

**REPRESENTATION OF THE ILLICIT DRUG SCOURGE IN THE SOUTH  
AFRICAN PRESS: A STUDY OF SELECTED NEWSPAPERS**

**by**

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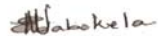
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## DECLARATION

“I Khutso Eunice Mabokela, declare that the thesis hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo, for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Media Studies has not previously been submitted for any degree purposes at this university or other universities; that it is my work in design and execution, and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged by means using of complete references.”

**Signature**



**Date:** 28 November 2022

## ABSTRACT

The study examines the representation of the drug scourge in the South African press with a focus on selected newspapers, namely the *Daily Sun*, *The Sowetan*, and *The Citizen* publications. The objectives of the study were to interrogate the editorial role of the selected newspapers in reporting illicit drug consumption, determine the framing of news reports on the coverage of illicit drugs, and analyse challenges that impede journalists' editorial role in presenting news reports on the consumption of illicit drugs. In addition, the study purposed to recommend an editorial tool kit to benefit a dissuasive campaign against the rampant consumption of illicit drugs in South Africa. It draws from the framing and accumulation theoretical propositions to underpin the study, and this is complemented by a detailed literature review on the press' representation of (illicit) drugs and drug abuse. The study employed the qualitative research approach and a descriptive design where data were collected through qualitative content analysis and a piloted in-depth interview method. Qualitative content analysis was used to determine news frames in the news reports about drug abuse whereas thematic analysis was applicable in determining the editorial role and challenges that impede journalistic practice in reporting the drugs scourge. The study noted that, a majority of the frames and editorial approaches to the coverage of the drug scourge were largely not beneficial to an effective anti-illicit drug campaign in South Africa. Instead, coverage of the selected newspapers yielded peripheral angles with emphasis on crime and violence; race-oriented, gendered, and class infused frames. This was further compounded by the press' focalisation on the scare-alarmist frame; foreigner-scapegoating; perpetrating the helpless frame; blame frame, and inept interventionist frames which lacked the capacity to generate a nuanced focalisation to stir the discourse on the drug scourge. In the end, the study concludes that there were both editorial and structural limitations to the social construction of the illicit drug scourge in the selected newspapers. Hence, the study has recommended a self-designed editorial tool kit to benefit a dissuasive press campaign against the rampant consumption of illicit drugs in South Africa.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

**AIDS** - Acquired Immuno-deficiency Syndrome

**APA** - American Psychiatry Association

**ATS** - Amphetamine-type stimulants

**CAT** - Methcathinone

**CDA** - Central Drug Authority

**CPF**- Community Police Forums

**DSD** - Department of Social Development

**HIV** - Human Immunodeficiency Virus

**IDU** - Injecting Drug Use

**MRC**- Medical Research Council

**NGOs**- Non-Governmental Organisations

**SACENDU** - South African Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use

**SANCA** - South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence

**SAPS** - South African Police Service

**TB** -Tuberculosis

**UN** - United Nations

**UNODC** - United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

**USA** - United States of America

**WHO**: World Health Organisation

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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The scourge of drugs in South Africa has reached alarming proportions, becoming an extensive contributor to the country's innumerable social, health, and economic issues. According to drug dependency statistics, in South Africa the abuse of drugs is twofold the worldwide standard and second to none in Africa (World Drug Report, 2018). This is especially concerning given the association between drug abuse and the severity of physical violence perpetrated against society's most vulnerable members (Peltzer & Pengpid, 2016). Despite the fact that drug abuse has been a long-standing issue, it remains a major public health and social issue, destroying individuals, families, communities, and national economies. Drug abuse has the potential to cause harm that extends beyond the health of users, as users may become perpetrators or victims of violent crime (National Drug Master Plan, 2019-24). Although the South African Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act No 140 of 1992 was recently amended to decriminalise cannabis use, illegal drugs such as *nyaope*, heroin, cocaine, and ecstasy, have been determined to be a significant benefactor to the high crime, violence, and mortalities in the country (South African Crime Statistics, 2021/22).

According to the United Nations Profile (2019), South Africa is unquestionably the key industry for illegal drugs entering the southern African region. The drug trade and abuse have risen significantly in the previous years with the tipping point traceable to the ensuing years of the country's first democratic elections in 1994. The country has seen a concurrent relief of stringent regulations on land, air, and maritime coastlines, an increment in global trade and commerce, and an emergence of fresh cultural attitudes among the more advantaged segments of the populace in recent years (ibid). This has necessitated the need for the press to galvanise public interventions to combat rampant drug abuse, particularly among the youth. According to Genovesi, Donaldson, Morrison, & Olson (2010), the press wields considerable power and can shape and manage perceptions of the public on the deleterious effects of abusing drugs. The press has a significant impact on societies in general by disseminating

information, setting the agenda, and influencing the behaviour of the public, private, and community sectors, as well as individuals (ibid).

In light of the foregoing, studying press reportage of issues on drugs is an important step toward understanding public perceptions of drugs, drug use, and public concerns about drug policy imperatives. Even though changes in behaviour as a result of South African media coverage of illegal drugs have not been proven, the press provides a narrative through their representation of drugs and drug abuse and serves as a guide for interpreting various situations through specific framing (McCombs, 2013). Furthermore, the media has a significant impact on stigmatised attitudes towards populations suffering from health problems, including drug addiction. The framing of news media about drug abuse regularly shapes public opinion (Fredheim, 2020). As a result, the press is anticipated to exercise socially prudent reporting when depicting individuals or society dealing with addiction issues caused by drug abuse (ibid).

McQuail (2013:168) refers to the press as a democratic watchdog. It has additionally been contended that publications, particularly their opinion pieces, "assess the significance of the discourse, debate, and choices taken in the primary battlegrounds of the general public, evaluate them and of situations, and empower decision-makers, law enforcement agencies, and/or residents to act against the troubles they have identified." As a result, the press have the ability to persuade South African government to implement drug intervention strategies in order to combat the widespread abuse of drugs.

"While the news media is the primary source of public information on health issues and has a significant impact on health policy formulation, their coverage can strengthen and misrepresent perceptions of key issues and contribute to the stigmatisation of health problems (Srivastava, 2018). "Similarly, media coverage of illegal drugs has the potential to disseminate important primary and secondary prevention messages (Musso & Wakefield, 2015:37). Newspapers, in particular have always been a powerful source in the public because people read them as meaningful texts. This might explain why the press has always been able to influence the opinion of the masses about the scourge of drugs.

Subsequently, newspapers perform a significant function of disseminating various forms of information, knowledge, and entertainment including informing society about

drug issues. Despite the fact that the drug problem is a major concern in South Africa, information available on drug-related issues reveals that coverage in terms of volume and quality of news reports on drug abuse is insufficient (Mabokela, 2018). Therefore, the study examines how the illicit drug scourge is represented in the South African press with specific reference to the selected newspapers in South Africa.

## **1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Over time, the press has demonstrated evident enthusiasm in covering other news genres such as politics, economics, and sport; however there seems to be a dearth in studies that cover illicit drugs reporting. South Africa is still dealing with a slew of drug-related problems that have dominated the media, politics, and education sectors. In the era of new public health issues, community members have previously turned to the newspapers to inform themselves and completely comprehend the intricate matters facing citizens, in particular the scourge of drugs. Mabokela (2018) observed that despite the health, social, and economic consequences of drug abuse among South Africans, drug consumption rates remain high, particularly among young people. This is exacerbated by the fact that the consequences of drug abuse receive little coverage in the South African press. Most news reports present event-based editorials that fail to investigate wider perspectives to alter or impact perceptions towards the extensive abuse of illegal drugs in South Africa.

Studies have shown that there is inadequate newspaper coverage on the anti-drugs and health campaigns by the South African government, private sector, and civic organisations to address the drug scourge (Mabokela, 2018). This is in the context of the press' role in advancing public concerns such as the prevention, and treatment of health problems. Arguably, this has deprived the press an opportunity to promote national awareness to facilitate buy-in from significant stakeholders such as the Department of Health, Department of Social Development, South African Police Services (SAPS), and civic society. For a large portion of the demographic, news organisations serve as the primary connection between societal issues and attitudes of the abuse of drugs. As such, when the media intentionally or unintentionally spreads misinformation or harmful stereotypes about drug-related issues, the public's perceptions and public policy discourse are distorted. For this reason, the study

examines the selected newspapers' representation of the drug scourge in South Africa with a focus on three selected newspapers, namely *The Sowetan*, *The Citizen* and *Daily Sun* publications.

### **1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY**

The motivation of the study was based on the preliminary observations regarding limited coverage of drug abuse issues in the South African press. Reporting to and providing the public with information on the scourge of drugs is becoming increasingly important for governmental and non-governmental agencies, at regional, national, and international levels. However, the reporting of drug abuse issues by the media seems to be lethargic (Belackova, Stastna & Miovisky, 2011). In view of the foregoing information, this study is important because it interrogates the role of the selected newspapers in making drug related issues a public, government, business, and media agenda.

Drug reporting is critical to South Africa's national development, whether on the social, economic, or political sphere because drug abuse is increasingly causing a serious concern among South Africans across the country. According to the Institute for Race Relations' Criterion Report (2018), 23% of voters ranked drugs and drug abuse as a higher priority for the government to address than crime and insecurity. However, the existence of drug abuse is dependent on the people's awareness and knowledge of the economic, health and social activities that impact society. It is in this context, that the print media in particular newspapers, become an important cog in national development with regard to drug awareness and civic education.

It is important to note that the abuse of drugs is the main concern in South Africa, where the use of illicit drugs has been stated to be two times the world average. The issue of illicit drugs affects over 15% of the population (World Drug Report, 2019). According to the South African Crime Statistics (2021/22), drug abuse accounts for 65% of all crimes committed in the country. Notwithstanding these concerns, there are minimal scholarly studies that investigated how journalists in print media particularly from newspapers, reported on the prevalence of illicit drugs in South African communities.

According to the National Drug Master Plan (2019-24), as a component of the framework to counteract the above-stated issue, the South African government has instituted and intensified policies on drug control. The South African Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act (140/1992) was subsequently abrogated and replaced by the Prevention of and Treatment for Substance Abuse Act 70 of 2008. This Act outlines distinctive challenges in the prevention of drug abuse and populates shortfalls in the Act of 1992. Its objectives include providing a clear reaction to drug addiction prevention, early detection, rehabilitation, and re-integration initiatives, as well as providing mechanisms for demand and injury prevention in the context of substance abuse prevention, early intervention, treatment, and re-integration initiatives (ibid). However, it is worth noting that some studies argue that the public is not aware of such initiatives because of the limited coverage they receive in the media, particularly the press (Mabokela, 2018). Therefore, the study seeks to create a public discourse and raise awareness on the drug scourge, thus compelling the selected newspapers and government to create mechanisms for combating further drug abuse in South Africa.

## **1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

### **1.4.1 Aim of the Study**

The aim of this study is to examine the representation of the illicit drug scourge in the selected newspapers in South Africa.

### **1.4.2 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are to:

- Interrogate the editorial role of the selected newspapers in reporting illicit drug consumption.
- To determine the framing of news reports on the coverage of illicit drugs in the selected newspapers.
- Analyse challenges that impede editorial role of journalists in presenting news reports on the consumption of illicit drugs.

- Recommend an editorial tool kit to benefit a dissuasive campaign against the rampant consumption of illicit drugs in South Africa.

### **1.4.3 Research questions**

The research questions are:

- What is the editorial role of the selected newspapers in reporting illicit drug consumption?
- How is the framing of news reports on the coverage of illicit drugs in the selected newspapers?
- What are the challenges that impede the editorial role of journalists in presenting news reports on the consumption of illicit drugs?

## **1.5 OVERVIEW OF ILLICIT DRUGS: A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS**

### **1.5.1 Demand and supply of illicit drugs**

Throughout two decades, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has been at the centre of global inquiry into complicated cases of drug supply and abuse, encouraging global participation and illuminating approaches with the most recent evaluations, data on patterns, and examination (World Drug Report, 2018). A third of a billion people, or about 5% of the worldwide adult demographic, consumed illegal drugs at least once in 2019. Worryingly, the negative effects of illicit drugs affect approximately 29.5 million abusers of drugs or 0.6% of the world's adult population. The above implies that their medication is causing them harm to the point where the users might develop a drug addiction and require treatment. The approximated 28 million years of "strong" living defeat transformed years of life (DALYs) misplaced overall in 2015 due to unexpected death and inability caused by drug use) highlight the magnitude of the harm caused by drug use in the same place (World Drug Report, 2018).



The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2019) reports global abuse of drugs, including illicit drugs, alcohol, and prescription drugs, as a socioeconomic problem, which is supported by literature (Fischer, Keates, Bühringer, Reimer & Rehm, 2014). According to the World Drug Report (2018), drug use is a worldwide issue that is not decreasing or narrowing. In addition, the data show a worldwide increase in drug dependence from 200 million in 2010, with a further increase to 324 million between 2012 and 2017 (World Drug Report, 2018). Furthermore, illicit drug use, which has recently been classified as a habit problem, is defined by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (2015:481) as "a maladaptive example of substance use appeared by repetitive huge unfavourable outcomes connected with the rehashed utilisation of substances, happening in six months or less" (ibid).

Furthermore, drug abuse is described by a repeated inability to achieve societal expectations at work and home, culminating in the loss of employment and a limited capacity to create and sustain strong relations, while proceeding to reveal oneself to physiologically difficult circumstances as tolerance tends to result in the need for increased levels of the drug to evade withdrawing (Appelbaum, 2015). The greatest shocking statistic is that drug abuse is said to account for 40% of the worldwide burdensome of psychological illness, impeding community social development and individual employment opportunities (du Plessis, Corney, & Burnside, 2013). Legislators encounter problems in designing efficient substance abuse prevention laws that consider the context in which the abuse substance happens (Merlo, 2016:08). Adding to their limited cases, legislators should argue with globalisation and the impact of global markets that expedite the accessibility of illegal drugs (World Drug Report, 2018).

Regardless of the lack of sustainable solutions for collecting data on drug abuse in South Africa, Kyei & Ramagoma (2013) assert that statistics on substance abuse show that South Africans consume twice as much as the worldwide average and are second to none in Africa. Previous research in South Africa and other countries found that certain socio-demographic factors, such as male gender, younger age, specific population groups (mixed race and White people), lower income or not working, and geolocation, such as urban areas, were associated with drug use. Furthermore, drug use has been linked to certain health risk behaviours such as psychiatric disorders

(significant depressive disorders), HIV risk behaviours, and criminal victimisation (ibid).

### **1.5.2 Demand for illicit drugs in South Africa**

In terms of the variety of illicit drugs available for consumption, South Africa has now fully globalised. According to Hübschle (2016:13), there are few popular substances that cannot be purchased in the country's urban centres. This, combined with South Africa's growing reputation as a transit point for illicit drugs, has exposed South Africans to drug trafficking syndicates, who then exploit vulnerable South Africans for drug smuggling and abuse (Tsoetsi, 2018:1).

Drug abuse is a major concern which has an adverse influence on nations' health, wealth, and security (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2019). Drug abuse has been linked to crime, interpersonal violence, risky sexual behaviour (with an increased risk of HIV acquisition and STI incidences), negative health outcomes for users, and a negative psychological impact on their families in South Africa. The most commonly used drugs among South African youth are cannabis and heroin (ibid).

The South African Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use (SACENDU) and the South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence provide data on drug abuse trends (SANCA). SACENDU is a South African Medical Research Council (MRC)-led research project. This project has relied on figures and qualitative data provided by a variety of stakeholders, including treatment centres, the South African Police Service, specialist researchers, hospitals, and mortuaries, since 1996 (Plüddemann, Dada, Parry, Bhana, Vawda, & Fourie, 2017). SANCA's national mission statement for 2020 is "to develop, consolidate and sustain outcome-based addiction services in South Africa through active partnerships with governments and other stakeholders" (SANCA, 2019).

SACENDU tracks patterns in alcohol and substance use from qualified professional rehabilitation programmes, including the ramifications of such use, and discloses this data on a six-month basis. The project is a sentinel surveillance system for alcohol and other drugs (AOD). The project operates in all nine provinces of South Africa, which are divided as follows: Western Cape (WC); KwaZulu-Natal (KZN); Eastern Cape (EC); Mpumalanga (MP) and Limpopo (LP) (combined as the Northern Region:

NR); Gauteng (GT: Johannesburg, Pretoria); Free State (FS), Northern Cape (NC), and Northwest (NW) (combined as the Central Region: CR) (Plü SANCA's National Treatment Portfolio is also spread across all nine provinces in South Africa and includes data from both in-patient and out-patient centres (SANCA, 2019).

- *Legal and institutional arrangements governing drug use among youth*

South Africa has signed the United Nations Convention to combat Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has a presence in South Africa through the office of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Southern Africa (UNODC, 2019). Its drug-related mandate includes strengthening legislative and judicial capacity to formalise and implement international laws and mechanisms on drug control, criminal organisations, corrupt practices, terrorist acts, and money-laundering; reducing drug trafficking; and enhancing government institutions and civil society organisations' capacity to prevent drug use and the spread of related infections (ibid).

Moreover, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2019), national laws have been passed in accordance with the UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. The Prevention of and Treatment for Substance Abuse Act of 2008 is the primary piece of national legislation addressing substance use. The Act, among other things, offers a comprehensive reaction to drug abuse and provides mechanisms to deal with substance abuse. Section 1 of the Act establishes a framework for dealing with substance abuse, while Section 2 outlines strategies for minimising harm. The Act has served as the foundation for many of South Africa's substance abuse programmes and strategies.

The National Drug Master Plan 2019-24, which outlines the strategies and measures to combat substance abuse, provides support for the Prevention of and Treatment for Substance Abuse Act. The Plan's interventions are based on a supply and demand structure that reduces demand, harm, and supply (National Drug Master Plan, 2019-24).

The Central Drug Authority (CDA) is the principal authoritative figure under the Department of Social Welfare, with the primary mandate of regulating, promoting, and enforcing substance abuse legislation. It is an advisory committee established under

the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (Act No. 70 of 2008). The CDA is responsible for executing the Drug Master Plan 2019-24 and coordinating all Act-related activities. Other important stakeholders, in addition to the CDA, include central (e.g., the Department of Home Affairs), and provincial governments, the police, NGOs, Civil Society, youth, and community formations. Drug committees are also established by provincial and local governments. Furthermore, the CDA reported that South Africa has 80 drug treatment centres qualified to treat 20,000 people per year (CDA Report to Parliament, 2016).

- *Extent of drug abuse among South African youth*

According to substance abuse statistics, consumption of drugs such as cannabis, cocaine, and tik in South Africa is double the average temperature and second to none in Africa (World Drug Report, 2018). In South Africa, the average age of substance misuse is 12 years, and it is reducing. South Africa is one of the world's top ten narcotics and alcohol abusers. 15 people out of every 100 have a drug problem, and 25 Rands out of every 100 Rands have been linked to the substance abuse disorder (Christian Addiction Support, 2016).

Methamphetamine dependency was at 23% among those treated for addiction, heroin dependency was at 19%, and cocaine dependency was at nearly 6%. Cannabis (3.6%), cocaine (1.2%), and amphetamine stimulants (1.02%) are the most popular drugs. In a study of five trauma units in Cape Town, Durban, and Port Elizabeth, a similar trend was observed. It was discovered that 14% of the patients tested positive for white pipe (a combination of cannabis and metaxalone), 33% for cannabis, and 15% for metaxalone. The growing problem of substance abuse among the youth (including children and adolescents) in South Africa is a major concern, preventing this population group from fully participating in the country's socioeconomic development. Although South Africa's young population of 13 million (15-24 age cohort) generates a golden opportunity, originality, innovative thinking, abilities, and energies of this population will go untapped due to substance abuse (Christian Addiction Support, 2016).

### **1.5.3 Drug abuse, patterns, and trends**

Drug abuse is defined as the use of psychoactive or addictive drugs such as cannabis, cocaine, and heroin (National Drug Master Plan, 2019-24). Several drug abuse studies have been undertaken around the world, including, but not limited to, the history of this behaviour and attitude, various patterns and aiding influences, demographic trends, economic influence, and related health problems (Liao, Kang, Tao & Bouey, 2015). Previously, researchers blamed drug abuse on resented colonial laws and the apartheid system that was supplanted by the new order of freedom; however, systemic methods have evolved, but a radical transformation of societies has not improved the lives of the poor politically, socially, or economically (Sorsdahl, Myers, Ward & Matzopoulos, 2014).

Arguably, the establishment of multi-pronged trading routes has recently discovered non-negotiated frameworks of illicit drug infiltration into societies, resulting in instability and insecurity (Van Heerden, 2014:74). This is supported by findings from subsequent studies, which show that there are numerous contributory distresses ranging from individual, family related, society, and socioeconomic factors that lead to substance abuse (Morojele, Parry & Brook, 2010). A prepubescent study found that drug abuse was influenced by peers, but it also stressed the importance of family relations and effective discussions in managing stress at home and in communities (ibid).

When confronted with difficult life experiences such as poverty and unemployment, some people's unconscious motivations and conflicts manifest as a lack of self-control (McKay & Deshingkar, 2014). Insatiable substance use as a response results in an unbalanced life due to addiction and the inability to perform responsibly because the pleasure derived from the substance is fleeting and requires ongoing maintenance (Norman, Sly & Whitehouse, 2014).

Recognising the social context that may facilitate drug abuse led to the development of political and health-related strategies to combat this social problem. Despite this, no positive outcomes or gains have occurred. Statistics show that substance abuse is on the rise as a result of new and emerging drugs and undetectable web-based trading (World Drug Report, 2018). This implies that there is a global need to review harm minimisation initiatives through collaborative relationships to eliminate the source, supply, and demand of these illicit drugs, which is consistent with the new policy

recommendations of eliminating the global threat through human rights respect (Parry & Myers, 2016:5).

- *Forms of drug abuse and drug trafficking*

Drug abuse patterns vary according to a country's social influences, culture, drug availability, acceptance and tolerance of the behaviour, and user characteristics (Degenhardt & Hall, 2015). The literature reveals that historically, Europe and Australia have high consumption patterns of other illicit drugs, affecting 8 million people, compared to Islamic religion countries (Lê Cook & Alegra, 2015). Cultural rituals highlight alcohol consumption patterns for traditional ceremonies in India, Mexico, and Africa, as well as for social activities in Australia (Bennett, Campillo, Chandrashekar & Gureje, 2013). Impactful settings and regulations governing distribution and use, particularly of alcohol and cannabis, shed light on cultural trends and their long-term impact (World Health Organisation, 2014). Furthermore, international, and local border control policies and practices have inadequate drug control surveillance systems.

This reveals susceptible African societies to illegal invasion by drug smugglers who, due to low income are using the continent as a transportation hub from Eastern to Western countries, fostering 52% usage of both internationally and locally sourced illegal drugs, such as cannabis from West Africa (World Drug Report, 2018). For instance, Afghanistan rallied heroin markets and entered Africa via commercial planes by using members of criminal groups as traffickers, and later in the 1980s, pervaded South Africa via the Indian Ocean path. Revenues of these drugs are aimed at economically productive young people in recreational settings, negatively confining them to overreliance and altering their psychological health while lowering the country's financial prosperity due to the associated health and crime costs (Csete & Sánchez, 2013; Trenz, Scherer, Duncan, & Harrell, 2013).

Furthermore, South Africa has observed an increment in the alternative methods of injectable heroin, amphetamine, and cocaine trafficking. Consumption statistics show that Coloureds and Blacks consume 15.2% to 43% in the Eastern Cape, 3 to 31.1% in Cape Town, 52% in Mpumalanga, and 19 to 30% in KwaZulu-Natal (Pasche & Myers, 2016). The issue is that heroin markets are endangering HIV infection reduction gains in Sub-Saharan Africa, accounting for 10% of newly acquired transmissions from contaminated heroin equipment (Kasirye, 2017).

- *Drug abuse disorders in prisons*

According to findings from a South African prison study, prisoners use unsafe methods of drug consumption, particularly injectables like heroin, which is connected with the procedure of unsanitary needle sharing, putting them at risk of acquiring blood-borne viruses like Hepatitis C and HIV (World Drug Report, 2018). This is a serious health issue, as evidenced by the 1.7 million substance abusers infected with HIV (ibid). Without no tactical prevention strategies and precautions in place, including the use of hygienic syringes, as is the case in Russia and Europe, prisoners' mental health suffers, and 23% have affirmed psychiatric illnesses (Gardner, Jones & Sifunda, 2016). When these prisoners are reintegrated into their communities due to maladjustment, they pose a serious suicide risk, which is a leading cause of mortality, particularly with substance abuse (Montanari, 2014).

According to a study done on incarcerated males, 51% have substance abuse problem stemming from environmental factors brought from early childhood, where constant mental anguish is a direct consequence of exclusion from the family, leading to unmanageable substance use carried through to adulthood, culminating in mental deficiency (World Drug Report, 2018). According to epidemiological studies, substance users are mostly from low-to-middle-income families with lower educational attainment, and they use multiple drugs (Gigliotti, Ribeiro, Tapia & Aguilera, 2014).

This is synonymous and a reality in Africa and the South African context, where areas with the highest drug abuse are generally the impoverished groups, particularly those who have been forcibly relocated due to political turmoil (Atwoli, Stein, Williams & McLaughlin, 2013). Despite the global mental health and substance use crisis, an effective drug policy lacks collective action strong enough to eliminate this dangerous behaviour (Parry & Myers, 2016). A global strategy may be hampered by disparities in abuse patterns between and within countries.

- *Drug abuse in incarcerated women*

A study conducted in Israel on the factors that drive abusers to participate in violent offenses while under the influence of drugs yielded disturbing results. According to indications, there is a rising population of women inmates who have had conflicting relations within their families, culminating in homelessness, and to survive on the

streets, they have engaged in stealing and drug use (Morojele & Brook, 2016). Several of these imprisoned women broken the law in order to protect themselves from abusive relationships, while others produced aggressive behaviour on the basis of detrimental settings at home, as well as non-acceptance by their significant others, resulting in poor relationships. Due to a lack of funds, some joined forces with organised criminals trafficking drugs that required violence (ibid).

According to statistics, 74% of these victimised women are from low-income families, lack education, suffer from psychological disturbances caused by trauma, and have used illegal drugs to self-medicate and cure their bruised egos (Gueta & Chen, 2015: 8). These experiences are similar to those reported in the United States, where two-thirds of perpetrators disclosed being multiple drug addicts and have been arrested twice in a three-to-six-month period due to their constant use of violence to obtain money for drugs (ibid). In the context of these complexities, South Africa is considered to have acquired a tradition of violent conduct from its historical political regime, which has been identified among the anti-social behaviours of substance users (Van der Merwe, 2014). The country is now facing a burden of mortality and morbidity as a result of substance-related accidents and violent behaviour (Waller, Gardner & Cluver, 2014).

#### **1.5.4 Mortalities caused by substance abuse**

Substance abuse accounts for 16.6% of the worldwide global burden of disease, causing 19.1% of disability, which, as previously stated, permeates in the substance abuser experiencing a shorter lifespan than the population average (Funk et al., 2012). Even though this habit is the result of certain sociocultural groups' beliefs and values and is used to alleviate cognitive and emotional stressors and to fit in with the subculture, the repercussions contribute to a health burden.

As a result, addiction is a health problem associated with mortality rates from violence, victimization, and accidents, with 60% of these fatalities testing positive for substance abuse (Matzopoulos et al., 2014). Furthermore, methamphetamine suppresses the immune system and has been linked to viral infections such as HIV and airborne tuberculosis (World Drug Report, 2018). Internationally, three million lives are unwittingly lost due to violence and accidents while driving under the influence of licit or illicit drugs. It is estimated that nine million people practice drunken driving, which



causes 11.4% of all vehicle accidents (ibid). Following this, statistical data from South Africa indicate that the global incidence of substance-related driving fatalities is doubled, with 43 per 100,000 population per year compared to the global incidence of 22 per 100,000 population per year (World Drug Report, 2018).

In South Africa, these driving fatalities include cyclists (53%) and pedestrians (47%), both of whom are under the influence of various substances. South Africa has the highest number of road fatalities, followed by Nigeria, due to drunken driving and other illicit drug use, losing 36,840 lives and costing the country R37.9 billion in medical care, family breadwinner loss, and road accident funds (ibid). In addition to car accidents, accidental overdoses result in deaths and potentially serious health problems for those who survive the overdose.

Between 2012 and 2018, inadvertent overdoses with heroin or prescription drugs such as opioids and benzodiazepams resulted in 11,500 early mortality, with 17 mortalities associated with new emerging drugs in the United States (Paulozzi, Weisler & Patkar, 2019:10). Furthermore, the use of new fashion drugs has become a global issue (World Drug Report, 2019). Because of their stimulating effect, these psychotropic substances, which were originally developed to map serotonin receptors in the brain, are now the most abused substances (Clarke & Adermark, 2015). According to the literature, there were 228,366 emergency room resuscitations in 2011, with 38,329 unsuccessful resuscitations (Baum & Neuberger, 2014; Evans & Sullivan, 2014:9).

According to Hong Kong statistics (2016-2018), of the 203 post-mortem findings of failed resuscitations, 90% were from new recreational drug misuse, while 84% were from alcohol and other drugs, and 41% were from self-hanging and other lethal means of committing suicide (Elliott & Evans, 2017). According to a South African study, accidental overdose of psychoactive drugs results in 56% of deaths occurring at home and 10% of deaths occurring in emergency rooms. These deaths contribute to 9,831 road accidents, 2,597 of which have high alcohol blood levels of 0.18g/100ml, with 47% of users hailing from the Western Cape and 53% hailing from other South African provinces (National Institute for Crime and Rehabilitation of Offenders, NICRO, 2017).

### **1.5.5 Poverty and occupational costs of substance abuse**

According to Leibbrandt, Woolard, Finn, & Argent (2016) relative deprivation is "material standard of living independent of that of others, unequal access due to social class of economic and other resources as the key driver of health inequalities because it deprives people of contemporary standards of living." This concept is linked to the one for poverty, which is defined as the failure to reach a reasonable standard of living evaluated in terms of basic necessities such as nutrition and shelter or income using the South African Index of Multiple Deprivation. This metric was used to assess insufficiency in South Africa's former homelands twenty years after its incorporation into the country. Despite the country's changes that have caused concern, the findings indicated that there is severe deprivation, particularly among female-headed households (Noble, Zembe & Wright, 2014:23). This pattern was observed in the research setting, where the mother lives with nine family members and only one person works and provides food and other household needs (ibid).

According to reports, South Africa still faces vast economic challenges carried forward from the legacy of the previous regime after 26 years of democracy and successful social and economic policies and reducing the unemployed is a far cry considering the low levels and educational quality acquired by the potential employee, resulting in an abundance of under skilled despair employees with no income benefits (South African Economic Statistics, 2020). Employed low-wage earners and the unemployed are captured in the web of South Africa's dual job markets, which have State-dominated industries governed by collective bargaining benefits, while small businesses are excluded from these arrangements and continue to earn for their labour mean wages. These conditions are an impediment to the unskilled or illiterate unemployed finding gainful employment, resulting in anxiety and depression (South African Economic Statistics, 2020).

South Africa's democratic political transformation has been unable to bridge socioeconomic inequalities, and people's lives have not improved significantly because the ability to qualify for scarce resources is based on social class and educational skills. Those in per urban and rural areas are the most affected (Kehler, 2018). Despite its blurring, social stratification remains a major determinant of where people live. Level of income, desires, health, government care, and human rights, and

being poor means inaccessibility to basic survival needs, partly due to prejudice premised on HIV status disclosure, coupled with less education, and are simply not looking for work out of desperation since they do not have fraudulent connections to offer jobs, and 41% of these are youth who end up with substance abuse behaviour (Shisana & Zuma, 2016:34). The issue is there are no promising employment opportunities as the country concentrates on increased economic activity through exports and imports revenue, which exacerbates poverty. These impediments expose the poor to vulnerabilities, helplessness, and mental instability because they lack a voice (Bhorat, Hirsch, Kanbur & Ncube, 2014).

- *The South African constitution and substance abuse*

The South African Constitution of 1996, which is rights-based, as compared to the Croatian structural policy, which dismisses civil rights pertaining to basic necessities allocation, asserts that the socioeconomic status of all citizens will improve; however, this vision has yet to be realised, as one-third of the population still lives in poverty, particularly in urban and rural areas, affecting women, as evidenced in the research setting. These women, if they work, cannot assure their job status due to their ethnicity, gender, and low education, which makes them less valuable in the workplace than men, making them temporal workers. If the employer faces difficulties, they are the first to be laid off, despite the fact that they are the heads of families. Loss of employment disempowers these individuals, and as they struggle to survive against the odds, they become depressed as a result of feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, and rejection (Sauregeres, Thomas & Moore, 2014:48).

Poverty-stricken members of the population living in remote areas are forced to seek work away from their homes and migrate temporarily to developed societies in order to improve their income levels. This movement may benefit their families while having negative health consequences for the breadwinner, who may face adverse circumstances at work that motivate substance abuse and risky behaviour, predisposing them to mental illness (Collins, 2015). Individuals experience health challenges when relocating to better their lives, trying to break the cycle of familial poverty against the backdrop of the country's hardships. South Africa has a first-world economy in some parts of the country, where the wealthy enjoy the fruits of available resources alongside the severely impoverished population living in the country's

grossly underdeveloped sectors, the peri urban and rural former Bantustans (Noble et al., 2014). The South African context is interconnected to both Europe and America, which promote poor reliance on social welfare, resulting in homelessness and anxiety, while the elite accumulate increasing wealth.

Because South Africa has an economy that other African countries envy, many of them are drawn to tour the country, and because it has the largest illicit drug market, drugs are also trafficked during this tourism (Peltzer, Louw & Mchunu, 2012:37). According to indications, these traffickers are linked to international markets that target specific populations, particularly poor distributors who need ways to survive, sell, and consume these drugs, resulting in mental disorders. The families in the research setting indicated that there is unemployment, which motivates drug lords to entice poor people to sell drugs, and they also participate because they see it as a way to make money (ibid).

The economic benefits of drug selling, and consumption are brief because addiction sets in, culminating in mental illness, which is most noticeable in low and middle-income countries, such as schizophrenia, depression, anxiety, and intellectual disability (Lund, Myer, Stein, Williams & Flisher, 2018:13). Unfortunately, these labels cause individuals to be discriminated and stigmatised, preventing them from accessing work and earning enough money to buy a house, feed their families, or have a stable relationship, resulting in a poor life and poverty among families. Suicidal thoughts are triggered by this internalised stigma. According to epidemiological studies, four out of ten people in the UK, US, and Australia suffer from mental illness as a result of substance abuse and live in severely under-resourced areas, compared to the wealthy in Brazil and India (Funk et al., 2012). These findings support the assertion that there is a link between poverty and mental disorders (Lund et al., 2018).

#### **1.5.6 Policies on drug abuse**

- *South African drug policy*

Improper cultural norms of smuggling, selling, and abusing unlawful and lawful drugs thrive in the lawlessness of the neighbourhood's political systems, to the hindrance of human existence, and strengthening these could mitigate the damage to families (Parry & Myers, 2016:8). The existing drug policy focuses on increasing alcohol taxes,

arresting those discovered in drug possession or under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and incarcerating them (ibid). Globally, anecdotal evidence suggests that these measures have failed, with 2.5 million deaths from substance-related poor health in 2018 (World Drug Report, 2019).

South Africa had 130 people dying nearly every day as a result of drug overdosing, contributing to the economic and health burden (Pirie, 2016). The World Health Organisation (2015) noted the dangers of alcohol use in South Africa and implored legislators to influence policy to alleviate the origin of drugs (Parry & Myers, 2016). According to the findings of studies, current policies should be reviewed, as suggested by international communities, in order to reduce morbidity and mortality, as well as the negative effects on families and communities (ibid). Cultural and structural variables have preconditioned people to substance abuse, and to overturn the damage, a new strategic policy is needed that will not only decriminalise the associated behaviours but will also eliminate the manufacturing and distribution of the harmful substances because their origins are known, as reported in the World Drug Report (2018).

South Africa and Africa lag behind in these initiatives despite the strenuous socioeconomic and health hazards since harm reduction strategies on the prohibition of alcohol advertisement, the primary substance abused, met with uphill citing concerns of prospective 2,500 mass layoffs and an economic loss of 228 million Euros, with the detrimental effect of increasing the already overstretched budget on the government's social assistance provision (Twillman, Kirch & Gilson, 2016).

One of the difficulties in policy making is a lack of agreement on the high-quality content of these initiatives. Despite the inclusion of inter-ministerial members as well as other stakeholders responsible for making decisions. The media has a significant impact on these political platform discussions. Furthermore, rather than viewing illicit drug use as the end result of social pathology, the mental health perspective frames it as a moral decay (Lancaster, Hughes, Spicer, Matthew-Simmons & Dillon, 2011:7).

Ethically, public and user opinion should be involved in policy development, but political structures have censored these opinions, which are also important in social policy formulation. The stakeholders argue that substance abusers with mental illnesses have dysfunctional cognitive processes and are unable to provide valuable input (Lancaster, Ritter & Stafford, 2013:8). This classifying and discrimination of drug

users in these discussions precludes the policy context and direction of a powerful contribution that considers the lived experience of family members, which can be extremely valuable.

- *Drug policies in Australia*

Inefficient substance abuse laws have cost the Australian Government extortionate sums of money, \$5288 million, for substance abuse related awareness campaigns and criminal convictions, but this has not thwarted behavioural patterns, as numbers have increased more than before, leading policymakers to redirect their focus on illicit drug production and manufacturing rather than control of those in possession of them (Birnbaum, White, Schiller & Waldman, 2016:18). Discussions on decriminalisation of illicit drug use have elicited a range of reactions and viewpoints from politicians and decision-makers, who fear that the public will be swindled and will disregard the law. The Portuguese have taught us that since the implementation of a decriminalisation and depenalisation policy in 2001, there has been a significant reduction in substance abuse, with positive health outcomes (ibid).

- *Challenges of policy formulation in USA*

Policy making has been an ongoing struggle among international communities working to reduce harm because there are divisions in the United States of America regarding the legalisation of cannabis for medicinal purposes and the use of profits for social development projects, and one South African parliamentarian and the Rastafarian religious group actively campaigned for the bill on this provocative issue in the context of emerging dangerous illicit drugs, but the global and local communities have been unable to reach an agreement (World Drug Report, 2019). In Canada, efforts are being directed toward preventive intervention that will strike a balance between the safety of licit drug use and the elimination of the source that is manufacturing the product (Nasr & Phillips, 2018).

## **1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The study was conducted to examine the press' representation of the drugs scourge in South African newspapers namely *The Citizen*, *Daily Sun*, and *The Sowetan*. The study further interrogates the editorial role of the selected newspapers in reporting illicit drug use issues in the newspapers understudy. The study also determines the

framing of news reports on the coverage of illicit drugs in the selected newspapers and analyses challenges that impede journalists' editorial role in presenting news reports on the consumption of illicit drugs. The study also recommends an editorial tool kit to benefit a dissuasive campaign against the rampant consumption of illicit drugs. In order to achieve this, the study analyses news reports on illicit drug abuse during the period from 01 January to 31 December 2017.

## **1.7 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS**

### **1.7.1 Behavioural change**

Behavioural change refers to the transformation or modification of human behaviour in response to particular stimuli normally associated with positive or negative reinforcement. In this study, behaviour change entails South Africans adopting responsible health behaviour, in terms of refraining from drug use as opposed to risky behaviour of abusing drugs. The readers' behaviour is largely influenced by the content of the news they read in newspapers (Conboy, 2016:68). For the purpose of this study, the researcher is concerned with how drugs affect the behaviour of addicts.

### **1.7.2 Dependence**

Dependence is described as "a powerful interest in taking the substance; inhibited control over use; detachment on cessation or decrease of use; tolerance to the effects of the drug and the need for high dosage to attain the intended physical effect evidenced by psychological harm" (Degenhardt & Hall, 2015:15). For this study, dependence refers to the ways in which the addicts are reliant on the drugs.

### **1.7.3 Drug**

In pharmacology, a drug is any substance that has the ability to inhibit or cure disease or enhance physical or mental well-being, as well as any chemical agent that distorts the biochemical or physiological processes of tissues or organisms (United Nations on Drugs and Crime, 2019). In the context of this study, the term refers to any illegal drug that is a danger to the psychological and physical wellbeing of individuals.

#### **1.7.4 Drug abuse and preventive interventions**

The concept described above refers to a proactive process that equips people and structures to tackle the challenges of humanity's events and transformation by generating and strengthening environments that favour healthy habits and lifestyles. It generally necessitates three levels of intervention: primary prevention (changing the individual and the environment to minimise the preliminary danger of drug use/abuse); prevention programmes (early recognition of people at risk of substance abuse and mediating to stop the progression); and tertiary prevention (treatment of people who have developed substance/drug dependence) (National Drug Master Plan, 2019-24). These interventions are expected to foster open discussion about drug abuse and decision making around the drug scourge. Furthermore, in this study drug abuse and preventive interventions refers to the preventative measures that South African communities, the selected newspapers, and government have taken to combat further drug use.

#### **1.7.5 Drug control**

The local, national, or international regulation of the production, distribution, sale, and use of specific psychoactive drugs (controlled substances) through a system of laws and agencies; alternatively, as an equivalent to drug policy in the context of psychoactive drugs, the aggregate of policies designed to affect the supply of and/or demand for illicit drugs, including education, treatment, control, and other programmes and policies. Furthermore, the vast majority of countries have declared a number of psychoactive substances, including cannabis, cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamines, to be illegal. As a result, they are subject to varying degrees of legal oversight (United Nations on Drugs and Crime, 2019). In the context of this study, drug control looks into the manner in which the South African government responds to the production and distribution of illicit drugs.

#### **1.7.6 Drug scourge**

The concept relates to the widespread abuse of illicit drugs within communities, which primarily results in the drug addicts committing heinous crimes to feed their addictions (Department of Social Development, 2017). For the purpose of this study, the drug scourge refers to the severity of drugs and their impact on the economy, health, and



the social effects of drug abuse on the addicts, communities, and the country. This context further refers to other ramifications of drug abuse such as crime and drug trafficking that compound the use and abuse of illicit drugs in South Africa.

### **1.7.7 Illicit drugs**

The United Nations (UN) drug policy treaties fail to distinguish between licit (legal) and illicit (illegal) drugs; they only define use as lawful/legitimate or illicit/illegal. Therefore, according to the United Nations on Drugs and Crime (2019: 27) “the term illicit drugs is used to describe drugs which are under international control (and which may or may not have licit medical purposes) but which are produced, trafficked and/or consumed illicitly”. In the study, the term illicit drugs refer to any drug that is considered unlawful by the South African Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act of 1992.

### **1.7.8 Media representation**

All media texts, by definition, are representations of reality. This implies that their producers purposefully compose, light, write, frame, crop, caption, brand, target, and censor them, and that they are artificially created renditions of the reality we interpret around us (McCombs, 2004). However, it is also worth noting that without the media, our view of reality would be highly restricted, and that we, as an audience, require these artificial texts to mediate our view of the world; in other words, we require the media to make sense of reality. As a result, representation is a fluid, two-way process in which producers locate a text in connection to reality and audiences evaluate a text based on its relationship to reality (ibid). For the purpose of this study, media representation refers to the portrayal of the news reports on the consumption of illicit drugs in the selected newspapers.

### **1.7.9 National Drug Master Plan**

The National Drug Master Plan (NDMP) is a written document formulated and implemented by government to outline all national drug control issues. The master plan is intended to bring together government agencies and other stakeholders in the field of substance abuse in order to combat the use and abuse of addictive substances, as well as related problems. It outlines the national and provincial contributions and roles of various government departments in combating the scourge of substance abuse (National Drug Master Plan, 2019-24).

### **1.7.10 Press**

Journalists and media entities are referred to as the press. Furthermore, the press includes both journals and news sources or media. However, the term "press" used to refer only to reporters for paper-based news media (because they are printed on printing presses), but it is now used to refer to reporters representing any news media, as well as the media itself (Melbourne, 2018). In the setting of this study, the press refers to newspapers particularly the three South African newspapers namely *The Sowetan*, *Daily Sun* and *The Citizen*, that were selected as the sources of data.

### **1.7.11 Substance abuse**

Abuse and misuse of lawful or unlawful drugs such as nicotine, alcohol, OTC and prescription medication, alcohol concoctions, indigenous plants, solvents, and inhalants, as well as use of illegal or illicit substances (Department of Social Development, 2017). Substance abuse is also defined as the acute or recurring use of any chemical substance to modify states of the body or mind for reasons other than medically warranted purposes, resulting in effects that are harmful to the individual's physical or mental health or the welfare of others (Drug Addiction and Drug Abuse, 2018). For this study, substance abuse refers to the misuse of illicit drugs such as *nyaope*, heroin, cocaine, crack, et cetera.

### **1.7.12 Target audience**

The intended audience or readership of a publication, advertisement, or other message is referred to in the preceding concept. Furthermore, in marketing and advertising, it is a specific group of consumers within a predefined target audience who are recognised as the targets or receivers for a specific advertisement or message delivered via media. However, just because an intended audience is focused does not preclude the message from being of interest to and received by those outside the intended demographic. Failures to target a specific audience, on the other hand, are possible and occur when information is conveyed incorrectly (Sherlock, 2014). In this study, target audience refers to readership of newspapers such as the *Daily Sun*, *The Citizen* and the *Sowetan*. The target audience of the newspapers comprises middle class citizens who live in and around the urban major centres in South Africa.

## **1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This section describes relevant theoretical perspectives and concepts for examining the representation of the scourge of illicit drugs in the press. This study was premised on three theoretical proportions, namely, framing and accumulation are debated below.

### **1.8.1 Framing theory**

Framing is parallel to agenda-setting, but it broadens research by focusing on the essence of the issues being discussed rather than a specific subject. The media focus attention on specific events and then place them within a field of meaning, according to framing theory (McQuail, 2013). It typically refers to the idea that the media approaches certain issues in different ways and thus reports on them in different frames and perspectives to the public. Because news media frame issues in a variety of ways, media scholars have found the concept of framing useful for analysing media coverage of news. The way the media frames an issue or event can influence how audiences interpret it. As a result, a media constructed frame is a central organising concept for news content that provides contextualised meaning through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration (Fredheim, 2020).

According to framing theory, how something is presented to an audience (referred to as "the frame") influences the decisions people make about how to process that information. Frames are mental representations that help to arrange or structure the meaning of a message. The most typical application of frames is the frame that the news or media place on the information they convey. According to framing theory, the media creates this frame by introducing news items with predefined and limited contextualisation. Frames can be used to improve understanding or as cognitive shortcuts to connect stories to the bigger picture (Fredheim, 2020). For example, the 'drug war' metaphor used in drug media coverage in the United States of America suggests strong military or law enforcement intervention as the sensible answer to a war-like problem, instead of proposing health or economic interventions (McLeod, 2018). To this end, the study employs the framing theory to explain the scourge of illicit drug consumption in the selected newspapers, which influences the South African public's perception of the dire effects drug abuse in the country.

- ***Frames in mass communication***

A communication frame can only be described in reference to a given issue, event, or political actor. The frames for social issues, for example, vary from the frames for social welfare transformation. Even the same issue at various times may elicit different frames (Entman, 2004:23). If the goal is to understand how communication frames affect public opinion, the communicator must isolate a specific attitude. For example, one might examine overall attitudes toward illicit drug use or, alternatively, reasons why people use drugs. Each of these attitudes could be framed in a different way. Considerations of health and social consequences, economic costs, and individualism may all be part of the frame that defines attitudes toward drug use (Fredheim, 2020).

Furthermore, it is critical to investigate the frames produced by various drug users and organisations on both sides of the issue in editorial writings and publications by interest groups or social movements. In public discussion, this presents a range of "culturally available frames." These sources can be supplemented by asking samples of people to record their thoughts on the issue of drug use using open-ended questions (Brewer, 2017). Scholars typically examine mass media sources such as major newspapers, magazines, websites, and television broadcasts, in addition to the above-mentioned advocacy communications (for example, from social movements). The selection of specific news outlets is determined by the researcher's intent, such as capturing general trends in coverage or comparing specific types of coverage across media. Coders then examine a sample, identifying themes and determining whether or not one of the predefined frames is present in the story or article (ibid).

- ***Episodic framing***

News reports can also be classified as episodic or thematic using Iyengar's (1991) dichotomous approach. Episodic framing can be effective as a social control tool. This type of story focuses on a single event or incident, whereas thematic stories provide a larger context for an event or issue. In his investigation of how the media frames political issues, Iyengar (1991) discovered that the significant proportion of crime stories are told in episodic fashion, and he explained how this affects audiences' inferences of obligation as follows: Following exposure to episodic framing, Americans describe persistent challenges such as poverty and crime as unorthodox outcomes rather than deep-seated social or economic conditions. Individual and group

characteristics are more important to audiences than historical, social, political, or other such structural forces (ibid).

When exposed to more "general or analytic" framing, "the public's rationality about causal and rehabilitation responsibility shifts accordingly," according to the study (Jernigan & Dorfman, 2016:192). Furthermore, the scholars discovered that regardless of frame, the stories about illegal drugs in his sample "evoked individualistic attributions of responsibility". As a result, it is inferential that the media's presentation of drug stories has influenced viewers' attributions of responsibility and contributed to Americans' proclivity to individualise drug problems rather than consider systemic issues (ibid).

Jernigan and Dorfman (2016) augmented on this finding in a content analysis of the graphic depiction of drugs on late night news network during 2010, a year when newspapers played a significant role in exacerbating public opinion about drugs and the drug war. According to their findings, the majority of drug stories (71% of their sample) were framed episodically rather than thematically. Framing news episodically, combined with the newspaper's propensity to "fragment social problems from their contexts," results in news stories that "blame primarily on individuals rather than social or systemic causes such as poverty, unemployment, or economic development" (ibid). Jernigan & Dorfman (2016) further claimed that newspaper coverage of the drug war "supported the nation's single-minded reliance on punitive approaches to the illegal drug problem" and "may have fuelled public support" for ineffective responses to illicit drug use.

- ***Effects of framing on individuals***

The effects of framing can be seen in many journalism applications, according to Fredheim (2020). The "frame" surrounding an issue can influence the reader's perception without changing the facts themselves. A frame defines the packaging of an element of rhetoric in such a way as to encourage certain interpretations and discourage others in the context of drug use or mass-media communication. For the purposes of illicit drugs, framing frequently presents facts in such a way that they implicate a problem that requires a solution. Members of the press are frequently perceived as attempting to frame drug-related issues in such a way that a solution

disproportionately benefits their own agenda and appears to be the most appropriate course of action for the situation at hand (ibid).

However, the majority of focus in the depiction of illicit drugs and communications literature has been on how frames in elite communication (for example, drugs, media outlets, and interest groups) influence citizens' frames and attitudes. This is commonly referred to as a framing effect (Fredheim, 2020). There is some debate about the best way to assess the magnitude of framing effects. One criterion is the variation in preferences produced by different frames on an issue. In evaluating endurance of a black supremacist rally, for example, respondents who received a free speech frame would be compared to those who received a public safety frame. The variability in the correlation between alternative framed preferences and personal values pertinent to the issue, such as freedom versus law and order on the hate group issue, is a second standard (Sniderman & Theriault, 2014).

- ***Framing public attitudes***

Framing is important because media portrayals are there to guide the audience's interpretations and to influence the formation of new opinions. For instance, Fan's time series analysis of illicit drugs press coverage in the United States between 1985 and 1994 discovered that by framing drugs as a crisis, the media contributed significantly to shifts in public attitudes, with 60% of the public viewing drugs as the most serious problem in the country (Clegg-Smith, Wakefield, Terry- McElrath, Chaloupka, Flay & Saba, 2008:17). There are numerous ways in which newsmakers can shape the way a story is presented using the principles of selection and salience (Clegg-Smith et al., 2008). The power is illustrated by strategically framing not only the facts of the story, but also the actors, leaders, affected communities, relevant arguments, and proposed solutions.

The selection and omission of specific sources, for example, contributes to the framing of an issue, with official sources such as politicians and government figures frequently dominating drug stories in the media (Teece & Makkai, 2015), while 'alternative voices' are marginalised. Similarly, the language used in framing problems and solutions is important. For example, the 'drug war' metaphor used in drug media coverage in the United States suggests strong military or law enforcement intervention as the reasonable response to a war-like problem, rather than suggesting health or economic

interventions (McLeod, 2018). As a result, framing theory is critical for examining the structure of news reports on the illicit drug scourge, thereby determining, and shaping the public's perception of drug abuse.

### **1.8.2 Accumulation Theory**

According to the accumulation theory, if the media focus on a matter recurrently and comparatively continuous, it can change people's attitudes and behaviour over time (Fourie, 2017). Significant changes in people's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour patterns can occur if various media, including broadcast and social media, corroborate with each other by conveying the same interpretations. Prior to the advent of new media, De Fleur & Dennis (1994) as cited in (Fourie, 2017) proposed that the media could focus their attention on and produce messages about a specific problem, situation, or issue in order to achieve desired results. To change bad habits, they could, for example, focus on drug abuse, race, crime, discrimination, and other social issues (ibid).

De Fleur and Dennis further said that the media's consistent and persistent focus and attention validate and corroborate each other over time. Individual members of the public then become increasingly aware of these messages and, person by person, gradually develop a comprehensive interpretation of the topic being presented (ibid).

The theory is predicated on the notion that although any single message may have a minor impact on a specific person, continuous, persistent, and substantiated messages result in minimal modifications that gradually add up over time to generate radical changes in society and culture (Fourie, 2017). Arguably, accumulation theory explains the role of the media in changing people's attitudes toward issues such as the drug scourge over time.

People have various reasons for using the media, which may include seeking information, entertainment, escapism, relaxation, socialising with friends or even just background noise and will choose what they look at to match their objective. Different people may want different things out of the same piece of media. People's individual characteristics and attitudes are more important than precisely what the message from the media is and, indeed, the media may adjust their content to provide what market research shows the audience is looking for (McQuail, 2013).

Furthermore, McCombs (2013) postulates that media influence is a change in the knowledge, attitudes, and actions of people as a result of exposure to media messages. The central word here is “change” when speaking of media influence, one is always speaking of changes, differences from what existed previously in the same group, or differences in relation to another population. Accumulation theory therefore provides an explanation for the role the media play over time in changing people’s attitudes towards topics such as drugs, race, divorce, sex, style, and politics. If all South African media reported in the same way over an extended period about the drug culture in the country, for example, such reporting could have an impact on people’s perceptions of drug abuse. Thus, the theory contributes to understanding how the selected newspapers’ consistent coverage of drug abuse may gradually dissuade or alter users’ attitudes towards drug abuse.

### **1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The significance of this study stems from its attempt to shed light on the nature of the influence exerted by South African newspapers in the coverage of the illicit drug scourge. The study is beneficial to raise awareness among South Africans, particularly the youth regarding the impact of the consumption of illicit drugs and the need to revisit relevant policy to regulate the control and consumption of drugs in South Africa. Furthermore, the study hopes to contribute to the discourse on the role of the press on community development by recommending an editorial tool kit to benefit a dissuasive campaign against the rampant consumption of illicit drugs in South Africa and beyond. News editorial teams could also benefit from the findings of this study where it recommends alternative ways of tackling news coverage of critical issues such as drug consumption. The study may eventually aid in the creation of new knowledge in the discipline, while it may also serve as a basis for future research on public health issues including those related to the illicit drug scourge.

### **1.10 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

The chapter presented the background and orientation to the study, which included the problem statement, the motivation and purpose of the study. Furthermore, the



chapter outlined the overview of illicit drugs: a situational analysis discussing; illicit drugs demand and supply, illicit drugs demand in South Africa, drug abuse, patterns and trends, social structures and drug abuse, mortalities caused by substance abuse, poverty, and occupational costs of substance abuse. In addition, definition of key concepts, theoretical framework and the significance of the study were provided. The next chapter presents literature review about the press and representation of the drug scourge.

### **1.11 OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS**

This study is divided into the following chapters:

Chapter 1 provides an introduction and orientation to the study with specific focus on the following: problem statement, and rationale of the study. The chapter outlines the research aim and objectives. It also discusses the significance of the study and takes into consideration the contextual background information on the drug scourge.

Chapter 2 presents literature review on the press and representation of the illicit drugs scourge. The review provides an overview of news reports on the issues of priming of illicit drug abuse in the press. The chapter also explores the press coverage of the illicit drugs scourge, framing of news reports on coverage of illicit drugs and the press and drug abuse prevention campaigns.

Chapter 3 presents literature review on freedom of expression, the safety of journalists while reporting drug abuse, and journalism and the expanding human circle of drug abuse, newspaper myths regarding drug addiction and newspaper (mis) representation of illicit drugs.

Chapter 4 describes the research methodology. The research methodology strategies for data collection and analysis are explained in this chapter. The methodology section of the study describes the research approach, study area, population, and sampling procedures, sampling stage and data collection methods. Furthermore, the chapter addressed the data analysis process, quality criteria and limitations of the study.

Chapter 5 presents and discusses data from expert informants on the editorial role in reporting the drug scourge in the selected newspapers. The formulated results are

presented and interpreted through the aid of an illustrative table, figures, and discursive narratives.

Chapter 6 discusses the data on the framing of news reports. The chapter presents a discussion of results generated through the examination of news reports on illicit drugs from the *Daily Sun*, *The Citizen* and *The Sowetan* newspapers. The chapter presents results on the framing of news reports on the coverage of the illicit drug scourge in the selected newspapers from 01 January 2017 to 31 December 2017.

Chapter 7 presents a summary of the research findings, conclusion and recommendations of the study. This is preceded by a re-statement of the purpose of the study which states the aim and objectives of the study as indicated in section 1.4 in Chapter 1. The summary of findings is structured emanating from the main sections of Chapter 5 and 6 (Data analysis and interpretation) and is aligned to the objectives of the study which gives rise to a categorical presentation of the summary of findings in subsections 7.2.1, 7.2.2 and 7.2.3 The conclusion of the study is a summation of the findings which captures the main highlights of the study and reflects on the key issues upon which the study hinges. Recommendations of the study are provided at the end of the chapter in section 7.3 and include prospects for future research in the area of media and coverage of drug abuse.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2. REPRESENTATION OF THE ILLICIT DRUG SCOURGE IN THE PRESS**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The focus of this chapter is to present and discuss relevant literature on the reporting of drug abuse in international and South African newspapers. The review provides an overview of scholarly works on illicit drug abuse in the press. The chapter also explores the press coverage of the illicit drugs scourge, framing of news reports on coverage of illicit drugs and role of the press in drug abuse prevention campaigns. Furthermore, the press and public opinion as well as the state of the South African press are discussed to help the researcher to locate the study within the scope of media and societal discourse.

#### **2.2 THE PRESS AND MATTERS OF DRUG ABUSE**

The section discusses the role of the press in the coverage of drug abuse as an important aspect of the literature review in this study. The discussion is presented based on the following aspects: the press as source of news and information on drug abuse, the press as organs of public persuasion on drug abuse, the press and shaping of public knowledge on drug abuse as well as the press as an agent of socialisation including educating society on drug abuse.

##### **2.2.1 The press as sources of news and information on drug abuse**

The press is the most accessible and potentially cost-effective means of disseminating information about important social issues that people face on a daily basis (Kawoosa, 2016). Drug addiction is a significant social issue that is at the heart of every person's existence in modern society. In a world so reliant on technology, the press wields enormous power over people and the content they consume because it has the ability to reach audiences all over the world in a matter of seconds (Lee, 2015:2). Readers internalise the messages the press presents in hopes of identifying with the stories reported. In this sense, the press as sources of news and information are efficient mechanisms of providing breaking news and discreet messages on illegal drug activities because so many people are exposed to newspapers and internalise the influential messages being delivered (ibid). There is no refuting that newspapers face

challenges in performing public service roles as their alignment with big business grows. Nonetheless, the press remains unsurpassed as a source of news and information (Kawoosa, 2016: 246). In comparison to new media, the press, particularly newspapers, has given significant space to critical social issues. Newspapers are the most accessible and potentially cost-effective means of disseminating information about important social and health issues such as drug abuse, COVID-19, HIV/AIDS prevention, crime, and so on (ibid). The illicit drug scourge is a topical issue that affects South African citizens. Subsequently, newspapers as sources of news and information have a great influence on communities as they report news reports on the scourge of drugs in the South Africa and globally.

### **2.2.2 The press as organs of public persuasion on drug abuse**

Newspapers are persuasion organs, and thus play an important role in swaying public opinion and attitudes towards societal problems such as drug abuse. The press gives social marketers a lot of space because their goal is to cause social change by conducting public service functions (Kawoosa, 2016). For example, social advertising targeted at decreasing substance abuse, cigarette smoking, and HIV/AIDS prevention aims to instil long-term changes in behaviour in the target population. The informational content can have a significant impact on public opinion. In 'Gauging Public Opinion,' Hadley Cantril (2004) suggests that news stories may be a more powerful factor in defining public attitudes than editorials and political columns. However, Berelson (2015:34) argues that the interpretations provided by editorial writers and political columnists can significantly increase the importance of an event in persuading the public. As a result, the more editorial writers and columnists describe the repercussions of drug abuse in newspapers, the more readers become aware of the scope of South Africa's drug problem.

According to Lancaster, Hughes, Spicer, Matthew-Simmons, & Dillon (2011), press coverage of unlawful matters has regularly been chastised for being sensationalised, biased, and narrow. Nonetheless, there have been few broad and structured evaluations of the essence of reporting. Despite the media's central role in drug policy implementation, there have been few broad and systematic analyses of the day today nature of press reporting on illicit drugs. These are concerned with what issues are being discussed, how they are being framed or discussed, and what messages and

moral judgments are being conveyed about drugs/drug abuse (ibid). The press, particularly newspapers, lacks the power to solve a complicated subject such as drugs. However, given the magnitude of drug addiction, newspapers are expected to accept moral responsibility for educating the public about drugs, their use and abuse, de-addiction facilities, models, and strategies. This can be accomplished by focusing more on crime, as well as providing direction and being the driving force behind a national drug communication and education programme (Kawoosa, 2016:45). The issue of the ethical responsibility of newspapers to inform and educate citizens about the dangers of drug abuse has been neglected in literature. Therefore, editors, journalists and the government have the obligation to collaborate to abate the drug scourge faced by the country.

According to Orsini (2017), newspapers can illustrate both macro and micro level factors that have contributed to the growth of this ailment and galvanise community engagement in preventing the intensification of the drug abuse problem. The press has swayed public opinion all over the world. But, when it comes to media support in drug abuse control, the media is frequently chastised for blatantly promoting drug abuse through advertisements as well as publicising unhealthy lifestyles (ibid). The press can assist in providing a consistent evaluation of the extent and scope of drug use and misuse, as well as drug-related problems in the South African society. This may further help to persuade readers to understand the negative consequences of drug abuse and addiction among citizens.

### **2.2.3 Influence of the press on shaping public knowledge on drug abuse**

According to Sirin (2011), the responsibility of the press in shaping societal knowledge, particularly on social issues, is critical and this includes addressing the scourge of drugs. The press and society are companions; they are inextricably linked. This creates a significant interdependence between the two systems; that is, the press relies on society for raw materials for production, while society relies heavily on the press for information needs. Nevertheless, media scholars, political scientists, and sociologists have produced extensive research on the social construction of news, indicating that newspapers are not impartial networks for capturing societal problems. Andrews & Caren (2010:843) maintain that "like other institutions, the media are

shaped by organisational, economic, political, social, and cultural forces that influence drug news reporting procedures and the content of news on drug use and abuse."

Critcher (2013:183) points out that certain drugs have been reported differently over time. Initial reports of 'new' drugs appear to be based on curiosity, but they rapidly shift to a more denouncing tone. This process has been argued to be visible with marijuana and lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD). However, in some societies, it can be argued that all 'mainstream' illegal drugs have already gone through this process and are firmly entrenched in the negative reporting of illicit drugs mould to influence human behaviour (Moodley, Matjila & Moosa, 2012:3). Therefore, coverage of the repercussion of substances abuse in the newspapers understudy may draw attention to potential readers and shape how they perceive the use and abuse of drugs.

#### **2.2.4 The press as an agent of socialisation on drug use**

The press is a socialisation agent that transmits normative standards, and it has consistently portrayed drug use as antisocial behaviour, a depiction to which people with limited personal experience with drugs may be especially vulnerable (Swalve & DeFoster, 2016). Nonetheless, the use and abuse of drugs, as well as related social problems, are regularly examined by news outlets, from which the public derives much of its understanding of societal issues. As news media organisations continue to be among the primary sources of information for the public, press representations have important cultural ramifications, including impacts on opinion formation and quality of public support for specific policy measures (Nielsen & Bonn, 2018), especially in cases of highly emotional issues. As a result, it is critical to recognise the ongoing framing devices and dominant narratives pertaining to drug issues that are prevalent in the press, particularly in South African newspapers.

Traditionally, mainstream news outlets have used uncompromising and dramatic rhetoric to discuss drugs, reinforcing effects such as addiction, financial troubles, and individual turmoil (Speaker, 2014). Previous research, such as Speaker's (2014) content analysis of published articles in popular U.S. periodicals and newspapers between 1920 and 1940, indicated that this rhetoric arose from anti-alcohol ideologies prevalent during the Prohibition era and was later applied to other drugs. Since then, anti-drug ideology and rhetoric have persisted in the United States, as drugs have become part of a "discourse of fear" promoted by the media (Altheide & DeVriese,

2017). Consequently, dominant representation of the consumption of illicit drugs in newspapers is central in creating dialogue among citizens and has the potential to influence their social behaviour.

## **2.3 FRAMING OF NEWS REPORTS ON COVERAGE OF ILLICIT DRUGS**

Framing is concerned with how the media draws the public's attention to specific topics; setting agendas, and then going a step further to create a frame whereby the audience will understand such knowledge (Kamalipour, 2010). The framing of news reports on coverage of illicit drugs in the selected newspapers is debated with reference to newspapers framing of drug related discourse, newspapers framing of demographics of drug abuse, newspapers framing of drugs on social behaviour and the framing of drug abuse as a disease. Furthermore, the subsection outlines the relationship between news framing, public opinion, and policy, the newspapers framing of criminal justice issues, and newspapers' framing of drug abuse treatment.

### **2.3.1 Newspaper framing of drug related discourse**

News reports have commonly portrayed stereotypical conceptions of drugs and drug-related activity, portraying drug users as "outsiders" and stimulating stigmatisation and misconceptions of drug issues and policies (Taylor, 2008). These depictions have perpetuated the stigma associated with those who use or sell drugs, portraying them as immoral, irresponsible, and predisposed to criminal conduct (ibid).

The press's routines and structural limitations have influenced how the public perceives and discusses drug policy. For example, Beckett (2015) proposed that the punitive tone used by media outlets over the last century has exacerbated the public's perception of drugs as a criminal problem. Furthermore, McGaw (1991) noted that the drug war metaphors popularised by politicians and the media in the 1980s focused attention on law enforcement and punishment while marginalising or excluding alternative policies, contributing to the public's perception of drugs as one of the nation's most serious problems at the time. The press's portrayal of illegal drugs has also influenced risk perceptions, limited the prospect of a fuller insight into drug issues, and limited support for drug policy reform (Lancaster, Hughes, Spicer, Matthew-Simmons, & Dillon, 2011).

A study by Alexander (2010) argues that the implications of framing restricted drugs in this way have been far-reaching. The discourse and miscommunication that permeate drug-related discourses contributed to public support for ill-advised drug laws in the United States, which were notoriously harsh in comparison to other developed countries. These harsh drug laws were not only ineffectual in terms of reducing drug sales and consumption, but they also created deep rooted issues such as mass incarceration (ibid). Furthermore, drug laws have been unfairly imposed, with racial minorities being incarcerated more frequently and receiving harsher penalties than White drug offenders, with impoverished communities bearing the brunt of the consequences (Alexander, 2010; Sirin, 2011).

Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, the emphasis on news production has resulted in a devaluing and lack of consideration for the multidimensional contribution that news coverage on drug issues plays in young people's lives; one in which it can concurrently aggravate, inform, and educate today's young people about the scourge of drugs (Alexander, 2010; Sirin, 2011). The perception among young people that newspapers educate them about the dangers of using drugs in specific contexts and via specific routes presents a significant challenge to the existing literature on drugs and broad-based criminal justice press content domains (one where containment of news access or type is often the proffered solution, particularly for younger audiences). The burgeoning media environment, the continued dominance of drug issues as a core concern among young people, and the recognised desire among focus group participants to 'tune in,' rather than 'tune out,' leads these authors to believe that young people's reliance on news media surrounding illicit drug issues will likely continue (Blood & McCallum, 2015). This subsequently generates the responsibility to extend and replicate this study so as to elucidate how the selected publications report on drug abuse.

### **2.3.2 Newspaper framing of demographics on drug abuse**

Drug researchers have identified that the emergence of American drug laws has been significantly connected to racism, xenophobia, sexism, classism, and oppression (Sirin, 2011). Drugs have been castigated as they became associated with allegedly questionable populations, and these associations were represented in media accounts. For example, newspapers have published sensational accounts about



Chinese men in opium dens encroaching on White women and pressuring them into opium addiction (Sirin, 2011), and as a result, California passed the first anti-opium smoking laws (ibid). Another drug scare in the 1910s fixated on African American men and cocaine with the media spreading and exaggerating the notion that the drug turned ordinary, peaceful people into violent offenders (Murakawa, 2011).

Contrary to popular belief, the extent to which Black Americans used cocaine was debatable and there was no indication that the drug prompted illegal conduct. Because it occurred at the height of "lynching, legal segregation, and voting laws all designed to eliminate political and social power" from Black residents in southern states, this drug scare can be understood as another instrument of oppression. Similarly, in South Africa young Black males are mainly portrayed as drug addicts and less is reported about young White males who also abuse drugs (Murakawa, 2011).

Assertions that make racial politics central, as well as the identifying of phenomena as troublesome, happen within a space of unequal access to and use of the press (Daniels, 2013). The content of the press is frequently geared toward White audiences, and press organisations are predominantly operated and owned by Whites (Robinson, 2010). Because of the innate values and conventions established by the structures and relationships of news organisations with other institutions, the institutional practices of the press and other media entail forms of agenda-setting and frame debates about social issues such as drugs, law, and crime in ways that frequently correspond with dominant racial meanings (ibid).

Subsequently, Bonilla-Silva (2014) contend that in an age when racial inequality is frequently justified through superficially "non-racist" frames in the dominant discourse there is frequently "racial silence" within both supportive and critical commentary on the War on Drugs (WOD). Trade books like Sullum's (2004) *Saying Yes: In Defense of Drug Use*, as well as organisations such as the Marijuana Policy Project and the National Organisation for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (Hart, 2013), argue against the WOD while disregarding its role in reproducing racial inequality. Furthermore, rather than assessing the racial implications of drug policy, most news coverage is filled with humour and moral panics (Trujillo, 2012).

Many stakeholders now contend that the militaristic prohibitionist standpoint has failed to mitigate narcotics production, transshipment, and supply of drugs to most parts of the

world, including the United States, instead this ends up creating conditions that intrinsically and extrinsically subvert human security (Collins, 2014). Through the adoption of a "wartime" mindset, the War on Drugs is seen to have enabled governments to become increasingly authoritarian, abandoning democratic legal norms, flouting the principle of habeas corpus, and violating basic human rights (Lindau, 2011). However, this stance has failed to acknowledge the engagement of crime syndicates, paramilitary forces, guerrillas, and regular armies in drug production and trafficking, which has resulted in widespread fear, violence, and displacement (Cantor, 2014; Contreras, 2014). There is substantial empirical evidence for the effectiveness of a de facto state of siege in heavily militarized urban areas where government forces engage drug cartels in urban warfare on the health, safety, security, and well-being of rural communities (Bargent, 2013; Hoelscher & Norheim-Martinsen, 2016).

### **2.3.3 Newspaper framing of drugs and social behaviour**

Throughout decades, newspaper messages lambasting and misconstruing various drugs were widely circulated in the United States America. For example, news sources reported that cannabis was a "drop-out drug," affecting users' motivation and patriotism (Orsini, 2017), and that LSD caused severe birth defects (ibid). The press reported that phencyclidine gave users "superhuman strength," and that cops needed new equipment to deal with those under its influence (Bargent, 2013).

Furthermore, other prevalent drug problems included the prescription sedative methaqualone, colloquially known as "ludes" due to the brand name "Quaalude," about which many newspaper and magazine articles were published (ibid). During the 1970s, President Richard Nixon of the United States of America's eagerness to exterminate the opium poppy attracted a lot of attention (ibid). Nixon referred to narcotics addiction as an "infectious disease," and heightened public outrage by referring to heroin addiction as an "epidemic" and "Public Enemy Number One" Despite a lack of evidence, news reports discussed heroin use among children as an epidemic (Orsini, 2017:56).

### **2.3.4 Framing of drug abuse as a disease**

The premise of substance abuse as a disease has also been critiqued because it has counterintuitively assisted to shift discourse toward public health while also serving as a "legitimation of repressive drug policies" (Reinarman, 2015:307). While the discourse has shifted to emphasise the need for more treatment and fewer punitive responses to addiction, the representation of addiction as a brain disease serves as "more of an adjunct to the war on drugs than an alternative" (Reinarman & Granfield, 2016:10), as it "walks arm in arm with the punitive prohibition laws that have led to the mass incarceration of the powerless."

Narratives that dehumanise drugs or use the disease metaphor obscure important information from public discourse that, if included, could help alleviate fear and stigma surrounding drugs while also broadening prospective treatment and policy options. A false dichotomy between alcohol and other drugs continues to heighten the "illusion of difference" between these substances' users (Levine & Reinarman, 2010: 807), but the harms frequently associated with drugs are as much a result of the criminalisation of drugs and the lifestyle imposition on users through unlawfulness as they are of the substances themselves (Reinarman & Granfield, 2015). Linking specific drugs to inevitable deviant behaviour and addiction is a limited and simplistic model that struggles to reflect the diverse drug experiences that people have (Seear & Fraser, 2010).

### **2.3.5 Relationship between news framing, public opinion, and drug policy**

Globally, the press is saturated with narratives about illegal drugs. Despite numerous years of research into bias, sensationalism, and inaccuracies in news media representations of illicit drugs, how audiences interact with these depictions (and their potential to filter, interpret, deconstruct, and even reconstruct media messages) has been overlooked (Cunningham & Turner, 2016). The media's portrayal of drugs has implications for drug and health policy, and also public discourse and perceptions of social problems. Power is wielded in the selection and framing of events in the media because these frames influence political discourse, policy formation, and public opinion (ibid). The framing of drug policies can influence how readers comprehend issues by establishing parameters for discussion (Altheide & Schneider, 2013). According to these scholars, state elites and the mass media play a prominent role in

the construction of social issues, and, as a result, in the generation and shaping of public concern around those issues. Lexical choices and their arrangement in news reports also hold great power in setting the context for debate, defining issues under consideration, summoning a variety of mental representations, and providing the basic tools to discuss the issues at hand (Pan & Kosicki, 1993:70). News reports have also been shown to normalise and facilitate the general public's adoption of "stigmatised language," or language that promotes specific notions of deviance (Altheide & DeVriese, 2017). When dominant discourses are experienced and widely accepted by individuals, they may become "self-perpetuating" due to their authority and prominence in society (Bright, Marsh, Smith, & Bishop, 2008:136). In addition, discourse can "become a tool for reproducing inequality, because it can serve not only to regulate thought and emotion, but also to identify others and thus to maintain boundaries" (Altheide, 2013:19). As periods of intense reportage inflate and diminish, they leave an informal legacy in the public consciousness that can influence how society reacts to subsequent events (ibid).

Government legislators attempt to maintain hegemonic power over illicit drugs by using the press to illustrate the detrimental ramifications of use. Yet again, this notion can be understood through the lens of social learning. If the audience witnesses drug use, it is possible that the conduct will be imitated. Imitation is based on the event's context and an assessment of perceived outcomes deemed suitable for participation. As a result, if it is associated with negative outcomes and would be inconvenient to participate, the individual is less likely to replicate the behaviour. However, the media reinforces the negative consequences of drug use to viewers so that they do not see drug use as beneficial and refrain from participating in such activities. Portraying illicit drugs in a negative light helps to reroute social behaviour (Lee, 2015:5).

Negative consequences of drug use are highlighted further in discussions about the punitive risks of illegal substances. Viewers are frequently presented with a punitive reality when watching news broadcasts about drug use. These reports typically include social status-based descriptions of the offenders, often vilifying the users and focusing on the legal consequences that await them. Publicly stressing the negative judicial and physical consequences of drug use encourages people to pursue a drug-free lifestyle (Lee, 2015).

### **2.3.6 Newspaper framing of drugs and criminal justice issues**

The press has become an increasingly powerful institution in framing and responding to criminal justice issues in the age of the 24-hour news cycle (Cunningham & Turner 2016). Newsmakers and the sources they cite wield considerable power over what information is disseminated by selecting elements to make them more visible to audiences (ibid). It is well documented that, far from serving as "messengers of truth," the press frequently presents criminal justice issues in sensational, biased, and inaccurate ways. The question then becomes, how will such coverage affect audiences? (ibid).

One example is newspaper reporting on illegal drugs. Research has recorded media imbalances of the risk and threat posed by drugs to society, insinuating assumptions that media coverage has triggered moral panics about addiction issues, intensified fear of drug use/drug users, and promulgated a lack of appreciation for the causes, context, and effects of drug use in society (Miller, 2010). However, previous research into press reporting on illicit drug issues has been media-centric, ignoring issues such as audience engagement with and interpretation of news media. This is a critical oversight. Insight from media and communication effect theories, audiences can filter, interpret, decode, and even reconstruct media messages in ways that are unrelated to the intentions of message producers (Hewege & Mitchell, 2013).

The above view is confirmed in the findings of a study based on focus groups with Australian young people aged 16 to 24 years old conducted to refocus attention on the procedures by which younger audiences engage with, interpret, and respond to news media coverage of drug issues. The study noted that, readers' engagement with drug-related news reports is important for young people for a variety of reasons. First, despite widespread claims of declining participation, research has shown that young people maintain high levels of contact with traditional news media (Lancaster & Hughes, 2014). Second, young adulthood is a critical period of socialisation and learning, and the media is thought to have a significant impact. Third, the content domain (illicit drugs) has been identified as one of the top concerns among young people (Mission Australia, 2010). The above observations are not surprising given that young adulthood is when the majority of illicit drug use occurs. According to the National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS), nearly one-quarter of 14-19-

year-old Australians (23.8%) had used an illicit drug in 2007, and more than half of 20-29-year-olds had used an illicit drug (54%) (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008). Subsequently, according to other surveys, many young drug users regard the press as one of their primary sources of information on drug issues. For example, a 2004 study found that 61% of cannabis users aged 15-18 years reported 'consumption' of the media for drug information however self-defined (Copeland, Swift, Clement, & Reid, 2010). This suggests that young people have a 'love-hate' relationship with the media in which the news both perplexes and is critical to them in terms of informing their decision-making processes (Denemark, 2012).

### **2.3.7 Newspaper framing of drug abuse treatment**

There was an opioid analgesic abuse epidemic in North America, and research on news media framing was conducted. McGinty (2016) investigated how the news media in the United States framed opioid analgesic use and abuse from 1998 to 2012. This study found that the news media framed the issue of opioid analgesic abuse as a criminal matter, with legal solutions being the most frequently proposed solutions. In contrast, another study discovered that the print news media in North America depicted the abuse of another opioid analgesic, oxycodone, as a social problem, which coincided with a decrease in oxycodone prescriptions by doctors in Nova Scotia, Canada. Although research on news media framing has been executed on opioid analgesics, there is a scarcity of similar research on ketamine, a psychoactive substance with abuse potential (ibid).

Rasmussen (2015) reiterated that the safety of long-term ketamine use in clinical settings has not been proven, and that therapeutic enthusiasm must be balanced against the risk of addiction. Ho & Zhang (2016) conducted a critical review of clinical trials evaluating ketamine as an antidepressant. To begin, the majority of these studies compared ketamine to a placebo. In most trials, there were no direct comparisons between ketamine and other antidepressants. Secondly, the follow-up period was insufficient to rule out addiction and risk associated with ketamine infusion on a regular basis. Thirdly, in some clinical trials, ketamine was combined with other psychotropic medications. Fourthly, the aforementioned studies were unable to distinguish between ketamine's rapid antidepressant effect and the "drug high" of psychoactive substances. Ketamine use for treating severe depression raises significant ethical

concerns, including a lack of safety data in off-label use and the potential for abuse (ibid).

Because of the increasing number of ketamine trials, the print news media has interviewed researchers and reported their findings. The headline of a 2016 Washington Post news story was "*One-time party drug (ketamine) hailed as a miracle for treating severe depression.*" Ketamine was outlined in this article as the "next big thing" in psychiatry, with an accelerated impact and booster treatment. Following the reading of this article, patients may request that their doctors prescribe ketamine, which has been mentioned as a miracle anti-depressant. Cautionary clinicians and academics are concerned that newspaper articles may overstate the benefits of ketamine. The aforementioned news item is very distinct from a 2003 Portsmouth Herald article with the headline "Parents enlisted in drug battle." In this article, ketamine was described as special K or a horse tranquilizer that produced superhuman strength, lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD)-like hallucinations, amnesia, depression, and long-term memory loss (McGinty, 2016:17).

## **2.4 THE PRESS AND EDITORIAL COVERAGE OF DRUG ABUSE**

In this study, press coverage of the drug abuse is discussed in terms of the North American narratives of drugs, early warning system on drug abuse in Belgium, press coverage of crime related issues, representation of illicit drugs mortality in international newspapers, the "War on Drugs": media, debate, and identity construction, dangers, and paradoxes of covering drug trafficking, common print media myths regarding drug addiction and moral entrepreneurship on illicit drug abuse. Furthermore, representation of drug abuse in Kenyan newspapers, the press' representation of drugs in Ghana and representation of illicit drugs in South African newspapers are presented. The literature review focused on the aforementioned due to their insightful and engaging analysis of the coverage of drug abuse in the press.

### **2.4.1 North American narratives of drug abuse**

Illicit drugs have been used for a variety of medicinal, recreational, and spiritual purposes throughout human history in virtually all cultures (Goode, 2012). However, periods of alarm related to drug use have been recurring in the United States, and

research has suggested that panics related to drugs have been significantly more frequent and infectious in American society than in other cultures (ibid). Social constructionists have emphasised the fact that drugs have been regarded a significant social problem at various times, even when scientific data did not support that claim.

However, press coverage of drugs is frequently influenced by factors such as journalists' assumptions, cultural stereotypes, and the demographic groups perceived to be at the greatest risk, rather than an empirical assessment of the magnitude of the threat (Manning, 2011). Such coverage has contributed substantially to “drug scares”, periods of time during which “a number of anti-drug individuals, groups, and media outlets; identify and denounce a particular drug as a new social problem requiring increased attention and regulation” (Boyd, 2010:6). The recurrence and persistence of drug scares in the United States suggests that these crises and "epidemics" are created rather than discovered (Murakawa, 2011:221).

- *Coverage of crack use and addiction*

Between 1984 and 1990, the United States of America experienced a massive increase in crack use and addiction, and the press frequently covered the story (Hartley & Miller, 2010). While the intention was to educate readers about a drug crisis that many people were unaware of, the coverage revealed a significant pattern of racial stereotypes and "media myths" that both propagated false stigmas and intensified public fear. According to a 2008 study, the press has taken a stance against "problematic" drug use, portraying drug addiction and drug users as dangerous and likely to commit further crime (Stuart, 2008). The study also discovered that, rather than discussing the fundamental issues surrounding the rise in drug use, the press tended to ease complex issues, further isolating crack users from society, and promoting their status as inner-city criminals (ibid). These practices not only promote false stigmas against drug addiction, but they also seem to simplify the demographics attained by certain drugs and the wider social implications that result from an increased fear of public safety.

A study conducted by Himmelstein (2013) however noted that within the first few years of the crack epidemic in the mid-1980s, the significant increase in usage became a focus for print media, particularly newspapers. However, the manner in which the issue was reported in the print media continued to affect and shape public perceptions (ibid).



An examination of drug-related print coverage in 1986 examined how print media used numerical data and statistics to sensationalise the situation which resulted from the 1985 Monitoring the Future national survey the press chose to print. The study discovered that print media specifically selected data over long time periods to sensationalise the actual drug crisis (Himmelstein, 2013). The study also discovered that the media was reluctant to report on positive new trends and used language to diminish progress of fighting drug abuse. For example, the 1986 report discovered that “although overall drug usage among young people continued the trend of gradual decline last year, the United States still has the highest rates among the world’s industrialised nations” (ibid).

- *Press coverage of race in opioid use*

Depending on the severity of the addict's drug addiction, the societal consequences of imposing a certain stereotype on them can be severe. A study discovered troubling facts about the portrayal of opioid addicts in the print media (Hansen & Netherland, 2016). Researchers discovered that after conducting a content analysis of the press narrative surrounding recent opioid use, “portrayals of race and opioids points to the critical role of racialised imagery and narratives in general public support for disparate policy responses in drug control” (Hansen & Netherland, 2016). The study further examined the notion of dehumanisation in drug-related media coverage; news reports about African American addicts typically overlook any background stories of family and home life and instead deal with the facts, whereas articles about White drug users frequently describe their communities as well as provide context (ibid).

The influx of emotion in media coverage surrounding actor *Philip Seymour Hoffman's* opioid overdose death in 2014 solidified a decade of media obsession with the White prescription opioid cum heroin user. Throughout the 2000s, news headlines echoed the latest American moral panic over drugs, this time among White, suburban youth and the middle-aged White housewife next door: on Fox News “*The New Face of Drug Addiction*” (Lee, 2013), on NBC News “*Painkiller Use Breeds New Face of Heroin Addiction*” (Schwartz, 2012), and on Today “*Hooked: A Teacher’s Addiction*” (Carroll, 2014).

Furthermore, though the moral panic of the White ethnic groups in these news items were rarely directly addressed, this was evident from the photos, surnames, and

locations (Vermont, Maine, Newton Massachusetts, West Los Angeles) that the novelty was the Whiteness of the drug addicts and the shock that (presumably White and middle-class) readers would experience as a result of that fact the addicts were exactly like them (readers). Photos of skinny, youthful blond women in fastened blouses, such as the Portland, Maine resident photographed with a bandage, searching for an intact vein in the New York Times article "*Heroin in New England More Abundant and Deadly*," sold copies because they defied a century of media-driven imagery that established who was and who was not a heroin user (Seelye, 2016).

Some researchers may contend that such news items have the prospect to de-mystify addiction in general, demonstrating that "anyone can become an addict," and that addiction is a blameless disorder that "does not discriminate" (Seelye,2016). Looking at the differences in media coverage of opioid addiction by race, it was argued that these White opioid images are resetting the terms of drugs and race in popular culture in ways that insidiously further separate White from Black (and Brown) suffering, culpability, and deservingness (Carroll, 2014). White opioid images have helped to sculpt out a dedicated space for White opioid use in the popular American imagination, one that leads to racially stratification therapeutic intervention and appears to work to further safeguard White communities from Black and Brown drug threats, while leaving intact law enforcement crackdowns on Black and Brown urban residents (Hansen & Netherland, 2016).

- *Coverage of socio-economic issues in opioid use*

The popular press is assisting in the creation of a form of narcotic apartheid that is inscribed not only on divergent narratives of White versus Black or Brown addicted people's human qualities, family, and community lives, but also on racially divergent legal codes and local, state, and federal policies in the United States of America. Therefore, in a way, press coverage of the suburban and rural opioid "epidemic" of the 2000s aided in drawing a symbolic, and then a legal, distinction between (urban) heroin addiction and (suburban and rural) prescription opioid addiction (even after progression to heroin addiction), similar to the legal distinction between crack cocaine and powder cocaine of the 1980s-1990s (Felner, 2009).

The popular media's association of illicit drugs with non-White ethnic groups in the United States dates back at least a century, to images of the threat of Chinese immigrant opium dens, "cocaine crazed Negroes," and Mexican reefer madness, which prompted the passage of early narcotics control laws such as the 1914 Harrison Act and the 1934 Marijuana Tax Act. Print media has long depicted "addicts" as ethnic minority groups (Taylor, 2008), and Blacks as more frightening and criminal than Whites in drug-related news stories. (Reinarman & Levine, 2014). These depictions racially reference urban drug epidemics, such as crack cocaine, as Black or Brown. They support policy responses that increase the criminalization of both specific users and distributors. In the context of South African drug abuse, Blacks have been represented as the only drug users, while White minority users are rarely reported on in the news. Drug abuse is regarded as a problem that primarily affects the Black population (ibid).

With the notable exception of methamphetamine, analyses examining the representations of White drug users are uncommon. "Methamphetamine has been constructed as a White drug used in poor rural communities, one that denotes declining White status and cultural anxieties about White social position" (Murakawa, 2011; Linnemann & Wall 2013; Garriott, 2011, 2013; Linnemann & Kurtz, 2014). Meth users have been "constructed as the bottom of the White racial-economic spectrum: 'White trash' (Murakawa 2011:223). Interestingly, the meth user, while despised, is less associated with violence and is more contextualised and sympathetic than crack users (ibid). Similarly, Tunnell (2004) contends that when OxyContin first appeared in rural, impoverished Appalachia, it was socially constructed as "hillbilly heroin," a White drug. This intersection of Whiteness and class is also visible in media coverage of non-medical use of stimulants (such as Ritalin, Adderall) by middle-class and affluent Whites seeking educational or job performance enhancement.

- *Coverage of race and class on non-medical stimulant use*

Talbot (2019) maintains that despite the fact that stimulants are scheduled narcotics with known abuse potential and dependency/addiction syndromes, this non-medical stimulant use is not generally depicted as drug abuse or addiction in the press coverage; instead, the pressures of academic and job effectiveness are quoted in sympathy photographs of middle-class Whites captured in the escalating demands of

work and school. Indeed, many stimulant users are portrayed positively as valiant, hardworking entrepreneurs and thought leaders who use stimulants as "neuro enhancers". When an epidemic is coded as a middle-class White, predominantly suburban problem, various representational strategies, and interventions are employed (ibid).

Hansen & Netherland (2016) maintain that individual White drug users are represented in the press as primarily blameless victims of their biology who need assistance, such as treatment and prevention of comorbidities such as overdose and infection (ibid). Class and race, as discussed further below, play a role in the social construction and representation of drugs. The drug war is based on a symbiotic relationship between the criminalisation of Blackness and the criminalisation of Whiteness (Lassiter, 2015). Although the long tradition of racialising records of drugs and drug use persists unabated, the racial coding is more nuanced than in previous accounts. Gone are the headlines from the New York Times in 1914, just before the Harrison Act was passed: *"Negro Cocaine 'Fiends' Are a New Southern Menace: Murder and Insanity Increasing Among Lower Class Blacks Because They Have Taken to 'Sniffing' Since Deprived of Whisky by Prohibition"* (Williams, 1914). While overtly racist media accounts are rare, authors argue that today's press reports about drug users employ "colour-blind" racism bolstered by White privilege that is just as effective. According to Bonilla-Silva, colour blind racism "maintains White privilege in ways that defy facile racial readings" (Lassiter, 2015).

Race is rarely discussed clearly and unambiguously in news items about White people's drug use. Undoubtedly, being unlabelled is a defining characteristic of Whiteness: as "the unmarked category against which distinction is developed, Whiteness never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations" (Lipstiz, 2004:67). While the White race is not referenced in drug news items, it does exist in coded terms. To find Whiteness in media accounts, search for code words that are used as indicators of race. "When used indexically, code words or phrases are implemented to generate racial meaning that produces a sort of psychopathic characterization of groups without direct reference to race," (Davis, 2007:251). In media coverage of drug use, "urban" code for Black or Latino and "suburban" (and sometimes "rural") code for White are

prominent. Heroin users are frequently stereotyped as city dwellers (Steiner & Argothy, 2001), making them prime targets for law enforcement.

According to Scotti & Kronenberg (2011), the concept "Suburban," on the other hand, is used to denote Whiteness. In the sample of media reports, the terms "urban" and "suburban" were frequently used to connote Black and White people. To confirm this, the geographic and demographic profile of the neighbourhood region were searched for each publication, and it discovered that "urban" was typically an indicator of a predominantly Black and/or Latino community, while "suburban" was typically a marker of a predominantly White, more affluent community. The Anglo-American surnames of the addicted people described, as well as physical descriptors, reinforced this geographic coding. News stories set in rural white communities used coding strategies similar to those used in suburban accounts of opioid use (ibid).

In addition to racial group, class and geographic location all play a significant role in the structures of and reactions to drug scares, and drugs constructed as "White" may differ in how sympathetically users are portrayed due to their associations with poverty and rurality. This is perhaps unsurprising given that Whiteness is not as monolithic as Blackness (Pruitt, 2015; Alcott, 2015). "White supremacy is itself incoherent and can manifest itself quite differently depending on historical periods and social groups,". It can therefore be argued that media representations are biased according to who is using the drug, with reporting varying according to age, gender, and ethnicity (Alcott, 2015).

Pruitt (2015) further argues that drug representations and drug users are influenced by the multifaceted intersections of class and race-based disadvantage White drug users who are disparaged appear to be primarily associated with rural poverty. Prescription opioid abuse first appeared among the rural poor in rural Maine, Maryland, and then Appalachia, most likely because isolation made prescription opioids more attainable than street drugs and because of an increased prevalence of pain syndromes related, in part, to "hard lives of manual labour" (ibid). Despite the fact that crime rates did not rise, the use of OxyContin in rural Appalachia was linked to crime by local law enforcement and politicians. Several studies on methamphetamine have linked the drug's construction as White to rural Whites' growing economic and class insecurities (Inciardi & Cicero, 2009:106).

According to Garriott (2013), meth production and use increased in rural communities for a variety of reasons, including the need to supplement income in areas where jobs are scarce and low-wage, and to help workers in monotonous, repetitive jobs (such as the poultry industry) perform better. Even within class, there are significant differences between rural, suburban, and urban Whites (Pruitt, 2015). In their study of suburban meth users, Beori and colleagues discovered that many had been introduced to meth as a means of improving their work performance and productivity while also "maintaining a suburban lifestyle" (Beori, 2009:14). Adderall, a stimulant similar to methamphetamine, is commonly used by students to improve test performance with little stigma attached to its use (Hanson, et al., 2013). Hence, the study assesses the representation of news reports on illicit drug scourge to establish how the selected newspapers frame drug addicts and their reasons for drug abuse.

#### **2.4.2 Philippines' "war on drugs" in the community press**

The Philippines has gained international attention as a result of President Rodrigo Duterte's anti-drug campaign. After thousands of suspected drug users and pushers, mostly poor people, were killed in the so-called "war on drugs," a human rights crisis erupted (Amnesty International, 2017). Between June and September 2016, just a few months after Duterte took office, more than 3,600 alleged drug users and pushers were killed, an average of 36 per day, as part of Project Double Barrel, Duterte's flagship anti-drug campaign (Associated Press, 2016). The initiative has two levels: Oplan Tokhang (a portmanteau for knock and plead in Cebuano) and Oplan HTV, with the former being more effective because it operates at the barangay or community level. By January 2017, the Philippine National Police had recorded 2,555 killings and 53,025 arrests in police operations alone. If the killings perpetrated by unidentified men are recorded, the death toll would exceed 7,000 (Amnesty International, 2017).

- *Use of photographs*

The news and photographs on the gruesome "drug war" in the Philippines' community press have never lost space on national broadsheets, tabloids, and television networks as the number of casualties continues to rise. The news reports ranged from the killings and arrests of suspected individuals involved in the illegal drug trade, to government prevention and rehabilitation and actuality of Duterte's drug-war statements (Serafica, 2018). Community papers, or newspapers with limited

circulation published in cities other than Manila's capital, have detailed accounts of the issue. "Because of proximity to their readers, some of these newspapers provide a closer look at the local developments that affects everyone—the identities of the victims, public officials, and the families of those killed. Among these papers are the *Punto! Central Luzon*, *Sunday Punch*, and *SunStar Pampanga of Luzon*; *SunStar Cebu*, *The Bohol Chronicle*, and *The Freeman of Visayas*; *Mindanao Times*, *SunStar Cagayan de Oro*, and *SunStar Davao* of Mindanao. During this nationwide antidrug campaign, the traditional role of community newspapers, as the voice of the locals, is put to test (ibid).

Over 500 community newspapers circulate in the Philippines, encompassing a broad array of events and issues that are not covered by the major national or Manila-based newspapers. The community press, as part of the public sphere, acts as an immediate watchdog on power in the areas they primarily serve. It informs the public about important issues and provides a forum for discussion so that people can debate policies and decide together on the best course of action. While the drug war is a national concern, national newspapers cover it differently than community newspapers (Serafica, 2018).

- *Media freedom and responsibility*

Centre for Media Freedom and Responsibility (2016) conducted a media monitoring study which reviewed 171 reports published from June 6 to 24 in three national broadsheets, the national media focused on police buy-bust operations, which aim to catch unsuspecting illegal drug dealers, as well as arrests and killings of suspects, using police blotters and interviews as primary sources. The stories rarely discussed the justice system and citizens' rights to due process, both of which are critical to victims and their families (ibid).

According to Serafica (2018), there was not much quantitative difference in terms of sources used and types of drug-related issues covered in the 328 articles chosen for the study by the authors based on the coverage of the aforementioned nine community papers from July 2016 to January 2017. More than half of the newspaper articles centered on drug suspects involved in police and unidentified assassination attempts. The second most popular stories concerned police and government officials'

statements, but they usually had a single source or were directly copied and pasted from government press releases.

In addition, there are very few articles that express opposition to the government's drug campaign, demonstrating how little opportunity was offered to express the side of human rights activists or religious groups. There are even fewer stories about alternative, let alone humane, solutions to the crisis. Only 8.8% of the articles were about drug rehabilitation, which was the original goal of Oplan Tokhang and the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002. The police were cited as a source 229 times, or 70% of the time, in over 300 articles, followed by government officials 98 times. In the first seven months of the drug war, local authorities dominated coverage. The victims of the drug war, on the other hand, including alleged and convicted drug pushers and users, were only heard 31 times (Serafica, 2018).

- *News reports on anti-drug campaigns*

Many stories on drug abuse in the Philippines' community press lacked context and background information. Furthermore, many stories omitted victims' rights and statistics as the foundation for launching the antidrug campaign, as well as its goals. The victims were depersonalised because most reports only published their names, ages, and addresses, occasionally their criminal record and occupation, but so little about their lives. The numbers and insights presented above are very telling of how drug-related issues were covered in community newspapers; they are stereotyped as police stories. A closer examination of the selected articles, however, revealed a wide range of story types unique to the community press that demonstrate how local communities specifically respond to national crises (Dalipe, 2016).

The way community newspapers serve their readers is the most noticeable difference between national and community press coverage of the anti-illegal drug campaign. Some articles stood out because they focused on the community's reactions to the national anti-drug campaign. Some demanded that the national government hold the locals accountable for the killings and violence. There were articles highlighting the attempts of the local government and sectors to remedy the drug problem in the face of insufficient funding and facilities (Corrales, 2016).



In effect, there is significant coverage of the effects of the drug war in barangays, districts, municipalities, provinces, and regional communities. Punto! The article "3-part rehab set for 'balik-loob' drug pushers, users in AC (Angeles City)" was published in Central Luzon (Manabat, 2016). The term "balik-loob" refers to a renewed spirit and willpower, and this community-led campaign, which was unique to the area, was overlooked by national newspapers. The article gave insight into how drug users turned away from drugs in order to become better citizens. *Sun Star Cebu* highlighted the role of young people in Southeast Asia who call themselves Young Progressives in another article (Dalipe, 2016). Despite its single source, the story demonstrated the youth group's willingness to support the local government's efforts for "systematic rehabilitation efforts for drug addicts." The current anti-drug campaign, according to the youth group, is a dysfunctional government initiative.

A study conducted by Corrales (2016) observed that news reports "*Drug surrendered turn urban rescuers*" and "*Business awaits drug quitters*," by Jesse Pizarro Boga (2016) and Yas Ocampo (2016) of the *Mindanao Times*, correspondingly, depict drug users as people capable of making the decision to stop their habit. Boga's piece included an appeal: "Help us to help you," so that (you will) ". . . live a life away from drugs and reunite with your families who truly love and care for you." By the end of the president's sixth month in office, 700,000 drug-related people had surrendered to police, and over 3,000 people had been killed, but the promise of eradicating illegal drugs and crime remained a long way off. President Duterte admitted that he had underestimated the drug threat and requested an extension of six months to meet his self-imposed deadline (ibid).

The study further noted that as Duterte's anti-drug campaign continued, community newspapers in the Philippines were likely to broaden their scope and narrative frames. The study noted that newspapers should be more critical of the use of violence in a campaign that has primarily impacted the poor because of their role in serving local constituents. Furthermore, to foster greater concern and activism, community newspapers should emphasise the human dimension in their stories (Corrales, 2016). Given the foregoing, the South African publications chosen for this study have the potential to raise awareness and support anti-drug campaigns aimed at reducing the drug scourge.

### 2.4.3 Early warning system on drug abuse in Belgium

Leuven (2015) investigated how the news media notify the public about new destructive illegal drugs detected by Belgium's Early Warning System (BEWS). Along with an examination among the most crucial attributes (style and content) of these messages, potential influences on the perception and knowledge of the general public, and particularly drug users were investigated. The study examined newspaper articles in the Dutch-speaking region of Belgium “*De Standaard, De Morgen, Het Laatste Nieuws, Metro, Het Nieuwsblad, Het Volk, Het Belang van Limburg* and *De Gazet van Antwerpen*. In the French-speaking part of the country six newspaper titles were selected: *Le Soir, La Libre Belgique, La Dernière Heure, Métro*, the newspapers of the group *Vers l’Avenir* and of the group *Sud Presse*”.

According to the study's findings, most newspaper articles are small, and visual support (images) is limited. As a result, the majority of the articles failed to capture the reader's attention right away. Nonetheless, the articles' positions were generally favourable, which means they were frequently published in the first section of the newspaper and on the odd pages. Because of this advantageous position, it was presumed that the news stories would be seen by a large number of readers, despite the small size of the text and title (Leuven, 2015:3).

When compared to warning messages with lower news value, warning messages with higher news value did not result in a greater number of newspaper articles (more media coverage). Newspapers did publish more articles if the incident occurred in their own region (Dutch-speaking or French-speaking Belgium), but there is no relationship between news value and media coverage. If the incident is more serious (has a greater impact) and personalisation is present, the news items are considerably larger and longer. In newspaper coverage, episodic framing was most common; in most cases, only simple factual information was provided, with no in-depth (background) information or discussion of related themes. The articles have a rather negative tone. Drug users are generally portrayed as 'victims,' and the substances in question are portrayed as a 'danger to one's physical health.' The most frequently presented themes (subjects) in the articles were 'negative effects/dangers' and 'formal characteristics.' The most frequently mentioned substance was MDMA (XTC). The

most common type of incident was an XTC-pill seizure combined with an MDMA overdose (de Cock, 2022).

The newspaper articles lacked specific warnings or advice for (potential) drug users and victims. There were also few references to professional drug-related organisations (for medical/psychological assistance or information). If a specific warning is issued, it is almost always the IPH's standardised warning, which is published at the bottom of their warning messages. It was frequently literally copied in newspaper articles: “we should warn again for the dangers of the use of illegal substances. Because the production of these substances takes places in an illegal circuit and cannot be controlled, drug users can never know exactly what they consume” (Leuven, 2015:6).

Furthermore, institutions were cited or paraphrased more frequently in newspaper articles than individuals, creating a rather distant impression and reducing empathy among readers. The most frequently mentioned institutions were the IPH (Institute for Public Health) and the Ministry of Public Health. In terms of people, it was discovered that 'drug users' and 'victims' are the most likely to be mentioned. Professionals like scientists and laboratory workers were much more likely to be referenced or paraphrased. The articles' reading comprehension score was determined to be 'difficult.' This was due to the frequent use of long (difficult) words, not the length of the sentences. The 'human interest' in the newspaper stories was very limited, and they fell into the category of 'boring/scientific texts,' which is strange for a newspaper report. As a result, readers are likely to lose interest in the article once they begin to read it (Leuven, 2015).

#### **2.4.4 Illicit drugs and mortality in international newspapers**

Newspapers play a significant role in influencing public opinion on the dangers of substance abuse. Between the early 1990s and 1996, there was a decrease in the predominance of warning and antidrug messages from the media, parents, and schools, as well as a proliferation of pro-use messages from the entertainment industry and high levels of tobacco and alcohol product advertising and promotion. According to media research, alcohol appeared in 93% of the 200 most popular movie rentals in 1996 and 1997, tobacco in 89%, and illicit drugs in 22%, with marijuana and cocaine being the most frequently depicted (Newton, 2014:8).

A review of mortality-related copy in US print media, for example, discovered that, when compared to actual causes of death, illicit drugs were over-represented by 40%, motor vehicles by 80%, toxic agents by 70%, and homicide by 33%; whereas tobacco use achieved only 23% of expected copy, heart disease only 33%, and cerebrovascular disease only 31%. This has the effect of increasing the general public's concern and outrage about illicit drug issues, often at the expense of focusing on issues that have a larger effect on incidence and death, such as alcohol intake among young people. It has been established that community concerns about drug use are more closely related to increased mass media coverage than to steadily increasing drug-related problems (Sivek, Miovska, & Miovsky, 2014).

Furthermore, in recent years, the contribution of press articles focusing on drug supply decrease and other criminal facets has been shown to be relatively high. In 2004 and 2005, 64% of all drug-related media articles cantered on drugs and criminality (Newton, 2006). In the case of cannabis, 52% of all articles focused on supply and possession (ibid), while 77% of articles on stimulants and opioids focused on criminal issues. Nevertheless, the proportion of crime-related drug news stories in the major serious newspapers decreased between 1996 (65% of all drug-related articles) and 2007 (49%). National Focal Points in the United Nations on Drugs and Crime observed a similar trend of declining depiction of criminal aspects in drug-related mass media coverage (ibid).

- *Framework of news production on war in drugs discourses*

As Chomsky (cited in Veit, 2013:138) suggests, drug wars are also a means of controlling what the elite's news defines as the 'dangerous' classes, minorities, or those who do not contribute to mainstream meaning-making and affluence. Among the most relevant examples is from the United States of America, where Black drug offenders are up to ten times more likely than Whites to be imprisoned on drug-related charges. (ibid). The following fear-inducing characteristics of discourses are tools that identify polarisation and power consolidation on drug use:

- Fear-inducing discourses aid in the construction and dissemination of a central narrative of harm, which is frequently portrayed as a highly contagious disease that threatens the very order and moral health of social universes. In the 1930s, marijuana users were said to lose their minds and become violent; in the 1960s,

lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) was thought to cause chromosome damage and make users stare at the sun for long hours until they went blind; and in the 1990s, crack cocaine was thought to cause irreversible damage to fetuses and new-borns if consumed by pregnant mothers, as well as to cause 'instant addiction,' literally sweeping the US' (Goode, 2012).

- These discussions also attribute the source of evil with a parasitic foreign force seeking to destabilize its host body. Various social groups (such as ethnic minorities) were represented as "others," and thus targeted and scapegoated. In the late 1800s, Chinese opium addicts were thought to seduce middle-class White women. In the early 1900s, cocaine was thought to make Afro-Americans violent, especially more toward the White population, and to give them superhuman abilities, making them bulletproof (Goode, 2008). Furthermore, heroin addict Vietnam veterans were viewed as the carriers of an anti-modern and highly dangerous disease that threatened the American spirit itself in the 1970s (Weimer, 2013).
- Fear-inducing discourses strive to design a feeling of fear and exemplify the need for instant action to be taken at any cost against the deviants and the deviant condition: 'the bottom line of all ideological discourse is the use of reports, whether they misrepresent the truth or not, to mobilize popular support to do something in the public arena, because they implement rhetoric like "epidemic", "firestorm", "rising tide" and "plague" with the urgency of swift and serious action (Chiricos, 2010:117).

Such reports use the authority of specific expertise ('an inquest heard/was told') focused primarily in the law enforcement sector (for example, that of police agents or coroners) to rationalise assumptions and interpretations made by the journalists themselves. These accounts are built on a semantic scaffold of contrast to increase their rhetorical heft. Thus, it is equally important to represent the framework of news production on the illicit drugs scourge in the selected newspapers for this study.

## **2.4.5 Representation of drug abuse in African newspapers**

### *2.4.5.1 Coverage of drug abuse in Kenyan newspapers*

Despite the fact that the drug problem is a major concern in Kenya, information available on drug-related coverage discloses that reportage in terms of volume and

quality is insufficient (Kenyah, 2014:27). For example, Owuor and Nyameino (2000) in their study on the coverage of drug related issues by the print media found out that the print media does not “come out strongly against and do not attach higher value for drug stories”. The study further observed that the print media did not prioritise their education role in society as far as drug abuse is concerned. Secondly, the print media had not taken their own initiative to campaign against drug abuse besides highlighting government and other stakeholders’ efforts against drug abuse. Thirdly, most of the articles appeared as briefs and were abstract lacking interpretation or the human-interest angle. Fourth, the newspapers were unperturbed by the increasing incidences of drug trafficking and abuse in the country. Fifth, print media by reporting the values of drugs impounded by officers were indirectly encouraging drug trafficking as people are likely to consider it as a quick way to riches. Lastly, drug stories were associated with provincial news roundups which are usually short pieces and lacking detail (Kenyah, 2014:29).

Otiende & Kahuthu (2002) content analysed the coverage of drugs related issues by daily leading newspapers, *Daily Nation* and *The East African Standard*. The scholars found that the newspapers assigned low level of prominence to drug related issues. They also found out that despite the efforts made to combat the drug problem, the media have not taken their own initiative in the campaign against drug abuse. Another important finding that came out of their study was that there were no follow up stories to display the consequences of the action they had reported.

One of the strong recommendations in the two studies was that follow up studies be done to determine whether the nature of reporting of drug issues has changed. The study evaluated the information that the media is giving to the public on drug abuse. The two studies only did a content analysis on the two leading daily newspapers, but this study has gone as far as interviewing the editors to find out whether they think they are doing their best as far as drug abuse is concerned (Kenyah, 2014). As a result, the study also interviews expert informants in South African newspapers to identify impediments to the reporting of drug abuse news.

#### 2.4.5.2 Coverage of drugs in Ghanaian newspapers

Ghana's press is vibrant, with a large number of newspapers published by a wide range of companies and individuals. The variety of publications stems from the

dynamic press sector, which publishes numerous dailies: some are investigative, others are partisan (such as supporting one of the two major political parties), but the majority are enjoyable to read (Adofo, 2015). The imperativeness of Ghana's print media is a true indicator of the country's democratic maturity. Newspapers in Ghana are heavily focused on domestic politics, corruption, and social issues in general, including drug abuse and crime. Despite Ghana's active media, there are constraints, particularly because the Criminal Libel Law remains on the books. The repeal of the law became a political manifesto issue for the New Patriotic Party, which was in opposition at the time. As a result, within six months of taking office, they repealed the Criminal Code's criminal libel provision.

The dynamism and fragmentation attributed to the Ghanaian media has tended to reflect in polarisation of issues along political lines over the years. Journalism standards in Ghana remain low; writers are more akin to reporters than journalists, so many articles are mostly narrative with little or no analysis. In terms of newspaper publications, the two most important newspapers in Ghana, the *Daily Graphic* and the *Ghanaian Times*, are available to the public (Adofo, 2015:18).

- *Press coverage of cocaine crimes*

There have been very few studies in the area of press coverage of cocaine crime, and they do not address all facets of cocaine crime as a subject matter. The following is a study that was discovered after an extended search. Gyan (2006) conducted a study that came close to addressing the issue of the essence of press coverage of cocaine crime issues in Ghana. The research was on the media coverage of the MV Benjamin/East Legon cocaine bust. This was a comparative analysis of the newspapers Daily Guide and Ghana Palaver. The study was to investigate the content of two Ghanaian newspapers with known partisan affiliations on their coverage of what became known as the "cocaine scandal" in Ghanaian media (ibid).

The study intended to uncover the biases in the *Daily Guide* (which favours the New Patriotic Party) and the Ghana Palaver (whose bias is for the National Democratic Congress). The study aimed to determine how the two newspapers reported the two incidents, keeping in mind that news content is influenced in part by the ideologies of those who own and/or finance the media (Adofo, 2015). The study discovered that the *Ghana Palaver* did not publish any favourable stories about the government, while the

*Daily Guide* did not publish any unfavourable stories about the government in connection with the scandal. According to the study, the *Ghana Palaver* used more derogatory adjectives in its reporting than the *Daily Guide* (ibid).

Due to the framing and surveillance functions of the press, it is expected that its lenses will cover all shades of issues in society. According to Croteau and Hoynes (2001:88), the key question to ask in determining who is setting the agenda is “who owns the media”? The presumption underneath asking such a question is that there is a widening gap in research concerning the state of press attention of cocaine crime issues, specifically with respect to the amount of coverage the media devote to cocaine crime issues and a critical comparative analysis of the nature of coverage given to the subject by state-owned and privately owned newspapers. Owners of media companies significantly affect the form and content of the media by firing and hiring certain personnel, funding projects, and making certain media platforms available to certain speakers. One of the concerns that the press is expected to cover and report on is the cocaine problem, which has grown exponentially since the advent of modern technology. Due to the magnitude of the drug abuse phenomenon in modern society, it is reasonable to expect the press to devote equal attention to coverage of the drug abuse (Adofo, 2015).

According to Andrews and Caren (2010), the media's agenda-setting power in exposing and raising awareness about social issues is directly related to the level of significance journalists place on those issues. If the media adequately covers cocaine crime issues, it can help to reduce the practice and its societal consequences. Such coverage can educate the general public on the subject, allowing citizens to take preventative measures to protect themselves from the insensitive activities of cocaine criminals.

- *Cocaine and drug-related crime stories in Ghana*

According to Jewkes (2004:40), crime stories are newsworthy because they focus on news values specific to crime, such as controversy, exaggerations, conflict, and so on. In contrast to the general declining trend in property-related and violent crime, crime related to personal use and trafficking increased from 2003 to 2012 (World Drug Report, 2014). In Ghana, section 1 of the Narcotic Drugs Control, Enforcement, and Sanctions Law -1990 (PNDCL 236) on Narcotic Drug Importation and Exportation



states that anyone who imports or exports any narcotic drug without a license issued by the Secretary for Health for that purpose commits an indictable offence to imprisonment for a term of not less than ten years if convicted. This is one of the policies implemented by authorities and law enforcement agencies in Ghana and throughout the subregion to combat the illegal drug trade. The National Democratic Congress (NDC) acknowledged in its 2012 manifesto that more effort was required to ensure that the Narcotics Control Board (NACOB) dealt efficiently and effectively with the drug menace (ibid).

It also vowed that the NDC government would designate NACOB as a security agency, allowing it to work with other security agencies to combat drug traffickers. On pages 34 and 35 of the NDC manifesto, it is stated that the National Patriotic Party (NPP) government had lost the war against the drug trade and that if elected, they will open all high-profiled cases. The NPP, Ghana's largest opposition group, also stated unequivocally its efforts to reduce narcotics use and trafficking. Chapter 4; page 87 of its 2012 election manifesto stated:

*“Increased use of, and trade in illegal drugs are a major threat to Ghana and our youth. It is also an issue of national security as our nation is used as a transit point. We will introduce a robust and comprehensive anti-narcotic drug and anti-organized crime policy and plan. This policy and plan would have five key areas among these would be to develop a comprehensive inter agency prevention policy aimed at preventing hard drugs from being imported into Ghana and also preventing Ghana from being used as a trans-shipment point. This policy will also target the domestic cultivation of cannabis and the processing of all forms of narcotic drugs.”*

Oduro-Frimpong (2011) conducted a study on crime issues as well. The study's main goal was to investigate the portrayal of crime issues in popular video film series and political elite discourses on the area of study in Ghanaian print media. The study also examined the content of selected Ghanaian newspaper editions (namely: *Christian Messenger*, the *Daily Graphic*, and the *Ghanaian Chronicle*). According to the findings of this study, both films and political elite discourses denounced the practice of possession of cocaine, peddling, or trafficking. Furthermore, the films offered a comprehensive understanding of some of the pressing underlying factors that exacerbated this practice in Ghana, as well as an implicit indication at how these causes would be discussed.

- *Political discourse on drugs in Ghana*

On the topic of political elite discursive practices, the study discovered that political leaders framed the issue of cocaine as an alien procedure that had somehow attempted to enter a country and attributed its causes to greed and moral decay. The study concluded that the two cocaine video films, on the one hand, pointed to increased social hardships as the cause of drug trafficking and, on the other, indirectly called for the redress of problems such as graduate unemployment as a measure to curb the practice. Political leaders, on the other hand, blamed the practice on greed and selfishness; as a result, these leaders frequently asked for prayers for the offenders of cocaine crime in order to help them reform (Oduro-Frimpong, 2011).

Another study was conducted by Yeboah (2008) on the level of coverage given to crime issues in Ghanaian newspapers, including cocaine. The study discovered that among the eight categories of issues covered by the *Daily Graphic* in 2008, namely politics, economics, science, legal issues, crime issues, social issues, health, and celebrity issues, crime reports were the fourth highest issue raised by the newspaper, accounting for approximately 10% of total newspaper coverage. Even with this information, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the essence of press coverage of cocaine issues in general, because cocaine was treated as one facet of broader criminal issues (ibid).

#### *2.4.5.3 Coverage of illicit drugs in South African newspapers*

Newspapers have a responsibility to inform and empower people make decisions about current events. That is why it is critical to have a free press that allows readers to make informed choices. Mabokela (2018) noted that despite a growing awareness of the consequences of *nyaope* consumption, coverage of news reports on the drug and its use in tabloid newspapers is still unsatisfactory. This is in the context of broader literature demonstrating that people under the influence of *nyaope* are reportedly committing crimes such as rape, robbery, murder, and domestic violence (SA Crime Statistics, 2021/22).

Furthermore, Mabokela (2018) observed that most news reports in the *Daily Sun* and *The Sowetan* newspapers continued to fail to explore wider alternative news angles aimed at changing or influencing positive attitudes toward the effects of drugs among

the youth, particularly the consumption of *nyaope*. The study emphasised the lack of narrative reporting and in-depth journalism as important styles of reporting on illicit drugs and related issues. Because tabloids tend to report issues on the surface without providing detail, this has a limiting effect on the intensive coverage of *nyaope* use in society. Meanwhile, this approach tends to overlook critical aspects of *nyaope* use that revolve around the psychology, economics, and sociology of substance abuse in South African communities. Given tabloids' considerable power as narrators of daily realities with the ability to persuade public opinion (Sparks, 2013), it is critical that they cover issues in a way that can impact positive attitudes toward the drug scourge.

Given the foregoing, newspapers have the potential to empower a debate on illegal drugs by providing informative and educative reporting on illicit drug consumption due to their 'class dimension' style, which is geared toward ordinary South Africans. As a result, tabloids should continually strive, as part of a responsible press, to report news on *nyaope* consumption in an objective and contextualised manner in order to empower readers with drug knowledge while also raising awareness about the consequences of using *nyaope* as an illicit drug (Mabokela, 2018:128). Furthermore, while the study showed that tabloid newspapers, by definition, struggle to report adequately on news stories about *nyaope* consumption, the drug continues to remain a pertinent issue that affects an overwhelming amount of South African citizens. As a result, there is an urgent need for more robust coverage on *nyaope* use to increase the frequency of reporting about illicit drugs. The degree of variation in tabloid coverage of *nyaope* use revealed that insufficient stories are published in newspapers, which remains a challenge. The study also discovered that the editors of the *Daily Sun* and *The Sowetan* should consider increasing the frequency by at least dedicating a weekly full page of *nyaope*-related news in their publications (ibid).

Studies conducted by Lewis, Hamilton & Franklin (2018:107) observed that newspapers could provide information on events and circumstances in society and the world by describing, translating, and responding on the meaning of events. On the other hand, information about the press and illegal drugs is undoubtedly limited, yet illicit drugs such as heroin, cocaine, ecstasy, and amphetamines feature in multitudes of newspaper reports and continue to stay some of the most popular themes in films, television, magazines, and internet chat rooms.

Furthermore, positive press narratives combine images and words with photograph complementarity that attract the audience in ways that the mainstream press does not always get right. It is not just the use of large or numerous images, but also the manner in which the images tell the story. Sidebars, images, and multiple stories on the page frequently blend seamlessly into the overall narrative. This newer style of news writing divides large chunks of text into smaller chunks to keep the reader interested (Lewis, Hamilton & Franklin, 2008). While news outlets such as newspapers, have limited space to dedicate to such issues, illicit drugs are undoubtedly newsworthy. Therefore, newspapers' portrayals of illicit drugs influence youth attitudes towards the scourge of drugs.

According to Manning (2017:151), newspapers widely misrepresent drugs, their effects, typical users and sellers, and the entire nature of the drug market and the enforcement reaction to it. In many ways, the media defines what is 'seen' as drugs because it focuses on solvents, *nyaope*, heroin, crack, ecstasy, and so on, conditioning public attitudes about the 'drug problem' and how to respond to it.

According to a survey conducted by Manning & McCandless (2019), newspapers primarily focus on the illegal facets of drugs and drug use. According to research on illicit drug press coverage, criminal stories about illegal drug production, trafficking, and sales, or secondary crime, account for roughly half of all news coverage. Furthermore, regardless of the underlying incidences, deaths related to illicit drugs receive significantly more attention than deaths related to prescribed or regulated substances. Overall, drug issues are presumed to sell the media to the public. According to Hughes (2018), news media should be recognised as one of the factors that can affect attitudes toward and demand for illicit drugs, and there is an opportunity to expand the use of news media to shape youth attitudes toward drugs.

#### **2.4.6 Press coverage of crime related issues**

The press plays an essential part in reporting crime-related issues. Collins (2011) conducted a study to investigate the impact of media ideology on the reporting of international matters by some news magazines in the United States and the United Kingdom. According to the study, the US media is market-oriented, whereas the UK media is more concerned with public service. Using the media ownership concept and framing approach, they content analysed two news magazines (with large circulation

and coverage) from the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK). (i.e. *Time*, *Newsweek*, the *Economist*, and *Prospect*).

The study's findings revealed that the UK news magazines (*Time* and *Newsweek*) covered an overwhelming number of international issues (79%) when compared to the US news magazines' coverage of international issues (*The Economist* and *Prospect*) (21%). However, the study discovered that US news magazines covered more international crime stories (12%) than UK news magazines (4%). The study discovered that the UK press was more competitive and aggressive in reporting international issues than the US press, which covered more crime and less international issues. In comparison to profit-driven media enterprises, the study supported the view that public service media will be more inclined to cover social and developmental issues. As a result, Collins et al. (2011) concluded that media ideology/orientation influences the types of issues covered or reported in its content.

Roberts & Douai (2012) investigated how the Canadian media created internet child luring cases during the first decade of the twenty-first century. They examined the content of two newspapers, *The Globe and Mail* and *The Toronto Star*, to determine how the media framed internet child luring and the effects of coverage on moral panics. The two newspapers were widely distributed and regarded as two of Canada's most influential. Roberts and Douai examined the tone and language of news coverage, the geographic spread of coverage, and the possible solutions prescribed for internet child luring using both quantitative and qualitative research methods. All of this was done in an attempt to answer the main research question was how did the print media in Canada cover Internet-related sex crimes against children, specifically child luring, during the study period.

The researchers discovered that in the majority of the news stories they examined, Canadian newspapers crafted internet-related child luring cases in a serious tone that instilled some fear about adolescent internet use and the vulnerability of children themselves. The study also discovered that *The Toronto Star* was more likely to offer solutions than *The Globe & Mail*. The study laid emphasis of framing on newspaper content and how it affected the public thinking and behaviour (Roberts & Douai, 2012).

### **2.4.7 Newspapers' anti-drug health campaigns**

Since there is limited literature pertaining to campaigns initiated by tabloid newspapers to create awareness on the use and abuse of illicit drugs; the study uses general newspapers to discuss campaigns. Newspaper campaigns and drug prevention experience are outlined according to the information-based programmes, raising awareness on illicit drug use, prevention on health issues, public service campaigns and the selection of target audiences.

- *Information based programmes*

According to Wakefield, Loken, and Hornik (2010:104), the use of newspaper campaigns to reduce health problems in society gained traction in the 1970s, with an initial focus on improving cardiovascular health. From the 1970s onward, media campaigns were increasingly used to prevent tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drug use. Print media campaigns through newspapers have the potential to continually spread simple and focused messages to a large audience over time at a low cost per capita. It is also presumed that print media can simultaneously reach a large and diverse proportion of the population (ibid).

In recent years, there has been a greater emphasis on information-based programs supplemented by a life skills approach. The dissemination of information approach is pivotal as it creates awareness about the horrendous effects of drug use and abuse. This information has been sent through both broadcast and print media such as newspapers and magazines. The main focus of this study is to examine the manner in which the press particularly newspapers coverage of the scourge of illicit drugs in South Africa. In addition, a campaign from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) anti-drug campaign, which debuted on June 26, 2007, the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. The campaign targeted various aspects of drug control, including drug abuse, drug cultivation and production, and illicit drug trafficking. UNODC observed that the percentage of drug abuse among users, decreased due to the interventions of such anti-drugs campaigns.

- *Raising awareness on illicit drug use*

Wakefield et al. (2010:106) argue that newspaper initiatives have been used successfully to reduce tobacco use and promote safety on the road, with moderately

positive results in a range of aspects. These initiatives have also been widely used to prevent youth drug use. They frequently target specific substances in order to reduce drug use and raise awareness of associated issues. These initiatives mainly target young people because evidence shows that drug use often begins during adolescence, a time in life when young people may experiment with cigarettes, alcohol, and illicit drugs (ibid).

Subsequently, the newspaper campaign should raise awareness of the problem of illicit drug use, initiate re-evaluation of personal risk, and encourage consideration of individual or collective action. The campaign must result in a shift in beliefs and attitudes toward the behaviour being promoted. It is critical to anticipate and identify audience objections (Wakefield et al., 2010).

- *Prevention of drug abuse on health issues*

Newspaper campaigns have become a popular method of communicating preventive health messages to the general public. The goal of these initiatives is to contact a significant proportion of individuals, such as those who may be difficult to reach using traditional methods, in order to change health-related attitudes and behaviours. Although anti-drug newspaper campaigns can be seen by almost anyone in the overall population who is exposed to the message, the campaigns typically focus on preventing, reducing, or stopping illicit drug use by young people (individuals 26 years and younger), because substance use typically begins during adolescence or young adulthood (Ferri, 2013). Subsequently, this approach is relevant to this study because it examines press' representation of the drug scourge in South Africa, namely *The Sowetan*, *The Citizen* and *Daily Sun* newspapers.

- *Public service campaigns*

According to Hammond (2007:57), public service campaign planning frequently begins with a desire to "do something" about a problem through any medium. What frequently follows is a review of how previous campaigns used the media, with the presumption that their strategies can be emulated or adapted for new campaigns. For instance, the worth of television public service announcements appears to be self-evident, prompting even small and medium enterprises with limited resources to invest valuable time and resources in developing them and then presenting them to media gatekeepers, who have an ever-shrinking supply of free advertising slots to dispense.

- *Selection of target audience*

The nature of the problem, the lessons learned from previous work to address it, and the availability of resources all play a role in determining the type of audience that should be targeted for a public service campaign, as well as how narrowly or broadly that audience should be defined. Members of a target audience should ideally share similar knowledge, concerns, and motivations that influence their behaviour, and they should be accessible via similar media, organisational, or interpersonal channels. The readers are the study's target audience, and they are reached by using tabloid newspapers as communication methods (Job, 2018:169). Furthermore, while representatives of the target audience are a great source of information, not everything they say should be taken in context. Focus groups, for instance, almost always promote fear messages; however, as previously discussed, studies suggest that fear-based messages work only in extremely limited circumstances (Job, 2018). As a result, formative research must include consultation with professionals who can provide an experience-based and analytical perspective.

- *Health-inducing behaviour*

Newspaper prevention strategies have been one of the most widely used tools for educating and persuading people to adopt and maintain health-promoting behaviours while abandoning health-harming behaviours (Hornik, 2012). Numerous researchers from various disciplines, including public health, medicine, health communication, medical sociology, and health psychology, have evaluated the effectiveness of these campaigns in promoting public health. Although it is difficult to reach a general conclusion about whether newspaper health campaigns can influence behaviour, a few meta-analyses provide a positive perspective on the prospects of health communication campaigns to influence individuals' health-related behaviour patterns. Snyder & Hamilton (2012), for example, conducted a meta-analysis of 48 published campaign studies in the United States and concluded that the average effect size of short-term campaigns on behaviour was across diverse behaviours, implying that 9% more individuals changed their behaviour after being exposed to the campaign messages. Similarly, Noar (2016: 21) examined the effectiveness of health campaign programs, concluding that "well-executed health mass media campaigns can have



small-to-moderate effects not only on health knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes, but also on behaviours."

The comparatively tiny effect sizes of most previous media health campaigns, on the other hand, suggest the presence of critical, yet unexplored, moderating factors, such as social contexts. Researchers have emphasised that campaigns manifest their effects in the context of the social environment in which target audiences are embedded and that attributes of the social context in which target audiences are integrated are likely to influence how they respond to campaign messages (Viswanath, Steele, & Finnegan, 2016).

Evaluators should consider social-contextual factors that may dampen or amplify campaign effects to gain a more refined and nuanced understanding of campaign effects. However, because most evaluation studies of health communication campaigns have taken an individualistic, psychological approach, there haven't been many empirical studies that look at the interaction between campaign exposure and the audience's social environment (Hornik & Yanovitzky, 2013).

- *Critique of drug health communication*

Although many scholars have identified a divide in the field of communication between press effects and interpersonal communication scholarship, a few researchers have made significant progress in bridging the gap between these two sub-areas of communication research (Eveland, Morey, & Hutchens, 2017). To be more precise, the function of dialogue about campaign topics in newspaper initiatives has been fiercely disputed by communication scholars in general, and health communication scholars in particular. A study by Hornik & Yanovitzky (2013) discussed three roles of conversation in campaigns. Discourse about initiatives or campaign subjects may make individuals more or less vulnerable to campaign effects by facilitating encoding and retrieving campaign messages, providing a specific interpretation of campaign messages within the audience's social networks, and providing social support to promote or hinder the adoption of campaign-recommended behaviour (ibid).

Conversation can extend the accessibility and occurrence of campaign messages, clarify socioeconomic values and rules about campaign topics, provide skills needed to act on campaign messages, and increase effectiveness in performing that

behaviour (Southwell & Torres, 2006). As such, campaign-related conversation may serve as a bridge between campaign activities and the campaign's ultimate goals. And most importantly, some campaign agencies may attempt to increase campaign-related conversation as their primary goal. As Southwell & Yzer (2007) pointed out, the best example of this category is the antidrug campaign. To capture the complexity and diversity of campaign-induced conversation on illicit drugs, this study examines the specific content in newspapers on their representation of the drug scourge.

#### **2.4.8 Press propaganda and education on illicit drugs consumption**

The press includes countless instances of drug propaganda in an effort to educate people in ways that are concurrent to political motives. This is accomplished specifically for children and adolescents through public service announcements, anti-drug advertisements, and moral messages published in newspapers. The press has an impact on society through a process of socialisation. According to social learning theory, people learn behaviours through social interaction and observation (Mosher, Clayton & Atkins, 2014). People are influenced by the media by providing examples of "acceptable" behaviour models. By attempting to manipulate the reader's feelings and perceptions of the material, political agendas can be directed into their beliefs and attitudes on a subject (Roberts, Henriksen, & Christenson 2009:8). In terms of drugs and drug use, the press portrays anything associated with illicit drugs as dangerous and castigated, conveying to target audiences that these drugs are not socially acceptable.

Public service announcements are perhaps the most direct way to reach out to specific audiences. In order for the government to combat illicit drug use, public service announcements provide information and promote anti-drug ideals through media campaigns (Werb, Mills, DeBeck, Kerr, Montaner, & Wood, 2011:834). They emerge as brief commercials throughout electronic media, delivering an anti-drug message to impact members of society. Adolescents are systematically targeted by public service announcements about illegal drug use in an effort to discourage them from using or even experimenting. As a result, the government only shares information that promotes this goal. Most of these advertisements are used to scare young people. The messages are designed to promote only the "bad" effects of illegal drugs, with little emphasis on scientific evidence that would contradict these goals and educate

society's youth. Instead, advertisements are loaded with gloomy imagery portraying illicit drug users as mentally unstable, inebriated, and often lower-class individuals. These representations are used in the hope of dissuading youth from using drugs while not informing them about how to stay safe if they do use drugs (Werb et al., 2011).

Furthermore, advertisements in the press play a significant role in dissuading illegal drug use. Many advertisements stress the adverse effects of illegal substances on people's mental health and well-being (Yzer, Vohs, Luciana, Cuthbert, & MacDonald, 2014:279) in an effort to deter potential unlawful conduct. "*Above the Influence*", for example, is part of an anti-drug advertising campaign. It focuses on youth aged twelve to seventeen years and depicts marijuana as a detrimental effect (Carpenter & Pechmann, 2014:948). The anti-drug advertising campaign cites multiple adverse effects of cannabis, including impaired coordination and judgment, decreased learning abilities, and the substance's addictive nature. Notwithstanding, the campaign neglected to note the positive attributes of the drug, such as feelings of euphoria, stress reduction, and increased sensory awareness (Erowid, 2015). "*Above the Influence*" and other drug advertisements are biased accounts which overlook factual information and leave audiences unable to make informed decisions. Many of the anti-drug advertisement campaign's more visually appealing advertisements depict users as insects, conveying the message that those who use illegal substances are a threat to society because they spread unethical behaviour (ibid).

Advertisements are used as propaganda in this way. Furthermore, messages within films are powerful social regulatory mechanisms because their meanings are more delicate but proportionately more powerful. In films and television shows about illegal drugs, the frightening relations to other complexities such as prostitution, gangs, and mental illness are frequently highlighted. Actors may portray a relatable situation to the viewer that rapidly spirals out of control due to the use of illegal drugs, and thus serve as a scare tactic to viewers (Yzer et.al., 2011).

- *Press engagement on illicit drugs*

Despite the paucity of research on audience interaction with media representations of substance abuse issues, assessments of drug prevention marketing programmes are insightful. These findings suggest that, as with other criminal justice content domains,

data processing by audiences is critical to mediating the message effect. Indeed, while such campaigns seek to reduce drug curiosity, evaluations have found that messages may be resisted by the audience- and thus have no effect (Ritter, Lancaster, Grech & Reuter, 2011).

Furthermore, such campaigns may pique audiences' interest in performing an experiment with the very drugs that they are being warned about. Furthermore, the nature of the effect appears to be mediated by the media content itself. Message resistance increased when campaigns overstated the dangers of drug use. Campaigns that used more advanced strategic techniques, such as social marketing and focus group testing, encountered less audience resistance and were shown to reduce drug interest, albeit to a limited extent and with varying effects across subpopulations (Hornik, Jacobsohn, Orwin, Piesse & Kalton, 2018).

As a result, it is unknown how far these findings from social marketing campaigns can be generalized to untargeted press messages. Indeed, there are likely to be significant differences because social marketing and press news reports represent fundamentally different approaches to media production, with the former focusing on information provision and social commentary and the latter on drug use reduction (Wakefield, Loken & Hornik, 2017). Nonetheless, the research results indicate that young people's interpretation and response to news messages is likely to be influenced by factors other than the content of the reports, such as the extent to which messages correspond with the individual audience members' pre-existing schemas (ibid). Subsequently, there is a yawning gap in research regarding the messages conveyed in South African newspapers to raise awareness of the scourge of drugs in the country.

#### **2.4.9 Press advocacy on drug campaigns**

The press can help to establish and maintain the drug problem on the national agenda by conveying simple and implicit messages aimed at gaining the population's trust. Education and newspaper exposure raise awareness and knowledge. To combat this issue, press advocacy should focus on areas for psychotherapy. However, while emphasising the dangers of drug use, the media must also provide information about possible help centres. As a result, there is an urgent need for a widespread public awareness campaign through the media to disseminate information about the negative consequences, legal provisions, and the availability of clinical and counselling services

for the treatment and social rehabilitation of detoxified addicts. Here are some brief excerpts from a few studies on the subject (Shodhganga, 2015).

- *Extensive campaigning*

A study conducted by Shodhganga (2015) noted Imlah (1970) examined that while most newspapers and in Britain have focused primarily on the drug addiction problem, some newspapers have been preoccupied with other facets of the drug problem. *The Birmingham Post*, for example, has run an extensive campaign to caution children about the dangers of unwanted drugs left around the house, as well as the number of accidental poisonings that occur every day. More and larger campaigns along these lines would be ideal. Commenting on the government's role, he asserts that, aside from official prescribing advice to doctors, there is little government education aimed at the general public for anyone else. There are many posters that say '*Smoking causes cancer*' and '*If you drink, don't drive,*' but none that say '*Heroin kills*' or '*Cocaine causes mental illness.*' One might wonder why this health issue is not given the same attention as others. The agreement for the establishment of the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control (1970), Commission on Narcotic Drugs- also emphasized the development of measures to prevent drug abuse through educational programs and special campaigns, including the use of the press (ibid).

Furthermore, Shodhganga (2015) noted it was concluded that because many of the first-order correlation coefficients among information and education levels remained fairly significant even after the mediating effect of newspaper publicity was eliminated, it can be implied that the total extent of formal education, in its association to greater awareness, is more than simply facilitating newspaper exposure. Whereas newspaper reading is mostly useful for expanding one's knowledge of ideas, formal schooling leads to a variety of mental abilities and skills. The research shows that when education is merged with newspaper exposure, the two together explain a significant amount of variation in information level. This finding is reflective of how people use their education by exploring new knowledge. Newspapers, for example, have a "multiplicative effect." Intertwined and mutually interactive relationships between mass media and education are required. Exposure to appropriate mass media is the common thread that connects all developmental efforts (ibid).

Given the scarcity of research on audience engagement with media portrayals of drug issues, evaluations of drug prevention social marketing campaigns are informative. These findings suggest that, as with other criminal justice content domains, data processing by audiences is crucial to moderating the message effect. Indeed, while such campaigns seek to reduce drug curiosity, evaluations have found that messages may be resisted by the audience (and thus have no effect) (Ritter et al., 2014).

Furthermore, such campaigns can entice audiences' interest in experimenting with the very drugs that they are being warned about. Importantly, the nature of the effect appears to be moderated by the media content itself. Message resistance was higher in campaigns that exaggerated the dangers of drug use. Campaigns that used more advanced strategic techniques, such as social marketing and focus group testing, encountered less audience resistance and were shown to reduce interest in drugs, albeit to a limited extent and with varying effects across subpopulations. (Wakefield, Loken & Hornik, 2011).

- *Social marketing campaigns*

The extent to which these findings from social marketing campaigns can be generalised to untargeted, mainstream media messages has yet to be determined. Indeed, there are likely to be significant differences because social marketing and mainstream news represent fundamentally different strategies for content creation, with the former emphasising drug reduction and the latter emphasizing information provision and social commentary (van Dijk 1996). Nonetheless, the findings suggest that young people's interpretation and response to news media messages are likely to be influenced by factors other than the content of the reports, such as the extent to which messages correspond with the individual audience members' pre-existing schemas (Shodhganga, 2015).

- *Health promotion messages*

Media campaigns are an effective way to spread health-promoting messages. Newspapers, television commercials, the Internet, mobile phones, and roadside advertising hoardings can reach a wide and diverse audience. Advertisements in the field of drug addiction and dependence may help shape patterns of drug use and drug intention, as well as modify mediators such as drug awareness, knowledge, and

attitudes (Hornik, Jacobsohn, Orwin, Piesse & Kalton, 2018). Therefore, it is the other intend of this study to establish how coverage of health promotion campaigns in South African newspapers can positively contribute to the war on drugs in the country.

However, moral and economic concerns are commonly mentioned. Unlike other health interventions, press campaigns are imposed on populations who have not acceded to their implementation. This is a significant ethical issue in modern, person-centered public health, where making decisions that are shared with the public is critical for behaviour change. Second, these campaigns can be quite costly, particularly when carried out at the national or state level. Large-scale purchases of public service announcement time during popular shows, as well as broad allocation through print media, are frequently restricted to government institutions. The first and second versions of the United States Office of National Drug Control Policy's National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, for example, cost 2.7 billion dollars over a period of more than ten years (Ilara, Ferri, & Faggiano, 2015).

Despite the fact that such campaigns were cautiously assessed, most press initiatives are not developed in accordance with the traditional public health circle, which comprised developing strategies based on evidence and evaluating their impact. A review of studies assessing press campaigns designed to prevent the use of illicit drugs can influence future strategies and aid in the design of effective campaigns. Subsequently, the review's goal was to assess the effectiveness of mass-media campaigns, particularly those in the press, in preventing or reducing drug use or the intention to use illicit drugs between many young people (Bo & Antonio, 2015).

Due to the need to address a wide range of preventable risk factors or injuries, such campaigns are rarely evaluated, making it difficult to inform policymakers about their effectiveness and sustainability. In this environment of general uncertainty, press campaigns addressing tobacco use and traffic accidents stand out as notable exceptions because they have been evaluated more frequently and have shown some evidence of benefit. The research included studies evaluating a variety of heterogeneous interventions in an attempt to summarise evidence on the effectiveness of press campaigns targeting illicit drugs. Whereas interventions were classified according to whether they were assessed using studies conducted in experimental settings in which participants were aware that they were being subjected

to press interventions or studies conducted in the field, which are more likely to show the real-life effects of large national press campaigns but are also more prone to bias (Blue Moon Research, 2017).

- *Newspapers support in drug abuse control*

According to Sharma (2018), there were no scheduled drug abuse, alcoholism, or tobacco programmes in India's health sector until 1986, with the exception of a few references in a mental health program. The study was conducted due to the widespread problem of drug abuse in the developing India. Newspaper reporting on specific days appears to have little impact. Public awareness campaigns are, in fact, required. Such press campaigns can be an effective tool for drug prevention. These provide a possibility to send a clear message that is repeated at regular intervals and is likely to be remembered by the audience. Effective campaigns carefully target or component the audience that the campaign is intended to achieve (ibid).

Furthermore, public figures can draw public attention to a campaign issue. By embedding a campaign's message in an entertainment program, you can gain public attention. A more effective campaign results from the repetition of a single message. Preventive behaviour campaigns are more effective when they emphasise positive behaviour change rather than the negative consequences of current behaviour. As a campaign strategy, instilling fear is rarely effective. Campaigns are more effective when they focus on immediate rewards rather than the avoidance of long-term negative consequences. More effective campaigns include key figures and groups in the media and government in their design and implementation (Shodhganga, 2015).

Similarly, campaign timing aids in determining campaign effectiveness and utilising effective feedback techniques to evaluating and enhance initiatives during operation and planning. Set reasonable, attainable goals for behaviour change. The use of commercial marketing and social marketing strategies has the potential to increase campaign effectiveness. Use educational messages in entertainment situations and personal messages to people linked to the targeted individuals, particularly those with direct interpersonal influence, such as peers and parents. More effective campaigns carefully select positive role models for social learning, as these individuals may become negative role models as a result of their individual actions (for example,



celebrities involved in substance abuse campaigns who are later discovered to have substance abuse problems themselves) (Shodhganga, 2015).

Furthermore, if fear appeals are used in campaign messages, they should be accompanied by techniques to alleviate the anxiety that is created. In general, public service announcements (PSAs) do not effectively change behaviour. PSAs should be used in conjunction with other campaign activities. More progressive manner use the news media to raise their visibility. The government's role in campaigns is to provide (a) funding for promotional campaigns and (b) suitable leadership on contentious issues. Such campaigns address target audiences' existing knowledge and beliefs that are impeding the adoption of desired behaviours and communicate incentives or benefits for adopting desired behaviours that build on target audiences' existing motives, needs, and values. More effective campaigns direct target audiences' attention to the immediate, high-probability implications of healthy behaviour, and they employ protesting to ensure that campaign messages have the desired effect on target audiences (Shodhganga, 2015).

#### **2.4.10 Role of journalists in drug prevention campaigns**

Journalism is made up of people who write about a wide range of topics; as a result, it is difficult for a journalist to equip himself with a suitable cultural background to deal with every problem precisely and perfectly. It is frequently stated that it is not the reporter's responsibility to educate; rather, the reporter's responsibility is to report (Shodhganga, 2015). Furthermore, reporters were simply unprepared for the phenomenon of drug abuse taking on sinister proportions. Some were unaware of the tragedy surrounding drugs and the subsequent massive increase in consumption. According to Shodhganga (2015), there is a shocking lack of public awareness about the crisis. Informed respondents, including some senior journalists who are supposed to be on top of all public issues, had scant or hazy information about the extent of drug addiction and little knowledge about the law on the subject and its success or failure in curbing the evil, as well as the existence of any de-addiction centre in the city (ibid).

If this is the level of awareness among knowledgeable people, one can only imagine how the general public feels about this issue. It is also true that newspapers tend to sensationalise and even subvert the traumas of those affected in order to make good copy. The journalists also discussed the numerous constraints they faced while

dealing with this issue. Of deadlines that left them no time to conduct research, check details, and obtain informed consent, and of the rush, particularly among television channels, to be the first to broadcast the news, which made maintaining confidentiality nearly impossible. The lack of up-to-date statistics, as well as the reluctance of officials and those in the know to reveal details, were also cited as issues (Wakefield et al., 2010).

Nevertheless, the journalist's dedication to any cause yields positive results. Any successful intervention program must start with a thorough understanding of the phenomenon of addiction, its causes, and the phenomenology of dependence. Addiction is undoubtedly the result of interactions between sociopsychological and physiological factors. The search for a single cause of addiction may be an unrealistic goal. Because of individual differences in personality characteristics, the extent and pattern of interaction of various factors is unique. Virk (2002) believed that today's media and communication progress is marked by currents of change. Journalists lack formal training in specialized fields such as agriculture and food reporting, among other things, when it comes to discussing drug abuse. Whatever professional training is available is only available to a select few. Even these bare-bones journalistic excursions are underutilised by many newspapers. After they return, these journalists are not given assignments that put their specialised training to the test, such as combining research and investigative reporting or even passing on their newfound experience and skills to junior members of the editorial staff (ibid).

- *Evolution of the news reports on drugs*

A study conducted by Kenyangha (2014) noted that the focus on economic issues has resulted in the formation of a school of economic journalists. Similarly, because there were no drugs in India previously, it was natural that we were unaware of the problem. However, young journalists must be made aware of this problem and develop sufficient knowledge to communicate with readers. There should be mandatory oral tests in journalism examinations, which are held every six months and have an average of 500-600 participants. The editorial groups in charge of organising the course for aspiring journalists should devote some lesson time to the issue (ibid).

Scientists make significant scientific breakthroughs about addictive drugs, their effects, treatment interventions, and so on, on a daily basis, and substance abuse and

drug addiction dominate the news. Journalists require up-to-date scientific knowledge in order to write compelling stories. Such programmes, which are designed to provide journalists with the most up-to-date scientific information on drugs and addiction, are desperately needed. There should be regular interactions between journalists and addiction scientists through workshops, seminars, and so on. This will not only provide up-to-date information, but will also assist in an interactive, problem-solving format that engages the skills and knowledge of working journalists (Kenyangha, 2014).

According to the Addiction Studies Program for Journalists (2014), journalists who want to give their stories an extra edge and set themselves apart from competitors, understand why addicts fail to stop using drugs, or looking for new approaches to stories and seeking information about how drugs change the brain and change behaviour, can participate in such interactions. Such gatherings can provide an intensive introduction to the scientific basis of addiction, information about the most recent advances in the field of drug-abuse research, story ideas, ways to deal with the constant flow of information; and misinformation about drug abuse and addiction, ways to better convey accurate information so that readers or viewers can make better decisions about drug policy, and a bank of resources for future reference, and so on. Journalists understand how difficult it can be to "break a habit" (Addiction Studies Program for Journalists, 2014). The program can give ideas for new questions to be asked which can put both drug users and policy makers on the spot for better explanation. In addition, the process will make journalists more sympathetic to the struggle to beat addiction. As they will encounter addiction subject matter, they will have the basic scientific understanding to fairly present addiction as more than mere "bad choices" (Kenyangah, 2014).

- *National Agency for the Campaign against Drug Abuse (NACADA)*

According to the International Centre for Journalists (2001), journalists in Kenya launched an educational outreach campaign to combat drug abuse in the country's educational institutions. The National Agency for the Campaign Against Drug Abuse (NACADA), the Kenya Union of Journalists (KUJ), and the Nation Newspapers Division collaborated on the program. It entailed nationwide "sensitization" campaigns that used the media to demonstrate the consequences of drug abuse. The primary targets were schools, colleges, polytechnics, and universities. Journalists also tried to

persuade parents to assist teachers in combating youth drug abuse. The campaign also featured coordinated editorial "power of the pen" rallies urging Kenyans to combat the drug problem. Journalists believed that the media could no longer afford to simply report on the devastation caused by drug abuse in Kenya. Everyone must be more proactive in combating drug abuse. The initiative transmitted information provided a platform for drug advisors, recommended treatment for drug addicts, and assisted those looking for work who wanted to quit using drugs (Kenyangah, 2014).

Ethical guidelines should be developed for both reporters and copy editors, and specialist writers should cover the drug abuse beat. Journalists could be subjected to intensive training before they begin writing. The media must collaborate with governments and non-governmental organisations to see if "our preoccupation with a different kind of journalism deters us from bringing these issues to the forefront" (Owuor & Nyamieno, 2000:48). Furthermore, the positive groups have their own experiences with how the issue should be prioritised with sensitive and focused handling of the affected person's concerns, rather than just dealing with the seizures, or providing on-the-spot coverage. Statistics that are exaggerated or out of date frequently lead to stigma and discrimination. Understatements and sensationalised reporting cause people to avoid the media. Addicts are afraid of losing what little support they have if they reveal their addiction status. It is perplexed as to why the media rarely came to their aid by emphasising the positive aspects of drug abuse rather than the negative (ibid).

The use of incorrect terminology is especially harmful for those who live full and useful lives. The media felt that this was an issue that should be reported without regard for any particular community or way of life. Facts and details should be double-checked and triple-checked because any distortion, misinterpretation, breach of confidentiality, or sensationalism could cause untold harm to those involved. Media outlets are frequently accused of "false, inaccurate, uninformed, and insensitive reporting." In any case, the media can do a lot to promote positive, accurate, and sensitive reporting that reflects emotion. It is believed that the emphasis should be on individuals and "the human dimension of the issue." It should be noted that discussing larger issues such as poverty, malnutrition, and ignorance, which cannot be resolved in the near future, may not obfuscate the issue. Another suggestion is to write editorials on drug problems at least twice a year in order to reason with those who are a part of the tragedy or who

could fall into the same drugs trap. Two editorials on the drug problem per year does not appear to be too much to ask (Otiende, & Kahuthu, 2002).

In the foregoing, what is required in fighting the drug scourge is a common-sense approach combined with a great deal of dedication. There is a need to ramp up awareness campaigns and go beyond running advertisements in national newspapers and on television, which typically paint a bleak picture of the problem. Education must begin in schools and colleges, where the majority of victims are found. Similar to sex education, information about various types of drugs and their harmful effects must be made available; parents can be called in to teach them how to recognise symptoms and how to deal with addiction problems. Courses of this type can be held in factories and other workplaces. Employers must also be educated so that they can begin to deal with the problem more effectively and responsibly (Kenyangah, 2014).

Furthermore, writers and producers must be provided with ongoing technical assistance; there is a need to convene periodic meetings of technical advisors to review programme content; they should also conduct ongoing data collection to provide feedback to producers/writers. As a result of this analysis of press coverage of drug abuse control in newspapers during 2001, a 'campaign dataset' can be created, allowing movements in opinion during the campaign to be linked to press coverage of the campaign (Kenyangah, 2014).

#### **2.4.11 Effective strategies for drug abuse prevention campaigns**

There has been so much research compiled on successful public health campaigns, either media only or media supplemented by other channels, that a series of generalisations on the most effective ways to use the press have been widely disseminated through the literature for use by communication practitioners (Backer, 2012). Three of the most important principles have proven to be extremely beneficial in our approach to press interventions.

*A. Design a campaign that will achieve widespread, frequent, and prolonged exposure to a message.*

This implies that press campaign messages must have a high reach (the proportion of target audience members who are exposed to a message at least once) and frequency (the average number of exposures per audience member reached). These objectives

are much easier to state than they are to accomplish. To achieve them, campaign practitioners must create messages that elicit high degree of attention from the target audience and disseminate the message through media channels that audience members actually use. It also means that

- Adequate capital resources are necessary to purchase sufficient amounts of time or space in desired media vehicles (such as newspapers, magazines, TV, and radio), or
- Substantial salesmanship and marketing skill should be used to convince media gatekeepers to donate these vital resources at times or locations likely to be seen by the target audiences, or
- A combination of procured and donated time and/or space should be used. To achieve campaign objectives, more campaigns are tuning to this option, with an emphasis on purchasing.

Successful anti-smoking initiatives in California and Massachusetts (Siegel & Biener, 2015) are examples, as is the anti-drug campaign. Paid media schedules are still in the minority in health campaigns, and more research is needed to compare the effectiveness of paid versus donated schedules (Murry, Stam, & Lastovicka, 2016). An investigation by (Murry et al., 2016) discovered no difference in effectiveness; however, the donated campaign in their study closely resembled the paid campaign, which is uncommon in practice. Because the targeting benefits of paid campaigns are usually substantial, they expect the trend toward paid media schedules to continue.

#### *B. Use audience segmentation strategies to target messages to at-risk audiences*

This is the foundation of the social marketing strategy. Fragmentation or targeting can result in much more efficient and effective allocation of campaign messages to those who need it the most. While demographic data can serve as a starting point, any targeting strategy should also include psychographic variables (such as attitudes, values, beliefs, and personality traits) that are linked to both the behaviour of interest (marijuana or other substance use) and the communication channels and message styles most preferred by target audience members (Slater, 2006). In this study, this strategy will use the press to target all demographics who are exposed to *The Sowetan*, *Daily Sun* and *The Citizen* newspapers.

*C. Use formative research throughout the audience segmentation, message design, and channel selection phases.*

Such qualitative and quantitative research is crucial in understanding the target audience's relevant needs, beliefs, behaviour patterns, and attitudes; designing messages to attract and persuade audience members; and determining the media channels and vehicles most commonly used by the audience (Atkin & Freimuth, 2019; Rogers & Storey, 2017). The research should include thorough pre-testing of drug prevention message concepts at the concept, "storyboard" or "rough-cut," and final production stages. This testing should ideally be conducted with members of the target audience, media professionals, and behavioural scientists who are familiar with both the behaviour of interest and theory-based approaches to message design.

Notwithstanding the encouraging growth in the application of these and other principles, many critical questions remain unanswered. A variety of techniques, for example, have proven to be effective, but little is known about the process by which media messages begin to change attitudes and behaviours toward drug abuse. What are the time lags between causes? Is there a better way to design and place prevention messages? How much expensive media time and space are required to effect the desired change? One of the most important and perplexing issues is the effectiveness of various channels in the media mix. Many public relations campaigns, in order to maximise their impact, have used multiple media at the same time, including newspapers, magazines, and billboards, as well as non-media interventions. This makes determining the separate contributions of these various channels to observed changes in outcome variables difficult (Atkin & Freimuth, 2019).

#### **2.4.12 Basic principles for press coverage of drugs**

Based on the preceding discussion, it is critical to develop some basic doctrine for better media mapping for drug abuse control. This could include increasing press coverage of critical issues, stories with human faces highlighting tragedies of untreated addiction or recovery, failures of punitive legal measures, or gaps in treatment. Messages should convey that addiction recovery is both possible and occurring (Werb, Mills, DeBeck, Kerr, Montaner & Wood, 2011). *'Millions of people have quit drugs; you can, too,'* should be the overarching theme for dealing with addicts. Aside from reporting on the latest reports or data on the extent or prevalence of drug abuse,

covering sporting events or official meetings, the focus of news stories could be: compelling individual success stories or people ruined by drugs, tragedies or drug abuse crises, and so on. New stories that are timely and have unusual, distinct, and unexpected revelations hit close to home. The goals of such press coverage may include mobilising support for prevention efforts, reducing stigma and discrimination, increasing the visibility and strength of individuals or organisations, and so on (ibid).

As a result, message design is the most important factor responsible for effective media support in drug abuse control. An unclear message or one depicting how to use drugs, where and how to obtain drugs, at what cost, and so on, can actually be counterproductive. Such press coverage will almost certainly not serve the purpose of reducing drug abuse. It can also boomerang. Some prevention resources may contain subtle messages that contradict the objectives' intent. Individuals who smoke, abuse alcohol, or use other drugs seek justifications for their actions. Here are a few guidelines to follow in this regard:

- Exclude information about drug preparation, acquisition, inhalation, injection, or ingestion methods. Several news reports or write-ups may contain information, photographs, or illustrations, et cetera., about drugs that may convey a message that the author or contributor did not intend. Resources intended to warn against drugs may unintentionally teach someone how to use drugs. Images of people injecting drugs, sniffing cocaine, or drinking alcohol may stimulate the behaviour. It is said that the sight of cocaine and objects, people, paraphernalia, and places can easily trigger a powerful craving for cocaine and emotions associated in the addict's mind with this drug (Kawoosa, 2016).

A recent story in The Times of India (August 11, 2003) titled "*Students flying high on wave of new addictions*" reported on the mode of drug use, names of drugs and their combinations, and other information that can be used otherwise. The story goes as follows:

*"Campuses across the state are on a new high, literally, as Ashish and Santosh ride the wave of "new addictions," trying different concoctions and beyond-your-comprehension methods to "attain a new state of mind", which may even put the Hippies of yore to shame. If Ashish uses a 'submarine' to get a bigger kick out of the traditional 'ganja' and Santosh can't sleep if he doesn't "eat" a lizard every night, parents of another student were horrified when they discovered their son getting a high eating bread and lodex sandwiches. Sociologists and*



*counsellors say it is alarming how the age-old problem of drug abuse on campus is taking horrifying proportions. Late in the night, lights are dimmed in hostel rooms on many a campus as boys get their heads together to create their "submarine."*

Messages emphasising moderation, controlled use or drinking within reasonable limits; restricted use of tobacco; or intermittent popping of prescription or non-prescription pills, according to Kawoosa (2016), send mixed signals to readers that these drugs are acceptable. Rather, the media should highlight total abstinence as a viable option. Furthermore, recommending alternatives to drug-dependent behaviours should be emphasised. The press must smash the notion that the only way to treat a headache is with an over-the-counter analgesic or that the only way to celebrate a special occasion is with an alcoholic beverage. Furthermore, the press can send a strong message that any form or amount of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs is dangerous (ibid).

#### **2.4.13 Moral entrepreneurship on illicit drug abuse**

Moral entrepreneurs ascertain which behaviour patterns are socially acceptable and which are not. Drug policies are created to support the political ideologies of moral entrepreneurs. While reinforcing political ideologies, these policies are not based on scientific reasoning, but rather on moral values that favour the motives of those in power. The regulations on illicit drugs rarely reflect the common good of society; rather, the motivations are to achieve conformity and maintain power (Lee, 2015).

Ethical entrepreneurs use the media to incite drug hysteria in order to force members of society to conform. They send out biased messages to the general public, telling them that drugs are harmful or immoral. As a result, members of society can develop a sense of collective consciousness. A collective consciousness allows members of society to support the government's actions in policy creation and encourages members of society to conform. It is a socialisation agent. Negative societal perceptions of drugs and drug use are created through the media. It is a mechanism used to instil moral panic and strong societal opposition to certain drugs (Montagne, 2011: 849).

Eventually, the press is used by governments to maintain their position at the top of the social hierarchy. The press serves as a means to an end. The information presented about legal and illegal drugs is intended to maintain and reinforce political

ideologies. Hegemony refers to certain social groups exercising social authority and control over marginalised classes by acquiring and shaping consent so that the higher classes' actions and power appear legitimate and natural (Lavoie, 2011: 912). Messages about legal substances frequently do not carry any negative connotations. Illegal drugs, on the other hand, are portrayed negatively in order to influence people's choices. Illicit substance use is frequently constructed in the press in order to legitimise and reproduce political ideologies (McKenna, 2018: 457). Thus, press depictions of illegal drugs uphold hegemonic ideals through persuasion techniques such as promoting propaganda, emphasising negative outcomes, disseminating false information, and censorship.

- *Censorship on illicit drug reporting*

Because of the content restrictions imposed on anything counterhegemonic, biased perceptions of drug use are presented throughout the press. Censorship is frequently justified on moral and political grounds. Governments impose these restrictions in an attempt to make illegal drugs unpopular. People are less likely to become involved if their exposure to drugs is limited. While the music industry is relatively open and unrestricted, the government retains control over what is heard through censorship (Canadian, Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), 1991). There are many restrictions on what is broadcast on the radio, for example. While popular artists' songs are still played, drug references are frequently removed. For example, the word cocaine (an illegal substance) is censored from Sheryl Crow and Kid Rocks' song "Picture." However, whiskey (a legal substance) is permitted on the radio. Preferentially isolating specific keywords implies that talking about drugs is immoral or taboo, as they equate words like "molly" (a reference to MDMA) with profanity. As a result, the subliminal message is received by the target audience within society who do not think critically and may associate illicit drugs with prohibition and immorality. As a result, it is the study's objective to assess the role of reporting on the drug scourge in the selected newspapers.

## **2.5 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

The chapter discussed the press and how it represents the illicit drug scourge both at the international and national levels. The context for the discussion of the academic debate about newspapers and the editorial roles and coverage of the press on drug abuse issues were provided. In addition, the chapter outlined the press and matters of drug abuse observing the following; the press as sources of news and information on drug abuse, the press as organs of public persuasion on drug abuse, influence of the press on shaping public knowledge on drug abuse and the press as an agent of socialisation on drug use. In order to determine the framing of news reports on coverage of illicit drugs the chapter discussed newspaper framing of drug related discourse, newspaper framing of drugs and social behaviour, framing of drug abuse as a disease, relationship between news framing, public opinion, and drug policy and newspaper framing of drugs and criminal justice issues. Furthermore, the chapter addressed the press and editorial coverage of drug abuse in relation to illicit drugs and mortality in international newspapers, representation of drug abuse in African newspapers, press propaganda and education on illicit drugs consumption, press advocacy on drug campaigns and effective strategies for drug abuse prevention campaigns. The next chapter presents literature review on the impediments to effective reporting on the drug scourge.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3. IMPEDIMENTS TO EFFECTIVE REPORTING ON THE ILLICIT DRUG SCOURGE**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The chapter presents and discusses relevant literature on the impediments to effective reporting on the drug scourge in the press. The chapter also reviews literature on freedom of expression, the safety of journalists while reporting drug abuse, and journalism and the expanding human circle of drug abuse. Furthermore, the chapter presents literature on newspaper myths regarding drug addiction and newspaper (mis) representations of illicit drugs.

#### **3.2 FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

Freedom of expression is a crucial human right that is required for several other democratic rights to be realised. It is a right, but it entails responsibility and consideration for others' rights. Limits to free expression are not constant but are influenced by cultural and social context. However, there must be no doubt as to who is responsible (Schudson, 2017). The concept of freedom of expression has legal, ethical, and moral implications. It concerns a universal good. Journalists and media experts play a significant role in the dissemination about news and information that can reveal wrongdoing, hold public institutions responsible, and help to create more just, peaceful, and inclusive societies. Journalists, who work on the front lines of the right to free expression and information, must be able to do so without fear of retaliation or intimidation (World Drug Report, 2018). Subsequently, journalists have the right to report issues of drug abuse freely and without any fear of drug cartels, drug lords and the government.

According to UNESCO (2016), most reporters are attacked in peaceful countries, but disclosing confidential material about, for instance, drug trafficking, human rights violations, or corruption can mean risking one's life. When it comes to defending professional ethics, poorly trained and underpaid journalists are severely disadvantaged. Journalists are corrupted and self-censored as a result of a lack of

security. The use of violence and threats to silence these journalists creates a serious threat to free expression and, as such, is the ultimate act of censorship. Equitably troubling is the fact that more than nine out of ten cases of journalist murder go unsolved. In a climate of fear and self-censorship, the end result is a vicious cycle of impunity, as well as a very likely chilling effect on society. There is an urgent need to draw attention to the alarming number of unsolved journalist murders and the lack of punishment for their offenders all around world (ibid).

As a result, even in countries that rank high on a variety of indicators measuring the vitality of democracy, welfare, freedom of expression, the absence of corruption, and other similar indicators, voices are silenced through social media expressions of hatred, harassment, and threats directed at journalists and other media workers; it is about instilling fear (Hagen, 2015, Löfgren & Ornebring, 2016). Even in these countries, attacks effectively silence societal debate on critical issues such as ethnic diversity, equality, and human rights. There are also indications of a centrally concocted propaganda war, led by state actors, in which journalists are one of the primary targets of digital attacks and abuse. Digital security is an obvious and integral part of the issue of journalistic freedom while reporting on the global drug problem (ibid).

According to the UNESCO (2018) report, the murder of journalists and media experts is the utmost form of censorship. It is not only a serious human rights violation, but it also reflects a wider threat on the collaborative freedom of speech and expression and access to information. According to the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, protecting journalists from attacks is "fundamental not only for reporters to be able to perform their work, but also for society's access to information and for government accountability." Individuals' voices are censored, others are intimidated, and self-censorship is encouraged, resulting in a "chilling effect" on free expression (ibid).

For many years, the media has been the lifeline of free expression. The presence of pluralism and media independence is essential to democratic rule, and media freedom is critical to the practice of journalism. Journalists who exercise their right to free expression through their work must be allowed to do so without restriction. In the age of globalisation and digitisation, this is the responsibility of the state, courts, media

companies and journalist organisations, but also of NGOs and civil society (UNESCO, 2018). Every day, new forms of censorship and repression emerge, including self-censorship, surveillance, monitoring and control, gatekeeping, propaganda - disinformation, terrorist acts, anti-terror legislation, criminalisation of encryption and/or anonymity, hate speech and harassment, and organised crime. These are critical issues in many countries, but particularly in areas experiencing social, ethnic, and political stress, armed conflict, or natural disasters (ibid). Subsequently, journalists and editors should be at liberty to report critical issues such as drug abuse. In addition, the right to freedom of expression is essential, because journalists and editors will ensure that readers are cognisant of the state of drug abuse in South Africa. Hence, the study's intent to establish the challenges faced by journalists when reporting about drug abuse in South Africa.

### **3.3 THE SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS WHILE REPORTING DRUG ABUSE**

Journalism is still a dangerous profession all over the world. Speaking the truth to power, investigating drug trafficking, crime, and corruption, holding governments accountable, and reporting from dangerous places all carry the risk of violent retaliation, harassment, or arbitrary detention (UNESCO, 2018). The frequency and regularity of harassment and violence directed at journalists increased between 2012 and 2017, most notably in the number of journalists killed while carrying out their work.

According to the Media Development Global Report (2017/2018), there are a number of other ways that journalists' safety is jeopardised. Aside from killings, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator includes kidnappings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, and torture. Threats and intimidation are also types of attacks, as are beatings, confiscation of equipment, forced exile, and sexual harassment. Cyber-attacks on websites and equipment, arbitrary surveillance, and online harassment are all examples of digital dimensions of attacks. All of these can be occupational hazards for those producing and disseminating journalism, particularly on sensitive topics like drugs, drug trafficking, and organised crime. Such violence and harassment can be the result of state or non-state actors' actions, contextual factors like political and social circumstances, or norms that legitimise intolerance (ibid). For example, the region of Latin America and the Caribbean has seen a substantial increase in journalist killings,

which are majorly linked to organised crime, drug trafficking, and corruption. Killings in the Arab region remain high despite ongoing conflict and upheaval; however, numbers have slowly begun to decline since a peak in 2012. Furthermore, the Africa region experienced a spike in journalist deaths in 2012 but has since seen a significant drop (ibid).

According to (UNESCO, 2016), there have been cases of intentional murder in which journalists, or their sources have been targeted. Over the last ten years, more than 800 journalists, media workers, and social media producers have been killed. During the last two years, 59% of these killed journalists were killed in war zones, while 41% were killed outside of armed conflict zones. Only 5% of these professionals were foreign correspondents, while 95% were locals. The same is true for non-lethal attacks, which range from intimidation, harassment, and arbitrary detention to misogynistic attacks on female journalists (ibid).

The safety of journalists and the issue of impunity are linked to a variety of factors, including media structure, media law, media ownership, access to media, digital inclusion, media literacy, gender, journalism education, and so on; all of which must be viewed in the context of a political, economic, and cultural context. Not to mention the global approach; many efforts, including human rights, media development, education, and media international prosecutors and examining magistrates, are required when states fail to handle the investigation of violence against media workers (UNESCO, 2016).

However, in order to make progress, knowledge is required. It is critical for researchers to broaden their theoretical and analytical frameworks. This has far too often been overlooked in contemporary research, but there is now an urgent need for empirical findings, theoretical insights, and analytical concepts. Academic research of the type described above is critical and can significantly improve our understanding of the complex issue of journalist safety, thereby contributing to safer working conditions for everyone who produces journalism (UNESCO, 2016). Furthermore, it can aid in the resolution of broader societal issues and systematic problems such as corruption, a lack of good governance, a weak rule of law, and inequality. The challenge is not only to explain the problems, but also to contribute to solutions and communicate with those

in authority so that research findings on the safety of journalists reporting on illegal drugs make a difference.

- *Dangers and paradoxes of covering drug abuse*

Covering "narco-trafficking," the news media's popular term for illegal drugs and their trafficking, is one of the most difficult tasks in journalism. It is even more difficult to cover these issues from both sides of the border, where all forms of violence converge with all forms of trafficking: drugs, arms, and people; and with multiple organised crime groups and complex phenomena such as maquilas (foreign assembly plants), poverty, and emigration in the south, and "Minutemen," growing prejudice, and debates over marijuana legalisation in the north (Sierra, 2019).

Colombian news organisations are frequently compared to those in Mexico. Another popular stereotype is Mexico's "Colombianisation." However, this comparison overlooks the fact that drug lord attacks on Colombia's press began with the top echelons of the media in the mid-1980s. Pablo Escobar kidnapped one of the owners of the country's leading newspaper, assassinated the editor, and blew up the second most-read newspaper's building. This elicited an almost immediate outpouring of solidarity from the media, but many killings occurred over the course of nearly a decade before journalistic organisations emerged to defend the profession. In Mexico, the opposite has occurred. Almost no one remembers the names of the 60 journalists killed in recent years, and professional solidarity is as scarce as diamonds (Sierra, 2019).

Furthermore, the emergency that Mexican journalism is currently facing cannot be met without solidarity; without a joint battle among all media to demand that the government fulfil its responsibilities; without large national media supporting small local media; and without mechanisms to ensure that information that is repressed or self-censored in a "plaza" (the term used by gangsters to designate towns and villages that they are fighting to capture) can be published (Sierra, 2019:37). It takes time to build this solidarity, as it has taken many deaths and horrors to examine the coverage critically, to review the usual parameters, and to identify the conundrums that monopolise it. Mexican journalism is attempting to protect itself while also producing quality coverage. This occurs at varying rates and with varying degrees of success, with anonymous heroes attempting to report, deceased colleagues unable to do so,



and far too many media, reporters, and editors forced to wear the straitjacket of self-censorship. Building such unity is a difficult task, but it is essential (ibid).

Drug trafficking is a global phenomenon, but it is almost always portrayed as a local problem. Drugs, their regulation, and trafficking are all international rather than national issues. For example, Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzmán is more than just a Mexican personality; he is a protagonist in a drama that also includes characters like the price of cocaine in Moscow, the rise of consumption in the United Kingdom, Spain, the United States, and Brazil, political-military riots in Guinea-Bissau, the changing division of labour among groups of Colombian and Mexican traffickers since the 1980s, and a century of history of the sale of prohibited drugs (Sierra, 2019).

### **3.4 JOURNALISTS KILLED WHILE WORKING ON ASSIGNMENTS**

According to UNESCO (2020), 12 journalists died in 2018 while working on specific assignments such as field reports, documentary filmmaking, or conducting interviews. Three (n-3) Russian journalists were killed in the Central African Republic while working on an investigative documentary; three (n-3) Ecuadorian media workers were killed in Colombia while documenting drug-related border violence; two (n-2) died in Guatemala on their way to cover a local carnival; one (n-1) was killed in Mexico while driving a company van with his news outlet's logo; two (n-2) died in Pakistan; and one (n-1) was shot while he tried to conduct an interview, and the other was shot while driving with his camera-person; one (n-1) died in India after being sent by his media outlet to cover state assembly elections. In 2019, one (n-1) journalist from Colombia was killed while he was working on a specific assignment (ibid).

UNESCO (2020) further noted that On December 30, 2017, José Luis Romero, who worked for Radio Línea Directa in the western state of Sinaloa, was kidnapped at gunpoint from a restaurant in the city of Los Mochis. Romero was reportedly shot in the head and shoulder, with his hands and legs broken; his body was discovered in a black bag near the city more than two weeks later. The journalist "paid with his life for our right to be informed," said Irina Bokova, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). According to the International Press Institute, a non-governmental organisation, José Luis Romero was the second Mexican journalist killed that year, and at least eleven (n-11) media

professionals were murdered in the country, the majority of whom had been covering drug trafficking and crime (UNESCO, 2020)

According to another UNESCO report (2020), sixty-two (n-62) journalists were killed simply for doing their jobs in 2020. The UN agency stated that between 2006 and 2020, over 1,200 professionals died in the same way, and in nine out of ten cases, the killers went unpunished. Because of statistics like these, the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists will be held in 2021, emphasizing the importance of prosecutorial services not only in bringing killers to justice, but also in prosecuting threats of violence. The UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, noted in his message that many journalists have died while covering conflict, but the number of media workers killed outside conflict zones has increased in recent years. "In many countries, simply investigating corruption, human trafficking, human rights violations, or environmental issues puts journalists' lives in danger," UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said.

Furthermore, the UN chief stated "that crimes against journalists have an enormous impact on society as a whole because they prevent people from making informed decisions. Journalists face countless other threats, ranging from kidnapping, torture and arbitrary detention to disinformation campaigns and harassment, particularly in the digital sphere. For Guterres, "crimes against journalists have an enormous impact on society as a whole because they prevent people from making informed decisions." "The COVID-19 pandemic, and the shadow pandemic of misinformation, has demonstrated that access to facts and science is literally a matter of life and death," he said. "When access to information is threatened, it sends a disturbing message that undermines democracy and the rule of law." Guterres also noted that women journalists are at particular risk (UNESCO, 2020).

"*The Chilling: Global Trends in Online Violence Against Women Journalists*" published by UNESCO in 2020 highlighted that 73% of female journalists polled said they had been threatened, intimidated, or insulted online as a result of their work. The Secretary-General urged Member States to show political will to investigate and prosecute these crimes by standing in solidarity with journalists around the world. Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, also sent a message on the occasion, saying that "telling the truth comes at a price" for far too many journalists. "When

attacks against journalists go unpunished, the legal system and safety frameworks have failed everyone.” “States thus have an obligation to protect journalists and to ensure that the perpetrators of crimes against them are punished. “Judges and prosecutors, in particular, have an important role to play in promoting swift and effective criminal proceedings,” she said (UNESCO, 2020).

UNESCO (2021) noted that it has trained nearly 23,000 judicial officials in recent years, including judges, prosecutors, and lawyers. The training covered international standards for free expression and journalist safety, with a particular emphasis on issues of impunity. The agency's #EndImpunity campaign in 2021 highlighted some of the specific dangers that journalists face in their pursuit of the truth. "We can only advance peace, justice, and sustainable development in our societies by allowing the truth to be spoken," Azoulay concluded. Commemorations in 2021 also paved the way for the 10-year anniversary of the United Nations Plan of Action on Journalist Safety and the Issue of Impunity, which will be commemorated in 2022 (ibid).

- *Self-protection mechanisms for journalists*

According to UNESCO 2020, recent funding from the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) has allowed 17 journalists from Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela to receive training on self-protection mechanisms and investigative journalism techniques specific to covering drug trafficking and organised crime. The workshop covered topics such as how to handle confidential sources and information in order to reveal the truth without jeopardising the safety of others. As a result of the workshop, participants produced six investigative reports on drug trafficking and organised crime, some of which were published by major Colombian media outlets such as Semana magazine and La Verdad newspaper, as well as posted on the Cosecha Roja Network (ibid).

Furthermore, this IPDC project was coordinated by UNESCO's Office in Quito in partnership with the Foundation for a New Journalism (FNPI) and falls within the framework of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. The workshop was led by a group of Colombian experts, including Ivaro Sierra, a journalist who specialises in covering drugs and conflicts; Francisco Thoumi, an expert on international narcotics control; and Socorro Ramirez, an expert on Colombia's border studies (UNESCO, 2020).

### **3.5 JOURNALISM AND THE EXPANDING HUMAN CIRCLE OF DRUG ABUSE**

Journalism expresses deep historical trends and shifts in human sensibility in various ways. These can help to gradually 'expand the human circle' in globalised times, incorporating those in jeopardy who deserve and now rightly demand wider recognition and global response. This perspective on journalism differs from the primary theoretical frameworks typically considered when attempting to critically engage with contemporary journalism, its production, practices, and performance - whether political economy, sociology of news organisations and practices, or cultural-studies approaches to journalism's texts, representations, and dominant discourses such as drug use, crime, drug trafficking, and so on (Schudson, 2017).

These and other theoretical optics undoubtedly aid in making sense of journalism performance and practices, but their gaze is generally fixed on a relatively short time span, thereby overlooking the significantly longer-term historical trajectories at work in journalism's communicative goals and professional and civil commitments on topical issues (Singer, 2017). To better understand the motivations of journalists and the mobilisation of journalism as a distinct, communicative, and collective enterprise in the modern era capable of both reporting on and recognising the human plight of others in unruly and uncivil places, it is necessary to understand how journalism is caught in the vortices of history. This, along with the political economics of the marketplace, the sociology of news organisations, and the competing discourses of propaganda and power, historically grounds and helps to better account for the assignment of journalists who willingly and knowingly place themselves in dangerous situations while reporting on drug abuse, drug trafficking, and organised crime (Singer, 2017).

Furthermore, in order to comprehend how and why journalism has increasingly sought to report on and bear witness to drugs, human injustices, and violence around the world, it is necessary to situate the emergence and development of journalism in relation to deep-seated historical antecedents and ongoing influences based within civil society. This includes a growing historical acceptance of distant others as not so dissimilar to us. The 'expanding human circle' (Nussbaum, 2014; Shermer, 2015) can be traced back to a number of underlying historical processes, some of which date back thousands of years, as well as the evolution of human society (Harari, 2014).

Bella (2011) maintains that the rise of the first axial age (monotheistic, universalising) religions, for example, in the middle centuries of the first millennium BC, has been seen as crucial in opening up a religio-normative space for critique and social challenge. This has evolved over time and is now able to be directed at existing power hierarchies and dominance structures (Armstrong, 2015). This more abstract or 'theoretic' communicative disposition evolved from earlier forms of communication that evolved in the Palaeolithic age, supplementing earlier mimetic (gestural) and later ritual modes of sociability and collective life (Bellah, 2011; Bellah & Joas, 2012).

The origins and systematisation of justice and law, both on and off the field of battle (Crowe, 2014), also made a significant contribution to historically evolving perspectives on what can be perceived and experienced as fair, equitable, and just. These beliefs were founded on deep-seated moral values and were not primarily about vengeance and the recognition of hierarchical power (Bahrani 2008; Johnston, 2011). However, as justice has evolved, such ideas and sentiments have become available to fuel social critique and support change initiatives (Alexander, 2016). This change must also be observed in regard to the historical background of journalists reporting issues such as drug abuse to prompt societal conversations on the drug problem faced by South Africa.

The advancement of city states, trade, and the 'gentle hand' of commerce (Mann, 2012) further encouraged social interaction across different communities and geographically dispersed groups, contributing to associational relationships based not on mistrust or traditional enmities but on shared interests and common recognition - though clearly these same processes can also promote competitive rivalries and the marketplace can also underpin forms of national conflict or war. From the Middle Ages to the present, state formation, war, and the (internal) pacification of violence have arguably contributed to a growing sense of moral repugnance at naked, brutal violence in public spaces, and such shifting sentiments have increasingly encroached upon the private sphere (Morris, 2014).

### **3.6 NEWSPAPER MYTHS REGARDING DRUG ADDICTION**

During the rise in crack use between 1984 and 1990, a steady stream of misinformation and media myths took up a substantial amount of reporting efforts during a time of intense press scrutiny and pressure on journalists to deliver hard-hitting news coverage. While the veracity of these myths has long been debunked, a 2014 study of crack-related newspaper coverage discovered that a common media trend to intensify drug coverage was to separate crack from other drugs (Levine & Reinerman, 2014). One of the most efficient and widely used strategies was to assert that crack was not the same as cocaine (Levine & Reinerman, 2014). The press began using words like "epidemic" and "plague" to describe the increased use of crack while informing audiences that it was instantly addictive (ibid).

A content analysis of crack-related articles published in The New York Times, Time, and Newsweek between 1985 and 1995 revealed a troubling pattern of myths perpetuated in the press and a disappointing lack of correction after research proved the myths false (Golub & Hartman, 2013). According to the study, 66% of crack-related articles in The New York Times in 1986 perpetuated at least one myth (Golub & Hartman, 2013). This figure had only dropped to 30% by 1995. One study also discovered that almost all crack use reports were based on urban users, despite the fact that this did not represent national drug use overall (ibid). The article debunks the top three crack-user myths perpetuated by the media: crack is the most dangerous drug, it leads to violent behaviour, and crack dealers are extremely wealthy. The study tracked the number of crack-related articles published between 1985 and 1995, as well as how the increase was communicated to the public. The author examined opioid-related drug coverage in both national and local print media throughout 2014 to determine how the opioid crisis was framed and whether harmful drug-related stereotypes were perpetuated. The author posed a specific research question: What information, statistics, and imagery did print news media use to narrate and frame the rise in opioid addiction? (Levine & Reinerman, 2014). Subsequently, the study's need to assess the framing of news reports on drugs in the selected newspapers as this might help to debunk and/or demystify the myths surrounding words used in the selected newspapers to determine the magnitude of the drug scourge.

### **3.7 NEWSPAPER (MIS) REPRESENTATIONS OF ILLICIT DRUGS**

Policymakers also use newspapers to validate and produce hegemonic ideals by presenting biased and false information. This is done on purpose. The press and the government work together to persuade people to believe certain things about drugs and drug use, and government officials essentially form an opinion about drugs on the individual's behalf (Goode, 2012:9). This becomes ingrained in society's collective consciousness, and public support takes on a life of its own beyond the individual, where public opinion becomes a reflection of the ideals presented in the media. Most people regard the news as a reliable source of information. However, news stations have hidden agendas as well.

One aspect of this is that they are supported by policymakers and thus serve their interests. Exaggerations, information distortions, and sensationalism are common in news stories (Montagne, 2011:849). The language used in news stories is also very influential. Reporters covering drug stories frequently associate drug terminology with words like crisis, fatal overdose, violence, and crime. Drug use is constructed as a problem simply by the presence of two negatively perceived social facts. Although not scientifically founded or fully understood, media discourses on drugs are frequently negative simply because they have been prohibited for so long that people do not know any other way (ibid).

Drug use is also incorrectly portrayed in the media as a criminal problem (Roberts, Henriksen, & Christenson, 2011). Drug consumption is frequently associated with other criminal activities to feed an assumed addiction. They are portrayed as dangerous criminals. However, there is rarely any consideration for the structural root causes of why people engage in drug activity. Some may use it to avoid the pressures of being a productive member of society (Goode, 2012:9). Others may use it recreationally to disconnect from the social world and relax (Osborne & Fogel, 2018:562). Others may seek illegal drugs for the sake of convenience. To elaborate, the true reason for using drugs could be that one's social position prevents them from obtaining drugs legally, forcing them to resort to illegal means. People continue to believe moralistic understandings of drug use as a result of a lack of social understanding, preventing evidence-based policy changes (ibid).

There is no dominant discourse in media reporting and representation; what Urbis Key Young (2013) refers to as 'variable' quality in press coverage reflects inter-media reporting differences as well as differences across media genres. Indeed, across the media industry, editors and journalists frequently openly disagree about how drug issues should be covered and have publicly chastised their colleagues in some cases. And there are numerous competing positions, viewpoints, and arguments among drug users and their careers. Hence, the study's need to analyse challenges that impede journalists' editorial role in presenting news reports on the consumption of illicit drugs in the *Daily Sun*, *The Sowetan* and *The Citizen* newspapers.

### **3.8 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

The chapter discussed impediments to effective reporting on drug scourge regarding freedom of expression, the safety of journalists while reporting drug abuse, journalists killed while working on assignments, journalism and the expanding human circle, newspaper myths regarding drug addiction, and newspapers (mis) representation of illicit drugs. Furthermore, the chapters presented dangers and paradoxes of covering drug abuse and self-protection mechanisms for journalists reporting drug abuse. The following chapter is a discussion of the methodology adopted for the study.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher addresses the research methodology and design adopted for the study. The chapter also discusses the method used to collect data from expert informants and news reports on illicit drugs in *The Sowetan*, *Daily Sun* and *The Citizen* newspapers. The researcher adopts the qualitative research approach to interrogate the editorial role of the selected newspapers in reporting about drug abuse, determine the framing of news reports on the coverage of illicit drugs in the selected newspapers, analyse challenges that impede journalists' editorial role in presenting news reports on the consumption of illicit drugs and recommend an editorial tool kit to benefit a dissuasive campaign against the rampant consumption of illicit drugs in South Africa. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the population and sampling procedures, outlines the area of study, and justifies the choice of data collection methods, and data analysis. Finally, the researcher presents a discussion of the quality criteria, ethical considerations, limitations of the study, and the summary of the chapter.

#### 4.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

This section of the study discusses qualitative research and descriptive research as the adopted approach and design for the study respectively in subsection 4.2.1 and 4.2.2. This entails the description of the purpose and justification of the methods in this type of study.

##### 4.2.1 Qualitative Research Approach

The study employed a qualitative research approach. The researcher adopted Creswell's (2014) proposition that, qualitative research is a research method that is based on the observation philosophy that takes an open, flexible, and unstructured approach to inquiry with the goal of exploring diversity rather than quantifying data about the phenomenon under investigation. For the purposes of this study, qualitative research aimed to discover and comprehend the meanings behind news reports on

illicit drugs in the selected newspapers and to provide journalists and editors' experiences when covering such stories. In addition, qualitative approach shed light on meanings behind news reports that are less perceptible. The approach helped the researcher to investigate 'what,' 'why,' and 'how' the illicit drug scourge is reported on in the selected newspapers, as opposed to use of the 'how much' and 'how many' elements preferred in quantitative studies. Furthermore, qualitative research is useful for studying experiences because it avoids the quantitative preoccupation with measuring, counting, and predicting in favour of describing, exploring, understanding, and interpreting a concept (ibid). Thus, the approach was deemed suitable for the study of news construction on the drug scourge as a social phenomenon which needs to be understood from an interpretivist paradigm.

#### **4.2.2 Descriptive Research Design**

For the study, the researcher used a descriptive qualitative design. According to Engel and Schutt (2017), descriptive qualitative design is necessary because it is mostly associated with describing words and language rather than measurements, statistics, and numerical figures. The employment of descriptive qualitative design allowed the researcher to gather news reports on the scourge of drugs, and then describe what has been observed in the news reports. In addition, the researcher espoused the design because it was suitable for the description of frames on news reports on the scourge of illicit drugs in the selected newspapers, where limited or no prior information exists. By using a descriptive design, the researcher was also able to describe the editorial role of the selected newspapers in reporting about drug abuse in *The Sowetan*, *Daily Sun*, and *The Citizen* newspapers by gathering first-hand information on the views of expert informants. In addition, the researcher analysed the challenges that impede the selected newspapers' editorial role in presenting comprehensive news reports on the illicit drugs scourge.

The choice of the design enabled the researcher to examine the news reports under study, by collecting detailed information through a qualitative content analysis data collection procedure. Furthermore, the design allowed the researcher to explore the representation of the illicit drug scourge in the South African selected newspapers in depth, which provided rich information that assisted with the synthesis of themes that emerged from the data.

## 4.3 POPULATION AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES

### 4.3.1 Population

According to White (2015:113), a population is a collection of objects, events, or individuals who share some characteristics that the researcher is interested in studying. This study's population consisted of newspaper expert informants (professional journalists and editors) and the South African selected newspapers namely *The Citizen*, *Daily Sun*, and *The Sowetan*. According to a survey of the South African Audience Research Foundation (2017), the South African press industry has a market that comprises 23 daily and 25 major urban newspapers in South Africa, most published in English which target communities locally and nationally. In addition, about 50% of the South African adult population are newspaper readers and newspapers account for about 19.3% of the R34.4bn of advertising money spent in the country (South African Audience Research Foundation, 2017).

State of the Newsroom (2019/2020:71) noted that the demographics of expert informants show that there is a total of over 100 national and regional commercial newspapers editors in South Africa. Black editors make 49%, whereas White comprises 28%, Coloureds 13%, and Indians 10% of the population in the South African press. However, in terms of being a useful indicator in this context, the percentages do not yet reflect the national racial percentages of the population (around 10% of the population in South Africa is White).

Similarly, the State of the Newsroom report (2018) states that the number of professional journalists in the South Africa has decreased over the last decade to 2019. The report also discovered that the South African journalist workforce had been cut in half over a decade, from 10,000 in 2008 to 5000 in 2019. According to the report, the number of journalists in Western capitalist societies has also decreased, but their workload has increased. This means that journalists who remain on the front lines will face "heavier workloads and other significant changes in labour conditions associated with digitalisation" (ibid). Despite this broad sphere of the press industry in South Africa, the study focused on practitioners who work within the national English medium newspapers only.

### 4.3.2 Sampling procedures

Sampling is the process of identifying the unit or group of people from the entire population who will participate in the study (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2016). The sample in this study refers to *The Sowetan*, *Daily Sun*, and *The Citizen* newspaper editions, news reports on illicit drugs in the newspapers, and professional journalists and editors in the South African press.

- *Purposive Sampling Technique*

Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling was used to collect data for this study. According to Leiner (2014), purposive sampling also known as judgment sampling, is a method in which the researcher determines what information is required and then sets out to find it using his or her knowledge or experience. Saunders (2018) posits that purposive sampling ensures intensive study of the selected items. Purposive sampling produces better results when the researcher is objective and capable of keen observation and sound judgment. For the purpose of this study, purposive sampling was selected to examine the content of South Africa's three daily newspapers regarding illicit drugs news reporting. As its name suggests, a purposive sample has been chosen for a specific purpose, that is, the deliberate and conscious selection of newspapers which published news on illicit drug abuse (ibid).

- *Purposive sampling for newspapers*

Purposive sampling was employed to select *The Sowetan*, *Daily Sun*, and *The Citizen* due to their generic appeal to ordinary readers particularly the youth (Audit Bureau Circulation, 2018), who form the largest section of the South African population (Statistics South Africa, 2019). Purposive sampling is used in several types of research, including achieving representativeness, allowing for comparisons, focusing on specific, unique issues or cases, and generating theory through the gradual accumulation of data from various sources (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Therefore, in this study the sampling technique was used to focus on the three aforementioned newspapers to gather data from news reports on illicit drugs.

With a daily readership of 141 187, the *Daily Sun* is South Africa's largest daily newspaper, targeting readers in and around the country's major urban centers (Audit Bureau Circulation, 2018). *The Sowetan*, with a daily circulation of 70 120 copies, is

the *Daily Sun's* main competitor, focusing on issues that affect the majority of South Africa's black readership. *The Citizen* is a daily national newspaper that covers a wide range of social issues and is politically aligned with the right. It has a daily circulation of 45 358 copies (ibid).

However, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2017:157) argue that, while purposive sampling may satisfy the researcher's need for this type of sample, it does not pretend to represent the larger population; rather, it is deliberately and unabashedly selective and biased. For example, this study did not sample every issue of the three newspapers namely, *Daily Sun*, *The Sowetan* and *The Citizen*; it solely selected issues which published illicit drugs stories during a particular period of the study. Therefore, purposive sampling is flexible and meets multiple needs and interests and enables the researcher to select a sample based on the purpose of the study and knowledge of a population.

- *Purposive sampling for news reports*

The news reports were selected with an intent to determine the framing of news reports on illicit drugs presented in the publications. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2017:156), in purposive sampling, which is often (but not always) a feature of qualitative research, researchers hand-pick the cases to be included in the sample based on their assessment of their typicality or possession of particular characteristics being sought. In this way, they can compile a sample that meets their specific requirements.

The study selected a total of one hundred and sixteen (n=116) news reports published between 01 January 2017 and 31 December 2017, a time when illicit drug-related news reports were aplenty and made headlines as a result of the rise in drug-related crimes in South African communities. The sampling technique was also used for its less costly and minimal time-consuming qualities. It further ensures proper representation of the research subject when the investigation has full knowledge of the composition of the subject and is free from bias. The technique also prevents unnecessary and irrelevant items entering into the sample per chance (Cohen, et al., 2017).

### 4.3.3. Sampling stages

In this study the sampling procedures comprised three stages.

- *Stage 1: The selection of the newspapers*

The first stage involved selecting a sample of 260 editions of *The Sowetan*, *Daily Sun* and *The Citizen* newspapers that fell within the specified time frame of this study, from the accessible population of the hard copies made available to the researcher. The researcher selected all issues of the dailies for the year 2017, because the use and abuse of illicit drugs was rampant among South African youth (SAPS Statistics, 2020). Thereafter, the researcher looked at the target population (selected newspapers) and later extracted a sample (illicit drugs news reports). The study focused on a small sample based on Creswell's (2014) contention that "large samples in qualitative research may result in the generation of an amount of data that is difficult, if not impossible, to manage and to analyse in meaningful ways". Qualitative research therefore calls for small samples. Streubert & Carpenter (2019:302) agree that for completeness, qualitative methods necessitate a small, purposeful sample. They contend that the sample size is not fixed. When data saturation occurs, that is, when no new data emerges but previously collected data is repeatedly reintroduced into the study, the required sample size in qualitative research is determined.

Furthermore, qualitative research focuses on the quality of information derived from the documents or participants, rather than on the size of the sample (Burns and Grove 2016:257). The researcher continued to access the newspapers with the intention to get more information on the scourge of illicit drugs, until it reached saturation level and then analysed and endeavoured to give a sound interpretation of the analysed news reports.

- *Stage 2: The selection of the news reports:*

The second stage involved the selection of the news reports from the selected newspaper editions of the study. Particular news reports were selected, because it was impossible to collect all the newspaper reports and editorials from the hard copies available for analysis. The news reports were selected based on a preliminary analysis of the number of published news reports on the scourge of illicit drugs in the newspapers under study. The researcher used news selection criteria to identify 116

news reports of *The Sowetan*, *Daily Sun* and *The Citizen* that focused on illicit drugs within the period of the study.

According to Mugera (2013), purposive sampling has the advantage of a wide range of sampling techniques that can be used to achieve the goal of the wide range of qualitative research designs used by researchers. Regardless of the type of purposive sampling used, the disadvantage of purposive sampling is that it is highly susceptible to researcher bias. When it comes to reducing possible researcher biases, the idea that a purposive sample was created based on the researcher's judgment is not a good defense. The judgmental, subjective component of purposive sampling, on the other hand, is only a significant disadvantage when such judgments are ill-conceived (ibid).

- *Stage 3: Selection of the expert informants*

Purposive sampling was useful in the instance of selecting professional journalists and editors because it provided a range of non-probability sampling techniques for the researcher to draw on. Purposive sampling, according to Teddlie and Yu (2017), involves a trade-off: on the one hand, it provides greater depth to the study than probability sampling; on the other hand, it provides less breadth to the study than probability sampling. This sampling technique was opted for due to its academic strengths. However, in purposive sampling, the subjectivity and non-probability-based nature of unit selection; selecting people, cases, et cetera., means that convincing the reader that the judgment used to select units to study was appropriate can be difficult. As a result, convincing the reader that the researcher achieved theoretical / analytical and logical generalisation can be difficult (Mugera, 2013). However, the selected participants for this for study had identified proof of identification and work experience in media houses for authentication.

#### **4.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

In this study, data were collected through qualitative content analysis and in-depth interviews. Permission was granted to access the newspaper editions and to interview the expert informants. The researcher collected news reports on illicit drugs published

in the selected newspaper Furthermore, the researcher collected data from of professional journalists and editors of South African newspapers.

#### **4.4.1 Qualitative Content Analysis**

According to Fourie (2017), content analysis is a method of gathering and analysing textual content. Words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that can be communicated in news reports are examples of this kind of content. The term "text" refers to any written, visual, or spoken medium of communication. Books, newspaper or magazine articles, advertisements, speeches, official documents, films or videotapes, musical lyrics, photographs, clothing, or works of art are all examples of text (ibid). This study used qualitative content analysis to determine the framing of news on illicit drugs scourge in the newspapers understudy, and themes emerged as a result of this procedure. When similar combinations of the aforementioned traits were found in an article, for example, a theme was produced. The news reports were then coded based on the presence or absence of each theme's distinct attributes. Multiple themes frequently appeared in each piece, and they were not limited to the newspaper in which they were first discovered. Subsequently, the following themes were highlighted in the study; the selected newspapers' editorial focus on the drug scourge, editorial approach to the drug scourge consumption; major themes in the selected newspapers' coverage of the drug scourge, tabloid press, drug scourge and national consciousness, and the selected newspapers drug scourge and government interventions.

The choice to study media texts (news reports on illicit drugs) was motivated by the understanding that examining media content is crucial for understanding framing (Borah, 2011). This is because the media are key social institutions where framing takes place, especially regarding social and political issues (McCombs, 2014). The study yielded frames such as the crime violence frame, race, gender, and class frames, the scare-alarmist frame, foreign national scapegoat frame, the helpless frame, blame frame, and the interventionist frame.

According to McCombs (2014), mass media provide an avenue for issues to be recognised as important by citizens who may not share the same experiences or spatial-temporal context. In the case of the scourge of illicit drugs, it has been



established that what most people know about drug use and abuse is from media reports since some do not have first-hand experience with drugs.

Gorman & Clayton (2015:213) posit that content analysis is another approach to textual data analysis in qualitative enquiries. This classifies textual material by reducing it to more relevant, manageable bits of data. The authors assert that content analysis is a more strictly quantitative method because it involves measuring selected units of text and drawing comparisons. They do, however, state that when used in conjunction with other qualitative data analysis methods, it provides a supplement to qualitative text coding (du Plooy, 2019). Of particular relevance to this study is the view that content analysis of news reports has been employed to establish how news sources and statements are used to promote the view on illicit drugs scourge to the readers.

- *Advantages of Content Analysis*

One of the advantages of content analysis is its potential to identify trends occurring over long periods of time. In this study, the coverage of illicit drugs news reports in different daily newspapers over a 12-month period was studied trying to understand the selected print media's resolve or willingness to cover drug abuse issues. The choice of newspapers to carry more hard news stories than soft news and vice versa was interrogated and contextualised. Data on determining how news reports on the coverage of illicit drugs in the selected newspapers are framed were collected through qualitative content analysis. This is a process that involves examining what has been written in the stories relating to illicit drug use. Content analysts assume that behavioural patterns, values, and attitudes found in the material reflect and affect the behaviours, attitudes, and values of the people who read the material (Fourie, 2017).

According to Keyton (2011:63), qualitative research serves to preserve the form and content of human interaction. These preservations, which are frequently in the form of text, are evaluated but not subjected to mathematical transformations, as is the case with quantitative research. Rather, qualitative research methods emphasise empirical, inductive, and interpretive approaches applied to interaction within a specific context.

In addition, the researcher used the inductive category development to code the variables of the news reports and decided whether the level of analysis would be one specific word, a key phrase, or a string of words. The researcher opted for qualitative

research for this study; this was dictated by the nature of information being researched. Qualitative content analysis looked at the framing of illicit drugs scourge, focalisation of the editorials: the simplistic approach, lexical choices, their genres (analytical or literary), contextualisation of the illicit drugs discourse, application of alternate news angles, and the editorial style of news reports.

#### **4.4.2 In-depth Interview**

In addition to the existing literature on the role of the press in addressing drug abuse, data were collected through the use of in-depth interviews. Data for analysing challenges that impede comprehensive reporting on the consumption of illicit drugs were also collected through in-depth interviews with expert informants. In this study, expert informants refer to the journalists and editors of newspapers. As an important qualitative research method, the in-depth interview, is where the researcher collects data directly from the participants. Interviews are useful in eliciting opinions, experiences, values, and other aspects of the population under study when used in conjunction with other research methods such as surveys, focus groups, and so on. Interviews always focus on achieving a specific goal (Thompson, 2018).

The questions for the expert informants were formulated based on the objectives of the study. In-depth interviews are most appropriate for situations in which the researcher wants to ask open-ended questions that elicit in-depth information from a relatively small number of people, as opposed to surveys, which tend to be more quantitative and are conducted with larger numbers of people (Wertz, Charmaz, McMullen, Josselson, Anderson, & McSpadden, 2016). In-depth interviews are characterised by open-ended questions in the form of an interview schedule so that expert informants expound on the topic, and not just provide “yes” or “no” responses. Many open-ended questions begin with “why” or “how,” which gives participants freedom to answer the questions using their own words (ibid).

An interview may be conducted in a variety of settings, including organisations, schools, colleges, markets, homes, and others, in order to elicit the desired information from a respondent. Furthermore, with the advancement of technology, we have seen an increase in the number of methods by which an interview can be conducted. Unlike in the past, an interview is no longer required for a meeting. It can be conducted over the phone, Skype, email, or other forms of the internet and telephone without the need

for physical presence. For the purpose of this study, the majority of the interviews were conducted virtually due to government restrictions following the COVID-19 global pandemic.

- *Significance of the In-depth Interview*

In-depth interviews are one of the most effective ways to gather primary data. In contrast to a simple questionnaire or rating scale, an in-depth interview is conducted with the goal of uncovering detailed information about an interviewee's experience and perspective on a subject (Thompson, 2018:34).

One of the most important advantages of in-depth interviews is that they are more effective and less structured than other data collection methods, allowing the researcher to uncover more detailed and in-depth information on drug reporting. Unlike other interview formats, these are intensive interviews of individuals with a small number of respondents (ibid).

Furthermore, in-depth interviews were used to explore the responses of expert informants to understand the representation of the illicit drug scourge phenomenon in newspapers. The researcher developed a relation with participants to achieve a complete understanding of their viewpoint on drug abuse. In-depth interviews, according to Thompson (2018), are not for people who cannot stop talking about themselves. Despite its realistic appearance, a good in-depth interview resembles normal talk. Burges (2014) and Lofland and Lofland (2015) both consider an in-depth interview to be a form of discussion. A total of 10-15 participants are interviewed individually in a study employing the in-depth interview mode of data collection, making it one of the most significant ways of data collecting (ibid). For this study, the researcher interviewed ten (n-10) journalists and three (n-3) editors.

As compared to survey interview, an in-depth interview which functions like a moderator guide, is moreover like a journalistic interview, this allowed the participants for this study to speak their mind. The interview also assisted the researcher to adjust the order of the questions as per the situation.

## **4.5 DATA ANALYSIS**

For the purpose of this study data were analysed through the use of thematic analysis and qualitative content analysis. According to Jones (2018), clear criteria must be established before the researcher can analyse the documents when performing content analysis. This entails developing broad research objectives and looking for relevant previously existing data sets that could be used to address these research objectives. In other words, the researcher is expected to recognise patterns in the data and make decisions about how to organise, classify, interrelate, compare, and display the data.

### **4.5.1 Thematic Analysis**

In order to determine the framing of news reports on the coverage of illicit drugs in the selected newspapers, data were analysed using thematic content analysis. According to Anderson (2017), thematic content analysis (TCA) allows the researcher to describe the themes identified in the data analysed. The meaning of the responses in this study is interpreted without changing the content of the responses. By reading through the news reports, it was possible to highlight the relevant information and then formulate discursive interpretations. Subsequently, the themes which were developed from the news reports are crime-violence frame, the race, gender, and class frames, scare-alarmist frame, foreign national scapegoat frame, helpless frame, and interventionist frame.

Thematic analysis was used in the study because of its ability to enable the summarisation of key features of a large body of newspapers to offer thick descriptions of the news reports set of views from expert informants. According to Braun and Clarke (2006:79), thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Subsequently, the researcher identified news reports on illicit drugs in the newspapers under study and described the data from the news reports in detail to generate themes. Overall, the study generated articulate thematic analyses of news reports that can be formulated into clear findings and conclusions on coverage of the illicit drugs scourge.

#### **4.5.2 Qualitative content analysis**

For the purposes of this study, qualitative content analysis was also used to analyse data generated from interviews with expert informants. According to Bogdan and Biklen, as cited in Schurink, Fouché, and De Vos (2011:399), qualitative data analysis is the interpretation of the respondents' arguments, their thinking about the topic studied, and their reasoning. The researcher can form an opinion about the topic or problem under consideration after analysing and interpreting the collected data. The goal of qualitative content analysis is to classify large amounts of text into a small number of categories that represent similar meanings. This research method was designed to allow for the subjective interpretation of news report content via a systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Fourie, 2017).

The goal of content analysis is “to provide knowledge and understanding of the news reports under study”. Keyton postulates that content analysis integrates both data collection method and analytical technique to measure the occurrence of some identifiable element in a complete text or set of messages. This is apparent in drug news messages where certain words or passages may denote and, in some instances, connote actions, behaviour and attitudes towards drug issues. A reader may deduce from a news story whether the reporter or the community understands the health, social and economic effects of drugs. Therefore, news stories are not value free; instead, they are laden with ideologies and hegemony. As a technique, content analysis helps researchers make inferences by identifying specific characteristics of messages in the particular units of analysis (Keyton, 2011:251).

#### **4.6 QUALITY CRITERIA**

Merriam as cited by Shenton, (2014:6) argues that “the qualitative investigator’s equivalent concept to validity is credibility and it deals with the question, how congruent are the findings with reality?” The purpose of this section of the study ensured that all methods used in the research process are plausible, credible, and trustworthy. Hence, the following strategies were used to guarantee a satisfactory level of trustworthiness.

#### **4.6.1 Credibility**

The degree to which the research represents the actual meanings of the research participants is referred to as credibility (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). This study used actual news reports on illicit drugs and participants as the main sources of study data upon which qualitative analysis was based. This validated the responses of the participants and the news reports because reality can be explained in different ways.

#### **4.6.2 Transferability**

According to Shenton (2004), transferability refers to the degree to which research findings of one study can be transferred to another context. This refers to how well the study findings fit another particular study. The researcher provided sufficient data generated on the basis of an approved check list on the news reports and in-depth interview guide held with participants to enable the findings to be applied with similar outputs to other situations and contexts.

#### **4.6.3 Dependability**

Dependability refers to the consistency of the research findings and the degree to which the research procedures are documented, allowing someone outside the research to follow, audit and critique the research process (Shenton, 2004). In this regard, the study maintained a clear audit trail where research documents were properly acknowledged, listed, and archived. This entailed compiling a clear record or file on how data on the news reports and expert informants were collected, analysed, and interpreted into study findings. The researcher had sufficient details and documentation of the methods employed so that the study can be scrutinised and replicated.

#### **4.6.4 Conformability**

Conformability refers to the degree to which the findings are a function solely of the informants and conditions of the research and not of other biases, motivations, and perspectives (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The focus of this study was mainly on news reports, participants (journalists and editors), and the subsequent interpretations rather than on the researcher. This entailed an assurance that the research procedures and interpretation were objective so that the research findings can be

confirmed by other independent researchers if they were to study the same phenomenon. The researcher maintained a clear audit trail where field notes and all research documents, and participants were properly acknowledged, listed, and archived. The study records also showed the procedures followed in the research process.

#### **4.7 ETHICS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

According to Brennen (2013), the fundamental concern is that all individuals who participate in qualitative research projects must voluntarily agree to participate without any psychological or physical pressure, manipulation, or coercion. In this case, the researcher ensured that participants agreed to participate in the study. The researcher gave the participants accurate information about the study's purpose and stated that there is no deception regarding the research's motivations.

Individual consent to participate in qualitative research must be based on complete, accurate, and open information. The journalists and editorial team were informed that they were part of a research project and were given detailed information about the research. Furthermore, the participants were informed that they could withdraw from the research project at any time. The privacy and confidentiality of participants should be protected and secured when appropriate, and all qualitative research should be based on authentic and accurate research. Fabrications, fraudulent materials, omissions, and contrivances are unethical and inappropriate for qualitative researchers (Christians, 2013:219). These aspects were followed in the entire process of the study.

According to Punch (2018), researchers are still trying to recover from the consequences of Stanley Milgram's 1960s-era obedience experiments, in which participants were manipulated and lied to without consent in order to encourage them to administer painful electric shocks to individuals who did not learn quickly enough. Milgram's "controversial research methods in laboratory experiments, allied to the negative reactions to revelations about medical tests on captive, vulnerable, and nonconsenting populations, led to the construction of various restrictions on social research" (ibid).

## **4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The researcher received a clearance certificate from the University of Limpopo's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Non-medical to conduct the research study. During the study, the following ethical considerations were considered:

### **4.8.1 Avoiding Undue Intrusion**

The study chose a research approach that avoids placing an undue burden on the journalists and editors such as long interviews or focus group sessions, multiple data-collection encounters over a period of time, and journalists keeping diaries (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, Ormston, 2014:87).

### **4.8.2 Informed Consent**

The researcher prepared a consent form detailing the purpose of the study and its aim. The details of the individual conducting the study, and that the participation was voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time without providing an explanation was outlined. In addition, the form detailed that the participation was through interviews guided by the researcher, and that the primary data the interviewee provided were kept confidential and his/her identity anonymous.

### **4.8.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity**

Ethics codes were clear that researchers should do everything possible to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of participants in research. This means not disclosing who has taken part, and not reporting what they say in ways that could identify them or be attributed to them (Ritchie et al., 2014). The researcher ensured that the names of the journalists and editors interviewed remained confidential and anonymous.

### **4.8.4 Protecting the Rights of Participants**

The researcher notified the participants that they have the right to withdraw from participating in the study at any time (Blaikei, 2010:31). Obtaining informed consent of research participants: The researcher informed the editorial staff about everything regarding the research from its purpose, down to how the results will be used, and assured the participants that their personal information will be protected.



#### **4.8.5 Scientific Integrity of the Research**

The researcher ensured that the research is conducted according to the acceptable standards of practice without fraud, deception, and dishonesty (Blaikie, 2010:31). The researcher adhered to the above-mentioned standards in the entire process of conducting the study.

#### **4.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

To perform a study of this nature is not without challenges. Content analysis and in-depth interview alone cannot serve as the basis for making statements about the effects of content on an audience. Hence, the challenge experienced in the study was in accessing all the hard copies of newspaper editions in order to review the appropriate stories published from 01 January to 31 December 2017. In addition, the population of the newspaper fraternity is extensive; and to access hard copies of newspapers, proved difficult, time consuming and costly. It was therefore decided to narrow the scope of this study to three daily newspapers, a genre that may not represent all categories of the print media industry.

#### **4.10 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

In this chapter, qualitative research and descriptive research as the approach and design of the study were presented. The population, sampling procedures and sampling stages were also outlined. The chapter also presented qualitative content analysis and in-depth interview as the data collection methods for the study. In addition, thematic analysis and qualitative content analysis were adopted for data analysis. Quality criteria was highlighted observing concepts like credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Finally, the chapter considered the ethical considerations and limitations of the study. In the following chapter, analysed data on the responses of expert informants on the editorialisation and challenges of reporting the illicit drug scourge are presented and discussed.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION: EDITORIALISATION AND CHALLENGES OF REPORTING THE ILLICIT DRUG SCOURGE

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter entails the analysis and interpretation of data collected from expert informants to generate findings on the selected newspapers' coverage of the drug scourge in South Africa. The ultimate goal of the analysis was to recommend an editorial tool kit that would benefit a dissuasive campaign against the rampant consumption of illicit drugs in South Africa (see section 1.4.2). Data for the study were collected based on the objectives as stated in section 1.4.2 in the background and motivation for the study. Extensive literature review and in-depth interviews held with expert informants were used to determine the editorial role of the selected newspapers in reporting drug abuse in the *Daily Sun*, *The Citizen*, and *The Sowetan* newspapers. This method was also useful in yielding data to analyse the challenges that impeded journalists' editorial role in effectively reporting the consumption of illicit drugs in South Africa. The structure of the chapter entails two main segments, namely the editorialisation and conceptualisation of the drug scourge (section 5.2), and challenges that impede effective coverage of the illicit drug scourge (section 5.3). The analysis and interpretation involve thematisation of the processed data following Braun and Clarke's (2006) method, which views thematic analysis as a qualitative analytic method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data to facilitate the formulation of study findings.

#### 5.2 EDITORIALISATION AND CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE ILLICIT DRUG SCOURGE

This section presents data from expert informants on the editorial role of the selected newspapers in reporting drug abuse. In addition, the section focused on the editorial focus of the illicit drug scourge in the selected newspapers, the editorial approach to the illicit drug scourge in the selected newspapers, major themes featured in the coverage of the illicit drug scourge in the selected newspapers', tabloid newspapers, drug scourge, and national consciousness, and the newspapers, illicit drug scourge

and government interventions. The focus of these sections was relevant to establishing broader views of experts on how the drug scourge was conceptualised in the selected newspapers.

### 5.2.1 Selected newspapers' editorial focus of the illicit drug scourge

There was a total of ten (n-13) expert informants interviewed for the study. Furthermore, three (n-3) of the participants were female whereas ten (n-10) were male. The participants were interrogated on the selected newspapers' editorial focus or policy on reporting illicit drugs consumption in South Africa. The purpose of this was to elicit the position of the participants on the editorial focus of news reports on the drug scourge in the selected newspapers. Table 1 below represents the demographic profile of the participants.

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Work Experience</b>
<b>The Citizen</b>	2 Females & 1 Male	51, 28 & 30	5, 6 & 21 years
<b>The Sowetan</b>	1 Female & 4 Males	26, 29, 32, 32 & 42	5, 5, 7, 9 & 15 years
<b>Daily Sun</b>	5 Males	26, 27, 30, 30 & 32	4, 5, 5, 8 & 10 years

Table 1. Demographic profile of the participants.

- **News reporting techniques for illicit drug scourge**

Based on the data from the editorial focus on the drug scourge in the selected newspapers, the participants noted that the 5Ws- Where, What, Who, When, Why, and How mantra were adopted by newspapers as an organising technique for reporting any hard news, including drug abuse. For example, the news report from *The Citizen's* 03 January publication titled "*Crackdown on Cape Crime*" (Wyk, 2017) reported on where the drug bust happened, who was arrested, when it happened, and how the crackdown happened. This allowed the journalist to achieve the completeness of news values in reporting the scourge of drugs. Subsequently, this basic format of reporting would help journalists to get the necessary information needed to write

accurate drug news reports. By so doing, the journalist would not submerge other interpretations of the news reports and foist their chosen values on the readers. Figure 5.1 below is one the news reports that highlighted using the 5Ws and H organising technique to report news on drug abuse.

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## Crackdown on Cape crime

More than 900 people were arrested in the Nyanga and Blue Downs police station clusters over the past week, Western Cape police said.

In the Nyanga cluster, which consists of the Nyanga, Manenberg, Bishop Lavis, Elsies River, Gugulethu and Philippi East policing precincts, there were 460 arrests.

"These arrests were made during various operations conducted in the precinct, which consisted of searches at drug houses, raids at illegal liquor outlets, tracing operations, vehicle control points, roadblocks, foot patrols and stop-and searches," said police spokesperson FC van Wyk.

A total of 142 suspects were apprehended for possession and dealing in drugs.

Others were arrested for murder, crimes against women and children, possession of illegal firearms, possession of stolen property, escape from custody, armed robberies, attempted murders, housebreaking and theft and assaults.

Officers seized illegal firearms, drugs and alcohol during the anticrime operation.

In the Blue Downs cluster, which consists of the Mfuleni, Kleinvlei, Kuilsriver, Bellville South, Delft, Belhar and Ravensmead policing precincts, 458 people were arrested.

They face charges of murder, attempted murder, assault, rape, house breaking, theft, possession of illegal firearms, drug dealing, child neglect and car theft, among other offences.

In operations this week, 62 houses were searched for drugs and 131 arrests were executed relating to drugs.

Approximately 2 800 litres of alcohol, mandrax tablets with an estimated street value of R26 200, tik with an estimated street value of R5 220 and dagga with a street value of R14 388 were also confiscated.

Tracing operations that were carried out in the Blue Downs cluster also led to the arrest of 57 wanted suspects. - ANA

**Operations included raids at illegal liquor outlets, tracing operations, vehicle control points and foot patrols.**

**FC van Wyk**  
Police spokesperson

Fig 5.1 "Crackdown on Cape Crime"

Some of the news reports that adopted the 5Ws and H reporting technique were noted in *The Citizen's* "KZN police chief praises various drug blitzes" (African News Agency, 2017), "Suspect hikers caught for drugs" (Caxton News Services, 2017), "Two Nigerians bust for drugs" (Caxton News Services, 2017). The participants further highlighted that news reports did not probe more on the origins and manufacturers of the illicit drugs to explore new angles such as the politics of the drug industry. These untouched issues would make it difficult for the South African Police Services to fight the root cause and origins of the drug scourge. The participants further noted that adopting the 5Ws and H reporting technique inhibited a comprehensive coverage of news on drugs as the information reported is insufficient to create public awareness on the severity of drug abuse in the country to curb the drug scourge. Moreover, most of the participants mentioned that in reporting about the scourge of drugs, news reports were less likely to contain condemnatory or stereotypical remarks about drugs and drug abusers such as "*kwerekwere*"-foreigners and junkies.

In addition, the participants highlighted that news reports on the subject of drugs were often published when the stories were current and when there were follow-ups on the previous events on drugs. This kind of editorial focus was not helpful to fight against drug abuse in South Africa because the news reports adopted the same follow up stories angle. The readers would subsequently assume that drug abuse is not prevalent since news reports on drugs were not fully developed. This is supported by Swanepoel's (2017) assertion that the lack of different angles in reporting the drug scourge trivialises the news being reported. Following this, the study observed that the participants noted alternative approaches such as employing in-depth and constructive angles to focus on the editorial role of the selected newspapers in reporting the scourge of drugs. Some of their views are presented below:

*"Newspapers use the 5Ws and H, as an organising strategy to report any news. The policy on reporting about the abuse of illicit drugs in the country is less likely to contain items including condemnatory remarks about drugs and drug abusers. Drug use rarely got explained within newspaper coverage, the journalists just report on what, who, where, why, which, and how" EI-01.*

*"There is no particular policy that is primarily focused on reporting about illicit drugs, however, newspapers demonstrate that they take stories on drug abuse seriously because drug abuse is severe, especially among the youth of South Africa. Adding to that, publications report on the subject of drugs only when the*

*story was current and when it was a follow-up on the previous newsworthy event on drugs” EI-08.*

The participants observed that there was no specific editorial focus on reporting the drug scourge in most South Africa newspapers. However, participants; EI-02 and EI-03 noted that newspapers adopted the general focus of reporting news writing including presenting information truthfully, accurately, and fairly about the drug scourge. This agrees with the South African Press Code’s view that “news shall be presented in context and a balanced, fair and accurate manner, without any intentional or negligent departure from the facts, whether by distortion, exaggeration or misrepresentation” (SAPC, 2017:10).

In the analysis, the participants noted that news reports on the drug scourge did not receive the same attention as politics, crime, business, and other news beats. Moreover, they noted that the news reports failed to highlight the essential facts relating to the origin of the drugs, the dealers, and the effects of drugs on addicts and communities. Therefore, this editorial focus of drug news reports in newspapers could suppress relevant available facts or give distorting emphasis on the drug scourge.

In addition, the study noted that the editorial focus by the selected newspapers eluded psychological issues which could have illuminated the prominence of the drug scourge. This could have included highlighted matters such as mental health, lifestyle choices, economics, crime, and personal issues to elucidate the negative consequences associated with the drug scourge. The editorial focus on such issues ensured that news on the drug scourge of is detailed to inform the public about the effects of drugs not only on addicts but the government and communities as well.

Most participants concurred that the newsworthiness of any news report had to be determined by a balance of six values: prominence, proximity, timeliness, peculiarity, impact, and conflict. The understanding of the nature of conceptions of newsworthiness in the newspapers helped to explain how and why news reports on the issue of drugs were selected. For example, “*Police pat on the back after raid*” (see attached Figure 5.2) adopted a balance of the news values in its news reporting. The use of the minister’s image in the drug news report could attract significant readers. Moreover, critical information on how the Hawks confiscated drugs this could have an impact as drug busts have strong news value and are significant to the public.

# Police get pat on back after raid

## Hawks pounce on drug lab in Dobsonville

By **Loyiso Sidimba**

Residents of a quiet Soweto neighbourhood were shocked yesterday when the area suddenly became a hive of activity hours before police made a major drug bust.

A joint operation between the Hawks in Gauteng and the police's crime intelligence unit led to the arrest of a 25-year-old man at a house in Mmes Park in Dobsonville.

Police discovered an elaborate operation that had produced 330kg of mandrax when they pounced, according to Gauteng Hawks boss Prince Mokotedi. Mokotedi could not reveal the value of the drugs found at the house on Vincent Thusi Street as police also found the unfinished product.

Some of the shocked residents told Sowetan that they did not suspect the house, which they claimed had been recently bought for cash, was a drug laboratory as Police Minister Fikile Mbalula described it.

They said the suspect arrested was a foreign national, but Mbalula would not confirm this. The minister said the operation was crime intelligence-led and that the police officers involved were a multi-disciplinary group.

The drugs manufactured at the Dobsonville laboratory were taken to Cape Town, according to the police minister.

Deputy national police commissioner Lieutenant-General

Fannie Masemola said police discovered that drugs were manufactured in the house during the intelligence-led operation involving crime intelligence in the Western Cape and the Hawks in Gauteng.

After the 25-year-old man was whisked away by police, two women were arrested in Orlando, also in Soweto.

Hawks spokesman Brigadier Hangwani Mulaudzi said the women were later released after police could not link them to the drug bust, but added that there would be further investigations.

Mulaudzi said the man was scheduled to appear before the Roodepoort Magistrate's Court tomorrow.

The drug bust follows the arrest of Danotus Ezeagbai, 49, who was found in possession of 4.6kg of CAT drugs with an estimated street value of R1.3-million in Bela-Bela, Limpopo.

Ezeagbai appeared before the Bela-Bela Magistrate's Court on Monday and was remanded in custody.

His formal bail hearing will be next Wednesday, according to Limpopo Hawks spokesman Captain Matimba Maluleke.

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Police Minister Fikile Mbalula said the operation was crime-intelligence led and involved a multi-disciplinary group. / PHOTOS: ALON SKUY



Some of the tools found at the house. The police said the manufactured drugs were taken to Cape Town.



Sowetan

Fig 5.2 "Police pat on the back after raid".

This was summed up in participant EI-11's sentiment that:

*“There is no set formula to decide how newsworthy a story is, but in general, the more of these six values a story meets, the more newsworthy it is” EI-11.*

The participant further noted that the journalists sought out the truth on what caused the drug scourge and reported it as accurately as possible. This editorial focus required diligence, and this meant making every effort to seek out all the facts relevant to drug abuse news to answer questions such as who was involved when the drug bust happened, were there any arrests, and how the drug bust happened? This type of approach enhanced the focus of diligence when reporting the drug scourge because pertinent questions raised by the journalists are answered. This concurs with Nel (2013)'s assertion that hard news straightforwardly presents the facts, focusing on the basic rules of news writing - who, what, where, when, why, and how –5 Ws & 1 H. The study observed that while the application of this news reporting technique aided journalists in reporting basic information on news drug abuse, it failed to focus on critical information such as drug bust statistics in the country. As a result, readers may be left with unanswered questions regarding the magnitude of drug abuse.

### **5.2.2 Editorial approach to the illicit drug scourge in the selected newspapers**

The participants said that the selected newspapers adopted the inverted pyramid to approach the news reports, and this was regarded as a suitable news writing approach to hard news such as drug abuse. Participants EI-02 and EI-07 mentioned the 'Inverted pyramid' style as one of the most common ways the newspapers used to write news on drug abuse. For this approach, the most important information is given right at the beginning, followed by less important information, emphasising the need to prioritise the content of the story (Nel, 2013). Some of their insights were as follows:

*“The inverted pyramid allows the news reports to focus on the most important information on drug abuse was presented first to grab the reader's attention. The who, what, when, where, and why appeared at the start of the story, followed by supporting details and background information” EI- 07.*

*“Organising news reports on drugs involves the inverted pyramid. This allowed the audience to quickly read the most crucial details so they can decide whether to continue or stop reading the story” – EI-02.*



Other participants however, noted that newspapers did not have an appropriate approach to reporting news reports on drug abuse. Reporting on drugs should always be a priority in all newspapers just like any news beat because the majority of young people in South Africa are abusing drugs (SA Crime Statistics, 2021/22). The participants further noted that newspapers ignored their editorial responsibility and power to influence readers against drug abuse. In addition, they stated that drug scourge news reports should be approached like any serious stories affecting the lives of communities. However, they believed that an alternative approach such as ensuring that there is space on the front page, or the second page reserved for drug news reports daily can be an option for the selected newspapers to create awareness on drug abuse.

On the other hand, participant EI-04 noted that adopting advocacy journalism on drug abuse campaigns could work for such news reports, as this kind of approach could help newspapers to produce good quality news reports which would allow the inclusion of critical information necessary to place the action against the drug scourge in context. This concurs with Fisher (2016: 714) that advocacy journalism encompasses “a broad church of subjective forms of reporting that promote social issues and causes, such as ‘muckraking’, ‘crusading’, ‘alternative’, ‘activist’, ‘peace journalism’, ‘civic’ advocacy journalism, and ‘interpretive’ journalism”. Therefore, given the history of drug coverage and its ramifications, a critical advocacy approach to news reports regarding drug abuse was essential because the selected newspapers have the framing power to set the constraints of debate and shape national discourse on the drug scourge in the country. In this study, advocacy journalism as an editorial approach was exclusive to the selected newspapers rather than attributed to individual journalists and was intended to represent the collective opinion or the public voice of the newspapers on the drug scourge. This kind of approach is important as it allowed the journalists to make their allegiances known, speak on behalf of the readers and speak to readers regarding the drug scourge.

The participants noted that communities, National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), and South African Police Services (SAPS) were the primary sources of news reports on the drug scourge in the newspapers. They further noted that communities played a significant role in most of the news reports published, and this was always helpful in providing tip-offs on drug-related criminal activities. Another participant, EI-03 noted

that newspapers received some of their tip-offs from anonymous members of the community exposing the SAPS for neglecting their requests to drug abuse interventions. The SAPS were also highlighted as reliable sources that would usually inform journalists on successful drug busts and operations and were also on the contact lists of journalists for clarity-seeking purposes.

Moreover, other sources noted from the sampled newspapers were non-governmental organisations, opposition parties, and surprisingly drug addicts. According to the South African Press Code (SAPC, 2017:10), what may reasonably be true, concerning the sources of the news may be presented as fact, and such facts shall be published fairly due to context and importance. In the case of topical issues such as the drug scourge, different categories of people were the most important sources for journalists. The study noted that the most congruent factor contributing to the media coverage of drug abuse are media sources, such as a politician, public representative, or an expert in the field. Therefore, it was important for the journalists to obtain information from this variety of legitimate and authoritative sources to form the basis of news gathering on the drug scourge.

### **5.2.3 Major themes featured on coverage of the illicit drug scourge in the selected newspapers**

The participants noted that social, economic, health, and psychological effects were the main themes raised in the selected newspapers regarding the drug scourge.

#### **5.2.3.1 *Social effects of the illicit drug scourge***

The participants noted that some of the news reports on the drug scourge in the sampled newspapers typically focused on social issues such as the threat posed by drugs on the social behaviour of addicts in society. Other news reports drew on statistics from the Department of Social Development to demonstrate the rising levels of drug use or harm caused by drugs, including terms associated with crime (see attached Figure 5.3). Moreover, the participants noted that social issues such as dropping out of school, vandalising of cemeteries, and stealing were other major effects reported in some of the news reports. Subsequently, the readers were informed about how drugs eliminated the element of socialisation in addicts, because the drug addicts became anti-social and a menace to their families and communities while

under the influence of drugs. This was supported by the following statements from some of the participants:

*“On social effects of drug use, the journalist report to the readers about how drugs eliminate the element of socialisation in addicts. Addicts are now become anti-social and were menaces to their families and communities” EI-13.*

*“Some of the highlighted social effects are domestic violence, delinquent behaviour, xenophobia, and isolation” EI-10.*

The participants indicated that newspapers could do more create awareness of social effects of drug scourge by promoting the nature, severity, or likelihood of risks arising from drug abuse and/or highlighting detrimental consequences of drug use for peers, family, or the individual drug user. The aforesaid views concur with Parrott, Morinan, Moss and Scholey’s (2014) assertion that the South African government has observed that substance abuse does not only affect the individual, but also affects the family, friends, and teachers at school, and other members of the community. This arises from the fact that some adolescents who abuse substances have become withdrawn, moody, irritable, or aggressive. This often leads to deterioration in family, peer group, and school relationships (ibid): One of the views was as follows:

*“Substance abuse’s negative impact on the social and economic status of the country included a range of problems such as inefficiency, impaired work performance, accidents, and absenteeism by drug addicts as a considerable cost to both industry and society, as a result, work productivity decline” EI-05.*

As suggested by core critics of drug media content, media may increase fears of drug use (Reinarman & Levine, 2016). As a result, the study found that the social effects of the drug scourge were underreported in the sampled newspapers, and readers would be underinformed about the harmful effects of drug abuse in communities, making it difficult for them to refrain from using illicit drugs.



## 10 houses burned during protest

By SIFISO JIMTA

**SMOKE** filled the sky as houses suspected of being drug dens and brothels were set on fire.

On Saturday, residents of Rosettenville, southern Joburg, took to the streets and torched about 10 houses.

In a previous protest against drug dealing and prostitution, four houses were set on fire. Furniture was removed from the houses and burnt to ashes.

Police and firefighters were sent to the area.

Addressing residents before the protest, community leader Simphiwe Hlafa told the crowd police are protecting criminals.

"We can't tolerate this. We are going to clean up these brothels and drug dens and chase the vagrants out of the houses."

Simphiwe told *Daily Sun* they are going to continue with the protest until their grievances are attended to.

"Our demands are real. We didn't just wake up and decide to protest.

"The police can shoot us. We are here because they are not doing their job. We will continue to fight these criminals and magoshas."

He said the prostitutes went back to the brothels after last week's protest.

Police spokesman Captain Kay Makhubele said officers



Police and firefighters were sent to the area to control the crowd and put out fires.

fired rubber bullets and stun grenades to disperse the crowd.

"The protest was an illegal gathering.

"None of the homeowners laid criminal charges, but police are investigating cases of malicious damage to property and public vio-

lence," said Captain Makhubele.

He urged residents who witnessed the torching of the houses to come forward.

"If you don't get any help from the police, then the matter will be escalated to the cluster commander and provincial office."



Daily Su

Fig 5.3 "No place for thugs"

### **5.2.3.2 Health and psychological effects of the illicit drug scourge**

The participants highlighted health and psychological effects such as the unhygienic nature of addicts, sharing of needles, smoking of human ashes, isolation, and the manipulative nature of addicts in the sampled newspapers. Participant, EI-08 noted that the news reports were on health issues such as HIV/AIDS, TB, and Depression. The insight was as follows:

*“Reports about the psychological issues, addicts’ aggressive behaviour, careless nature, and paranoiac state are common themes carried in newspapers” EI-09.*

This agrees with the National Drug Master Plan (2019-24) which state that drug abuse hurts the users, their families, and communities and 2.5 million workdays are lost due to absenteeism arising from substance-related illnesses. Illicit drugs damage the health of users and are linked to rises in the acquisition of non-communicable diseases including HIV/AIDS, cancer, heart diseases, and psychological disorders. As a result, the study noted that the sampled newspapers inadequately reported the health risks associated with drug abuse because the news reports were minimal considering the dire health consequences of drug abuse. The health effects were observed in news reports such as the *Daily Sun’s “Nyaope blood shock”* (Molobi, 2017), *“Man’s Bluetooth overdose scares addicts”* (Moore, 2017), *“Addicts smoke human issues”* (Mokoena, 2017) (see attached Figure 5.5) and *“Deadly consequences for Bluetooth users”* (Nkosi, 2017), presented in Figure 5.4 below.

# Deadly consequence for 'bluetooth' users

**Bongani Nkosi**

SOCIETY should pull together to stop the nyaope "bluetooth" trend in its tracks, and not leave this responsibility to the government.

This was the reaction of the national Department of Health yesterday to nyaope users who resort to a much more deadly way of getting the drug into their system in Pretoria's northern townships.

Known in Mabopane and Soshanguve as "bluetooth", this trend entails the transfusion of already drugged blood into another user.

Nyaope users Sowetan spoke to outside the Mabopane train station yesterday said many of their peers were using syringes with blood to drug themselves.

Sharing a nyaope smoke in public with his friend, a nyaope addict said the bluetooth trend started late last year.

He claimed many were found dead usually in the mornings. "I won't use [blood] injections because I smoke nyaope with dagga already. I don't use injections."

The friend jumped into the conversation: "It's people who've not done biology who are

injecting themselves. You cannot just inject yourself with someone else's blood. It kills the veins and disturbs your heartbeat."

The pair suggested rehabilitation schemes for nyaope users in their area would help them. "I have a child, but I can't be a good father while I'm using nyaope."

They took Sowetan to an addict they said needed to stop using syringes.

But he denied he was injecting blood from fellow users. "I only hear about this bluetooth thing, but I've not done it."

"How could someone just inject themselves with someone else's blood?"

Joe Malla, the department's spokesman, expressed shock about the trend. "We're extremely worried as the Department of Health because it's not just about addiction with this bluetooth thing."

"The transmission of HIV will also go up as they are sharing blood not knowing what the other person has. However, we think government and the community should intervene by acting together to deal with this matter," said Malla.

Malla said talking out about nyaope was just as critical as the provision of reha-

ilitation facilities. "Yes, to those who are already addicted the issue of rehabilitation needs to be strengthened."

The South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (Sanca) in Soshanguve confirmed "bluetooth" was becoming common in the township.

Hendrick Lefoka, a social worker at the Sanca centre, said the practice was becoming a trend.

"It's usually done because others cannot afford the drug. So, it's a cost effective practice for them."

"It's been confirmed by our patients in the clinic. Personally, I have interviewed over 10 people who agreed that they've shared injections. It's a growing trend," Lefoka said.

However, Pretoria police appeared to be out of the loop.

Warrant Officer Matthews Nkoadi, spokesman for police stations in Soshanguve, Mabopane and GaRankuwa, said they were not aware of it. "We're policing the Tshwane north area and are in contact with all neighbouring Tshwane areas. But we haven't heard of such a thing. It's news to us."



Nyaope users have started a new trend that involves them taking the drug by injecting themselves with drugged blood drawn from fellow users. PHOTO: MOELETSI MABE

**BUSINESSWOMAN GETS BACK HER AIRPORT EATERY**

It was 11 months since she left in 2015

Fig 5.4 "Deadly consequences for 'Bluetooth' users"

### **5.2.3.3 Economic effects of the illicit drug scourge**

The economic detriment of the drug scourge was another theme noted in the study. The participants noted that newspapers opted for such news reports because of the value they held regarding the country's investment opportunities as drug abuse and crime had the potential to drive away investors. This concurs with South African Revenue Service's (2019) view that although the socio-economic cost of smoking, in general, is staggering, statistics provided by the SA Revenue Service (SARS) indicate that the known direct cost of illicit drug use in 2018 was roughly R101 000 million. Based on international data, the social and economic costs of illicit drugs can be estimated at approximately 6,4% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or about R136 380 million per year.

The participants further noted that some news reports on the economy highlighted the issue of budget given to the underperforming SAPS annually. The news reports reported the SAPS funds be injected into the Department of Education's account to develop the current failing education system. It was further revealed that crime interrelated to drugs chased investors and tourists away. This was observed in the *Daily Sun's* news report titled "SA a hot spot for trafficking" (Rammutla, 2017). On the contrary, participant EI-12 noted that:

*"Publications did not publish many news reports on the economic effects of drugs because such stories are hardly selected to bring them to the attention of the readers" EI-12.*

Other participants noted that the majority of the news reports in the sampled newspapers focused on major drug busts by SAPS mainly at the entry points such as airports and taverns. Some of the news reports were "Huge cocaine bust at airport" (Molobi, 2017), "Cops bust Jozi drug lords" (Mbatha, 2017) and "Tip off leads to two arrests" (Mdluli, 2017). The participants also noted that the newspapers highlighted news reports on violence incited by communities protesting against drugs and cases of mob justice. Moreover, it was mentioned that drug users most often emerged on the news media agenda about crime, community fear, and/or foreign nationals, revelations about drug use and dealers, particularly among young people. These were observed in news reports such as "We'll use violence" (Jimita, 2017), "Gogo's against relaxed cops" (Tlhoaele & Kola, 2017), and "We are tired of crime" (Mbatha, 2017).



Furthermore, participant EI-03 noted that reporting the consequences of drugs was deemed significant in the *Daily Sun* and *The Citizen* newspapers because journalists highlighted the plight of communities on drug abuse and a failing government that allowed drugs to ruin communities. Subsequently, the study noted the news reports failed to explore a broader focus on hard-hitting drug abuse stories such as the consequences of crime, protests, and vandalism on the economy of the country.

- *Selection of the social, health and economic news reports on illicit drug scourge*

The participants highlighted the selection of news reports on the effects of drugs depended on whether there were enough stories to report or not. However, there were exceptions in situations where priority was given to stories that involved prominent figures, heinous crimes, and inexplicable drug events. These news reports were considered the most significant because they attracted readers to the newspapers. Nonetheless, the majority of participants highlighted a myriad consequences from the aforementioned themes in the drug news reports, and an insight from one of the participants is presented below:

*“Their selection of news is motivated by news values. Stories go through certain channels before being published in the newspaper. One of the most important news values the journalists used first was the threshold. This is where events have to pass a threshold before being recorded at all” EI- 06.*

Participants EI- 04 and EI-09 observed that selection of news reports on these effects was also motivated by the magnitude of the stories. They noted that the greater the intensity of the drug stories, the more gruesome the murder due to drugs, the more drug raids, and the more drug-related crimes the greater the impact on the perception of the sub-editors and editors responsible for news selection. Moreover, it was noted that the news reports presented a somewhat misleading picture of drug use and harm were also included in the sampled newspapers as an effort to scare readers from abusing drugs. As a result, the depiction of such misleading pictures could be detrimental to the brand of publications as they would be seen to violating the South African Press Code (2017) which state that news should be fair, objective, accurate and factual. On the selection of news reports on drugs, one of the participants EI-09 said:

*“Reports of court cases where crimes are alleged to have been committed by someone with a drug problem also stood a better chance of selection” EI-09.*



The aforesaid agrees with Shoemaker and Cohen's (2016:185) view that the process of news selection in newsrooms has resulted in various overviews of 'news values' or 'news selection criteria. The concept of newsworthiness is built on the assumption that certain events get selected by the press above others based on the attributes or 'news values' they possess. Figure 5.5 below could draw the reader to the news report because of the quantity of cannabis captured.



Police investigate the dagga bushes during the five-hour operation at the farm in Kromdraai on Saturday.

by **EVERSON LUHANGA**

FROM a distance it looks like a beautiful, green farm.

But close up it turned out to be a farm of dagga worth millions.

An investigation into the huge dagga farm in Kromdraai, Mogale City has resulted in the owner of the dagga farm being arrested.

Sergeant Tshepiso Mashale said police had followed up on information.

"We were shocked to see a big green dagga plantation."

She added that when police raided the farm on Saturday, they immediately noticed the strong smell of dagga.

Members from the Krugersdorp Police Station, K9 unit and volunteers from Mogale City and Randfontein CPF went to the farm. During the five-hour operation, 3 CPF volunteers helped the SAPS.

"The group confiscated about 8 000 dagga plants with a value of about R3 million.

The neighbours were shocked by the discovery of dagga in their neighbourhood. Sina Mzimkhulu (29) said they had never seen anyone at the house.

"I have always seen these green plants from a distance but I don't know who owns it and I don't know what these plants are called. This is shocking because drugs are dangerous."

Major-General Anna Mateisi expressed her thanks towards everyone involved in the search.

She praised the partnership between the CPF and SAPS, as well as the people who made themselves available to help.

Fig 5.5 "Cops find dagga worth millions"

Subsequently, the study noted that the goals of newspapers led journalists to select some events over others for inclusion in the news and the same applied to the selection of news reports on drug scourge. The selection of such news also ensured that readers were informed of the severity of the drug scourge.

#### **5.2.4 Tabloid newspapers, illicit drug scourge, and national consciousness**

The study noted that all of the thirteen (n-13) participants highlighted that no efforts to create national consciousness were made in the news reports on the drug scourge in the sampled newspapers. One of the participants, EI-09 indicated that newspapers had informative and educative roles, further noting that newspapers seemed to hold less value on how drug campaigns could be used to deliver preventive health messages to create national consciousness about the drug scourge. Participant, EI-05 noted that newspapers reported few news reports where drug addicts were desperate for treatment, whereas the other news reports were on the predicament of addicts to seek effective government drug treatment facilities. EI-05 further highlighted that drug awareness campaigns had the potential to reach and modify the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour of a large proportion of the community concerning the drug scourge. However, one participant EI-07 indicated newspapers should not solely focus on the business of generating revenue and forget their role to inform, educate, and create public awareness on drug issues. The sentiment is expressed below:

*“It has also been argued that newspapers, and specifically their editorials, ‘evaluate the importance of the discussions, arguments, and decisions uttered in the main arenas of society, assess them and of situations, and motivate decision-makers, authorities, and/or citizens . . . to act against the problems they have identified” EI-07.*

Moreover, the participants observed that the sampled newspapers could liaise with communities, government, non-governmental organisations to get news on the drug scourge for national consciousness. They further stated there could be news on how the drug scourge has differently affected more communities, and there was a likelihood that these communities were shy to come forward with the stories to conscientize communities on the magnitude of the drug scourge in the country. This is supported by Sirin’s (2011) viewpoint that the press and society are bedfellows and are interrelated in many ways. The role of the press in shaping the knowledge of society, particularly on social issues is integral to similarly addressing the drug scourge. Moreover, the majority of participants indicated that newspaper campaigns, in some situations, could be a powerful force for social change as they had been widely used to disseminate information about drugs, or threats to them, to persuade people to adopt behavioural changes. The participants further noted that drug awareness information could be delivered to large readers repeatedly and over time to

conscientize the nation. The participants also indicated that for all the media's power to inform and persuade, newspapers alone were not likely to bring about large, sustained changes in drug abuse. This view implored that print media campaigns could be effective if media efforts could be coordinated with other initiatives in government, homes, schools, and communities.

However, participant EI-03 noted that newspapers tried to cover news reports that engaged readers honestly, fairly, factually, and accurately. It was critical for newspapers to provide readers with information about the drug scourge so that they could consider whether or not they wanted to become addicted to drugs. EI-03 also highlighted that newspapers were often dependent on government sources to get stories rather than journalists 'going out there to uncover the drug news. This concurs with Wakefield et al. (2011:106) who postulate that newspaper campaigns have been successfully applied in the reduction of tobacco use and the promotion of road safety and have shown moderately positive results in several areas. These campaigns had also been widely used for the prevention of illicit drugs in young people. They often addressed specific substances intending to reduce the use of drugs and raise awareness about associated problems.

However, Kreuter (2016) purports that media campaigns unlike other health interventions are imposed on populations that have not consented to their implementation. This is a considerable ethical issue in modern, person-centred public health, where taking decisions shared with the public is essential for promoting behaviour change. Second, mass-media campaigns can be very expensive, especially when implemented at the national or state level. Therefore, the study noted that the sampled newspapers failed to live up to their expectations of creating consciousness about the drug scourge to persuade the public to refrain from drug abuse.

### **5.2.5 Newspapers, illicit drug scourge, and government intervention**

The study noted that twelve (n=12) participants highlighted that newspapers attempted by all means necessary to report on government interventions. In the context of this study, government intervention simply referred to the involvement and relationship of the South African government and the press to combat the drug scourge. One of the participants EI-09 expressed that:

*“To a certain extent because some of the news articles published in newspapers were on different government interventions performed by different government departments in the country” EI-09.*

The Figure 5.6 below is a *Daily Sun* news report by (Jimita, 2017) which presented one of the government interventions on the drug scourge. In the news report, the MEC for Department of Social Development led government officials on a drug awareness campaign.

## MEC helps nyaope addicts



Nyaope addicts in Gauteng and North West share blood while trying to get a fix.

Photo by Stephens Molobi

By SIFISO JINTA

TODAY Gauteng MEC for Social Development Nandi Mayathula-Khoza will lead a team of government officials on a drug awareness campaign in Tshwane.

This follows the recent Bluetooth craze in the Tshwane area which went viral on social media.

Bluetooth is the sharing of blood via needles from one nyaope smoker to another in order to share the high.

Various activities have been planned for the day, involving both community and private partnerships and the Soul City TV series.

"We will engage with substance users in and around Mabopane," said Mayathula-Khoza.

MEC Mayathula-Khoza's aim is to educate the addicts on the dangers involved in swopping blood and also to help those in need.

The department will share information on departmental services and programmes about substance abuse.



Daily Sun, 1 February

Assessments and screening by health professionals and social workers will also be conducted on site.

"We hope for personal contact with residents through our door to door campaign around Mabopane.

"We will then host an engagement session and a community engagement dialogue.

A panel of representatives from various stakeholders will discuss the challenges necessary to ensure that substance abuse harm, demand and supply is reduced," said the MEC.

She said the sessions will also provide a feedback platform, while allowing everybody to raise concerns.



1 of 1

Fig 5.6 "MEC helps nyaope addicts"



The participants highlighted that the newspapers also reported on government interventions from the Department of Health, Home Affairs, and the South African Police Services to advocate campaigns against the drug scourge but the coverage was inconsistent. This was noted in news reports such as, “*Mayor tackles battles on drugs*” (Keppler, 2017), “*Health ministers team up*” (Rammutla, 2017), “*Operation Wanya tsotsi in full swing*” (Jimita & Mokwena, 2017), “*Minister takes drugs concerns seriously*” (Rammutla, 2017), and “*Crackdown on drug dealers*” (Keppler, 2017) as presented in figures 5.7 and 5.8 below.



**TALKING TOUGH.** Minister of Police Fikile Mbalula, centre, is visiting police stations around the country to assess their capacity. Picture: Neil McCartney

# Crackdown on drug dealers

**LAUDIUM:** MAJOR ANTICRIME OPERATION AT WEEKEND

» **‘Criminals are running amok and we are going to stop them’ – police minister.**

**Virginia Keppler**

**N**ew Minister of Police Fikile Mbalula at the weekend warned criminals running amok in Laudium, east of Pretoria, that the police are coming for them.

He was on a visit to Laudium Police Station with Gauteng community safety MEC Sizakele Nko-

and we are going to stop them. We need the support of communities and we are going to mobilise like never before.”

Anticrime activist Yusuf Abramjee said the Laudium police operation was the biggest yet in the area.

“It has disrupted the drug dealers,” said Abramjee. “We are going to see sustained operations in future.”

“The community is grateful to Minister Mbalula, the MEC and the police leadership for the increased visibility, which has coincided with the annual Ijtima – the largest gathering of Muslims in Southern Africa taking place in the area.”

Abramjee said the minister

police officer, Sergeant Philemon Sibiya. Constable Rasomani Mampuro was also shot and injured.

Two suspects with illegal guns had been arrested, Mbalula said.

The officers were on duty on Good Friday when criminals opened fire on them during a stop-and-search operation in the area.

The minister paid his respects to Sibiya’s family and visited Mampuro in Botshilu private hospital in Soshanguve.

Mhaga added Mbalula would also be visiting other police stations to see for himself if they were equipped to respond to the problems communities are facing.

“The minister will look at the capital resources and he will also be dealing with identified hot-



**Fig 5.7** “Crackdown on drug dealers”.

# Minister takes crime concerns very seriously

By **KARABO RAMMUTLA**

THE Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, said they've noted community concerns about criminal activities.

Mapisa-Nqakula was briefing the media on behalf of the justice, crime prevention and security cluster in Tshwane yesterday.

The minister said that issues of drug trafficking, prostitution, illegal firearms, house hijacking, labour practices favouring migrants and criminal activities associated with immigration are their top priorities.

"This impacts on relations between South Africans and foreigners," said Mapisa-Nqakula.



**Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula briefed the media yesterday.** Photo by Andrew Mkhondo

The briefing was also attended by Minister of State Security David Mahlobo, Minister of Home Affairs Malusi Gigaba and acting national police commissioner, Khomotso Phahlane.

Mapisa-Nqakula said the cluster has to ensure that government meets its constitutional mandate to protect citizens, by intensifying the fight against crime.

According to the minister, 56 business inspections have been carried out so far.

"Seven employers have been charged for employing undocumented migrants, and 147 undocumented migrants were arrested," said Mapisa-Nqakula.

She said the cluster will ensure that matters are resolved to the satisfaction of the South African public.

"We remain committed to instilling public confidence in the police and the entire justice value chain at all times, especially among victims of crime," said Mapisa-Nqakula.

She said that South Africa has the institutional and legislative structure to peacefully resolve any challenge without resorting to violence.



Fig 5.8 "Minister takes drugs concerns seriously"

The issue of frequency was highlighted by the participants as it was about how often newspapers focused on the interventions implemented by the South African government to address the drug scourge. The participants noted that the inadequate reportage could mean that the South African government departments were doing less to tackle drug abuse. Nonetheless, the participants did not think that the angle of news reports on drug abuse was structured in a way that motivated other government departments to follow suit in fighting the scourge of drugs and its deadly consequences. The angle was narrative, and the journalists failed to ask the government official on whether the government has a budget particularly to fight the drug scourge. This concurs with Hartley & Miller's (2010) assertion that when the United States of America saw a massive rise in crack use and addiction between 1984 and 1990, the press consistently reported the issue. While the intentions were to educate readers about a drug crisis invisible to many, the coverage displayed a substantial pattern of racial stereotypes and "media myths" that both perpetuated false stigmas and heightened public fear. As a result, the study noted that news media coverage of drugs represents an important source for public perceptions of illicit drugs, which shape national drug policies. Therefore, government interventions may have the influence on policies to intensify the fight against the drug scourge among South Africans.

### **5.3 CHALLENGES IMPEDING EFFECTIVE COVERAGE OF THE ILLICIT DRUG SCOURGE**

This section outlines the challenges that impeded journalists from effectively covering the drug scourge in the selected newspapers. The challenges are discussed in terms of routinisation of the press rooms; lack of stakeholder participation; limiting operational structures, and lack of relevant skills with which to report the drug scourge.

#### **5.3.1 Routinisation of newspaper newsrooms**

The participants observed that the routines of press newsrooms involved getting to the newsroom, having editorial conferences where journalists conducted diary meetings, pitched ideas to the editorial team, and the story ideas would then be selected by the editors of the newspapers. The participants further mentioned that the newspapers



covered news reports on drug scourge the same way as they would report other forms of hard news or beats. News reports on drug abuse were not treated with a sense of urgency within the context of a scourge but were approached just like politics, health, economic issues, et cetera.

This is supported by Nel's (2013) view that news routines are "those patterned, routinised, repeated practices and forms that media workers use to do their jobs" under normal circumstances. These routines were dictated by technology, deadlines, space, and norms. Therefore, the results showed that the routines adopted by the journalists from different publications were similar. In addition, the media houses conducted themselves as formal organisations that used routines for getting work done in the newsrooms. However, it was noted there was no particular routine espoused for writing news reports on drug abuse, the routines were the same for all news reporting.

- ***Editorial hurdles***

The participants noted that some of the common hurdles that emerged in the publications were timeliness and lack of access to information especially concerning news reports that involved the courts. They further noted that the challenge was that in print, journalists often got stories days after they happened. Moreover, the participants noted that receiving the best obtainable version of the truth within the given time constraints was another one of the major challenges and this affected the urgency of the news reports. One of the participants, EI-11 also highlighted that another major issue was regarding meeting deadlines. The participant further noted that deadlines were one of those limitations that journalists had to cope with while reporting news on drug abuse because there was no time for research or to check details and procure informed consent. However, one (n-1) participant EI-09 noted that there were no newsrooms that operated successfully without encountering challenges. The participant further indicated that journalists were normally caught in a predicament on whether to adhere to the newspapers' policies or put the needs of readers first. The sentiment is expressed below:

*On one hand, the journalists must report to the public about drugs, as it is in their interest. On the other hand, they also must protect their job. They are caught between a rock and a hard place" EI-09.*

This agrees with Wang (2016) that the productivity of a work group will be greater and better than the productivity of a set of individuals. Editors like the idea that teams eliminate layers of decision-making between readers and the final product. Journalists get turned on by the possibility of having greater control over their work (ibid). The participants further noted the challenges of managing time and the pressures that came with journalism. In addition, one expert informant EI-08 said newspapers sometimes could not adjust to the pressures that came with working in the journalism industry, but short notice deadlines were some of the inevitable ones. The insights of the participant are as follows:

*“Luckily, the journalists might work with an amazing team that sometimes put the needs of the public before their own. So, the sub would compromise by selecting their stories to be in the edition. Luckily because they are a daily paper, they know that their stories will make it in the newspaper that week” EI-08*

*“Journalists sometimes gave up easily. Most of the time they plan to get the stories but other times not. When the story is sensitive or has a bit of backlash, it is then sent to their media lawyers, and this can dent the image of the newspaper” EI-03*

Therefore, the study noted that journalists and editors at times experienced challenges of finding their way around the editorial hurdles of reporting news on drug scourge. Moreover, the study noted that journalists and editors had adhere to the ethical principle of reporting stories that informed, educated, and entertained readers for the purpose of creating awareness on issues happening in and around the world, regardless of the challenges involved.

### **5.3.2 Lack of stakeholder participation**

The aspect of stakeholder engagement featured prominently in the interviews where participants felt that good stories on the drug scourge needed to reflect a strategic partnership between the press and society in order for the anti-drug campaign to be successful. Eight (n=8) participants noted that there was a need to build stronger relations and more trust between editorial teams and civic organisations such as NGOs. Participant, EI-03 said:

*“If NGOs and community have stories, they should tell them. In the same breath, the newspaper shouldn’t be flooded with depressive content” EI-03.*

The participants further noted that journalists should not be rushed to meet deadlines as they at times struggled to get the facts of a story that may still be unfolding. In addition, EI-02 indicated that to ensure the success of drug awareness, the media organisation needed a certain amount of 'buy-in' from the readers and/or communities for whom the awareness campaigns are meant. The sentiment is expressed below.

*"The press also needs support from communities where they work hand in hand to expose the drug lords and drug cartels in the country" EI-02.*

Furthermore, the participants noted a challenge on the lack of support from the government in terms of funding newspapers to run communication campaigns to create public awareness of the drug scourge. This concurs with Owuor and Nyamieno's (2000:48)'s assertions that there is a need for the press to partner with the work done by governments and NGOs to see whether "their preoccupation with a different kind of journalism approach may bring these issues to the centre stage".

The participants also noted that insufficient or lack of editorial support that encouraged journalists and editors to trust each other's judgments and promote a decision-making process that reflected the partisanship and position of a newspaper made it difficult to report news on drug abuse. One of the participants, EI-07 noted that editors sometimes ignored journalists' perspectives and plights, and this was detrimental to the quality of news reported.

Moreover, twelve (n-12) of the participants noted that news reports on the drug scourge lacked participation and support from stakeholders such as non-governmental organisations, businesses, communities et cetera. One participant EI - 06, however noted that the support newspapers received involved press releases from NGOs dealing with drug abuse issues. This is supported by Ritter's (2014) study that stakeholders have a key role in the formulation and delivery of policy and also in the production and dissemination of "evidence" that is used to inform policy and practice. Increasingly, stakeholders and stakeholder networks have emerged and developed locally and nationally, where they also operate beyond national boundaries. Hence, their involvement in the anti-drug campaign in partnership with media organisations has the potential to increase public participation and buy-in from the larger populace, thereby enhancing national consciousness levels alluded to in subsection 4.2.4 above.

### 5.3.3 Limiting operational structure and institutional capacity

All of the participants acknowledged that the contemporary operational structure in the newsrooms was limited the reporting of news. The participants noted that the capacity of newspapers usually featured editors, sub-editors, and journalists, and specific beats such as crime, health, politics, sports et cetera that formed a dedicated team in the publication. They further noted that reporters of drug abuse news usually operated under the crimes beat and were overshadowed by crimes-related news. One of the participants, EI-12 noted that crimes beat reporters in the newspapers usually knew in advance all the potential meanings of their stories or ideological values underpinning the editorial policy of the newspapers, yet drug related coverage remained unpredictable. This concurs with what McCombs (2013) posits, that the belief that ownership ultimately determines the nature of media is not just a theory but virtually a common-sense axiom which leads to some beats being elevated over others, often through prioritisation. Additionally, second law of journalism' which states that 'the contents of the media always reflect the interests of those who finance or control them. These views resonate with what a news Studio Executive once complained about that Mr "Rupert Murdoch (a media mogul) isn't looking at the quality of the script, I promise you. He's looking at the quality of return" (quoted in Boggs and Pollard, 2007: 5), as an indication of the degree to which commercialisation has impacted on objectivity in the newsroom. One of the informants remarked thus;

*"I think the biggest challenge in newsrooms is that journalists make calls to chase up new angles on a drug store, and the sub-editor would make it the question of how the story will financially benefit the newspaper because newspapers are challenged with circulation declines EI-08.*

Moreover, the participants noted that news reporting was a specialised area that operated within set parameters, for example, house style and editorial policy. The study observed that the participants were conscious of the editorial policies in the press. They noted that fundamental to the understanding of media structure was the question of ownership and how the editorial powers were exercised in the newsroom. Therefore, the profit-driven nature of today's media was a key determinant of how a particular matter, for example the drug scourge, was given attention or not within a specific publication.

The participants further noted that journalists consciously and ‘professionally’ discharged their duties of reporting based on the values and ideology of their media houses. Therefore, this had a negative impact on the conduct of reporters because, despite having different perspectives to a drug-related news event, issue, or topic; the loyalty of journalists was to the in-house regulations or editorial policy, and this caused them to employ the same reporting style. Ultimately, this approach would not give prominence to the main areas that would benefit or promote the anti-drug scourge discourse or news frame in South Africa.

#### **5.3.4 Lack of relevant skills among practitioners**

The participants noted that journalists faced unique challenges in covering drug news reports and the lack of relevant skills to report news on topical issues such as drug abuse, crime, health et cetera was highlighted. The participants further highlighted that some journalists lacked the skills to finding drug abuse stories, collecting information on drug abuse, and writing it to create national consciousness. Moreover, the participants noted that journalists lacked the skills to take additional responsibilities such as conducting preliminary researching on drug abuse. For example, drug abuse information based on poorly designed, or research should not be reported unless the flaws were emphasised. This concurs with Ekstrom & Westlund (2019)’s standpoint that journalism’s ability to provide factual and reliable information is based on journalists’ epistemic activities. The participants also noted that the skill to get all the relevant facts when preparing for a publishable story increased the pressure placed on the skills of reporting the drug scourge. In addition, the participants noted that discarding the fact-checking step before publishing had shown that journalists practiced questioning tactics and choices of interrogative emphases as knowledge creation activities. The participants further noted that the lack of specialised skills, knowledge, and good judgment among journalists reporting drug abuse is detrimental. According to Harro-Loit & Josephi (2020), studies have shown how the dwindling workforce and economic pressures create the conditions that influence the quality of journalism.

The participants also noted that lack of time management was one of the key factors that influenced how information was acquired and this negatively affected the working practices of journalists. Moreover, time pressure in production routines was frequently

created by multitasking, which journalists are particularly faced with. As a result, the study concluded that the lack of the aforementioned skills harmed the quality of news reports on the drug scourge, which is detrimental to South Africa's fight against the scourge.

#### **5.4 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter presented data analysis and interpretation of the responses from informants on the editorial role of the selected newspapers in reporting the drug scourge, framing of news reports on the drug scourge and the challenges that impede effective coverage of the drug scourge in the South African newspapers. The chapter also presented study findings on the editorial focus on the drug scourge in the selected newspapers, editorial approach to the drug scourge, and major themes in the selected newspapers' coverage of the drug scourge. Additional sections included discussions on the tabloid newspapers, the drug scourge, and national consciousness. The chapter also presented findings on the challenges that impede the newspapers from effectively covering the drug scourge based on thematic analysis of the routinisation of press newsrooms, lack of stakeholder participation, limiting operational structure and institutional capacity, and lack of relevant skills among practitioners. Chapter six (6) presents the data analysis and interpretation of the framing of news reports on the drug scourge in the selected newspapers.

## CHAPTER SIX

### 6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION: FRAMING OF NEWS REPORTS ON THE ILLICIT DRUG SCOURGE

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter entails the analysis and interpretation of data collected to generate findings on the selected newspapers' coverage of the drug scourge in South Africa. Qualitative content analysis was used to collect data to determine the framing of news reports on the coverage of illicit drugs in the newspapers under study.

#### 6.2 SELECTED NEWSPAPERS AND FRAMING OF ILLICIT DRUG SCOURGE IN SOUTH AFRICA

In order to determine the framing of news reports on the coverage of illicit drugs in the selected newspapers, the study analysed fifty-five (n=55) news reports in *The Citizen*, thirty-two (n=32) in the *Daily Sun*, and twenty-nine (n=29) news reports in *The Sowetan* newspaper. Overall, one hundred and sixteen (n=116) news reports were analysed in the selected newspapers. Subsequently, the study noted that the drug scourge news reports adopted frames such as the crime-violence frame, the race, gender, and class frames, scare-alarmist frame, foreign national scapegoat frame, helpless frame, empathy-blame frame, and stakeholder interventionist frame which are discussed in detail below.

##### 6.2.1 Crime-violence frame

Based on the analysis of results regarding coverage of the drug scourge, it was noted that the news reports presented different content relating to crimes and violence committed due to drug abuse.

- **Lexical choice of news reports on illicit drug scourge**

The choice of jargon in the news reports determined the crime-violence frame of the news reports. An example is *The Citizen's* news report titled "*Killer waiter remorseful*" (Lange, 2017) where words and phrases such as *killer*, *steal*, *murder*, *drug* and *gambling addict*, *stabbing*, *ill-gotten gains*, and *deceased* were used. The journalist employed these words to inform the reader of the murder committed due to drug

abuse. This agrees with how Bell (2009:85) paid particular attention to news media's use of language, for example, asking whether the language used is emotive or impartial. He argued that analysis of language reveals information about a journalist's choices, which reflect pre-existing social discussions or can powerfully condition new ways of speaking about events and phenomena. Furthermore, the news report in *The Citizen* titled "Son on trial for mom's murder" (African News Agency, 2017), the *Daily Sun's* "Four bust for stealing ARVs at the clinic" (Mnisi, 2017) "Addicts smoke human ashes" (Venter & Lotriet, 2017) and *The Citizen's* "Botch-up sinks drug trap" (Watson, 2017) also highlighted the crimes committed by users under the influence of illicit drugs. Subsequently, the choice of words the journalist used conditioned readers' perspectives that the dire consequences like crime and violence were associated with the drug scourge.

This approach to the news reports on drug abuse highlighted the role of journalists in both selecting and interpreting issues and events for the public, and signalled the importance, or lack thereof of issues in a story with attendant effects on audience perceptions. The crime violence frame was not deliberately selected by the reporters as they were unaware of the magnitude of crime and violence caused by drug abuse. This is supported by Altheide's (2017) study that the United States of America (USA)'s 1980s and 1990s media sources on drugs were found to be frequently linked with and discussed in the context of crime and violence. According to the Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act No 40 of 1992 no person shall manufacture any scheduled substance or supply it to any other person, knowing or suspecting that any such scheduled substance is to be used in or for the unlawful manufacture of any drug. Nevertheless, lexical choice is a key tool reporters use to subtly convey bias. Words are never created equal, even synonyms vary as far as connotation (Hall, 1989). As a result, the study noted that the level of the meaning of words chosen to report crime-violence news positioned discursive fields of meaning and association of the crime and violence to the drug scourge.

- **Contextual connotation of news reports on illicit drug scourge**

Considering the impact of drugs on the high rate of crime in South Africa, the readers would want to know why the country is not treating the matter with the urgency it deserves. The news reports from *The Citizen* titled "Son on trial for mom's murder"



(African News Agency, 2017), the *Daily Sun's* "Four bust for stealing ARVs at the clinic" (Mnisi, 2017) "Addicts smoke human ashes" (Venter & Lotriet, 2017) and *The Citizen's* "Botch-up sinks drug trap" (Watson, 2017) somewhat informed the readers of the psyche of the killers, drug traffickers, and dealers. Furthermore, the news reports highlighted the severity of drugs and that drug users were not the only ones implicated in the crimes but also law enforcement officers. This was also noted in *The Citizen's* "Hawks charge one of their own" (African News Agency, 2017).

The essence of the preferred meaning in the news reports was made through the use of framing tools such as the selection of words, metaphors, exemplars, descriptions, arguments, and visual images to deal with justifications, causes, and consequences. In addition, the news reports were designed to have particular meanings to the consumer of the text, and the meaning was that all citizens regardless of age, race, and status contributed to the crimes and violence in communities. This concurs with Fredheim's (2020) statement the media spend a substantial amount of time reporting deviant and criminal behaviour, and this news of deviance conveys information to the public regarding societal norms. Hence, even if media sources are not consciously engaging in a moral crusade, simply reporting certain incidents can be enough to galvanise public concern or apprehension.

- **Omitted information in news reports on illicit drug scourge**

*The Citizen's* 03 May 2017 news report titled "Killer waiter remorseful" (see attached Figure 6.1 below) omitted important information concerning how the police established that the waiter was responsible for the murder. The reaction of the police to the violence caused by drugs is negative because in the news report in *The Citizen's* "Hawks charge their own" where a police officer was implicated in drug dealing and trafficking. The study noted that it was seldom to encounter news accounts that explicitly presented the core argument of the frame. More commonly, an image or set of images, metaphors, catchphrases, or anecdotes carried the frame. The news frames were deliberately, and in some cases, consistently constructed equally by that which was omitted as by that which was included.

- **Limiting debate in news reports on illicit drug scourge**

The journalists needed to interrogate why the killer in “*Killer waiter remorseful*” spent the stolen money and then claimed to regret his actions afterward. In addition, the news report fell short of widening the scope of the debate by querying what motivated the killer’s actions. The scope of the drug scourge debate could have also been broadened to suggest rehabilitation and government intervention. Arguably, the killer was not going to continue with this heinous crime if it were not for CAT- the drug he snorted before committing the murder as he was under the influence of drugs. Furthermore, the scope of the debate in *The Citizen’s* news report titled “*Son on trial for mom’s murder*” (African News Agency, 2017) failed to introduce a solution frame by suggesting alternative approaches to reporting about crime stories originating from drug abuse. To simply proscribe the use of something without proffering other alternatives may not work effectively. This is supported by Jernigan & Dorfman’s (2016) research on media framing which found that the majority of crime and drug news reports are reported “episodically” rather than “thematically. Subsequently, the study noted that consistent coverage of news reports on drug scourge could benefit prominence of anti-drug campaigns in the selected newspapers.

## Killer waiter 'remorseful'

**Ilse de Lange**

A self-confessed drug and gambling addict, who admitted stabbing his former manager's mother to death with a steak knife, was yesterday convicted on charges of murder, housebreaking and robbery.

Judge Eben Jordaan convicted Johan Visser, 35, after the former waiter admitted that he had, in September 2015, murdered Anita Cassel at her Wonderboom home.

Visser had previously lived with Cassel and her son, Danie, and also briefly worked as a waiter at Panarotti's in Montana, where Danie is a manager.

He said in a statement he had gone to the Cassels' house in the early hours of the morning to get the keys to the restaurant, because he was still owed R3 000 and wanted to steal the money.

When he could not find the keys, he went to the kitchen where he snorted two "bullets" of the drug CAT and took three big sips of brandy to calm him down.

He wanted to leave when he realised Cassel's dogs had detected him, but became afraid when the elderly woman came to the kitchen, took a steak knife and stabbed her several times in the chest.

She screamed for help and when Danie came to her aid, he stabbed Danie in the arm and head-butted him.

He then took the keys to the restaurant from Danie's room and

took his former manager's cell-phone so that he could not phone the police.

Visser hid in the bushes outside before going to the home of his girlfriend, who drove him to the restaurant. She waited for him while he went inside and removed more than R45 000 from the safe.

Visser used the money to buy new clothes and more drugs. He was arrested the same day while gambling with his ill-gotten gains.

Visser said he had already been without sleep for days because of his drug use and had no intention of hurting anyone when he broke into the Visser's home.

"I did not plan for the deceased and Danie to be hurt that day. Things just happened at the spur of the moment when I was detected at the house.

"I am truly remorseful for my actions," he said.

The trial was previously transferred to a new judge when Judge Bert Bam rejected a plea bargain agreement, which would have seen Visser being sentenced to 25 years imprisonment.

Judge Jordaan postponed the trial to August for sentencing proceedings.

*Things just happened at the spur of the moment when I was detected at the house.*

**Johan Visser**  
Convicted murderer



Fig 6.1 "Killer waiter remorseful"

## 6.2.2 Race, gender, and class frames

Based on the analysis of results regarding coverage of the drug scourge, it was noted that the news reports presented different content relating to race, gender, and class on drug scourge.

- **Lexical choice of news reports on illicit drug scourge**

The study noted that news reports titled “*Yes, I harboured pimps, prostitutes in my house*” published in *The Sowetan*, (Sithole, 2017), *The Citizen’s “Mother admits she neglected kids”* and “*Killer waiter remorseful*” (Lange, 2017), were the only news reports that implicated white men and women in dealing in drugs. Words and phrases such as *58 years old, woman, mother, and white* were used in the news reports to identify the drug users. This agrees with McQuail’s (2013) assertion that lexical choices and their configuration in news reports also “hold great power in setting the context for debate, defining issues under consideration, summoning a variety of mental representations, and providing the basic tools to discuss the issues at hand” Therefore, the study noted the choice of the words in the news reports had the power to inform readers that the drug scourge affects everyone despite race, age, and gender.

The news report “*Yes, I harboured pimps, prostitutes in my house*” illustrates that the police only arrested the “God-fearing white woman” in question only when the community took justice upon themselves by torching her house. What is also implied in the news report is that the law enforcement agents disregard the community’s pleas against drug dealers especially when the people involved are from the White middle class. Drug historians have established that the origin of American drug laws is strongly linked to racism, xenophobia, sexism, classism, and oppression (Sirin, 2011). Drugs were maligned as they became linked to supposedly disreputable populations, and these connections were reflected in media accounts. Additionally, Murakawa’s (2011) study posits that another drug scare in the 1910s focused on African American men and cocaine as the notion was circulated and exacerbated by the media that the drug transformed ordinary, peaceful individuals into dangerous criminals. Hence, this was noted in the majority of news reports in the sampled newspapers where most addicts were young black males from poor backgrounds using drugs as an escape

mechanism. The study also noted that drug dealers were also identified as black males from middle-class backgrounds.

The news reports' headlines however did not capture the race, gender, and class of the drug users. A good headline, according to Harris, Leiter, & Johnson (2012:506), will reach out and grab the reader's attention. The readers are hooked to the news report when it is vivid, informative, clear, and accurate. Therefore, the study noted that the inclusion of either race, gender, or class of the drug addicts in the headlines would have enticed readers to buy the newspapers to learn more about the story. When such headlines are frequently presented in the press, the readers would also be aware that the scourge of drugs affects everyone regardless of race, gender, and class. Furthermore, the headlines could denote the importance of the content the news report on illicit drugs referred to.

- **Contextual connotation of news reports on illicit drug scourge**

The preferred meaning in news reports such as "*Yes, I harboured pimps, prostitutes in my house*" (see attached Figure 6.2), "*Mamelodi marches against foreigners*" (see attached Figure 6.3) and "*Houses, cars burn in vigilante protest*" was that Whites and foreigners were above the law because when communities reported them as dealing in drugs, they were not brought to book by the law enforcers. This is supported by Murakawa's (2011:29) study which found that White users were presented as victims who were in danger of inhabiting or descending into "white trash" status in the media. The rationale for consciously selecting words and symbols was to influence the reception and interpretation of news reports' texts of white people as victims. In some instances, there is this naivety on the part of the media that the consumers just take messages as encoded. But the reader is not only a consumer of already-encoded meanings but also the producer of the meanings of the text.

The framing of the news report in *The Citizen's "Mother admits she neglected kids"* (Lange, 2017) could create awareness on the part of the reader after reading about the race and gender of the person implicated in the news report. This concurs with McQuail's (2013) view that the idea of framing is an attractive one and provides a strong hypothesis that an audience will be guided by journalistic frames in what it learns. Subsequently, the study noted that this frame was considered significant in the

drug abuse discourse as it constituted central organising ideas of how race, age, and gender were framed in the South African selected newspapers.

- **Omitted information in news reports on illicit drug scourge**

For any framing to work effectively and efficiently, the press will have to deliberately include and/or exclude certain information. It is a truism in media lingua that, that which is excluded may be equally if not more important than that which is included. The *Citizen's* news report titled "*Mother admits she neglected kids*" (Lange, 2017) (see attached Figure 6.4) failed to elaborate on the reasons behind the mother neglecting her kids. The journalist assumed that the readers were aware of her socioeconomic status. Perhaps her drug abuse might have been influenced by the fact she was unemployed and used drugs as an escape mechanism. The news reports do not question why the woman is using drugs and why she did not ask for the intervention of the Department of Social Development (DSD). The study noted that this omission on its own inadvertently tried to normalise the abnormal, that is, people can choose to neglect their responsibilities rather than asking the government to intervene.

- **Limited debate in news reports on illicit drug scourge**

The aforementioned news reports also limited debated on the drug scourge without interrogating other factors such as economics, corruption, breakdown of rule of law, and class. McQuail (2013) posits that the media ought to circulate information and ideas as a basis for a public opinion since citizens largely depend on the media for information as a basis for mobilisation. When the media wittingly or unwittingly avoids confronting authorities to explain or address critical issues such as the class and race of the drug user, they would be doing injustice to the readers and the nation at large. Therefore, the study noted that newspapers as the public sphere are expected to enlarge the space for debate instead of limiting it. The figures below present the news reports on race, gender, and class frame.

# 'Yes, I harboured pimps, prostitutes in my house'

## Lindile Sifile

A "GOD-FEARING" woman and owner of one of the homes that were set on fire for being a "brothel" in Pretoria, has admitted to housing prostitutes and their pimps because she felt sorry for them.

Annemarie van Zijl, 58, of Pretoria West told Sowetan yesterday that although the torching of her house by a mob on Saturday had upset her, she did not feel guilty for allowing her tenant, known as "Paul", to turn her home into a brothel. Paul, a Nigerian national, had been renting Van Zijl's two-bedroomed house since May while she, husband and daughter, 15, stayed in the backyard cottage.

Van Zijl's home was one of two houses that were burnt by a mob of about 50 people at the weekend. The mob, mainly of South Africans, accused the owners of the two properties of running brothels and drug dens. The mob left and burnt another house in Court Street, just a few metres away from Van Zijl's.

She said she found out that Paul - whom she described as being the nicest tenant she has had - had turned her home into a brothel a month after living with them. She noticed a lot of strange men coming into the house. Her

husband then bought a CCTV camera to monitor the house.

"The footage confirmed that indeed there were prostitutes living in my house. I was very angry with Paul until I got to sit down with these girls and heard their sad stories.

"They became my babies. I allowed them to stay because they did not have anywhere else to go and even if they did, they would have carried on with prostitution.

"I could not chase them away, I was scared of what could happen to them and what I would say to God should something really bad happen," said Van Zijl.

The second house in Court Street had all its nine bedrooms gutted. The mob also looted the house.

Neighbours blamed its Nigerian "owner" for causing the chaos after he allegedly chased away squatters when he took control of the property late last year.

"He replaced the locals with only Nigerian tenants in December. That's what started the mess. There was no drug dealing or prostitution in that house," said a neighbour who wanted to remain anonymous, fearing for her life.

Yesterday, the neighbourhood was quiet with random police vehicles patrolling the area.



Fig 6.2 "Yes, I harboured pimps, prostitutes in my house"

# Mamelodi marches against foreigners

## SECOND CLASS: GIVE WHITE SOUTH AFRICANS JOBS

» « **‘Why give them asylum when there are no wars in their countries?’**

**Virginia Keppler**

**T**he capital city is gearing up for a planned march on Friday by South Africans against foreign nationals on various issues, including the employment of foreigners ahead of locals, the hijacking of buildings and alleged drug dealing by foreigners.

Mamelodi Concerned Residents spokesperson Makgoka Lekganyane said they organised the march because they were tired of being slaves in their own country.

Lekganyane said the question they wanted to ask government was why were they giving Nigerian, Zimbabwean and Pakistani

foreigners asylum while there were no wars in their countries?

“Unemployment is at 34% in South Africa but they give people asylum while there is not work for South Africans,” said Lekganyane.

He said if people went to businesses and restaurants in and around Tshwane, they would find foreigners working there.

“Our fellow white South Africans are not working but government gives work to Zimbabweans and other foreigners ahead of them,” added Lekganyane.

“Afrikaners are our countrymen but they are being treated like second-class citizens. But President Jacob Zuma says we must welcome foreigners. Repeal the laws that discriminate against fellow white South Africans.

“Zimbabweans, Nigerians, Pakistanis and other foreigners are not our countrymen and they bring nothing but destruction ... they hijack our buildings, sell drugs, inject young South African women with drugs and sell them

as prostitutes.”

Foreigners, he claimed, “destroyed our beloved Johannesburg and now they are destroying Pretoria”.

Tshwane Metro Police Department spokesperson Senior Superintendent Isaac Mahamba confirmed it had received an application from Mamelodi Concerned Residents to hold a march on Friday.

“The application has not yet been approved,” Mahamba said. “We are still going to meet the organisers later this week.”

He added that should the application to march be approved, there would be conditions. According to information received by *The Citizen*, one of the stipulations would be that the marchers refrain from attacking foreigners or use any violence against the businesses of foreigners.

“We will be marching from the old Putco building in Marabastad at 11am to the department of home affairs,” Makgoka said.

– [virginiak@citizen.co.za](mailto:virginiak@citizen.co.za)



Fig 6.3 “Mamelodi marches against foreigners”



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# Mother admits she neglected kids

## **Ise de Lange**

A Springs mother yesterday admitted in the North Gauteng High Court in Pretoria she had forsaken her legal duty to protect her five children from her husband's physical and emotional abuse.

To questions by prosecutor Jennifer Cronje, the 38-year-old mother conceded that she had forsaken her legal duty to send her children to school, but said

she did not know at the time that it was illegal not to do so.

She denied that she had sold drugs, although she knew her husband sold drugs and she admitted to being a user. She admitted that she had neglected her duty to protect her eldest daughter from being sexually abused and raped by her father.

The mother earlier testified how her husband had tortured their 11-year-old son from the age of five by hitting him with a knob-

kerrie and sjambok, stringing him up between pillars and making him hang there overnight, spraying him with teargas, punching him and burning him with a blow torch.

The woman and her husband pleaded not guilty to a range of charges, including attempting to murder their 11-year-old son, child abuse, child neglect, drug dealing and failure to send their children to school.

The case continues.



**Fig 6.4** “Mother admits she neglected kids”

### 6.2.3 Scare-alarmist frame

Based on the analysis of results regarding coverage of the drug scourge, it was noted that the news reports presented different content relating to scare alarmist frame of drug abuse.

- **Lexical choice of news reports on illicit drug scourge**

The study observed that in the *Daily Sun's* "Man's Bluetooth overdose death scares addicts" (Moobi, 2017), the journalist employed words such as *shocked, devastated, overdose, dead, dangerous, and concerned* to paint a clear picture of the occurrence to the reader. This agrees with Butler 's (2019) posits that this sense that the frame implicitly guides the interpretation has some resonance with the idea of the frame as a false accusation. The journalist's choice of lexicon was clear enough to scare and catch the audience's attention to the dire effect of drug abuse in the news reports. The study noted that some of the words or phrases in the *Daily Sun's* news reports were employed in the context of proffering solutions. The scare-alarmist frame of the news reports was designed to elicit a particular interpretation from a select group of media.

News reports that reported about drug addiction were observed in *The Citizen's* "Loss of faith in police are probed" (see attached Figure 6.6), "SA is boiling over", "Worry about airport drug hauls grows", and "Centre ill-treats us, say addicts" (see attached Figure 6.7). The news reports disseminated a scare-alarmist frame of the drug scourge in communities. Other news reports also conveyed concern about new forms of drugs triggering increases in overdoses. Fourie (2017) explains that "frames, largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organise the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports". Therefore, the study noted that the journalists behind the news reports adopted a scare tactic reporting to warn readers of the severity of the drug scourge. The figures below present the aforesaid news reports:



The body of a nyaope addict who died of a drug overdose was found near a train station on Friday morning.

Photo by Samson Ratswana

## Man's Bluetooth overdose death scares addicts!

By SEIPATI MOOBI

SHOCKED nyaope addicts gathered around the body of one of their friends on Friday morning.

The young man from Ramogodi, near Ga-Rankuwa in Tshwane, is believed to have overdosed on Bluetooth.

His devastated friend said the dead man was recently released from prison.

"When I saw him on Thursday night he was excited and high. He did not look okay but he continued to inject himself.

"When he first injected himself, he almost fainted. Then he injected himself again and fell down.

"I was shocked," said the friend.

He said at first he was not bothered because it was common to feel dizzy after a shot.

"We waited for him to recover so that we could draw blood from him and share it.

"Instead he woke up and asked for water."

The friend said they decided to leave him to recover as he had fallen asleep again.

"I was shocked when we were called the next morning and were told that he had been found dead."

Martha Poopedi, a resident, said they noticed the man lying there and thought he was asleep.

"However, we became concerned when hours went by and he did not wake up. We tried waking him but he did not respond. That is when we realised something was wrong," said Martha.

She said the dead man is well known in the area as he often hung around the busy train station not far from where he died.

Martha said the addicts gather near her house and inject themselves with Bluetooth. "Most people say it is dangerous, unhealthy and pure madness.

"But for addicts it is a bargain, because they share," she said.

Police spokeswoman Constable Zanele Mtsweni said an inquest docket has been opened.



Fig 6.5 "Man's Bluetooth overdose death scares addicts".

## Loss of faith in police probed

**Denise Williams**

**Cape Town** - Rosettenville police station management will appear before parliament's portfolio committee on police tomorrow to explain why recent incidents of violent vigilante justice happened on their watch.

Chairperson of committee Francois Beukman said members of parliament believed that these incidents in Rosettenville in Johannesburg could have been avoided if the community had more trust in the police.

Residents in that area recently burned down several brothels and drug dens in an outpouring of rage against crime.

The residents have claimed they had appealed to the police to shut these crime hotspots down but that no action was taken.

They also alleged that this was because SA Police Service (Saps) officers were being paid by those with vested interests in the sale of illegal drugs and prostitution to turn a blind eye.

"We cannot allow citizens' trust in law enforcement agencies to erode any further. It is patently clear that urgent interventions are needed at certain police stations," Beukman said.

He added: "Cluster and station commanders should ensure that the trust between the community and SA Police Service is strengthened.

This could be done through proactive steps, "such as constant visible policing, the deployment of specialised units, better co-ordination of crime intelligence units and improved relations with Community Policing Forums, as well as improving response time to crime complaints by members of the public".

Beukman said the committee's concern was reinforced by the recent crime survey released by Statistics South Africa last week indicating that the public's trust in the police service was diminishing.

It was imperative that steps be taken to urgently resolve past grievances against Saps.

All complaints of police misconduct and alleged corruption had to be properly investigated, he said.

***We cannot allow citizens' trust in law enforcement agencies to erode any further. It is patently clear that urgent interventions are needed at certain police stations.***

**Francois Beukman**

Chairperson of parliament's portfolio committee on police



Fig 6.6 "Loss of faith in police probed"



**NYAOPEN.** An addict is seen rolling a marijuana joint laced with white 'nyaope' powder yesterday in Soshanguve where 250 addicts had left a rehab centre for 'lack of resources'. Picture: Jacques Nelles

# Centre ill-treats us, say addicts

**'NO AMENITIES': STATE FACILITY DISMISSES CLAIM**

→ **Disgruntled users of a deadly drug discharged themselves from rehab.**

**Nhlawulo Chauke**

**T**wo hundred and twenty-nine "bluetooth" drug users – who volunteered for rehabilitation after the Gauteng department of social development (GSD) took on a "hotspot" approach and visited places of substance abuse in Mabopane and Soshanguve, Tshwane – have all discharged themselves from a rehabilitation centre due to alleged "ill treatment".

Nyaope is a cocktail of dagga, heroin, anti-retroviral drugs, rat poison and acid, and is smoked

and injected. It is sometimes "bluetoothed" (when blood is drawn from a user, who is already high and reinjected into another person to share the high).

The "bluetooth" users were sent to the Dr Fabian and Florence Rebeiro Treatment Centre in Zonderwater, Cullinan, and were part of 581 people admitted.

Yesterday, 23 users who dismissed themselves from the rehabilitation centre claimed they had been given medication without access to consulting a doctor, were forced to sleep on the floor and only fed bread twice a day.

The deadly "bluetooth" method has already claimed 17 lives in the Tshwane region alone.

Thabo Mokwena, an addict, said they had been forced to sleep on the floor, without mattresses or electricity. Peter Mahlangu said the toilets were not in working order.

The addicts also complained

that they were not given any counselling and only dumped there.

GSD spokesperson Mbangwa Xaba dismissed the claims, spread on social media, as malicious.

About 250 service users volunteered for treatment and a further 131 brought themselves to the centre for admission, bringing the total admission on that day to 381.

"This comes at huge cost to the [health] department, which is already spending about R11 000 on each patient.

"Its capacity was stretched beyond the limit," Xaba added.

Xaba said those in need of medical treatment were referred to Bronkhorstspuit and Mamelodi hospitals. He said they currently have 130 drug users at the centre, all of whom have been allocated social workers and they have commenced with group sessions.

He said the department is content with their progress thus far.

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**Fig 6.7** Centre ill-treats us, say addicts

- **Contextual connotation of news reports on illicit drug scourge**

In the *Daily Sun's* news report "*Man's Bluetooth overdose death scares addicts*" (Figure 4.13), the lead asserts that the shocked *nyaope* addicts gathered around the body of one of their friends who died from a Bluetooth overdose. The lead gave the reader the most important information concisely and clearly. This is supported by Nel (2013) who postulate that it is clear that news discourse plays an important part in the struggle to affirm a single, uni-accentual value for signs. News discourse is hostile to ambiguities and seeks to validate its suppression of the alternative possibilities intersecting its signs by reference either to 'the facts of the story or to 'normal usage' Therefore, the news report submerged other readings of the text and foisted its contextual connotation on the readers. A report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2010) posits that prevalence of injecting drug use (IDU) varies considerably around the world, both between and within countries. An estimated 15, 9 million people worldwide are injecting drugs and up to 3 million of them are infected with HIV.

The study noted that the news reports in *The Sowetan* and *The Citizen* also yielded the scare-alarmists frame and had an overall negative tone toward the scourge of drugs, and specifically mentioned youth demographics as drug abusers. This agrees with Gamson's (2018:165) assertion that scare frames are considered significant in examinations of media discourse as they constitute "central organising ideas" or organising principles that assign "coherence and meaning to a diverse array of symbols, thus creating awareness of the issue at hand". Therefore, the adoption of the scare-alarmist news reports in the selected newspapers had the inherent prospects to dissuade readers from using drugs based on fear rather than behavioural change.

- **Omitted information in news reports on illicit drug scourge**

The *Daily Sun* journalist in "*Man's Bluetooth overdose death scares addicts*" did shoddy work by not asking the other addicts who last saw the dead addict alive whether they weren't scared that they might also perish in the same manner. The journalist was unsuccessful to establish whether this was the first fatality produced by overdose caused by drug in the region. In addition, the other journalists in similar news reports failed to probe the addicts, and communities about an overview of mortalities caused by drug overdose particularly focusing on the causes of mortality and the nature of

drugs used. The loopholes in the news reports provided the readers with a “half-truths” image of what happened. Subsequently, the frames adopted by the news reports had already set a tone that deaths caused by drug overdose in the region were not prevalent. Therefore, the omission of these statistics in the news report painted a bleak picture of the drug scourge to the readers.

- **Limiting debate in news reports on illicit drug scourge**

The selection of news sources could either broaden or narrow the scope of debate on any issue. In some instances, this could be to the detriment of the reader because they may fail to get a factual, true, complete, and balanced story. The debate on the scare alarmist frame was limited to how journalists in news reports such as *The Citizen’s* “Worry about airport drug hauls grows” (see attached Figure 6.8) and “Centre ill-treats us, say addicts” (see attached Figure 6.7) and *The Citizen’s* “New drug frenzy” and “SA is boiling over” could not probe for plausible reasons why the government should be concerned about rampant abuse of drugs. The news reports only conveyed a dismal outlook and did not offer any solutions; typically, there was only an implication that something should be done.

The study noted that the newspaper coverage of the drug scourge had contributed substantially to “drug scares”. The news reports in the *Daily Sun*, *The Citizen*, and *The Sowetan* expressed the negative attitude of communities toward drug abuse and discussed related harms such as death, overdose, addiction, mental health issues, and the negative experiences of drug addicts. These news reports provided information about drug use trends or patterns, use among a certain demographic, or the availability of a new drug, and the scare-alarmist frame was generated in the selected newspapers.



## Worry about airport drug hauls grows

**Eric Naki**

The latest discovery of R54.6 million worth of drugs and illegal cigarettes at OR Tambo International, has raised concerns about the increase in the transportation of illicit goods, particularly drugs, through the airport.

In the latest incident, Sars customs officials and detector dogs have intercepted 100kg of crystal meth with an estimated value of R30 million at OR Tambo International Airport on Friday.

Sars spokesperson Sandile Memela said the shipment originated from Cameroon and came through Istanbul in Turkey, on a flight to Johannesburg.

"The cargo found at the transit shed was loose dried fish and 33 cans of about 3 litres each that tested positive for crystal meth.

The goods were handed over to the police for further investigation," Memela said.

On February 17, customs officers confiscated 16.6 million suspected illegal cigarettes with a commercial value of R18 million.

The cigarettes were contained in 1 647 master cases that were consequently confiscated pending further investigation.

Memela said the possible duties in respect of the cigarettes

amounted to approximately R11 million.

On January 25, 28kg of Ecstasy and cocaine, estimated at more than R8 million, were confiscated in two separate incidents within 48 hours at the airport.

A detector dog sniffed out a consignment with 15kg cocaine covered in cream valued at R4.3 million in transit from Sao Paulo, Brazil to Windhoek in Namibia.

In an earlier incident a cache of 13.2kg of Ecstasy was intercepted at the airport mail centre. The drugs, with an estimated street value of R3.9 million, were en route to Sweden from Malawi.

Memela said customs officials noticed damage on the seals of the cream containers. "Upon further inspection they discovered Ecstasy in 42 containers."

The investigations into the discoveries were still in progress.

Memela, who expressed concern about the frequency of the drug discoveries, said last month because some of the consignments has only a postal address, it is difficult for Sars to track down the actual perpetrators.

***A cargo of loose dried fish and 33 cans have tested positive for crystal meth.***

**Sandile Memela**

Sars spokesperson



Fig 6.8 "Worry about airport drug hauls grows"



## 6.2.4 Foreign national scapegoat frame

News reports on the framing of the drug industry were analysed by observing the lexical choice, contextual connotation, oversight due to omission, and limited debate on the drug scourge. According to South African Gazette (2019), the origins of immigrants in South Africa include many countries within the African countries including Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

- **Lexical choice of news reports on illicit drug scourge**

In the news report titled *The Citizen's "Foreigners live in fear"* (Kgosana, 2017) (see attached Figure 6.9 below) the journalist employed words such as *Nigerians*, *xenophobic*, *destruction*, *hijack*, *prostitution*, and *anti-foreigners*. The choice of words and symbols in media texts was informed by the agenda or framing that the journalist wanted to reinforce. In the news report, the journalist emphasised how communities accused foreign nationals, particularly Nigerian nationals of dealing in drugs and prostitution in Pretoria. The news report further noted that The South African First Party, and Mamelodi Concerned Residents geared up for a march to the Union Buildings to protest against the presence of foreign nationals in the country. The closeness, relevance, and importance of the issue of drugs to every citizen of the world made it topical, hence worth reporting on. Subsequently, the study noted that the reportage of such occurrences could be labelled as xenophobic, but the reporter tried not to frame the news report in a dispelling way.

On drug dealers and production of illicit drugs, the moment the public started to become aware of a certain issue or condition in society and believed the issue or condition to be a social problem required a quick solution depends on both the actual situation as well as the choice of wordlist processes. The majority of the news reports adopted the foreign national scapegoat frame news reports on how communities were dissatisfied with foreign nationals particularly Nigerians who were dealing in drugs and practicing prostitution in the country as reported in the majority of *The Citizen* and *The Sowetan* news reports.

News reports included leaders, smugglers, cartels, sellers, and drug producers who were portrayed as responsible for the risks associated with drugs, and the risks

emphasised were drug proliferation and public safety. Specifically, foreign national traffickers were regarded as a pernicious force responsible for the destruction of communities through the diffusion of drugs and crime.

## Foreigners live in fear in Pretoria

Rorisang Kgosana

Foreigner-owned tuck shops shut yesterday as fear of xenophobic attacks gripped parts of Pretoria after several businesses were looted on Monday night.

Residents torched two houses occupied by Nigerians to stop alleged drug dealing and prostitution in Pretoria West on Saturday.

Resident Gavin Emmanuel said a group of young men attacked a shop on the corners of Maunde and Tau streets.

"We heard several gunshots, but it is alleged it was shop owners trying to scare the looters away. The owners then fled the scene and the group used crowbars and pick axes to force their way into a shop."

Fridges, freezers and goods were looted before the group moved on to another store on Maunde Street. Emmanuel said the group was accusing foreign nationals of taking their jobs.

"The same thing happened around Atteridgeville. It spread very quickly. A police Nyala and a [Toyota] Quantum came to disperse the crowd but as soon as the police left, the group continued to loot. This lasted until after midnight, when it started to rain," said Emmanuel.

Police spokesperson Brigadier Mathapelo Peters said the looting spread to Lotus Gardens, where shops were completely emptied. She said residents in Mamelodi also attempted to loot a shop, but

walked away empty-handed.

"Approximately 20 shops were attacked and looted in Atteridgeville, Lotus Gardens and one in Mamelodi, but nothing was taken from there.

"There are also allegations that these shops belong to foreign nationals and are used for drug dealing and prostitution."

Peters said no arrests were made as the shop owners had not reported the incidents to police.

Calm was restored after the public order policing unit was monitoring the area.

"Once a case is opened, we can establish who the shop owners are and the extent of the damage caused," said Peters. "We encourage foreign nationals to immediately report any attacks or looting."

A new antforeigners party, The South African First Party, and Mamelodi Concerned Residents are gearing up for a march to the Union Buildings on Friday to protest against the presence of foreign nationals in the country.

Mamelodi Concerned Residents spokesperson Makgoka Lekganyane said they were "tired of being slaves" in their own country.

"Zimbabweans, Nigerians, Pakistanis and other foreigners are not our countrymen and they bring nothing but destruction," said Lekganyane earlier this week.

"They hijack our buildings, sell drugs, inject young South African women with drugs and sell them as prostitutes."



Fig 6.9 "Foreigners live in fear in Pretoria"

# 'We march because they sell drugs and take our jobs'

DURING the march against foreigners on Friday, Sowetan interviewed three South Africans on the reasons they participated in the mass action.

## ● Olebogeng Ipeleng

The 20-year-old is a student at Jeppe College. He hails from Taung, a town in North West, but stays with his parents in Pretoria.

He went to the march after class, and scribbled a placard accusing illegal immigrants of bringing drugs to the country.

"I'm part of this march because I'm also a citizen of South Africa," he told Sowetan.

His driving force to join the march was his belief that foreign shop operators sell expired food.

"Where I come from in Taung there was a guy who was sent to buy cereal for a child. He found that the food was expired," he said.

"It worries me that people from outside the country sell expired products.

"I also saw a programme on TV called Leihlo la Sechaba just a few days ago.

They were talking about prostitutes. Girls from the age of 12 were used as prostitutes by Nigerian guys.

"I'm here to participate so that these people can be charged or go back to their countries.

## ● Thabiso Vincent Ntuli

The 28-year-old hails from Verena in Mpumalanga. He travels to his workplace in Pretoria by bus every day.

He joined the march because he believed foreigners were displacing locals from jobs.

"Our brothers are unemployed. As an example, there was a fellow South African here who was full of mud," he said.

"People from outside the country are working in offices. These are jobs that should be ours. They are educated yes, but in whose country? In our country."



Thabiso Ntuli

He accused Nigerians of selling drugs. "They tell us we're stupid. They are here for money."

Turning to Zimbabweans, Ntuli alleged they were stealing jobs by agreeing to take paltry pay.

"People from Zimbabwe are not selling drugs, but they are messing us up in jobs," he said.

"You'll find that your parents struggled to raise you up and took you to varsity, but you can't find a job because Zimbabweans agree to being paid R40 a day.

"In whose country are we demanding more? Every work opportunity here is made for us."

## ● Neo Mokoena

The man from Stinkwater, a rural community 58km north of Pretoria, is a cool drink vendor in the city.

Mokoena does not blame foreign nationals for unemployment, but accuses Nigerians of peddling drugs. He believed they should leave the country, hence he joined the march.

"I'm not too sure if foreigners are to blame for our unemployment. I'm unemployed too and I also blame my laziness to look for a job," Mokoena said.

"I'm concerned the most about drugs. Nigerians are here for drugs. They are only here for a fancy lifestyle. They are driving expensive cars.

"You find someone who's here a short time driving a big Mercedes Benz, while I don't have it." - Bongani Nkosi



Olebogeng Ipeleng at the march against illegal immigrants.

PHOTOS: BONGANI NKOSI



Neo Mokoena



Fig 6.10 "We'll march because they sell drugs and take our jobs"

- **Contextual connotation of news reports on illicit drug scourge**

In the news report, “*Foreigners live in fear in Pretoria*” (see attached Figure 6.9) the journalist intended to inform the reader that communities were tired of foreign drug dealers in their communities and wanted the South African government to intervene immediately. Hence, the march to the Union Buildings (see attached Figure 6.10 above) The residents detailed that the foreign nationals brought nothing but destruction by hijacking buildings, injecting young South African women with drugs, and selling them as prostitutes. Another example is also observed in *The Citizen’s “Woman forced into prostitution”* (see Figure 6.11 attached), which highlighted how a woman was forced into prostitution and plied with drugs by Nigerian nationals. The woman testified at the trial against the Nigerians, who had pleaded not guilty to numerous charges ranging from human trafficking, money laundering, and running a brothel to drug-related charges. The news reports generated a foreign national scapegoat frame that saw communities blaming Nigerian foreigners for dealing in drugs.

This frame implied that communities could be labelled as xenophobic by readers of the newspapers understudy. In addition, the news reports could imply that communities could use foreign nationals as scapegoats concerning the scourge of drugs in their communities. Subsequently, the study noted that the preferred meaning in the news reports was that there are communities who take the law into their own hands and accused Nigerians of dealing in illegal drugs. The communities ‘plight is on law enforces to hold foreign nationals unaccountable this was noted in the majority of the news reports associated foreign nationals dealing in drugs.

# Woman 'forced' into prostitution

**SEX SLAVE:** GAVE ALL MONEY EARNED TO NIGERIANS

→ Addict assaulted if found with cash, given cocaine to enable her to do street work.

Ilse de Lange

**A** former prostitute has told the High Court in Pretoria she was plied with drugs and forced to see more than 10 clients a night while living with a Nigerian in a Pretoria flat.

The woman was testifying in the trial of Nigerians Obioma Benjamin Abba, 32, and Chinedu Justice Obasi, 38, who have pleaded to numerous charges ranging from human trafficking, money laundering, running a brothel to

drug-related charges.

A South African woman, Nolwazi Patience Mkhonto, is on trial with them for allegedly subleasing her flat to the brothers, knowing it would be used to harbour victims of human trafficking. The state alleges Obasi had used women as prostitutes, but later handed over the business to his brother.

The woman, who testified through closed circuit television, told the court she couldn't leave Obasi's flat as she did not have any money and was addicted to drugs.

She described a nightmare existence of sleeping during the day and being woken up at six in the evening to smoke a pipe of rock cocaine before being sent into the streets to work for up to 12 hours. She would have up to 10 clients or more per night and would be given a "sleeper drug" on her return.

She needed the drugs and they

enabled her to do the work, she said. She was given more rock cocaine to smoke between clients but if she had a long wait, she would get a "hanger" to keep her going. She said Obasi did not like it if the women drank and would hit them if they did.

They had to hand over their earnings to him the next morning. They were not allowed to keep any of the money and were assaulted if they were found with any cash.

Clients paid between R80 and R100, depending on what they wanted, but she also served men who just wanted a naked woman to sit around while they smoked rock cocaine, paying between R200-R300 for two hours and even spending up to R10 000.

She said Obasi used to make the drugs himself, but sometimes bought from other dealers.

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Fig 6.11 "Woman forced into prostitution"

- **Omitted information in news reports on illicit drug scourge**

The foreign national scapegoat frame in the news reports was done to drive home the point that foreign nationals were blamed by South Africans for the manufacturing and distribution of illicit drugs in the country. The journalists ensured that the news reports dispelled any xenophobic connotations that the reader may feel were concealed in the reporting. What was missing in the news reports is how the foreign nationals trafficked the drugs in the country. This assertion is also supported by Macherey (2014) that a work is tied to ideology not so much by what it says as by what it does not say. It is in the significant silences of a text, in its gaps and absences, that the presence of ideology can be most positively felt. It is these silences that the critic must make 'speak'. Therefore, the news reports implied that Nigerians are notorious for drug cartels, but the government has turned a blind eye, hence the intervention by communities. Therefore, the study noted that this omission on its own inadvertently tries to normalise the ideology that foreign nationals dealing in drugs.

- **Limiting debate in news reports on illicit drug scourge**

Whilst the abovementioned news reports brought to the attention of the reader to the alleged drug dealers, the journalists limited the debate to South Africa only. Therefore, the study noted that the news reports gave information on the challenges of foreign nationals who were dealing in and producing illicit drugs in the country. They also tried informed the reader about the process of drug production and identified the dealers and why it was seemingly difficult for these challenges to be addressed by the government. However, the fact that foreigners said they were living in fear and what the law enforcement was doing to curb their fear was a limited debate in the news reports.

### **6.2.5 Helpless frame**

Based on the analysis of results regarding coverage of the drug scourge, it was noted that the news reports presented different content relating to the helpless frame of drug abuse.

- **Lexical choice of news reports on illicit drug scourge**

The study observed that in the *Daily Sun*'s 07 February 2017 "*Residents want to be heard*" (see attached Figure 6.12) and "*We are tired of crime-residents*" (Mbatha, 2017) (see Figure 6.13) the journalist employed words and phrases such as *tired, fed up, barricaded, troubled, rampage, and concerned* to describe the occurrence of the disgruntled and helpless community to the reader. Butler posits that this sense that the frame implicitly guides the interpretation has some resonance with the idea of the frame as a false accusation (Butler, 2009). The journalist's lexical choice was clear enough to catch the audience's attention to the news report. The study noted that some of the words or phrases in the *Daily Sun* news reports were employed in the context of helpless communities. Moreover, the helpless frame of the news reports was designed to elicit a particular interpretation from a select group of media.

News reports that reported concerns about drug addiction were observed in *The Citizen*'s "*Loss of faith in police are probed*", "*SA is boiling over*", "*Worry about airport drug hauls grows*", "*Centre ill-treats us, say addicts*". These news reports disseminated a helpless frame of the drug scourge in communities. Other news reports also conveyed concern about new forms of drugs triggering increases in overdoses. Gitlin (1980) explains that "frames, largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organise the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports".



# Residents want to be heard!

By MARGARET MLANGENI, KGALALELO TLHAELE, LEHLOHONOLO MBATHA and STEPHENS MOLOBI

GAUTENG residents have voiced their anger across the province by taking to the streets.

■ In Tshwane yesterday, residents of Rosslyn Gardens barricaded the R566 in Rosslyn, preventing all movement on the busy road.

Committee leader Nare Rammutla said they had been left in the dark two to three days a week since the start of the year.

Ward councillor Sphiwe Montlha

said the municipality was waiting for cable materials to be delivered.

■ More than 500 residents of Delmore Gardens in Boksburg, Ekurhuleni, are saying “no” to squatters across the road.

Traffic came to a standstill in the early hours of yesterday morning and school kids and workers were forced to go back home.

Resident Martha Moeti (42) said: “No one will ever buy a house close to a squatter camp.”

Ekurhuleni’s member of the mayoral committee for human settle-

ments, Lesiba Mpya, said the squatters were moved from Ulana after their shacks were destroyed by rainstorms: “We had to relocate them to a better place,” Mpya said.

■ Yesterday mayor Herman Mashaba visited Rosettenville.

On Sunday residents set fire to three houses and a tavern believed to be operating as brothels and drug dens. Mashaba apologised to the community for government letting them down.



Kids and people going to work were forced to return home after residents of Delmo Park in Boksburg barricaded the road.



Cops clean the road after a clash between them and residents in Rosslyn Gardens.



Fig 6.12 “Residents want to be heard”



- **Contextual connotation of news reports on illicit drug scourge**

The aforementioned news reports highlighted the plight of communities that resorted to violence to fight the drug scourge. The news report carried a negative tone from residents who believed that the South African Police and the government were not taking their concerns about drugs seriously. The study noted that the choice of words, syntax, metaphors, descriptions, arguments, and visual images in the news reports were selected and employed in the news report to construct a picture of angry residents to the readers of the sampled newspapers.

- **Omitted information in news reports on drug scourge**

The *Daily Sun* journalists did not ask communities reasons they felt helpless and what were possible solutions the government could provide to ensure their pleas were considered. Moreover, questions on whether the SAPS responded to the complaints of communities on the drug scourge in their areas were not asked by the journalists. In addition, the journalists that covered similar did not probe communities on what they thought could be a solution to tackle the issue of drugs. The loopholes in the news reports provided the readers with missing information on what had been done and what needed to be done to ensure that the drug scourge is addressed. Subsequently, the study noted that the frames adopted by the news reports have already set a tone that communities are ignored by law enforcement and that they feel helpless.

- **Limiting debate in news reports on illicit drug scourge**

The debate was limited to how journalists in news reports such as *The Citizen's* "Worry about airport drug hauls grows" and "Centre ill-treats us, say addicts", and *The Citizen's* "New drug frenzy" and "SA is boiling over" did not probe for plausible reasons why the government should be concerned about communities' fights on the rampant abuse of drugs. The news reports only conveyed a dismal outlook and did not offer any solutions; typically, there was only an implication that something should be done. The study noted that the news reports in the *Daily Sun*, *The Citizen*, and *The Sowetan* on the helpless frame highlighted community concerns and their negative attitude toward the scourge of drugs.



Squatters from Princess informal settlement protested yesterday and blocked the road with rubbish.

By LEHLOHONOLO MBATHA

COMMUNITIES across Gauteng continue to rise up against crime.

Yesterday Albertina Sisulu and South roads near the Princess squatter camp in Roodepoort on the West Rand were closed for traffic for most part of the day.

This came after the mob killing of an alleged thug.

Chaos broke out after the man, who was allegedly a well-known criminal, was tortured to death.

Residents claimed the area had seen a huge increase in crime in recent years, including drugs being sold in old buildings and magoshas selling their bodies in dirty backyard rooms.

The residents had been threatening to take the law into their own hands for several years, and they did that on Wednesday night.

The gatvol residents caught a suspected druglord during a violent protest.

He was allegedly assaulted and set alight. Various businesses suspected of dealing in drugs were petrol bombed.

Police called in to intervene were pelted with stones, while the violent protesters also looted a truck transporting frozen chicken.

Resident Mpho Lethabo said: "We are tired of crime in the area. We don't get help from police. That's why residents have decided to take matters into their own hands."

Police spokesman Colonel Lungelo Dlamini said cops were sent to the area to maintain law and order.

He said regarding the man who was torched, no case had been opened yet.



Fig 6.13 "We are tired of crime- residents"

### 6.2.6 Inept public health care frame

Based on the analysis of results regarding coverage of the drug scourge, it was noted that the news reports presented different content relating to inept public health care frame to combat drug abuse.

- **Lexical choice of news reports on illicit drug scourge**

The journalists in *The Citizen's* "Centre ill-treats us" (see attached Figure 6.7) and "JZ must address youth issues" (see attached Figure 6.14) employed words such as *rehabilitation, treatment, approach, capacity, outcry, and interventions*. This agrees with Danesi's (2012) posits that, words in general are symbolic signs, as are many hand gestures. These symbolic signs play important roles in the building of meaning in a news story, be it hard or soft news. Therefore, the words in the news reports were employed to highlight the public's pleas on the significance of drug rehabilitation centres in communities. Moreover, the study noted that framing of the words and symbols educate the public about topical issues such as the scourge of drugs. On the contrary, the public is oblivious to the fact that news organisations are also limited in capacity and there is fierce competition among stories for space for news reports.

The media must be an involved agent of change by ensuring that petitions against drugs are on the government agenda. This is supported by Chaguta (2017) who postulates that before news stories make it into the paper, the issue must first make it into the media agenda. The media agenda is the hierarchy of importance ascribed to different issues by a news organisation. The study observed that the majority of the reports expressed community concerns over the increasing drug use, addiction, or overdoses in their areas. The news reports further noted the appeal of residents over the shortage of drug rehabilitation centres in the country. These yielded the inept public health frame where the South African government failed and provide enough rehabilitation centres for drug addicts.

# JZ must address youth issues – DA

## PROBLEMS: LACK OF JOBS, CRIME, DRUG ADDICTION

» Party prepares to reply to president's State of the Nation Address on Thursday.

Virginia Keppler

The youth of Mamelodi, east of Pretoria, raised concerns about unemployment and drug addiction, primarily among young people, with the Democratic Alliance yesterday, ahead of the State of the Nation Address (Sona) on Thursday.

The DA is consulting the youth across South Africa so that when the party responds to President Jacob Zuma's Sona, they can share with him young people's experiences.

DA national spokesperson Phumzile van Damme visited the Denneboom station and business precinct in Mamelodi yesterday to listen to the youth describe their problems.

"The DA believes that young South Africans are being denied work opportunities by systemic underskilling and educational shortfalls, and that President

Zuma must address this critical issue in his State of the Nation Address 2017," she said.

"We also want to hear if the youth has any creative solutions for South Africa.

"I have spoken to young activists who have done a great job in helping young people in the area to get jobs with business owners in the community and it is very positive."

Van Damme said 40% of young people in Tshwane were unemployed.

"Our mayor, Solly Msimanga, is devoting a lot of time to creating job opportunities."

Mayoral spokesperson Samkelo Mgobozi said there was obviously a link between unemployment, crime and drug abuse.

"The city has long recognised the problem with drugs in communities like Hammanskraal, Eersterust, Mamelodi and Soshanguve."

Some money had been earmarked for rehabilitation facilities, but the former administration set aside "a lot of money for a lot of things, whether those things have been done is an entirely different story".

Mgobozi said the new administration, through its social development department and with the member of the mayoral committee for community safety, was trying to ensure the affected youth were put to productive work and rehabilitated.

Abigail Feruzi, a seamstress and a Zimbabwean national, asked Van Damme if they could help provide more people with stalls from which to operate small businesses.

- virginia@citizen.co.za

**The DA believes young South Africans are being denied work opportunities by systemic underskilling and educational shortfalls.**

Phumzile van Damme  
DA national spokesperson



PHUMZILE VAN DAMME, the DA's national spokesperson, at Denneboom in Mamelodi yesterday. Photo: Jiri van der Merwe



The Citizen

Fig 6.14 "JZ must address youth issues"

- Contextual connotation of news reports on illicit drug scourge

The contextual connotation behind most of the news reports was premised on the uproar of communities on the Department of Health and Social Development's failure to provide drug rehabilitation centres for addicts. Furthermore, there were news reports that reported the ill-treatment of drug addicts in the few government centres

that provided drug rehabilitation. Interventions and collaborations were additional factors mentioned in response to drug rehabilitation centres. Some news reports discussed a variety of solutions such as individual drug treatment programmes and treatment-oriented for teenagers. The challenge, however, was that the journalists seemed preoccupied with receiving statements from the residents without endeavouring to engage with responsible authorities on the position of the government to increase rehabilitation centres. A study conducted by Mabokela (2018), noted that news reports on rehabilitation centre in *Daily Sun* and *The Sowetan* inadequately raised the issue of minimal rehabilitation centres considering the hardships endured by addicts when seeking rehabilitation.

On the contrary, two news reports painted rehabilitation centres negatively. For example, one news report from *The Citizen's* 08 March 2017 "*Centre ill-treats us, say addicts*" was concerned with overdose deaths reported on individual ill-treatment and discussed a rehabilitation centre that was a nightmare for most addicts. In the news report, one hundred and twenty-nine (129) "*Bluetooth*" drug users who volunteered for rehabilitation after the Gauteng Department of Social Development (GDSD) took on "hotspot" approached and visited places of substance abuse in Mabopane and Soshanguve, Tshwane has all discharged themselves from rehabilitation centre due to alleged "ill-treatment".

Another news report, "*Probe into man's gang rape*" (see attached Figure 6.15) in *The Sowetan's* 11 July 2017 edition also emphasised how a man quit rehabilitation after he was raped by seven men at a drug rehabilitation centre in Randfontein. The alleged rape victim is said to have told his family about the ordeal after he left the rehab before completing his treatment. Consistent and cutting-edge coverage of government rehabilitation centres could have been highly prioritised because most of the addicts in black townships do not have access to rehabilitation treatment due to various reasons including poor socioeconomic situation (Ghosh, 2013). Needless to say, this compromised the noble roles of the media, that is, to inform, educate and raise awareness of the drug scourge.

# Probe into man's 'gang rape'

Man quits rehab after alleged rape by seven men - MEC

By **Pertunia Mafokwane**

Gauteng social development MEC Nandi Mayathula-Khoza has launched an investigation into how a 30-year-old man was gang raped by seven men at a drug rehabilitation centre in Randfontein, on the West Rand.

The alleged rape victim is said to have told his family about the ordeal after he left the rehab before completing his

treatment.

The incident was reported to the department last week.

Mayathula-Khoza said the alleged victim did not "deserve" to be raped.

She was speaking yesterday at a press briefing in Johannesburg on some of her department's cases.

"This is a man who went to one of our substance abuse treatment centres where he

alleges that he was raped by seven men," she said.

"He was in rehab because he is abusing drugs and our role as a department is to help people who are abusing alcohol and drugs to be assisted in a form of going to our rehabs, but this man just left the rehab and reported to his family that he was raped." Mayathula-Khoza said the victim refused to speak to social workers because he

could no longer trust anyone.

Her department also intervened in the illegal marriage of a 17-year-old girl, whose 42-year-old husband allegedly paid her parents R25 000 in lobola. Mayathula-Khoza said this was also wrong.

Her department also rescued more than 20 boys who were abducted and taken to illegal initiation schools.



Gauteng social development MEC Nandi Mayathula-Khoza's department is investigating the alleged gang rape of a 30-year-old man at drug rehab centre in Randfontein. /VELI NHLAPO



Sowetan

1 of 1

Fig 6.15 "Probe into man's gang rape"

- **Omitted information in news reports on illicit drug scourge**

In the abovementioned news report "Probe into man's gang rape" the journalist missed the opportunity to interrogate the Department of Social Development on the kinds of challenges faced by drug addicts while at rehabilitation centres. The journalist

expressed a bias by choosing to use and/or not to use news items to establish the operations of rehabilitation centres. The study further noted that the selection of vital details such as negligence at rehabilitation centres was necessary to give readers a different opinion about the events reported. However, bias through omission is difficult to detect. Regardless of the effects of drug abuse in South Africa, the journalists misplaced brevity because the failure of the journalist to elaborate on important aspects as observed in the foregoing information makes one think that the news report was used as a mere filler.

- **Limiting debate in news reports on illicit drug scourge**

No witnesses or other sources from the police or government were quoted in the news reports; hence objectivity and balance were compromised. McQuail (2013) asserts that many aspects of news form are related to the pursuit of objectivity in the sense of facticity or factualness, and the key element of facticity is attribution to very credible or positively verified sources. Smith cited in McQuail (2013: 378) also weighed in by saying without attribution of credibility by the audience, the news could not be distinguished from entertainment or propaganda. To update planning on drug rehabilitation, more recent national prevalence data on the number of drug treatment centres and the types of treatments offered in South Africa are needed.

### **6.2.7 Stakeholder interventionist frame**

Drugs news reports on the stakeholder interventionist frame chronicled interventions by South African law enforcement agents focusing on the magnitude of raids, types of drugs seized, several arrests, what lead to the raids, and where the raids happened. The news reports also focused on interventions by communities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

- **Lexical choice of news reports on illicit drug scourge**

Several news reports were included in this category of law enforcement and the frame that yielded was the interventionist frame. The news story titled "*Crackdown on Cape Crime*" published in *The Citizen* on 03 January 2017 (see attached Figure 6.16) accounted police raids that happened in the Western Cape, where multitudes of people were arrested. The words and phrases dominant in the news reports for

readers to decode the drug scourge texts in a specific way were *arrests, drug houses, raids, apprehended, operations, possession, and stolen property.*

The headline of the news report was catchy and convenient to market the news report. According to Rudin & Ibbotson (2012:75), headlines contain several eye-catching aspects such as alliteration, emotive verbs/adjectives, capital letters, and sub-headings, as well as grammatical omissions. Tabloids are written for a less demanding reader who is not interested in thorough news updates. The role of the lead in any news report is also crucial. The news report's lead "More than 100 people were arrested in the Nyanga and Blue Downs police station clusters over the past week, Western Cape police said" entices the reader to continue reading. The news report also pointed out the different kinds of crimes committed, the number of people arrested, and where and when the arrests happened.



## Crackdown on Cape crime

More than 900 people were arrested in the Nyanga and Blue Downs police station clusters over the past week, Western Cape police said.

In the Nyanga cluster, which consists of the Nyanga, Manenberg, Bishop Lavis, Elsies River, Gugulethu and Philippi East policing precincts, there were 460 arrests.

"These arrests were made during various operations conducted in the precinct, which consisted of searches at drug houses, raids at illegal liquor outlets, tracing operations, vehicle control points, roadblocks, foot patrols and stop-and searches," said police spokesperson FC van Wyk.

A total of 142 suspects were apprehended for possession and dealing in drugs.

Others were arrested for murder, crimes against women and children, possession of illegal firearms, possession of stolen property, escape from custody, armed robberies, attempted murders, housebreaking and theft and assaults.

Officers seized illegal firearms, drugs and alcohol during the anticrime operation.

In the Blue Downs cluster, which consists of the Mfuleni, Kleinvllei, Kuilsriver, Bellville South, Delft, Belhar and Ravensmead policing precincts, 458 people were arrested.

They face charges of murder, attempted murder, assault, rape, house breaking, theft, possession of illegal firearms, drug dealing, child neglect and car theft, among other offences.

In operations this week, 62 houses were searched for drugs and 131 arrests were executed relating to drugs.

Approximately 2 800 litres of alcohol, mandrax tablets with an estimated street value of R26 200, tik with an estimated street value of R5 220 and dagga with a street value of R14 388 were also confiscated.

Tracing operations that were carried out in the Blue Downs cluster also led to the arrest of 57 wanted suspects. – ANA

**Operations included raids at illegal liquor outlets, tracing operations, vehicle control points and foot patrols.**

**FC van Wyk**  
Police spokesperson



Fig 6.16 "Crackdown on Cape Crime"

Another example was a news report published in *The Daily Sun's* 24 January 2017 edition with the title "*Cops find dagga worth millions*" (see attached Figure 5.5) was enough to lend a certain meaning to the reader. The news report highlighted the careful use of words in the headline that promoted a particular agenda or frame concerning the drug scourge. These words or symbols were used for both denotation and connotation. They were employed in the text to manipulate the reader to decode a text in a particular way as desired by the encoder. According to Entman (1993) cited in McQuail (2013: 380), framing involves selection and salience. He summarises the main aspects of framing by saying that frames define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies.

The third news report titled “*Yes, I harboured pimps, prostitutes in my house*” published on 22 February 2017 in *The Sowetan* (see attached Figure 6.17) attracted the reader to find out what the South African law enforcement has done to people harbouring drugs in their houses. The headline endorses the story. A good headline, according to Harris, Leiter, & Johnson (2012:506), will reach out and grab the reader’s attention. The readers are hooked when it is vivid, informative, clear, and accurate. The headline enticed readers to continue reading to learn more about how, when, and the reasons for the act of sheltering the pimps and prostitutes, who are also drug dealers and addicts. When such headlines are frequently presented in the press, the readers would also have fewer doubts about the country’s legal system in fighting the collusion of community members in drug activities. Furthermore, the headline denoted the importance of the content the news report referred to.

Additional news reports with this frame were observed in *The Citizen’s* 20 January 2017 titled “*R500 000 drug bust*” where three suspected drug dealers were arrested with a large number of *mandrax* tablets with an estimated value of R 100 000 00. “*Cops patrol beefed up*” in *The Citizen’s* 15 February 2017, a news report on how sixty-three (n=63) additional Metro police officers were deployed to Rosettenville, south of Johannesburg, where as many as sixteen houses were set alight by protesters, who suspected they were being used as brothels and drug dens. *The Citizen’s* 23 February 2017 news report “*Limpopo Drug lab Bust*” (see attached Figure 6.18 below) highlighted how the police in Limpopo confiscated machines, drug manufacturing equipment, and chemicals with an estimated value of R10 million. The study noted the rationale of consciously selecting words and symbols, as well as images was to influence the reception and interpretation of media texts. In some instances, there was this naivety on the part of the media that the consumers just take messages as encoded. But the reader is not only a consumer of already encoded meanings but also the producer of the meanings of the text.

## Limpopo 'drug lab' bust

Police in Limpopo have confiscated machines, drug manufacturing equipment and chemicals with an estimated value of R10 million.

Spokesperson Brigadier Motlafela Mojapelo said two suspects, aged 26 and 39, were arrested at the drug laboratory.

Police also recovered two stolen vehicles – a Ford Meteor and a Nissan NP300 – which were reported stolen in January 2009 in Thabazimbi.

"Police received information regarding the suspects, who are involved in vehicle theft, carjacking and dealing in and manufacturing drugs at Thabakhubedu village in Dennilton policing precinct," said Mojapelo.

Equipment for the manufacturing of Mandrax tablets with an estimated value of R2 million and R29 820 in cash were recovered.

Mojapelo said two other suspects managed to evade arrest in the swoop.

"The arrested suspects will be charged with manufacturing and dealing in drugs and possession of stolen vehicles.

"The operation lasted several hours until 4am yesterday. More arrests are expected."

The suspects will appear in Moutse Magistrate's Court soon.

- ANA



**Fig 6.17** "Limpopo Drug lab Bust"

The *Daily Sun's* 22 May 2017 "Tip-offs Saves Young Girls", 08 March 2017, "Cops Bust Jozi Drug Lords", and 03 January 2017 "Big New Year's Day Drug Bust". The *Sowetan's* 27 February 2017 news report titled "Smell of Dried fish lead to R30m tik", "School bus driver bust for drugs" and *The Sowetan's* 08 May 2017 edition were some of the many news reports that reported about law enforcement in the sampled

newspapers. The study noted that the news reports focused on people who broke laws in terms of the South African Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act No 40 of 1992.

- **Contextual connotations of news reports on illicit drug scourge**

The interventionist frame generated in the news reports “*Yes, I harboured pimps, prostitutes in my house*” and “*Cops find dagga worth millions*” demonstrated how the government particularly the South African Police Services (SAPS) also relied on tip-offs from either community members or Community Police Forums (CPF) to achieve successful raids. The news reports were framed to give meaning to the reader to realise that SAPS was committed to fight the plague of drugs. The news report “*Yes, I harboured pimps, prostitutes in my house*” in *The Sowetan’s* 22 February edition illustrated that the police only arrested the “God-fearing woman” in question only when the community took justice upon themselves by torching her house. What is also implied in the story is the existence of law enforcement which disregarded the community’s fight against drug abuse whereby mob justice was considered a criminal offense.

The news report by *The Sowetan* (Sifile, 2017) further highlighted how the 58-year-old Annemarie van Zijl, of Pretoria West, told *The Sowetan* that although the torching of her house by the mob had upset her, she did not feel guilty for allowing her tenant, known as “Paul”, to turn her home into a brothel. The God-fearing woman further said she harboured the pimps and prostitutes because she felt sorry for them. Therefore, this is a clear indication that had not the mob of 50 interceded, the lady was still going to continue with the criminality unabatedly. The story inferred that there was a syndicate in this evil practice of drug abuse, which was mostly linked to prostitution.

This was observed when the pimp continuously offered the prostitutes drugs such as cocaine to sell their bodies to feed their addiction. However, the gross violations of these acts revealed that there was not much commitment on the part of the SAPS and judicial system to decisively deal with the scourge of drugs. This concurs with (Fourie, 2017) that lexical choices and their configuration in news press also “hold great power in setting the context for debate, defining issues under consideration, summoning a variety of mental representations, and providing the basic tools to discuss the issues at hand”.

Another news report published in *The Citizen's* 10 February 2017 with the title "*Heroin and cocaine bust: two in court*", identified that the KwaZulu-Natal police only managed to arrest the suspects for alleged possession of cocaine and heroin after they received tip-offs. Subsequently, the majority of the news reports "*R500 000 drug bust*", "*Three men nabbed in dagga sting operations*", "*R5m of cocaine confiscated*", "*Trio arrested in border drug bust*" et cetera chronicled successful operations conducted by the South African Police Services (SAPS) in fighting the scourge of drug abuse. Altheide & Schneider (2013) posits that frames influenced the way audiences conceptualised issues by setting parameters for discussion. Therefore, the study noted that there was substantial necessity for the news reports to be framed in a manner that demonstrates that a collaboration between the selected newspapers and law enforcement is momentous to successfully wage the war on drugs in South Africa.

- **Omitted information in news reports on illicit drug scourge**

The news report "*Yes, I harboured pimps and prostitutes*" (see attached Figure 6.2) had evident cracks, such as why the police did not try to investigate the situation. According to the news source, the police did not take the God-fearing woman into custody for interrogation. Furthermore, the news report failed to mention what happened to the pimps and prostitutes who were housed, their overall number, nationality, and the duration that this woman's home operated as a brothel. The journalist did not interview the representatives from SAPS to establish if anyone had been arrested, especially the woman and the mob. The news report clearly showed that the style of reporting had no intention to get to the bottom of the story. The newspaper failed to employ in-depth journalism about the news report on harbouring pimps, and prostitutes who were dealing drugs.

In addition, the police commissioner and interchangeably spokesperson's viewpoint concerning his or her position on the rampant drug cartels and brothels run by citizens and foreign nationals were not mentioned in this story. This news report's authorised framework raised more problems than it answered. Subsequently, the study the frame of the news report could be recognised by the receiver, it is more than likely that the receiver (reader) of the message will not interpret it in the way the journalist (sender) wanted them to. In that case, the sender has failed to convey his or her message by omitting significant information in the news report.

Another gap was observed in *The Citizen's* 28 February 2017 news report titled "*Police on high alert*" (Hlatshaneni, 2017) which depicted police in a negative light, whereby angry community members torched a police van. The atrocious act happened when SAPS was on alert following a violent protest on Sunday night by community members "fighting against drugs and prostitution" believed to be perpetrated by foreigners in the area. According to the community, they were trying to root out drugs and prostitution as a result of SAPS' failure to fight the drug scourge in the area. The journalist did not try to probe the community on the measures taken to alert the police of the drug activities transpiring in the area, before taking the law into their hands.

Furthermore, clarity on why it took SAPS such long to act was not provided by Captain Kay Makhubela. Consequently, it was significant for the news report to detail whether SAPS was aware of the rampant drug use in that region. Therefore, the study noted that the importance for journalists to probe such questions to avoid posing a challenge to the credibility of the content presented in the news report.

- **Limiting debate in news reports on illicit drug scourge**

In the aforementioned news reports, the journalists confined the illicit drugs scourge debate to the role which the press played if the South African government, particularly the South African Police Services recognised the importance of combating the scourge of drugs. The journalists failed to see the importance of including alternative techniques to dealing with the problem.

In the news reports "*Police on high alert*" and "*Yes, I harboured pimps and prostitutes*", the journalists were unsuccessful in probing the SAPS and government's impending plans to scrap drugs and drug dealers in the areas. For the journalists to only dwell on the community's atrocious acts of burning drug dens without interrogating more on what caused their outrage, and what took SAPS that long to respond to the community's demands and pleas, put the professionalism of the reporters to test. Journalists were expected to be well equipped with interviewing skills and impart knowledge relevant to the social, economic, and technological development of nations. In their defense, trained journalists and mainstream media have expressed their apprehension about citizen journalism citing that unprofessional fingers are fiddling in the venerated profession of journalism (Fourie, 2017).

Furthermore, the news reports limited the debate to the idea that SAPS and the government were doing well in fighting drugs, regardless of the 2020 South African Crime Statistics that asserts that 60% of the crimes committed in the country are drug-related (South African Crime Statistics, 2020). Therefore, framing of law enforcement news reports confined the debate simply to successful operations of SAPS, without questioning why the police had allowed drug abuse to continue unabated.

### ***Community interventionist Frame***

The stakeholder interventionist frame underpinning the news reports on community interventions is discussed below.

- **Lexical choice of news reports on illicit drug scourge**

The news report titled '*Houses, cars burn in vigilante violence*' in *The Citizen*, 20 February 2017 used words that were predominant to lend a certain meaning to the reader. The reporter used words such as *rampage, violent attacks, tension, harassed, foreigners, and attacked*. Another example is "*Mamelodi marches against foreigners*" in *The Citizen*, 21 February 2017. Additionally, words that carried similar aggressive connotations were also observed in *The Sowetan's* "*Group set to confront drug lords who target kids*" employed words and phrases such as *drug fights, anti-drugs, shocked, and saddened*. The *Daily Sun's* "*We'll use violence*" employed the use of words and phrases such as *fight, burned, community action, and anger*. The journalists applied the careful use of these words and phrases to promote a community interventionist frame.

# 'WE'LL USE VIOLENCE'

## Residents vow to clamp down on crime

By SIFISO JIMTA  
VEREENIGING remained tense yesterday, with residents monitoring the area for any illegal dealing.

Magoshas have also vanished from the area.

On Sunday, residents took the law into their own hands in their fight against alleged druglords and brothels.

They burnt two houses they claimed were used by magoshas and drug sellers.

The community's actions came close on the heels of similar incidents in Joburg and Tshwane recently.

Residents told *Daily Sun* they had complained and protested about the brothels and drugdens many times, but the police appeared to be unable to do something about it.

They said they had organised a peaceful march to the Vereeniging cop shop last year, where they made their voices heard.

They submitted a memorandum and demanded that police tackle criminal activities in their town and arrest the criminals and prostitutes.



Angry Vereeniging residents set two houses alight and damaged one during a violent protest on Sunday.  
Photo by Lucky Morajane

A resident told the *People's Paper*: "The cops did not keep their end of the deal.

"Our anger reached boiling point on Sunday.

"We will use violence to shut down brothels and drug dens.

"We had given the police and courts 14 days to respond

to issues raised in the memorandum, but they didn't even respond.

"This shows that we are being undermined, or maybe the police work with the thugs to hijack our beloved town," said another resident.

"We will not stop until our town is cleared of drug lords

and magoshas by the police and the courts."

Captain Fikile Funda told *Daily Sun* that two houses were set alight and one was damaged.

"No one seems to know the owners of the houses," he said, adding that no cases had been opened yet.



Daily Sun

of 1

Fig 6.18 "We'll use violence"

This is supported by Entman (1993) cited in McQuail (2013: 380) that framing involves selection and salience. He summarises the main aspects of framing by saying that frames define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies. A very large number of textual devices can be used to perform these activities. They include using certain words or phrases, making certain contextual references, choosing certain pictures or films, giving examples as typical, referring to certain sources, and so on. Subsequently the study noted that aggressive words were employed in the news reports to manipulate the readers to decode how communities intervened in the scourge of drugs as desired by the journalists. In addition, the data



from the news reports presented that reporting from all the newspapers evoked a narrative of both resentments and concerns from communities and this yielded the stakeholder interventionist frame.

- **Contextual connotation of news reports on illicit drug scourge**

*The Citizen's "Brothels, drug dens set on fire"* news report was written in a manner that the reader was aware of the extent of drug dealings in the country. The news report also highlighted the grievances of residents over the scourge of drugs, which ultimately forced them to take matters into their hands. Another news report from *The Citizen* titled "*Loss of faith in police probed*" noted that residents in that area burnt down several brothels and drug dens in an outpouring of rage against drug crime. The residents claimed they have appealed in vain to the SAPS to shut down these crime hotspots.

Subsequently, the residents believe that steps needed to be taken to urgently resolve past grievances against the South African Police Services. With that being said, the element of xenophobia could creep into the reader, more so when foreigners were in the majority of news reports and accused of dealing in drugs. However, the contextual connotation of the majority of the news reports highlighted the interventions by communities on the scourge of drugs in the country.

Furthermore, other news reports on community interventions in the newspapers understudy were, "*Residents want to be heard*" (Mlangeni, Tlhoale, Mbatha & Molobi, 2017), "*No place for thugs*", "*We'll use violence*", "*We are tired of crime*", and "*Residents rat on button dealer*", "*Residents demand action*", "*Community says no to human trafficking*" and "*We march because they take our jobs*".

- **Omitted information in news reports on illicit drug scourge**

Considering that communities across the country seemed to be fighting a lone battle about the scourge of drugs, the journalists conveniently avoided highlighting the issue of citizens' trust in law enforcement agencies. It was patently clear from the news reports that urgent interventions were needed at certain police stations. The news reports also omitted important information about ensuring that the trust between communities and the South African Police Service (SAPS) was strengthened. One can argue that it was the nature of journalists either to include or exclude certain information in a story to influence and manipulate readers or audiences in the way

they decode media texts. The exclusion or omission of some information or words is not a fortuitous incident; it is deliberate and planned. Pan & Kosciński (1993) cited in Golan, Johnson, & Wanta (2018) posit that the way journalists present, and frame issues impact public understanding and policy formation.

- **Limiting debate in news reports on illicit drug scourge**

If all the news reports were to demonstrate the value of objectivity, the journalist would have also interviewed the South African Police Services to establish whether the disgruntled communities have alerted police stations about the drug scourge before taking the law into their own hands. This is supported by McQuail (2013:173) who contends that there is a broad international consensus that standards of truth and objectivity should be central values of journalism. In addition, it could have added value to the news reports if the journalists had questioned the invasion of their communities by drug abuse as a new phenomenon because it had been the trend since centuries ago. The current generation would not have witnessed crime due to drugs both in the urban and rural areas. The study observed that the interventionist frame was not adequately indicated; the journalists failed to adopt a solution frame that could assist both citizens and authorities to care for their needs to protect them from the challenges faced due to the scourge of drugs.

### ***Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) Interventionist Frame***

The interventionist frame underpinning the news reports on non-governmental organisations' interventions is discussed below. According to McQuail (2013), the idea of a 'frame' concerning the news has been widely and loosely used in place of terms such as 'frame of reference, 'context,' 'theme,' or even 'news angle' of the drug abuse intervention.

- **Lexical choice of news reports on illicit drug scourge**

The study noted that *The Citizen* and *The Sowetan* were the only newspapers that reported the interventions done by non-governmental organisations to fight the scourge of drugs. Words and symbols were carefully selected in the news reports to effectively communicate the desired message to the readers of the newspapers under study. *The Citizen's* news reports titled "*Sanco seeks drastic action*" (African News Agency, 2017), "*TUKS joins war on drugs*" (Keppler, 2017), "*Hope for drug*

*users*" (Watson, 2017) and "*Mayor tackles battle on drugs*" (Keppler, 2017) used words like *launched, efforts, substance, brief interventions, agreement, engaged, contact centre, and rights activists*. Similarly, *The Sowetan* news reports titled "*Groups set to confront drug lords who target kids*", "*Smokers using cremation remains to get high*" and "*Drug test should be held for high school admission*" employed words such as *confiscate, drug-free, drug fight, partnerships, and interventions*.

Subsequently, the words in the news reports were employed to highlight the importance and urgency of involving print media, particularly newspapers to address the scourge of drugs. It was also important to keep in mind that newspaper proprietors may not be aware of all the facets of the stories in their firm. The study noted that news reports in the newspapers yielded an interventionist frame.

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## Sanco seeks drastic action

Drastic action is needed to fight crime and drugs to prevent xenophobic attacks, the South African National Civic Organisation (Sanco) said yesterday.

Sanco called for an urgent review of the national crime prevention strategy (NCPS) to ensure that new priorities responded adequately to acts of criminality threatening the safety of communities. This followed the outbreak of violence in Pretoria West during which two houses, alleged to be drug dens, were torched.

"South African Police Service management needs to get to the bottom of allegations that law enforcement officers are either compromised by involvement in crime, or turning a blind eye to criminal activities because they are receiving bribes from crime syndicates," said Sanco national spokesperson Jabu Mahlangu.

The breakdown in trust between police and communities had resulted in some communities, including Rosettenville in Johannesburg and Pretoria West, taking the law into their own hands, he said.

Last week, about 10 alleged drug dens and brothels in Rosettenville were set alight by angry community members. Two alleged drug dens in Pretoria West were set alight on Saturday. - ANA



Fig 6.19 "Sanco seeks drastic action"

- **Contextual connotation of news reports on illicit drug scourge**

All the news reports on the framing of NGOs interventions gave the impression that the fight against drugs was already a lost battle because the NGOs stated they had failed to receive support from the government. An example of such a news report is observed in *The Sowetan's* 01 June 2017 titled "*Group set to confront drug lords who target kids*" (see attached Figure 6.20). In the news report, parents' organisations, child rights activists, and non-governmental organisations in Chatsworth near Durban threatened to take the drug fight to local drug lords. This came after police recently discovered one of the biggest drugs-producing laboratories in Chatsworth, south of Durban.

# Groups set to confront drug lords who target kids

## Sandile Motha

PARENTS' organisations, child rights activists and non-governmental organisations in Chatsworth near Durban, have threatened to take the drug fight to local drug lords.

This comes after police recently discovered one of the biggest drug-producing laboratories in Chatsworth, south of Durban.

It is alleged that the laboratory was producing drugs known locally as "jelly babies" which look like jelly babies sweets. The drugs are allegedly destined for primary schools in and around Durban.

Now, anti-drugs forums have proposed that suspected drug lords in areas such as uMlazi, Wentworth, Chatsworth, KwaMashu and Durban's affluent suburbs be targeted and driven out of their neighbourhoods. The organisations yesterday held a meeting where they allegedly drew a plan of action.

"They have now gone too far; this is a clear indication that these drug

lords will stop at nothing in their bid to destroy our youth. We must all stand up and defend this country from becoming a drug capital.

"What are we supposed to do when drug lords target young ones who are still pure?" asked Durban South Anti-drugs and Gangsterism chairman Denver Wagner.

"This is war. We will not be friendly with them. The message is clear: we want them out of our neighborhoods."

The new "jelly babies" drugs have apparently hit the streets of Durban and were selling like hot cakes.

Lieutenant Simphiwe Mhlongo, KwaZulu-Natal Hawks spokesman, has warned youth who might come across the drugs to be careful.

"This new drug aims to lure unwary primary and high school learners. It is believed to contain a concoction of dangerous drugs.

"These drugs come in different and attractive colours and they are shaped like sweets," said Mhlongo.

He said the confiscated drugs

would be tested in order to find out what ingredients they contain and how dangerous they are to the human body.

Childline's Dumisile Nala described these latest developments as disturbing.

"We're shocked and saddened by the expansion of drug havens that now target children.

"This shows that our children are unsafe and soft targets for drug lords," said Nala.

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Fig 6.20 "Group set to confront drug lords who target kids"

These organisations fell let down by the police because nobody had been arrested since the drug bust. Fish (2010) abandoned the assumption that competent readers discover one “deep structure” or normative intention because that assumption did not enable him to explain why some readers interpret a text in one way and others interpret it in another. This study agrees with Franklin et al. (2015: 85) who postulate that media, through news values, tend to prefer particular broad ways of framing issues. Media have been criticised for favouring episodic frames that focus on individual actions over thematic frames that focus on systemic concerns.

In a journalistic context, stories are given meaning by reference to some particular ‘news value’ that connects one event with other similar ones. However, the media may not have the monopoly on framing, as it were, other mediating factors may afford other critics to question and/or dismiss certain news frames. This was observed in some of the news reports on non-governmental organisations. Other news reports on the intervention frame included “*TUKS joins war on drugs*” and “*Hope for drug users*”.

- **Omitted information in news reports on illicit drug scourge**

The interventionist frame adopted in the news report in *The Sowetan*’s 01 June 2017 “*Group set to confront drug lords who target kids*” as hard news left wide pits about completeness as a news value. The news report could not elaborate on how the police reacted to their intervention in the fight against drug abuse. The police were fighting a losing battle because Lieutenant Simphiwe Mhlongo, KwaZulu-Natal Hawks spokesman, only warned youth who might come across the drugs to be careful. The Lieutenant hardly mentioned anything about supporting or opposing the drastic measures taken by the NGOs. The reporter did not ask the spokesman about his thoughts on interventions by the NGOs and what the SAPS in that region was planning to ensure future collaborations with non-governmental organisations in fighting the rampant drug scourge. This omission on its own inadvertently tried to normalise the abnormal, that it is acceptable for NGOs to play a critical role in maintaining a drug-free country.

- **Limiting debate in news reports on illicit drug scourge**

In as much as the news report “*Group set to confront drug lords who target kids*” touched on several pertinent issues such as the intervention of NGOs to confront drug lords, it fell short of offering solutions from the SAPS. In framing it is crucial to suggest

a solution if at all an issue is to remain on the government agenda. The story could not explain why the scourge of drugs had been neglected whilst the safety of communities was compromised. This is supported by the evaluation of news coverage of the Cold War, Gamson (2014:114) concluded that news media frames diagnose, evaluate, and prescribe solutions through selective reporting of particular bits of information. In short, news media frames are “how an account organises reality”, and represent “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion”. Other news reports in the newspapers also failed to interrogate SAPS on interventions and solutions to drug abuse. In opening avenues for debate on national matters, the press would be interconnecting citizens and government and possibly galvanise both to engage and conceive solutions to national challenges such as the scourge of drugs.

#### **6.2.8 Empathy-blame frame**

Based on the analysis of results regarding coverage of the drug scourge, it was noted that the news reports presented different content relating to empathy- blame frame for drug abuse.

- **Lexical choice of news reports on illicit drug scourge**

The way the news reports were written, that is, diction and slant, was a well-calculated exercise designed to give meaning to the blame frame. A news report in *The Sowetan's* 07 February 2017 “*Blame game as addicts cry for help*” (see attached Figure 6.22) focused mainly on the views of addicts regarding their challenges and lived experiences. The journalist of the new report selected words that he/she considered significant and relevant.



# Blame game as addicts cry for help

**Bongani Nkosi**

**THE blame game between the incumbent administration of Tshwane and the ANC has continued, this time around over failure to uproot nyaope in the city and surrounding townships.**

Nyaope addicts Sowetan spoke to outside the Mabopane train station lamented that rehabilitation centres were not readily available to them.

"We want to stop this thing. It's killing us. But it's hard to get into rehab. They tell us to come back after months.

"The only thing you do while waiting is to smoke and smoke. You end up not going [to rehab]," said an addict who declined to be identified.

His friend, whom he shared a smoke with, agreed with him that chances of accessing rehabilitation were daunting. "I've tried many times to get into rehab. I gave up because I was told to wait."

But for 2015/16 financial year, former Tshwane mayor Kgosisentso Ramokgopa had set aside R50-million to fight the nyaope scourge.

This money was largely to be used for rehabilitating addicted youth. Now the DA-led coalition administration has blamed the previous city government of doing a shoddy job in the fight against nyaope.

The country was shocked last week in the wake of news that some nyaope

smokers in Tshwane townships were now sharing blood to get their fix.

The reports once again brought to surface that nyaope was still a scourge in the capital city.

"They did nothing," Sakkie du Plooy, the metro's MMC for health and social development, said of Ramokgopa's administration.

He said data now at his disposal showed most of the R50-million was not spent properly. Du Plooy said R9.6-million of this allocation was donated to 48 NGOs, a number of whom were not qualified for the job.

"The previous administration passed on the responsibility to the NGOs, hoping that they would do the job.

"There's a long story about how this R50-million was distributed. Not all of it was used," Du Plooy said.

"There was also major fraud involved in handing [over of] this money. That is now under investigation."

Du Plooy said another anomaly was that management of the R50-million was placed under a deputy director working in an understaffed office.

"There is nothing wrong with his capability but he was struggling with two staff members to manage distribution of

the money to different NGOs.

"The administration of this whole thing, especially the monitoring, was totally inadequate," he said.

Tebogo Joala, ANC's spokesman in Tshwane, said the current metro was deflecting attention on its failures by blaming Ramokgopa's administration.

"They are now over five months in office. We committed money and resources.

"We were at an advanced stage of dealing with the scourge of drugs, particularly nyaope," said Joala.

"We had assembled various stakeholders, most of which are in the practice of dealing with drugs and rehabilitation.

"Instead of the DA and EFF-led government continuing on that positive programme we've established, they are blaming us.

"They are not responding with urgency to this issue."

Last week Gauteng education MEC Panyaza Lesufi also expressed concern over nyaope in schools.

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I've tried many times to get into rehab. I was told to wait.



Nyaope addicts say that rehabilitation centres are not readily available to them in Tshwane.

PHOTO: JAZZA KUMOTI/16



Nyaope addicts usually gather in abandoned structures to use the drug.

PHOTO: BOITUMELO TSHEHLE



A nyaope addict injects himself with the drug in Ivory Park, Tembisa.

PHOTO: THULANI MBELE



SOULE VARSITY FOUNDED AFTER FIGHT WITH DOMESTIC

Fig 6.21 "Blame game as addicts cry for help"

A blame frame was also observed in *The Citizen's 28 March 2017*' news report titled "*Mother admits she neglected kids*" where a drug-addicted mother admitted in court that she had forsaken her legal duty to protect her five children from her husband's physical and emotional abuse. She told the court that her husband is a drug dealer and that's how she became heavily reliant on drugs. Subsequently, the woman claimed she was unaware that it was illegal to neglect her children and not send them to school. The mother further expressed how she and her children were abused by her husband, who tortured his 11-year-old son from the age of five. The woman blamed her husband instead of taking responsibility for her action.

Description of the horrendous acts included the choice of words such as *torture, abuse, punching, murder, and burn*. Words and symbols were carefully selected in this news report to effectively communicate the desired message of the drug addict to the readers. This supports Rooney's (2010) argument that the "non-serious" newspapers have 'abandoned the public sphere. As a popular style of journalism, the tabloids departed from an emphasis on political coverage and a predominant engagement with broadly public issues of the day a long time ago.

Another example of a news report on drug addicts' views titled "*Centre ill-treats us, say addicts*" is observed in *The Citizen's 08 March 2017* edition. In the news report, addicts blamed officials at the rehabilitation for the ill-treatment they received which led to their relapse. In this occurrence, the journalists used empathetic words in their reporting to paint a sensational picture for the reader concerning the severity of the treatment addicts received at rehabilitation centres.

Another news report that chronicled some of the drug addicts' views was the *Daily Sun's 11 May 2017* "*Go sell your evil drugs elsewhere*" (Moagi, 2017). The lead starts with the word "gatvol" which is *tsotsi taal*/township slang meaning "fed up". This is one of the more apparent ways in which the *Daily Sun* newspaper tried to strengthen its relationship with its readership by employing colloquial expressionism and slang (Fiske, 1994). This strategy appeared to allow the newspapers to talk to a readership in its own, informal manner and further extends the explicit appeal of these papers to be on the side of the people, leading discussions in an editorial version of the language of the people. This choice of language implies that the newspapers are on the side of the people as readers and opposed to the interests of the power block (ibid).

Therefore, the news reports also generated a blame frame shown by the addicts. This frame implied that the news reports could make readers sympathise with the addicts.

- **Contextual connotation of news reports on illicit drug scourge**

The news reports reported that drug addicts were mentioned in the context of shifting the blame to the government and communities instead of owning up to their involvement of perhaps contributing to the risks associated with drug consumption. An example is *The Citizen's* 28 March 2017 "*Mother admits she neglected kids*"; the news story sought to give readers the impression that the mother of the deceased child was psychologically damaged by the drugs and physical abuse, and that the court should be lenient toward her. The news report also attempted to convey a mother that was remorseful of her actions. However, it was in the same breath that the mother pleaded not guilty to the charges laid against her, which is a contradiction. Implied in the news report was that the mother had the freedom to express herself. This is supported by Section 16's freedom of expression (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). Sensationalising media coverage and the demonisation of drug users have implications for public opinion, and studies have analysed the effects of drug reporting on audience perception (Lancaster et al., 2011). Therefore, the study noted that it was critical to recognise this regretful framing strategy regarding drug abuse that was pervasive in the selected newspapers. Given the foregoing information, it was apparent that addicts will always feel victimised and find excuses for their actions.

- **Omitted information in news reports on illicit drug scourge**

All news reports in the newspapers understudy noted that the journalists failed to report on the socio-economic factors faced by the addicts. The journalists failed to interrogate the addicts on what led them to abuse drugs. The addicts were also not given a chance to be human, and to narrate challenges such as unemployment, poverty, emotional distress et cetera. The journalists missed out on opportunities to know the full stories behind the addict's abuse of drugs. According to UN Drug Profile, (2012), psychologically, it has been established that most drug addicts abuse drugs as escape mechanisms. To this end, anecdotal evidence also supports a connection between increased substance abuse and both increased availability of drugs and the psychological consequences of adjusting to life in the "new" South Africa. Subsequently, the blame frame facilitated a limited discourse of drug use and

distribution as a pernicious force, which excluded more progressive policy options and perpetuated the long-standing stigma associated with addicts. Hence, the news reports noted an empathy blame frame in which the addicts blamed the government for its failure to provide them with drug rehabilitation.

- **Limiting debate of news reports on illicit drug scourge**

The news reports limited the debate only to the negative effects of drugs and some of the addicts' pleas to quit using. The debate that was not considered in the news report "*Mother admits she neglected kids*" was on how the mother also neglected her children's safety. The journalist should have probed the issue of safety because the only negligence raised by the mother was the failure to educate her children. This is supported by Philo, Miller, and Happer's (2018) assertions that the press plays a central role in communicating to the public topical issues happening in the world. In those cases, in which audiences do not possess direct knowledge or experience of what is happening, they become particularly reliant upon the media to inform them. That is not to say that the media simply tell people what to think – people do not absorb media messages uncritically. The study observed that the limited debate on the news report restricted the readers on issues that they (readers) would have been conscientized on and/or sought clarity on.

### **6.3 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

The chapter discussed the media frames that emanated from the qualitative content analysis, namely the crime and violence frame, race, gender, and class frames, the scare-alarmist frame, foreign national scapegoat frame, the helpless frame, empathy-blame frame, and the stakeholder interventionist frame. The chapter noted that all the frames of the news reports presented different content relating to the illicit drug scourge. The next chapter, chapter seven (7) is a presentation of the summary of findings, conclusion, and recommendations of the study.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### 7. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is to present a summary of the study findings, conclusion, and recommendations of the study. The discussions in the chapter emanate from the aim of the study, which was to examine the representation of the drug scourge in South African selected newspapers. The study was based on the following objectives, namely to interrogate the editorial role of the selected newspapers in reporting illicit drug consumption, secondly to determine the framing of news reports on the coverage of illicit drugs in the selected newspapers, thirdly to analyse challenges that impede journalists' editorial in presenting news reports on the consumption of illicit drugs, and fourthly to recommend an editorial tool kit to benefit a dissuasive campaign against the rampant consumption of illicit drugs in South Africa. The summary of the findings is subdivided into three categories, specifically subsection 7.2.1, which addresses matters on the editorial role of the selected newspapers on reporting the drug scourge; subsection 7.2.2 which deals with framing of news reports on the coverage of illicit drugs and subsection 7.2.3 where challenges impeding effective coverage of the illicit drug scourge in the selected newspapers are dealt with.

Data were collected through qualitative content analysis from news reports on the consumption of illicit drugs from the *Daily Sun*, *The Citizen*, and *The Sowetan* newspapers in South Africa. This was complemented by data collected from informants who contributed their expert views on the role of the selected newspapers in editorialising drug abuse and the challenges that impede comprehensive coverage of the drug scourge. The discussion of the findings makes inference to both the literature that supports or negates the results as well as the selected theories that underpin the study as stated in section 1.8 in Chapter 1. Section 7.3 presents the conclusion of the study which focuses on the main highlights of the study and is subsequently followed by the recommendations of the study where the study proposes a tool kit to benefit a dissuasive campaign against the rampant consumption of illicit drugs in South Africa. as presented in subsection 7.4 of the study.

## **7.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS**

The study examined the representation of the drugs scourge in South Africa, through a qualitative analysis of the selected newspapers namely, *The Sowetan*, *The Citizen* and *Daily Sun* newspapers focusing on news reports published between 01 January 2017 and 31 December 2017. The focus of the study was to interrogate the editorial role of the selected newspapers in reporting drug abuse, determine the framing of news reports on the coverage of illicit drugs, and analyse challenges that impede journalists' editorial role in presenting news reports on the consumption of illicit drugs. The summary of the findings of the study is outlined below:

### **7.2.1 Editorial role of the selected newspapers in reporting drug abuse**

The analysis and interpretation of data in the study observed that some critical aspects of the editorial role in reporting illicit drug abuse in South African selected newspapers were not evident. This is discussed in an itemised form under the editorial focus on the drug scourge in newspapers; editorial approach to the drug scourge consumption; major themes in the coverage of the drug scourge selected newspapers, tabloid newspapers, drug scourge and national consciousness, and the newspapers drug scourge and government interventions.

- ***Editorial focus on the illicit drug scourge in the selected newspapers***

From the findings, the study observed that there was no specific editorial focus on reporting illicit drugs in most newspapers. In addition, the study noted that news reports on drugs were often published when the stories were current. This kind of editorial focus was not helpful to fight against drug abuse in South Africa because the news reports only adopt the same narrative angle. The adoption of this angle contributed to the lack of diverse coverage of stories on drug trafficking, drug cartels and the South African stance on the drug scourge. The findings resonate with Swanepoel's (2017) view who noted that, the lack of different angles in reporting the scourge of drugs trivialises the subject by making the readers to think that drug stories are less important than other beats because they are not fully developed. Subsequently, in-depth, and constructive angles to news formulation on the drugs scourge were not adopted and this limited the focus on the editorialisation and framing of the scourge in the selected South African newspapers.

- ***Editorial approach to the illicit drug scourge in the selected newspapers***

The study noted that newspapers adopted the inverted pyramid approach to the news reports, and this was regarded as a suitable news writing approach to hard news such as drug abuse. This kind of approach was noted as one of the most common ways newspapers used to report drug abuse. This agrees with Nel's (2013) assertion that the most important information is given right at the beginning of the story, followed by less important information, emphasising the need to prioritise the content of the story. The approach was partly helpful in providing information on what the news report is about, who was involved, where the story happened, and how it happened. The study further noted that newspapers missed the opportunity to approach the drug scourge like any other serious stories affecting the lives of South Africans.

- ***Major themes featured in the coverage of the illicit drug scourge in the selected newspapers***

The study noted that social, economic, health, and psychological effects were the main themes raised in the selected newspapers regarding the drug scourge. On the social effects, the study noted that social issues such as dropping out of school, vandalising cemeteries, and stealing were some of the highlights in the news reports. On the social effects of drug abuse. The study further noted that drugs erode the element of socialisation in addicts, as they become anti-social and a menace to their families and immediate communities. This concurs with Parrott, Morinan, Moss and Scholey's (2014) assertion that the South African government has observed that substance abuse does not only affect the individual, but also affects the family, friends, and teachers at school, and other members of the community.

The study noted that newspapers opted for news reports on economic effects of drug abuse because of the value they held on the country's investment opportunities. This concurs with Peltzer, Louw & Mchunu (2012:37) that because South Africa has an economy that other African countries envy, many of people are drawn to tour the country, and because it has the largest illicit drug market, drugs are also trafficked during this tourism. The study further noted health effects of drug abuse such as HIV/AIDS, and Tuberculosis. Subsequently, the study noted that addressing issues such as social, health, and economic in the selected newspapers has the potential to

positively change the behaviour of drug users as the news reports highlighted the detrimental effects of abusing drugs in the country.

- ***Tabloid newspapers, illicit drug scourge, and national consciousness***

The study noted that there were no efforts created by the newspapers to create national consciousness of the scourge in the country. The study further observed that the newspapers could do more on reporting drug stories because there might be more news on how the drug scourge has affected more communities, and there is a likelihood that these journalists are not motivated to search for such stories. This is supported by Kawoosa's (2016:45) study that the press in particular newspapers do not have a magic baton to resolve a complex problem as drugs. But keeping in view the magnitude of drug dependence, newspapers must take the moral responsibility to make the masses aware of drugs, their use, abuse, de-addiction facility, models, strategies et cetera. The study further noted that drug campaigns have the potential to deliver preventive health messages to create national consciousness about the drug scourge. Subsequently, the study noted that the selected newspapers failed to live up to their editorial function of creating drug national consciousness to inform and persuade the public to refrain from abusing illicit drugs.

- ***Selected newspapers, illicit drug scourge, and government intervention***

The study findings noted that newspapers attempted to present qualitative reports on government intervention programmes in the news reports. The study highlighted that, newspapers reported on government interventions characterised by interventions from the Departments of Health, Home Affairs and Social Development but the coverage was inconsistent. This is supported by Hartley & Miller (2014) when the United States of America saw a massive rise in crack use and addiction between 1984 and 1990, the press collaborated with the government to consistently reported the issue. While intentions were to educate readers about a drug crisis invisible to many, the press coverage displayed a substantial pattern of racial stereotypes and "media myths" that both perpetuated false stigmas and heightened public fear. Subsequently, the findings of this study show that the South African government and newspapers can take lessons from this kind of relationship in the fight against drug abuse since there was no evidence of such synergy in the coverage.



### 7.2.2 Framing of news reports on the coverage of illicit drugs

The summary of findings on the framing of news reports on the coverage of illicit drugs in *The Sowetan*, *Daily Sun* and *The Citizen* newspapers covered frames such crime-violence frame, the race, gender, and class frames, scare-alarmist frame, foreign national scapegoat frame, helpless frame, and interventionist frame.

- ***The crime-violence frame***

The study noted that the news reports in the newspapers understudy reported on different crimes and violence committed largely caused by confirmed abuse of illicit drugs in different parts of the country. The selected newspapers employed words such as *killer, steal, murder, drug, gambling addict, stabbing, ill-gotten gains, and deceased* to inform the readers of the crimes and violence committed by drug users with the intention to get money to buy more drugs. This agrees with how Bell (1989:85) paid particular attention to the news media's use of language, for example, asking whether the language used is emotive or impartial. He argued that analysis of language reveals information about a journalist's choices, which reflect pre-existing social discussions or can powerfully condition new ways of speaking about events and phenomena. Subsequently, the choice of words the journalists used in the selected newspapers provided readers with information on how the drug scourge is mostly associated with dire consequences such as crime and violence. Despite the study being qualitative in nature, the researcher observed that the frequent reference and prominence of crime and violence-related news with the drug tag warrants the frame to be labelled as such.

Furthermore, the essence of the preferred meaning in the news reports was made through the use of framing tools such as the selection of words, metaphors, exemplars, descriptions, arguments, and visual images such as vandalised properties which were effectively applied to deal with justifications, causes, and consequences of drug abuse. The study further noted that news reports were designed to have particular stereotypical meanings to the general readers regardless of age, and status with the purpose of illuminating the drug issue as a crime and violence phenomena. This confirms Ritten's (2014) notion that the media spend a substantial amount of time reporting deviant and criminal behaviour, including drug abuse, and this approach to information dissemination to the public has a positive bearing regarding enhancement of adherence to upholding societal norms. The study observed that, even if the media

did not deliberately contact specific sources or did not consciously engaging in a moral crusade, the simplistic reporting of certain violent incidents related to drugs fell into the appropriate frame towards galvanising public concern to combat the drug scourge.

While the crime-violence frame is populist and useful in creating the necessary hype about drug abuse in South Africa, the study noted that most news reports omitted important information which could yield a balance in the coverage of drug abuse. This particularly concerns how the police (SAPS) tracked or identified the alleged people responsible for the crimes and causing violence in the respective communities. The reaction of the police to the violence caused by illicit drug trafficking and rampant sale was negatively portrayed because in some news reports police officers were allegedly implicated in drug dealing and trafficking as well. Subsequently, the study noted that the scope of the drug scourge discourse fell short of presenting a nuanced posture to suggest that the law enforcement agencies were in control of the fight against drug lords, syndicates, and peddlers whom the press lauded as loosely strewn in the South African communities.

- ***The race, gender, and class frames***

The study noted that, although there were a few news reports that referred to race, gender, and class in most of the news reports, these few inferences had damning implications for the fight against the drugs scourge in a post-apartheid non-racial, non-sexist democratic South Africa. This is due to the fact that racially biased and gendered campaigns are likely not to produce a concerted effort which can unite the nation against the drug scourge as noted in the use of phrases such as “*58-year-old woman, drug dealer, a mother of two, and White waiter*” were used in the news reports to identify the white men and women who dealt in dealing in drugs (Lange,2017). Thus, lexical choices and their configuration in news stories also “hold great power in setting the context for debate, defining issues under consideration, summoning a variety of mental representations, and providing the basic tools to discuss the issues at hand.

The study further noted that the preferred meaning was that most White people and some were above the law because when communities reported them as dealing in drugs, they were not brought to book by the law enforcement agents. This was observed by Murakawa (2011:29) who noted that some news accounts portrayed. Therefore, the study noted that when the press wittingly or unwittingly avoids

confronting authorities to explain or address critical issues such as class and race of the drug user, they do injustice to the readers and the nation at large, with consequences for continued suffering under the drug scourge.

- ***The scare-alarmist frame***

The study observed that most of the news reports in all newspapers fashionably employed words such as *shocked communities*, *devastated family*, *overdose...*, *dead body*, *dangerous criminals*, and *panic mood* to paint a grim picture of the drug occurrences to the readers. The study noted that the lexical choice of journalists was clear enough to scare and catch the audience's attention on the dire effects of drug abuse in the news reports. explains that "frames, largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organise the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports". For this reason, although the news reports were catchy and awakening, they could not persuade South African readers, particularly drug addicts to refrain from abusing drugs. This is in contrast to assumptions within the accumulation theory that prefer the gradual-persuasive approach of the media in guiding them to change their behaviour over time (Goode, 2012), rather than scare them into line. Subsequently, the study observed that scare-alarmist frames used in the news reports set a tone that deaths caused by drug overdoses were not prevalent, thereby undermining the effort to combat the drug scourge.

- ***The foreign national scapegoat frame***

The study noted that in their coverage of drug abuse, journalists regularly employed popular names, words, and concepts such as *Nigerians*, *xenophobia*, *competition*, *hijackings*, *prostitution*, and *foreigners* in the news reports. The choice of words and symbols in media texts is usually informed by the agenda or framing that the journalists want to reinforce (Fredheim, 2020). In the news reports, the reports emphasised how communities accused foreign nationals, particularly Nigerians of dealing in drugs and inducing prostitution among young women South African townships, particularly in Pretoria. The closeness, relevance, and importance of the issue of drugs to society makes it topical, hence is worth reporting on. Subsequently, the dialectic form of reportage of these occurrences were often labelled as anti-migrant or xenophobic in

spite of the reporter's approach being framed by the news construction process rather than blatant hate for "others".

The study also noted news reports that included drug leaders, drug smugglers, cartels, and drug manufacturers whom journalists portrayed as being responsible for the social risks associated with drugs such as drug trafficking and crime. Specifically, foreign national drug traffickers were regarded as the pernicious force responsible for the destruction of communities through the diffusion of drugs and perpetrators of drug-related crimes. This frame implied that communities could be labelled as being xenophobic by the readers of the newspapers under study owing to the cumulative, but unverified narrative that the drugs scourge is driven by foreign nationals, most of whom are not documented. Conversely, the news reports subtly encouraged communities to use foreign nationals as scapegoats to justify societal failure to address the drug scourge in the country. In the end, the study noted that the press induced the preferred meaning through their news reports that communities who took the law into their own hands (in what is termed community justice), were justified to attack the Nigerians whom they accused of dealing in illicit drugs.

- ***The helpless frame***

The study also observed that most of the news reports did not instil confidence in society about the ability of law enforcement system in dealing with and being able to control the drug scourge in South Africa. In fact, most stories involved journalists employing words and phrases such as *locals are tired*, *communities are fed up*, *roads were barricaded*, *society is troubled*, *community rampage*, and *government is concerned* to describe the conditions of the disgruntled and helpless communities in the face of the drug scourge. While the journalists' lexical choice was clear enough to catch the audience's attention to the highlights in the news reports, the study noted that some of the words or phrases, particularly in the *Daily Sun* were employed in the context of ever fearful communities, thereby exacerbating the state of helplessness in society.

This approach was limited by journalists' failure to investigate the reasons behind police ineptitude and government's inability to provide possible interventions to ensure their safety. These limitations in the news reports did not help the readers to fill the gaps between what has been done in the past (background) and what needs to be

done in the current and near future to ensure that the drug scourge is addressed. Subsequently, the helpless frame had the inimical political tone that suggests that communities are alone in the fight against the drug scourge since they are seemingly ignored by law enforcement agents.

Another aspect revealed in the study that limited the discourse on the drug scourge was *the* news reports' lack of explanation why the government was seemingly not effectively complementing communities' fights against rampant abuse of drugs. Often the news reports conveyed a dismal outlook about the drugs issue and hardly offered any organic solutions other than implying that something should be done. Summarily, the news reports thrived on the perpetuation of a livid helpless frame which highlighted community fears and their vulnerability to ramifications of the scourge in South Africa.

- ***The inept public health care frame***

This aspect relates to the manner in which news reports covered the response of the government, particularly the public health care sector in handling the drug addicts, treatment, and other drug related matters. Most of the reports featured phrases and words such as *poor rehabilitation facilities*, *irregular treatment*, *inconsistent approach*, *inadequate capacity*, *community outcry*, and *unsustainable interventions* to paint an inept picture of a hamstrung public health care system which fails to provide community services. This resonates with Danesi's (2012) assertion that, words in general are symbolic signs, as are many hand gestures to demonstrate the extent to which social phenomena affects society. The symbolic signs played an important role in the construction of meaning in a news story to highlight the community's pleas on the need for effective drug rehabilitation centres in the drug infested communities. However, the findings show that while this type of framing was useful in creating public awareness about the impact of the drugs scourge, it yielded little outcomes on the ability of the press to educate the public on finding alternative means to mobilise resources to mitigate the scourge. This is evident where the news reports highlighted the appeal by residents over the shortage of drug rehabilitation centres, trained personnel, and lack of sustained interventions in the affected communities, particularly in the countryside. This yielded a public health care failure frame, which presented an even more complex trajectory compounded by the crippling service delivery woes in South Africa.

Furthermore, the findings show that news reports focused on the ill-treatment of drug addicts in the few limited drug rehabilitation centres rather than emphasising the need to strengthen government interventions and stakeholder collaboration to ease the burden of the drug scourge on the drug rehabilitation centres. This situation was noted by Mabokela (2018), who observed that rehabilitation centres in South Africa operate with minimal facilities which exacerbates the hardships they endure in the process of assisting drug addicts.

Despite the limited coverage in the selected newspapers of the Department of Health intention to capacitate and increase the number of rehabilitation centres, they failed to provide detail on the highly prioritised locations such as the Black people's townships where most of the poor and vulnerable addicts live with limited access to rehabilitation treatments due to various reasons including poor their socio-economic situations (Ghosh, 2013). Hence, the editorial focus and emphasis in the selected newspapers on the government's failure to provide effective public health care, particularly the provision of professional treatment at rehabilitation centres yielded what the study calls the inept public health care frame.

- ***The stakeholder interventionist frame***

The study findings noted how news reports chronicled interventions by South African law enforcement agents outlining the magnitude of raids, documenting the types of drugs seized, the number of arrests, justification for the raids, and listing the hotspots where the raids mostly happened. This form of reporting was coupled by a number of news reports which also focused on community-based interventions and coverage on the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in mitigating the drug scourge. The reports featured a particular set of words and phrases which dominantly characterised the press' framing of readers' minds to decode the drug scourge in a mild way. An analysis of the media texts revealed use of key terms such as *police arrests, residents flag drug dens or houses, police and locals conduct raids, drug peddlers apprehended, police operations yield results, migrants in possession of 1m worth of drugs, and community recovers stolen property*. These news headlines were commendable for being catchy to popularise the drug scourge as noted by (Nel, 2013) who opined that headlines that contain eye-catching elements such as alliteration,

emotive verbs/adjectives, as well as deliberate grammatical omissions are useful in arousing popular interest.

This generated the interventionist frame as demonstrated how the news reports projected a stakeholder-led mitigation response led particularly by the South African Police Services (SAPS) which relied largely on tip-offs from either community members or Community Police Forums (CPF) to facilitate successful raids. The frame enabled the selected newspapers to focus the reader on the assurance that SAPS, non-governmental organisations, and communities are committed to collaboratively fight the drugs scourge. In the end, it can be argued that, while the press' interventionist frame provides momentous hope that society can unite against drug abuse, it has the unintended effect of marginalising the perpetrators of the drugs scourge, particularly drug lords and smugglers whose activities continue to produce more victims of the drug scourge. This has the potential to yield a vicious cycle where the police and communities continue to chase the shadows of the problem meanwhile the drugs masterminds remain untouched.

- ***The empathy-blame frame***

Although the preoccupation of the press' coverage of the drug scourge is largely to dissuade people from abusing drugs and minimising the effects thereof, the study found out that most news reports were tailored within the slant that subscribes to empathising with addicts riding on the blame frame. In the news reports, addicts blamed officials at the rehabilitation centres for the ill-treatment they received which often, led to their relapse. The newspapers were not specific in its presentation of the facts about who in particular was mistreating the addicts, rather preferring to generalise the problem to the rehabilitation institutions. Information relating to the involvement of political meddling or interference in the functioning of public health institution was inferred, but selectively editorialised, bearing a self-censorship mode. Where the news reports covered it, the information concerned major issues which were covered in a sensational style and largely related to political grandstanding and electioneering. Selin & Nyrhinen (2022) view this strategy as allowing the press to talk to a readership in its own terms, using the informal style, further extending the explicit appeal to be on the side of the people (victims) to foster discussions in an editorial approach amenable to the language of the people. The implications of this frame are

that, whereas the press may align itself with the plight of people (victims), this denies the readers the objective view about the impact of the drug scourge on other areas or aspects of society such as safety and security.

Furthermore, the study found out that, most news reports presented drug addicts in a manner that shifts the drug scourge to foiled government and community interventions instead of owning up to their involvement in risky behaviour and the consequences of drug abuse. Although the news reports were successful in highlighting the socio-economic difficulties faced by the addicts, readers would have benefitted more if the journalists had interrogated the addicts on what led them to abuse drugs. This would afford them the opportunity to narrate their challenges such as unemployment, poverty, and emotional distress as elements that usually trigger the desire to seek “stress relief” from drugs. Therefore, the blame frame produced a limited discourse, which perpetuated the often-negative stigma associated with drug addicts. This had the implication of soliciting readers to empathise with the addicts meanwhile blaming the government and society for the drug scourge.

### **7.2.3 Challenges impeding effective coverage of the drug scourge**

The summary of findings presented in this sub-section is based on the challenges that impede journalists from effectively reporting the drug scourge. The subsection does this through presentation of the summary of findings relating to routisation of the selected newspapers newsrooms; lack of stakeholder participation, limiting operational structure and institutional capacity, and lack of relevant skills among practitioners. Although the data that yielded these findings were mainly collected through in-depth interviews with informants, reference to both literature and theory is made to consolidate the challenges associated with the press’ ability to effectively cover the drug scourge in South Africa.

- ***Routisation of within the newsrooms***

Routines in the newsrooms particularly revolve around organisation of the newsroom, holding editorial conferences some of which may take the form of diary meetings where story ideas are pitched to the editorial team and subsequently endorsed by the newspaper editors. The study observed that there was a tendency by the selected newspapers to treat the drug scourge with minimal sense of urgency and not as a matter that should be high on the national agenda in South Africa. This was observed



upon analysis of the approach and editorialisation of the news reports which revealed that news reporters thrived on the basic news selection criteria familiar in the selection of hard news (Corley, 2021). This saw drug stories not been given special attention to produce the “frenzy” that is often associated with beats such as politics, popular sport and celebrity stories.

According to McCombs (2013) news routines are “those patterned, routinised, repeated practices and forms that media workers use to do their jobs”. These routines are created in response to the limited resources of the news organisation and the vast amount of raw material that can be made into the news. More specifically, the routines are dictated by technology, deadlines, space, and norms (ibid). The study found that due to the cost of news production, editorial space, and the need to meet deadlines, newsrooms develop a tendency to follow less innovative ways including searching the internet and presenting reviews based on existing online news. In the context of technological innovation and the competitiveness of the media market, it was noted that print journalists encounter the challenge of often publishing their stories days after they happened. Subsequently, this necessitated the rush to publish easier or routine-based versions of news reports rather than focusing on field-based frames of in-depth information on the drug scourge.

- ***Lack of stakeholder participation***

The study findings noted newspapers lacked participation and support from stakeholders such as non-governmental organisations, businesses, communities et cetera to fight the drug scourge in the country. In addition, the study noted editorial support, to encourage journalists and editors to trust each other's judgments and promote a decision-making process that reflected a newspaper's partisanship and position, made it difficult to report on drug abuse news. The topic of stakeholder engagement came up frequently in the interviews, with participants believing that in order for the anti-drug campaign to be successful, good stories about the drug scourge needed to reflect a strategic partnership between the press and society. This concurs with Owuor and Nyamieno's (2000:48)'s assertions that there is a need for the press to partner with the work done by governments and NGOs to see whether "their preoccupation with a different kind of journalism approach may bring these issues to the centre stage".

- ***Limiting operational structure and institutional capacity***

The findings of the study noted that the operational structures in newsrooms hampered the quality of news reports on drug abuse. The study also observed that the capacity of newspapers typically included editors, sub-editors, and journalists, as well as specific beats such as crime, health, politics, sports, and so on, which formed a dedicated team in the publication. The study also noted that regardless of the fact that newspapers are considered the fourth state, they are also in the business of generating revenue. Increasing capacity by hiring more journalists to give priority to news on drug abuse means that the newspapers would operate at a loss. This concurs with McQuail's (2013) posits, that the belief that ownership ultimately determines the nature of media is not just a theory but virtually a common-sense axiom which leads to some beats being elevated over others, often through prioritisation. Therefore, this had a negative impact on the conduct of reporters because, despite having different perspectives to a drug-related news event, issue, or topic; the loyalty of journalists was to the in-house regulations or editorial policy, and this caused them to employ the same reporting style.

- ***Lack of relevant skills among practitioners***

The study noted that journalists lacked the skills to take additional responsibilities such as conducting preliminary researching on drug abuse. For example, drug abuse information based on poorly designed, or research should not be reported unless the flaws were emphasised. This concurs with Ekstrom and Westlund (2019)'s standpoint that journalism's ability to provide factual and reliable information is based on journalists' epistemic activities. The study also noted that the skill to get all the relevant facts when preparing for a publishable story increased the pressure placed on the skills of reporting the drug scourge. In addition, the study noted that discarding the fact-checking step before publishing had shown that journalists practiced questioning tactics and choices of interrogative emphases as knowledge creation activities.

### **7.3 CONCLUSION**

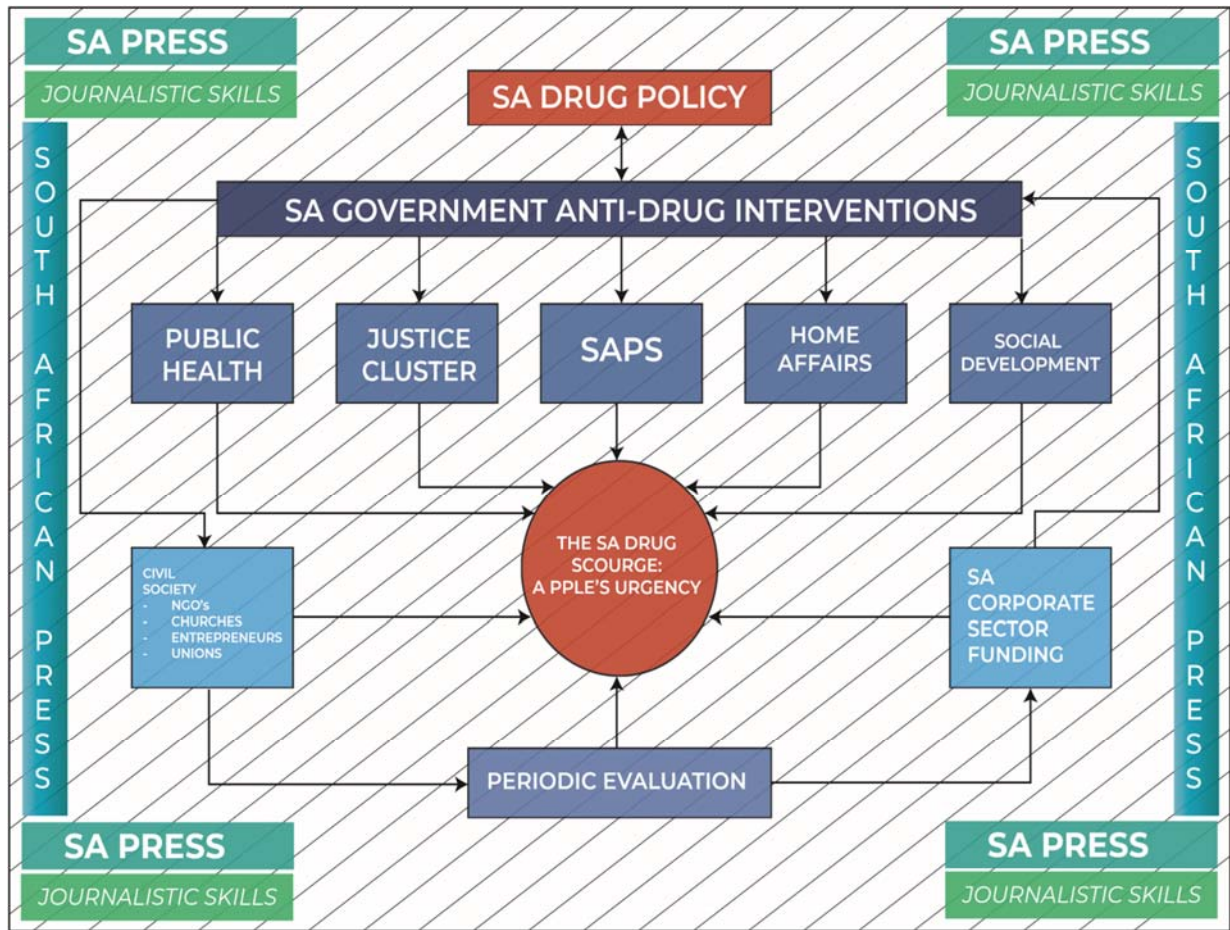
The conclusion of the study resembles the culmination of the entire research process and therefore reflects on the main highlights of the study with a special emphasis on

the elucidation of study findings and implications thereof. Despite the multi-dimensional context within which the drug scourge unfolds in the broader South African socio-economic and political milieu, the study focused on examining its representation in the print media industry only. This enabled the thesis to specifically interrogate the editorial role of the selected newspapers, determine framing of news, and analysis of challenges that impede journalists' ability to report comprehensively; with anticipated notion of cultivating accumulative restraint in drug consumption among members of society. Drawing on framing and accumulation theoretical propositions, the study successfully sifted a number of media frames which emanated from the editorial caricature of news formulation processes that were devoid of alternative perspectives with which to inspire confidence in the anti-drug press campaign. As literature would show, most of the news stories thrived on redundant and tired themes, which hardly acknowledged the existence of the "monstrous" threat of the drug scourge that has imposed a heavy burden on the socio-economic fibre and security spheres of communities in the country. Hence, the majority of frames and editorial approaches to the coverage of the drug scourge were largely not beneficial nor effective in complementing existing anti-illicit drug campaigns in South Africa, particularly those led by the government. Rather, the stance of the selected newspapers flagged traditional, yet peripheral angles with emphasis on crime and violence; race-orientations, gendered and class frames. This was further compounded by the press' focalisation on the scare-alarmist frame; scapegoating and elevation of mundane frames such as helplessness; apportioning blame, and inept interventionist frames which failed to stir a sustained focalisation on drug scourge discourse. In the end, the study noted both editorial and structural flaws on the social construction of the drug scourge in the selected newspapers and therefore recommends a self-designed editorial tool kit to benefit a dissuasive press-led anti-campaign against rampant consumption of illicit drugs in South Africa.

#### **7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Following the preceding sections including the analysis of data collected for the study, summary of the findings and the concluding remarks on representation of the illicit drug scourge in the South African selected newspapers, this section reflects on the 4<sup>th</sup>

objective which intended to recommend a press tool kit to benefit a dissuasive campaign against the rampant consumption of illicit drugs in South Africa. In view of the limitations of this study stated in Section 4.9, the researcher presents a self-designed editorial tool kit, which views coverage of the drug scourge as part of the “people’s agency” and not merely as “another” form of hard news. It comprises upskilling of journalists’ ability to report news on the drug scourge as a people’s urgency; use of alternative angles to support government effort; avoiding self-defeating frames such as scapegoating and scare-tactics; multi-sectoral approach to funding; drug policy review and periodic evaluation of the anti-drug campaign in South Africa. This strategy is presented in the form of a graphical illustration in Figure 1 below:



A SELF DESIGNED ANTI-DRUG PRESS CAMPAIGN STRATEGY  
(MABOKELA, 2022)

**Fig 1.** is a graphic representation of the anti-drug press campaign strategy

## **7.5. FURTHER RESEARCH**

In addition to the findings and recommendations presented in this study, the researcher has noted the necessity for an inter-media study that goes beyond the focus on a single medium to investigate the rampant abuse of drugs in South Africa. This entails future studies broadening their scope of study to include other South African media platforms such as electronic media, radio, and television to recommend comprehensive anti-drug campaign strategies.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS



#### **Representation of the Illicit Drugs Scourge in the South African Press: A Study of Selected Newspapers**

##### **1. Framing of news reports on the coverage of illicit drug scourge:**

- 1.1 How do the news reports frame violence associated with illicit drugs?
- 1.2 How do the news reports frame manifestation of race, class and gender tensions associated with drug use?
- 1.3 How do news reports represent crimes related to drug issues?
- 1.4 How do the news reports frame government interventions in the drug scourge?
- 1.5 How do the newspapers report on illicit drug use treatment in South Africa?
- 1.6 What are the different frames used to represent drug users' perceptions of drug use?
- 1.7 How are drug cartels framed in the news report?
- 1.8 What are some of the frames of news reports adopted for drug abuse related stories?
- 1.9 What efforts are evident in the framing of news reports on the effects of drugs on the economy?
- 1.10 How do news reports frame social effects about drug abuse in South African communities?

**APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**



**Representation of the Illicit Drugs Scourge in the South African Press: A Study of Selected Newspapers**

**1. Demographic Profile of Participants**

<b>1. GENDER</b>	Female		Male					
<b>2. AGE IN YEARS</b>	18-29		30- 35		36-40		40+	
<b>3. OCCUPATION</b>								
<b>4. WORK EXPERIENCE IN YEARS</b>	0-5		6-10		11-15		15+	

**2. Editorial role of the selected newspapers in reporting illicit drug abuse**

2.1 What is the press' editorial approach or policy on reporting illicit drugs consumption in South Africa?

.....  
 .....

2. In your view, is there an appropriate approach to news reports on drug abuse? If so, what is it and why do you think it is appropriate?

.....  
 .....

3. What are some of the major consequences associated with drug abuse which newspapers highlight and why do think these are important?

.....  
.....

4. What motivates the selection of the news reports on drug abuse and the consequences thereof?

.....  
.....

5. What are the main highlights of newspaper reports on the social, economic and psychological effects of drug abuse?

.....  
.....

6. To what extent do you think newspapers have played their role in creating awareness on the dangers of drug abuse and the need for treatment?

.....  
.....

7. In your view, to what extent have newspapers reported on government interventions that assist in addressing the drug abuse problem?

.....  
.....

8. What do you recommend as an effective model to report on drug abuse issues?

.....  
.....

9. How can the press change readers' perceptions on consuming illicit drugs within the communities they serve?

.....

10. How frequent does your newspaper report on news reports on illicit drugs consumption? May you elaborate on the possible reasons for this frequency?

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11. Who are the current major sources of news reports on illicit drug issues in the press and what have been their contributions so far?

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**3. Challenges that impede journalists in presenting news reports on the consumption of illicit drugs**

1. What are the routine activities involved in the process of writing news reports on the consumption of drugs?

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2. What are the salient news angles adopted in the news reports involving the consumption of drugs in your newspaper?

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5. What are some of the editorial hurdles or encounters you often experience in compiling news reports on illicit drug use?

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6. How have you could overcome or circumvent the problems stated above in developing news stories?

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7. What are the main questions that inform your approach to news reports on the consumption of illicit drugs?

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8. What are the existing means in your organisation that facilitate community buy-in to assist you to report effectively about drug abuse?

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9. What kind of support do you get (including that from stakeholders) to help you cover drug abuse more effectively?

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10. In your view, what form of editorial support do journalists or media organisations need to present effective stories that address the drug scourge in the country?

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**APPENDIX C: LETTER TO RESEARCH INFORMANTS**

P.O.BOX 578  
SOVENGA  
0727  
4 October 2019

Dear Research Informant

**Re: Invitation to Participate in a Research Project**

My name is **Khutso Eunice Mabokela** and I am currently conducting research for my PhD studies at the University of Limpopo. I hereby invite you to participate in the research project I am undertaking. The topic of the research is titled: **Representation of the Illicit Drugs Scourge in the South African Press: A Study of Selected Newspapers.**

The participation in this research will be in the form of an interview. The study will examine the press' representation of the drugs scourge in South Africa. Specifically, the study intends to interrogate the editorial role of the press in reporting illicit drug use, and how the news reports are framed. In addition, the study will analyse challenges that impede journalists' editorial in presenting news reports on the consumption of illicit drugs.

Your identity as a participant will be kept confidential. No remuneration will be offered for participation in the discussion. The discussion sessions will be taped through an audio recorder. Be assured that all information you provide in the interview will be treated in the strictest confidence. Furthermore, participants and the researcher will sign a consent form that confirms the terms and conditions stated in this letter.

Your participation in this study will be highly appreciated.

**Yours Sincerely**

Khutso Eunice Mabokela

Mobile Number : 0793406306

Email: khutsomabokela7@gmail.com

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Yes, I am willing to conduct an interview to discuss these issues further. Your identity will be kept confidential throughout the study.



**APPENDIX D: ACADEMIC RESEARCH CONSENT FORM**



**I, ..... (name), being over the age of 18 years declare that I give consent to conduct an interview for the research project titled: Representation of the Illicit Drugs Scourge in the South African Press: A Study of Selected Newspapers.**

I understand that I am under no obligation to answer any or all of the questions posed, and I am participating in the interview of my own free will.

I may withdraw from the interview session at any time. I will not directly benefit from taking part in this research. I am aware that the information in this study will be published, and I will not be identified in any way and individual information will remain confidential.

I agree that information in the interview will be recorded on audio tape.

I am aware that I should retain a copy of this Consent Form for future reference.

**Participant's signature..... Date.....**

I certify that I have explained the study to the research informant and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participate.

**Researcher's signature..... Date.....**