

# **“It’s a lot of things”: Zimbabwean university students’ perceptions on the causes of suicide ideation and suicidality among youths during the COVID-19 pandemic**

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## **Abstract**

This research studies university undergraduate students’ perceptions of the causes of suicide and suicidality among the youths in Zimbabwe with reference to the case of Midlands State University. The research also examined the contribution of COVID-19 to suicide and suicidality and the role of the family and church in suicide and suicidality causation or prevention. A qualitative methodology was used to collect data through semi-structured interviews, key informant interviews and a focus group discussion using a sample of 31 participants. Thomas Joiner’s Interpersonal theory of suicide is utilised and adapted to explain suicide ideation among Zimbabwean youths. Abusive, fractured family and romantic relationships, economic frustrations, stigmatisation, loneliness, drug abuse and the pressure to conform were some of the causes of suicide ideation. The research recommends increased regular mental health and suicide prevention awareness campaigns to inform the students on the available services. Supportive, stable and positive relationships and interactions within families and churches are necessary to build resilience against suicide ideation and suicidality.

Keywords: COVID-19, suicide ideation, suicidality, families, youth