THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND DEMOCRACY AMONG THE YOUTH IN THE OMARURU CONSTITUENCY OF NAMIBIA

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF EDUCATION

ADULT EDUCATION

OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

BY

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APRIL 2023

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Date: April

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to explore the influence of social media on civic engagement and democracy among the youth in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia. The study employed qualitative research design with purposive and snowball sampling methods to select the participants. The findings reveal that social media is influential in the domain of civic engagement. It is also shown that land availability, youth empowerment, gender-based violence, unemployment, and high crime rate, entertainment and retail business draw the attention of the youth on social media. The youth participants prefer to use social media to express their views and opinions instead of addressing relevant authorities because of fear of prosecution and because social media helps the users to reach a wider audience. It seems that the main stream media has been monopolised by the government to limit freedom of expression and accessibility to the youth. The youth have diverging perspectives with regard to the impact that social media has had on the community in Omaruru Constituency as some youth believe that the use of social media had indeed made a tangible impact, while other were unsure as to whether social media has had an impact on the community of Omaruru Constituency or not. Moreover, the study revealed that mainstream media has been monopolised and is controlled by the Government to limit freedom of expression and accessibility to the youth. The youth urged the Government to consider using social media as a platform to engage them because social media promotes civic engagement through social dialogue, not just be between government institutions, and elected government officials but with the public especially the youth that use Facebook. The recommendations target the government, the youth and the community emphasising on the need for law or policy to engage community members and youth without fear of intimidation. Further studies should be undertaken regarding other regions of Namibia, and future research should examine and distinguish the causal relationship between online and offline participation in the public discourse for civic engagement among the youth.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank God for the wisdom, strength and good health he bestowed upon me to complete this Thesis. Secondly, would like to express my profound gratitude to Prof. Alex Kanyimba for the advice and willingness to support and guide me from the very beginning of the thesis in 2017. His constrictive comments and advice, helped and shaped me, developed my academic writing skills and enhanced my growth as a scholar. This would not have been possible without his unwavering support and guidance.

List of abbreviations and Acronyms

OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
BBS	Bulletin Board System
IRS	Iinternal Raw System
GBV	Gender-based Violence
MICT	Ministry of Information Communication and Technology
O/M/A/S	Office /Ministry/ Agency/ State-Owned Enterprise
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural and Organisation
N.Y.C	National Youth Council
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
N.Y.S	National Youth Service
NDP	National Development Plans
AR	Affirmative Reposition
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my wife Saara Stefanus and son Jeremiah Omwene Nafimane, Shoopala who have been my symbol of motivation to persevere through this masterpiece of academic work.

DECLARATION

I, Petrus.S. Shoopala, hereby declare that this study is a true reflection of my own research, and that this work, or part thereof, has not been submitted for a degree in any other institution of higher education.

…….. …….

Petrus.S. Shoopala Date

……..

Signature

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide orientation of the study. This study addresses social media and civic engagements at international level, at continental level in Africa and also development in Namibia. It presents the statement of the problem and research questions. It also explains the significance of the study, limitations and delimitation of the study and provides a summary of the thesis.

1.1 ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

The evolution of a networked social movement, organized largely around digital tools and social media platforms, is reshaping civic engagement and democracy, not only in the case of large-scale civic and political uprisings, but also in the context of daily engagement with personal and public discourse or matters to bring about social change among the youth. However, over the last several decades, young peoples' participation in traditional measures of civic engagement in wealthy democracies, such as voting and political party affiliation (in the case of young adults), has been steadily declining (Nascimbeni and Vosloo, 2019). They are less invested in 'dutiful' citizenship acts, such as voting, favouring instead a "personalized politics of expressive engagement" such as digital networking, self-expression, protests and volunteerism (Bennett, Freelon, and Wells, 2010). This clearly indicates the young people participation on civic engagement in the main stream media has declined and migrated to digital civic engagement through social media platforms. Digital civic engagement by youth can look like any of the above; it can include digital instances of more conventional hallmarks of civic engagement, such

as reading and circulating news, writing emails to an elected representative or community organization (or interacting with them on social media), or belonging to a campus or community group online.

Social media is "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, 61). Social media includes social network sites such as Facebook and other content creation and sharing sites. The most widely used social media technologies are social network sites, of which the most popular is Facebook with over 1.4 billion users worldwide, the majority of whom are 18 – 24 years old (Statistic Brain, 2014). At this juncture, civic engagement is defined by Raynes-Goldie and Walker (2008) as participation in any activities, individually or collectively, that is aimed at addressing social problems. In response to addressing social problems, online civic engagement will take place, which refers to any individual or collective effort that is aimed to address social issues using social media, such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. Thus, for the purpose of this research, the focus will be on Facebook. Facebook has demonstrated to be a valuable tool to foster dialogue among citizens, serving as a platform for political expression and discussions on public interest issues (Halpern and Gibbs, 2013). Activists have found them useful for advocating changes (Warren et al, 2014) and up holding principals of democracy.

. In the study of Sharma et al. (2015) stated that the youth were found to be the predominantly active users of Facebook worldwide. Globally, Facebook resembles a direct form for communi participation in which many real-world civic tasks take place online. Facebook has been praised for their potential for facilitating civic engagement and shaping democracy. At a time when one

of the most difficult problems facing democracy in the Western hemisphere is the decline in citizens' participation in politics (Dahlgren, 2009), this potential has been vested with hopes that social media can help reinvigorate extra-parliamentarian political participation i.e. participation beyond the rights and obligations of liberal citizenship (e.g. voting) and thus strengthen democratic accountability at national and international levels (Castells, 2013; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010). In 2016, we witnessed two shocking political decisions in stable democracies: the election of Donald Trump as American president and the United Kingdom's referendum to exit the European Union membership. After the scandal of Cambridge Analytica mining Facebook data to influence the 2016 U.S. elections, a public conversation began to question the role of data use, surveillance practices, and especially of social media such as Facebook in shaping democracy. In 2014, as the #BlackLivesMatter movement emerged, by using Facebook was referred to as a "kind of a gateway drug for activism", referring to its role in connecting people who feel strongly about race or LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, (Questioning), Intersex, Asexual) rights and who then stay engaged in that issue area on or offline. One useful way to think about this relationship is to consider digital interventions as part of a broad repertoire of civic engagement practices, in which even minor moments of claiming voice may lead to more instrumental action.

The role of social media before, during, and after the recent spate of protests in Southern Africa can be summed up in three interrelated ways namely, to enable cyber activism; to help trigger street demonstrations and to encourage civic engagement by aiding the mobilisation and organisation of protests and to promote a new form of citizen journalism, which provided a platform for ordinary citizens to express themselves and document their own versions of reality

(Partut & Patrut, 2014). Thus, social media in Africa has certainly created new spaces for individual self-expression and interest-group mobilisation to deliver democracy and civic engagement in Africa. The observation of social media played a crucial role in the success of the fight for democracy in many North African and Middle East countries during “Arab Spring”. A number of studies have analyzed the series of events that unfolded in these countries from the beginning to the end, and found that social media indeed played an instrumental role in the success of the revolution in many of these counties. For instance, Howard et al. (2011) find that social media played a crucial role in the success of Arab uprising by disseminating information and facilitating protest organization and mobilization against the dictatorship, resulting in even overthrow of the autocratic governments in some countries such as Tunisia. In addition, (Breuer and Farquhar 2015) confirm the important contribution of the Facebook and social media in Tunisian revolution, where the internet and social media was used by the digital elites to bypass the barriers that prevented the flow of information in the country. Similarly, social media has been credited to facilitate the protests in Egypt. Recent studies show that social media continues to be used in the way it was used during Arab Springs. For instance, evidence suggest that social media has facilitated the political and community engagements of Sudanese youth and has been used by them to organize demonstrations demanding regime changes (Kadoda and Hale 2015).

In South Africa, the #FeesMustFall protests among young tertiary institustion students are one of the protest of note, in mid-October 2015. The protests were sparked by the steep increase in university students struggling to schooling due to the exorbitant cost of tertiary schooling. With the above, example and literature, it is quite evident that social media influences civic engagements affect democracy and it has the potential to play a much bigger role in empowering the citizens of a given county as platform for ordinary citizens to express themselves and

document their own versions of reality for social change and by exercising the fundamental rights to effect change in their countries.

Namibian is no exception to the use of social media platform such as Facebook as tool for daily engagement with personal and public discourse for social change. In Namibia, with the current population of 2.6 million, 1.2 million use the internet, while 31.2% are social media users (Petersen, 2022). A survey on Namibians' use of popular social media sites such Facebook was conducted in 2018 by Christoph Stork in Namibia. This survey found that "the age group 18 – 24 used social media more (36%) compared to age groups 25 – 34 (29%); 35 – 44 (10%) and 45 – 54 (5%) respectively" (Stork, 2012, p. 23) This statisics signifies the Facebook penetration indicating a positive effects of social media on democracy, since social media is a the mechanism through which internet promotes democracy significantly, a Facebook social movement page "Affirmative Repositioning" (AR) captured the attention of young, educated Namibians and placed the issue of un affordable urban housing squarely on the national agenda (Kambala, Nauyoma, & Amupanda, 2015). Joining what has been described as "the biggest mass action since Namibia's independence" (Becker, 2016), thousands of young urbanites applied for serviced land from municipalities and threatened land occupation if their applications were not processed in a timely fashion (Namibian, 2014; Tjihenuna & Haidula, 2014). As AR grew and gained traction with an online community of concerned citizens, the government agreed to its demand to service 200,000 plots of urban land and make them available for housing

Another significant progress has been made in terms of drafting a legal instrument/policy on the use of social media. This is propelled by the advancement in the use of technology to communicate and

share of information; the Namibian government has developed a policy to provide guidelines on the use of social media by Offices, Ministries and Agencies, Regional Councils and Local Authorities to share information and to provide a platform through which the Government could engage the citizens in social dialogues" (MICT, 2016, p.16).The Social Media use Policy and Implementation Plan 2016/17 -2019/20 only creates favourable prospects for government's envisioned methods of implementing the National Information Policy and Access to Information legislation. This includes Facebook by which offices, ministries and agencies, regional councils and local authorities provide a way for users to build connections, share information and interact with the public.

With the literature above there is no study that addresses the use of social media and civic engagement among the youth in Omaruru Constituency. Thus he aim of this study is to explore the influence of social media on civic engagement and democracy among the youth in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Facebook has become platform of noise that drives people to opposite ends, opposing views of the opinion spectrum on political, racial, economic, and information issues (Vaidhyanathan, 2018). This issue emerges from the character of Facebook in social media as to what Facebook contributes in establishing a good public discourse and the influence it has on civic engagement and democracy. However, Namibia has no been spared from this opposing views as well as opposite ends, as parliamentarians as well as politicians in Namibia are eager to control the use of social media such as Facebook by the public through tightening the law, amid claims that internet platforms are being abused to tarnish some political leaders' images and called for

striker regulations (Shinovene 2014). Moreover, Dr. Nicky Iyambo, the Namibia's Vice-President has expressed that the youth use social media platforms to spread pornographic material, anti-government rants, tribalism, racism, xenophobia and insults (Ashipala, 2017). However, some policy-makers in Namibia believe that social media can be used by the Government as a social platform to engage citizens, especially young people on State programs, such as public awareness campaigns, community engagement and civic education (Shinovene 2014). It is evident that social media, especially Facebook to be specific causes contamination and can be weaponized in ways that divide society and segregates people, instead of connecting as well as bring them together with different views and opinions thus weakening democracy if not well understood by the policy makers.

However, apart from the division in society and segregation of people, meanwhile the use of social media, provides opportunities and also threats in relation to digital rights of individuals as well as for the common good. In order to protect the fundamental rights of third parties and the public interest the government must meet certain legal requirements, to ensure digital rights are protected and enjoyed by all. The right to freedom of expression18 as enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. This therefore includes the use of social media to express one's opinions or views. Free speech and expression is the lifeblood of democracy, facilitating open debate, the proper consideration of diverse interests and perspectives. The aforementioned rights work together with the right to privacy, recognized in article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and in many other international and regional

human rights instruments Privacy can be considered as the presumption that individuals should have an area of autonomous development, interaction and liberty, a “private sphere” with or without interaction with others, free from State intervention and from excessive unsolicited intervention by other uninvited individuals.

With the above, this shows that there are mixed views and assumptions to opposite ends, opposing views among commentators and policy-makers in parliament in Namibia on how social media can influence civic engagement as well as promote democracy. This displays an unclear understanding regarding underlying views and assumptions on the use of social media among the youth from policy-makers/parliamentarians who were suppose to protect fundamental human right that protects the digital rights to express one’s opinions or views and free speech on Facebook despite Namibia being a democratic country. On the other hand, there is no guiding policy or legal instruments on Privacy on the use social media especially Facebook in Namibia. The call by parliamentarians for social media to be restricted is against article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as the Constitution of Namibia (2015,p12) Article 21 (1) (a) “All person shall have he right to freedom of speech and expression, which includes freedom of the press and other medias” including the use of Facebook. Therefore, this study was to explore the influence of social media on civic engagement and democracy among the youth in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study had answered the following questions:

- What influences the youth to use social media for civic engagement and democracy in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia?
- What should be the role of social media be in civic engagement and democracy among the youth in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia?
- Why should the Namibian Government consider using social media as a platform to engage the youth in civic engagement and democracy for the government in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia?

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study will provide clarity and understating on the use of social media among the youth, particularly Facebook. This study will contribute to the academic body of knowledge on the subject of using social media for civic engagement and the impact it has on democracy. A key beneficiary of this study is the Ministry of Information, Communication and Technology as it may enable it to get an overview of the role and the influence of social media on civic engagement and democracy as a new phenomenon being studied. This will also serve as a guide and a working government document and for the Ministry of Information, Communication and Technology to provide information to the public in order to create an open and transparent government. It will also benefit the Ministry of Sports, Youth and National Service to enable it to incorporate social media as a civic education subject in its curriculum, during the training of the youth in the National Youth Service.

1.5 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Some of the youth were reluctant to answer the questionnaires or to participate in the focus group discussion. Furthermore, time constrains to collect the data was also a limitation of this study, since I am full time employed in Ovitoto (Otjozondjupa Regiojn) and I had to travel from Ovitoto, to Omururu which is 208Km to collect data. To counter this, the researcher had made provision for the approval of a study leave and identify a suitable time to collect data. In terms of reluctance of the youth to participate in the study, the researcher requested the youth to recommend their peers who were willing to participate in the study and build a relationship with the youth leaders, this include the Youth Officers at the National Youth Council as well as Omaruru Youth Forum in order to encourage the youth to participate in the study.

1.6 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study focuses on the youth from the age of 15-35 years in Omaruru Constituency in Erongo Region. This includes those youth who have Facebook accounts and "like" several Facebook pages in Namibia.

1.7 CHAPTER DIVISIONS

The remainder of the thesis is organised as follows:

Chapter 2 present the review of literature related to the concept theory and theories guiding the use of social media and Facebook in Namibia and Chapter 3 is outlining the research methods and design and accounts for the procedures used to analyse the data as well as the ethical considerations. Chapter 4 presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected from the youth of Omaruru Constituency while Chapter 5 presents the discussion of the data.

Chapter 6 provides the summary, recommendations and suggestions for future research

CHAPTER 2:

THE CONCEPTS AND THEORIES GUIDING THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND FACEBOOK IN NAMIBIA

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present the review of literature related to the concept theory and theories guiding the use of social media specifically Facebook in Namibia. The first section presents the conceptual framework followed by the theoretical framework. The next section is about the historical development of social media and Facebook in Namibia. This is followed by the role of social media and Facebook in the development of democracy and the use of social media and Facebook for civic engagement among the youth. The last section presents a review of related studies on the use of social medial and Facebook for civic engagement.

2.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The key concepts that are discussed in this section include: *social media*, *civic engagement*; *democracy* and *the youth*. Synthesis

2.2.1 Social Media

Social Media has been defined as websites which allow profile creation and visibility of relationships between users (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). In this study, social media is defined as a tool to facilitate the exchange and sharing of information among online members by attracting large audience with shared values, interest and objectives. A publication by Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011) explains that web-based applications provide functionality for sharing, relationships, group conversation and profiles. These web-based

services, for example Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and MySpace, allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system. Web-based services articulate a list of other users with whom a user shares a connection or a list of friends with whom they share information that can be accessed and viewed by users or friends that they are connected to. However, these web-based services may vary from site to site in terms of connection, user profiles and way of sharing information.

2.2.2 Democracy

Democracy can have several definitions. For example, Stevenson (2010, p.388) defines democracy as "a system of government in which all the people of the country can vote to elect their representatives; a country which has this system of government; fair and equal treatment of everyone in the organisation and their rights to take part in making decisions". Moreover, Bühlmann, Wolfgang and Benhard (2008) identify the following key concepts: equality, freedom, and control as part of democracy. The concept of democracy is defined in this study as: a political system with freedom of association and a government democratically elected by the people, for the people were the rule of law and freedoms of expression and association as well as equal treatment of everyone and respect of human rights prevails and be protected by the constitution. Thus for the purpose of this study the constitutional democracy will be the main focus.

According to Buchanan (1975), in a **constitutional democracy** the authority of the majority is limited by legal and institutional means so that the rights of individuals and minorities are respected. The Namibian Constitution is regarded as one of the most modern and progressive basic laws worldwide, with constitutional principles, a bill of rights, the separation of powers, and democratic order. After 32 years, Namibia's constitutional democracy was formally fully

established. The Constitution is the supreme law of the land and the normative guideline for the entire citizenry and its government. The past 32 years, constitutional democracy has brought political stability to the country. However, democratic values as inherent principles and premises of the Constitution need to be more fully developed and democratic procedures which are upheld at all times. Thus, constitutional democracy, by its nature, is a collective decision-making institution that prevents single individuals from making decisions for the group.

2.2.3 Civic Engagement

Civic engagement refers to volunteer and service activities geared to helping others and creating a good society (Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins & Carpini, 2006). On the hand, youth civic engagement activities include working for charities or religious or community service organisations; providing service or volunteerism; fundraising and aiding in environmental, disaster, or social relief efforts (Andolina, Jenkins, Zukin, & Keeter, 2003; Dudley & Gitelson, 2002; Eliasoph, 2011; Flanagan & Levine, 2010; McFarland & Thomas, 2006). The concept of civic engagement is seen in this study as the practice that involves, a combined and organised action/effort or an activity voluntarily or non-voluntarily to influence decision politically or non-politically with the aim to bring about change in a society or community. This combined action or effort can be undertaken online and offline. According to Montgomery, Gottlieb-Robles, and Larson (2007), these sites enable youth to access information about issues, other relevant organisations and how to act effectively. Users can connect with their peers to get feedback and support and organise around issues important to them thus, drawing to online action for civic engagement by using social media to enable the youth to connect with their peers by collectively share and accessing information online.

2.2.4 Youth

The National Youth Council Act of 2009 (National Youth Council Act 2009, p.4) defined youth as "a young person aged from 16 to 35 years old". In contrast, UNESCO, explains that youth are persons who are between the ages of 15–24 (UNESCO, 2011). However, for the purpose of this study, the definition of the National Youth Council Act of 2009 will be embraced as it represents the Namibian context in which the study will be conducted. The National Youth Council Act of 2009 defines youth as a young person between the age of 16-35.

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is underpinned by Jürgen Habermas' theory of the public sphere. According to Habermas (1997:105): "By 'public sphere' we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed. Access to the public sphere is open in principle to all citizens. Citizens act as a public when they deal with matters of general interest without being subject to coercion." For Habermas, the public sphere is the place where individuals can organize with others for social change and for the extension of democratic processes (Habermas 1992 in Brookfield, 2005).

In addition, Habermas defines the public sphere as the civic space or "commons" in which adults come together to debate and decide their response to shared issues and problems (Brookfield, 2005 p. 230). He sees the public sphere as a "network for communicating information and points of view" (Habermas, 1996, p. 360). The streams of communication that flow through this network are, in the process, filtered and synthesized so that they coalesce into "bundles of public opinions" (Habermas, 1996, p.360). In this way, the public sphere, can serve as "an intermediary between the political system, on the one hand, and the private sectors of the life-world and functional systems, on the other"(Brookfield, 2005, p. 373). Habermas claims that society is more or less democratic according

to the processes its members use to come to decisions about matters that affect their lives. The more democratic a society, the fuller the information bases or sources to which its citizens have access and the fewer the distortions that constrain their communication (Brookfield, 2005). In his view the more freedom of conversation that people enjoy, the higher the likelihood that true critical reason reason employed to create a just and humane democracy will emerge

The notion of a public sphere of informal citizen deliberation enabling the formation of rational public opinion that can critically guide political systems is seen by many democratic theorists as central to strong civic engagement and democracy. However, Habermas' theory of public sphere was redefined by the new digital era of contemporary physical or virtual spaces where citi-zens partake in conversations regarding the common good. The principles of the public sphere involved an open discussion of all issues of general concern in which discursive argumentation was employed to ascertain general interests and the public good both offline, by means of using contemporary media e.g newspapers, television, radio etc., but by of digital public space online through social media.

Thus a study by Asher Rospigliosi and Sue Greene (2014), on Proceedings of the European Conference on Social Media, also sought to understand to what extent Habermas' public spheres are created on the Facebook pages of Irish radio stations (Habermas 1989). Are the pages open public spaces where rational critical debate can occur online among Facebook users, culminating in a contribution towards the formation of public opinion? Evidence suggests that public spheres do exist online on radio station Facebook pages, based on findings drawn form the audience and textual analysis of the Facebook pages. Although some of the content is believed by the audience to be of a frivolous nature many audience members believe public spheres, perhaps closer to what Keane calls micro-public spheres, are created and do exist on radio station Facebook pages

and that these discussions can help shape public opinion on important matters (Keane 1995). Tolson argues that commercial broadcast outlets can't possibly consider themselves public spheres due to their uncertainty of whether to primarily be entertaining or informative entities for their audiences and this appears to hold true on radio station Facebook pages (Tolson 1991: 197). The principles of the public sphere involved an open discussion on different media platforms of all issues of general concern in which discursive argumentation was employed to ascertain general interests and the public good. The public sphere thus presupposed freedoms of speech and assembly, a free press, and the right to freely participate in political debate and decision-making both offline using different social media platforms such as Facebook for collective actions.

Digital collective actions in the public sphere tend to scale up more quickly, driving offline activism attitudes and redefining civic engagement. However, according to various scholars and media sources, their participation seems to stop at online petitions and events created on Facebook. They are recurring "slacktivists". It is very common and fashionable nowadays to share your political opinions on your Facebook wall, or to like and share blog posts, tweets, Instagram pictures relating to a certain cause. Activist and advocacy groups have noticed that lately there has been a spike in the use of social media to build support on social cause and advocacy. Such forms of advocacy, particularly those related to social media, are often derisively referred to as "slacktivism" or armchair activism. "Slacktivism" requires little to no involvement and can be usually done from the comfort of a phone screen. These activities pose a minimal cost to participants; one click on Facebook or retweet on Twitter and the slacktivist can feel that he or she has helped to support the cause (Laura, 2014). The notion of a public sphere of informal

citizen deliberation enabling the formation of rational public opinion that can critically guide political systems is seen by many democratic theorists as central to strong democracy.

2.3.1 ONLINE AND OFFLINE YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

At the moment, social media represent the primary news source for the youth. It is mainly online that they react, engage, inform and co-exist altogether. “Social media can be seen as the contemporary equivalent of what the newspaper, the poster, the leaflet or direct mail were for the labour movement.” (Gerbaudo, 2012:4) As mentioned before, social media and the Internet overall have been regarded as contributing to the civil decline of the youth. There is not a discontinuity but rather a new redefinition of civic engagement. The literature has revealed that, “formal organisations are losing their grip on individuals and group-ties are being replaced by large-scale, fluid networks.” (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012) Young people nowadays find new ways to voice their concerns and to “garner new agents of representative.” (Loader, Vromen, Xenon, 2014). Revolutions in Moldova, Burma, and Iran motivated utopianisms to usher in a new era of “Facebook democracy” where vast numbers of connected youth could coordinate protests through social media applications and bring about the overthrow of totalitarian regimes. The capacity of smart phones to create dense, youth-driven networks based on a shared politics of the personal helped galvanize a nation against totalitarian rule. Zhuo et al. (2011) found Facebook helped maintain both strong and weak tie networks in ways traditional media could not.

Facebook served as a source of pan-Arab mobilization through groups like “Progressive youth of Tunisia” and the Serbian “center for applied Nonviolent action and strategies” that translated

identity politics into mobilization through shared experiences with strikes and blogging.. Social media have proven to have the power to create social network ties that can be mobilized, allowing people to “come in contact with social movement networks and creating a sense of collective identity based on common interests and a shared agenda.” (Lomicky & Hogg quoted by Mico & Ripolles, 2014) Thus, the social media has become, over time, a potent tool for civic and political participation, a crucial motivation for the core constituency of movements.

Users do not simply reproduce their offline networks on Facebook. It is more accurate to state that Facebook friends use their offline networks to craft an online network that resembles but does not replicate their offline world (Subrahmanyam et al. 2008, (Zhao, Grasmuck, and Martin, 2008). in adition, Parks (2010) found that over half of Facebook friends consisted of “weak tie” friendships, including acquaintances, “lapsed” friendships and friends of friends. only 10 percent of Facebook friends were regarded as “very close” or “strong” friendships. These networks emerge from offline contacts, but they are also larger than one’s immediate offline networks. Facebook friend networks thus are spatially and temporally extended versions of offline networks.

Despite the fact that Facebook friend networks contain both strong and weak ties, they are networks we hand-pick. Facebook falls under what Walther (2007) calls computer mediated communication. Cathcart and Gumpert (1986) define mediated communication as “any person to person interaction where a medium has been interposed to transcend the limitations of time and space” (30). This ability to self-select a community within which one can present an online self is key to Facebook’s popularity in public sphere that is a key to democracy. From this vantage point democracy involves a communication process whereby a collectivity comes to develop a

shared judgment of what is right, or best. For this to occur, opportunities must be created in which the diversity of ideas and opinions initially held by individuals can be transformed through a process of reasoned, equitable, dialectical communication, into judgments or decisions to which all parties can consent.

Thus, public sphere theory was used in this study to explore, in terms of decision making, especially issues pertaining to democracy as fur as freedom of association and exercising the right to take part in any cause or action that is meant to bring social change in which an people live. For the purpose of this study, Herbamasas theory of public sphere affirms the use of social media especially Facebook among the youth with a defined purpose to achieve a certain goal or objective and decisions about matters that affect their lives. For exampl, Affirmative Repossession Movement (ARM) mobilization strategy through the use of Facebook yielded astounding results as the youth responded in numbers and caught local authorities by surprise when close to 51,000 Namibian youth submitted applications for land (Haidula & Mongudhi, 2015) through various municipalities around the country. This was a resound collective action that was organised online and executed offline to ensures that it intended purpose yielded result on land delivery.

In addition this affirms Kahne , Middaugh, Lee, and Feezell (2010) who found that the more people engage politically online, the more likely they will engage offline. Kahne et al. (2010) for example found that among United State of America based youth, spending time in online communities seemed to promote more general civic engagement. They contend that social network activity spills over into offline engagement. Engagement with “online participatory communities” tied to youth interests exposed young people to a diverse set of viewpoints and made them more interested in politics.

2.4 THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN NAMIBIA

Before independence, the use of social media in Namibia was not prevalent as no data was recorded. However, after independence, there has been an evolving paradigm shift in the use of communication technology as Namibia was getting on its feet to get to the world standard on information communication and technology. Since the early days of the telephone, Bulletin Board System (BBS) and Internal Raw System (IRS), social media has since come a long way with new applications that enable free international calls being developed (Ryan, 2015). This paradigm shift involves the acquiring of iPads, iPhones and tablets from conventional mobile handsets, and this has heightened the popularity of social media with more and more people acquiring these gadgets. This was not prevalent in a pre-independent Namibia.

At independence, the Namibian Government adopted policies to support the use of social media through E-governance, which is the first stage of incorporating a digital platform for citizens to acquire accessibility to the digital world. Thus, Namibia has introduced an e-governance policy in 2005 (OPM, 2005). Mudhai, Tettey, and Banda (2009) defined e-governance differently namely, in terms of engaging citizens in policy formulation and in the administration and evaluation of government services by openly discussing with them issues pertaining to effective decision making. However, many countries in Africa, and elsewhere in the world as well as Namibia, are already beyond this stage.

Fast forward, the use of social media as a digital global village that interconnects people and facilitates effective and user-friendly communication, has not left Namibia lagging behind. Thus, the National Assembly has adopted the Government's Social Media Use Policy and

Communication Plan for 2016 to 2020. This framework's objective is to provide guidelines for information dissemination to the public. The social media use policy focuses on guidance in the use of social media within the Namibian government communication environment with the aim of improving government transparency, participation and interaction with the public (MICT, 2017, p. 6). Moreover, the policy is vital for the process of creating a transparent, effective and efficient government as well as service delivery in line with the NDPs, Vision 2030 and the Harambee Prosperity Plan. The policy also creates favourable prospects for the Government's envisioned methods of implementing the National Information Policy and Access to Information legislation.

In their research on cultural influences on Facebook users in Namibia, Peters et al. (2015, p. 25) found that, in general, "Namibian participants felt like they had more freedom on Facebook to openly express opinions, speak their minds, and use 'like' buttons to agree with controversial political topics". Many Namibian participants indicated that they discussed controversial government decisions or proclamations intensively on Facebook and that this was an extension of their level of comfort with discussing such topics openly in the real world. In, addition, Tyson (2015) revealed that the use of social media in Namibia is on the rise thus correlating with international trends. On the other hand, many Namibians have been going 'online' but chiefly to social media sites – particularly Facebook and Twitter (Fredrick Ebert Stiftung, 2014).

Statistically, there is a Facebook penetration rate of 10.7% or 231,340 in Namibia (Internet World Stats, 2015), which undoubtedly is changing the way people consume and use information. Thus with the above statistics, the significance of social media use in Namibia cannot be overlooked since we live in an interconnected digital global village. Social media as a

communication tool will certainly remove bottlenecks of conventional methods thereby enhancing efficiency and effectiveness across the entire spectrum of the Namibian service industry and influence communication change. The potential use of social media in Namibia will realise the implantation of e-governance to be a reality and to contribute positively to e-democracy and civic engagement. Potential use of social media in Namibia will also present a prospective opportunity that contributes to decision making.

On the other hand, informal, youth-led movements for democratic change are on the rise in Namibia as can be seen for example in the formation of the Affirmative Reposition (AR) Movement in 2014. The movement protests and demands a fair land distribution process to the landless, especially the youth (New Era Reporter, 2014). It is believed that the youth is likely to make its mark on democracy-building processes through an increase in social media usage, with the help of these digital affordances. Therefore, in Namibia, activism has been rife in the political and social arena, especially around issues of land distribution, income inequality, and human rights, since, given current social inequalities and inequities in the distribution of public resources, young people feel disenfranchised (Keulder, Nord, & Emminghaus, 2010; Namibia, 2008). However, the use of new media is emerging as a dominant form of activism among youths who wish to draw the attention of political, regional, and local authority leaders to particular issues in the public sphere that are directly relevant to their interests. However, this is evidence to the youth of Omaruru Constituency on the use of Facebook since they have created an Omaruru Youth Forum Facebook page which serves as a platform for the youth to engage each other on civic affairs within their community.

2.5 THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND FACEBOOK IN DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRACY

Literature outlines several roles of social media and Facebook in the development of democracy. Loader and Mercea (2012) indicated that social media promotes open an equal deliberation between citizens. Government representatives and policy-makers are afforded new opportunities to use information and communication technologies to provide eager citizens with a public platform where they can have a direct say in political discussion, to air their views, and express themselves as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Digital democracy is a fresh wave of technological optimism that has more recently accompanied the advent of social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Wikies and the blogosphere.

In terms of democracy, social media particularity Facebook, plays an important role in encouraging civic engagement in a democratic society by promoting political expression of individuals, subsequently influencing social change (Guo & Saxton, 2014; Halpern & Gibbs, 2013; Kent, 2013; Warren, Sulaiman, & Jaafar, 2014). For example, with the rapid overthrow of Tunisia's president Ben Ali in January 2011 serving as an incredible inspiration, Egyptian activists — mostly young, urban, and college-educated launched a no-violent protest movement that grew rapidly (Habeeb 2012, p. 3). Therefore, social media is making it easier for people to have a voice in government to discuss issues, organise around causes, and hold leaders accountable (Chakrabart, 2018)

Despite the role of social media and Facebook on development of democracy, several criticisms exist as well. Generally, citizens are being manipulated by the mainstream media that is monopolised and controlled by governments to limit freedom of expression and accessibility

(Loader & Mercea, 2011, p.759). Freedom of expression is grounded and enshrined in the Universal Declaration, for instance, Article 19 of the UDHR states that "everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." In addition, Article 21 of the Namibian Constitution (1998, p.9) echoes the same human right: "(1) All person shall have the right to (a) freedom of speech and expression which shall include freedom of the press and other Media." Therefore, Freedom of speech and expression is paramount to human right as as inshrined in the Namibian Constitution and it This shortcoming towards the limitation of freedom of expressions sifnificant to on has not been comprehended as it undermines the influence social media on civic engagement and democratic governance. Most authors agree that civic engagement in the political sphere is at the centre of every democracy. It can be argued that civic engagement is the backbone of modern democracy (Tabia & Ortiz, 2010).

2.6 THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND FACEBOOK FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AMONG THE YOUTH

Young people are more eager than the rest of the population to engage in online political and civic activities (Rainie et al., 2011). Social media tools have received tremendous attention with regard to the influence they have on the youth to encourage civic engagement to become active citizens, addressing social issues, self-reflect and advocate for social change. The youth increasingly use new media technology to facilitate volunteering, fundraising, community service work, and global activism (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). Research contacted by Madden, Lenhart, Cortesi, Gasser, Duggan, Smith and Beaton (2013) found that of the 82% of teens who

reported using social media, 94% have a Facebook profile, and 81% said they used Facebook profiles most often, while 26% had a Twitter profile, and 7% use Twitter most often. In addition, Valenzuela, Park and Kee (2009) found that civic engagement is associated with broad Facebook use, while political participation is associated with joining Facebook groups.

The use social media is for a variety of purposes. This includes expression such as posting or updating their status, changing of profile pictures of any content and picture to create or spark a debate which is relate to civic view or participation. Online civic expression, whether in the form of a like of a posting, a shared image, or a written post, can lead to or even constitute civic participation (Rheingold, 2012). Facebook was developed as a form of self-expression and networking. Furthermore, the youths are engaged on social media by making it as part of their everyday life, from the posting and sharing of photos, uploading video and sharing interest by joining specific groups. Self-reflection, in this context, means that political actors can criticise their own opinions, values, and arguments when confronted with new and different arguments.

However, the use of social media has some underlining challenges among the youth. These relate to lack of competency to communicate their concerns to the right audience. Rheingold (2008) notes that although many young people actively participate online, they may lack the skills to effectively communicate their common concerns to large audiences. A more recent study found several participation barriers to youth civic engagement on social media such as language and content; information; slow feedback; disbelief; privacy and social identity or too much commitment and workload (Brandtzæg, Haugstveit, Lüders & Følstad, 2015). Most users lack trust since they interact with people they do not know personally. In addition, civic expression using social media can be deceiving in terms of identity as the youth might choose not reveal

their real identify to avoid intimidation or due to fear of being reprimanded when offline. The considerable overlap between connections on social network sites and off-line relationships furthers the need for at least some degree of consistency and authenticity on social network site profiles (Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechter, & Espinoza, 2008). Hence, further research is needed to expand this research with regard to the overlap between connection on social networks and offline relationships on consistency and authenticity on social network site profiles.

2.7 A REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES ON THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND FACEBOOK FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENTS

Gismondi (2015) undertook a study titled ‘Civic engagement: an exploratory study of social media use and civic engagement among undergraduates**.** The study indicated that, in recent years, college student environments have rapidly changed from the traditional means of engagement. One aspect of change in this regard has been the development of an online environment for students to navigate and integrate into daily life. Data indicate that students are frequently online for many hours each day, and 90% of all undergraduates use Facebook (Dahlstrom, de Boor, Grunwald & Vockley, 2011). In addition to face-to-face interactions, undergraduate students are now met with a myriad of web-based social experiences, from the primarily academic (BlackBoard Vista, online lectures, course blogs) to the primarily social (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Reddit). The study indicated that colleges and universities that are interested in cultivating a spirit of civic engagement on campus must consider not only traditional means of engagement but also social media.

The second study related study is titled “How social media is used by a civic engagement initiative in the context of the refugee crisis**”** by Uhsemann (2016). This study investigated the

German civic engagement initiative *Moabit Helps* and its use of social media. The goal of the study was to understand how social media are used by the initiative in the context of a refugee crisis. The findings of the study showed that the context of the refugee crisis shapes the nature of social media use in some ways more than in others. The findings showed that a Facebook page was primarily being used as a channel of information. This specific use of informational messages is partly due to the decision of the initiators to use public Facebook merely for information sharing purposes in order to not provide right-wing extremists with a public platform for discussion following hate comments after a false report of a refugee.

It can be learned from the above case study that a Facebook page was primarily being used as a channel of information. Primarily, Facebook was being used for mobilising followers through the group's swarm intelligence in matters of instant calls for help and action. However, the above case studies limit the generalizability to the use of social media and civic engagement in Namibia because people make use of social media in different ways.

2.8 SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the concepts and theories guiding the development of social media and civic engagement in Namibia. Firstly, the chapter addressed the conceptual framework followed by the theoretical framework. The theory that is used in this study used is constructivism which is about examining knowledge and understandings of the world that is developed jointly by individuals. The chapter further discussed the historical development of social media and Facebook in Namibia. It shows that Namibia has made some effort to incorporate social media in undertaking a democracy-building process through an increase in

social media usage with the help of these digital affordances and to recreate itself after independence since this was not the case. Namibia has no rich data as far as social media in the context of civic engagement; however, the Government has established working documents and policies to adopt the use of social media to promote e-governance and digital democracy. Moreover, the chapter presented the role of social media and Facebook in the development of democracy and the use of social media and Facebook for civic engagement among the youth. Social media has influenced the youth by encouraging civic engagement as well as enabling them to become active citizens, addressing social issues, self-reflection and advocating for social change. Thus, as global digital communication hub, it has redefined development, rejuvenating the political sphere and making it the centre of every democracy. Finally, the chapter presented two case studies on social media and civic engagement in the United States of America and Germany. The lesson that can be learned from these case studies is that Facebook has been used as a communication tool to mobilise refugees to take action collectively and for students to cultivate a spirit of civic engagement on campus not only to consider traditional means of engagement but also social media.

CHAPTER 3:

RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present and describe the research methods and design used to study the influence of social media on civic engagement and democracy among the youth in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia. This is followed by the population of the study as well as the research instruments. The next section relates to sampling and sampling criteria. A section on data collection procedures is included, and this is followed by the data analysis section. The last section pertains to the ethical considerations of the study

3.2 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design. The main focus in qualitative research is "to understand, explain, explore, discover and clarify situations, feelings, perceptions, attitudes, values, beliefs and experiences of a group of people" (Kumar, 2013 p.103). According to Creswell (2007) the objective of qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or respondents that will best help the researcher to understand the problem of the question. The qualitative design enabled the research to gather data through questionnaires and focus group discussions with the use of open-ended questions. Therefore, the qualitative design was found to be suitable for this study as it helped the researcher to seek the understanding and experiences of the youth perceptions, opinions, values and their experiences on the use of social media and the influence it has on civic engagement and democracy in Omaruru Constituency.

3.3 Population

The population of this study are the youth between the ages of 15-35 years of Omaruru Constituency. A population is a group of individuals who have the same characteristic to be studied (Creswell, 2007). Hence, all the youth from the between the ages of 15-35 years would make up the population of the study.

3.4 Research Instruments

According to Yin (2011), research instrument is as a tool for collecting the data like questionnaires and focus group as the instrument to collect the data. In this research, the instruments that were used to collect data are focus groups and a questionnaire with open-ended questions.

3.4.1 Focus Group

Kumar (2013) describes focus groups as a form of strategy in qualitative research in which attitudes, opinions or perceptions towards an issue, product, service or programme are explored through a free and open discussion between members of the focus group and the researcher. The main purpose of choosing focus group was to draw upon participants' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions in a way in which would not be feasible using other methods, for example observation or one-to-one interviewing.

3.4.2 Questionnaires

"A questionnaire is a series of questions asked to individuals to obtain statistically useful information about a given topic, and it is simply defined as mimeographed or printed questions that is completed by or for a respondent to give his/her opinion" (Creswell & Plano Clark 2011,

p.155). Open-ended questions were used because the researcher did not provide the optional answer, so the participants answer the questions by their own responses and in their own words. Open ended questionnaires were used because they offer a fast, efficient and inexpensive means of gathering large amounts of information from sizeable sample of participants. This instrument is particularly effective for measuring subject behaviour, preferences, intentions, attitudes and opinions from the participants.

3.5 Sample and Sampling procedures

In research terms a sample is a group of people, objects, or items that are taken from a larger population for measurement. The sample should be representative of the population to ensure that we can generalise the findings from the research sample to the population as a whole (Popplewell,2013).The sampling method of this study consists of purposive sampling used to draw the sample from the population of the youth in Omaruru Constituency. This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Therefore, only the youth that had Facebook accounts at the time of the study were part of this study since they could give meaning to the phenomenon being studied. Snowball sampling method includes the identification, done by the researcher, based on specific reasoning, of a number of respondents to be interviewed and which in their turn, shall indicate (recommend) other respondents which will make the object of the research (Kolaczyk, 2009). This was necessary because the researcher did not have a predetermined number or size of the youth to be included in the sample, and little was known regarding the youth of Omaruru Constituency by the researcher.

3.6 Data collection procedures

Firstly, the researcher wrote a letter to the National Youth Council and the Omaruru Constituency Regional Councillor about the study to request permission to conduct the study in Omaruru Constituency. Together with the Youth Officer, the researcher mobilised the youth to take part in the study, and those that were interested contacted the Youth Officer to participate, and they also encouraged those that had Facebook accounts to participate. Secondly, the data collection procedures started with the focus group, 18 youth member where part of focus group, and the data was recorded on an audiotape, and notes were taken simultaneously. The researcher appointed a facilitator and one of the youth members to take notes during the focus group discussion. Thirdly, the researcher handed out questionnaires to the participants. However, participants who could not complete the questionnaire were not left out as arrangements were made to complete the questionnaires at their convenient space and time, and they were given a due date when to complete the questionnaire and returned by the participants at Omaruru Youth Office.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the interpretation and organisation of data collected during fieldwork for the purpose of discovering important dimensions and patterns of relationships (Polit & Beck, 2006). The researcher read through the participants' responses one by one as the first step to obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning and the general ideas of participants' responses by means of using a thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for analyzing qualitative data that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyze, and report repeated patterns (Braun and Clarke 2006). It is a method for describing data, but it also involves

interpretation in the processes of selecting codes and constructing themes. A theme is a 'patterned response or meaning' (Braun and Clarke 2006, p. 82) derived from the data that informs the research question. . The data generated from the questionnaire were subjected to coding by arranging data into segments of verbatim and clustering of headings as per the open ended questions. The responses from participants were then grouped together in categories of similarities, and themes were then labeled and defined in relation to the research questions.

3.8 Research EthicsEthical considerations

Institutional approval was obtained, and a clearance letter was obtained from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee of University of Namibia. Before commencing with the research, the researcher wrote a letter to the National Youth Council's Executive Chairperson and the Omaruru Constituency Regional Councillor regarding the study and requesting permission to conduct research in Omaruru Constituency. All participants were informed and reassured of confidentiality and that they were at liberty to withdraw from the research at any time. All participants signed consent forms which provided details about the research, and participants were advised not to write their names or contact details on the questionnaires. The data will be kept safe in a computer with a personal password, and the questionnaires will be stored in a secured safe**.**

3.9 SUMMARY

This chapter has presented research methods and design used to study the influence of social media on civic engagement and democracy among the youth in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia. A qualitative method was found to be the appropriate research design. The phenomenological design was found appropriate because of participants' understanding and

experiences, perceptions, opinions, values and their experiences in relation to the use of social media. Other aspects outlined in this chapter include the study's population and research instruments. The chapter also presented the study's sample and sampling procedure. The last three sections pertain to the data collection procedure, data analysis methods and the issuf research ethics.

CHAPTER 4:

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

- The purpose of this chapter is to present and interpret the data collected from the youth of Omaruru Constituency. The presentation and interpretation of data follow the following sequences derived from the research questions.What should be the role of social media in civic engagement and democracy among the youth in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia?
- What influences the youth in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia to use social media for civic engagement and democracy?
- Why should the Government consider using social media platforms to engage the youth in civic engagement and democracy for the Government in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia?

4.2 THE INFLUENCE OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The following are participants' views of the youth of Omaruru Constituency on what influenced them to use social media for civic engagement.

4.2.1 EXPRESSING VIEWS ANYTIME

Participants were asked about the what influences them to use social media for civic engagement and this is what they revealed regarding expressing views anytime.

Participant 1; *"Before, I was on social media, it was difficult to voice my thoughts and to say what is on my mind. I joined Facebook and many groups to express my views. In simple words, what influences me was the fact that I was able to say what's on my mind, any day and anytime."*

The participant revealed that it was difficult to voice her thoughts before, and thus joining Facebook enable the participant to say what is on his/her mind at any given time. This entails expression of views at any given time has been made easy for the youth to express their views any time.

4.2.2 KEEPING UP WITH LATEST TECHNOLOGY TRENDS

Apart from expressing views anytime, participants also revealed technology as a least trend as one of the influences to use social media for civic engagement and this is what they revealed.

> Participant 2; "*Social media is cheap and help keeping up with the latest technological trends and a good platform to educate and create awareness on social issues among the young people, with the same purpose and life objectives, political views"*.

The above responses show that social media is a cheap and enables the participants to keep up with the latest technological trends by educating and creating awareness on social issues among the young people, with the same purpose and life objectives, political views.

In addition, participant 3, 4, and 5 had this to say:

> Participant 3: "Social *media provides a way to connect with others globally and it is user-friendly*."
>
> Participant 4**:** "I *preferably use Facebook on the latest news update and to socialise with my friends and engage in anything concerning our community or nation by taking part by commenting and reading comments to learn something new."*
> Participant 5**:** *"My interest in social media was influence by my political values and my willingness and interest socialising with people abroad."*

The above response revealed that what influences young people to use social media for civic engagement to socialise with friends and engage other users that have a same purpose, life objectives and interests. This includes latest news update as well as political values and through social media, the youth can connect with their peers globally abroad and socialising with people abroad. In addition, some youth participants expressed that they used social media to because it is user friendly and enables them to socialise with people abroad and thus this create a digital village and it is used as a means to acquire knowledge. The online *autonomy of* young people in

choosing their own interests and sharing user-generated knowledge drives their use of social media.

4.2.3 Facebook groups for political or social issues

Table 4.1 How Facebook groups involved in political or social issues or working to advance a cause in a community to which participants belonged.

Table 4.1. A this point the researcher wanted to know the Facebook groups to which the youth belong in the Omaruru Constituency, that involves in political or social issues or working to advance a cause in their community.

Youth Group	**Facebook group**
Youth Group 1 Number of Participants: 4	*Omaruru 'it matters' youth group* *Youth in Politics* *Affirmative Reposition*
Youth Group 2 Number of Participants: 3	*Affirmative Reposition* *Political Watch* *Omaruru Constituency Youth Forum*
Youth Group 3 Number of Participants: 2	*Omaruru se Mense* *Political Watch* *Affirmative Reposition*
Youth Group 4 Number of Participants: 2	*Omaruru Constituency Youth Forum* *Omaruru se Mense* *Political Watch*
Youth Group 5 2	*Omaruru Constituency Youth Forum* *Omaruru se Mense* *Political Watch*
Youth Group 6 Number of Participants: 2	*None*

The results in Table 4.1 are categorised in 6 youth groups as well as the number of participants per group. The youth are categorised in 6 groups according the total number of participants that indicated the similar Facebook group they belong to. Thus, the results revealed that Youth Group 1, has the most total number of 4 participants that indicated that they are part of the *Omaruru 'it matters' youth group, Youth in Politics and Affirmative Reposition* respectively . In addition, a total of 9 participants from Youth Group 2, 3, 4 and 5 revealed that they belong to Political

Watch as well as Affirmative Reposition. Interestingly, 9 participants also revealed that they are part of the Omaruru Consistency. However, 2 participants revealed that they do not belong to any Facebook group. These results reveal that the participants in Omaruru Constituency do not belong to a homogenous group but from different group. This social groups mainly facilitates as well as provoke discussion that aim to help shape the community and foster social change as well as create synergy on issue of public concern.

4.2.4 Participants views on issues drawing their attention on social media

The following are participants' views in relation to issues or ideas that strongly draw youths' attention on social media.

4.2.4.1 Land availability

> Participant 1**;** "*Land availability to our own people and the way land is too expensive for the young people"*
>
> Participant 3: *"All social issues that affect the youth like affordability of land to the youth not being prioritised by our leaders, unemployment, and high crime rate"*

Land availability and affordability has been identified as the most issue that draw the attention of the youth on social media.

4.2.4.2 Youth Empowerment

> Participant 2*: "I am not really into politics but issues of youth empowerment and lack of land among the youth as well as gender-based violence."*
>
> Participant 4: *"Youth empowerment and advocacy as well as entertainment"*
>
> Participant 5*: "I am more into retail business and entertainment as well as real estate and strongly advocate for an equal and just society."*

Another burning issues that attract the attention of the youth to use social media, include youth empowerment, this is a result of unequal distribution of resources can cause some prevalent social issues like gender-based violence being major concerns among the youth.

4.2.5 Social Media Audience

Participants were asked about what they would do to make sure that their comments are directed to the right audience when they post them on social media. The following were their responses.

> Participant 1: "*It is difficult to communicate on radios since a lot of people like "catching" on matters that are not directed towards them; the best way you can do is to caption and tag them, that way you will reach the right audience."*
> Participant 2 concurs with Participant 1, by using tagging the right audience as a means to communicate their message to the right audience on Facebook.
> Participant 3. indicated that: *"my audience are my followers on my Facebook profile. If I direct something at a specific group, I will private it and only tag the relevant people."*
>
> Participant 4: "*Tag the person I want my comments to be directed to the person and also use hashtag"*

The responses above show that the youth used the technique of tagging the right audience. Apart from tagging and sending a private message as well as caption, some of the respondents revealed that they used a hashtag or they just posted their messages or send a private message. Most of the respondents revealed that they would tag the relevant audience or post on the profile page of the person or institutions they wished to communicate the message to.

4.3 CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY THE YOUTH ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The last question in sub-section is about the challenges the youth encountered when using social media for civic engagement. The following were their responses.

> Participant 1: *"People are always not keen on getting involved because social media is very impersonal, and most of them use improper language to attack others."*
>
> Participant 2: *"I always have a problem with people taking my post personally and being ignorant to the main topic being discussed at hand."*
>
> Participant 3: *"I do not use to have enough data packages for social media, and even when you post something, some of the people are so ignorant and don't understand that topic or main discussion"*
> Participant 5: *"Negative replies from users and people who are ignorant and narrow-minded"*
> Participant 6: *"Lack of feedback from relevant authorities, and some of the offices* do not *have Facebook pages on which one can post problems or they do not read Facebook discussions when community members express their challenges or complains"*

Participant *7: "Lack of understanding to some people and knowledge of something being debated by some people when commenting on something they d not understand"*
Response 8: *"Some offices don't have Facebook pages or some officials or people don't have Facebook."*
Response 9: "*I don't know some of my Facebook friends if this is their true identity when I engage with them or comment and the authenticity of some resources when posting."*

Participants indicated that they hardly had data to access the internet and that the messages that are uploaded were usually personal and contained improper language. Another challenge concerns ignorance and lack of understanding. There is also a challenge regarding lack of feedback from relevant authorities and lack of access to social media platforms. The main challenges are personal attacks, ignorance of the main issues being discussed, lack of data and negative comments.

4.4 SOCIAL MEDIA DEMOCRACY

4.4.1 Subjection to the rule of law or intimidation

To address the above theme, participants were asked their opinions on the youth that had been subjected to any rule of law or intimidation. The following are their responses.

Participant 1: "*I do not know anyone that was subjected to any rule of law or intimidation because freedom of expression is our human right."*
Participant 2: *"Freedom of expression is protected in our constitution and intimidating them when they express their views is a gross violation of human rights to express themselves freely."*
Participant 3: *"The youth is the future; they should be allowed to express themselves freely because they will lead our country tomorrow and leaders are account to us."*
Participant 4: *"It is wrong to intimidate people expressing themselves; we are in a free and independent country."*
Participant 5: *"It is good for the youth to be held accountable for their comments as it will teach them what is right and right to use social media.*"
Participant 6: "*Just because we are an independent country, one cannot just wake up and insult leaders on social media; this is not right."*
Participant *7: "Young people are careful of what they say and know that everything they say unethically might be used against them and be held accountable."*

The participants could not recall anyone that had been subjected to any rule of law or intimidation because freedom of expression is our human right. This is because freedom of association and freedoms of expression prevail in Namibia. However, some were of the view that

the youth should be held accountable for their comments as this would teach them ethics of social media use for civic engagement. This result indicates that the youth are cognisant of their fundamental human rights as far as intimidation is concerned. The results also indicate that participants are also aware that it is morally wrong to incite violence, insult leaders, and they should held accountable for their comments. Thus, social media education should be provided to teach them about the ethics of using social media.

4.4.2 Social Media as a tool to promote democratic values among the youth Participants were asked about how they promote democracy by using social media, and the following are the responses.

> Participant 1: "*I promote democracy allowing everyone to share and post their opinions; allow people to talk their mind without fear and favour. This makes it easy so that the leaders can know and see that we are not happy or satisfied with the service of the government of the day.*"
> Participant 2: "*I use Facebook to promote democracy by taking part in the current affairs and debates on Facebook."*
>
> Participant 3: *"By contribute to burning issues raised like unemployment, poor service delivery by the Omaruru Municipality, lack of sanitation and share post that will have our leaders and the government accountable, like maybe waste pollution."*

The data above indicate that social media is a hub of democracy as it influences social change. Most participants revealed that the use of Facebook promotes a safe environment to debate on current issues and public participation that influence good governance which is the centre of democracy. Through social media, democracy is promoted by posting and provoking discussions that concern the youth. Participants revealed that they use social media to promote democracy allowing everyone to share and post their opinions; allow people to talk their mind without fear and favour as well as criticise the government of the day. This entails that they exercise freedom of speech, which is the fundamental concept of democracy.

4.4.3 Youth use social media as an expression platform Participants were also asked to state why they prefer to use social media to express their views and opinions instead of directing them to the relevant authorities. The following are their responses.

> Participant 1: *"Authorities also follow social media post. Support views raised by leaders who need support before taking issues to authorities creating awareness among my peers it is easy to use"*
>
> Participant 2: *"Because at times it is easier to use and to write your views and opinions than to speak"*
> Participant 4: *"Social media can be heard by thousands including the President himself. But, if I have to address the relevant authorities, all I will get is "the schedule is full"; I will literally be prosecuted just for addressing that specific issue".*

The above responses show the role of social media for civic engagement and democracy as discussed previously. The result indicates that it has been a norm among the participants to use social media owing to fear of prosecution as social media creates a safe haven to reach out to authorities. Nevertheless, Participant 4 had a different view. The participant explained that social media helps users to reach a wider audience.

4.4.4 Youth reluctance to participate in the mainstream public sphere The following are participants' views on the youth's reluctance to participate in mainstream public sphere via long-established instruments of public deliberation such as radio, newspapers and TV rather than social media.

> Participant 1: *"Most of the youth are afraid to air their views publicly because of old-fashioned people running most programs. It is difficult to say what you really want to say on radios, newspapers and T.V."*
> Participants 2: *"Nobody actually wants to take action; posting on social media gives them the comfort of feeling like they have done "something" but in fact, nothing is really done."*
> Participants 3: "*Probably because they do not feel confident enough to go live*"
> Participants 4: "*It is easily available, to retrieve old post and to reach our peers.*"
> Participants 5: "*Most of our youths are not interested in public sphere because they believe it's just another scam for the government officials to benefit from. There is just too much talk and zero results*."

The above responses show that the youth are reluctant to participate in mainstream public sphere via long-established instruments of public deliberation such as radio, newspapers and TV; instead. They rather use social media. This is because mainstream media is believed to have been monopolised and controlled by the Government to limit freedom of expression and accessibility to the youth. Thus, posting on social media gives the youth comfort. The youth do not have enough confidence to participate in mainstream media.. Thus, social media is mainly appealing to young people and compared traditional media such as newspapers, television and radios.

4.5 WHY SHOULD GOVERNMENT CONSIDER USING SOCIAL MEDIA AS A PLATFORM TO ENGAGE THE YOUTH IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND DEMOCRACY

The following responses show participants' views on the role of social media in civic engagement and democracy among the youth in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia.

4.5.1 A tool to sensitize the local authorities on service delivery and a platform to issues affecting the youth

> Participants 1: " *to sensitise the local authorities of their (the youth) dissatisfaction when it comes service delivery and community youth-friendly platform to discuss issues that affect us the youth- such as improving the local infrastructures to promote leisure as well as bringing investment to the town that will benefit the youth."*
>
> Participants *2: "Sir, in most cases we don't* do not *have time to listen to radio or read newspapers. We spend our time on Facebook; like me, I like the Affirmative Reposition Facebook page. It is always interactive with many new updates on what happened in our county, and people always comment and debate, and people are free to comment or write their opinions without any fear. It is the same with some Facebook pages like Omaruru Constituency Youth Forum pages and others. People can post their frustration especially the delivery of land, lack of service from Omaruru Municipality or maybe the hospital, and sometimes you will see people putting notice to organise cleaning campaigns for people to volunteer- you know."*

The participants revealed that social media's role is to sensitise local authorities of their dissatisfaction with service delivery. Furthermore, the results indicates that social media is a

youth-friendly platform that can be used to discuss issues that affect affects the youth. Social media provides a platform to reconnect the youth to a domestic public domain platform such as radio and televisions as well as newspapers. Hence, it provides and guarantees to freedom of speech and expression, without any fear to voice their opinions and influence any lack of service delivery in their community. It can be inferred that social media extends comfort when discussing topics openly in the real world.

4.5.2 Government consideration to use social media as an engagement tool The following views shows why, according to participants, the government should consider using social media as a platform to engage the youth in civic engagement and democracy.

> Participant 1: "*This will allow the youth to be more civically and politically engaged across a variety of issues that effects their community like, unemployment, gender-based violence, teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse and influencing youth to increase the number of youth engagements in electing their leaders and have the government accountable."*
>
> Participant 2: "*...like sharing of information, lack of service delivery and making our leaders and government accountable by exposing corrupt activities, and it promotes communication, good governance, social dialogue between members of the public and their leaders*"
>
> Participant *3: "I have trust issues, and some sources might not post authentic news or information. So, using government platforms for civic engagement will promote social dialogue and curb fake news."*
>
> Participant 4: "*Government using social media can be a platform to reach out to the youth since the youth spend most of their time already on social media. This is obvious because most of the youth, especially in Omaruru, do not buy newspapers or listen to the radio and prefer to use social media. Therefore, this will act as a bridging gap bridging between the Government and the youth and promote an open-door policy."*

The above narratives from the participants revealed that government need to consider use social media as it promotes civic engagement through social dialogue, not just be between government institutions, and elected government officials but with the public, especially the youth that use Facebook. Social media promotes an inclusive public debate and discussion on issues such as unemployment, gender-based violence, teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse that influence

the you and affect the community. The participants indicated that if a law or policy is enacted that requires all leaders to have access to and use social media, especially Facebook, to engage community members, it would enhance democracy, and the youth would be able to express themselves openly without fear of intimidation from their leaders. However, some youth expressed authenticity and fake news as one of their concerns.

4.5.3 Youth Expression of offensive expression towards leaders on social media. The following are participants' views about why the youth express offensive expressions to the leaders they have elected in power and tarnish their names on social media.

> Participants 1: "*The fact that the leaders we have elected are not doing a lot or are rather not addressing the challenges and the needs of the youth the youth feel like, in doing so, it will help open their eyes on issues affecting the youth. This will enable them to see dissection from the youth by expressing themselves on social media.*"
> Participants 2 indicated that the youth are frustrated; "*We are frustrated; high youth unemployment and lack of service delivery from our leaders we elected, and there is literally nothing about the youth in Omaruru except high teenage pregnancy and alcohol and drug abuse."*
> Participants 3: "*Some of the youth just want attention, and they don't know what they want in their lives, but insulting leaders is disrespectful and it won't help anything or provide any solution."*
> Participants 4: "*Because some of the youth lack morals and discipline or sometimes nothing is being done to them when insulting leaders."*
> Participants 5: "*We are the one that voted those leaders, and we cannot be suppressed by anyone, and intimidation violates the Namibia constitution and threatens democracy as well as freedom of expression."*

The participants revealed that they insult the elected leaders because of failure to address the needs of the youth. In addition, they revealed Socioeconomic factors, frustration, high unemployment rates, and lack of service delivery are among the factors the influence the youth to hurl insults towards their leaders. However, participant 4 and 5 had a different view and cite issues of morals and discipline as well as violations of the Namibia Constitution as a threat to democracy as well as freedom of expression. However, some of the participants indicated that

insulting leaders is not the best solution or remedy to resolve any problem as it threatens democracy and freedom of expression.

4.6 IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE IN THE COMMUNITY

The following are participants' narratives about the impact that the use of social media has had on their community in Omaruru Constituency.

> Participant 1 does not really recall any impact that social media towards the community of Omaruru Constituency, so this is what he said. *"In the Omaruru Constituency, the use of social media does not really have a back-dated tangible impact that one can relate to apart from being an active marketing tool for those that are doing business and selling."*
>
> Participant 2: "*This is most effective compared to other available avenues and non-existing of public notice board. However, social media is the most trending platform for community members to upload community meetings, community police affairs and public meetings. It is very effective in community affairs by encouraging community volunteerism like cleaning campaigns and public demonstrations."*
>
> Participant 3:*"The most effective issue was when a woman was missing in the community, and her picture was applauded on social media, and she was found when her picture was applauded on Facebook."*

Some participants in this study could not give a clear-cut answer pertaining to the impact social media on the community of Omaruru Constituency. However, some participants revealed that the use of social media had indeed made a tangible impact. This includes, being used as a marketing tool to market or sell their products, a platform to invite community members for public meetings, community policing as well serving as a tool to influence community members to undertake any civic action like voting and taking part in community affairs like volunteering.

4.7 SUMMARY

The chapter presented and interpreted date pertaining to the influence of social media on the youth, particularly Facebook on civic engagement and democracy in Omaruru Constituency. The first section was about the influence of using social media for civic engagement. In that section, it was shown that social media was positively perceived as the youth could use it to connect with their peers, to get feedback and support and respond to issues that are important to them. Other influences include the ease of using Facebook compared to traditional media, the associated functionality and access to outlets. The subsequent section presented participants'' views on social media and democracy. It was shown that young people use social media to promote democracy as it is an inclusive tool for them to engage in the public domain and that social media is convenient and effective for them. The last section is about why government should consider using social media as a platform to engage the youth on civic engagement and democracy. This section shows that social media presents an opportunity to supplement and intensify messages distributed via traditional media and thus ensure that good governance and access to information are promoted.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented data pertaining to the influence of social media on civic engagement in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the results by reflecting on the research questions. The first subsection discusses the influence of social media for civic engagement in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia; this is then followed by the discussion on the relationship between social media and democracy in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia. The final subsection discusses why the Government should consider the use of social media as a platform to engage the Omaruru youth in civic engagement and democracy.

5.2 THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

5.2.1 EXPRESSING VIEWS ANYTIME

The results reveal that the social media is influential in the domain of civic engagement. The first factor is that social media is a cheap mode of communication because it enables the youth to participate in online communication. Secondly, the youth use social media to express their opinions at a given time. This concise with a study by Yue, Nekmat, and Beta (2019) in Indonesia found that young Muslim women are joining groups on social media, for community and expression as an alternative public sphere, especially since it may not be acceptable for them to engage in the public “street politics” of young men.

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5.2.2 KEEPING UP WITH LATEST TECHNOLOGY TRENDS

The first factor is that social media is a cheap mode of communication because it enables the youth to participate in online communication. Secondly, the youth use social media to express

their opinions at a given time. In addition, the youth use social media to engage and connect with friends globally, and in this way, create a digital village. Finally, social media is influential in civic engagement because it creates awareness on current affairs, locally, nationally and globally as well as issues of life objectives and on political aspects. The preceding findings coincide with Brandtzæg and Heim (2008) who stated that social media is the third-most important tool for continued participation of youth in social and civic issues. Moreover, Fernandes, Guircanu, Bowers and Neely (2008) explained that young voters networked with those of similar political views and values, sharing information about candidates, their campaigns, issues, local appearances, and social, media allows communication across geographical boundaries. The findings reveal that social media enables users to become active and collaborative participants rather than passive viewers online. However, it also includes engaging the youth with the same political views.

5.2.3 FACEBOOK GROUPS FOR POLITICAL OR SOCIAL ISSUES

The results of this study show that some of the youth belong to a variety of Facebook groups. These include the Affirmative Reposition, Omaruru Constituency Youth Forum and Political Watch. Gil de Zúñiga, Jung and Valenzuela (2012) explain that Facebook groups give their users the feeling of being connected to a community, and it enhances their knowledge about other participants. In support of the results, the Afrobarometer team in Namibia, led by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), interviewed 1,200 adult Namibians between 5 and 27 November 2017. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Asked which group best represent their personal views on land reform, almost half (47%) of Namibians choose Affirmative Repositioning (AR), far ahead of the Landless People's Movement (LPM) (10%) and opposition political parties (10%). Almost

three in 10 say that they “don’t know” (19%) or that none of these groups represents their views (8%), while only one in 20 (5%) say that land reform isn’t necessary (Figure 8). The AR appears to capture best the views of urban residents (52%), younger Namibians (50% among 18- to 35-year-olds. In this study, there were some youth who did not belong to a Facebook group. Therefore, from an education point of view, recent research also discovered that youth who are not part of a Facebook groups are likely to be disadvantaged because Facebook groups are meeting points for the youth. Moreover, Facebook is a convenient platform for learning where announcements are made, and resources are uploaded (Wang, Chen & Liang, 2012). Facebook groups created awareness, mobilise the youth and raise awareness on community members’ issues.

5.2.4 ISSUES DRAWING THE ATTENTION OF THE YOUTH ON SOCIAL MEDIA

5.2.4.1 Land availability.

Issues or ideas that strongly draw the attention of the youth on social media include the availability. This is supported by the Afrobarometer team in Namibia, led by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) study that reveals that almost half (47%) of Namibians – including 63% of those with post-secondary education – say the social movement Affirmative Repositioning (AR) is closest to their views on the land issue, compared to only 10% who align with the Landless People’s Movement (LPM). The AR movement is also widely seen as most effective in raising land issues with the government (41%). Therefore, Social media can foster reciprocity and trust and, accordingly, create new perspectives for civic and political engagement. social media particularly, Facebook serve as a driving force of trust to facilitate civic engagement; sharing of information; social change; sharing and discussing of sensitive issues of the government of the day (e.g. criticising

governments or leaders' poor performance); discussing burning issues of national interest availability and affordability of land.

5.2.4.2 Youth Empowerment

Youth empowerment has been revealed by the data as another issue that draws the attention of the youth on social media, this as well includes entertainment and unemployment. A study by Shihomeka (2019) supports the results. The author explains that the high rate of unemployment among the youth and the absence of relevant infrastructure in rural areas create an environment to use social media as a virtual space to discuss and advise one another on issues that affect them deeply and immediately. The author further explains that the existence of such a sphere tends to trigger their interest and participation in politics, both regionally and locally. Another study by Sey and Ortoleva (2014) explains that millions of internet and new media users play games for entertainment rather than engaging in civic discussions.

5.2.5 Social Media Audience

The results of this study reveal that the youth use the following strategies to make sure that their comments are directed to the right audience when they upload them on social media. These strategies include captioning and tagging the right audience. Other youth target the followers, while others only upload on Facebook. Tagging is defined as the process of associating a term, label, annotation, or simply a "tag" with a piece of information, e.g. textual information, document, digital photo, video, blog, or bookmark to particulars users (Nov & Ye, 2010). Moreover, Bruneel et al. (2013) assert that engaging with digital photos including photo sharing and tagging has been one of the popular pastimes, especially among the adolescents (Bruneel et al., 2013).

5.3 CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY THE YOUTH ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The results also reveal various challenges of using social media for civic engagement These include lack of data to access the internet; personal attacks and messages; improper language; ignorance of main issues; lack of understanding; lack of feedback from relevant authorities and lack of access to social media platforms. This finding is in line with the views Rheingold (2008) who explained that that although many young people actively participate online, they may lack the skills to effectively communicate their common concerns to large audiences. Other authors such as Brandtzæg, Haugstveit, Lüders and Følstad (2015) stated several participation barriers to youth civic engagement on social media. These include language barrierand content; information; slow feedback; disbelief; privacy and social identity or too much commitment and workload. Jenkins, Ford, and Green (2013) as well as Winter (2011) concur with the findings. These authors explain that barriers to youth civic engagement include language barrierand content; information; slow feedback or a lack of knowledge as the most frequent obstacles (e.g., lack of competence) in addition to privacy concerns and the feeling among the youth that they have nothing valuable to contribute or that their contributions would not be welcomed.

5.4 SOCIAL MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY

5.4.1 Subjection to the rule of law or intimidation

Youth participants hold ambivalent views on the notion of being subjected to the rule of law or intimidation as a result of participation in social media platforms. There are those who believe that freedom of association and freedoms of expression prevail in Namibia. These youth are cognisant of Article 21 of the Namibian Constitution (1998, p.9) *"(1) All person shall have the right to (a) freedom of speech and expression which shall include freedom of the press and other*

Media". However, regarding the notion of freedom of expression, a report produced by the Alianza Regional por la Libre Expresión e Información (2016, p. 5) argued that it is mostly in countries with "weak or inexistent legal frames" that "governments use criminal figures to restrict freedom of expression". In contrast, Namibia has been proven to respect fundamental human rights as far as freedom expression is concerned.

However, some youth believe that the youth should be held accountable for their comments as this would teach those ethics of social media use for civic engagement. The data revealed that it is morally wrong to incite violence, insult leaders and those doing so should hold accountable for their comments. Thus, social media education should be provided to teach the youth the ethics of using social media. Despite the fact that freedom of speech and expression is paramount to democracy, it is imperative for social media user to be cognisant of the ethics of the use of social media. Thus, in support of this view for individuals to be mindful of these ethics, Nates (2018) states that some of the ethical questions that must be contemplated and ultimately answered are as follows. Can this post be regarded as oversharing? Has the information in this post been distorted in anyway? What impact will this post have on others?

5.4.2 Social Media as a tool to promote democratic values among the youth

Democracy is defined by Stevenson (2010, p.388) "a system of government in which all the people of the country can vote to elect their representatives; a country which has this system of government; fair and equal treatment of everyone in the organization and their rights to take part in making decisions". In this regard, there are various ways by which the youth can promote democracy through social media. They include the fact that social media is a hub of democracy

as it influences social change, and the youth use social media to promote healthy and public participation that influences good governance which is at the centre of democracy.

Moreover, social media is used to promote democracy by posting and provoking discussions that concern the youth. Another way is through criticising the government of the day as this promotes debate and mobilises youth to be aware of their rights. The youth revealed they use social medial to promote democracy by advocating for social equality in public domains, and this includes taking part in the current affairs and debates on Facebook. These views are in line with Chakrabart (2018) who explained that social media is making it easier for people to have a voice in government to discuss issues, organise around causes and hold leaders accountable and Corrales, 2015; Long, 2018; UNESCO, 2018) who equally agree that in democratic societies, social media is related to incremental effects on political engagement expressed in actions such as voting, joining in a social movement and taking part in offline protests

5.4.3 Youth use social media as an expression platform

The results of the study revealed that youth participants prefer to use social media to express their views and opinions instead of addressing relevant authorities. The reasons for this preference include fear of prosecution as social media creates a safe haven to reach out to authorities, and the fact that social media helps the users to reach a wider audience. Literature supports these reasons as it is noted that social media has allegedly become the most powerful tool to steer media and public relations (Lee & McGovern, 2013; Goldsmith, 2015). Additionally, through the use of digital technologies, citizens can more easily express their opinions and thus counter the views of the more powerful intermediaries (Dahlgren, 2009).

Facebook has the ability to reach a large audience and increase visibility for major issues affecting community members.

5.4.4 Youth reluctance to participate in the mainstream public sphere

The youth in this study put forth reasons why they are reluctant to participate in the mainstream public sphere rather than social media. The reasons are that mainstream media has been monopolised and is controlled by the Government to limit freedom of expression and accessibility to the youth. Thus, posting on social media gives them a feeling of comfort. Secondly, the youth do not have enough confidence to participate in the mainstream media. It seems that social media is mainly appealing to young people compared to radio newspapers and television.

The results above are supported in the study conducted by Shihomeka (2019). The author explains that “Some young people also consider that public meetings summoned by councillors are for politicians only and even more specifically, for ruling party members. Furthermore, the works of Shihomeka (2019) as well as Bennett (2008) notes that television and radio seem less interactive, more moderated, and more top-down compared to those pertaining to dating, friends, games, music, and video-sharing, suggesting that the level of informality and grassroots initiative, i.e., "a sense of ownership" and "individual expression," are important. Thus, social media sites like Facebook enable youth to access information about relevant organisations, and how to act effectively towards on a certain activity to impact and influence change int the community. Moreover, as a “public space,” social media is not used solely to disseminate information about movement tactics or actions, but it also plays a role in shaping the very discourse on issues that social movements raise (Carney, 2016).

5.5 WHY GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONSIDER USING SOCIAL MEDIA AS A PLATFORM TO ENGAGE THE YOUTH IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND DEMOCRACY.

5.5.1 A tool to sensitize the local authorities on service delivery and a platform to issues affecting the youth,

The results of this study show a variety of roles of social media in civic engagement and democracy among the youth in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia. These are about the role of sensitising local authorities of their dissatisfaction in relation to service delivery. Second is the role pertaining to the friendliness of the platform that can be used to discuss issues that affects the youth. Another role concerns freedom of speech and expression, the need to voice opinions and influence any lack of service delivery in their community. This view is supported by Alonso and Lippez-De Castro (2016) who stated that social media promotes inclusive and equitable governance model where multiple actors are involved. Social media promotes inclusion of all the people and communities who are interacting, collaborating, and deliberating on public affairs. Therefore, the means of young people to use social media promotes democracy as they feel that using social media serves as an inclusive tool for their leaders to include them in any public domain engagement and which is convenient and effective for them.

5.5.2 Government consideration to use social media as an engagement tool.

The research reveals why the Government should consider using social media as a platform to engage the youth in civic engagement and democracy. Firstly, social media promotes civic engagement through social dialogue, not just be between government institutions, and elected government officials but with the public especially the youth that use Facebook. Studies by Shihomeka (2019); Immanuel (2014) explain that some policy-makers believe that social media can be used by the government as social platforms to engage citizens, especially young people on state programs. Equally, social media promotes an inclusive public debate and discussion of

issues that affect respective communities such as unemployment, gender-based violence, teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse and influencing youth.

Additionally, social media promotes public law and policy. It is explained that once a policy or law is enacted, all leaders should have access and use social media, especially Facebook, to engage community members. This would enhance democracy, and the youth would be able to express themselves openly without fear of intimidation by their leaders. According to Newman, et al. (2018), intimidation will lead some to take a less active part in online public life than they would otherwise want to, a dynamic only further compounded in political contexts where people may feel reluctant to discuss news openly or share their political views for fear of social or other repercussions or where some political leaders amplify and encourage various forms of harassment. In a study by Shihomeka (2019), one of the councillors he interviewed explained the following:

> "*I have realised that most of the youth are always on Facebook, so we created a page with the name of our constituency, so whenever I have something, that's where I post the information and we are always interacting with each other*" (Shihomeka, 2019, p.120).

This finding seems to show that social media is a platform to engage the youth in civic engagement and democracy.

5.5.3 Youth Expression of offensive expression towards leaders on social media

The youth provided diverging perspectives on why the youth express insulting expressions to their leaders citing specific names on social media. Insults are hurled because leaders fail to address the needs of the youth. In addition, the youth also cited socioeconomic factors, frustration, high unemployment rates, and lack of service delivery among the youth as some of the factors the influence them to hurl insult towards leaders. This position is partly consistent with Ndeitunga stated that "the president of the country is allowed to be criticised if he is not doing well on what the majority of the country expect of him to do. However, Ndeitunga does not condone insults because he stated that leaders do not deserve to be insulted and ridiculed

New Era (2020,). Ndeitunga further posited that criticism is allowed, especially if there is no performance because that is the duty of leaders, but respect should be accorded because all people are entitled to basic human rights and freedoms (New Era 2020, p.1).

It seems that some youth have different views on the matter of using insults on social media. The publicly held view is that such youth who hurl insults at leader's lack in moral values and have challenges related to discipline. Moreover, it was also explained that insulting leaders is a violation of the Namibia Constitution and or a threat to democracy as well as freedom of speech of expression. Moreover, Chief Immanuel /Gaseb the Acting Chierporson of the Council of Traditional Leaders of Namibia also commented on the misuse of social media by referring to the recent case of young businessman Michael Amushelelo who widely circulated a video on social media in which he referred to Dr. Hage Geingob, the president of Namibia, as a "dog" (New Era, 2020).

5. 6 IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE IN THE COMMUNITY

With regard to the impact that the use of social media has had on the community in Omaruru Constituency, the youth expressed diverging perspectives. Some youth lack surety on the impact that social media has had on the community of Omaruru Constituency. This contradicts publication by Valenzuela, Correa, Gil de and Zúñiga, (2018); the report from the World Bank (2017). These publications express that "social media can be effective in generating sudden spikes of protests and in coordinating uprising, but they alone cannot yield sustained representation of interests and promote social change". However, some indicated that the use of social media had indeed made a tangible impact. This includes, being used as a marketing tool to market or sell products, a platform to invite community members for public meetings,

community policing as well as serving as a tool to influence community members to undertake civic action like voting and taking part in the community affairs like volunteering. Paridon and Carraher, (2009) concur as the authors explain that social media is a cost-effective method for marketing activities. Moreover, Valenzuela, Correa, Gil de and Zúñiga, (2018, p.72) suggested that "Facebook and Twitter are conducive to protest behaviour through two distinct mechanisms: whereas the influence of Facebook use is more effective through communication with strong-tie networks".

5.7 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the findings of the data presented pertaining to the influence of social media for civic engagement in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia. The chapter has outlined the influence of using social media for civic engagement in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia. It seems that social media is influential because the findings reveal that social media enables users to become active and collaborative participants rather than passive viewers online. However, it also includes engaging the youth with the same political views and to connect with friends globally, and in this way, create a digital village. Furthermore, the chapter discussed the topic of social media and democracy. It appears that social media is relevant to the notion of democracy because social media is a hub of democracy as it influences social change, and the youth use social media to promote healthy and public participation that influences good governance which is the centre of democracy. Moreover, social media is used to promote democracy by posting and provoking discussions that concern the youth. Finally, the chapter set out motivation as to why the Government should consider using social media as a platform to engage the youth in civic engagement and democracy. These motivations include the fact that social media can be used by the Government as a social platform to engage citizens, especially

young people on State programs. In addition, it creates an inclusive public debate and discussion on issues that affect respective communities. Issues that can be addressed through a social dialogue include unemployment, GBV, teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the data pertaining to the influence of social media for civic engagement in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia. The purpose of this chapter is to summarise the findings of the study and to provide recommendations and directions for further studies. The summary of the findings reflects on the research questions.

6.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study revealed that social media is influential in the domain of civic engagement because it is a cheap mode of communication which enables the youth to participate in online communication. Equally, the youth use social media to express their opinions at a given time. In addition, the youth use social media to engage and connect with friends globally, and in this way, create a digital village. Social media is relevant to the notion of democracy as it influences social change and promotes healthy and public participation that influences good governance which is the centre of democracy. Moreover, social media is used to promote democracy by posting and provoking discussions that concern the youth.

The study also revealed the significance of social media in relation to why it can be used by the Government as a social platform to engage citizens, especially young people on State programs. Significant reasons include creation of an inclusive public debate and discussion of issues that affect respective communities such as unemployment, GBV, teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse.

In addition, that land availability; youth empowerment; gender-based violence; unemployment; high crime rates; entertainment; retail business; real estates; equality and a just society are issues or ideas that strongly draw the attention of the youth on social media. The youth employ the strategies of captioning and tagging the right audience to these issues, while other target their followers. However, the various challenges of using social media for civic engagement include lack of data to access the internet, personal attacks and messages, improper language, ignorance of main issues, lack of understanding, lack of feedback from relevant authorities and lack of access to social media platforms.

It appears from the results that youth participants hold ambivalent views on the notion of being subjected to the rule of law or intimidation as a result of participation in social media platforms. Some believe that freedom of association and freedoms of expression prevail in Namibia. However, other youth believe that the youth should be held accountable for their comments on social media as this would teach them ethics of social media use for civic engagement. It seems that some are of the view that it is morally wrong to incite violence, insult leaders, and those doing so should held accountable for their comments. Thus, social media education should be provided to teach the youth about the ethics of using social media. It seems that some youth have different views on the matter of insults using social media. The publicly held view is that youth who hurl insults at the leaders lack moral values and have related to discipline. Moreover, it was also explained that insulting leaders is a violation of the Namibia Constitution and a threat to democracy as well as freedom of expression.

The results of the study reveals that youth participants prefer to use social media to express their views and opinions instead of addressing relevant authorities. The reasons for this preference

include fear of prosecution as social media creates a safe haven to reach out to authorities, and social media helps users to reach a wider audience. Moreover, mainstream media has been monopolised and is controlled by the Government to limit freedom of expression and accessibility to the youth. The youth seem to urge the Government to consider using social media as a platform to engage them in civic engagement and democracy because social media promotes civic engagement through social dialogue, not just be between government institutions, and elected government officials but with the public especially the youth that use Facebook.

The youth have diverging perspectives with regard to the impact that the use of social media has had on their community in Omaruru Constituency. Some youth believe that the use of social media had indeed made a tangible impact in marketing and inviting community members for public meetings, community policing as well as serving as a tool to influence community members to undertake any civic action like voting and taking part in the community affairs like volunteering. However, some youth are not sure as to whether social media has an impact on the community of Omaruru Constituency.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations are made. The recommendations are directed to the Namibian Government, the youth and community groups.

6.3.1 Recommendation to the Namibian Government

- The Government of Namibia must develop a law or policy to ensure that all elected leaders use social media especially Facebook to engage community members. This would enhance democracy, and the youth would be able to express themselves openly without fear of intimidation. While doing so, it should also initiate digital education and social media campaigns for young people to be aware of social media ethics and code of conduct.

- The office of the Ombudsman together with Ministry of Information, Communication and Technology should embark on a social media literacy or digital literacy campaign through print and visual media and public meetings.. This initiative would raise awareness among youth by informing them about their rights and encouraging them to report social media bullying and to reframe use of vulgar language among the leaders by insulting and ridicule them on Facebook.
- There is a need for the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture to revisit its curriculum and incorporate information media literacy as a school subject to address the issues of social media literacy.
- For the Ministry of Sports, Youth and National Service, there is a need to incorporate social media literacy as a civic education subject in its curriculum during the training of the youth in the National Youth Service.
- The Namibian Government needs to find ways to maintain law and order in relation to the use of social media, particularly Facebook, in Namibia instead of restricting and controlling its use by the members of the public. This should include promoting the flow of information smoothly, enacting laws and introducing policies that discourage the posting of harmful language, inciting violence, insulting and ridiculing leaders on social media.
- There is a need for the law makers to ensure that any proposed bill to regulate social media and control will not infringe on citizens ‟ rights to freedom of speech and expression”.
- The study further recommends that government ministries and agencies, local authorities or municipalities should invest in technology to be able to use social media as a tool to

provide feedback to community members and clients for the purpose of enhancing service delivery.

6.3.2 Recommendation to the youth

- The youth should consider using other platforms e.g. creating WhatsApp groups or creating pressure groups to reach out to the right audience instead of relying only on social media especially Facebook to reach out the right audience. This is necessary in case some relevant authorities or institutions may not have an official Facebook page through which they could engage them.

- The youth, in particular, need to embrace social media as a tool to spark and initiate a civic action in their communities and for learning rather than just entertainment and disseminating potentially untruthful information as well as inciting violence, and they should be aware of the legal consequences of insulting leaders online.
- The youth should be aware of their audience and be respectful and sensitive about the content they share and create on Facebook when engaging others or expressing views and opinions.
- Once the Government or relevant stakeholders initiate digital education or social media education campaigns are launched, young people should acquaint themselves with the established general code of conduct as outlined in initiated digital education and social media campaigns.

- This study recommends that the youth should refrain from using vulgar language when addressing their leaders as such practices go against the norms and culture of our society and is a violation of the Namibia Constitution and or a threat to democracy as well as freedom of expression.

6.3.3 Recommendation to the community

- There is a need to organise community outreach programs such as social media literacy aimed at sensitising communities especially the youth on the need for social engagement via social media, most specifically Facebook ethics.
- The community, through their elected political leaders, should help young people develop their interests and find other people who share the same interests. They can help introduce young people to new initiatives and ideas and deepen appreciation of existing community interests.
- There is a need for communities to initiate online community Facebook support groups with around-the-clock access and the ability to provide help in emergencies.
- Communities should create online Facebook community groups to reduce and fight crime; this would help in identifying suspects, identifying links between criminals or locating criminals by examining photos, posting pictures of stolen items, a crime scene and spreading information on missing people in the community.

6.4 DIRECTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study focused in one region in Namibia. A study can be conducted focusing on other regions in the country, and future research should examine and distinguish the causal relationship

between online and offline participation in the public discourse for civic engagement among the youth.

6.5 SUMMARY

This chapter summarised the findings, made recommendations and provided suggestions for further research. The chapter revealed that social media is influential in the domain of civic engagement as a cheap mode of communication for the youth to express their opinions at a given time. However, form the results, it appears that young participants hold ambivalent views on the notion of being subjected to the rule of law or intimidation as a result of participation in social media platforms. The study reveals that there are those who believe that freedom of association and freedoms of expression prevail in Namibia; hence, they indicated that they had never been subjected to the rule of law or intimidation for expressing their views and opinions on social media. Conversely, the study revealed that the youth should be held accountable for their comments as it is morally wrong to insult leaders, and it is a violation of the Namibia Constitution and a threat to democracy as well as freedom of expression. The study revealed some challenges of using social media for civic engagement.

In addition, the results revealed that there is a need for the Government to consider using social media as a platform to engage the youth in civic engagement and democracy because social media promotes civic engagement through social dialogue, not just be between government institutions, and elected government officials but with the public especially the youth that use Facebook. The chapter provided recommendations based on the results from a government, youth and community perspective. In terms of the Government, it is recommended that it must

develop a law or policy to ensure that all elected leaders use social media especially Facebook to engage the community members.

In terms of the youth, the youth should be aware and mindful of their audience and be respectful and sensitive about the content they share and create on Facebook when engaging others or expressing their views and opinions. In terms of the community, communities should create online Facebook community groups to reduce and fight crime, initiate social media literacy campaigns and create Facebook support groups with around-the-clock access and provide help during emergencies. Finally, the chapter presented suggestions for further research noting that future research should examine and distinguish the causal relationship between online and offline participation in public discourse for civic engagement among the youth.

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Appendix A
Ethical Clearance letter

UNAM
UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Ethical Clearance Reference Number: SoE-DEC100621/10 **Date: 11 June 2021**

This Ethical Clearance Certificate is issued by the University of Namibia Decentralised Research Ethics Committee (DEC) in accordance with the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Policy and Guidelines. Ethical approval is given in respect of undertakings contained in the Research Project outlined below. This Certificate is issued on the recommendations of the ethical evaluation done by the Faculty/Centre/Campus/Unit Research Ethics Committee.

Title of Project: THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND DEMOCRACY AMONG THE YOUTH IN THE OMARURU CONSTITUENCY OF NAMIBIA

Nature/Level of Project: Master

Researcher: PETRUS S. SHOOPALA

Student Number: 200918681

Faculty: EDUCATION & HMAN SCIENCES
School: EDUCATION

Take note of the following:
(a) Any significant changes in the conditions or undertakings outlined in the approved Proposal must be communicated to the DEC. An application to make amendments may be necessary.
(b) Any breaches of ethical undertakings or practices that have an impact on ethical conduct of the research must be reported to the DEC.
(c) The Principal Researcher must report issues of ethical compliance to the DEC (through the Chairperson of the Faculty/Centre/Campus/Unit Research Ethics Committee) at the end of the Project or as may be requested by DEC.
(d) Approval is valid for a period of one year from the date of issue.
(e) A mid-year report to be submitted to DEC (where applicable).
(f) The DEC retains the right to:
  (i) Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance if any unethical practices (as outlined in the Research Ethics Policy) have been detected or suspected,
  (ii) Request for an ethical compliance report at any point during the course of the research.

DEC wishes you the best in your research.

.....
Dr Helena Miranda
SoE-DEC Chairperson

UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA
PO BOX 88, RUNDU
TEL: 066 268 6000 FAX: 066 255 564
2021 -06- 11
DIRECTOR
RUNDU CAMPUS

Appendix B

Permission to student to contact research

Erongo Regional Council
Omaruru Constituency

Tel: +264 (0)64 571240
Fax: +264(0)64 571260
PO Box 479
Omaruru

Enquiries : A Kephas

23rd June 2021

Mr. Petrus S. Shoopala
Private Bag 2166
Okahandja

Dear Mr. Shoopala,

Re: Request for permission to contact research and collect data on the Youth of Omaruru.

Your later dated 15th June 2021 has reference,

It is our pleasure to inform you that you are most greatly welcome to came and conduct, your research and colleting of data on the youth of our town.

My office will assist you where it can. For any queries please don't hesitate to communicate with my office.

Yours Sincerely,

.....
Hon. E. M. Wetha
Constituency Councillor

Appendix C

Permission to student to contact research

NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF NAMIBIA (NYC)
Telephone: +264 - 61 - 248218/9 Postal Address: P. O. Box 60956, Katutura, Namibia Website: http://www.nyc.org.na E-mail: mshangula@nyc.org.na Physical Address: 36 Pasteur Street, Windhoek West

"Youth growing with the Nation"

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON

15 July 2021

Petrus Shoopala
Education Officer
Otjozondupa Regional Council
Directorate of Education, Arts and Culture

Dear Mr Shoopala,

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AND COLLECT DATA ON THE YOUTH OF OMARURU CONSTITUENCY

This letter serves that the National Youth Council as the custodian and coordinating body of the youth established in terms of Act no. 03 of 2009, hereby grants permission for the conduct of your research.

We hereby acknowledge and support this research and collection of data on the youth of the Omaruru Constituency, with a special focus on "**The influence of Social Media on Civic Engagement and Democracy among the youth in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia**".

We hope this research will yield positive outcome for academia, and will bring the clarity sought to understand the usage of social media amongst the youth, and the impact it has on civic engagement and democracy.

Wishing you the very best in this endeavour.

Yours in Youth Development,

Sharonice Busch
Executive Chairperson

Appendix D

Research questionnaires

Section 1

Social media and civic engagement

1. What influenced you to use social media for civic engagement?

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   ……
   ……
   ……

2. Which Facebook group do you belong to that is involved in political or social issues, or working to advance a cause in your community?

   ……
   ……
   ……
   ……

3. What action or work did that group initiated in your community?
   ……
   ……
   ……
   ……

4. Which issues or ideas strongly draw your attention on social media?
   ……
   ……
   ……
   ……

5. What will you do to make sure that your comments are directed to the right audience when you post them on social media?
   ……
   ……
   ……
   ……

6. What challenges do you encounter when using social media for civic engagement?
   ……
   ……
   ……
   ……

Section 2
Social media and democracy

1. What is your opinion on the youth that have been subjected to any rule of law or intimidation after they expressed their views or opinions regarding the Government on social media?
   ……
   ……
   ……
   ……

2. How do you promote democracy by using social media?
   ……
   ……
   ……
   ……

3. Why do u prefer to use social media to express your views and opinions instead of addressing them to the relevant authorities?

   ……
   ……
   ……
   ……

4. Why are the youth so reluctant to participate in mainstream public sphere via long-established instruments of public deliberation such as radio, newspapers and TV, rather than social media?
   ……
   ……
   ……
   ……

5. What is your view on the Government's strict control the use of social media in Namibia?
   ……
   ……
   ……
   ……

Thank you very much for taking time to fill out this questionnaire.

Appendix E

Focus group guide

Instrument title: Focus group discussion guide

Open-ended questions:

1. What should the role of social media be in civic engagement and democracy among the youth in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia?

2. Why should the Government consider using social media as a platform to engage the youth in civic engagement and democracy?

3. Why do the youth advance insulting expressions to leaders they have elected in power and tarnish their (leaders') names on social media?

4. What impact has the use of social media had towards your community in Omaruru Constituency?

Thank you very much for your participation.

Appendix F

Informed Consent Form

Informed consent form

Title: The influence of social media on civic engagement and democracy among the youth in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia.

The purpose of this study is to study the influence of social media on civic engagement and democracy among the youth in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia.

You will be asked questions about the influence of social media on civic engagement and democracy among the youth in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia. Your response will be recorded to ensure that the study's findings adequately reflect your views; your participation is voluntary, and all the information will be treated confidentially, and no discomfort, stress or risks are anticipated.

Before you take part in the research, kindly pledge that:

I voluntarily agree to participate in the study titled "The influence of social media on civic engagement and democracy among the youth in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia" conducted by Mr. Petrus Shoopala, Student No: 200918681, Contact No: +264 81 3454280, Email shoopalapetus@gmail.com, from the Department of Life Long Learning and Community Education, University of Namibia.

I have read and understood the information about the study, as provided to me, and I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of this participation although I have signed this consent form. The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained to me, and my name and information will not be linked to me on this data. I have understood the use of the data in research; publications, sharing and archiving have been explained to me.

Participant:

_____ _____
Signature Date

Researcher:

_____ _____ _____
Name of Researcher Signature Date

Appendix G

Permission from the student to conduct research

Email: shoopalapetrus@gmail.com

15 June 2021

Hon. Erenst Wetha
Regional Councillor
Omaruru Constituency Office
P.O. Box 476
Omaruru

Dear: Hon. Wetha

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONTACT MY RESEARCH AND COLLECT DATA ON THE YOUTH OF OMARURU CONSTITUENCY

The above subject matter refers.

I, Petrus S Shoopala, a registered student at the University of Namibia, student No: 200918681, currently pursuing my studies for a Masters of Education (M. Ed), I have completed my course work and I am currently busy with my Thesis. I am intending to do a study with special focus on the youth within Omaruru Constituency and the reassert title is as follow: **The influence of Social Media on Civic Engagement and Democracy among the youth in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia.**

Given the fact that your esteemed institution is the main stakeholder from which the young people reside, and the fact that my sampling population is the youth of Omaruru Constituency. On the other hand, among those youth that will be selected for data collection purpose will be those that reside in Omaruru Constituency only.

This study will target 50 youth and it is purely for academic purpose and it is tailored to provide clarity and understating on the use of social media among the youth, and the influence it has on civic engagement and democracy.

All participants will be informed and reassured of confidentiality and that they are at liberty to withdraw from the research at any time and an informed consent will be obtained from the participants, to be granted permission to record the participants. All participants will sign consent forms which provided details about the research and will be informed not to write their names or contact details on the questionnaires.

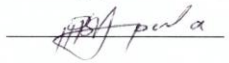
The Ethical Clarence certificate issued by the University of Namibia's Ethical Clearance Committee is here to attached for ease of reference perusal.

P/Bag 2166 Okahandja
+264 81 3454280
Email: shoopalapetrus@gmail.com

Therefore, it is under this background that I am requesting for permission to conduct my research on the youth of Omaruru Constituency.

Please accept Hon. Wetha, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Faithfully yours



Mr. Petrus Shoopala
+264 81 3454280

Appendix H

Permission from the student to conduct research

P/Bag 2166 Okahandja
+264 81 3454280
Email: shoopalapetrus@gmail.com

15 June 2021

Ms. Sharonice Busch
Executive Chairperson
National Youth Council
P.O. Box 60956
Katutura

Dear Ms. Busch

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONTACT MY RESEARCH AND COLLECT DATA ON THE YOUTH OF OMARURU CONSTITUENCY

The above subject matter refers.

I, Petrus S Shoopala a registered student at the University of Namibia, student No: 200918681, currently pursuing my studies for a Masters of Education (M. Ed), I have completed my course work and I am currently busy with my Thesis. I am intending to do a study with special focus on the youth within Omaruru Constituency and the reassert title is as follow: **The influence of Social Media on Civic Engagement and Democracy among the youth in the Omaruru Constituency of Namibia.**

Given the fact that National Youth Council is the custodian of young people from the age of 15-35 in Namibia, and the fact that my sampling population are the youth of Omaruru Constituency. On the other hand, among those youth that will be selected for data collection purpose will be those from affiliate and none affiliated organizations, so that it can have an equal representation from the population of young people in Omaruru Constituency.

This study will target 50 youth and it is purely for academic purpose and it is tailored to provide clarity and understating on the use of social media among the youth, and the influence it has on civic engagement and democracy.

All participants will be informed and reassured of confidentiality and that they are at liberty to withdraw from the research at any time and an informed consent will be obtained from the participants, to be granted permission to record the participants. All participants will sign consent forms which provided details about the research and will be informed not to write their names or contact details on the questionnaires.

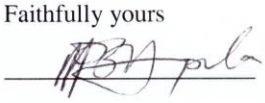
The Ethical Clarence certificate issued by the University of Namibia's Ethical Clearance Committee is here to attached for ease of reference perusal.

P/Bag 2166 Okahandja
+264 81 3454280
Email: shoopalapetrus@gmail.com

Therefore, it is under this background that I am requesting for permission to conduct my research on the youth of Omaruru Constituency.

Please accept Ms. Busch, the assurances of my highest consideration

Faithfully yours



Mr. Petrus Shoopala
+264 81 3454280

Appendix I

Language editing testimonial

8 August 2022

To whom it may concern

Language Editing – Petrus S. Shoopala

This letter serves to confirm that a **MASTER OF EDUCATION (ADULT EDUCATION)** thesis entitled *THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND DEMOCRACY AMONG THE YOUTH IN THE OMARURU CONSTITUENCY OF NAMIBIA* by **Petrus S. Shoopala** was submitted to me for language editing.

The thesis was professionally edited and track changes and suggestions were made in the document. The research content or the author's intentions were not altered during the editing process and the author has the authority to accept or reject my suggestions.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Selma Ashikuti
PhD in Education (Language Policy and Planning)
M.A. in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)
B.A. in English and French