

**THE ROLE OF OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN
POLITICAL GOVERNANCE: A CASE STUDY OF AFRICA UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS**

BY

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to find out whether participatory governance can be reflected through social media. This was established through gauging whether a given set of participatory governance principles are replicated in social media. Social media has been used by many users across the world but has not been adequately explored in terms of how it contributes to enhancing participatory governance in a country. The study was informed by Media Theory and Citizen Participation Theory. The Media Theory reveals how the media is supposed to play a role in democratizing society whilst the citizen participation theory shows the duties and contribution of citizens to societal development. These combined theories provided a comprehensive framework to assess the contribution of social media by specifically looking at the ability to allow citizens to contribute ideas, ability to engage leaders in deliberations and ability to influence policy. It was found out that many students feel that in spite of citizens using social media to contribute to governance, leaders do not take heed of contributions that are made online and that states are often repressive of vocal personalities online. To this effect, many students opt to use pseudonyms and do not give real personal details when contributing to issues of corruption, human rights and elections. The study revealed that there is a need for states to incorporate social media as a means of gauging public opinion on issues of national interest so that citizens' support decisions that are made. The researcher then recommended a social media strategy that will see social media being incorporated in basic service delivery as a means of engaging citizens and this can be developed by states working with civil society and governance stakeholders such as the private sector.

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Dedication

This research is dedicated to the entire Macheka family.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

DSTV	-	Digital Satellite Television
GNU	-	Government of National Unity
IMF	-	International Monetary Fund
IPLG	-	Institute of Peace, Leadership and Governance
MDC	-	Movement for Democratic Change
NANGO	-	National Association of Non-governmental Organizations
SAPs	-	Structural Adjustment Programmes
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
WB	-	World Bank
ZANUPF	-	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZBC	-	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.0 Introduction to study

Although social media has been used to mobilize support against autocratic leadership that has led to the ouster of autocratic regimes in Tunisia and Egypt, it is still not clear how social media fits into participatory governance. The Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak regimes in Tunisia and Egypt respectively were toppled by citizen protests that were spread and supported by social media users in both countries (Boyd, 2011). Social media was used to advance causes that were common amongst a large group of citizens in urban largely areas. The grievances that citizens had and continue to have are repression of media, unemployment and undemocratic government (Gustin, 2011).

In dealing with the grievances mentioned above, citizens have helped usher in a new political dispensation through social media. This new political dispensation is in terms of the ability of citizens to directly influence the political landscape without a key political figure leading them as reflected in social movements. “Social movements are an association of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and or organizations engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities” (Diani, 1992,p1). Significant as they may be, social movements are not the only element that has been promoted by the Internet and social media.

Beyond the social movements, online lobbying and advocacy have been intensified by social media. Hussain and Howard (2011) note that Tunisian blogs were full of discussions and petitions for better governance but the ruling regime suppressed

voices and repressed any moves to improve the situation by citizens. In this case, there was the interplay of social media and citizen contributions but it is not plain how social media contributes to participatory governance. In Kenya, politicians are now battling through their manifestos on social media platforms and this has seen political leaders looking to engage more citizens online (Nabiswa, 2013). Social media in Kenya, Tunisia and Egypt is being used by different groups for different purposes and ends.

In Ghana, internet discussion forums were monitored between November 1999 and March 2000 as the government tried to weed out discussions on the conduct of politics, legislation and the economy (Ndegwa, 2001). It is possible that the Ghana government realized the potential of social media in shifting the balance of power and decided to move in quickly to avoid being ousted. Africa has had studies on participation through cell phones in West Africa. Cape Verde made a huge use of cell phones in its 2008 elections as seen through politicians who used online portals to discuss policies with citizenry and to deliberate on prospective projects (Senghor and Moleketi, 2011). Ivory Coast has the www.Abidjan.net site that helps with providing information to the diaspora and acts as a platform for the diaspora to communicate with the local governance system back home. This site is unique as it provides an opportunity to participate in electronic surveys as well as electronic petitions whilst its wider approach to citizen participation is through information dissemination, awareness raising, consultation, questioning and dialogue between citizens and service providers (Senghor and Moleketi, 2011).

From the continental experiences of social media it is clear that social media is now being used for different purposes by different groups but the contribution of social media in participatory governance is still not clear. The Kenyan, Cape Verde and Arab Spring cases presented above reveal uncoordinated efforts and use by different groups which raises the question on how exactly social media fits into political governance participation. However, it is important to understand the media and governance background in Africa as these factors have a bearing on social media and form the basis of the researcher's study.

1.1 Background to Media and Governance

1.1.1 Governance

The African state of governance is an outcome of several interrelated factors from both inside and outside Africa. Jacobs and Calland (2002) posit that the African state has adopted an incoherent system of governance that has harnessed the worst aspects of Western governance and the heinous elements of traditional African authority. The gross violations of human rights across the continent buttress this view as freedoms are not respected and human rights activists are generally abused (Davenport, 2007).

As human rights violations intensified through the 1960 and 1970s, one party state was imposed (Davenport, 2007). By the mid 1980s only 5 out of the 49 independent African states were multi-party democracies (Wanyande in Oyugi and Gitunga 1987). One party state limited and restricted dissenting voices and criticism of the incumbents. Opposition parties that could bring in alternative ideas to the governance discourse were outlawed (Mutua, 2000).

Soon after these one party states were imposed, the focus was shifted to economic development. The Structural Adjustment Programmes by The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund that were adopted by many African governments in the early 1990s impacted African society (Bunwaree and Heward, 1999). In a bid to develop economically, African states opened up their economies and liberalized trade (Tsie, 1996). There was also a move to open up political systems under the supervision of the IMF and World Bank (Tsikata, 1995; Shah, 2013). All these developments impacted governance as the idea was that the media and private sector should be left to operate liberally then development would eventually follow (Baron, 1997).

The effects of the economic and political developments from structural adjustments mentioned above as well as the one party state led to alienation of the citizenry and set state and citizens on a collision path (Ribot and Oyon as quoted in Zeleza 2006). As time progressed, the African governance landscape was restructured to protect and maintain the status quo of unrestricted elite rule by a select group of leaders that had both economic and political leverage (Mazrui, 1995). This group of leaders managed to restructure various instruments of the state such as the army, judiciary and media through an intricate patron-client relationship (Pitcher et al., 2009; Eisenstadt, 1984). This elaborate patron-client relationship created an elite governing core and governed periphery that could do little to influence policy and decisions (Berman, 1998). The ruling centre which consisted of an elite group of leaders that used political influence for economic mileage dictated policy and determined the direction that the state took in terms of development and ideology (Adebayo, 2012).

This convoluted patron client relationship limited citizens from participating and making decisions that affected society (Hyden, 2006). The elite core that governed had and still has managed to maintain domination through instilling an ideology through the media which is a dominating idea that came from Gramsci (1916).

1.1.2 Media

Due to massive formal and informal restrictions, African media can no longer open up the public sphere that is supposed to be a meeting point between governing institutions and citizens to discuss policy and governance (Hainsworth, 2011). The democratic role the media is supposed to play has been limited through draconian legislation and restructuring of media companies across most countries. As the media has become limited, citizens can no longer contribute their ideas and criticism through it.

The state controls the media as mentioned above but it needs to be understood why. Hallin and Mancini (2004) put forward that governments are now interested in controlling the media because the media has the power to transform political systems if left unattended. To protect themselves, African governments now make sure that the media does not function at its optimum ability through restrictive legislation and violence (Tettey, 2001). Italian philosopher Gramsci put across the idea that the state cannot impose control over any particular class unless more logical or rational methods are used (Hainsworth, 2011). His idea was that the state is coercion combined with hegemony and his definition of hegemony was political power from intellectual and moral leadership. Simply put, the media and other elements of society like church and schools were supposed to create political consensus through

instilling a set ideology in the general population. This domination seeks to explain how and why African governments wish to control the media (Gramsci 1916 translated by Abidor, 2008).

In the researcher's study, the above idea of state control over media was propagated by African states that had been supported by marxist states during the liberation struggle. Altheide (1984) argues that the hegemony through media ideology is determined by the same class who rule politically and determine the system of development in a state. The news that comes through the media is determined by a small group of elite rulers who propagate a message that keeps citizens subdued (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1994). This was the basic make-up of the independent African state soon after independence. The idea that citizens should be taught on what to think and how to think was the basis of state monopoly after independence. Alternative ideology that came through opposition parties was quelled through one party state imposition and violence (Animashaun, 2009). All the above factors reveal that the media is important to African states because it can be used to control the minds of the masses.

A research conducted on ownership of media in Africa, Europe and the Middle East shows that media control is higher in poorer countries, autocratic regimes and countries where there are higher rates of state control on the economy (Djankov *et al.*, 2001). States seek to control the media so as to ensure dissenting voices are repressed and that they continue ruling. Therefore, many African countries have repressive laws that hinder the media from fulfilling its functional role in a

democracy which include acting as watchdog over the government, informing the public about common issues and creating a platform for debate (Curran and Gurevitch, 1996).

Uganda has its Press and Journalist Amendment Bill from 2010 which can see journalists licenses revoked when they give anti-government reporting (Balancing Act, 2010). The late Malawian president Mutharika passed Section 64 of the Penal Code Amendment Bill of 1999 which prohibited journalists from criticizing government officials or revealing state secrets (Lee, 2012). Revealing state secrets might damage a country but these laws are now used to repress dissenting voice from civil society or ordinary citizens. As the trend continues, these laws are now used to violate citizen's freedom of speech and association. These laws are in most African states and have closed down the media as an avenue for participation.

1.1.3 The Zimbabwean Context

Frere (2012) in a media study by Open Society Foundations conducted on central African countries notes that there is a gap between theory and practice when it comes to the media. Although constitutions allow freedom of speech, journalists are still harassed by states and their agents when they criticize politicians. This trend is prevalent in Southern Africa and Zimbabwe as a country has the same breach between what the ideal is and what the practice is.

The gap between what is ideal and what is practiced has led citizens to find alternative sources of information. A mobile and telecoms landscape guide in 2011 noted that 47% of Zimbabwean urban dwellers watch DSTV (Powell, 2011). The prevalence of this phenomenon is due to the frustrations that Zimbabweans have with the state controlled radio and television, which beyond propagating a Zanu PF

agenda, does not offer anything worthwhile in terms of entertainment either (Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009).

State response to citizens seeking alternative sources of information and expression has been immediate in some areas and gradual in other regions. As Zimbabwe gained independence and the Zanu PF government began its rule, there was a restructuring of media boards and personnel through the Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust that took over the national broadcaster (Ronning and Kupe, 2000).

After this restructuring era came the attempt to deal with threats to power through the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act as well as the Public Order and Security Act of 2002. The Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Public Order and Security Act of 2002 both restrict the media and citizens (Article 19 and MISA, 2004). Citizens are restricted from freely meeting and discussing common governance topics as these may be seen as a threat to national security (Loewenstern and Moyo, 2003).

On failure of these laws to effectively deal with dissenting voices in the media, harassment and abductions were propped up. Harassment and abductions of journalists have been intensified since 2000 whilst bombings of independent press such as the Daily News in 2000 and Voice of the People in 2002 remain a mystery (Article 19 and MISA, 2004). Non violent boycotts and peace marches have been dealt with harshly by the police in urban areas across the country (Solidarity Peace Trust, 2004). These state responses to active citizen participation have narrowed the playing field for citizens.

Despite restrictions from the state, the media has made significant contributions to governance. Chavhunduka as quoted in Islam (2002) notes that the alarming spread of AIDS in the 1980s, government corruption and looting of DRC diamonds by some Zimbabwean army commanders in the 1990s were all revealed by the media. These issues later had severe implications on governance, the economy and citizen's social lives. However, Chuma (2005) warns that it is utter folly to conclude that the independent press in Zimbabwe has provided the public sphere and discussion platforms that are expected in a democracy as the independent press has also been radical as seen in support of its own political and economic elite. This revelation meant that citizens were left with no voice as the state and private press were representing political elites in a battle for citizen's minds.

In spite of all the mentioned restrictions through intimidation, restrictive laws like AIPPA and POSA, citizens still find a way to manoeuvre and informally participate in governance through emerging platforms. Technological advancement and the spread of Internet usage through Internet enabled cellular phones and Internet cafe shops where people can access the Internet for a fee have provided citizens an opportunity to contribute to political governance discussions through social media. A general analysis of online newspaper article commentaries and social media commentaries shows that there are a lot of discussions online. However, the contribution of social media in political governance is still not well elaborated.

1.1.4 Africa University

Located 17 kilometres north of Mutare, Africa University is a Pan African institution and houses students from over 25 different African countries. The proclamation to

establish the university was given by the President of Zimbabwe, Robert Gabriel Mugabe in 1992(Africa University, 2009). The university is a United Methodist related institution and its establishment was widely facilitated by the Methodist church. The university then started with two faculties in 1992 but has since grown to have 6 faculties and the Institute of Peace, Leadership and Governance. The 6 faculties are the faculties of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, Management and Administration, Health Sciences, Theology as well as Agriculture and Natural Resources (Africa University, 2009).

The university provides internet access to its students through network cables and wireless connections. Registered students are given an identification number which they use to access the Internet through their personal computers or Internet laboratory or library laboratory. The researcher's study was done in the second semester of the 2012/2013 academic year and the Academic office gave the registered students at a figure of 1269. The university provides an online discussion platform for students to discuss constructive issues of their concern and initiation of discussion can be done by any registered student. This platform often discusses issues of democracy and African governance which hints at an interest in African governance issues by students. This is another reason why Africa University students were chosen for this study.

Africa University students were chosen for the study because of other reasons as well. The researcher made an assumption that a university would have the more technologically up to date users who are familiar with social media. An assumption

that was made is that students at Africa University would be more conversant with African governance issues as there is daily exposure to news and discussion through different faculties that make up the university. African students studying at Africa University were then selected to represent citizens in the study. Students are future contributors to economic development and voters in their countries thus they were an ideal group to study before they fully engage in full societal life upon graduation. The university was also chosen because there is the perception that youths which are the 15-35 age groups do not participate in governance and this research would go a long way in addressing this assumption. All in all, the wider assumption is that if university students are not aware of governance issues and what part they can play in them it will then be challenging to assume that less educated people with less exposure in African communities can know any better. These assumptions informed why Africa University would be a relevant case to analyze.

1.2 Research problem

In spite of social media being participatory because of its communal nature which allows people to contribute to public discussion on the Internet, the question on the contribution of social media to participatory governance still remains. Claims that the state has repressed methods of citizen participation such as voting and public discussions through harassment, surveillance, arrests and torture have created disillusionment of traditional citizen participation methods (Davenport, 2007). This research aims to examine the contribution of social media in participatory governance because it has been suggested that media and governance systems are interdependent (Curran and Gurevitch, 1996).

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were to

- To identify ways in which social media enhances citizen participation in political governance and encourage engagement between leaders and citizens.
- To examine the contribution of social media to debate on government decisions and whether social media is the preferred platform by citizens to engage on.

1.4 Research Questions

- In what ways does social media enhance citizen participation in political governance and encourage engagement between leaders and citizens?
- What is the contribution of social media to debate on government decisions and is social media the preferred platform by citizens to engage on?

1.5 Justification

This research benefits governance, peace building and democracy literature as it brings in a new lens to the discourse concerning citizen participation in governance. In essence, this research will touch on an aspect which is often at the heart of peace building and democratic discussion which is citizen participation. This research is also important for the Institute of Peace, Leadership and Governance because it brings modern technology into the governance discourse and this is important because this is a vibrant area in the modern era. Knowledge of this area is important in understanding the behaviour of citizens who now spend a lot of time online. This research is important for media houses as it will give them an evaluation report on

some of the services they offer such as online discussion forums via their online commentaries. This is important not only for programming purposes but for better governance of their services at large. Political parties can also benefit from this study as it will reveal the perceptions and feelings in a segment of the electorate. The sentiments and chain of thoughts here could be used to predict sways in political perceptions. This is a necessary ability that is needed in the political realms and this study speaks to this effect.

1.6 Limitations

A limitation faced in the research was in the literature on the subject under study. There is a gap in comprehensive literature on the social media phenomenon. However, this was countered by looking at the wider field of media studies which the theme of social media fits into. To this effect, the researcher made use of media theory and analyzed communication literature which are the basic themes behind the media. Delay of the approval letter to conduct the research from the Registrar's office was a constraint during the undertaking of the research. The researcher had to extend the data collection period so as not to compromise the quality of work. Although the research fulfilled its aims, a challenge was faced in the sampling procedure. A number of dynamics that affect the student population such as lack of a comprehensive list of student details list from the Academic affairs office meant that adjustments to sampling procedure had to be made. The researcher countered this challenge by accessing students through the faculties so as to gain an accurate representation of student sentiment and behaviour on social media platforms. Student leaders who had been invited by the Student Representative council to take part in the interviews did not all show up and this was a challenge as the researcher had

wanted to interview all student leaders on campus. In the absentee follow ups, the researcher learnt that they had pressing commitments as the period that the study was undertaken had major events such as University commemorations that they had to participate in. To counter this challenge, the researcher acquired the room numbers of the available leaders and arranged to meet them individually for the interviews.

1.7 Delimitations

Theoretically, this study was delimited to Media theory and Good governance theory. The media does not have a one size fits all theory thus to understand the dynamics in African media, the researcher used the Hypodermic needle perspective, Functionalist perspective and the Agenda setting perspective. To understand the governance aspect the Neoliberal perspective which speaks to good governance and participation was used in this study. Geographically, the study was limited to Africa University which is located in the Eastern province of Zimbabwe named Manicaland. The reason Africa University was chosen is because consistent social media user age groups which are the 18-24 and 24-34 are concentrated on the university campus because most Zimbabwean students start their degrees at 18 years of age (Mano, 2001). The most consistent social media users are found in the 18-34 age groups (Internet World Statistics, 2012; Alex Web Information, 2012). To access this group, the Africa University campus was a befitting target group. Africa University students were also strategically located because of the sensitive nature of the topic. The topic is sensitive because during the research period the constitutional referendum was held on 16 March and the topic under study would have faced possible resistance from suspected security agents who still approached the researcher during the study. At this critical juncture in Zimbabwe's political development, tensions are high and

access to citizens in urban areas would have been hard to do because the topic under study is deemed sensitive as it touches on governance. The study was also done from January to May of 2013 and reflections from the study came from sentiments that were prevailing at this period.

1.8 Definition of terms

Citizen Participation

Conge (1988) defines citizen participation as individual or group activities at countrywide or neighbourhood level that support or resist state systems, authorities as well as resolutions regarding the distribution of resources. Conge (1988) puts an emphasis on the idea that the actions can be verbal or written, violent or peaceful and could vary in intensity. Citizen participation includes deliberations on policy options with leaders, uncensored debate on laws before and after they are made, engagement with leaders and solidarity decision making (Mkandawire 2005, Adebayo 2012). Diamond (2008), adds derivatives which are freedom of opinion, discussion, speech, assembly, petition and the Internet.

Social media

Social media refers to web based services that allow users to create personal profiles and communicate with other users that they share commonalities with (Boyd and Ellison, 2008). These services are accessible via cell phone or computers that have the ability to go on the Internet. Examples of these applications are Facebook, Tweeter and YouTube.

1.9 Structure of the study

Chapter 1

This chapter gives the background of research, objectives and limitations of the study.

Chapter 2

This chapter reviews the themes of the study and studies that have been done around the topic. The indicators of citizen participation that will be used to explore the data solicited from the sample are also explored in this chapter.

Chapter 3

This chapter presents the methodology, sample and research design that the study will take.

Chapter 4

In this chapter, the data analysis and presentation are undertaken.

Chapter 5

Recommendations and conclusions of the research are presented in the final chapter of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to provide an understanding of the building blocks that make up the research and these are social media and the governance component. In order to achieve this, the media and governance landscape need to be understood and the use of media theory and governance theory respectively would aid in this. At the base of this study was the belief that Africa had its indigenous form of citizen participation which allowed citizens to meaningfully contribute to political governance such as the *Kgotla* in Namibia (Somolekae, 1998; Mamdani, 1996).

As colonialism came and introduced a new political governance structure, citizens were largely ignored and as Africa became independent, selective resuscitation of methods of political participation by independent but autocratic African governments was done (Mamdani, 1996). As African states settled into the global arena they adopted new political governance and development structures such as the Neoliberal approach and this spoke to issues of citizen participation (Hyden, 2006). Confusion in trying to keep traditional African structures that allow citizens to contribute whilst trying to please the global political arena by allowing its prescribed methods of political participation led to an even more autocratic governance regime which alienated citizenry. As African citizens tried to adapt to the double dealings of their rulers in trying to engage them, social media then emerged as a platform of mass participation and this is the platform that is explored in this chapter.

2.1 Media Theory

Print and non print media have a number of theories that try to explain how the media works and its effects on society (Curran and Gurevitch, 1996). The media does not have a one size fits all theory that explains the method and effect of media thus a combination of media theory was used to understand the media. The Functionalist perspective is strengthened by the Hypodermic needle perspective and the Agenda setting perspective and this hybrid model is used to understand how the media works in Africa.

2.1.1 Functionalist Perspective of the media

A Functionalist approach founder, Durkheim, explained the functionalist approach as an analytical approach that focuses on a social phenomenon's function or role that it fulfils in society (Cosser 1977 as quoted in Barter *et al.*, 2000). For instance, the mass media has a role it plays in society and this includes maintaining harmony (Bourgault, 1995). This can be done through democratizing society and this is done through promoting people's freedom of speech, creating a platform for communication between leaders and citizens, and acting as watchdog of state as well whistle blowing (Norris 2007: Wright 1960 as quoted in Curran and Gurevitch, 1996).

The Functionalist perspective by Durkheim (1953) is used to understand the media in Africa through analyzing the role it plays. It is crucial to note that a role can be functional in as far as it promotes democracy and the general good of the people whilst it can also be dysfunctional as seen in the use of media in the 1994 Rwandan genocide (Kellow and Steeves, 1998). The functionalist approach also views the

media as an instrument that is supposed to teach citizens about not only their role in society but also about their rights (Omari and Pisani, 2007). The media is supposed to foster a culture of respecting human rights in its reporting. Abuses are supposed to be well documented so that the perpetrators are held accountable. This has a bearing on the researcher's paper because citizen participation is only possible when citizens have accurate and up to date information on all the dynamics that affect governance and the media is supposed to provide this up to date information (Norris, 2007). Beyond teaching people about their rights, the media has additional roles as well.

The media plays a role in democratizing society through creating a space that citizens and leaders can interact and this space is known as the public sphere. The public sphere is an orb that has generated a lot of debate amongst academia. The founder of the idea, Habermas, describes the public sphere as an area in people's social life where public opinion can be formed and is open to all citizens (Habermas *et al.*, 1964). The public opinion incorporates criticism of government decisions, deliberation on common problems among citizens as well as consensus on differences and agreements on issues that affect citizens. Initially, this public sphere was dominated by intellectuals who communicated intelligent ideas but then was opened up to include the general citizenry (Okolo, 2009). As populations expanded and all citizens could not be directly involved in governance, methods of participation in the public sphere evolved and thus had a profound influence on governance.

As populations expanded, political groups emerged as a means of group participation and organized themselves as political parties (Duverger, 1951). In the same light,

newspapers emerged as projectors of public opinion and representatives who would stand in for constituencies in discussions with government were then selected in communities (Habermas *et al.*, 1964).

In modern day humanity, civil society has been an influential facilitator of discussion and mobilization of public opinion and the media has become a central facilitator of this sphere. Shami (2009) notes that the public sphere is not freely accessible to all and has been a widely fought for space between the ruler and the ruled. Citizens and leaders have been fighting over this space and this is projected through manipulation of the media and civil society which are critical components of the public sphere (Frere, 2012). The public sphere is important because the prevailing public opinion can either lead to the toppling of the ruling government or keep it in power through social movements. The public sphere is a threat to power due to the mass effect it can have because it is a think tank and army at the same time because it has the capacity to come up with its own ideology and push for its agenda through the strength of numbers (Shami, 2009). This sounds the alarm for many African states because the delivery of services to citizens is often poor so with the threat of being toppled, the only way to stay in power is to limit this open field.

On the other hand, the media can also play a dysfunctional role in society. In Rwanda, the media through the radio was used to incite hatred and largely contributed to the 1994 genocide (Kellow and Steeves, 1998). The culture of seeing one with opposing views as an enemy was perpetuated after independence by the Zanu PF regime (Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, 2012). This method of seeing an opposing view as evil has led to name calling in the GNU era as the name calling of

“¹*Zimbwasungata*” and “sell-outs” are words that were used before independence but are still used to describe democratic opposition in a tolerant society. This hate speech has a dysfunctional role in society as it alienates political opposition and different ethnic groups.

The media and different dynamics that affect it have been explained by a number of theorists over time. These theories have had different relevance at different periods in diverse areas. For instance, the Hypodermic needle theory seeks to explain the mass media using a needle analogy. The theory posits that certain principles, ideas and feelings are injected into the individual media user and these result in a particular behaviour (Fourie, 2001). The recipient is seen as an inert and helpless victim of mass media impact (Garrison, 1988). This theory was based on the media landscape in the 1930s and 1940s and has been found weak in that it was mainly based on studies of radio impact and does not include internet or other media forms (Fourie, 2001).

However, the researcher notes that the gradual hate speech that can lead to genocides in the modern era could possibly be explained by this theory. Hate speech can be injected and lead to a rise of hate which may lead to killings of one race as seen in the Holocaust (Sharpe, 1980). This is especially important in Africa because of the diverse ethnic content and recent experience. In Rwanda, the media through the radio was used to increase hate and spread a violent message in the 1994 genocide (Kellow and Steeves, 1998). However, this theory does not explain how social media works

¹ Derogatory Shona term meaning sell outs

and how citizens can participate in political governance but helps in understanding how the media then affects citizens.

Understanding media effect on citizens is important in understanding how states then react through legislation and state control over the media. The media has been used as a catalyst in some of the worst atrocities known to mankind in the past centuries (Sharpe, 1980). Cohen (2001) gives practical examples of the direct and powerful effect of the media through the way that viewers identify with characters in films on the television. The media has a direct and powerful effect on society and aggressive messages projected by the media end up resulting in aggressive behaviour whilst health awareness messages lead to a healthier lifestyle approach by viewers (Cohen, 2001). African politicians often put out violent messages in the media so that they divide nations along ethnic lines for their political interests and this is done through messages presented in the hypodermic needle model (Aapengnuo, 2010).

Racism and prejudice are often instilled in people through the mass media as well. Through seemingly subtle prejudices that grow into a certain belief about other races or segments of the hypodermic model will possibly lead to attitudes and behaviour towards certain groups (Downing and Husband, 2005). This effect of the media possibly explains why African states seek to control the media as much as possible. In the context of social media, it is possible that prejudices towards ethnic groups are prevalent in different platforms. Prejudices can increase ethnic hatred and perpetuate conflicts and social media could possibly be used as an instrument for this purpose as seen in the brief synopsis of social media and how it works.

Another lens used to understand media is through the Agenda setting model. This model puts forward the idea that the media sets the discussion plan and hierarchy of issues through paying attention to certain issues whilst ignoring other issues (McQuail and Windahl, 1993). This agenda setting ability then influences public opinion because the facts that are put out on any issue are determined by the media itself. Riaz (2008) then adds that over time the agenda of the media will then become public agenda because the media houses will determine what citizens hear and see.

In the context of the researcher's study, the political agenda is then set by the media through radio and television. A highlighted issue is how the media can focus attention on spectacular issues so that they generate sales and an example of this is focusing on a Presidential scandal rather than what a President has actually achieved in terms of policy (Aelst and Walgrave, 2006). Agenda setting is also seen in how the media can support one party during elections as seen in the state owned media supporting the Zanu pf party in Zimbabwe (Chuma as quoted in Raftopoulos and Savage, 2004). Beyond this aspect, the media can create a hyper environment or a tense environment that supports a certain group and this has detrimental effect on citizen participation (Shaw, 1979).

A tense environment could lead one group to dominate another and this is possible on social media. Group domination on either ethnic or social lines could still occur on social media platforms such as Facebook. Social media platforms allow one to block people that they do not want to associate with and this could be interpreted in a negative way creating more tensions between societal groups. Media houses can put out views that engage citizens on minor issues whilst ignoring political governance

issues because they have been paid off by influential politicians (Aelst and Walgrave, 2006). On social media platforms, news quickly spreads and topics easily become worldwide as seen in the 2012 belligerent Joseph Kony video that managed to gain 9, 45 million tweets in a space of four days (Goodman and Preston, 2012). Warlords and Africans plight became the agenda in 2012 although wars and warlords have been at play in Africa for many decades (Jackson, 2003). In 2012, African warlords suddenly became a hot issue because major news channels broadcasted the video due to their own questionable agenda. The world then started getting concerned about African plight due to the media putting issues in the spotlight.

2.1.2 Zimbabwean Media

The media landscape in Zimbabwe is abounding with experiences and lessons that inform aspects of this research. Civic rights that include freedom of speech and association have been at the centre of debate and many fights between citizens and the state (Welch, 1995). As Zimbabwe attained independence in 1980 and the Zanu PF government took over, it made moves to restructure the media landscape which had been set up to support and maintain the Rhodesian government. This restructuring exercise faced many challenges and the dynamics around this process had grave influences on citizen's rights to participate in political governance discourse.

In Zimbabwe, two main press fronts were available during the colonial era, the colonialist papers such as *The Chronicle* and *Rhodesia Herald* which backed the white regime and the protest papers by the black nationalists, *Moto* meaning Fire and *Umbowo* meaning Witness. Their agendas were on polar extremes with the latter

pushing for black emancipation whilst the former sought to maintain the status quo by castigating the blacks as backward and antichristian (Mukasa, 2004). In both cases, Gramsci's hegemony through media is seen here as both the nationalists and the Rhodesian government sought to instil a political ideology to citizens through their different publications.

Upon independence, however, the situation changed. With the new nationalist government in power, moves to localize the media also followed. As the state could not be seen directly taking over the media and in this case the publishing houses, it set up the Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust or ZMMT to take over on its behalf (Ronning and Kupe, 2004). The new government was walking a political tight rope as it tried to put the national press under local control but without looking like the Smith regime that had been there before. A 20 million dollar grant from Nigeria helped the new government acquire foreign owned stock and renamed the local publishing house to Zimbabwe Newspapers (Nyahunzvi, 2012). The new Zanu PF government then took over the daily press releases, namely, The Chronicle and The Herald. Under Zanu PF rule, criticism of government was limited.

The independent press managed to maintain a degree of autonomy and this went on until the early 90s. Publications such as the Parade, Moto and Horizon played a critical role as they critiqued governance issues with a wide market being middle class intellectuals (Chiumbu, 1997). The eventual demise of all these independent magazines then followed as a new chapter in Zimbabwe's media history opened. After the failure of the private independent press to sustain itself through The Daily Gazette, The Independent and The Standard then opened as private newspapers. As

these papers were operating, a consortium of local and international funders then opened the Daily News (Raftopoulos and Savage, 2004). This consortium was the Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe, which was owned by unspecified local and international businesses. The Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe (ANZ) was set up with 60 percent of shareholding under the Africa Media Trust which was owned by British, South African, and New Zealand companies (Mukasa, 2004). The Daily News was meant to rival the state controlled daily papers which dominated the landscape (Ronning and Kupe, 2000). On refusal to register under the new Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Daily News was shut down in September 2003 (Mendel *et al.*, 2004).

As AIPPA and POSA were launched and restrictions intensified, social media was slowly taking shape in the developed Western countries such as the United States of America (Word Press, 2011). In 2004, Facebook was spreading through universities in America whilst MySpace was launched in the same year (Wood, 2013). However, both social media platforms were not yet as popular in African countries.

Following the formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU) in February 2009, a number of changes in the media have been worthy of note. The establishment of the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC) which licenses newspapers and regulates media practice led to the licensing of 3 private newspapers, leading to the reopening of the popular Daily News (Chuma, 2010). This has been a monumental development and achievement in the life of Government of National Unity in spite of the criticisms rendered against it. As the GNU was formed, social media was now making inroads in many African countries.

2.1.3 Legal Framework governing media

No comprehensive discussion about Zimbabwean media would be complete without a mentioning of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act of 2002. Under AIPPA, media companies are required to register under the Media and Information Commission (MIC) in order to operate (Chuma, 2010). The MIC was eventually succeeded by the Zimbabwe Media Commission in the GNU era. The application by the MIC required media outlets to disclose details such as political affiliations of the companies' directors as well as its business plans (IFEX, 2003). There have been numerous arrests of journalists under this act and many raids of media offices (Solidarity Peace Trust, 2004).

The Government of National Unity has been working at opening up the media but with increased fee rates of journalist accreditation to operate, one then wonders whether this will increase or decrease the journalists working in the country (Muchemwa, 2009). One has to analyze this scenario through a Zimbabwean literacy rate which is at 90 % (Zimstats 2004, CIA World Fact book 2012). This figure has been contested by Zimeye (2012) but as a working figure, any figure in the 80s is still high. A population that has a literacy rate this high but a closed media will ultimately look for alternative sources of information. Historically, urban Zimbabwe has been the market for media houses and the start of many protests as the 1989 University of Zimbabwe and those most economically active are now in the urban areas (Omari and Mhiyo, 1991). The dynamics and debates that have been at play in the media have largely ignored the public's opinion and have been a largely Zanu PF vs MDC affair though state and private media respectively (Raftopoulos, 2006). The editorial sections where one could write letters to the editor were the only areas that

the public could contribute to when it came to articles and reacting to pieces by journalists. In any case, the media house could simply censor and put out what they felt was “safe”.

Whilst restrictions on citizen discussion were being increased at this stage in 2009, social media popularity was spreading. Social media portals had increased in popularity and Facebook had reached over 200 million users worldwide (Wood, 2013). Social media came into play and gave an opportunity for the public to engage in debates and discussions on any issues with little fear of reprisals. However, with traditional media outlets such as newspapers trying to adapt to the new technological changes, a few started offering online versions of their newspapers (Boczkowski, 2005). In a bid to encourage readership newspaper houses added a commentary section for their audience (Jucker and Landert, 2011). This section has been the platform for many debates and discussions on governance issues across the world.

The Public Order and Security Act of 2002 has been the subject of many debates in not only the private, but also the public sphere. The principles of the main political parties in the GNU have been grappling over amendments to this Act before the next elections are held, possibly in 2013. The Public Order and Security Act was a result of the swelling political tensions that rocked Zimbabwe after the 2002 elections and is argued to have been the successor of the Smith regime Law and Order Maintenance Act abbreviated as LOMA (Loewenstern and Moyo, 2003). The controversy around this law was heightened by former Justice Minister and speaker of parliament Emmerson Mnangagwa who once remarked that although he does not approve of LOMA, it does “come in handy” (Loewenstern and Moyo 2003).

Considering the apolitical post of Speaker of Parliament he occupied this was a worrying revelation because he is supposed support laws that benefit the country as a whole not a particular political party. POSA limits citizen's ability to use non violent measures under Section 5 (Mandinde, 2005). Non violent activism is a method that can be used to participate in governance when citizens want changes. This law has been used in a partisan way and this has been seen in numerous arrests of citizens and civil society groups (Solidarity Peace Trust, 2004). Solidarity Peace Trust's study of POSA sections 5 to 11 which permit detention without bail, evidence or charge accounted for 16% of the total national arrests in 2003.

In the current GNU era, it is fascinating to note that the law seems to be getting addressed only because it now affects political parties' campaigns. However, this law is a political tightrope that could either land one in jail or get one injured. Although an organization is supposed to serve a notice to the police, the bureaucracy and procedure make it a cumbersome process for even peaceful protests. Solidarity Peace Trust (2004) noted the number of people who have been arrested by this act and these include people wearing protest t-shirts at a world cup cricket match in Bulawayo, Women of Zimbabwe Arise who were singing and handing out roses on Valentine's Day in 2003 and subsequent Valentine's days. Such groups are not a visible threat to the harmony of society but they are the most affected by it. Controversial urban militias such as *Chipangano* and *Al Shabaab* move in numbers but have not been molested courtesy of this law (The Zimbabwean, November 2, 2011; Change Zimbabwe, 2012). This act has succeeded in silencing dissent from irate communities, especially universities in Zimbabwe (Crisis in Zimbabwe

Coalition, 2012). With no outlet for venting out frustrations and sharing ideas on the way forward, the technological revolution came as a means of contributing to the governance discourse from the year 2008 onwards (Rainie, 2012). One does not need to go into the streets to protest on the grounds of poor government but one can take the fight right to the repressor's doorstep via online commentaries.

In relation to governance work, the POSA disallows freedom to meet and engage with political leaders because citizens need permission from the police for this. This bureaucratic process is tedious and frustrates citizens who would have otherwise wanted to meet and participate in community gatherings (Change Zimbabwe, 2012). Instead of wanting to meet, a possible outlet for one's frustrations and platform to air views is then social media platforms. Online, one does not currently need a clearance by police to join a civic group or lobby organization. Instead of showing up to sign a petition to address service delivery, which would imply a large group meeting, an illegal act, one can sign an online petition or like a page that seeks to repeal a law (Dubai School of government, 2012). In such a case, one will be saved the hustle and possible abuse by the police.

POSA also outlaws any statements that are perceived to incite violence and this is an aspect that touches on social media (Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, 2012). A lot of careless statements are often thrown across platforms and according to this Act, these are illegal. In essence, although this Act was not drafted with social media in mind, it already has a bearing on what can be said and not said on social media. However, the question that then arises is whether online platforms are taken as serious as non

violent protests such as Women of Zimbabwe Arise protests that often attract a lot of publicity.

2.1.4 Historical synopsis of social media

Initially, social media was not as popular in Africa with applications such as Friend star being more popular in America (Word press, 2011). Social media then spread to regions with ongoing conflicts such as the Middle East and Africa. Social media use reached its highest worldwide user numbers since inception in 2012 with over 1 billion Facebook users and YouTube with 800 million users (Wood, 2013).

As social media spread across different continents, Africans began using it but with more users in the Arab countries which are in Northern Africa (Chatora, 2012). In Africa, Facebook is the most popular application and had 48, 3 million users by the end of September 2012 (Internet World Statistics, 2012). Social media use had been largely for interpersonal communication but its use in social movements has risen in the period from 2008 to 2012 (Cave *et al.*, 2012). As social media began being used by citizens to mobilize support for common causes in repressive countries such as Syria and Egypt, governments reacted by shutting down the internet and monitoring activities online (Boyd 2011; Gustin, 2011).

Governments also started intensifying arrests for online comments. In 2011, a Zimbabwean man, Vikas Mavhudzi, was arrested for commenting on the Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai's wall that the Egyptian protests were worth emulating but the case was thrown out because the police failed to access this message online (Bell, 2011; Macha, 2011). The internet and social media platforms do not have a central regulator that is openly available to states for censorship and the most that

they could do was to tell internet service providers to shut down platforms as seen in Egypt during the 2011 protests (Goldsmith and Wu, 2006). However, there are interesting dynamics on which demographic group has been utilising social media in the different regions.

The Dubai School of government (2012) notes that youth (ages 15 and 29) make up 70% of Facebook and social media users in the Arab Region. These are also part of the economically active and feel they have something to lose in terms of bad governance thus are eager to show their agitation when the need be (Gustin, 2011). This age group also went onto the streets in the Arab Uprisings as the situation was limiting them socially, economically and politically. Statistics from 2012 put worldwide percentage users at 92% for the 18-29 age group and 73% for the 30-49 age group (Bremmer, 2013). In South Africa, the 18-34 age group consists of 64% of all Facebook users but broken down it has the 18-24 age group with 33% and 25-34 with 31% (Klaus, 2011). This shows that the University attending age is the most consistent of social users and this helped delineate the study to the Africa University campus.

2.1.5 Contribution of social media to democratisation

The potential of the Internet to improve governance has been well documented (Perritt, 1998: Chadwick and May, 2003). Social media contributes to governance and redefines issues across geographical boundaries. Community is redefined as people across the world start feeling an ideological bond such as democracy and respect for human rights which are beyond a limited geographical space (Gunkel and Gunkel, 1997). The researcher notes that the Arab Spring Uprisings were supported

by all continents on Facebook pages and shows a new sense of community. Different people from different countries could share the plight of the Egyptians and living under a repressive dictatorship. Social media was useful in immediate updates as is seen in the synopsis of social media movements below.

Social media can help political leaders form public opinion and make informed decisions because they know what constituencies' desire (Agre, 2002). When decisions are known and supported by the majority of citizens, they are more likely to make successful policies (Perritt, 1998). This is a potential step in democratizing society as a well informed society is crucial for a developmental programme. Social media adds weight to traditional communication theory by showing that communication is more than a mere transmission but is often ritualistic. Beyond helping family integration and everyday greeting rituals social media combines society as a whole by combining the core and periphery that are found in governance studies (Rothenbuhler in John *et al.*, 2006). This community impact goes beyond this stage and speaks to issues of commons in pooled resources.

Hardin (1968) sums up the idea in that freedom in a commons will bring devastation to all. This idea comes from the situation where there are pooled resources that all community members have access to and therefore are subject to degradation because of overuse. When members try then all decide to acquire more from the same pool, clashes then ensue because resources are not infinite. The Internet is then seen as a resource that may not be infinite as people may think and is already seeing clashes between different stakeholders who often have conflicting interests (Shackman, 2010).

Social media platforms are diverse and may not all necessarily be structured as commons as Facebook allows one to block other members. However, the researcher posits that as information now becomes a currency in the virtual world, clashes will follow and social media may end up with fragments just as the real world is fragmented on ideological lines. This is a challenge of social media but should not overshadow the potential benefits of social media.

2.1.6 Social Media Movements

Social media movements have been on the rise across most continents and have had different effects on different societies. A thorough understanding of the different movements and the causes behind them is needed so as to understand how social media is a tool that is not necessarily owned by a single group of people.

2.1.6.1 Arab Spring Uprisings

The Arab Spring uprisings refer to uprisings that occurred in Arab countries in Northern Africa as well as the Middle East and the most popular of these uprisings have been in Syria, Egypt and Tunisia. At the core of these uprisings were citizen complaints against rising prices, unemployment and demands for freedom (Ghannam, 2011).

In the above movements, social media played and continues to play significant roles which are bringing world attention to the plight of citizens, mobilization of protestors and fundraising (Harkin *et al.*, 2012). Gustin (2011) suggests that without tools such as Facebook and Tweeter, fewer people would have known about the uprisings. International coverage of these uprisings then led to external pressure for former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak to resign (Hussain and Howard, 2011). In such a

case, the world would not have known the plight of the Egyptians as a hard handed military would have suppressed the revolution. Social media not only played this international publicizing role but also served a local function as well.

Boyd (2011) says that social media encouraged local support and bravery amongst citizens in the Arab speaking countries. Boyd (2011) suggests that the risk of physical harm would not have been possible if one felt that they are the only ones sticking their neck out and Boyd feels that Facebook acted as a unifying tool and helped to spread the message that people were in the struggle together. More specifically, Gustin (2011) feels Facebook did a bigger job to organize activists within the country whilst Tweeter functioned to spread the message worldwide. In the Syrian case, the social media is at all levels of the conflict and human exchange (David, 2012). Videos of massacres of many people are viewed via YouTube and feeding through to major news channels such as Al Jazeera. Social media has also been used by belligerents in different conflicts.

Berman (2012) notes that Syrian rebels and their support systems use social media for self promotion or image management. Image in a conflict is of paramount importance in this globalizing world as one needs to be seen as part of the masses as much as possible. Harkin *et al* (2012) argue that the social media has become another battle front in the ongoing conflict in Syria. This is a plausible argument as key issues such as fundraising and tactic exchange are now traded via the social media (Berman, 2012). During the Islam religious event, Ramada, one rebel group, Suqour al- Sham distributed food to needy families and distributed a lot of videos about this across all platforms (Berman, 2012). Social media is being used to endear certain

groups to the outside world as groups seek to ascertain their future. On the same note, the Umma Bridage built a civilian hospital in Southern Idlib with supplies donated from Libya and this group distributed a large number of its videos in its community work. Social media in these instances is used to create a positive image one's group. From the Arab uprisings, it can be seen that individuals and groups use the social media to advance their causes. This makes them participate more but it does not speak much to the participatory governance aspect of social media.

2.1.6.2 Occupy Wall Street Initiative

The Occupy Wall Street Initiative is a movement that was initiated by a Canadian website Adbusters in mid July 2011 (Rehmann, 2013). The idea was to protest against the acerbic power of key banks and multinational companies over democratic processes (OccupyWallSt.org, 2013). As the movement spread across America, it had more than 400 Facebook pages and 2,7 million fans worldwide (Preston 2011). The social media was useful in mobilizing people to participate in this movement as well as helping the movement acquire international recognition which is always necessary when pushing for societal transformation (Rehmann, 2013).

2.2 Participatory Governance

Citizen participation is a concept that has gained momentum as democracy has spread across the world. The Neoliberal perspective of social media is used to understand this study. The approach that is used to analyze citizen participation is the Neoliberal perspective and is mainly countered by the ²*Ubuntu* perspective.

² A philosophy emphasizing societal harmony and people's allegiance with each other

2.2.1 Neoliberal approach to citizen participation

In 1990, following the debt crisis of the Latin, American and Caribbean countries, policy makers, international agencies and academic representatives met in Washington to discuss challenges and a way forward for development (Burki and Perry, 1998). The agreement for this meeting is best summed up in the idea that the market should determine all facets of national development whilst the state reduces its influence and reduces social protection for its citizens (George, 1999). This was to be done through liberalizing trade and investment, fiscal discipline and privatization of public institutions (Bockman, 2007). This links to my study as a “hands off” approach by government which would lead to a free press and liberal media for society.

The above statutes of neoliberals and how they speak on participation have been pushed for by international development oriented organizations. The focus for citizen participation according to World Vision International has to do with fulfilling its agenda. For instance, World Vision International believes that for developmental aid to be effective there has to be citizen participation so that there is accountability from leaders who distribute these funds as noted in the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness (World Vision International, 2011). This agenda based advocacy is being used by multilateral organizations as well.

The World Bank Institute pushes for citizen participation through access to information, networks of civil society groups and networks of likeminded groups. These organizations only subscribe to citizen participation in as far as it makes their projects successful. Khan (2005) as quoted in Brautigam et al (2005) focuses on

citizen participation and notes that citizen participation is basically a person's right to take part in decision making either through themselves or a representative. This view is rather shallow as it does not offer a modern and effective approach to empower citizens beyond elections. This view is in the economic and social affairs of the United Nations department and possibly explains how the United Nations has not been effective in reacting to mass movements by citizens since 2010. Citizen participation also contributes to the wider discourse on good governance.

Citizen participation falls under good governance and this means that as citizens participate more, there is likely to be better governance of human and natural resources (Hickey and Mohan, 2004). UNDP (1994) puts forward that good governance includes citizen participation, transparency and accountability which need to be undertaken by a government. In such a case, citizen contributions in terms of ideas and criticism are prioritised by a government and government plays a role of encouraging debate in the public sphere. The UNDP (1994) departs from a hand off policy that the IMF and WB advocate for by saying that state should intervene in the public interest. The UNDP adds that for a state to provide its citizens with fair opportunities and inclusion in governance, its judicial and economic wings must be working properly. This "working properly" means there must be rule of law and respect of human rights in a state because these are possible conditions that permit citizen participation (UNDP, 1994). Citizen participation also means the government will amicably work with civil society and the private sector (Haque, 2003).

In the context of my study, governments must be willing to work with civil society as civil society mobilizes people to participate in the public sphere whilst the media

puts out all facts and promotes debate in the public sphere. In the same light, the World Bank advocates for good governance. The World Bank's good governance agenda is simply attached as conditions for its loans in developing countries (Santiso, 2001). In the World Bank's scope on good governance, civil society plays an active role in mobilizing marginalized groups to participate in the management of their resources (Collingwood, 2001). Good governance from the World Bank also speaks of political legitimacy as an aspect of good governance (Sano and Alfredsson, 2002). Although the World Bank claims not to interfere directly with the internal politics of countries, Sano and Alfredsson (2002) argue that the programs that it advocates for affect the political dynamics and at times do not promote good governance.

A weakness with the World Bank approach is the top-down nature of its development initiatives and that the World Bank listens more attentively to international NGOs that claim to work with locals but are not really representative of people on the ground. Another weakness that comes from Diarra and Plane (2011) is that participation to the World Bank is done through civil society. Individuals contribute through civil society and not individual movements. All in all, the UNDP and World Bank agree that citizen participation can be seen as an indicator of good governance.

Grindle (2002) departs from the above ideas and talks of good enough governance. She writes that there are too many uncoordinated efforts that attempt to improve governance from different donors and these are often unsupported by governments because they call for radical political shifts. An approach of good enough governance will give room for states to change at a more reasonable pace and improve practical

aspects in a realistic way and this was in reference to more effective and responsive rule. This is illustrated by practical initiatives such as local and national institutions that facilitate citizen participation in policy deliberation and resource allocation. Such initiatives try to show why good governance is important for society.

Good governance is important because it produces citizens with better awareness of rights and responsibilities (Grindle, 2002). Citizen participation makes citizens partners in governance and because citizens are now partners in governance, there is a better chance of decided development priorities being supported. This view is supported by Victor and Kemp (2012) who say that projects are more likely to be supported by citizens thus have a better chance of success if citizens contribute in formulation and implementation of ideas (Hickey and Mohan, 2004). Victor and Kemp (2012) also suggest that domineering of one group over others is quelled through citizen participation. This deserves special note because of the assorted ethnic component in African countries. Citizen participation programmes need to take note of the diverse ethnic nature of most African countries. Caddy (2012) also says that when citizens are engaged, new ideas on development can be tapped as citizens are a potential hub of knowledge. Hickey and Mohan (2004) argue that citizen should be a blend of citizen's legal rights as well as decision making at local level. In other words, citizen participation strategies should deal with institutions that make up society and have procedures of action that allow citizens to contribute and influence governance. An attempt at institutional approaches has been seen through the African Union.

The African Union was established in 2001 and one of the areas it focuses on is promoting good governance (Gruzd and Herbert, 2008). A programme under the African Union that developed but has been seen sceptically because of its origins is the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). NEPAD was agreed upon after consultations with the World Bank and this is the reason why it is viewed as a neo-liberal advancement that seeks to rob African states of their natural resources through liberating trade (Bronwen, 2004). It is to this effect that recommendations for citizen participation that can be monitored through the African Peer Review Mechanism of NEPAD have been resisted (Gruzd and Herbert, 2008). African states have been largely resistant to voices calling for more citizen engagement in all areas of governance such as budgets and political governance. The neoliberal approach has also been critiqued and alternative methods and ideology on participation have been given.

The *Ubuntu* approach to governance counters the Neoliberal approach that focuses on individualism by offering a community based approach that is more indigenous to African culture (Murithi, 2006). Kayuni and Tambulasi (2005) speak of *Ubuntu* as a philosophy found in different African cultures and expressed in different languages as Unhu in Shona and *Umunthu* in Chewa. The idea behind *Ubuntu* emphasises mutual respect, cooperation and societal cohesion. This idea is suggested as an ideal move and governance philosophy for African democracies (Enslin and Horsthemke, 2004). *Ubuntu* in governance would bring about inclusivity, consensus building and fair distribution of resources (Murithi, 2006). The idea of *Ubuntu* is argued as giving

a more indigenous approach to citizen participation because it has a history from Africa and departs from economic overtones of neoliberalism.

In traditional African society and governance structures, a coinciding participation means was available. For instance, Namibia had a platform called the *Kgotla* that the community met to deliberate on common issues and grievances (Somolekae, 1998). This podium was uncensored and a leader or chief who was not governing well could be openly criticized and songs and dances to this effect were permitted (Mamdani, 1996). This led to accountability, transparency and participation which are elements that make up good governance. Swaziland had its own edition named *Libandla* that at this point allowed community participation. The only restrictive element with both the Namibian and Swaziland platforms is that they did not allow women to participate. Traditional African culture and shunning women then clashes with the Neoliberal approach that says all marginalized groups should be heard in any discourse that affects society. Beyond the differences that have been mentioned above, citizen participation often faces challenges of its own.

2.2.2. Challenges of Citizen Participation

Citizen participation has often faced challenges that span beyond geographical areas and are hinged on ideological differences. Citizen participation in a dictatorship differs from citizen participation in a democracy and this is seen in African states. Citizen participation discourse intensified in Africa during the colonial era in both colonial areas and nationalist movements. The autocratic colonial regimes, by nature, did not allow significant native black African participation in governance. Civic freedoms such as freedom of speech and association were not upheld. The

fascinating aspect here is that the nationalist movements did not allow dissenting ideas on citizen participation either (Mkandawire, 2005).

There was a common goal of independence but there were different ways of achieving this and different meanings attached to the nationalism within nationalist movements amongst the different ethnic groups and people. The nationalist movements because of intellectual leaders such as Nyerere and Mugabe had the prowess in persuading dissenting voices to silence during this colonial period (Mkandawire, 2005). This worked into gaining independence but soon afterwards the dissenting voices grew louder and the mistake that African states made was not harnessing this voice into the governance discourse. The voice that grew and was fighting for citizen participation then came through ethnic lines and led to the civil wars that plagued the newly independent states (Adebayo, 2012). The idea behind the wars was that citizens felt the only way they could participate in governance and redistribute resources was through war because their voices through elected representatives were not being heard.

Citizen participation has also been limited by an intricate patronage system that silences voices of dissent in society (Mkandawire, 2005). Bratton and Van de Walle (1994) then expound on this by describing a neopatrimonialism system that limits citizen's participation by buying off influential voices in society through lucrative contracts and projects to people with influence that keep their sphere of influence subdued for the big man in the system (Erdmann and Engel, 2007). However, neopatrimonialism is citizen participation for an elite few through a patron-client system but it limits participation for the majority of citizens by buying out their

representative. This personal use of state machinery through public office system has been used to restructure all aspects of government and governance by leaders who want to secure their political future regardless of popular opinion (Snyder, 1992).

The inclusion of marginalized groups such as the black Americans and immigrants in the governance discourse in the United States of America has evolved over time through development of liberal participation through representation (Strange, 1972). For instance, black Americans only started voting after the passing of the 15th Amendment in 1869 but they were still persecuted for voting in the years that followed (CRF, 2013). The participatory methods in the United States of America have been referendums, open primary elections and labour groups (Strange, 1972). Adejumobi (2000) argues that good governance and citizen participation did not come from the World Bank as these ideas have been entrenched in African minds and are the reason why Africans fought colonialism. This view castigates the imposition of Western principles that come attached to structural adjustment programs as these have been detrimental to African development, culture and society. Adejumobi (2000) argues that genuine democracy will only come through citizen participation. The unique aspect about this brand of citizen participation is that decisions that citizens make have to aggregate the interests of most citizens as well as affecting their life chances. The researcher notes that the idea by Adejumobi (2000) speaks to the aspect of citizen participation being linked to the overall human development of citizens. The economic and social spheres are linked to citizen participation and this insinuates that when citizens effectively participate in governance discussions and deliberations, they are more likely to be developing

holistically as the economic and social spheres cannot be separated. When decisions are made by the majority of citizens as is seen in the ladder of citizen participation by Arnstein (1969), development follows because there is the will to move forward in cohesion.

Citizen participation faces a challenge from states because it speaks of issues of human rights and decentralization (Mazrui, 1995). Citizen participation goes beyond the civic freedoms of freedom of speech and association to environmental and cultural rights (Bosl and Diescho, 2009). African governments are not comfortable with speaking of human rights because most governments do not respect and promote citizen's rights (Mutua, 2000). In the researcher's study, social media was tested in as far as it allows citizens to freely contribute their ideas without fear of reprisals which is a basic freedom. The researcher also tested whether the challenges that citizen participation faces are the same that social media encounters.

2.2.3 Ladder of citizen participation

This model is significant because it tries to explain how citizens participate through various steps on a ladder and it alludes to citizen's relationship with leaders. This model offers a framework to gauge how citizens participate in any society and programme. The social media component of this research could fall under one of the categories on the ladder.

In using the Arnstein model to analyze the South Korean model of participation through social media, the researcher notes that citizens participate but may not have the power to influence decision and this falls under the tokenism segment. Haque (2003) in a study of East Asian countries such as South Korea and Taiwan notes that

citizen participation has started to include marginalized groups such as women in parliamentary bodies. The researcher notes a trend in these cases of a lot of debate and opposition to civic participation by strongholds of power which are often autocratic states. Arnstein (1969) gave a ladder of citizen participation that is below.

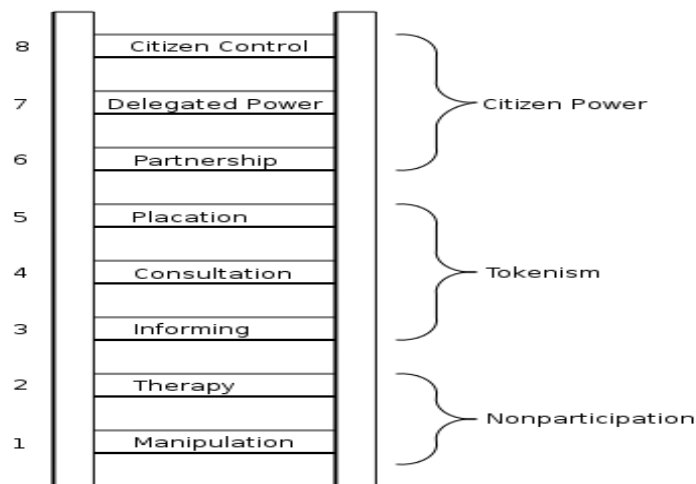


Figure 1: Ladder of citizen participation from Arnstein (1969)

The manipulation and therapy levels which fall under non participation are components that are created by segments of society to control other groups (Arnstein, 1969). The tokenism can be viewed as participation but it does not have the power to make things happen. The citizen power category views citizens as agents of change with vested power in society.

This model can be used to gauge social media as well as different platforms that offer different exposure and experiences for citizens. As citizens like the page of a political leader on Facebook, it does not mean that they are actively participating in policy deliberations. However, if on tweeter a leader discusses his views on policy and there is feedback through responses and retweeting, then there is some sort of

consultation. This consultation does not mean that the leader will necessarily alter his position according to citizen's views either. At the most ideal level, citizens have the power to make decisions and they are trusted by their leaders to do so. However, the Arnstein model has been challenged by other writers (Connor, 1988). The Arnstein model has been challenged in that its linear ramps from one stage to another are not a true reflection of reality (Connor, 1988). The model has also been used mostly to assess citizen participation in environmental governance in Europe and not as a worldwide model which possibly hinders its application to Africa (Maier, 2001). This model was used to find out whether social media is highly participatory or non participatory.

2.3 Conclusion

There is evidence that citizen participation is not a new phenomenon to African governance. However, due to fear of mass uprisings when citizens share their grievances, citizen participation methods have been repressed and avenues to air views such as the media have been limited by states. Social media is a relatively new avenue that citizens have used to communicate with their families but has also been used to mobilize support for economic and political causes.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This researcher made use of Media Theory and Participatory Governance Theory to understand how social media fits into political governance participation. From these theories came a set of participatory governance principles that were used to find out how social media fits into political governance participation. Citizen participation should include unrestrictive membership of citizens, deliberations with leaders and governance institutions, uncensored debate on political governance aspects and solidarity decision making (Mkandawire 2005, Adebayo 2012). Diamond (2008), adds derivatives which are freedom of opinion, discussion, speech, assembly and petitions which make up a participatory programme.

The researcher then came up with a set of data instruments that would find out whether the above participatory principles are reflected in social media. The researcher principally followed a qualitative approach given that the desire was to establish how social media fits contributes to participatory governance through assessing what people say and do online. The data collection was done over two weeks at the Africa University Campus. The researcher collected responses from 103 Africa University Students from 13 countries. These students came from the six faculties and Institute of Peace leadership and Governance that make up Africa University. Responses from key informants such as the Africa University network engineer, information and communication technology director, Pan African Club, Student Representative Council, student community leaders and the Zimbabwean

National association of non-governmental youth organization youth leader were also used to corroborate student perceptions.

3.1 Research Design

This research was largely qualitative in nature but also included simple quantitative elements to buttress the qualitative component. The qualitative method was chosen because it is the most ideal method to explain both process and outcome of a social phenomenon (Biklen, 1992; Blaikie, 2000). The researcher wanted to understand an everyday phenomenon in social media and the best method to describe phenomenon that is experienced daily is qualitative (Schratz and Walker, 1995). Social media is used on a daily basis by students and thus needed to be analyzed in its natural set up and the ideal method is to use a qualitative approach. The participatory principles that were tested could be clearly brought out through the qualitative method as it gives room to describe phenomenon and experiences using different adjectives (Blaikie, 2000)

The case study was used as the research strategy. The case study was relevant because it focuses on a phenomenon and how it fits into its wider context in a particular period and institution (Krathwohl, 1993). Social media and how it fits into political governance participation needed to be studied within the context of a presumably educated and enlightened community that uses social media. The case study approach then fit in well with Africa University because the demographic statistics of students could be determined. This was important because social media is said to be used by the younger generation more (Alexa Web Information, 2012). The case study was also used as a strategy because it is a flexible method that can

incorporate multiple means of data collection (Berg and Lune, 2012). The researcher wanted to capture the thoughts of students through a questionnaire, student leaders and key informants through in depth interviews thus these different data collections tools fit in well with the case study strategy. Observation of online discussions on social media platforms so as to examine which participatory principles occur needed to be done and the method that could incorporate this method was the case study method.

The research was delimited to African students studying at Africa University. These students were taken to represent the more enlightened citizens who will soon make up the voting and economically active group in African countries. The researcher made the assumption that exposure from various news outlets and the university curriculum made the students a relevant target group because they can contribute evocative views on social media and its place in participatory governance. The timing of the research also coincided with the constitutional referendum in Zimbabwe and this influenced some of the content on social media platforms during the study. The researcher interviewed the respondents by himself in person but the interview with the NANGO northern region youth coordinator was done using Facebook and electronic mail.

3.2 Population

The study population included all students enrolled for the 2012-2013 second semester who actively registered on campus during the semester. The Academic Affairs Department at the university pegged the registered students at 1269 for the 2012-2013 second semester.

3.3 Sampling Procedure

3.3.1 Entry into research environment

The researcher sought permission from the Registrar's office to conduct research on the campus. There was a delayed response to the researcher's request to conduct the research on campus and the researcher had to extend the data collection period so that data collection could be comprehensively done. On receiving the approval letter, the researcher approached the Academic Affairs office for statistics on the number of students that were available on campus. Due to the intricate nature of the student list which mixes up students who have not started their programmes, the researcher decided to access students through the faculties to comprehensively get a snapshot of different views across faculties. The researcher then found out that faculties often share buildings and classes thus accessing students would have to be strategically done to ensure all faculties were represented in the sample. The researcher approached the secretaries in the different faculties to access students and after showing them the approval letter from the Registrar, their help was forthcoming.

3.3.2 Data Collection methods

The researcher grouped students under their various faculties which acted as clusters and then went to the faculty secretaries to ask for class representatives to help distribute the questionnaire to different faculties. When the faculty did not have class representatives, temporary class representatives were used to distribute the questionnaire. In the case of there not being class representatives, the faculty secretary would distribute the questionnaire to students who would give the questionnaire to students. The challenge faced with this is that different faculties

have different numbers of students because some faculties offer fewer degree programmes for students. The two faculties with the most students are the Faculty of Management and Administration as well as the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences which have over 725 students combined. These faculties ended up having more students in the sample reflecting the larger percentage of the student population these faculties have so as to get an accurate picture of how students view issues across different faculties. Students were then randomly selected from the different faculties through class representatives and faculty secretaries. The sample in this study thus had 103 students from the 6 faculties on the African University campus.

The research used purposive sampling because the researcher sought to find the main student groupings which are:

- Pan Africanist Club (2 members). This group was selected because it focuses on governance and democratic related issues across Africa. The club has debates and public meetings to discuss issues of governance thus were relevant as its experiences and views would add value to the findings.
- SRC (5 members). The student representative council is the student leadership and was selected because its mandate according to its constitution incorporates participatory governance approaches to its own management. This group was then selected as relevant because it would possibly offer unique insights due to its experiences of being the link between students and school administration.

- Regional student body leaders (3 leaders). The regional student body leaders were selected because they not only lead students but because they could possibly bring different sentiments from the diverse experiences that they bring from different regions. To this effect, the West African Community leader, East African Community leader and the Zimbabwean community leaders were incorporated for their views.
- NANGO Northern Youth Region Chairperson (1). This leader was selected because he has valuable experiences from working with organization leaders as well as communities in various democratic and good governance campaigns across Northern Zimbabwe. The experiences from such exposure would add value to the findings.
- Network Engineer and Information Technology director. These two were selected because they regulate information and data traffic on the Africa University campus. There was a need to find out how data traffic flows on a daily basis so as to understand how popular social media is and other dynamics that may affect it such as policies and rules that may be in place.

A Focus group discussion with the SRC members was held in the Student Union Office. Focus group discussions were selected because they are a method that can be used to acquire information from transient groups (Berg, 2009). This group would have been hard to interview individually because of the class schedules and programmes that they undertake. As the study was taking place, the university was organizing a fundraising dinner, 20th anniversary celebrations as well as the new

Student Representative Council elections. Beyond this, students had to do assignments and this made it hard to reach all of the student leaders.

3.4 Data Collection tools

3.4.1 Interviews

In depth interviews were held with members of the Pan African club and the regional student body leaders so as to find out the leaders perception's on how social media fits into citizen participation. Interviews were selected because they are good for exploring new leads and angles to a topic (Labovitz, 1981). This was crucial to the study because since few prior researches have been done on social media, to enhance quality of the research, the researcher needed to make sure unique views to the study are included. Due to the restructuring of the club that is taking place because of students who graduated in the previous year, two members were available online as the rest have left the university either on internship or graduation. The student community leaders that were approached were brought together by the SRC.

3.4.2 Focus Group Discussion

A focus group discussion was held with the Student Representative Council. Focus groups help to listen to plural voices and is best at exploring life experiences (Morgan as quoted in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Experiences of social media were crucial and the researcher wanted to explore these from a student leadership standpoint. This discussion was not well attended and had 3 members. The researcher had to make follow up interviews with two absentee committee members who were on campus during the data collection period. This initial discussion was held in the Student Union office and lasted for 45 minutes. The discussion was held at 9pm because that is the time that the leaders usually meet for their meetings.

3.4.3 Questionnaire

Questionnaires were also used to collect data from the general student population. Questionnaires are useful in that they are seen as the most flexible tool to collect both quantitative and qualitative data (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Questionnaires were administered through approaching the different faculties and receiving help from class representatives who pointed out students from the different faculties and countries. Challenges faced were the non return of questionnaires from the faculties that used the secretaries to distribute the questionnaire. Suspected security agents who work for the government also quizzed the student on his research and took a night to explain what the researcher desired to do. However, due to the aura around social media as the in thing in communication, general student participants were willing to disclose their feelings and share experiences that link to citizen participation through social media.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Students approached to fill out the questionnaire asked the researcher whether it was anonymous and which organization the researcher worked. The researcher made it clear that their responses would remain anonymous and would be used for this research only. As the respondent learnt that the researcher was also a fellow student they opened up more.

The researcher was, however, given a warning about the nature of the topic and its sensitivity due to the current political climate in Zimbabwe by suspected security agents and Africa University academic staff. The warning was based on the idea that there is a tense atmosphere and that Africa University is currently blacklisted by

intelligence officers as such institutions could possibly start movements that could upset political balances of power. The researcher took extra care when approaching students and made it clear from the start that the research was for academic fulfilment and not meant to find out individual voting preferences or anything political in nature. The researcher then assured respondent that they would not be followed up for assisting in the research.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data from the interviews was analyzed thematically without discarding unique views that were given by the participants. This was done so as to comprehensively analyze the topic and respond to the research questions.

The questionnaire was analyzed using a statistical software package named Software Package for Social Sciences that is produced by International Business Machines Corporation (IBM). This was selected because the questionnaire was given to a large number of students and manual analysis would not have been possible in the research time. This package is also useful in decoding questionnaires and it was necessary in this case as the questionnaire had been drafted to give a slightly quantitative element through simple descriptive statistics

3.7 Conclusion

The research methods gathered the needed information according to the researcher's perspective. The use of different methods gave a comprehensive understanding of the topic under study. The researcher spent two weeks collecting data and challenges that were faced include delay of the approval letter from the registrar's office as well as non returned questionnaires from some respondents in faculties.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Presentation and analysis

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the general student population as well as expert opinion on the ability of social media to enhance citizen participation. The social media portal that is used by most students is presented whilst the political governance aspect that most people are interested in online is also examined. This chapter also finds out how social media promotes people's freedoms of speech and association and assesses how much leaders engage citizens online. These above factors are then used to find out how social media enhances participatory government and how relevant the Arnstein model of citizen participation is to the participatory governance discourse. The media theories are also tested to see their relevance.

4.1 Data Presentation

4.1.1 Construction of concepts

Students understand participatory governance as a process that has various stakeholders that include citizens and leaders. These stakeholders have various roles to play and leaders are supposed to listen and respond to the requests that citizens have. Citizens are supposed to communicate their ideas to the state through dialogue which is supposed to be initiated by the leaders. There is a perception that leaders have the duty to initiate dialogue with the citizens once they are elected into office. Students revealed their understanding of participatory governance in the processes and constitutions of the clubs that were interviewed. The Pan African club and the Student Representative Council revealed that they practice participatory governance

in undertaking duties. This is done through different committees that first deliberate on issues and have the voting ability so as to pass a resolution. Open deliberation for all and voting are elements that students feel reflect political governance participation.

To further understand the students construct of concepts, the questionnaire asked them to tick the political governance areas that they have interest in. This was done to find out where student's constructs of participation are reflected. The questionnaire had a few options to tick but did not limit students to the possible areas of interest. The areas the questionnaire suggested had been selected by the researcher because they are common themes that are found under political governance instruments in The Mo Ibrahim foundation, African Peer Review Mechanism and are also popular topics on social media platforms.

The most popular issue was that of human rights. This was reflected in the interviews with a possible reason being that students are more aware of their rights because this is the most conflicting issue between citizens and their governments. The Pan African club members and the Student Representative Committee members revealed that human rights are mentioned in media platforms and this offers a possible reason for their popularity which speaks to the Agenda setting ability of the media.

Table 1 Showing issues students respond to online

Issues that students respond to	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Human Rights	40	38,8	42, 6	90,4
Corruption	30	29,1	31,9	74,5
Elections	15	14,6	16,0	90,5
Other (Health, Leadership, Economic Policy, Representation)	9	8,7	9,6	100.0
Missing (Who did not fill out section in questionnaire)	9	8,7		
Total	103	100,0		

Corruption was the second most popular topic with elections the least popular from the given options. Other issues that students respond to and feel that are governance related include health, leadership, economic policy and representation. A notable factor is that the health issue came from The Faculty of Health Sciences student, Economic policy came from a Faculty of Management student and leadership from a Humanities student. The fact that these few responses can be grouped under the

Faculty of the respondent reveals that the faculty and field of expertise possibly influence how a student views governance. To further understand this, more focused research might be needed but in this study, an inference at a relationship between the faculty and understanding variables is present. In contrast, 9 students did not respond to this part of the questionnaire. A reason that was listed by the non respondents is that political governance does not concern them. On analysing this statement, there is a possibility that the respondents do not understand the link between political governance and their field of expertise. There is also the possibility that these respondent view governance only from the field that they study as seen in the Health students case. This does not mean that students are ignorant but that there is little knowledge on how governance and the different fields they are familiar with interact.

4.1.2 Participatory ability of social media

Students felt that social media enhances citizen participation through providing a sociable platform for airing views. There is freedom to discuss governance issues within a person's social network but this network often excludes actual real life leaders unless one deliberately looks to engage them by sending a request on Facebook or following them on Tweeter. The social media realm has its own leaders who start debates and encourage citizens to participate and these can be either civil society or the more politically conscious social media users within a person's social network. The definition of this social network does not mean personal relationships with such persons but can be started online through trusted affiliates who post about election results or major news outlets that provide links to articles and events online.

Social media enhances participation through offering a communication channel with leaders. Student leaders believed that this platform has a lot of potential to engage and save government money as they do not have to travel to remote areas as much to engage citizens but there is no political will to do this. However, this view overlooks the view that most of rural Africa does not have electricity and let alone Internet services. This shows the developmental gap in terms of infrastructure in African countries. This factor influences the reach of citizen participation because until rural Africa can afford internet enabled mobile phones, social media will be open to urban areas only. Social media educates citizens on their rights and duties as citizens through the different networks that are online. This is important in learning about issues that are affecting governance but does not give citizens the power to make decisions. This reduces the participatory nature of social media because participation is towards a goal and when this is not achieved, human development is stifled.

Table 2: Cross tabulation of respondents age group and platform used to access governance news

Respondents age group	Platform used to access latest governance news					Total
	Facebook	Tweeter	Online Newspapers	Whatsap p	Other(TV, Radio, Skype)	
18-21	8	4	25	0	0	37
22-27	9	1	21	4	1	36
27-32	3	0	5	2	0	10
32 & above	4	1	8	2	2	17
Total	24	6	59	8	3	100

Online newspapers are used by the majority of students to access news. An aspect worthy of note here is that besides the reasons of easy access and cheaper rates, a prevailing view is that these platforms are interactive. Citizens not only want to be told the news and notified of issues but also want a platform and chance to respond and react to issues through articles. The segment labelled Other in the table included radio, television and other social media platforms such as Mixit and Skype. These social media platforms are also used to access news but are not as popular and this reveals the diverse nature of social media. On analysing this diverse nature, the question on which platform allows the most engagement between citizens and a

governance institution then comes up. Student leaders noted that Facebook is probably the most user friendly because it is not stringent in its joining requirements.

4.1.3 Challenges of social media

Social media faces challenges that range from simple access to the Internet, literacy and the very make up of social media portals themselves. Social media faces a challenge that it is often limited to a specific demographic group due to the language factor. Social media uses the English language as the main language of communication and this delimits its users who have to be at the most basic level literate to be able to use social media. This leaves out most of the rural and urban African population that is illiterate.

Beyond being literate, the ability to use a mobile phone and computer to access the internet is also limited to a demographic section of a country. Internet enable cell phones are often expensive and are usually beyond the reach of a large segment of the population. This means that social media will be accessed by a segment of population that might not be representative of the general population in terms of economic income, age and social mobility. This limits how much social media can be used to provide a general sentiment of the population on governance aspects.

Social media also limits participation because one can choose to leave out segments of the population that they might not be comfortable within the social media portals. Social media is set up in a way that leaves room to accept a person as a friend on Facebook and Tweeter or to ignore them. This means that users which can be societal institutions and individuals can leave out people they disagree with. This limits the participatory aspect because one is identified with a group of likeminded individuals

and not real sentiment on the ground. There is a fear of follow up on comments made on online platforms by intelligence or security agents.

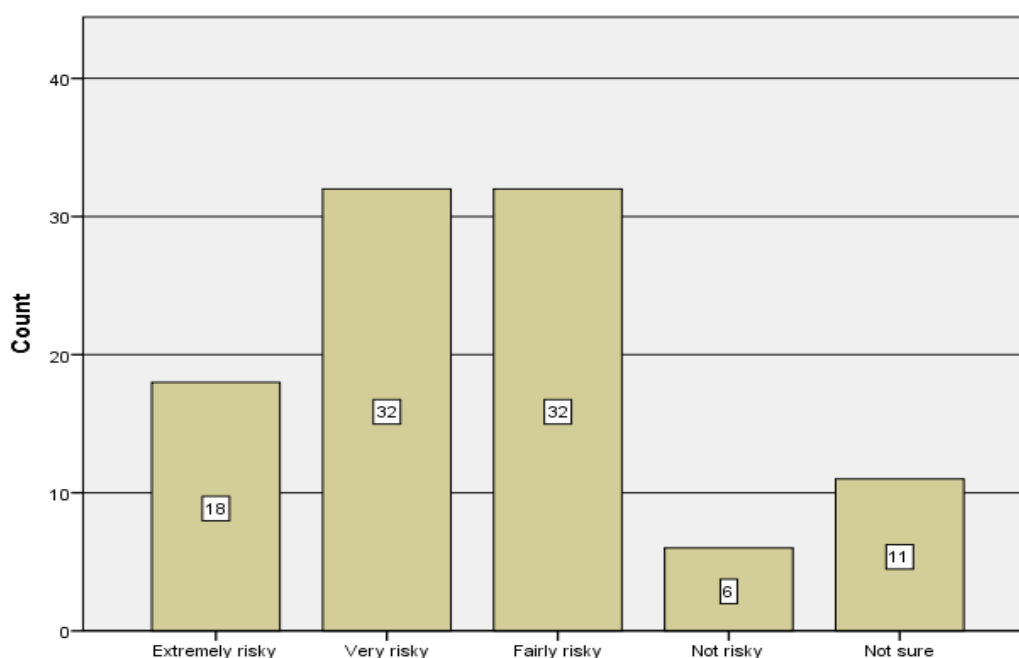


Figure 2: Simple bar graph illustrating number of respondents rating political environment

Zimbabwean student's responses had clear declarations that there will be follow up when one speaks out their mind online and in public. Such fears in a democracy undermine any platform for citizen participation because when people are not free to express themselves, then they will shy away from the public sphere. This means that the public sphere is no longer public as only those with political muscle can air their views without fear of reprisal. The public sphere that the media is supposed to promote debate and deliberation on issues and policies. In the same light, the online environment is seen as very risky by students. The reasons that came up for this are

fear of violent harm and abduction. When there is fear, participation is artificial and does not contribute to good governance.

The question on whether students feel leaders use their comments to decide on policy was met with a negative response in that leaders hardly listen to citizens as seen in the pie chart below.

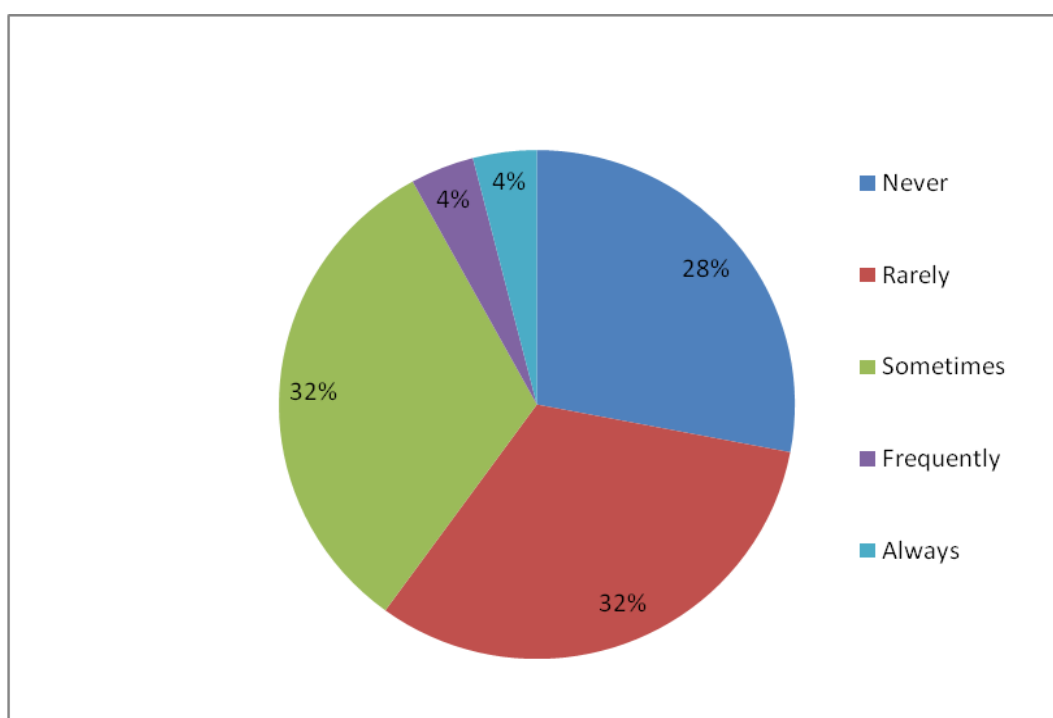


Figure 3: Pie chart showing sentiment on whether leaders use social media to engage citizens

The feeling from the general student population that leaders do not use social media to engage citizens was shared by student leaders. Student leaders in the SRC said that the reason citizens often protest local council decisions is that what will have been contributed by citizens is not what is passed. The example of South African

councillors whose houses were burnt down because of voting for prepaid electric and water meters that citizens had turned down was cited. In this case, councillors did the opposite of what they had been told by their constituencies. There is a perception that leaders merely do ceremonial consulting but do not make decisions based on the opinions gathered from social media. However, this raises the question on why leaders use social media if they are not going to use opinion gathered from there. The NANGO Youth coordinator revealed that as a leader, he solicits opinion online and tries by all means to deliver that opinion to the regional body. A challenge he stated that possibly explains why leaders fail to communicate prevailing opinion is that of misplaced priorities. He noted that leaders and citizen priorities often conflict and due to greed, leaders often put their interests above the communities.

Table 3. Cross tabulation of age group and disclosure of personal identity

Respondents age group	Pseudonym or real name when commenting?		Total
	Real name	Pseudonym	
18-21	13	24	37
22-27	10	22	32
27-32	4	6	10
32 and above	8	8	16
Total	35	60	95

Empirical evidence reveals that the ability to alter personal details influences how honest or open a person will be online. In the table above, the 18-27 age groups have the most respondents and more respondents do not use their real names when commenting online. In the interviews, it was revealed that one can be careless and insensitive with their words as long as the personal details on the social network are false and they can safely abuse people anonymously. An example worthy of note is that of Congo that came from the East Africa Community Leader.³ He revealed that during elections, some people set up pages that pretended to be electoral bodies and put out false elections results online. This caused some fights amongst supporters of

³ Interview held on March 6, 2013

different parties. On the other hand, one can comment and feel safer when they do not use their real name on different platforms. This complex scenario of what people will say when they feel they are untouchable presents a dilemma for governments that do not govern well.

The Pan Africanist group tries to ensure maximum member participation through different committees that focus on different areas such as finance and regional affairs. The Pan African club already advocates for involvement not only in governance but political issues as well. One member noted that “⁴politics is King and whoever says that politics does not matter is foolish because sooner or later, whatever decisions leaders make, will affect the content of your fridge at home”. On probing about this view, the member revealed that the elections that citizens ignore and referendums that people refrain from contributing to affect all aspects of their lives directly and indirectly.

On analysis the researcher notes that bad governance also comes from the citizens who abstain from participating in governance issues. This view raises questions that can be explored in other researches such as citizen duties and what role the citizen is obliged to play in society. The importance of social media from the club is in its ability to create a platform for robust discussions on governance derivatives. A point worthy of note is that social media circumvents bureaucratic procedure for meeting in person. One member noted that the POSA and AIPPA acts in Zimbabwe will quickly bring police to full alert when citizens meet to discuss on common issues thus social media circumvents this challenge.

⁴ Pan African Club member interviewed on March 7, 2013

However, the Pan African club does not have online accounts because it is currently in a restructuring phase with new members being looked for from the wider student body. The network engineer showed interest and knowledge on current affairs in the governance realm. The engagement aspect of social media was quizzed vis-a-vis the constitution making process in Zimbabwe. In this case, social media was not used to find out people's views although not all people could attend outreach meetings due to work and other commitments. The NANGO youth coordinator noted that his organization NANGO uses participatory approaches through social media and encourages use of social media to circumvent physical restrictions.

A high rate of data is taken up by social media on campus. Staff and students spend more time on Facebook and social networking than academic search engines. For instance, on the day of interviewing, Tuesday 27 February, the time was 3:40 pm in the afternoon and at this point, 5gigabytes had been taken up by social media whilst only 468 megabytes had been used for academic purposes. The academic data usage which is less than half of a gigabyte and 9 percent of data used on social media shows that students and staff spend more time on social media than on academic searches. The biggest consumer of social media data was Facebook. The more time spent on Facebook does not necessarily mean that people are accessing governance issues and commenting on issues but it possibly mean that people are exposed to latest issues more. On Africa University portals, interesting dynamics are also at play. There is an online discussion platform that has been set up on the education Moodle site. This is an online chat forum where a student can introduce a topic and then it can be discussed online although students have not been using this site as

much for academic discussions as for social issues. This site was reintroduced after it had been temporarily suspended due to crude content and foul language that students ended up using on each other. Instead of educational discussions on African issues the platform ended up being used to abuse other students, gossip and as a tabloid.

In terms of social media, The IT Director noted that there is a risk of over blowing the importance and impact of social media. He highlighted the example of Egypt, where citizens are still suffering a year after protests. The point he highlighted is that unless social media leads to policy change, it is not helpful. Face to face interaction with the leaders is still the most viable avenue that will bring change is the view that the director had. He noted that African leaders are not too aware of how social media works. In contrast, he noted that he has donated money to The Obama Campaign and is on Obama's mailing list. There is also YouTube and Facebook direct which allows for face to face interaction and question answer interaction with Obama, a feature that is foreign in African governance leaders. On probing further, the ICT director revealed that African leaders are unresponsive and insensitive which explains why they shy away from such platforms. Social media can be used to make leaders accountable by asking them pertinent questions about their conduct thus ineffective leaders often shy away from social media because they fear exposure. The NANGO Northern Region Youth coordinator revealed that there has been a massive campaign to access youths and encourage them to participate in national processes via social media. He revealed that social media is now included in civil society's programming in a bid to involve youths in national discussions.

4.2 Data Analysis

4.2.1 Arnstein model

The Arnstein (1969) model offers ranks of citizen participation in the form of a ladder. The ladder has 8 rungs which are grouped into three sections that are non-participation, tokenism and citizen power. At the lowest level of efforts there is non-participation whilst some participatory efforts fall under tokenism whilst the highest level of citizen participation is citizen power. Students are of the view that the engagement online is tokenism as citizens are only consulted on a few issues. At this level, there is no power to influence decisions and citizens are merely contributing their views. This can be expressed through a leader who posts about a prospective bill or act on Facebook and asks for comments but does not use these comments to influence his decision on the bill or act.

To get to a higher level of participation that citizens have the power to make decisions, students were of the opinion that governance stakeholders have to play their respective roles. The media should not be biased in its reporting so that all facts are in the open when people meet to deliberate on issues concerning the wider community. Students were of the view that there should be respect for citizen's freedoms of speech and thought so that all citizens have the opportunity to participate online. The violence and intimidation that has plague citizen and state relations in Africa should be stopped so that there can be peaceful deliberations amongst governance stakeholders.

The impact of social media on the public sphere that Habermas speaks of is also revealed. Social media offers a possible deliberation sphere for citizens but falls short

in that the citizens have to meet some requirements to effectively participate. If citizens are illiterate and do not know how to use the Internet and social media portals, they will not be able to take part in online discussions. Therefore public opinion means which emanates from social media may not really be representative of the wider community.

The researcher then tried to understand why there have been social media facilitated protests in Egypt, Syria and Tunisia but very little of these in southern Africa. Another question the researcher tried to answer is whether citizen protests would fit into the Arnstein model of citizen participation. A possible reason for less protests of the revolutionary nature in southern African is that citizens are not as aware of their rights. However, from the responses given by students, this reason does not hold too much weight as a high awareness of rights was noticed amongst respondents. A possible reason that emerged from student responses is the instilled government fear amongst citizens. This fear of death and harassment was high amongst respondents from different countries and possibly offers an explanation to why citizens have not followed the revolutionary path in spite of common problems that the northern countries faced as well. The Arnstein model does not give room for participation in the form of protests. This weakness of the model presents an opportunity to come up with improvements that incorporate modern dynamics of citizen participation.

4.2.2 Media Model Testing

The functionalist perspective was viewed in the findings as the media plays a role in society. Respondents revealed that latest governance news is put out by the media and these are attempts at democratizing society. However, a dysfunctional role is

revealed as hate speech and bias which often creates tensions that can escalate into violence are also seen in society.

The Hypodermic needle is also seen at play with prejudice being injected in the media and jokes in the media. Jokes that mock certain politicians and segments of the population often result in a negative attitude and behaviour towards specific groups. The diverse ethnic composition of Africa was constantly mentioned by respondents and was noted as an area where the Hypodermic needle could be found at play. The researcher noted that there has been a steady build up of hate and prejudice fed by the media across different countries. Social media has not improved the situation as ethnic groupings are on social media portals such as Facebook and continue to feed ideas that perpetuate conflict.

The Agenda setting perspective was also evident in social media exchanges. The media determines what is important in terms of issues. The researcher noted that as the study was being undertaken, the Zimbabwean constitutional referendum was being planned and the media dedicated a lot of space to this process. Mass media projected the referendum as the only process that was taking place in the country and shows how the media can shape public agenda.

4.2.3 Neoliberal perspective

The neoliberal approach to citizen participation was also seen in the data collected. The neoliberal perspective advocates for citizen participation to be led by civil society. From the NANGO northern region youth coordinator as well as respondents from the Pan African club members, civil society is very active in using social media to help youths participate in the national political governance discourse. The

NANGO leader revealed that his group used the social media in campaigning for youths to learn and contribute ideas on the new constitution in Zimbabwe from the years of 2012 to 2013. The neoliberal perspective also pushes for the state to have a “hands-off” approach to citizen participation and only go as far as creating a conducive environment for citizens to participate.

However, on the ground, there is evidence that the state directly interferes by putting out laws that limit citizens’ speech and movement such as AIPPA and POSA in Zimbabwe. Respondents revealed double standards of African governments that state one thing on the media but do another on the ground. African governments purport to support civil society but limit its ability to perform on the ground through legislation and harassment. The free media that the neoliberal perspective supports is not evident on the ground as states often have a monopoly of the media and this has a direct influence on the content that is published. Respondents were of the suggestion that states should let the media enjoy some freedom so that governance as a whole improves. Political governance would improve with press freedom because with the media acting as watchdog, leaders would be under pressure to lead better. The neoliberal perspective was useful in understanding the dynamics that plague media and governance as it provides insight on what African states are trying to fit into due to the influence of International nongovernmental organizations.

4.2.4 Group dynamics on social media

Students revealed that social media alienates citizens according to accessibility. Citizens who can afford to engage in social media discussions often do not interact with those who do not have access. The technological gap thus creates a divide that

threatens the participatory aspect of social media in as far as incorporating all members of society. The divide between urban users who use social media and a largely rural population that does not know how to use the Internet creates a gap that limits the ability to use social media to enhance participatory governance. There are also groups that emerge on the social media platforms as well.

There are factions that emerge on social media due to the nature of social media. Social media permits one to choose friends that they wish to associate with and block those that may not want to engage with. This often alienates groups that may have opposing views and those that may not choose to remain neutral. These group dynamics have been reflected on Facebook with different pages reflecting different groupings that differ on ideology.

The researcher noted the choice of words by respondents revealed group dynamics that show some identity setting. There is a perception that pit “us” the normal citizens who are oppressed and repressed against “them” who are in power and do not care about us the citizens down here. The recommendations given by some respondents revealed this core and periphery sentiment as there is a general feeling of repression by the dominant ruling group. Leaders in power are viewed as a separate entity that operates autonomously and the citizens are mere subjects and victims of these decisions. The researcher discovered that this probably means that citizens do not feel like they are partners in governance but are mere subjects that are at the mercy of leaders. This feeling is possibly detrimental to society because there is doubt of a unity of purpose when one group feels superior or inferior to another. If this feeling is prevalent in a community then there is a possibility of sabotage of one

group's project as it will be viewed as an outsider initiative that will not benefit all groups. The researcher noted the prevalence of ethnic clashes on social media portals in Congo. These clashes take on a nasty nature due to hate speech which emanate from simple discussion topic such as corruption or elections.

4.3 Way forward

In terms of Internet coverage and accessibility, students were of the opinion that there should be a move towards electrifying rural areas so that technology access can be increased. This was based on the idea that the globalizing world and technological advances are not going to stop so African governments should make a deliberate effort to try and catch up with the more advanced world.

With respect to media reporting, students were of the opinion that there should be less reporting bias especially towards ruling political parties. The media has become a mouthpiece for one political party and this limits opposing views which are then harshly dealt with using state machinery such as intelligent services. In this regard, governments should learn to accept criticism because this criticism will help the country develop.

Students and key informants stressed the need for governments to find out citizen expectations in governance. Delivery of key services can only be done when leaders are aware of their citizen's expectations. Issues such as checks and balances on power, respect of human rights and privacy issues were seen as a starting point in moving forward.

4.4 Conclusion

From the data presented, most students indeed use social media to contribute to governance issues. However, confidence in the participating system is lacking because there is a perception that leaders do not listen to citizens because leaders do not seem to make decisions based on online sentiment. This belief is possibly wider than the study scope of social media and speaks to the governance process as a whole.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Recommendations and Conclusion

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the process of data collection and key findings before it gives the recommendations. The summary of the research process draws from the literature review and data collection process. The recommendations given are for social media users, government and civil society. The chapter ends with a conclusion that closes the research as a whole.

5.1 Summary of research process

The researcher sought to identify ways in which social media enhances citizen participation in political governance and establish whether participatory governance principles are reflected through social media. On establishing these principles the researcher sought to examine how they are reflected in social media exchanges. To establish a foundation for the study, literature around media and citizen participation was examined to set the base of inquiry.

Media theory in the functionalist perspective, Hypodermic needle and agenda setting made up the Media theory. The governance element was analysed through the Neoliberal perspective. These perspectives helped to come up with a set of principles that could be used to assess empirical data. To this effect, social media was examined to see whether it reflects participatory principles such as unrestrictive membership of citizens, governance content in its discussion, freedom of citizens to contribute and the ability to engage all governance stakeholders. Social media was assessed through these factors to find its place and contribution to political governance participation.

The researcher then came up with a set of data instruments that would find out whether the above participatory principles are reflected in social media. The researcher principally used a qualitative approach given that the desire was to establish how social media contributes to political governance participation through assessing what people say and do on different social media platforms. The data collection was done over two weeks at the Africa University Campus. The researcher collected responses from 103 Africa University Students from 13 different African countries. These students came from the six faculties and Institute of Peace, Leadership and Governance that make up Africa University. Responses from key informants such as the network engineer, information and communication technology director, Pan African Club, Student Representative Council, student community leaders and the Zimbabwean National association of non-governmental organizations northern region youth leader were also used to corroborate student perceptions.

A number of challenges were faced during the research and these include the delay of approval letter to conduct research on campus from the Registrar's office. This reduced the data collection time for the research and the researcher had to extend the time to collect data.

5.2 Summary of key findings

The responses from students show that there is a general mistrust and fear of verbally contributing to the political governance discourse through social media. The reasons for this are the fear of follow ups, abductions and harassments that citizens have been exposed to in the past due to harsh governments that restrict people's civic freedoms.

Responses from the 13 countries that respondents came from show that there is a prevailing fear of intelligencia that can follow up on social media contributions.

Human rights are the most popular issue that students comment on online. There is a wide awareness of civic freedoms such as freedom of speech and expression which were reflected in reasons why pseudonyms are preferred when commenting online. The preferred platform for acquiring governance news is online newspapers and the reasons are that these papers are cheaper, more accessible and more interactive. Respondents expressed concern about rural areas not being able to contribute ideas via social media platforms as respondents felt that rural folk do not have easy and reliable access to internet services. On analysing this factor it is possible that the challenge is not merely internet access in rural areas but literacy levels can also be a limiting factor. Beyond literacy, Internet access is expensive because of the few access points available. Internet enabled mobile hand sets are more expensive than basic calling handsets and with low incomes, they are beyond the reach of not only rural folk but some urbanites as well. Another significant finding is how civil society and non-governmental organizations are emphasising the use of social media in their work. Civil society is using social media to mobilize youths behind different causes as seen in the online mobilization for voters in the run up to the Zimbabwean constitutional referendum on 16 March 2013. Facebook and Tweeter were used to mobilize youths to vote through NANGO affiliated organizations. Civil society is then seen as trying to open up the public sphere for citizens to participate in by using social media as a convenient and cheaper means to ensure citizens contribute their ideas.

Although social media can lead to good governance by serving as a virtual public sphere, without the political will, social media will remain a forum that people can complain about governance with no real change occurring. Social media and its advantages of cheaper access do not suffice to ensure widespread citizen participation because not all people have access to Internet services. The research also showed that Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation is a useful tool in assessing how helpful a method of citizen participation is in influencing policy. Social media was seen to be at the consultation level and there is room for social media to move up the rungs and reach a level where citizens have real power to influence discourse and decisions.

5.3 Recommendations

The researcher recommends a University Wide course that gives a basic understanding of a citizen's duties, responsibilities and gives an understanding of how governance affects all the students and programmes under the different faculties. Citizen participation should not be limited to a course under the Institute of Peace, Leadership and Governance only as it affects all citizens and should be presented as such so as to better equip students with skills and knowledge about how all economic, social and political facets of a country link together. With this knowledge, students can better improve governance from their different fields of expertise.

A clear Internet and privacy policy that speaks on rights and restrictions is needed so as to reduce fear to express oneself online as well as reduce abuse and arrests of citizens who post online. The idea behind the social media in citizen participation is

about creating a public sphere where ideas can be freely exchanged and citizens can feel they are a significant part of the governance process. To this effect, the media needs to play a more impartial role by providing a platform that comes up with realistic ideas from the citizens.

The researcher also recommends that IPLG starts researching more on the idea of social media as a means of participation in the country of Zimbabwe. There has been a huge expansion of the mobile services market and this has created a virtual world that also discusses on governance issues. The online sentiment has not been comprehensively researched on in Zimbabwe and IPLG needs to research on this.

Social media could be integrated into the basic governance system in African society through a social media strategy. This strategy would require planning and development. As service delivery such as water delivery and bill payments go online, social media could initially be tried out as a means to gauge public opinion on new services just as the way suggestion boxes worked before. As the strategy develops it could incorporate more processes and develop new processes that can be done in person without necessarily meeting. The idea would be to engage citizens who are often mobile and do not have the time to come for community meetings which should not be discarded but complimented through social media. The possible return on investment by central government would be high because the benefits go beyond the engagement aspect. Social media would help garner support for development programmes because citizens are better informed of the happenings in society. Linked to this is the possibility that citizens can also contribute more ideas for programmes and critique programmes which will increase the success rate of

programmes. Due to technological advancements and increase of information technology advancements, governments could save money on bulky paperwork by having information saved on servers. Offsite servers increase security of information and provides quicker access to information for any stakeholder. As the world is moving to a more automated globe, social media would be a massive help and cheaper method to access citizens on a more regular basis.

The researcher recommends that social media be incorporated in aspects such as human rights and democracy. Human rights monitoring can be done by all Zimbabweans who have access to Internet enabled cellphones. This could help bring out events that are often swept under the carpet and encourage an open society. Citizens can enquire on democracy and procedures from different committees and groupings that deal with issues of conflict such as human rights commissions and truth commissions. Social media is strong in that it provides a platform to directly interact with a citizen such that intermediary through representation is often cut off. This is useful in getting accurate information on sentiments from citizens and the researcher recommends the use of social media to conduct online surveys and opinion polls which would greatly improve governance.

Another recommendation would be for the incorporation of social media in health service delivery in African countries. Health awareness could be greatly advanced through the use of social media as citizens use social media every day. Knowledge can be spread through different platforms which could go a long way in curbing the spread of illnesses that often kill people in Africa. Social media can also be used to improve health service delivery by improving communication between service

providers and citizens. There is a challenge of leaders in different sectors being out of touch with reality on the ground because leaders do not stay in their constituencies and social media could possibly improve the communication channels.

5.4 Conclusion

Social media enhances citizen participation in political governance by providing a cheaper platform for the economically active to contribute to discussions. Social media contributes to citizen participation by providing a more accessible contributory point for the 18-34 years working class which is literate and has access to Internet services. This group can access social media at work through computers and on the way home through Internet enabled mobile phones.

Participatory governance principles that are reflected through social media are found in the content, membership, ability of citizens to freely express themselves and the ability of social media to engage governance stakeholders. The content on social media reflects participatory governance through discussions on corruption, elections and human rights but falls short on the membership. Social media membership alienates a larger African population due to literacy and cost factor. The literacy levels are not as high in grassroots communities thus social media does not provide an opportunity for a lot of citizens to participate.

Governance stakeholders such as leaders and governance institutions have not fully accepted social media as a platform for citizen engagement. The younger leaders in both ruling and oppositional parties use social media to engage citizens but older leaders have not fully embraced this method. Thus in not being used by older leaders who are often the true holders of power in society, social media undermines its

participatory nature. Social media has few older generational leaders and this limits its ability to be truly participative. Participatory governance is tolerant of diverse views and gives citizens freedom to speak but it can also block a group that is not positively viewed. This is seen in social media through blocking and censoring views that one may not be comfortable with. This research showed the strengths, weakness and opportunities surrounding social media as a means of citizen participation. It was also revealed that citizen participation fits into the wider discourse of good governance and that states need to improve communication with citizens because that is the only way that a society can holistically develop its economic, social and political facets.

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Appendix

Africa University

Participatory governance through social media questionnaire

Thank you for participating in this survey. The initial section will collect some background information about you and then you will be asked some specific questions about how you use participate in discussions and deliberations on social media. I look forward to hearing your opinion and hope that you enjoy this experience. Social Media platforms refers to Facebook, Tweeter, YouTube, blogs, whatsapp and any other online network you use.

Personal Information

Male ☐ Female ☐

Age Group

18-21 ☐ 22-27 ☐ 27-32 ☐ 32 and above ☐

Faculty

Country.....

Participatory governance through social media

1. Which platform do you use to acquire the latest governance news?

Facebook ☐

Tweeter ☐

Online newspapers ☐

Whatsapp ☐

If other please specify.....

Why do you prefer this platform?.....

2. Which governance issue do you mostly comment on?

Corruption ☐

Elections ☐

☐

Human Rights

If other please specify.....

3. Do you use your real name or pseudonym on online discussion forums?

Real Name ☐ Pseudonym ☐

Why

.....

4. Would you share comments you do online in public? Yes ☐ NO ☐

Why.....

.....

5. In your opinion, do political leaders make many efforts to use social media to engage with you on online platforms? (Please Tick)

Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Frequently / Always

6. In your opinion, do political leaders use the views you put online in policy decisions?(Please tick)

Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Frequently / Always

7. Online discussion platforms give you a chance to debate on government policy (Please tick)

Strongly disagree/ Disagree/ Neither agree nor disagree/ Agree/ Strongly agree

8. Online discussion platforms are tolerant of diverse views?

Strongly disagree/ Disagree/ Neither agree nor disagree/ Agree/ Strongly agree

9. Can one speak out and criticize without restraint on online platforms?

Always/Almost always/Sometimes/Almost never/Never

10. How would you describe the environment in political discussions online?

Extremely risky/ Very risky/ fairly risky/ not risky/ not sure

11. In your opinion, how many people in your country, if any, are afraid to openly express their political views? Please give an estimate percentage

.....

12. Please list recommendations on participatory governance through social media

.....

.....

Focus Group and Interview Guide

1. How do you understand participatory governance?
2. In your work on democracy as a club, do you use participatory governance? How?
3. In what ways do social media portals enhance citizen participation in governance?
4. In what ways do social media portals encourage debate on government decisions?
5. How do social media portals encourage engagement between leaders and citizens?

Countries represented from respondents

Zimbabwe

Zambia

Democratic Republic of Congo

Liberia

Angola

Malawi

Sierra Leone

Cameroon

South Sudan

Nigeria

Lesotho

Sudan

Kenya