

**USES OF FACEBOOK BY YOUTH IN VHEMBE DISTRICT SOUTH
AFRICA**

by

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DECLARATION

I, **Sundani Ndivhuwo Doctor**, declare that the dissertation entitled, “**Uses of Facebook by youth in Vhembe District South Africa**” hereby submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Media Studies at the University of Limpopo, is my academic work, and has not previously by any means submitted at another university or faculty. All resources that I have used and quoted have been indicated or acknowledged by means of completed references. My student number is XXXXXXXXXX

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the uses of Facebook by youth in the Vhembe District Municipality of Limpopo Province, South Africa. It is exploratory qualitative research. The research sample consisted of twenty (20) respondents both 10 males and 10 females whose ages range between 18 and 29 years who are on Facebook. Purposive sampling was adopted for the study to sample the study population members. The method used to collect data was the structured interview. The data collected from research respondents were analysed in themes and sub-themes using texts and tables. The study found that Facebook is the most preferred social media by youth from the Vhembe District. The platform connects users irrespective of their geographical boundaries and promotes the level of interaction on social and entertaining issues. Facebook also enables the Vhembe District youth to search for jobs and also helps them to discuss their academic and sometimes political issues. Most of the Vhembe District youth prefer using Facebook to share recent information and create content such as pictures and videos with their friends when they are online. The Vhembe District youth also use the platform to entertain each other. The major problems faced by the Vhembe District Facebook users are that a majority of them become exposed to pictures and videos of sexual nature, cyberattack, cyberbullying and vulgar language whereas a minority become victims of account hacking and invasion of privacy. The research respondents came up with solutions to prevent social media challenges. A majority of respondents suggested that strong passwords, an increase in privacy, social media law implementation, social media campaigns and social media education can help prevent online challenges. A minority of students indicated that parental support, strong age restriction, adding known Facebook users, blocking, unfollowing and unfriending unwanted users can help to prevent challenges faced by Facebook users.

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DEDICATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Pages
DECLARATION	i
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
DEDICATION	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xi
CHAPTER 1:	
INTRODUCTION	
1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY	1
1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM	3
1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW	4
1.3.1 The importance of social media to the youth	5
1.3.2 Content youth share on social media	5
1.3.3 Challenges youth encounter when using social media	6
1.3.4 Technical solutions to prevent social media abuse	6
1.4 THE ROLE OF THEORY IN THE STUDY	7
1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	8
1.5.1 Aim of the study	8
1.5.2 Objectives of the study	8
1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	8
1.6.1 Research design	9
1.6.2 Sampling procedure	9
1.6.2.1 <i>Population</i>	9
1.6.2.2 <i>Sampling technique</i>	10
1.6.3 Data collection method	10

1.6.4 Data analysis method	10
1.6.5 Quality criteria	11
1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	11
1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	12
1.8.1 Individual autonomy	12
1.8.2 The risk of harm	12
1.8.3 Respondents' anonymity	12
1.8.4 Trustworthiness	13

CHAPTER 2:

CONCEPTUAL AND OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

2.1 INTRODUCTION	14
2.2 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF FACEBOOK	14
2.3 TRADITIONAL MEDIA	16
2.4 DIGITAL MEDIA	17
2.5 SOCIAL MEDIA	24
2.5.1 Facebook	28
2.5.2 Twitter	29
2.5.3 YouTube	30
2.5.4 WhatsApp (Messenger)	31
2.6 MEDIA ETHICS	34
2.7 YOUTH	36
2.8 SOUTH AFRICA	37
2.9 SUMMARY AND OUTLINE OF CHAPTER 2	38

CHAPTER 3:

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION	39
3.2 SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY	39
3.2.1 The basic tenets of the social exchange theory	39
3.2.2 The importance of the social exchange theory	41
3.2.3 Weaknesses of the social exchange theory	41

3.2.4 Relevance of the social exchange theory to this present study	42
3.3 SOCIAL PENETRATION THEORY	43
3.3.1 The basic tenets of social penetration theory	43
3.3.2 The importance of the social penetration theory	44
3.3.3 Weaknesses of the social penetration theory	45
3.3.4 Relevance of the social penetration theory to this present study	45
3.5 LITERATURE REVIEW	46
3.5.1 The importance of social media to the youth	47
3.5.1.1 <i>Connection</i>	47
3.5.1.2 <i>Communication</i>	48
3.5.1.3 <i>Academic purpose</i>	50
3.5.1.4 <i>Fighting boredom</i>	51
3.5.1.5 <i>Job-seeking</i>	52
3.5.2 Content youth share on social media	52
3.5.2.1 <i>Event information</i>	52
3.5.2.2 <i>Created content</i>	54
3.5.3 Challenges youth encounter when using social media	56
3.5.3.1 <i>Cyberattacks</i>	56
3.5.3.2 <i>Cyberstalking</i>	57
3.5.3.3 <i>Sexual bullying</i>	58
3.5.3.4 <i>Culture of online disclosure</i>	59
3.5.3.5 <i>Lack of academic performance</i>	60
3.5.4 Technical solutions to prevent social media abuse	61
3.5.4.1 <i>Data fabrication (Deception)</i>	61
3.5.4.2 <i>Profile privatisation</i>	62
3.5.4.3 <i>Password security</i>	63
3.5.4.4 <i>Media literacy</i>	64
3.5.4.5 <i>Ethical support</i>	65
3.5.4.6 <i>Online campaigns</i>	66
3.6 LAWS GOVERNING SOCIAL MEDIA IN SOUTH AFRICA	66
3.6.1. Privacy law	67

3.6.2 Freedom of expression	68
3.7 SUMMARY AND OUTLINE OF CHAPTER 3	69

CHAPTER 4:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION	70
4.2 DEFINITION OF METHODOLOGY	70
4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN	71
4.3.1 Qualitative research	72
4.3.2 Principal advantages of qualitative research	74
4.3.3 The exploratory research design	75
4.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES	75
4.4.1 Population	75
4.4.2 Sampling technique	77
4.5 DATA COLLECTION METHOD	78
4.5.1 Interviewing	79
4.5.2 In-depth interviewing	80
4.5.3 Structured interviews	81
4.6 DATA ANALYSIS	82
4.6.1 Analysis of qualitative data	82
4.6.2 Thematic analysis	82
4.6.3 Data analysis process	83
4.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	84
4.8 QUALITY CRITERIA	85
4.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	86
4.10 SUMMARY AND OUTLINE OF CHAPTER 4	90

CHAPTER 5:

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

5.1 INTRODCUCTION	91
5.2 BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS	91
5.3 EMPIRICAL RESULTS OF THE STUDY	93

Theme 1: Importance of Facebook to Vhembe District youth	93
Sub-theme 1.1 Connection	93
Sub-theme 1.2 Communication	95
Sub-theme 1.3 Information	96
Sub-theme 1.4 Socialisation	97
Sub theme 1.5 Academic purpose	98
Sub-theme 1.6 Job-seeking	99
Sub-theme 1.7 Entertaining themselves	99
Sub-theme 1.8 Religious purpose	100
Theme 2: Content shared by Vhembe District youth on Facebook	101
Sub-theme 2.1 Created content (pictures and videos)	102
Sub theme 2.2 Updates	104
Sub theme 2.3 Messages	105
Theme 3: Challenges faced by Vhembe District youth on Facebook	105
Sub-theme 3.1 Pornographic materials (Pictures and videos)	105
Sub-theme 3.2 Cyberattacks	107
Sub-theme 3.3 Cyberstalking	108
Sub-theme 3.4 Sexual bullying	108
Sub-theme 3.5 Vulgar language	109
Sub-theme 3.6 False information	110
Sub-theme 3.7 Invasion of privacy	110
Sub-theme 3.8 Hacking of account	111
Theme 4: Solution for preventing social media abuse	112
Sub-theme 4.1 Strong password	112
Sub-theme 4.2 Increase of privacy	113
Sub-theme 4.3 Social media law implementation	113
Sub-theme 4.4 Social media campaigns (outreaches)	114
Sub theme 4.5 Social media education	115
Sub-theme 4.6 Parental support	116
Sub theme 4.7 Strong age restriction	116
Sub theme 4.8 Adding known Facebook users	117

Sub-theme 4.9 Block, unfollow and unfriend	118
Sub theme 4.10 Time limitation	119
5.6 SUMMARY AND OUTLINE OF CHAPTER 5	119

CHAPTER 6:

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION	120
6.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	120
6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS	121
6.3.1 Recommendations to the Vhembe District youth	122
6.3.2 Recommendation to the Ministry of Communications of the Republic of South Africa	122
6.3.3 Recommendations to elderly people and parents in the Vhembe District	123
6.4 CONCLUSION	124

REFERENCES	126
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LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Biographical profile of respondents	92
Table 2: Respondents' content shared on Facebook	101

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	23
Figure 2	33
Figure 3	34

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Consent form	146
Appendix 2: Interview guide	149
Appendix 3: Ethical clearance letter	153
Appendix 4: Language editing letter	154

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CD-ROM	:	Compact Disc Read Only Memory
CJCP	:	Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention
DVD	:	Digital Video Disc
E-mail	:	Electronic mail
EU	:	European Union
FB	:	Facebook
GCIS	:	Government Communication and Information System
ICTs	:	Information Communication Technologies
IDP	:	Integrated Development Planning
IM	:	Instant Messaging
LSMs	:	Living Standards Measures
NCPF	:	National Cybersecurity Policy Framework
SET	:	Social Exchange Theory
SPT	:	Social Penetration Theory
SNSs	:	Social Networking Sites
TNS	:	Transparent Network Substrate
UNCRC	:	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	:	United Nations Children's Fund
USA	:	United States of America
VDM	:	Vhembe District Municipality
WWW	:	World Wide Web

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

During the 21st century, the means of communication have advanced to include many platforms. Social media has created new templates of communications from person to person, person to mass media and vice versa (Pernisco, 2010:5). Furthermore, Pernisco (2010:5) emphasises that in the past five years, social media websites have become universal, giving young people new ways of interacting with each other and communicating with the world.

The coming of the social networking era has brought forth infinite access to free speech in our social environment (Pernisco, 2010:5). Social media platforms, such as Facebook have manifested free speech and connections (Pernisco, 2010:5).

Social media is a broad category or genre of communications media that allows for social interaction among groups of people, whether they are known to each other or strangers localised in the same place or geographically dispersed (Chandler & Munday, 2011:397). According to Mir (2012:2), social media continues to change how people communicate and it includes a broad umbrella of new online communication channels. Similarly, Olowu and Seri (2012:62) indicate that social networking sites are virtual communities where users create individual public profiles, interact with real-life friends and meet other people based on shared interests.

Chowdhury and Saha (2015:28) define social networking sites like Facebook as:

Web-based services that allow individuals to (i) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system (ii) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and (iii) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

Social media is a significant vehicle for fostering social connections that maintain or expand existing social networks (Hakansson & Witmer, 2015:519). Social networking sites, such as Facebook, have become a part of daily life experiences for an increasing number of people (Chowdhury & Saha, 2015:28).

Facebook has attracted considerable attention among researchers and it has experienced a vast expansion in recent years, leading to its extensive use by people from all generations (Rouis, Limayem & Sangari, 2011:965).

Jain, Gupta and Anand (2012:2) explain that when Facebook started, the youth got immediately attracted to it as they found it very convenient to expand their social circle and chat with other fellow youth. In this regard, Wiese, Lauer, Pantazis and Samuels (2014:3) state that Facebook is incorporated into the daily lives of the youth in South Africa. The Gallup report (2014:3) reveals that young people are drawn to Facebook because they want to take part in the conversation and make connections.

This study will investigate the usage of Facebook among youth because it has been perceived that young people are more inclined to post statuses and comments on Facebook that can be described as shocking and sometimes disgraceful and they also upload images of a sexual nature and of nudity that are emotionally disturbing to others.

Hlatshwayo (2014:16), who conducted a social media study in Swaziland, discovered that youth always complain about pornographic materials, bad language, character assassination and gossip that are posted on social media. Chowdhury and Saha (2015:28) are of the opinion that some young people who make use of social networking sites perform various types of wrongdoings that could be detrimental to their peers and they might be involved in illegal acts which could lead to negative feedback on this site. In this regard, Swist, Collin, McCormack and Third (2015:33) emphasise that because of the extensive reach of social media, its users can also deploy it in negative ways, specifically in relation to content, which can lead to potentially disturbing and harmful practices.

Additionally, Olowu and Seri (2012:62) explain that some youth have lost their control over social media usage and begun having problems with their functionality in social and personal circles as the internet has taken over total control of their lives.

This study is limited to the Vhembe District Municipality of Limpopo in South Africa and encompasses both male and female youth who use Facebook. The youth in the Vhembe District frequently use Facebook and one assumes that it has changed the landscape of their daily communication. The study excludes users of other social media such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, Google Plus among others because the majority of the youth who reside in the Vhembe District Municipality mainly use Facebook to exchange messages, pictures and videos.

According to Simbanegavi (2011:1), the Vhembe District Municipality (VDM) is located in the northern parts of Limpopo. The province shares a border with Zimbabwe and Botswana and the district capital is Thohoyandou (Simbanegavi, 2011:1). The district has four local municipalities, namely Makhado, Thulamela, Musina and Mutale.

Simbanegavi (2011:1) reports that during the South Africa Local Government Elections in 2009-2011, the Vhembe District Municipality had a population of approximately 1.2 million people. The Vhembe District Municipality is a rural municipality plagued by a high rate of unemployment and poverty. Simbanegavi (2011:1) states that between 2009 and 2011, unemployment in the Vhembe District Municipality stood at 53 per cent and the poverty rate was at 32 per cent.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The present researcher through the participant observation method noticed that some Vhembe District youth used Facebook to post statuses and comments that were emotionally disturbing to other users and they uploaded pictures of a sexual nature that caused discomfort to other users. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) indicate that participant observation is the process enabling researchers to learn about the activities of the people under study in the natural setting through observing and participating in those activities.

The Vhembe District youth need to express themselves better on Facebook or limit access to their personal information on social media sites.

Badenhorst (2011:2) suggests that disorders such as emotional disturbances when users frequently send cruel or threatening content (e.g., messages or pictures) to a person's social networking website account or a mobile phone; it is usually persistent and repeated and is directed to a specific person and may cause alarm, annoyance or substantial emotional distress to the receiver and other users.

Several researchers, like Rouis *et al.* (2011:965), have examined Facebook users' profiles to determine why and to what extent they are keen on posting messages and sharing pictures and videos. According to Beger and Sinha (2012:27-28), the study conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund South Africa discovered that social media have made it easier for some South African young people to be exposed to sexual content online since 88 per cent of the surveyed students reportedly own their mobile phones and 33 per cent reported having received pornographic images from personal mobile phones. Beger and Sinha (2012:27-28) further caution that exposure to sexual imagery can have detrimental psychological effects on South African young people. In this regard, Madden, Lenhart, Cortesi, Gasser, Duggan, Smith and Beaton (2013), stress that some youth get annoyed when their Facebook friends share inane details and the stress of needing to manage their reputation on Facebook contributes to the lack of enthusiasm.

1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature and other scholarly materials that are related to the research topic discussed in this study are reviewed in this section. According to Boote and Beile (2005:3), a literature review provides a theoretical basis for the research and helps a researcher determine the nature of that particular research. The researcher selects a limited number of works that are central to the study rather than trying to collect a large number of works that are not as closely connected to the topic area. The researcher evaluates reports from existing literature relevant to the study, describing, summarising and clarifying the literature about the uses of social media by the youth.

1.3.1 The importance of social media to the youth

According to Hunter and Caraway (2014:76), many 21st century youth operate in a cultural milieu where social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, have become part of their lived environments and wherein young people display information and ideas, establish friendships or start a feud, and share conversations and perspectives, from the imaginative to the mundane. Ginger (2008:2) states that the youth have grown up and have been socialised into a world shaped by the internet and that they brandish native and latent intuitions and understandings of internet technology unknown to previous generations.

Njoroge (2013:19) highlights that there has been a virtual explosion of the use of social media in making interpersonal connections. This is particularly the case for young people. Social networking has become a phenomenon of unprecedented proportions and is expanding communication. It is also discovered by Halder and Jaishankar (2013:5) that the majority of youth use Facebook to pass time, overcome boredom or seek dating partners, while others would use it for educational purposes.

1.3.2 Content youth share on social media

According to Eke, Omekwu and Odoh (2014:3), social networking sites, including Facebook and Twitter fascinate millions of users, many of whom use these sites as part of their daily activities. Eke *et al.* (2014:3) state that there is an overabundance of social networks with various features meant to suit the different interests of their followers. Hlatshwayo (2014:12) asserts that youth mainly use Facebook to distribute information and ideas, thus increasing the flow of information.

Mir (2012:3) submits that youth often share information about certain events and that, as the number of users who share their experiences of and information on the same event increases, the impact on target users – who is looking for information and recommendations on social media – may increase.

Halder and Jaishankar (2013:18) state that youth watch and exchange sexual clippings on social media. However, Halder and Jaishankar (2013:18) also suggest that while many

young people may be aware of such sexual clippings and sexual fantasy, these are regarded as taboo and the majority of them would refrain from watching such clippings due to fear that parents may come to know of it.

1.3.3 Challenges youth encounter when using social media

With social media engagement becoming more prevalent across a wide age range, (children and young people), there is a greater awareness of the risks they may encounter daily (Swist *et al.*, 2015:56). Other forms of dangerous online behaviour, according to Njoroge (2013:13), include cyberattacks. Njoroge (2013:13) further mentions that female social media users are more likely to be the victims of cyberattacks.

Ginger (2008:13) observed that Facebook is notably favourable to one-sided activity and browsing or "stalking", as most users refer to it. Chowdhury and Saha (2015:30) concur that sometimes youth use Facebook to spread misinformation and carry out various types of cyberstalking with their unknown friends through chatting.

Haddon (2015:7) emphasises that the most high-profile conduct issue concerning potentially negative things young people do online is cyberbullying through the use of social media. Fairbairn, Bivens and Dawson (2013:18) note, however, that young women and girls appear to experience higher rates of sexual violence than any other group.

1.3.4 Technical solutions to prevent social media abuse

According to Boyd (2007:15), youth often fabricate key identifying information like their name, age, and location to protect themselves. While parental groups often encourage this deception to protect young people from strangers, many teens engage in this practice to protect themselves from the watchful eye of their parents. Furthermore, Boyd (2007) confirms that fabricating data does indeed make search more difficult. Boyd (2007) discovered that another common structural tactic youth use to protect themselves from the challenges they may encounter on social media is by choosing to make their profile private, in this way teens can select who can see their content. This prevents parents from seeing the content, but it also means that peers cannot engage with them, unless they have been invited to be included on the social network profile as a friend or contact.

1.4 THE ROLE OF THEORY IN THE STUDY

The present study adopts the social exchange theory which, according to Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005:875), explores exchanges between individuals or small groups. According to Pan and Crotts (2012:73), the social exchange theory focuses on social media communication and explains how human beings communicate with each other, how they form relationships and bonds and how communities are formed through communication exchanges. It is thus relevant to the present study because it purports to explain Facebook relationships.

Pan and Crotts (2012:73) maintain that social media are dependent on users providing content, and an understanding of the motives of why individuals' participation is fundamental. Pernisco (2010:11) indicates that the sites open up different portals through which the users get information and create a more diverse news outlet. The advent of social media websites, including Facebook, means that more people are creating media and, thereby, choosing what messages will shape their society. Kuppuswamy and Narayan (2010:68) emphasise that social networking sites provide individuals with a way of maintaining and strengthening social ties, which can be beneficial in both social and academic settings.

The social penetration theory is also adopted in this study, as social media deals with relational closeness and how it evolves by using Facebook. McCarthy (2009:6) states that the social penetration theory was formulated to describe the dynamics of relational closeness and explains why relationships are formed, why they end, plus the processes that they engage in to prosper. This theory is important in this study because Facebook is also becoming more popular and has become part of daily life for increasing relationships of people. Young people are also attracted to Facebook because of its features. Kuppuswamy and Narayan (2010:67) support the concept of relation closeness when they define social networking as "a set of people and the relationship between them".

1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This section explains the aim and objectives of the study. Simon (2011:1) states that the formulation of the purpose statement needs to meet the aim and objectives of the study to solve the phenomenon being examined.

1.5.1 Aim of the study

The study aims to investigate and explore the uses of Facebook by youth residing in the Vhembe District Municipality in Limpopo, South Africa.

1.5.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are to:

- investigate why the Vhembe District youth find it important to use Facebook;
- determine the types of content the Vhembe District youth share on Facebook;
- identify the challenges faced by the Vhembe District youth when using Facebook
- and discover solutions that could prevent problems the Vhembe District youth encounter on Facebook.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study uses the qualitative research methodology which, according to Fouche and Schurink (2011:310), allows phenomena to be investigated, analysed and interpreted differently depending on one's belief of what social reality is and how social phenomena can be known.

Research methodology assists a researcher to conduct research and assists towards solving a research problem noticed by that researcher. According to Rajasekar, Philominathan and Chinnathambi (2013:5), research methodology is the science of studying how research is to be conducted. Essentially, the methodology has to do with procedures by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena.

1.6.1 Research design

This study uses the exploratory research design because the researcher aims to explore how Vhembe District youth use Facebook. According to Dawson (2002:5), exploratory research is undertaken to explore an area where little is known on the topic or to investigate the possibilities of undertaking a particular research study. Furthermore, Babbie (2011:67) indicates that exploratory study is mostly conducted to satisfy the researcher's curiosity and desire for a better understanding of issues.

1.6.2 Sampling procedure

1.6.2.1 Population

The population of the study is Vhembe District youth who are active Facebook users. According to Du Plooy (2009:109), a population is a group of people with certain similar characteristics. The researcher resides in the Vhembe District and thus found it appropriate to conduct the study in that geographical area. The researcher selected 20 members of the youth population. The reason for selecting 20 members of the youth population is that the researcher is on Facebook and is, therefore, able to identify a number of Facebook users from the Vhembe District on this social network site and is of the view that 20 is sufficient for this study. There is not enough time allocated for this study to work with a large population, because of time constraints. According to Du Plooy (2009:109), due to constraints such as time, cost and personnel, it may not always be possible to have access to the target population to which the researcher wants to generalise findings.

The sample will comprise ten (10) males and ten (10) females who own mobile phones and who are also on Facebook, whose ages range from between 18 to 29 years, irrespective of their levels of education and religious backgrounds. The reason for selecting persons whose ages range from 18 to 29 years is that they are more likely to be found on Facebook, on an hourly basis, sharing content such as messages, pictures and videos.

1.6.2.2 Sampling technique

The researcher adopted purposive sampling, which is also known as judgmental sampling, to sample twenty (20) members of the research population. With the adoption of purposive sampling, the researcher aims to select respondents to identify cases that would be useful to the study. This is because not all the youth on Facebook reside in the Vhembe District. According to Bernard (2013:228), purposive sampling is the sampling method where a researcher decides the purpose he or she wants informants to serve in a study. Furthermore, Babbie (2011:197) indicates that purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling in which the units to be observed are selected based on the researcher's judgment about which ones will be the most useful or representative.

1.6.3 Data collection method

The study employs a structured interview as an instrument of data collection. In structured interviewing, respondents are asked to respond to as nearly identical a set of stimuli as possible (Bernard, 2000:191). Furthermore, Bernard (2000:191) indicates that one variety of structured interviewing involves the use of an interview schedule. The researcher elected to use the in-depth interview approach, with open-ended questions to collect data related to the study objectives. The reason for using in-depth interview questions is that such questions allow the researcher to collect as much rich information as possible from the respondents.

1.6.4 Data analysis method

The study employs thematic data analysis to analyse data from respondents about the uses of Facebook. According to Ibrahim (2012:40), thematic analysis is a type of qualitative analysis used to analyse classifications and present themes (patterns) that relate to the data and it illustrates the data in great detail and deals with diverse subjects through interpretations.

1.6.5 Quality criteria

The credibility criteria involve establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the respondent in the research (Trochim, 2006:1). The researcher will ensure that the credibility is maintained throughout the study, to ensure that the findings reported are the ones obtained through the data collection process undertaken.

Dependability is similar to the concept of replicability or repeatability (Trochim, 2006:1). The researcher will make sure that the research strategy is described and precisely followed to meet the requirements of dependability. Furthermore, the researcher will ensure that all methods in the study are presented to avoid errors in executing the study. Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others (Trochim, 2006:1). The researcher will critically evaluate the methodology that will be used in the research study to ascertain that it yields good results that can be confirmed by research respondents and other researchers.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

With relevant and interesting findings, the study with no doubt will contribute to ongoing social media debates and discussions that would help to promote comfortability on Facebook. The findings of this study could also assist social media researchers and government with multiple opportunities to improve recommendations on the usage of social media platforms and implementations of social media laws and activities that could help youth to foster social interaction.

Vhembe District youth, who are Facebook users, could benefit from this research and it could enhance positive interactions on the social network. The findings could help youth to be more careful in managing their reputations and build good and sustainable friendships with their Facebook friends. Having positive online networks could also help young people from the Vhembe District to gain strong social support. The community members of the Vhembe District, specifically adults, could also benefit from the research recommendations as they could be made aware of the importance of advising the youth

on the use of Facebook without violating the peace and well-being of other Facebook users. This could be done by presenting the recommendations after the study is completed. Other people, for instance, officers in both public and private organisations, could also benefit from this research, enhancing their usage and knowledge of Facebook with other people, including their clients. One is of the view that the findings of the study could assist social media practitioners to enhance their social networking sites by implementing tools to restrict contentious content, such as pornographic images and messages to trend. The study could serve to inspire future media studies students and add information to the existing body of knowledge in the discipline of new media.

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The present study also considers ethical considerations. According to Wassenaar (2014:61), the essential purpose of research ethics is to protect the welfare of research respondents. Wassenaar (2014) further mentions the following ethical considerations which apply to this study:

1.8.1 Individual autonomy

Participation in this study will be voluntary. The respondents will not be forced to participate in the study. The respondents will sign a consent form to confirm their willingness to participate in the research and they are permitted to withdraw at any given point of the research when or if they would like to withdraw from it.

1.8.2 The risk of harm

When conducting practical research, the researcher will ensure that the rights of all the respondents are protected, respected and not infringed upon, even after the research is completed. In this regard, the researcher will be careful and not disclose any confidential information about the respondents when disseminating or publishing the study.

1.8.3 Respondents' anonymity

The researcher will ensure that all the research findings will be made public without any mention of the respondents' identities or names to protect them. Furthermore, the

researcher will provide the respondents with information about how their data were used or published in academic literature.

1.8.4 Trustworthiness

The researcher will ensure to show trustworthiness when conducting the scientific research to protect the welfare of respondents. Another reason is that trustworthiness is a fundamental quality that both the researcher and the respondents look for in each other during the research process.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL AND OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the focus is on the description of the conceptual and operational terms and a historical overview of Facebook as the main representation of all the social media platforms used by the Vhembe District youth. The objective of this chapter is to create a better understanding of the overall study. The descriptions of different concepts by different scholars show how they are related to the study and how social media have emerged in South Africa.

2.2 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF FACEBOOK

Facebook was created by an ambitious Harvard student, Mark Zuckerberg, with the help of Andrew McCollum and Eduardo Saverin. The site was launched in February 2004 and derived its name from its original name, “TheFacebook.com”, and the creators took inspiration from the books of student headshot photos and basic biographical data distributed to Harvard students to tell them about each other (Grimmelmann, 2008:6).

Grimmelmann (2008:6) further reports that by September 2005, Facebook was claiming that 85 per cent of all students registered at 882 colleges had Facebook profiles and 60 per cent of them logged in daily. Grimmelmann (2008:6) also mentions that Facebook allowed high school students to join the website in September 2005, and then, a year later, it was open to anyone with an e-mail address who claims to be 13 years of age or older.

According to Croft (2007:2), after Facebook opened up, anyone with a valid institutional e-mail address from over 30 000 organisations across the world was eligible for membership, including high school students, government employees and the corporate community. Between May 2006 and May 2007, Facebook traffic grew by an astonishing 89 per cent. Croft (2007:2) also discovered that Facebook remained a closed social network until May 2007, when Zuckerberg announced that Facebook was to become the social operating system for the internet. Up until that time, the Facebook platform was for

Facebook alone, but now, users could integrate all of their internet activities into their single Facebook profile.

In August 2007, Facebook announced that it was looking to translate its popularity into bigger profits by offering advertisers direct access to their targeted demographic consumers (Croft, 2007:2). In 2008, Facebook hired Sheryl Sandberg as a chief operating officer – snatching the savvy, high-profile executive from Google Inc – and then later, in the same year, introduced chat (The Associated Press, 2014). In this regard, Croft (2007:2) reports that in February 2009, Facebook introduced “Like”, allowing people to endorse other people's posts, and in September 2011, a new version of the profile page was introduced, which now showed highlights from a person's entire life rather than just recent posts.

In December 2011, Facebook completed a move to Menlo Park, California, and in April 2012 it announced plans to buy Instagram, a photo-sharing social network, for 1 billion dollars in cash and stock (The Associated Press, 2014). The Associated Press (2014) further states that Facebook also disclosed its plans to list its stock on the Nasdaq, under the ticker symbol “FB”. In August 2012, Facebook updated its application for iPhones and iPads, to make it less clunky. According to The Associated Press (2014), in 2014, Facebook said it had more than 1 billion active users worldwide.

Concerning Facebook's progress in the South African context, the South African Social Media Landscape Report (2015:1) reveals that since it is a worldwide social network, Facebook also remains the most popular social network in South Africa. Statistically, where the gender is identifiable, there are 5,6 million males and 5,6 million females who use Facebook in South Africa. According to the South African Social Media Landscape Report (2015:1), the number of users is a clear sign of both the maturity of the platform and its mainstream use as an everyday tool rather than as a high-technology choice.

South African Social Media Landscape Report (2015:1) also revealed that from a marketer's point of view, an equally significant finding is that, of a total of 11,8 million South African users, 22 per cent of the population (8,8 million) access Facebook on their

mobile phones. The statistics further show that Facebook is one of the most favourite social media networks for many people in South Africa.

The Facebook user base is beginning to resemble the South African urban population and the highest growth in the user base of Facebook is seen in three key economic hubs, namely Johannesburg (55 per cent), Pretoria (49 per cent) and Cape Town (44 per cent). Interestingly, Nelspruit continues to show high growth, at 40 per cent (South African Social Media Landscape Report, 2015:1).

2.3 TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Thurman (2013:3) views “traditional media” as anything which does the purpose of communication among family, friends and society as a whole. Furthermore, Thurman (2013:3) states that traditional media can be divided into the following genres: traditional dance, drama, painting, sculpture, song, music, motifs and symbols. All these forms of media may not be popular, but they assist in communication. These forms of media are different in different regions and communities.

Traditional media are methods of communication or forms of publications traditionally used to distribute news and information. Cave paintings, homing pigeons and books were some of the earliest forms of traditional communication or media (Nekatibebe, 2012:19). Traditional media, also referred to as "old media", are media introduced before the advent of the internet and that use various pre-internet media platforms such as magazines, books, newspapers, radio and television (Nekatibebe, 2012:19). The history of traditional media platforms dates back to 59 BC when Julius Caesar introduced a daily sheet, *Acta Diurna* (Daily Events), which was posted around Rome (Nekatibebe, 2012:19).

According to Brooke (1996:1), traditional media refers to: “The conventional means of mass communications as practiced by various global communities and cultures from ancient times.” Brooke (1996) notes that the "folk media" are some of the most vibrant representations of traditional media because they reflect communication channels for the common people of a society or religion. In this regard, Brooke (1996) gave an example of street theatre and puppetry as old media that were practised as conventional means of communication by various global communities.

Traditional media, which in their original manifestation did not require computer technology, do make use of computer technology in their present configuration, as do many other technologies that are not necessarily communication media, for instance, automobiles (Ikenwe & Iwari, 2015:3).

Traditional media, particularly television and radio, have influenced people's daily lives and routines, and have played a significant role in determining the content of the programmes that audiences watched and listened to, as well as controlling the time when this content would be broadcasted (Nekatibebe, 2012:20). In this regard, Nekatibebe (2012:20) states that this meant that people had to adjust their daily routines based on the scheduling of the programmes. Nekatibebe (2012) further notes that traditional media has played three important roles over the years, that is to inform, educate and influence opinions.

According to McGoldrick (2013:3), traditional media channels are the primary mediators of opinions. Although people fortify their opinions through discussions and dialogues, it is the mass media news channels that have been the strongest shapers of public opinion – at least during the last century. However, the rise of new media has increased communication between people all over the globe. People can now interact through websites like Facebook and YouTube. The evolution of these new media technologies has brought about globalisation. There is no doubt that today there is a massive shift away from the old media as people are migrating to the use of smartphones and other digital and social media.

2.4 DIGITAL MEDIA

Over the last two decades, we have witnessed a rapid transformation of traditional media into new media that encompass digital, computerised and networked information and communication technologies (Eid & Ward, 2009:1). Caddell (2013:2) defines "digital media" as "a participatory layer of all media that allow users to self-select their own experiences, and afford users the ability to bridge media, gain feedback, retell their message, and collect relationships". In other words, digital media is a new way of exploring content for users.

Njoroge (2013:7) confirms Caddell's (2013) definition, by stating that digital media refers to on-demand access to content at any time, anywhere and on any digital device, but it also allows for interactive user feedback, creative participation and community formation around the media content. Furthermore, Njoroge (2013:7) states that most technologies described as digital, often have the characteristics of being manipulated, networkable, compressible and interactive.

Some examples of digital media, according to Njoroge (2013:17), may be the internet (World Wide Web), websites, computer multimedia, video games, Compact Disc Read-Only Memory (CD-ROM) and Digital Video Disc (DVD). Caddell (2013:4) is of concern that digital media enables to segment users and customises messages in a valuable and measurable way. Furthermore, Caddell (2013:4) states that the availability of information, users' inherent desire to contribute and user-friendly technology have rewritten the rules of engagement. The conversation on digital media is multi-directional and usually not started or controlled by brands.

The "digital media" term can therefore include all kinds of media formats as long as they are indeed evolving (Siapera, 2012:5). In this regard, Siapera (2012:5) comments that thinking of digital is only half a story; these elements may be present in older media forms as well. Siapera (2012:5) adds that the new elements that point to a significant change in the media are that they are the results of convergence between the computational logic characteristic of the computers and the communicative logic characteristic of the media.

The main outcome of the turn towards digital media is that media texts become de-linked from particular media (Siapera 2012:3). Siapera (2012:3) also says the following about the digital media:

Users can now read books on the internet or on Kindle (a series of electronic readers designed and marketed by Amazon.com), watch television or films online or on our mobiles, and upload photographs on their blog or hang them on digital frames. This attribute leads to the much talked about media convergence. Digital computer

technologies can be interactive and networkable such as; the internet, Web site and so on.

Ikenwe and Iwari (2015:4) found that digital media platforms have radically broken the connection between physical place and social place, making physical location much less significant for our social relationships. Flanagin and Metzger (2008:5) state that, in the last few years, with the sudden explosion of digital media content and access devices, there is now more information available to more people from more sources than at any time in human history. In this regard, Gutierrez and Tyner (2012:32) further contend that the omnipresence of digital media is particularly resonant with younger generations of users, who approach information in diverse and innovative ways that position their daily uses.

The viewpoints of Flanagin and Metzger (2008) and Gutierrez and Tyner (2012) support a related standpoint by Swist *et al.* (2015:10), which is that the digital age is fundamentally a networked age, where young people are exposed to a life well beyond their immediate peer, schooling and family groups through these new and dynamic online networks. As such, their experiences are individual, situational and contextual.

The “millennials” or the “net generation” (“digital natives” or “generation Y”) share the feature of having been immersed in an environment of digital technologies (e.g., computers and the internet) for their entire lives (Flanagin & Metzger, 2008:6). Furthermore, Flanagin and Metzger (2008:6) state that the interactivity afforded by digital media has set up an expectation among many young people that these media should play the roles of both information source and receiver simultaneously – as they critique, alter, remix and share content in an almost conversational manner using digital media. The implications of the uses of technology that are favoured by the youth present new and different challenges for both discerning and learning to create credible information.

In relation to the South African context, Lie (2005:121) indicates that information communication technologies (ICTs), and particularly the internet, open new methods of participatory communication for community networking in South Africa. Malila (2013:11) opines that The National Youth Policy 2009-2014 document addresses some of the

issues related to technology, specifically with regard to the suggestion that access to ICTs is one of the ways in which opportunities for young people can be enhanced.

Lie (2005) and Malila (2013) share James' view (2009:76) that the most important virtues and greatest liabilities of the new digital media lie in their openness. Moreover, digital media can empower young people by inviting them to assume new empowering roles and exposing them to diverse perspectives. Furthermore, James (2009:62) states that from an early age, the new media can offer the youth opportunities to try out new roles that may prepare them to become skilful professionals, collaborators and active citizens.

The National Youth Policy 2009-2014 policy document mentions ICT peer education as among the youth's responsibilities and proposes that young people should engage in peer-to-peer education to promote youth development in areas such as literacy, use of information and communication technology (Malila, 2013). Consequently, the current development of ICTs demonstrates again that form and content are closely related to processes involving the encoding of information and the structuring of knowledge (Malila, 2013).

As far as Magda (2011) and Osunkunle (2010) are concerned, information and communication technologies are of vital importance for the social development of a country. Magda (2011) and Osunkunle (2010) also concur that the advent of information and communication technologies has indeed led to a technological revolution across the globe and it continues to change the global social and economic milieus of countries making use of these technologies.

The developed countries have become knowledgeable societies, because of this technological revolution, and most developing countries are also putting strategies in place to bridge the digital divide by encouraging the use of ICTs (Osunkunle, 2010:377). Magda (2011:3-4) states that what is required nowadays is the ability to understand information and, more importantly, to evaluate and integrate information in multiple formats that the computer can deliver. In other words, Magda (2011) is suggesting that ICTs are important to deliver communication from one person to another and from the person to mass media.

According to Lie (2005:124), the so-called new virtual communities or digital networks that are using the internet as a communication technology medium, are often contrasted with real-life communities. Lie (2005:124) further indicates that the “geographically dispersed communities” relate to issues of community building for localised and democratic development in and through the use of cyberspace. Looking at the South African context, Lie (2005) asserts that, although South Africa is still in a developing stage, digital media and ICTs are becoming a significant and inherent part of South African society.

Flanagin and Metzger (2008:14) caution that, for young people, in regard to the information, digital media present unique credibility issues. However, there has been little research that focused on the credibility of information and youth, even though youth are keen information seekers across many domains of information technologies, whether for class assignments or personal use. Flanagin and Metzger (2008:14) further indicate that it may be the case, however, that youth, who use digital media, seek different types of information than adults.

With regard to the credibility of information obtained through digital media, Flanagin and Metzger (2008:15) indicate that credibility is important for youth, however, not only because they are active information seekers, but also because there are some key differences between them and adults' information seekers in general and specifically in their information-seeking goals. While adults often seek medical information about treatments or diseases, youth are more likely to seek information on social-related issues, health (e.g., fitness, dieting), or sexuality (Flanagin & Metzger, 2008:15).

Since they are the first generation to grow up with interactive digital media, youth are comfortable with collaborating and sharing information and they do so in ways that allow them to act quickly and without top-down direction (Flanagin & Metzger, 2008:6). Compared to adults, Flanagin and Metzger (2008:6) further state that youth tend to be relatively heavily immersed in digital media by virtue of growing up in an environment saturated with these tools.

Valenzuela, Arriagada and Scherman (2014:2048-2049) concur with the views expressed by Flanagin and Metzger (2008), stating that:

As individuals who have grown up with the internet and digital media, young people tend to be involved in this kind of collective experience based on shared interests, representing new forms of citizenship.

Valenzuela *et al.* (2014:2048-2049) also point out that digital media have changed not only people's access to information but also the ways in which they appraise information – as Flanagin, Metzger (2008) and Lie (2005) have also indicated.

Electronic networks make it easier to rely on the collective to assess information and credibility assessments constructed through collective or community efforts (e.g., wikis, text messaging via cellphones or social networking applications) emerge as a major theme in recent discussions and phrases like “distributed” and “decentralised” credibility, the “democratisation of information” and “collectively versus institutionally derived credibility” are common (Flanagin & Metzger, 2008:17). At the core is the belief that digital media allow for the uncoupling of credibility and authority in a way never before possible (Flanagin & Metzger, 2008:17).

Due to the emergence of digital media, Ikenwe and Iwari (2015:2) suggest that many people now prefer digital news to news in its usual traditional forms such as newspaper publications or radio and television broadcasts. It is also suggested by Shen and Agusleo (2008:3) that the digital media revolution is continuing and gathering speed as it goes and the transition from analogue to digital was a revolution in itself. Today, the entire value chain is in the process of transformation, from the content provider to the users, with the internet as the underlying driver of change.

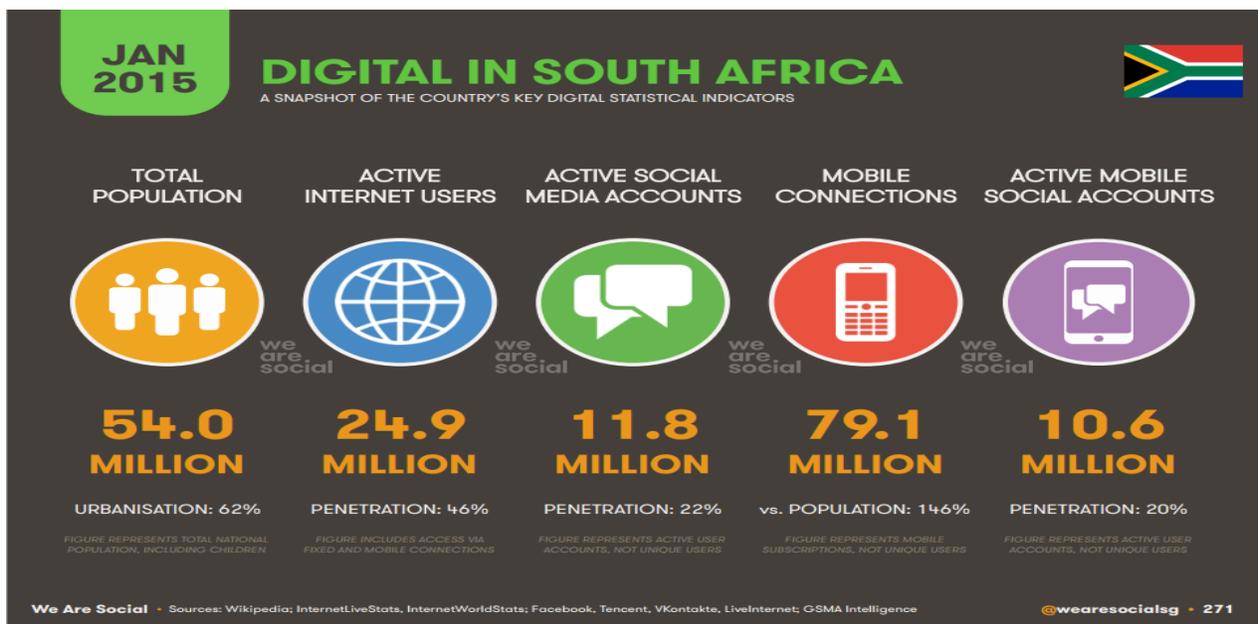
According to Siapera (2012:4), in the European Union (EU), the 2012 digital switchover puts a formal end to analogue media. Soon the process of digitalisation will turn all media into digital media. However, Flanagin and Metzger (2008:13) discovered that specific instantiations of digital media technology may also pose particular credibility challenges for youth who possess less knowledge, experience and skepticism than adults. Flanagin

and Metzger (2008) gave an example of electronic mail (e-mail). In the case of spam, younger children, in particular, might blindly transfer their perceptions of e-mail as a personal, credible medium and therefore not fully appreciate the sender's commercial intent (Flanagin & Metzger, 2008:13).

Magda (2011:4) supports Flanagin and Metzger's (2008) conclusions, emphasising that ICTs offer considerable opportunities to those who can take advantage of them, but people also have to consider a trend of increasing exclusion for those who cannot. This observation by Magda (2011) and Flanagin and Metzger (2008) shows that the primary sources of information in the world are often (although not exclusively) digital, which is quite different from any prior generation. Many scholars have discovered that digital media have changed not only people's access to information but also how people appraise information.

Figure 1 below gives a snapshot of the statistical record of active digital media users, social media accounts and mobile connections in South Africa.

Figure 1: Digital statistics in South Africa



Source: Hypertext. Africa (2015)

2.5 SOCIAL MEDIA

Dewig (2010:1) refers to social media as “the wide range of internet-based and mobile services that allow users to participate in online exchanges, contribute to user-created content, or join online communities”. Dewig (2010:1) further states that social media are the kinds of internet services commonly associated with blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, social network sites, status-update services, virtual world content, media-sharing sites and so forth.

Swist *et al.* (2015:10) define “social media” as “a set of Web applications that rely on the participation of mass groups of users rather than centrally controlled content providers, aggregate and remix content from multiple sources, and more intensely network users and content together”. Simply stated, Swist *et al.* (2015:10) defined “social media” as “the practices and social relations that are formed through social media”.

Brokaw (2011:1) notes that the social media era started around thirteen years ago and it began with LinkedIn, which was launched in 2003, followed by Myspace and Facebook in 2004, YouTube in 2005 and Twitter in 2006. In less than a decade, their populations have grown rapidly and they have reached billions of people worldwide. Statistically, Brokaw (2011:1) indicates that Facebook has more than 500 million users worldwide, Twitter has approximately 175 million users, LinkedIn has more than 90 million users and Myspace has 57 million users.

The term “social media” emerged in 2005 and reflected an interest in the growth of relatively more recent interrelation parts of the internet, sometimes called Web 2.0 (Haddon 2015:1). As Hazelton and Terhorst (2015:53) observe, social media has undoubtedly arrived and continues to do so with each day. Furthermore, Hazelton and Terhorst (2015:53) state that social media, in its infancy, was not as widespread in the personal lives of people, let alone in the workplace. Recently, social media platforms have captured a significant amount of time of individuals and exist in every aspect of their lives.

Social media are the most recent forms of media and have many features and characteristics. They have many facilities on the same channel such as communicating, texting, image sharing, audio and video sharing, fast publishing, linking with users all over

world and direct connecting (Shabir, Hameed, Safdar & Gilani, 2014:132). In this regard, Shabir *et al.* (2014:132) state that social media platforms are online locations where people can interact with others to share information, entertainment and news, which will be of their own choice and creation.

For Haddon (2015:1) and many media researchers, the term “social media” refers principally and more narrowly to the communication and interaction-oriented parts of the internet, including blogs, social networking sites such as Facebook, and microblogging sites such as Twitter as well as to diverse platforms for sharing audio-visual material (e.g., YouTube and Flickr).

Social networking sites are also the cheapest and fastest access to the world, so they are very important for people of all ages and their use is increasing day by day at a high rate (Shabir *et al.*, 2014:132). Therefore, Shabir *et al.* (2014:132) recognise that the majority of youth are shifting speedily from electronic media such as television and radio to social media. Njoroge (2013) holds that the reason why many young people are flocking to social networking sites is that they are offering fast-paced and inexpensive online communication.

Social media networks, according to Oyedemi and Lesame (2005:78), constitute the new social morphology of societies and indicate the interconnectedness of social activities. Oyedemi and Lesame (2005:78) further state that while the networking form of social organisation has existed in other times and spaces, the new information technology paradigm provides the material basis for its pervasive expansion through the entire social structure.

As far as Siapera (2012:4) is concerned, the term “social media” prioritises the element of connectivity or the ways in which people connect with other media, mainly computers, but also more recently, mobile phones. Anaeto and Jacobs (2015:39) also assert that social media platforms are media for interaction and relationships, largely informal, and they are now popular means of communication and quite accessible. Siapera (2012) further states that social media platforms are popular because they can be accessed with

ease, on a variety of platforms like laptops, netbooks, personal computers, tablet computers and smartphones.

In relation to the views expressed by Anaeto and Jacobs (2015:39) above, one can concur that social media are categorised thus because of their interpersonal and user-generated nature. Social media is about conversations, community, connecting with the audience and building relationships and it not only allows users to hear what people say about them, their preferences and choices but also enables users to respond and make comments. In this regard, Anaeto and Jacobs (2015:39) state that social media embody features like interactivity, adoptability, portability and convergence. These features have led to their phenomenal growth and usage.

According to Swist *et al.* (2015:4), social media platforms are becoming common features of young people's everyday lives. Social and communicative elements of the internet, predating Web 2.0, had been used by youth, for example, Instant Messaging (IM), e-mail and chat rooms (Haddon, 2015:1). Haddon (2015:1) asserts that youth had developed the forerunners of some current social and communicative practices via other, older media, including texting, as well as the more general uses of mobile phones.

It is worth noting that before social media, mobile phones were being used by young people to exchange audio-visual content (e.g., with Bluetooth) as well as to take and post pictures online (Haddon, 2015:1). The basic finding of Flanagan and Metzger (2008:14) is that social media can play an important role in enabling youth participation in the development of the country. Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson and Seymour (2011:7) found that social media helped conversations to reach a wider audience, leveraging the concept, which means conversations that can be conveyed to different forums.

The rate at which youth are shifting to social media consumption has led to a host of questions being raised regarding its impact on society. It is agreed that social media affects people's lifestyles and it is an ongoing process to identify the nature of this influence in every society and country, especially the impact it is having on youth (Shabir *et al.*, 2014:132). In other words, Shabir *et al.* (2014) is recognising that the influences of

social media will have a greater impact on the youth because they tend to adopt and adapt to new ways of living more easily.

Siapera (2012:5) states that there are a lot of issues with the term “social media” because it introduces a somewhat arbitrary split between old and new media. The term further signifies a shift in media logic, which denotes a degree of novelty. In this regard, Ikenwe and Iwari (2015:4) concur that social media differs from traditional or industrial media in many ways, including quality, frequency, usability, immediacy and permanence. In addition, Ikenwe and Iwari (2015:4) explain that social media, as emerging digital communication channels, create a user-orientated information-sharing basis where many people can generate both information and consume information in different forms such as social blogs, weblogs, podcasts, the internet, social bookmarking, news portals or social news, wikis, social networking sites like Facebook and YouTube, among others.

Anaeto and Jacobs (2015:37) support the views of Ikenwe and Iwari (2015) by indicating that social media are becoming significant channels for information dissemination and communication around the world today. In this regard, Lucy (2014:4) states that social networking sites can reach populations across geographical locations and user demographics and this is at the heart of their recruitment appeal.

The everyday impact that social media has on individuals is that it enhances processes of social identity construction in social spaces where opinions and ideas are shared (Valenzuela *et al.*, 2014:2048). Online social networking sites can operate as useful resources to create collective experiences that are essential conditions for protest behaviour, especially among youth (Valenzuela *et al.*, 2014:2048).

According to Edosomwan *et al.* (2011:8), social media platforms are best for the following reasons:

- promote open communication between users;
- enable users to share ideas and work in teams effectively, which helps in sharing knowledge and experiences;
- promote better content, such as webcasts and videos, than just simple text;

- help to communicate collaboratively between potential users, in receiving feedback, development, or any forms of service and support;
- encourage members of the community to become well-recognised;
- a good venue for discussions and becomes a classic goal of communications.

2.5.1 Facebook

According to Fellows (2015:1), Facebook is “a Web-based, interactive network that allows users to share information and thoughts over a wide area. It makes a possible connection to those with shared interests across political, economic and geographic borders”. Fellows (2015:1) also states that Facebook is not a one-stop-shop that will fulfil all your communications needs, but it is simply another tool in the communications toolkit. In this regard, Fellows (2015:1) advances that Facebook’s purpose is to go where the eyes are by furnishing information on websites that you know people visit. With one billion users and growing, it is safe to say the eyes are on Facebook.

Facebook also raises the user’s profile in the public sphere. Chowdhury and Saha (2015:28) say the following about Facebook:

Facebook is a Web-based service which is allowing individual youth or teenagers to construct a public profile in a bounded system and it helps individuals to share connections, views, and thoughts with strangers (unknown friends) or enable them to share their viewpoints with visible well known friends.

Facebook can broadly be defined as “internet-based social spaces designed to facilitate communication, collaboration and content sharing across networks of contacts” (Chowdhury & Saha, 2015:28). Facebook has improved communication or interaction between people all over the globe and it provides various entertainment functions as a tool for social change (Ikenwe & Iwari, 2015:5).

2.5.2 Twitter

According to Alsanie (2015:70), Twitter is an online social networking service that enables users to send and read short 140-character messages, called “tweets”. Registered users can read and post tweets, but unregistered users can only read them. Users access Twitter through the website interface, short messaging service (SMS) or mobile device application. Alsanie (2015:70) also reports that Twitter Inc. is based in San Francisco and has more than 25 offices around the world. It was created in March 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, Biz Stone and Noah Glass and the site was launched in July 2006. The service rapidly gained worldwide popularity, with more than 100 million users who, in 2012, posted 340 million tweets per day.

Edosomwan *et al.* (2011:6) explain that Twitter gained popularity, firstly, because it offered more and different options such as micro-blogging and, secondly, because it was used by some celebrities. Alsanie (2015:70) reveals that in 2013, Twitter was one of the ten most-visited websites and it has been described as “the SMS of the internet”. By July 2014, Twitter has more than 500 million users, with more than 271 million active users.

Twitter also contains information that people will find valuable; the messages come from users they choose to follow and will show up on their homepage for them to read. This can be things like traffic alerts, board meeting updates, and general news regarding the community, county, state and even nation (Fellows, 2015:3). In addition, Fellows (2015:3) states that Twitter can be used to find out what is going on in the community, state government, federal government and other organisations and businesses of interest to the users.

Tham and Ahmed (2011:1) highlight that in recent years, social networking sites like Twitter have become the most visited websites in the world. Lucy (2014:4) supports this, commenting that Twitter is the most popular microblogging platform, with nearly 650 million registered users as of 2014. Lucy (2014:4) further emphasises that young people are migrating to Twitter in growing numbers, often times as a supplement to their other social media accounts such as Facebook.

Jones (2014:29) reveals that Twitter is now available in 33 different languages and has significantly increased its support for languages that use non-Latin character sets. Furthermore, Jones (2014:29) hints that Twitter has occasionally altered the appearance of the service and added new features, often in reaction to users developing their own conventions, such as adding a hashtag (#) in front of any important keywords to tag them.

Twitter's network features can also be explained by referring to Veletsianos (2011:2), who has categorised online social organisations and distinguished between groups, networks and collectives. According to Veletsianos (2011), Twitter is fluid and generative entity in which participation consists of distributed individuals connected in loose and strong ties, membership is mostly unrestricted and respondents may know some, but not all members of the network.

2.5.3 YouTube

Edosomwan *et al.* (2011:5) define YouTube as “the world's most popular online video community where millions of people can discover, watch and share originally-created videos”. It was founded in 2005, by Chad Hurley, Steve Chen and Jawed Karim, who were all early employees of PayPal. YouTube provides a forum for people to connect, inform and inspire others across the globe and acts as a major distribution platform for original content creators and advertisers, large and small.

YouTube is based in San Bruno, California and uses Adobe Flash Video technology to display a wide variety of user-generated video content, including movie clips, television clips and music videos as well as amateur content such as video-blogging and short original videos (Edosomwan *et al.*, 2011:5). YouTube, now owned by Google, is an extremely popular Web-based platform and every minute, 35 hours of video are uploaded and every day more than two billion videos are viewed (Fellows, 2015:4).

Like Edosomwan *et al.* (2011), Fellows (2015:4) indicates that YouTube is great for sharing visually compelling content, information, news and presentations. Furthermore, Fellows (2015:4) indicates that the platform is also useful for training guides, where videos create more of an interactive experience versus a text document. In this regard, Fellows (2015:4) indicates that county officials can share public meeting videos, campaign

advertisements, highlight programmes and services from the county and even bolster tourism through a video tour of the community. According to Fellows (2015), it is also free to sign up and upload your own videos on YouTube.

2.5.4 WhatsApp (Messenger)

According to Alsanie (2015:70), WhatsApp is a proprietary, cross-platform instant messaging subscription service for smartphones and selected feature phones and it uses the internet for communication. In addition to text messaging, users can send messages, images, video and audio media as well as their location. WhatsApp Inc. was founded in 2009, by Brian Acton and Jan Koum, both former employees at Yahoo!. Furthermore, Alsanie (2015:70) states that the company is based in Mountain View, California and employs 55 people. Alsanie (2015:70) also indicates that since October 2014, WhatsApp is the most globally popular messaging app with more than 600 million users.

Anglano (2014:206) highlights that WhatsApp provides its users with various forms of communications, namely user-to-user communications, broadcast messages and group chats. Bouhnik and Deshen (2014:217) report that the declared purpose of WhatsApp founders when they developed it was to replace the existing SMS platform with a system that is free of charge in an ad-free environment. The feature of WhatsApp highlighted by Bouhnik and Deshen (2014:217) is also mentioned by Tawiah, Nondzor and Alhaji (2014:104), who note that WhatsApp messenger offers free texting and attempts to shift mobile users' preference from the traditional SMS.

When communicating, users may exchange plain text messages as well as multimedia files (containing images, audio, and video), contact cards and information (Anglano, 2014:206). Furthermore, Anglano (2014:206) emphasises that each user is associated with its profile, a set of information that includes a WhatsApp name, status line and avatar (a graphic file, typically a picture). The profile of each user is stored in a central system from which it can be downloaded by other WhatsApp users that include that user in their contacts and the central systems also provide other services, like user registration, authentication and message relay.

WhatsApp has tapped into users' insatiable appetite for personal communication, which has found expression in various forms over the past 150 years, starting with the pony express, telegraph and airmail letters to the telephone and e-mail. The application has become today's flag-bearer for personal communications. WhatsApp is simple, secure and fast (Goetz, 2014:4). This social networking site does not ask users to spend time building up a new graph of relationships; instead, it taps the one that is already there (Goetz, 2014:4).

According to Tawiah *et al.* (2014:103), social media platforms, like WhatsApp, have become a dominant factor in today's digital world. Bouhnik and Deshen (2014:217) reveal that over the last two years, the application has become very popular, gaining over 350 million users and, on average, 31 billion messages are sent per day. Furthermore, Bouhnik and Deshen (2014:103) indicate that, technically, WhatsApp can be viewed as a social network that allows users to access a great deal of information rapidly and the simple operation scheme makes the program accessible to a variety of users of different ages and backgrounds.

Tawiah *et al.* (2014:103) state that the network is affecting how users communicate and businesses operate. Its seeming benefits are the ability to create, share, adapt and reuse content, engage in digital dialogue and collaborate, have peer-to-peer contact and social interaction with other users. According to Tawiah *et al.* (2014:103), WhatsApp's discoverability and continuous accessibility have attracted a greater number of digital communication users who are interested in using the platform.

Bouhnik and Deshen (2014:219) suggest that there are a number of reasons why people adopted WhatsApp as their main communication channel rather than alternatives (such as SMS or other social networks) including the following:

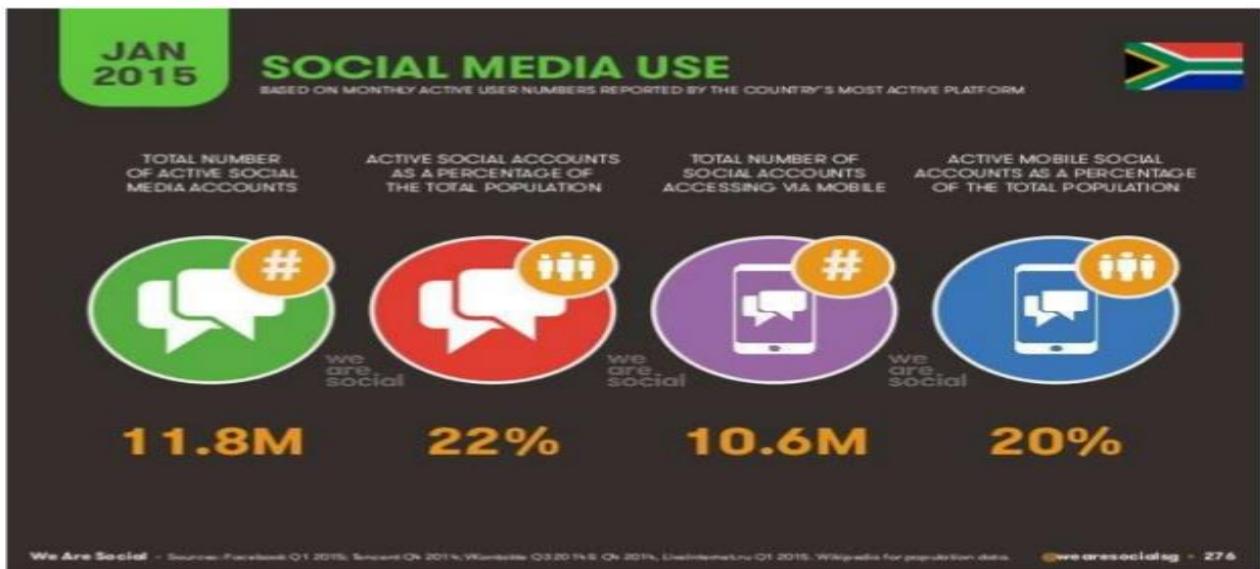
- the low cost of the application, combined with the ability to send an unlimited number of messages, and its immediacy;
- the desire to feel a part of the trend since their acquaintances have already adopted the application;
- the capacity to conduct an ongoing conversation with many friends simultaneously

- the knitting together of a community of friends or family;
- a sense of privacy relative to other social networks.

From the different views, perceptions and analyses by different scholars about social media, one can concur that today, just a click of a button allows youth to communicate, virtually free—via several messaging platforms including WhatsApp messenger—to share their experiences with other users across the globe. In other words, this shows that WhatsApp, as with other social networking sites, helps to disseminate communication from one user to another.

Figure 2 below gives the statistics of the total number of active social media accounts, active social media accounts of the total population in South Africa, total number of accessing social accounts using mobile phones and, lastly, active mobile social accounts.

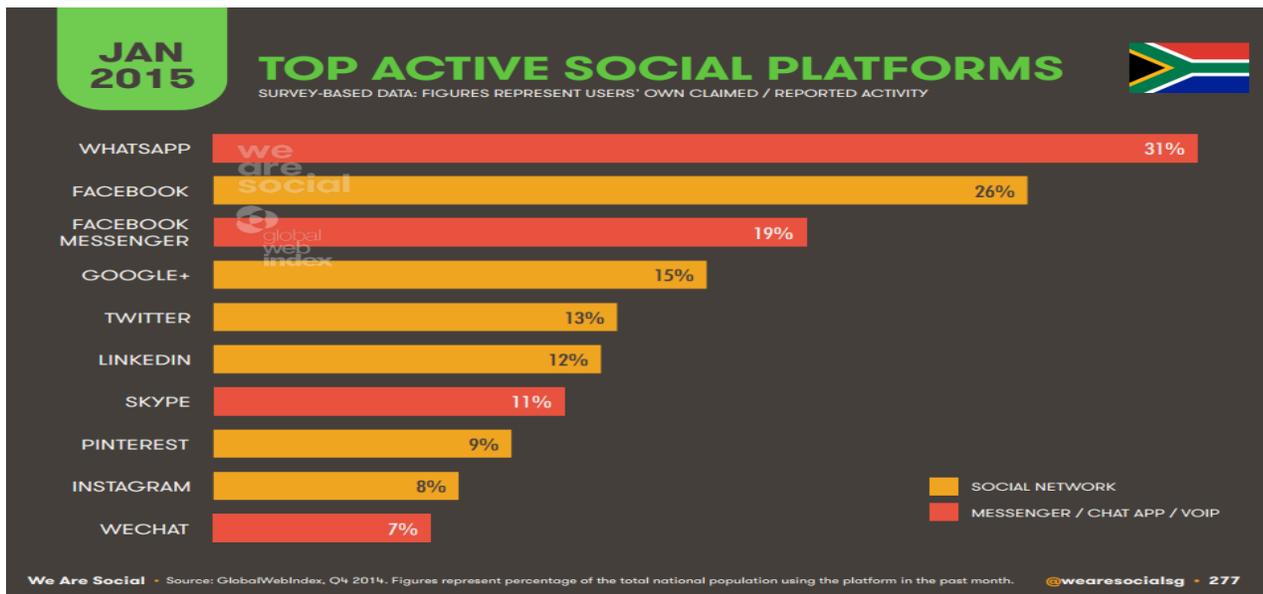
Figure 2: South African social media usage statistics



Source: Hypertext. Africa (2015)

Figure 3 below gives a snapshot of the total number of active social media platforms in South Africa ranging from mostly used to rarely used.

Figure 3: South African top active social media platform



Source: Hypertext. Africa (2015)

2.6 MEDIA ETHICS

According to Nasir (2014:190), “media ethics” are the subdivision of applied ethics dealing with the specific ethical principles and standards of media, including broadcast media, film, theatre, arts, print media and the internet.

Oosthuizen (2002:5) states that ethics deal with the moral component of human life. As a branch of philosophy, ethics focuses on what is good and what is not. Therefore, Oosthuizen (2002:5) indicates that ethics are an essential part of the media communication process. James (2009:11) concurs with the views expressed by Oosthuizen (2002), indicating that people’s understanding of what constitutes an ethical issue is deliberately broad and includes respect and disrespect, morality and immorality, individual behaviour, role fulfilment and positive (civic engagement) and negative (deception and plagiarism) behaviours.

According to James (2009:14), “respect” involves openness to differences, tolerance of others and civility toward people, whether or not they are personally known. The respectful person gives others the benefit of a doubt. Respect or disrespect can be

observed by and directed toward very young children and will soon be recognised as such. Furthermore, James (2009:14) indicates that ethics presupposes the capacity for thinking in abstract terms about the implications of a given course of action for one's self, group, profession, community, nation and world.

"Ethics" can be defined as "being able to differentiate between choices. Although all of these choices may be morally justifiable, some may be more justifiable than others" (Oosthuizen, 2002:11). In this regard, Oosthuizen (2002) also emphasises that media users and media institutions are moral agents that can potentially behave ethically or unethically. Eid and Ward (2009:2) state that ethics are key fundamentals to the effective performance of new media. Furthermore, Eid and Ward (2009:2) suggest that ethics should go hand in hand with the freedom of new media and social networking use.

According to Morren and Yasenchak (2011:12), the issue of the relationship between ethical practice and the growing array of social media and networking is very new. Also, Morren and Yasenchak (2011:12) assert that the purposes of social media ethics are mainly to protect the public from harm and to ensure professional integrity. As far as Nasir (2014:188) is concerned, globally, digital media ethics relate to the diverse ethical problems, practices and norms on social media and digital journalism. In other words, Morren and Yasenchak (2011) are saying that the distinction between the two concepts (ethics and respect) is worth noting.

In terms of meta-ethical absolutism theory, Oosthuizen (2002:12) assumes that there is a universal ethical code that applies to everyone, regardless of place, time and circumstance. This shows that media users, including consumers of social media, are expected to behave in a certain way that does not end up bringing issues of undesirable characteristics.

When a social media user uses social media in an irresponsible way, either on behalf of someone or a personal social media account, it can undermine the person's commitment to ethical practice and expose him or her to integrity risk (Parkes, 2011:2). Parkes (2011:2) reiterates that when personal opinions are expressed through social media

(either on a personal or an online forum) to another user, organisation, fan page, or company, it raises an ethical challenge.

Even though Parkes (2011) focused on general ethical principles in different spheres like the workplace, it is also revealed that cyberbullying, harassment and discrimination were some of the top five risks for social media. As a result, James (2009:17) states that young people may be more inclined to use new media for good, but may also be the most likely perpetrators or victims of ethical lapses.

Contemporary youth are qualitatively different from older generations in an ethical sense. Awareness of ethical implications of online conduct is reported to be generally low, although variation is acknowledged (James, 2009:19). Furthermore, James (2009:19) highlights that as youth assume more proactive roles on social media, a number of ethical risks can arise.

2.7 YOUTH

In examining social media and the youth, it is also important to distinguish what is meant by youth. As far as Haddon (2015:1) is concerned, the term “youth” can cover different ages in different countries; in some societies, youth extends into the late 20s, whereas in others, such an age would be considered young adulthood. Meanwhile, the legal definitions of adulthood, the age at which young people are legally allowed to do different things (e.g., have sex, drive, buy alcohol), vary culturally.

Authors, such as Van Niekerk and Ndlovu (2005), attempted to define the term “youth” in the South African context. The National Youth Policy (2009-2014:12) define “youth” as “those falling within the age group of 14 to 35 years”. Van Niekerk and Ndlovu (2005:149) state that those individuals growing up in the 1990s are called generation Y or the millennial generation since they are the generation that graduated from secondary school in the new millennium. In South Africa, this generation was born in the 1990s and they have no personal memory of apartheid.

Van Niekerk and Ndlovu (2005:150) also specify that in their youth, generation Y has experienced abortion and divorce rates ebbing and popular culture beginning to

stigmatise hands-off parental styles and to recast babies as special. Child abuse and child safety have become hot topics, while books teaching virtues and values are best sellers. Cable television and the internet are cordoning off “child-friendly” havens, while educators speak of “standards” and “cooperative learning”.

Generation Y grew up in the burgeoning software industry, in front of tubes (television), screens, or boxes that have defined their perceptions of reality and they are more individualistic. This means that generation Y knows how to use new technology and can communicate via technology, irrespective of their geographical locations (Van Niekerk & Ndlovu, 2005:150). In this regard, Knight (2013:13) suggests that this generation is driving many changes in society, but a number of scholars see a much broader process of social change.

According to Van Niekerk and Ndlovu (2005:149), the youth of today are leading the technological revolution in South Africa. They lead in internet and software knowledge in the country, especially those in the higher Living Standards Measures (LSMs) category. Van Niekerk and Ndlovu (2005) furthermore maintain that the government is prioritising the provision of technology in schools throughout the country. Exposure to the internet has opened up the global community to South African youth.

2.8 SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa is located at the southern tip of the African continent, at the confluence of the Atlantic Ocean on the west and the Indian Ocean on the south-east. Cape Agulhas marks the southernmost point of Africa, some 161 kilometres (100 miles) south-east of the Cape of Good Hope. The land area of 1 219 912 square km (471 008 sq miles) supports a population of 47.4 million people (2006 estimate), 51 per cent of which are female (Underwood, 2015:1).

On the report of Statistics South Africa (2015:2), the South African population consist of 80.5 per cent Africans (80.6 per cent of African males and 80.6 per cent of African females); 8.8 per cent coloureds (8.7 per cent coloured males and 8.9 per cent coloured females); 2.5 per cent Indians/Asians (2.6 per cent Indian/Asian males and 2.4 per cent Indian/Asian females) and 8.3 per cent whites (8.2 per cent white males and 8.3 per cent

white females). South Africa has borders with Namibia to the north-west, Zimbabwe and Botswana to the north, and Mozambique and Swaziland to the north-east. The independent kingdom of Lesotho forms an enclave within the south-east part of South Africa (Underwood, 2015:1).

Underwood (2015:1) furthermore states that South Africa is divided into nine provinces: Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North-West, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Northern Cape and Free State. Each province, according to Underwood (2015:1), has its own major city and seat of administration. In addition, Underwood (2015:1) states that South Africa has three capital cities: the administrative capital, Pretoria, in the northerly province of Gauteng; the legislative capital, Cape Town, in the south; and the judicial capital, Bloemfontein, in the north-east, KwaZulu-Natal has the largest share of the population (approximately 21 per cent), followed by Gauteng with 20 per cent.

Underwood (2015:1-2) also specifies that eleven official languages are recognised in the Constitution of South Africa for administrative, governmental and legislative purposes including IsiZulu, the home language for 23.8 per cent of the population, IsiXhosa (17.6 per cent), Afrikaans (13.3 per cent), Sepedi (9.4 per cent), English (8.2 per cent), Setswana (8.2 per cent) and Sesotho (7.9 per cent).

van Niekerk and Ndlovu (2005:151) further reveal that, as South Africa develops, the use of ICTs is likely to become even more prevalent among the country's generations X and Y. The reason for this is that South Africa has a massive skills shortage problem and academic institutions in South Africa that offer ICT courses and training have realised the importance of these to the youth market, while South African youth themselves have shown a keen interest in ICT.

2.9 SUMMARY AND OUTLINE OF CHAPTER 2

The description of the conceptual and operational terms operational terms related to the study by different authors of media were discussed. The following chapter will focus on the literature review.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present the relevant theories that formed part of this study in the form of a review. The social exchange theory and the social penetration theory serve as the foundation to explain how social media enable relationships to be formed and how communication is organised and disseminated by the users. Furthermore, the literature review, which is a core part of this chapter, will present the importance of using social media; the types of content the youth share on social media; the challenges encountered by the youth when using social media and technical solutions to prevent social media abuse. Lastly, this chapter will present the South African social media laws related to this study and explain what the laws state and prescribe for users to do when they are online.

3.2 SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

The study used the social exchange theory (SET) as the principal theory since it is most relevant to the topic of this study, that is, the use of Facebook by the youth, one of the most used social networking sites in the world. Firstly, this theory explains the communication of people and how they build relationships based on such communication (Pan & Crotts, 2012:73). In this instance, communication refers to the experience of self and others through dialogue (Nastase, 2011:4). Secondly, this theory clarifies how social media platforms enable social media users from around the world to formulate new relations.

3.2.1 The basic tenets of the social exchange theory

The SET is one of the major theoretical perspectives in the social science field (Cook & Rice, 2003:53). Zafirovski (2005:1) also asserts that in recent years, the social exchange theory has become one of the most prominent sociological theories. Emerson (2008:335) points out that four figures were largely responsible for the formulation of the social exchange theory, namely George Homans, John Thibaut, Harold Kelly and Peter Blau.

According to Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005:874), the SET is one of the most influential conceptual paradigms in regard to the behaviour of individuals and the ability of people to change one another's behaviour through variations of their own behaviour control. This shows that the behaviour of Facebook users is the one that determines the sustenance of their communication and relationships.

Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005:890) state that relationship development is not a matter of single stimulus-response. This means that it needs more than one individual to develop a relationship through regular communication. Further, Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005:875) assert that another basic tenet of the SET is that relationships evolve over time into trusting, loyal and mutual commitments. To do so, parties must abide by certain rules of exchange. In this regard, Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005:875) also state that the rules of exchange form a normative definition of the situation that forms among or is adopted by the respondents in an exchange relation. In this way, rules and norms of exchange are the guidelines of exchange processes.

According to Pan and Crotts (2012), mutual reinforcement could be analysed through a framework and often the rewards are social, such as opportunity, prestige, conformity or acceptance.

The reasons why people engage in social exchange have been posited as:

- an expected gain in reputation and influence on others;
- an anticipated exchange on the part of others;
- altruism (disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others);
- direct reward.

(Pan & Crotts, 2012:74)

In relation to the above, Pan and Crotts (2012:74) also state that, given that participation in social media communication is not compensated, the first three reasons appear to have particular relevance to why people participate in social media.

3.2.2 The importance of the social exchange theory

The SET identifies social networking websites as tools, which people can use to communicate and share information. With the popularity of social networking websites on the rise, social interaction is affected in multiple ways, as users adapt to an increasingly technological world (Pernisco, 2010:11).

Social media seems to represent social constructivist views of knowledge as decentralised, accessible and constructed by and among a broad base of users (Greenhow, 2011:140). In this regard, Kuppuswamy and Nrayan (2010:68) emphasise that social networking sites are important to the users – they can expand and develop a network, consisting of their friends (including, for example, relatives, fellow students or colleagues), and this enables users to maintain online relationships for work, study, special interests or leisure-related purposes. This finding by Kuppuswamy and Nrayan (2010) confirms that social networking sites do not only allow individuals to meet strangers but also enable users to discuss and make visible their social networks. Ahn (2011:1440) states that the features of social media may influence the likelihood of contacting strangers on the internet. In relation to social networking ties, emphasised by the SET, social media, like Facebook, result in connections between individuals which is not possible through any other existing media.

3.2.3 Weaknesses of the social exchange theory

Notwithstanding its usefulness, theoretical ambiguities within SET remain. As a consequence, tests of the model, as well as its applications, tend to rely on an incompletely specified set of ideas. Few studies directly examine the exchange processes of the social exchange event and, as a result, people know little about the processes of the social exchange (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005:874).

Pan and Crotts (2012) are concerned that the theory fails to explain the challenges the individuals encounter when they are in the communication process on social networking websites. In this regard, Farrugia (2013:5) states that Facebook claims to keep people connected, but the challenges faced by users in romantic relationships were unknown. Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005:875) concur that the difficulties facing the SET are

systemic. So, the central ideas that comprise the SET have yet to be adequately articulated and integrated. Furthermore, Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005:875) state that these difficulties create two problems. Firstly, SET ideas have not been fully identified and many tests of the SET omit critical theoretical variables. Secondly, some formulations of SET are ambiguous, lending themselves to multiple interpretations and, as a result, the presence of any vagueness renders a model difficult to test.

Zafirovski (2005:15) suggests that the theory can be examined and criticised at two levels of analysis. The first level pertains to the treatment of human behaviour or social life as exchange and the second to the reduction of social interaction or “exchange” as well as the psychological process.

3.2.4 Relevance of the social exchange theory to this present study

Given that all social media, including Facebook, are reliant on users providing content, an understanding of the motives on why individuals participate appears fundamental and, thus, the social exchange theory appears more relevant to this study. The theory explains how communication between the users happens and how, eventually, relationships are constituted.

Farrugia (2013:5) confirms that many people use Facebook as a way to stay in contact, while others use the platform as a way to develop new connections. On this point, Farrugia (2013:5) states that a benefit of social networking websites is that they allow people to develop or maintain relationships with individuals who may not geographically be close to them.

The SET’s explanatory value has been felt in such diverse areas as social powers and networks, among others (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005:875). According to Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005:875), when individuals use Facebook as their communication tool, the social exchange theory is an important premise to explain how communication in the relationship between users is exchanged.

Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005:886) note that a relationship might be interpreted as a series of interdependent exchanges or, alternatively, it might be interpreted as the

interpersonal attachments that result from a series of interdependent exchanges. In other words, social exchange theory can mainly be conceived in terms of interchanges between various groups, organisations, or systems and rarely of individual transactions.

3.3. SOCIAL PENETRATION THEORY

The social penetration theory (SPT) is also relevant to the study in the sense that it focuses on the interpersonal closeness, which evolves by using social networking sites (SNSs) like Facebook. As it is mainly the youth who use Facebook on a daily basis, it is more likely that they are able to create and sustain relationships with other users. Likewise, McCarthy (2009) states that relational closeness happens with the emergence of social media.

3.3.1 The basic tenets of social penetration theory

The SPT was formulated by psychology professors, Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor, in 1973, to describe the dynamics of relational intimacy (McCarthy, 2009:6). McCarthy (2009:6) asserts that this relational intimacy or closeness can progress from superficial to intimate. The SPT also explains the formation of relationships and their collapse, and the process that people should consider to secure them. In this regard, McCarthy (2009:6) also highlights that closeness develops through self-disclosure.

Kuppuswamy and Narayan (2010:67) focused on the concept of “relation closeness” when they defined “social networking” as “a set of people and the relationship between them”. According to Pernisco (2010:11), these social networking sites can alter the dynamics of relationships, they can also create lots of new relationships and increase social interaction.

Farrugia (2013:6) states that individuals work their way through four stages of relationships, equating to higher levels of intimacy and depth within said relationships. The four stages are best defined as follows:

- orientation is a way for people to begin to develop a relationship by revealing basic information about themselves to others;

- exploratory affective exchange is where people begin to gain a better understanding of the personality of the individual they are conversing with;
- affective exchange is where the relationship becomes more intimate. The exchange of conversation includes more personal information;
- stable exchange, the final stage, is where the relationship is the strongest. There is complete openness to talk about all aspects of life.

In relation to the abovementioned four stages, Olson (2012:11) adds that relationships cannot be formed positively until one feels positive about oneself. The perception of attraction influences self-disclosure and Facebook users, who like each other, tend to disclose more to each other. On this matter, Nastase (2011:1) states that the social penetration theory gives insight into how self-disclosure affects personal relationships of all forms, specifically in regard to the communication process, and how individuals can recover their relationships.

3.3.2 The importance of the social penetration theory

The SPT is a useful theory when it comes to understanding of the interactions that the individuals partake in on a daily basis (Griffin, 2009:4). According to Griffin (2009:4), the SPT looks at the different stages of relationships and helps individuals understand how they rationalise and make decisions about them. Individuals all begin and usually desire to have a stable exchange and, for most people, this is the extent of the relationship.

Kuppuswamy and Narayan (2010:67) confirm the importance of the theory by highlighting the way in which these SNSs are becoming more and more popular and have increasingly become an important part of relationships for a number of people. Furthermore, Kuppuswamy and Narayan (2010:67-68) emphasise that due to SNSs' incredible features, such as inbox, notifications, groups and search, young people are attracted to them. By expanding and developing their network of friends, young people are able to maintain online relationships for study, work, special interests or leisure-related purposes.

The SPT basically states that even without thinking about it, individuals compare relationships with each other; if the interaction is positive, then that relationship is looked

upon favourably (Griffin, 2009:3). In other words, Griffin (2009) is saying that individuals have to progress through all stages included in the social penetration theory to achieve the desired relationships.

Nastase (2011:2) suggests that the main rulings over self-disclosure in the SPT are the basis of rewards of relational closeness. Sharing information in a new or old relationship, according to Nastase (2011:2), depends on the benefit analysis of advancement in the relationship and if the perceived mutual benefits outweigh the greater vulnerability then the process of social penetration will proceed.

3.3.3 Weaknesses of the social penetration theory

According to Griffin (2009:2), the SPT can generally be critiqued in two areas. It is first of all given a positive critique for its heuristic (enabling people to discover or learn something for themselves). That is to say that this theory had led to many studies on a wide variety of relationships and is given credit for much of the thinking behind relationship development. On the other hand, Griffin (2009:2) highlights that the SPT is often criticised for having a narrow scope and critics suggest that the processes in which relationships develop are not always linear.

3.3.4 Relevance of the social penetration theory to this study

The SPT is relevant to the current study in the sense that it supports the social exchange theory. The SPT appears to describe the dynamics of relational closeness. In other words, this theory shows how relational closeness advances self-disclosure between individuals who use communication tools like Facebook. There is a need for this theory to assist in explaining and testing hypothesised relationships between youth that use Facebook to build their relationships through self-disclosure.

Communication, using self-disclosure, has proven to be very important, according to the SPT. This clear, objective approach to relationships can explain any aspect of relationships (Nastase, 2011:6). The ties to the most fundamental of communication make this theory important and influential on relationship issues (Nastase, 2011:6). This

shows that the SPT is trustworthy and can be applied to everyday life, even though it does not explain the challenges that individuals may face with regard to self-disclosure.

Social media sites empower users to take an active role in their own socialisation process and in constructing their own self-identity (Sponcil & Gitimu, 2013:5). The self-identity that is constructed through communication happens among youth when they are online and they disclose information about their backgrounds, qualities and beliefs to their unknown friends. Thus, the SPT is used to investigate how youth use Facebook to self-disclose.

3.5 LITERATURE REVIEW

Boote and Beile (2005:3) state that a literature review is an evaluative report of studies found in the literature related to your study area. In this regard, the review should describe, summarise, evaluate and clarify the literature.

According to Randolph (2007:1), there are many practical and scientific reasons for conducting a dissertation literature review. One practical reason is that it is a means of demonstrating that the author is knowledgeable about the field, including its vocabulary, theories, key variables and phenomena, its methods and its history. Furthermore, Boote and Beile (2005) concur that with some modification, the literature review is a “legitimate and publishable scholarly document”.

Randolph (2007:2) mentions that another practical reason for conducting a dissertation literature review is that it allows the researcher to find out who the influential researchers and research groups in the field are. Furthermore, Randolph (2007:2) stipulates that the literature review plays a role in:

- delimiting the research problem;
- seeking new lines of inquiry;
- avoiding unsuccessful approaches;
- gaining methodological insights;
- identifying recommendations for further research;
- seeking support for grounded theory.

3.5.1 The importance of social media to the youth

According to the report by the Sub-Saharan African Media Landscape (2014:12), over a few years, Facebook has grown from practically no users in sub-Saharan Africa to becoming the most widely used social media platform by youth. In this regard, Perrin (2015:3) states that in America, youth, whose ages range from 18 to 29, are the most likely to use social media.

Over the past decade, it has consistently been the case that young people in higher-income households were more likely to use social media; however, it has been indicated that more than half (56 per cent) of those living in the lowest-income households now also use social media, though growth has levelled off in the past few years (Perrin, 2015:4).

3.5.1.1 Connection

Social media provides new opportunities to develop relationships and enhance one's social connections with others through sharing of information (Chan-Olmsted, Cho & Lee, 2013:150). Boyd and Ellison (2006:3) opine that the public display of connections is a crucial component of SNSs. Swist *et al.* (2015:25) suggest that for many young people, social media provides vital points of social connection that enable them to respond to adversity with resilience. One can thus conclude that the connection among the youth is an important motivating factor when they are using social media platforms like Facebook.

According to Chan-Olmsted *et al.* (2013:150), social media platforms have entered mainstream society with promising social utilities even for young people. Connectedness enables Facebook users to link with the outside world and to easily expand their experience (Chan-Olmsted *et al.*, 2013:155-156). In this regard, Uys, Mia, Jansen, Van Der Schyff, Josias, Khusu, Gierdien, Leukes, Faltein, Gihwala, Theunissen and Samsodien (2012:6) state that youth in South Africa have about 45 mobile social interactions per day. The survey by Uys *et al.* (2012) also mentions that younger people spend an average of five hours per day on social networking applications, with about 4 hours on messaging applications such as Facebook and WhatsApp.

Facebook enables youth to engage with virtual communities and interact with other professionals and gain professional exposure. While shared social experiences may allow bond formation, young people actively connect and network with others (Veletsianos, 2011:4). Sponcil and Gitimu (2013:4) found that young female users are more likely to use social media for maintaining relationships with families and friends, whereas male users are more likely to use social media to meet new people. In this regard, Eke *et al.* (2014:8) state that social networking sites can be a great way to make connections with people with related interests and goals.

Swist *et al.* (2015:32) report that the benefits of social media, identified by a group of Australian young people with a physical disability, included increased connectivity with existing friendship networks and family, which increased their sense of belonging to these existing circles. Swist *et al.* (2015:17) further indicate that young people begin to use new technologies in ways that enable greater connectivity with their expanding social networks.

According to Jain *et al.* (2012:2), social networking sites allow individuals to articulate a list of others to share connections, views and thoughts. Mdlongwa (2009:27) states that the flow and process of creating social media is often likened to a conversation, which happens even if no one actually speaks directly to any person in particular. One can assume that the existence of social networking sites play a pivotal role in creating friendships, as confirmed by Eke *et al.* (2014:10), who found that, generally, social networking has been found to strengthen individual interpersonal relationships.

3.5.1.2 Communication

Another common reason youth use Facebook and other social media is that they want to communicate with one another. Eid and Ward (2009:1) state that millions of young people around the globe, through social networking have recently been building online local, regional and global communities to communicate their shared interests and activities. Social media allows young people to identify and communicate with the people whom they want to be associated with. The reason for the communication is to develop effective relationships with others who share some commonalities with them (Chan-Olmsted *et al.*,

2013:156). In other words, social media like Facebook provide active means of linking individuals as determined by their needs, interests and beliefs at the time of interaction.

Furthermore, Eid and Ward (2009:1) highlight that the use of social networks, for example, Myspace, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, has implications for society and culture. Flanagin and Metzger (2008:14) state that youth need access to social media technologies to ensure that they have meaningful choices in what media they consume and how they exercise their voices. Anaeto and Jacobs (2015:38) suggest that in contemporary society, much of media communication finds expression in various social media platforms and social media have also become so embedded in young people's everyday lives that they largely modify perceptions, understandings, construction of meanings and general view of reality or world.

According to James (2009:39-40), online disclosure of personal stories can also yield support for youth. Furthermore, James (2009:340) states that social networking sites help young people, who are struggling with sensitive issues, to find support for personal problems that they may fear disclosing face to face. Rooyen, (2010:1) emphasises that SNSs such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp are applications where the millennial generation meets to communicate and discuss ideas. In relation to this, Eke *et al.* (2014:6) mention that, youth use Facebook and other channels of social media to develop their communication, identities, beliefs and stances on various issues such as politics, religion and the economy.

Through the use of social networking sites, youth can express themselves, communicate and collect profiles that highlight their talent and experience (Eke *et al.*, 2014:6). Jain *et al.* (2012) acknowledge that social networking sites are not only popular for providing platforms for chatting, sharing scraps, videos, pictures and the like, but also for discussing social issues. In the Gallup Report (2014:3), it is indicated that social media make it easier for youth to have discussions on a more public and widespread scale.

Facebook is giving an opportunity to all the youth, as well as Facebook seekers, to communicate with their friends within a very fraction of a period of time (Chowdhury & Saha, 2015:30). Social media offers plenty of opportunities for interactivity and it is not

too hard to see how the youth and other users benefit from using social media (Eke *et al.*, 2014:8). Furthermore, Eke *et al.* (2014:8) state that youth are learning and adapting to the world using a relatively new form of communication such as Facebook.

3.5.1.3 Academic purpose

According to Veletsianos (2011:1), the occurrence of online social networking and participation in online spaces has attracted the attention of researchers who have sought to understand the use of such networks for learning and academic purposes. Bouhnik and Deshen (2014:218) state that online communication between groups of young students and between students and teachers has become popular over the last few years through various channels like Facebook. Furthermore, Bouhnik and Deshen (2014:218) highlight that this tool has different characteristics that influence its suitability for learning purposes.

The openness of social media permits young people to explore different domains and outlets for their skills without the costs and time that are usually associated with training and education (James, 2009:62). Perrin (2015) found out that currently, in America, adoption rates for social media stand at 76 per cent for those with college or graduate degrees.

Greenhow (2011:140) states that young people learn with social media and related issues, where learning is defined as formal or informal learning within or across a range of disciplines. For Chakraborty (2015:146), social networking websites help in education by allowing students and teachers to interact on one platform. In this regard, Veletsianos (2011) states that young people use social media to fulfil essential social learning functions including peer support from current and former classmates, and targeted help with school-related tasks as well as to engage in identity work and formation, development of technological fluencies and new literacy practices.

Steinfeld, Ellison and Lampe (2008:434) state that Facebook has become very popular among youth who enrolled for undergraduate diplomas and degrees, with usage rates upwards of 99 per cent at most campuses in America. It also indicated that social

networking sites have also stimulated much recent research on various aspects in academic settings. According to Lucy (2014:4), in recent years, the effectiveness of using Facebook and other social media sites has attracted a steady growth of academic inquiry across various domains for young people.

In this regard, Halder and Jaishankar (2013:5) indicate that the usage of social media by the students, as well as the higher educational institutions, has assisted them in achieving their educational goals. Tham and Ahmed (2011:2) report that students also believed that such tools could allow them to share knowledge in formal education contexts. Eke *et al.* (2014:3) found that social networking sites helped schools and universities to leverage and complement formal education activities and enhance learning outcomes for students.

Social networking sites also provide young people with the opportunity to take ownership of their learning (Brady, Holcomb & Smith, 2010:154). However, it is important to note that the educational benefits of SNSs are not experienced by all young people, because there are those who come from underprivileged countries. In this regard, Eke *et al.* (2014:9) also comment that certain groups of learners, such as indigenous young people, those from low socio-economic backgrounds and those living in remote areas, face persistent challenges with regard to internet access and literacy.

3.5.1.4 Fighting boredom

Indications are that social networking sites are not only used to connect with people or for communication purposes but it is also used to overcome boredom, specifically in the case of young people who are generally more technologically advanced. Ginger (2008:13) indicates that one way in which youth fight boredom is to browse online by looking at pictures of someone they wish to take out on a date or downloading the latest songs. Therefore, Swist *et al.* (2015:32) assert that social networking services have the potential to promote resilience, which helps young people to successfully adapt to change and stressful events.

James (2009:11) emphasises that in setting out to explore young people's activities on social media, voluntary leisure-time activities or play are foremost in their analysis,

although work activities such as schoolwork, research and job-seeking are also carried out online by youth.

3.5.1.5 Job-seeking

The youth also use social media to search for job opportunities in order to accomplish their educational, economic, political and social objectives (Eke *et al.*, 2014:3). Eke *et al.* (2014:9) further emphasise that how social network sites are used can have a direct bearing on young people's economic futures. Njoroge (2013:3) is also of the opinion that social networking websites are not only used to connect users, but some of them can also help members of communities, especially young people to find jobs or establish business contacts. Njoroge (2013:26) further highlights that for young people and students preparing for the workplace, social networking sites offer opportunities to enhance their technical skills and also enable networking with professionals for internships and job opportunities. Papadopoulos (2009:30) also assert that on social networking sites, one can network – or make contact with people – which could lead to new job opportunities.

3.5.2 Content youth share on social media

According to Basevi, Reid and Godbold (2014:68), the use of social media and text messaging is widespread throughout modern society. Basevi *et al.* (2014:68) furthermore state that users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other content.

3.5.2.1 Event information

The phenomenal growth in digital technology and the rise of social media platforms over the past few years have revolutionised the way in which people communicate and share information (GCIS, 2011:3). Findings by Swist *et al.* (2015:4) confirm this opinion by the GCIS (2011), indicating that young people's use of technology and social media is evolving at a rapid pace, with implications for their wellbeing. Swist *et al.* (2015:32) found that in Australia, social media platforms have not just enabled young people to publicly share information about events, but it has also created a platform where memories and emotions can be shared with friends and family members during times of grief.

People who attend the same event will, for instance, post their own pictures and videos of the event online and, subsequently, by looking at the array of media around this event, anyone will have a better understanding of it than if they had just read one newspaper report (Mdlongwa, 2009:27). From the research conducted in Swaziland in 2014, Hlatshwayo (2014:12) explained that social media platforms have become significant for the distribution of information and ideas, thus increasing flows of information. In this regard, Goi (2014:6) states that social media are considered the next milestone in the evolution of corporate information and its analysis by the global community.

GCIS (2011:3) contends that people are embracing social media to communicate in ways that could never have been imagined just a few years ago. Halder and Jaishankar (2013:1) state that youth have made Facebook part and parcel of their everyday affairs. According to Hlatshwayo (2014:12), social media have extended the public sphere to offer opportunities for a wider range of people, both in Swaziland and outside it, to produce, distribute and exchange information.

The youth is increasingly utilising these social networks for information on events, browsing through friends' news feeds and personal updates (Tham & Ahmed, 2011:1). Social media has a way of moulding the minds of people, especially the youth, with regard to opinions presented on other media like television and the internet. Some of the events are shared by the youth usually based on their entertainment value. People begin to see what is popular and what the majority of people think about certain events (Pernisco, 2010:12). Facebook and Twitter are increasingly used as sources of real-time information and a place for debate in the entertainment sphere (Jones, 2014:30).

In a survey done in Swaziland, by Hlatshwayo (2014:12), it was also discovered that the respondents used social media as a reliable source of information more relevant to their social lives. In a country like Swaziland, according to Hlatshwayo (2014:15), people have been forced to rely on social media for information, because local newspapers have failed to stand up to the repressive machinery of the state. Chan-Olmsted *et al.* (2013:152) suggest that online applications are designed to facilitate information sharing, knowledge distribution and opinion exchanges. Anaeto and Jacobs (2015:37) indicate that social

media platforms, such as Facebook, have made the communication process faster, more interactive and user-friendly by enabling user-generated content.

3.5.2.2 *Created content*

Chan-Olmsted *et al.* (2013:150) hold that social media platforms are perhaps the most significant application that has grown exponentially in many population segments and the users also use them to share created content. On this matter, Chan-Olmsted *et al.* (2013) suggest that social media, compared to traditional media, allows youth to actively engage in a communication process not only as information receivers but also as message creators. Social media offer new activities such as user-generated content, remixing and dissemination of information (Swist *et al.*, 2015:12). Social media enables young people to remix and share content in rapid and easy ways (Swist *et al.*, 2015:56). Social media and mobile technologies increasingly enable young people to create content and share experiences that are meaningful to them, informing their wellbeing and sense of belonging, which makes them feel part of a community culture (Swist *et al.*, 2015:30).

There is no significant difference in the amount of social media use and sharing of user-generated media content between young males and females (Chan-Olmsted *et al.*, 2013:158). Social media allows young people to control the content they receive, find information and news that is relevant to their context and perhaps even generates the content of their own that can be shared by other youth (Malila 2013:11). Judd and Johnston (2012:6) state that the internet is now also home to social media since people use this medium to actively converse with other users and participate in the creation of content.

One of the most important features of social media platforms is participation and they encourage users to add, edit or simply rehash their created content (Goi, 2014:6). The reason for creating content and sharing this content, according to Chan-Olmsted *et al.* (2013:156-157), is openness. The openness characteristic is enhanced by social media's networking philosophy and the availability of easy-to-use mechanisms. Furthermore, Chan-Olmsted *et al.* (2013:156-157) explain that the evidence of openness is prevalent,

as people, especially the younger generation, share their lives online through social media sites like Facebook.

However, Beger and Sinha (2012:28), state that the study about the usage of ICTs and SNSs in South Africa in 2009 revealed that, the online social media platforms, like chat rooms, served as a platform for 14 per cent of users who had been exposed to “distressing content” and have had “sexual advances” made to them. Furthermore, Beger and Sinha (2012:28) indicate that findings also revealed that 12 per cent of the surveyed individuals had been exposed to “distressing content” through mobile phones. Exposure to “worrying content” on the internet, including the content of a “sexual nature, and nudity” surfaced for 22 per cent of the surveyed respondents.

In the ICT report conducted in 2009 in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg, it was indicated that, out of the students who were exposed to pornographic content online, 52 per cent reported looking at the images before exiting the website (Beger & Sinha, 2012:28). Furthermore, Beger and Sinha (2012:28) state that male and female students had different reactions to pornographic images – more boys claimed not to be bothered by pornography they encounter online, whereas most girls felt disgusted.

According to Haddon (2015:7), through social media, some youth involve themselves in sexting which has multiple definitions but often means young people, for whatever reason, send each other sexual images of themselves. Beger and Sinha (2012:25) state that sexting, as defined by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP), is the act of sending nude or semi-nude photos or videos, including sexually suggestive messages through mobile phone texting or instant messaging. Beger and Sinha (2012) also indicate that within South African law, under Section 19 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 2007, this form of communication is a punishable crime.

Criminal Law Amendment Act of 2007 also states that “any person exposing or displaying, or causing exposure or display, of child pornography to a child is guilty of the offence of exposing or displaying, or causing the exposure or display, of child pornography or pornography to a child”. As a result, and in accordance with this Act, a

conviction will result in the child's name being registered as a sex offender in the national register for sex offenders (Beger & Sinha, 2012).

3.5.3 Challenges youth encounter when using social media

As social media engagement is becoming more prevalent among young people, there is a greater understanding of the risks they could encounter as users on a daily basis (Steinfeld *et al.*, 2008:56). Youth are at risk as they navigate and experiment with social media because of their limited capacity for self-regulation and vulnerability to peer pressure (Jain *et al.*, 2012:3). There are frequent online expressions and behaviours that confirm this, such as bullying, cyberattacks, clique-forming and sexual experimentation according to recent research by Jain *et al.* (2012:3).

3.5.3.1 Cyberattacks

A form of dangerous online behaviour is engaging in cyberattacks (Njoroge, 2015:13). Studies have often found an overlap between cyberattack offenders and victims. According to Njoroge (2015:13), many studies conducted by media researchers clearly indicate that young people are usually attacked by people of the same age. Basevi *et al.* (2014:68) emphasise that due to the wide online audience and the relative permanence of anything posted online, errors in judgement can occur where appropriate guidelines do not exist.

It was also discovered that in South Africa, cyberbullying has become a real safety risk. News sources reveal that both young boys and girls are victims of cyberbullying (Beger & Sinha, 2012:22). Beger and Sinha (2012:22) further indicate that in the 2009 Transparent Network Substrate (TNS) report, a representative sample of 401 SNSs users, aged 16 and older, it was found that 3 per cent of surveyed respondents have been victims of cyberbullying.

Since social media provides an easy way to receive feedback and communicate with peers, young people's attitudes toward themselves can be affected by using social media networks (Sponcil & Gitimu, 2013:5). More interestingly, social networking sites, like Facebook, create the illusion of familiarity and intimacy on the internet and, as a result,

people may be inclined to share information, which they otherwise may have preferred to keep private (Eke *et al.*, 2014:11).

Eke *et al.* (2014:11) also state that Nigeria was faced with one of the worst dangers that social networking sites can generate. The death of Cynthia Osokogu, the Nasarawa State University postgraduate student who became the victim of the conspiracy through Facebook. Furthermore, Eke *et al.* (2014:11) indicate that this feature of Facebook that promotes the adding of friends or posting of messages, without a second thought about the consequences, has led to many ladies like Cynthia Osokogu falling victim to a conspiracy, fraud and armed robbery.

The 2011 Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University study found that 36 per cent of student participants had experienced some form of cyberbullying and, of this, nearly half had not shared nor told anybody about their incident (Beger & Sinha, 2012:23). However, Beger and Sinha (2012:23) report that the other half of students, who had not experienced cyberbullying, indicated that they would speak to someone about it if it should happen. According to Beger and Sinha (2012:23), a similar trend was found in the EU Kids Online study. In that study, 77 per cent of children surveyed, who had been cyberbullied, had talked to someone about it, 52 per cent told their friends and 42 per cent told their parents.

3.5.3.2 Cyberstalking

Spending much time on Facebook makes young people more interested in searching and reading a lot of information about their unknown online friends (Chowdhury & Saha, 2015). There are a number of scammers on social network sites who may try to steal or use personal information; information that can potentially be used to commit a crime such as identity theft or fraud (Eke *et al.*, 2014:11). Another mistake young people make is to assume that when you are talking to a friend on Facebook, you are in a private space and, since no one but your friend is listening, you can speak freely (Papadopoulos, 2009:17).

Pernisco (2010:5) states that there are users who create false profiles of people on social networking sites. In research conducted in Canada, in 2010, mention is made in the article about one incident where a student had created an account for the school principal and

the student ended up being sued for destroying another person's reputation (Pernisco, 2010). Pernisco (2010) also cautions that stalking activities on social media sites will always be an ongoing issue if there are no measures taken to mitigate such activities.

In some countries, there are young people who gossip and make fun of other social networking sites users (Haddon, 2015:5). The United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has declared that cyberstalking and cyberbullying are considered unlawful infringements of privacy. In addition, UNICEF highlights that these activities cause harm to an individual's reputation through explicit, intentional publications, which threaten to "electronically distribute information of another person" without consent (Beger & Sinha, 2012:24).

Beger and Sinha (2012:24) state that South African national news outlets have recently unveiled cases related to cyberstalking among South African children and young people. For instance, the case of a 16-year old South African girl, in Springs, Gauteng, who became a victim of cyberstalking on social media, prompted the mother to actively seek a legal order to protect her daughter from the perpetrator, after the daughter had informed her of the victimisation.

From the viewpoint of Anaeto and Jacobs (2015:39), misconduct, like cyberstalking on social media, happens among youth due to a lack of strict institutional gatekeeping, as compared to the regulatory context present in traditional media. Users of social media have the freedom to write and post all sorts of materials, which might not be socially responsible and right to people connected to them.

One can concur that social media sites have resulted in the development of dangerous online behaviour. Thus, it is not only the exposure to unwanted material that is considered a serious risk but also becoming a member of controversial groups on social media that spread annoying content to other users.

3.5.3.3 Sexual bullying

Bullying is a phenomenon that existed well before the creation of mobile phones and the world wide web (WWW); however, the two platforms have magnified the problem by

creating a new venue through which bullying can be executed. When perpetrated through the mobile phone or online, cyberbullying is facilitated by the apparent anonymity and distance from the victim (Beger & Sinha, 2012:24).

Beger and Sinha (2012:25) emphasise that in articles 19 and 34 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), it is required that states ensure the protection of children from all forms of abuse, including online sexual-related abuse. In this regard, Njoroge (2013:26) indicates that anxieties about youth's online relationships tend to be focused on contact and socialisation with strangers and reveal concerns regarding the use of technological tools to harm or abuse as well as to bully others.

Conversely, Ahn (2011:1439) emphasises that many studies found that young people are less likely to experience unwanted sexual solicitations or harassment on SNSs, while they are more likely to experience these dangers in instant messaging and chat room environments.

3.5.3.4 Culture of online disclosure

In research by James (2009:44), it was discovered that another danger youth encounter when they are using social media is an emergent culture of online disclosure which, according to Papadopoulos (2009:10), is referred to as a user's "visibility" to other users on SNSs. In this regard, James (2009:44) states that it becomes an issue when the user reveals personal information on his or her webpage. James (2009:44) states that this developing culture (of online disclosure) holds both risks and opportunities for young people. Careless oversharing of personal information on social media can have long-term negative effects on young people and the friends about whom they write and whose online identities they co-create. James (2009:44) furthermore indicates that the culture of online disclosure can cause young people to form potentially dangerous relationships with other users, as, for instance, in cases of teen-adult predator relationships.

Many young people assume that only invited friends will read the users' profiles and that the uninvited will respect their privacy and treat their online expressions as if they were off-limits (James 2009:37). Young people often do realise that their homepages are public

and accessible, but they trust that only their peers are interested enough to view them and they end up becoming victims of cyberstalking and cyberbullying (James 2009:37).

3.5.3.5 *Lack of academic performance*

Young people, who are Facebook users, tend to spend too much time online and less time studying (Ahn 2011:1442). Spending more time on social media potentially increases young people's exposure to risks (Swist *et al.*, 2015:17). In this regard, Veletsianos (2011:3) states that Facebook users in Texas, United States of America (USA), reported spending fewer hours per week studying than non-users.

According to Greenhow (2011:140), youth miss out on the educational potential of using social networking site features such as the choice to personalise and extend learning experiences by connecting with other students, who share their academic and career interests, or fostering a sense of social belonging and peer group support. Rouis, Limayem and Sangari (2011:965) indicate that an extended presence on Facebook can have harmful effects on productivity and the task performance of students. Long hours spent on Facebook seem to decrease students' academic performance and, thus, their grades.

Some young people check for updates on Facebook while doing their homework, which interferes with their homework preparation. Spending much time on Facebook makes it difficult for young people to be focused and complete their homework effectively (Rouis *et al.*, 2011:966). This scenario, according to Rouis *et al.* (2011), leads to poorer results and decreased global achievements.

However, Ophus and Abbit (2009) indicate that young people value social media since they are adopted to help in the learning processes at educational institutions. Tham and Ahmed (2011:2) opine that students also believed that social media allowed them to share knowledge in formal education contexts.

3.5.4 Technical solutions to prevent social media abuse

Young people worry about the risks associated with their social media participation and the majority take active steps to keep themselves safe (Swist *et al.*, 2015:59). Furthermore, Swist *et al.* (2015:59) highlight that some of the young people in Australia are more concerned about contact and conduct risks on social media.

The following are the technical solutions by different authors to mitigate the challenges faced by young people on social media:

3.5.4.1 Data fabrication (Deception)

In this context, James (2009:42-43) indicates that if online data fabrication is done to protect the user's privacy, it is largely viewed as proper and is even encouraged by many parents. Deception can be a safe way to participate online. Furthermore, James (2009:85) states that some young people feel tempted to misrepresent their identities and their backgrounds because identity verification is difficult. Data fabrication or deception can reduce accountability in online spaces and lead to online aggression, ranging from grieving to anonymous death threats.

An educator, who participated in the research by James (2009:37), called the process of data fabrication practice "code-switching" and noted that it provides a sense of control by allowing people to present different identities in different contexts on social media. James (2009:37) also specifies that the Pew Organisation discovered that among young people whose profiles are public, 46 per cent say they give at least some false information as a way of protecting themselves. These privacy strategies, according to James (2009:37), can produce either multiple identities or one fragmented identity, both of which can preserve a sense of privacy, while still allowing for disclosure and participation.

Deception can help young social media users build communities of support while maintaining a sense of control over sensitive information (James, 2009:40). Nevertheless, James (2009:42-43) also states that the line between benign and malicious deception can be difficult for young people to discern in mediated spaces where outcomes are not

immediately clear. For example, pretending to be someone you are not online can harm others, even if the harms are distant or invisible to the perpetrator.

3.5.4.2 Profile privatisation

Another technical solution to prevent social media abuse is privatisation of profiles. According to Ahn (2011:1439), a major controversy surrounding SNSs is youth privacy and safety. In this regard, James (2009:370) indicates that most social networking sites have privacy settings that allow users to limit access to their profiles to a narrow audience of confirmed friends and evidence suggests that many young people use them. Boyd and Ellison (2006:13) state that privacy is also implicated in users' ability to control impressions and manage social contexts.

Knight (2013:6) says the following about privacy:

Privacy is an important aspect of new media, and it offers a compelling case to explore the contours of the debate over the evolution of social practices, media use, technological capabilities and internet infrastructures.

In the case of social networking sites, where youth have constructed very personal spaces, Haddon (2015:5) highlights that when older people seek to find out what is in those spaces, studies discovered that a sense of invasion of privacy is even more serious and sometimes met by making profiles private to keep them out. Ahn (2011:1439) discovered that young people disclose a variety of personal information on their profiles, but they also proactively use privacy features to manage who can view their content.

Even if the users try to protect their privacy by restricting the visibility of their personal information and posts on social networking sites, they should be cautious of what they post on social media sites (Eke *et al.*, 2014:12). In 2009, Facebook changed its terms of service to allow users to retain archived copies of user content, even if the user had removed the content from their profile (Eke *et al.*, 2014:12).

According to Papadopoulos (2009:10), it is important to control visibility on Facebook through the privacy settings. Furthermore, users can choose to make other information

visible to “everyone”, to “friends of friends” or to “friends only” and it is important to recognise that a friend on Facebook is someone you have listed as a contact and such persons are not necessarily friends in real life.

In the research conducted by James (2009:36), it was found that a considerable number of respondents indicated that privacy is not about hiding personal information, but rather involves carefully managing its disclosure, what is shared, how it is presented and who can access it. James (2009:39) further mentions that the most relevant to privacy is how online disclosure can be carried out anonymously and yield positive, comforting and even empowering feedback.

Although some youth may have their profiles set to private, their friends might not. Interacting with peers in social settings may result in pictures and references, made within the context of a relaxed, non-professional atmosphere, being posted on the page of a friend who has not set his or her profile to private (Judd & Johnston, 2012:7). In other words, Judd and Johnston (2012) are indicating that privacy on social media is essential because it prevents perils that users might face on social media.

3.5.4.3 Password security

Password security is one of the solutions to prevent social media abuse. According to Eke *et al.* (2014:12), password security would help offset social media risks. Password security is a crucial part of a recommended security policy. Good password security according to Eke *et al.* (2014:12) would make it much harder for an attacker to gain access to a protected account or database. Social media users should be taught to choose strong passwords, which they can memorise without having to write them down on a sheet of paper near their computer or mobile phones, where they could be exposed (Eke *et al.*, 2014:12). Furthermore, Eke *et al.* (2014:12) advise that there are well-known techniques for creating strong memorable passwords, for example, Byte Interactive Good Passwords Websites assists in generating strong passwords, up to 60 characters in length that are aligned with the keys on a standard keyboard to assist in recall.

Another application is password safe available from [http://source forge](http://sourceforge) (Eke *et al.*, 2014:12). Users might also consider grouping passwords by category of sites or applications. For example, a strong core password might be reused, but with variations at the beginning or ending characters (Eke *et al.*, 2014:12). Security on social networking sites starts with knowing with whom one is communicating. Many young people, who are social media users, have friends and follow online, but do not really know who their online friends are or whether they are even who they claim to be. It is relatively easy for an attacker to impersonate someone on social media sites (Eke *et al.*, 2014:12).

3.5.4.4 Media literacy

In this regard, Papadopoulos (2009:25) states that young people are the most devoted users of SNSs and are also the most likely to underestimate the risks inherent in such usage. Papadopoulos (2009:25) states that educating young people should therefore be a priority. Pernisco (2010:8) defines “media literacy” as the ability “to analyse and evaluate media”. Many people have the ability to do this and more and more people are learning about it. In this regard, James (2009:82) indicates that complementing the capabilities of the new media are the literacies that are required to use them effectively.

Fairbairn, Bivens and Dawson (2013:22) hold that fostering social media awareness and literacy is an example of primary prevention with regard to the challenges faced by youth when using social media. Many researchers propose that prevention should focus on making youth more resilient. Gutierrez and Tyner (2012:33) state that media education is often associated with simply attaining the applied skills needed to navigate social networks or media production tools and editing devices.

Swist *et al.* (2015:63) reveal that when adults and young people are given the opportunity to sit with each other in front of their devices and work together to navigate scenario-based exercises, this leads to the clarification of social networking services and an increased understanding of adults about the role of social networking in young people’s lives; a greater level of familiarity and comfort for adults in navigating the technologies and services their children use; a better understanding by adults of how they could assist

their children to participate online and a sense of achievement and self-efficacy for the young respondents.

It is pivotal that media literacy be taught by sites like Facebook, because parents, like youth, sometimes have varying comfort levels with and understandings of social media (Fairbairn *et al.*, 2013:22). Papadopoulos (2009:25) shares the view that Facebook, itself, could probably do more to inform young adults about the privacy risks.

3.5.4.5 Ethical support

James (2009:85) refers to ethical support as “adult support”. Furthermore, James (2009:85) says the following about ethical support:

Parent role models, teachers, mentors, and school curricula can play decisive roles in young people’s online choices. Positive adult role models can provide resources to help youth buck the norms of the offline cheating culture and make considered choices online with respect to identity, privacy, ownership and authorship, credibility and participation.

In other words, these young people, who are actively linked to these global online communities, are both a terrifying prospect for parents and educators and an interesting area for social science research. For example, Ahn (2011:1435) highlights that parents and educators in the USA face difficult quandaries concerning students and SNSs. James (2009:85) further explains that if a young person’s parents engage in social media piracy, they unwittingly reinforce the norms of the infringing culture.

Research has shown that adult supervision and active mediation are important to ensure children have clear ground rules and learn basic media literacy (Swist *et al.*, 2015:61). Furthermore, Swist *et al.* (2015:61) state that strategies that encourage and support parents to engage in regular conversations with their children about their social media practices and family values should be a priority.

James (2009:85) suggests that if there are few cyberspace mentors, then a young person may have no support for reflecting on the larger implications, for himself or herself and others, of sharing details of his or her bad behaviour adventures on his or her social networking site page. As a way of ethical support, GCIS (2011:3) states that before engaging with a specific social media channel, the users should ensure that they understand its terms of reference, conventions and etiquette.

Ethical supports can also be and are increasingly provided through digital and social media themselves. Social media organisations have an increasing presence on the sites that, youth who use Facebook and Myspace may be supported to be aware of privacy (John & Catherine, 2009:85). The 2011 Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University study focused on the importance of crafting appropriate legislation that provides adequate protection for children as well as the funding and programming of education initiatives around ICTs and SNSs' risks for young people (Beger & Sinha, 2012:24).

3.5.4.6 Online campaigns

Swist *et al.* (2015:34) advise that online campaigns that support young people to counter negative messages could be an effective strategy. Swist *et al.* (2015) gave an example of an Australian campaign called "Appreciate-a-Mate", an application developed by an Australian youth to promote positive body image and communication. Swist *et al.* (2015:34) also state that the safety and effectiveness of these forums for children and young people are yet to be fully evaluated.

In terms of protection, Swist *et al.* (2015) submit that there is an urgent need to work with communications professionals through campaigns to promote balanced media usage by young people. Papadopoulos (2009:25) supports the notion that the youth should be informed of the long-term (future) negative effects that may result from the information they are supplying now (today).

3.6 LAWS GOVERNING SOCIAL MEDIA IN SOUTH AFRICA

Currently, in South Africa, there is no specified legislation dealing explicitly with social media. Social media is a rather new concept in the South African legal system and this

area is largely underdeveloped. However, many researchers discovered that there are generally laws related to social media and personality rights.

Privacy law and the right to freedom of expression, which are part of South African law, apply to social media since they cause legal risks. These rights are captured in the South African Constitution. Robinson (2015:1) notes that posting on social media platforms, such as Facebook, holds the potential for infringement of an individual's personality rights and subsequent liability.

3.6.1. Privacy law

Looking at how Facebook users disseminate content posted by other users on Facebook, without them being aware, raises the question: "Is privacy on Facebook taken into consideration by the users?" In this regard, Papadopoulos (2009:18) indicates that South African law has recognised and protected privacy, under the law of delict, since the 1950s.

The South African Constitution also recognises the right to privacy as a fundamental human right in the Bill of Rights. Section 14 (d) under the Bill of Rights provides that everyone has the right to privacy, which includes the right not to have "the privacy of their communications infringed" (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). Section 14 provides for the right of privacy of every individual (Robinson, 2015:2). In terms of infringement of privacy rights, Papadopoulos (2009:19) mentions that if someone tells someone a personal fact, in confidence, on Facebook and a third party eavesdrops in on their conversation, the third party is infringing on the person's right to privacy. Papadopoulos (2009:18) highlights that section 14 extends to any other method of obtaining information or making unauthorised disclosures.

Some law commentators, according to Papadopoulos (2009:19), divide the constitutional right to privacy in section 14 into informational privacy rights and substantive privacy rights. Furthermore, Papadopoulos (2009:19) indicates that informational privacy rights limit the ability of people to gain, publish, disclose or use information about others without their consent, whereas substantive privacy rights enable individuals to make personal decisions about such interests as their family relationships, home life and sexual orientation.

Section 10 of the Constitution protects human dignity in terms whereof every citizen has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected. According to Burchell (2009:2), dignity is a facet of personality and people have the right to have their dignity respected, together with the broader, inherent right to privacy. In this regard, Burchell (2009:2) furthermore opines that it is the personality rights of dignity and privacy that underscore individuality and set both the limits of humanity and human interaction.

Robinson (2015:4) published an article on the influence of technological developments on the right to privacy, detailing the impact of social media on privacy and the relevant South African privacy laws that pertain to this and even raised the question of whether privacy still matters in this new technological era of Facebook posts. Furthermore, Robinson (2015:4) reiterates that the privacy settings on Facebook allow users to limit the publication of content and if a post was shared to “Friends only”, it must be interpreted as limited publication and cannot be construed that an individual gave up all his or her right to privacy.

3.6.2 Freedom of expression

Section 16 of the Constitution of South Africa relates to the right to freedom of expression. Freedom of expression is considered to be the heartbeat of a democratic society (Robinson, 2015:2). The general rule is that anything you publish, notwithstanding whether it is on social media or not, which has a negative impact on the personal rights of another, may result in the limitation of the right of freedom of speech (Robinson, 2015:2). Thus, section 16 (c) of the Constitution does not protect freedom of expression, which constitutes hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion and that constitutes incitement to cause harm (Delaney, 2007:6).

Delaney (2007:6) furthermore indicates that section 16, as with all rights contained in the Bill of Rights, can be limited in terms of section 36, which is the limitation clause. The rights in the Bill of Rights may be limited only in terms of law of general application to the extent that the limitation is reasonable and justifiable in an open and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom, taking into account all relevant factors, including:

- (a) the nature of the right;
- (b) the importance of the purpose of the limitation;
- (c) the nature and extent of the limitation;
- (d) the relation between the limitation and its purpose
- (e) and less restrictive means to achieve the purpose.

3.7 SUMMARY AND OUTLINE OF CHAPTER 3

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the theories that are relevant to the study; presented a review of the literature on this topic by previous scholars specifically related to the importance of using social media for the youth; content the youth share on social media; the challenges encountered by the youth when using social media, the technical solutions to prevent social media abuse and, lastly laws that regulate social media in South Africa were also discussed. The following chapter 4 is about the research methodology.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focused on how the overall research has been conducted. The discussions in this chapter focused on the research method, research design, population of the study, and methods of analysing the data gathered. Quality criteria, limitations of the study and ethical considerations were also discussed.

4.2 DEFINITION OF METHODOLOGY

Barbour (2014:335) defines methodology as “the discussion about the assumptions that underpin different approaches to doing research and their implications for conducting research and developing theory”. Babbie (2011:513) states that methodology is the science of finding out procedures for scientific investigation. Silverman (2000:88) simply defined methodology as “a general approach to studying research topics”.

According to Polit and Hungler (2004:233), methodology decisions depend on the nature of the research demand. In this regard, Mouton and Marais (1996:16) mention that methodology in research can be considered to be the theory of correct scientific decisions. Silverman (2000:88) also indicate that the researcher’s choice of method should reflect an overall research strategy.

In this study, methodology refers to how the research was conducted and how it helped towards solving a research problem noticed by the researcher. Furthermore, the principal focus of this study was the exploration of the experiences of the uses of Facebook by the Vhembe District youth, therefore, the research approach was qualitative.

Methodology includes the design, setting, sample, methodological limitations, data collection and analysis techniques in a study (Burns & Grove, 2003:488). Methodology is a coherent group of methods that complement one another and that have the ability to fit to deliver data and findings that will reflect the research question and suit the researcher’s purpose (Henning, 2004:36).

Research methodology assists the researcher to conduct research and undoubtedly helps towards solving a research problem noticed by the researcher. As it was indicated in Chapter 1 of this study, Rajasekar *et al.* (2013:5) are of concern that research methodology is a science of studying how research is to be carried out. Furthermore, Rajasekar *et al.* (2013:5) opine that the aim of research methodology is to give the work plan of research.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Flick (2007:36), research design is a plan for collecting and analysing evidence that will make it possible for the researcher to answer whatever questions posed. Flick (2007:36) furthermore states that the design of research touches almost all aspects of the research from the minute details of data collection to the selection of the techniques of data analysis.

The term “research design” is widely used in the social sciences, particularly in disciplines that champion experimental methods (Tredoux & Smith, 2006:161). Furthermore, Tredoux and Smith (2006:161) explain that the term is too frequently taken to mean a fixed set of procedures and methods that constitute a sort of periodic table of the social sciences. In this regard, Babbie (2011:93) asserts that research design involves a set of decisions regarding what topic is to be studied, among what population, with what research methods, and for what purpose.

The present study is an exploratory qualitative in the uses of Facebook by youth in the Vhembe District. Exploratory study was so essential because it generally involves interviews which provide rich data compared to other types of studies. Babbie and Mouton (2011:277) concur that in exploratory qualitative study, the researcher collects sufficiently descriptions of data in context and reports them. In this regard, Babbie (2011:67) also indicates that exploratory study is mostly done to satisfy the researcher’s curiosity and desire for a better understanding of the phenomena.

4.3.1 Qualitative research

Flick (2007:2) defines qualitative research as “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world and they turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs and memos to the self”. Furthermore, Flick (2007:2) notes that qualitative research at this level involves a naturalistic approach to the world and this means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Babbie and Mouton (2011:270) are of the concern that the primary goal of the studies using a qualitative research approach is defined as describing and understanding rather than explaining human behaviour. Babbie and Mouton (2011:210) further reiterate that the main concern in qualitative research is to understand social action in terms of its specific context rather than attempting to generalise to some theoretical population. Silverman (2000:1) emphasises that if the researcher wants to explore people’s everyday behaviour, the qualitative methods may be appropriate.

Qualitative research focuses on interpretation and might lead to the development of new concepts or theories, or an evaluation of an organisational process (Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge, 2009:6). Qualitative usually focus on words, language and narration than numbers and figures.

According to Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim (2006:272), qualitative research makes in situations where we know in advance what the important variables are, and are able to devise reasonable ways of controlling or measuring them. In this regard, Holloway (2005:4) highlights that researchers who use qualitative research adapt a person-centered and holistic perspective to understand the human experience, without focusing on specific concepts. In addition, Holloway (2005:4) states that the original context of the experience is unique and rich knowledge and insight can be generated in-depth to present a lively picture of the respondents’ reality and social context. These events and circumstances are important to the researcher.

Creswell (2007:37-38) summarises the characteristics of qualitative research as follows:

- qualitative researchers tend to collect data in the field at the site where participations experience the issue or problem under study;
- qualitative researchers as a key instrument collect data themselves through interviewing respondents;
- qualitative researchers gather multiple forms of data rather than rely on a single data source;
- in the entire qualitative research process, the researchers keep a focus on learning the meaning that the respondents hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the researcher or writers from the literature and
- qualitative research is a form of inquiry in which researchers make an interpretation of what they see, hear and understand.

According to Delpont and Founche (2011:424), qualitative research is by its very nature, flexible and open-ended and so it continues to evolve over the course of the project. In addition, Delpont and Founche (2011:424) explain that qualitative research reports traditionally have been more flexible than reports of quantitative research. In this design, qualitative researchers may use more varied and literary writing styles that increase length.

According to Kelly (2006:379), good qualitative practice should:

- keep close to the data when labeling phenomena and at all stages of the generation of interpretive understanding;
- take into account the researcher's impact on the context of study and on the development of the interpretive account
- and keep alive several possibilities or rival explanations.

4.3.2 Principal advantages of qualitative research

- qualitative research can make visible and unpick the mechanisms which link particular variables, by looking at the explanations, or accounts, provided by those involved;
- qualitative research studies behaviour in natural settings or uses people's accounts as data; usually no manipulation of variables;
- qualitative excels at answering very different questions to those addressed by quantitative research;
- by employing qualitative methods, it is possible to study how people understand concepts;
- qualitative research methods can allow researchers to access 'embedded' processes by focusing on the context of people's everyday lives where such decisions are made and enacted;
- qualitative research can help the researchers to understand apparently illogical behaviours
- and qualitative research can de-mystify by providing detailed accounts of experience and there is an extensive catalogue of such research, employs a flexible, emergent but systematic research process (Barbour, 2014:13-157; Hancock *et al.*, 2009:6).

In this regard, Creswell (1998:16) indicates that undertaking qualitative research requires a strong commitment to study a problem, time and resources. Furthermore, Creswell (1998:16-17) states that qualitative inquiry is for the researcher who is willing to do the following:

- commit to extensive time in the field;
- engage in the complex, process of data analysis which is the ambitious task of sorting through large amounts of data and reducing them to a few themes or categories;
- write long passages, because the evidence must substantiate claims and the researcher needs to show multiple perspectives
- and participate in a form of social and human science research.

4.3.3 The exploratory research design

In this study, the researcher used an exploratory qualitative research design, which Burns and Grove (2003:313) define as “a research conducted to gain new insights, discover new ideas and or increase knowledge of phenomena”.

Exploratory qualitative research design is detailed in terms of characteristics, data collection, analysis features and approaches for interpreting and validating the research (Creswell, 2014:24). In the exploratory sequential approach, the researcher begins with a qualitative research phase and explores the views of respondents. The data are then analysed, and the information used to build into a second quantitative phase (Creswell, 2014:44).

In this study, exploratory design was used and involved gathering qualitative data using interviews. In this regard, the study was exploratory because it was considered the most appropriate for getting in-depth information on the uses of Facebook by youth from the Vhembe District. The researcher, therefore, had a desire of knowing more about the uses of Facebook by exploring different views from different social media researchers and scholars by reviewing their research and analysing their findings and discussions about the phenomena.

4.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES

4.4.1 Population

Wimmer and Dominick (2011:87) indicate that one goal of scientific research is to describe the nature of a population. As Du Plooy (2009:109) stated in Chapter 1, the population of the study is a group of people with certain similar characteristics. Durrheim and Painter (2006:132) explain the following concerning the research population:

The population is the larger pool from which the researchers' sampling elements are drawn and to which they want to generalise their findings.

In this regard, Polit and Hungler (1995:43) define a population as:

The totality of all subjects that conform to a set of specifications, comprising the entire group of persons that is of interest to the researcher and to whom the research results can be generalised.

The population of the study is the Vhembe District youth who are active Facebook users from four local municipalities, namely Makhado, Thulamela, Musina and the newly-established municipality named Collins Chabane which is also known as LIM345. The establishment of Collins Chabane Local Municipality (LIM345) on 3 August 2016 following the new municipal boundaries done by the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) has resulted in the termination of the Mutale Local Municipality. Then, the researcher decided to replace research respondents from Mutale Local Municipality with respondents from Collins Chabane Local Municipality (LIM345) as opposed to what was in Chapter 1 of this study.

The population is comprised of ten (10) males and ten (10) females who own mobile phones and who have Facebook accounts. The ages of selected Facebook users range between 18 and 29 years. The researcher preferred this age group because it consists of active Facebook users.

The researcher selected the population of the study irrespective of their levels of education and religious backgrounds to get different information about their uses and experiences of Facebook. The reason why the researcher selected twenty (20) respondents was that the entire population cannot be examined due to time and resource constraints and one is of the view that 20 is sufficient for the purposes of this study. Studying every member of a population according to Wimmer and Dominick (2011:87) is also generally cost-prohibitive and may, in fact, confound the research because measurements of large numbers of people often affect measurement quality.

Statistically, the Vhembe District Municipality Integrated Development Plan (IDP) Review 2013/14 (2014:10) reveals that the population of the Vhembe District from Census 2001 was 1 198 056 and 1 294 722 from Census 2011. The IDP Review (2014:10) furthermore

reveals that from 2001 to 2011 the population of the Vhembe District had increased by 96 666 people.

4.4.2 Sampling technique

According to Latham (2007:2), the sampling method involves taking a representative selection of the population and using the data collected as research information. Flick (2007:119) is of concern that sampling is the selection of cases or materials for the study from a larger population or variety of population. Silverman (2000:102) concurs that the purpose of sampling is usually to study a representative subsection of a precisely defined population to make inferences about the whole population.

This study used a purposive sampling of non-probability to sample twenty (20) population members who are the Vhembe District youth. For Bernard (2013:228) in the study where non-probability is used, the samples are gathered in a process that does not give all the individuals in the population equal chances of being selected. Dominick and Wimmer (2014:94) are of concern that non-probability sampling is the method that is frequently used by mass media researchers, particularly in the form of available samples.

The aim of choosing the non-probability technique is to ensure that different population members who are Facebook users are suitably selected. Durrheim and Painter (2006:139) refer to non-probability sampling as “any kind of sampling where the selection of elements is not determined by the statistical principle of randomness”. Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016:1) assert that the non-probability sampling technique is useful especially when randomisation is impossible like when the population is very large.

Therefore, the purposive sampling design of non-probability was used for the study. Babbie (2010:193) indicates that this category of sampling is sometimes called “judgemental sampling”. The design was adopted because the research was using known respondents who are Facebook users in the Vhembe District. According to Babbie (2013:73), in purposive sampling, the researcher selects a sample based on knowledge of a population, its elements and the purpose of the study. However, Silverman (2000:104) is of concern that purposive sampling allows the researcher to choose a case

because it illustrates an interesting feature or process.

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2014:96), purposive sampling is used frequently in mass media studies when researchers select respondents who use a specific medium and are asked questions about that medium. Furthermore, Wimmer and Dominick (2014:96) opine that purposive sampling is chosen with the knowledge that it is not representative of the general population. In other words, the researcher eliminates population members who cannot make a valuable impact on the study.

The researcher adopted purposive sampling to reach a target population of 20 members because the aim of the study is primarily qualitative and explorative. Another reason the purposive sampling technique was chosen is that the researcher wanted a valuable tool in studying the experiences of Facebook by the Vhembe District youth and to develop a rich exploration from those experiences rather than using sampling techniques that allow the researcher to develop thin exploration.

Etikan *et al.* (2016:2) are of concern that purposive sampling is typically used in qualitative research to identify and select the information-rich cases for the most proper utilisation of available resources. Further, Etikan *et al.* (2016:2) concur that this involves the identification and selection of individuals or groups of individuals that are proficient and well-informed about a phenomenon of interest.

Teddli (2007:83) explains that purposive sampling is typically designed to pick a small number of cases that will yield the most information about a particular phenomenon. Teddli (2007:83) further states that purposive sampling leads to a greater depth of information from a smaller number of carefully selected cases.

4.5 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

This method also called data capturing or data gathering entails the instruments used to collect data from the research respondents. Strydom (2011:335) calls this step of data gathering approximately “taking note while taking notes”. Strydom (2011:335) also notes that various data collection techniques can be used, for instance, open-ended narrative, field guides and interviews. In this regard, Creswell (2007:118) mentions that data

collection is a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information to answer the emerging research question.

Burns and Grove (2003:373) define the data gathering stage as “the precise, systematic gathering of information relevant to the research sub-problems, using a method such as interviews”. Looking at the nature of the research that aims to investigate the uses of Facebook by the youth in the Vhembe District, the researcher used the interview as an effective method of collecting data from the respondents.

Particularly, when researchers are interested in understanding the perceptions of respondents or learning how respondents come to attach certain meanings to phenomena, interviewing provides a useful means of access (Berg & Lune, 2014:115).

4.5.1 Interviewing

Interviewing was found suitable by the researcher as a data collection procedure. This approach was used because it is in line with the research design of exploring more about the experiences on the uses of Facebook by the youth in the Vhembe District. Further, this approach also helps the researcher to produce a thick narration of the objectives of the overall study to create a better understanding of the experiences on the uses of Facebook by the youth in the Vhembe District.

In this regard, Berg and Lune (2014:105) indicate that interviewing may be defined simply as “a conversation with a purpose.” Specifically, the purpose of conversations is to gather information. According to Kellehear (1993:7), a verbal method, such as an interview has an ability to reach into all content areas. Berg and Lune (2014:105) also emphasises that the interviewer asks questions and the interviewee, called the informant, provides the answer. In early approaches, interviewing was described as a game in which both the researcher and the informant received essential rewards for participation.

Silverman (2000:122) explains that the most popular approach is to treat respondents' answers as describing some external reality or internal experience. Creswell (2007:135) is of concern that the researcher should follow a protocol and use a consent form used to record information collected during an interview.

In the data gathering process, the researcher physically and individually met the respondents and interviews were conducted in a quiet, healthy environment. Individually, the respondents were asked questions designed in the interview guide. Importantly, the researcher when conducting the research followed all ethical considerations. Interviews were conducted for 35 to 40 minutes.

The researcher followed the following procedures before conducting the interview with research respondents:

- thanked the respondents about the time dedicated for the interview;
- arranged a conducive interview room;
- greeted and cordially welcomed the respondents;
- introduced the topic, aim and objectives of the study
- and read all questions for respondents to prior understand before answering.

After the interview with each research respondent, the researcher did the following:

- thanked the respondents for the time;
- reminded the respondents about the ethical considerations
- and reminded the respondents about the usage of their information.

In terms of the above-mentioned procedures, Kellehear (1993:7) opines that in interviews, each potential respondent must be given an explanation of the research, its possible benefits and harm.

4.5.2 In-depth interviewing

The researcher selected the in-depth interview approach because it gives a researcher opportunity to meet respondents physically. Henn *et al.* (2006:160) explain that this approach involves one-to-one interviews in which individual respondents are questioned at length about a particular issue, experience or event. In this regard, Kellehear (1993:1) highlights that in-depth interviews and the detailed analysis of their texts are seen to penetrate more deeply and sensitively into the subtle world of social and personal meaning.

4.5.3 Structured interviews

In this study, the researcher gathered data from the respondents using a structured interviewing approach which Kajornboon (2000:4) indicates that it is sometimes called a standardised interview. The same questions in the interview guide were asked to all respondents. The researcher used such kind of interview to avoid misinterpretation and to make sure that all respondents face the same questions in the same order. Moreover, Kajornboon (2000:4) states that structured interviews are interviews in which all respondents are asked the same questions with the same wording and in the same sequence. It would be ideal if questions can be read out in the same tone of voice so that the respondents would not be influenced by the tone of the interviewer.

Bernard (2000:191) emphasises that an interview schedule or guide is used in structured interviewing. On this detail, Diccico-Bloom and Crabtree (2006:314) indicate that in a structured interview, a person interviewed is more a respondent in the meaning-making than a conduit from which information is retrieved.

Structured interviews can also be used where information must be obtained from respondents or members of a comparison group. The same information must be obtained from numerous people (Grosshans, 1991:8). Additionally, Grosshans (1991:53) indicates that structured interviews simulate what would be done during actual data collection.

Kelly (2006:299) asserts the following about this kind of interview:

- ask open-ended questions which do not presume an answer;
- avoid leading questions;
- keep respondents focused and ask for concrete details;
- ask questions when you do not understand;
- ask respondents to rephrase or reconstruct;
- follow up and do not interrupt;
- listen more and talk less
- and tolerate silence and allow the respondent to be thoughtful.

4.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Strydom (2011:336) indicates that data analysis is a stage in which the researcher does data reduction, presentation and interpretation. Hancock *et al.* (2009:24) highlight that analysis of data in a research project involves summarising the mass of data collected and presenting the results in a way that communicates the most important features.

The researcher used thematic analysis of narrative enquiry to analyse data from the research respondents about their uses of Facebook. Riessman (2008:1) is of concern that a study, which is narrative in nature, is well understood and highlights for the readers the influence of theoretical perspectives. In this regard, Barbour (2014:123) notes that narrative involves the telling of a story with a clear sequence that seeks to locate experiences on a chronological continuum. For Hunter (2009:44), the aim of a narrative study is therefore not to find one generalisable truth but to find many truths from the respondents.

Nigatu (2009:41) suggests that the core activity in the narrative analysis is to reformulate stories presented by respondents in different contexts and based on their different experiences. In this regard, Hunter (2009:44) agrees that the process of telling the narrative is believed to have the potential to transform the respondent's experiences.

4.6.1 Analysis of qualitative data

According to Nigatu (2009:24), qualitative data analysis is the range of processes and procedures whereby the researchers move from the qualitative data that have been collected into some form of explanation, understating or interpretation of the respondents and situations they are investigating.

4.6.2 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a type of qualitative analysis. Thematic data analysis, according to Ibrahim (2012:39) is a comprehensive process whereby the researcher is able to identify numerous cross-references between the data and the research's evolving themes.

In this study, the researcher used the thematic analysis method to analyse data gathered from the research respondents about the uses of Facebook by youth in the Vhembe District. The reason for using thematic analysis was that the researcher wanted to deal with patterns that allow thick analysis that is more understandable.

Ibrahim (2012:39-40) states that thematic analysis gives an opportunity to understand the potential of any issue more widely and provides flexibility for approaching research patterns. This makes the process of thematic analysis more appropriate for analysing the data when the research aims to extract information to determine the relationship between variables and to compare different sets of evidence that pertain to different situations in the same study.

According to Barbour (2014:338), thematic analysis underpins most qualitative research analysis, whether or not it is explicitly stated. Additionally, it draws on the organisation of data into relevant themes that the author indicates that they are the broad codes assigned to the main issues arising in data (usually justified in terms of the frequency with which they occur). These are then used to organise data, with reference also to related sub-categories. By the way, “coding” according to Gibson (2006:1) refers to: “The creation of categories in relation to data; the grouping together of different instances of data under an umbrella term that can enable them to be regarded as of the same type”.

When discussing thematic analysis, Pinnegar and Daynes (2007:6) assert that the themes highlight changes in the thinking and action of the individual researcher and research movements within the disciplines. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) furthermore explain that themes provide a way of tracing the process by which one becomes a narrative researcher. In this regard, Ibrahim (2012:40) indicates that this process will confer accuracy and intricacy and enhance the research’s whole meaning.

4.6.3 Data analysis process

The researcher transcribed and translated the electronic-recorded interviews, then read and reread them in their entirety, reflecting on the interviews as a whole to ensure that they are legible. Therefore, the researcher summarised the interviews to distinguish

similarities and differences in the narratives of the respondents about their uses of Facebook to review them. Writing notes assisted the researcher to identify the main ideas from the data gathered from the research respondents.

As the research is exploratory in nature, when analysing the data, all interviews conducted by the researcher have common aspects and the researcher prepared and improved them. Then, the researcher organised data in different themes and sub-themes that had emerged in a narrative revised form. The thematic coding in the study helped to categorise and explore different experiences of the Vhembe District youth when they are on Facebook. All themes were crafted based on four research objectives. The objectives were to investigate why the Vhembe District youth find it important to use Facebook, determine the types of content the Vhembe District youth share on Facebook, identify the challenges faced by the Vhembe District youth when using Facebook and to discover solutions that could prevent problems the Vhembe District youth face on Facebook.

Once themes and sub-themes were reviewed, the narrative texts that seemed to be significant were created, analysed, written down and entered on the computer. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that when interpreting the data, all the experiences of the Vhembe District youth when they are on Facebook had been well documented from the views of the research respondents. All of the findings based on the analysis of the data are also well presented.

4.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

According to Fossey, Harvey, McDermott and Davidson (2002) who wrote about qualitative methodology, the method has the drawback of being subjective. The data that the research has found is based on subjectivity. Furthermore, the study did not go into detail in terms of uses of other social media like Instagram, LinkedIn, Google+, Tumblr and so forth. The reason behind this is that the researcher wanted to mainly focus on Facebook because it is a social networking Web site application that is a great medium for socialisation and communication on a daily basis among the Vhembe District youth.

The population of the study was twenty (20) Vhembe District male and female youth whose ages range from 18 to 29 years. The researchers selected them because they own mobile phones and they are active users of Facebook. Further, the population was accessible and seemed well understanding the study.

The researcher used the interview as an instrument of data collection. The instrument was selected based on its characteristic of enabling the researchers getting to know respondents quite intimately so that they can really understand how they think and feel about the phenomena.

4.8 QUALITY CRITERIA

The uses of Facebook by youth in the Vhembe District of South Africa is qualitative research. In this regard, quality criteria are an essential aspect that the researcher considered in the study. It is important in the sense that when the researcher is done conducting the study, there must be quality in terms of the following criteria features: credibility, dependability and conformability.

To ensure that quality criteria are taken into consideration, the researcher made sure that the credibility was maintained throughout the study, ascertaining that the findings reported are the ones obtained through the data collection process undertaken and are convincing and believable and the findings of the research are related to the findings of other researchers. According to Anney (2014:276), credibility is defined as the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings. Furthermore, Anney (2014:276) states that credibility establishes whether or not the research findings represent plausible information drawn from the respondents' original data and is a correct interpretation of the respondents' original views.

In its broadest sense, van der Riet and Durrheim (2006:90) indicate that credibility refers to: "The degree to which the research conclusions are sound". Furthermore, van der Riet and Durrheim (2006:90) explain that qualitative researchers have two problems with this understanding of credibility. Firstly, they find it impossible to identify and rule out specific

credibility threats before doing the research. Secondly, social constructionists reject the idea that research findings can be accurate reflections of reality.

Thoughtfully, the research strategy was described and precisely followed to meet the requirements of dependability and critical evaluation of the methodology that was used in the research study to ascertain that it yields good results. In this regard, the researcher also ensured that all efforts in the research were made reasonable and logical. Additionally, all interviews and records regarding the study were carefully organised and documented to ensure dependability.

Dependability is the degree to which the results are repeatable. This applies to both subjects' scores on measures and the outcomes of the study as a whole (van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006:92). As it was indicated in Chapter 1, Trochim (2006:1) states that dependability is similar to the concept of replicability or repeatability. In this regard, Babbie and Mouton (2011:278) concur that an inquiry must also provide its audience with evidence that if it were to be repeated with the same context; its findings would be similar. Kellehear (1993:9) opines that dependability refers to: "A method which, if used by others in similar conditions to the original research, will actually turn up the same or highly similar results".

The researcher lastly followed conformability by making sure that the methodology used in the research study yields good results. "Conformability" refers to the degree to which the results of an inquiry could be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers (Anney, 2014:279). From Elo, Kaariainen, Kanste, Polkki, Utriainen, Kyngas (2014:1), conformability refers to objectivity, that is, the potential for congruence between two or more independent people about the data's accuracy, relevance or meaning. Babbie and Mouton (2011:278) are of concern that conformability is the degree to which the findings are the product of the focus of the enquiry and not of the biases of the researcher.

4.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This section considers the ethical issues or considerations of the study. Silverman (2000:200) states that in social research, ethical considerations are much more important.

According to Kellehear (1993:11), research ethics refers to: “The responsibility that researchers have towards each other, the people who are being researched, and the wider society which supports that research”. Wassenaar (2006:61) is of the view that the essential purpose of research ethics is to protect the welfare of research respondents.

Kellehear (1993:4) further highlights that in social science research, the researcher must make sure that there is no ethical dilemma in involving people in the study without their permission. In this regard, Wassenaar (2006:61) is of concern that ethical considerations also involve more than a focus on the welfare of research respondents and extend into areas such as scientific misconduct and plagiarism.

As an example, Silverman (2000:200) emphasises that qualitative researchers studying human subjects ponder over the dilemma of wanting to give full information to subjects but not contaminating their research by informing subjects too specifically about the research question to be studied. Further, Silverman (2000:200) asserts that when a researcher is studying people’s behaviour or asking them questions, not only the values of the researcher but the researcher’s responsibilities to those studied have to be faced. Creswell (2007:141) concurs that regardless of the approach to qualitative inquiry, a qualitative researcher faces many ethical issues that surface during data collection in the field and analysis and dissemination of qualitative reports.

In South Africa, most universities require that a research ethics committee (REC) review all social science research involving human participants before data collection can commence (Wassenaar, 2006:61). Qualitative researchers need to give much more attention than is currently done to thinking about the considerations that must be taken into account (Hammersley, 2007:291).

According to Babbie (2010:64), ethical issues or considerations cover the following essential aspects:

- voluntary participation (also called individual autonomy);
- no harm to the respondents;
- anonymity;

- deception
- and trustworthiness.

When collecting data, participation in this study was voluntary. The researcher made it clear to research respondents about the informed decision in research. In this regard, the researcher did not force any of the respondents to participate in the study. The researcher also made sure that the respondents sign consent forms before the interviews commence. The researcher also informed the respondents that they are permitted to withdraw at any given point of the research when or if they would like to withdraw from it.

In the case of voluntary participation, Babbie (2010:64) suggests that a major tenant of research is that participation must be voluntary. Furthermore, Babbie (2010:64) indicates that the same norm applies to social research and no one should be forced to participate. In this regard, Babbie and Mouton (2011:529) emphasise that the researcher shall inform respondents that they are free to participate or to withdraw from the research while explaining the foreseeable consequences of declining or withdrawing.

When gathering data from the research respondents, the researcher ensured that the rights of all the respondents are highly protected, respected and not infringed even after the data gathering process has been completed. The researcher made sure to minimise the risk of harm to respondents. Furthermore, the researcher was always careful and did not disclose any confidential information such as the names, addresses and contact details of the respondents when disseminating the study. This was to make sure to fulfil what the researcher promised during the time when the study was proposed.

In terms of no harm to the respondents' norm, Babbie (2010:65) notes that human research should never injure the people being studied, regardless of whether they volunteer for the study. In this regard, Kellehear (1993:11) emphasises that researchers are expected to consider the safety and welfare of those people who participate in the research. Further, Babbie (2010:65) indicates that in social research practice, this often concerns being careful not to reveal information that would embarrass subjects or endanger their home lives, friendships, jobs and so forth.

The anonymity of respondents is one of the central aspects of social research ethical considerations. In this regard, the researcher ensured that all the research findings are publicly made without any mention or disclosure of the respondents' identities, names and addresses to protect them. Furthermore, the researcher provided the respondents with adequate information about how their data will be used in academic literature.

A research project guarantees anonymity when the researcher cannot identify a given response with a given respondent (Babbie, 2010:67). In this regard, Babbie (2010:70) also highlights that because deceiving people is unethical, deception within social research needs to be justified by compelling scientific or administrative concerns.

The researcher did not conduct a research study involving deception. The researcher then did not even deceive any respondent in a way that could affect his or her will of participating in the study. Further, the researcher made sure not to misrepresent the findings of the research. The researcher also made sure to cite work done by other researchers to avoid deception.

In the University of Utah Institutional Review Board Report (2002:1), it is clearly noted that deception is the intentional misleading of subjects or the withholding of full information about the nature of a research procedure. University of Utah Institutional Review Board Report (2002:1) further noted that deception increases ethical concerns because it affects the ability of the respondent to give informed consent. In this regard, Kellehear (1993:12) states that deception or cheating is a practice, which is not welcome in social research.

In this regard, the researcher also considered trustworthiness when conducting the overall research study. The reason for considering trustworthiness was to protect the welfare and safety of respondents. Another reason is that trustworthiness is a fundamental quality that both the researcher and the respondents look for in each other during the research process to practise the ethics that the researcher promised to follow.

Dick (1999:2) is of concern that research tends to be participative. Especially in its more participative forms, it is likely to be regarded as trustworthy by its respondents. However, rigour can still be an issue with a wider audience. For Babbie and Mouton (2011:276), the key criterion or principle of good qualitative research is found in the notion of trustworthiness.

Consequently, plagiarism, which is a core of research ethics, was also taken into consideration by the researcher by making sure that all used researchers, scholars, articles and other sources in form of texts and figures are referenced well in the study. The reason to avoid plagiarism was that the researcher did not want to break any research ethics. Babbie and Mouton (2011:531) are of concern that social science researchers shall not present substantial portions or elements of another person's work or data as their own, even if the other work or data source is cited occasionally. In this regard, the reference style recommended by the university research committee that is Harvard was consistently used in the overall study.

4.10 SUMMARY AND OUTLINE OF CHAPTER 4

This chapter has focused on how the overall research was conducted. Furthermore, the method of data collection was also discussed. The chapter also dealt with how data were collected and analysed using relevant data analysis, which is a thematic data analysis procedure.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the principal focus is on both data analysis of the data gathered by the researcher and interpretation of the results of the study on the uses of Facebook by youth from the Vhembe District. This chapter also entails a description of the biographical details of the respondents who are the study population.

This study was made of a qualitative approach and the qualitative data were analysed in the form of a narrative. Furthermore, the interpretation of the qualitative results was in a narrative form using themes and sub-themes developed by the researcher.

5.2 BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The sample of the study consisted of 20 respondents, both 10 males and 10 females, whose ages range between 18 to 29 years. They were selected according to purposive random sampling. All respondents were from four Vhembe District local municipalities namely; Thulamela Local Municipality, Makhado Local Municipality, Musina Local Municipality and the newly established municipality called Limp 345 also known as Collins Chabane. The majority of respondents were from the Thulamela Local Municipality because they were easily accessible, followed by Makhado then Musina and Limp 345.

All 20 respondents volunteered to become part of the study. The biographical data of the research respondents was compiled during the interview process. The researcher voluntarily asked for respondents' gender, age, level of study and local municipality they belonged to before the actual interview commenced. The biographical details of the respondents are presented in the table below.

Table 1: Biographical profile of respondents

Respondents	Gender	Age	Level of education	Local municipality
1	Male	23	Degree	Thulamela
2	Female	21	Grade 12	Thulamela
3	Male	27	Honours degree	Thulamela
4	Male	23	Grade 12	Thulamela
5	Female	21	Grade 12	Thulamela
6	Male	27	Honours degree	Makhado
7	Female	22	Grade 12	Makhado
8	Male	23	Grade 12	Makhado
9	Male	23	Honours degree	Musina
10	Male	23	Degree	Musina
11	Female	23	Grade 12	Makhado
12	Female	18	Grade 12	Makhado
13	Male	29	Degree	Makhado
14	Female	22	Grade 12	Thulamela
15	Female	21	Degree	Musina
16	Female	22	Grade 12	Musina

17	Male	22	Grade 12	Limp 345
18	Male	23	Grade 12	Limp 345
19	Female	22	Grade 12	Limp 345
20	Female	22	Grade 12	Limp 345

5.3 EMPIRICAL RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Data for the study were gathered using structured interviews and the researcher was guided by an interview schedule. The interviews were electronically recorded and transcribed by the researcher to analyse the data. In this section of the study, the findings are analysed in the form of themes and accompanied by sub-themes that were identified during the process of data analyses.

Theme 1: Importance of Facebook to Vhembe District youth

The respondents came up with different motives for their usage of Facebook. Users indicated that they use Facebook to connect with other users, inform Facebook friends about different things, entertain themselves and look for jobs.

Sub-theme 1.1 Connection

The majority of respondents stated that they use Facebook to connect with their siblings, relatives, old friends and unknown friends they are interested to chat with. Some respondents think that their friendships become much stronger when they always chat with their Facebook friends. Some of the respondents explained the following about connection:

“I prefer chatting with friends from my hometown who are at different places all the time when I log in on to Facebook. This helps me to know what are they up to in life. Connecting with my friends is something I enjoy most because a majority of them we attended together primary and secondary school and some of them we share common interests”.

(Respondent 20)

“I mainly use Facebook to connect with other users especially those whom I don’t even know at all. It is interesting to chat with Facebook users from other countries such as Nigeria, Botswana, Cuba and Zimbabwe because I learn a lot of things from them. Now I have many Facebook friends from other countries and I always enjoy chatting with them”. (Respondent 11)

“I spend a lot of my spare time on Facebook. What I do when I am online is to add both known and unknown friends because I like to socialise with them. Besides, I enjoy learning other peoples’ lifestyles and cultures when I am chatting with them”. (Respondent 15)

“I use Facebook to connect with my spouse. My spouse and I inform each other about our whereabouts and other family-related issues that we will need each other to know at that particular time”. (Respondent 13)

“I get to stay connected with family members and friends who are near and far. Further, I share with them my opinions and views about things which are happening at the university, my relationship and church”. (Respondent 5)

“I connect with my old friends that we matriculated together on Facebook because after matric we went to different universities and the distance kept us apart and this causes us to struggle to get along. So, Facebook helps a lot to keep us in touch”. (Respondent 6)

It is indicated in the literature that some social media users use them for connection. Swist *et al.* (2015:17) state that, social media are specifically designed to facilitate, promote and enhance interpersonal connections at peer, family, local and global scales. In this regard, Eke *et al.* (2014:8) state that social networking sites can be a great way to make connections with people with related interests and goals, like a virtual meeting place where friends hang out. Chowdhury and Saha, (2015:30) are of concern that through Facebook; young people may increase their empathy for their existing and old friends which gives more systematic communication.

Sub-theme 1.2 Communication

Some respondents indicated that communication was one of the reasons for using Facebook. They further highlighted that Facebook makes it easier for them to keep in touch with their friends, relatives and loved ones because it is fast to deliver messages when they are chatting.

“I always communicate with my family members and friends through group chats on Facebook. This helps me to understand what are they up to in life and know their whereabouts”. (Respondent 17)

“As I am a Law student I use Facebook as the platform for communicating with other lawyers and attorneys about their breakthroughs in the Law stream. I find this interesting because they are willing to assist me all the time when I chat with them”. (Respondent 18)

“I am a chess player and when I am in a situation whereby I do not have airtime, I use Facebook to communicate with other chess players about where and when are we going to meet for matches, practise and meetings. I find communication working because we respond to each other’s inboxes on time”. (Respondent 6)

In this regard, Chowdhury and Saha, (2015:30) indicated the following about communication:

Through Facebook, young people may increase their empathy for their existing and old friends which gives more systematic communication.

Also, Njoroge (2013:2) indicates that through social media, young people can use networks of online friends and group memberships to reconnect and communicate with old friends.

Sub-theme 1.3 Information

As indicated by some respondents Facebook helps them to share and receive crucial information. Respondents highlighted that when they are online they become informed about a lot of things that are happening in their surroundings and abroad. Five respondents explained the following regarding information:

“I primarily use Facebook to share with my online friends any important information I come across such as announcements from the Office of the President of the Republic of South Africa, local municipality and church so that my friends keep updated”. (Respondent 4)

“My university friends and I like to go out during the weekends. I normally inform my online friends about the important events we ought to attend. It is interesting that some Facebook friends are frequently willing to join us. Through Facebook, I also share ideas that enhance our online friendships such as motivation”. (Respondent 19)

“Information that my Facebook friends always share with me is about academia. They share with me medical course outlines from other universities and update me about medical practise trending news through online newspapers links. The information they share is crucial because it helps me to enhance my knowledge in medicine”. (Respondent 12)

“I usually share information about soccer with my friends. I also created a group chat in which I share recent information about soccer”. All the time I update my friends about match fixtures, players and their teams. Many Facebook friends and other users like and comment on my posts”. (Respondent 17)

“As I am a motorist, I share information with my friends about roadworthy, traffic and accidents on their Facebook walls. Also, if I come across a roadblock, I share that information with my Facebook friends who are motorists so that they can be aware of such situation”. (Respondent 13)

It is acknowledged in the literature that social media such as Facebook can be used by users to share information. Sponcil and Gitimu (2013:5) are of concern that, due to digital technology, and the emergence of social media, users can show considerable information

about themselves and their friends. Additionally, Sponcil and Gitimu (2013:5) indicate that this self-disclosure is a way to open up their own identities of how they want others to perceive them. Hlatshwayo (2014:16) adds that social media like Facebook make it a lot easier for young people to exchange information and ideas with too many people within a very short space of time.

Sub-theme 1.4 Socialisation

The majority of respondents agreed that they registered for their Facebook account to socialise with users of different races, gender, cultures, counties, etc. Some respondents are of the following opinions about socialisation:

“When I am online, I find users who listen to me when we are socializing. They become happy when I socialise with them about the state of politics and economy in South Africa. Some respondents especially who have knowledge about economy come with ideas that can help to grow the macroeconomy”. (Respondent 15)

“I create strong networks with accountants since I am an unemployed BCom Accounting graduate. I socialise with my Facebook friends who are qualified accountants in a group chat to help me get a job. To be a member of social groups helps me to improve my social skills and to know better what is inspiring people in the world in different sectors”. (Respondent 3)

“I value Facebook most because it allows me to socialise with my new and old friends. I have many Facebook friends from South America, and we mostly socialise about how things are done in their country and South Africa. This is so interesting because I learn many things such as culture, tourism, politics and economy from them”. (Respondent 7)

“Through Facebook, I socialise with my fellow Christians. Facebook friends who are Christians help me to grow spiritually. Further, our messages teach other users and I to respect one another in life”. (Respondent 8)

Socialisation was also emphasised by Sponcil and Gitimu (2013:5) who indicated that social media provide an easy way for young people to receive feedback and communicate

with peers. Sponcil and Gitimu (2013:5) further indicate that young people can also be affected by using social media networks.

Sub-theme 1.5 Academic purpose

Some respondents responded that they mainly use Facebook for academic purposes and the rest just follow suit. They also emphasised that they are part of group chats formulated specifically for academic updates. Some of the respondents responded thus:

“Using Facebook benefited me a lot because my classmates and I use the platform to discuss our assignments, homework and presentation. If ever I fail to attend a lecture some of my classmates update me about what was being taught in the lecture halls”.
(Respondent 9)

“Facebook friends who are doing the same courses as me send information about the application for bursaries such as National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), shutdown student protests such as #FeesMustFall and reminders of the university calendar. It is important to have such friends because their messages help me to know what is happening at the university”. (Respondent 5)

“I prefer Facebook for my studies. Content such as digital notes and video lectures are always sent to my inbox by some of my Facebook friends from other universities and I find them important because I download and use them for my practical, test and exam”.
(Respondent 7)

With regard to education, Gutierrez and Tyner (2012:38) indicate that new media, such as social networks and the internet and so on could be seen as educational agents. In this regard, Eke, Omekwu, and Odoh (2014:6) state that young people use social networking sites not only for leisure and personal socialisation, but also as a platform for more meaningful and serious deliberations, and they use social networking for online learning, finding jobs to accomplish educational and economic being.

Sub-theme 1.6 Job-seeking

The majority of unemployed respondents who passed matric and graduated from tertiary institutions indicated that they use Facebook as a tool that helps them with finding jobs and internships. They also mentioned that they visit Job fan pages from where they find uploaded recent jobs.

A few respondents indicated the following about job seeking as their reason for using Facebook:

“I always visit Facebook job pages like Puff and Pass to look for jobs that are posted within that particular time which are related to my qualifications. When I find jobs that are related to my qualifications I apply as I completed my first degree”. (Respondent 9)

“Some Facebook friends get job advertisements from agents and send them in my inbox or share them on my timeline. As a university unemployed graduate, I consider job vacancies and I eventually apply so that I can get the job opportunity”. (Respondent 3)

It has been proven by Eke *et al.* (2014:6) that some users of social media use the platforms for finding jobs to accomplish their economic, educational, political and social being. Also, Ginger (2008:13) indicates that Facebook has a different feel than most websites for it helps to look for professional jobs.

Sub-theme 1.7 Entertaining themselves

A number of respondents are of concern that they use Facebook to entertain themselves. They also indicated that Facebook kills boredom because immediately when they log in they view joke pages. Some respondents stated that when they are scrolling down recent posts of their friends they come across humorous stories. Three respondents explained the following:

“I get entertained when I am bored through funny videos uploaded by friends on their Facebook timelines. I become very interested to watch those videos because they relieve stress after a long day. I also share some funny pictures and videos with some Facebook friends so that they watch them”. (Respondent 19)

“Facebook helps me to kill boredom. I view sports news to know what is going on in the sports world and I also use Facebook to download cartoons and memes (content such as images, videos and texts that become popular and spread rapidly on the websites) on various Facebook pages. Facebook keeps me busy during the weekends and the platform helps me to overcome boredom”. (Respondent 2)

“I do not get bored all the time when I am online because I chat with friends who love jokes and entertainment. My friends and I always share funny stories, videos and pictures. I am always happy when I am online because each minute I receive jokes from a friend”. (Respondent 5)

Entertainment as the reason for using Facebook is also confirmed by Jones (2014:30) who said that social media are increasingly used as a source of real-time information and a place for debate in entertainment.

Sub-theme 1.8 Religious purpose

Some respondents indicated that they use Facebook for information about their beliefs and religions. Three respondents described how Facebook helps them to practise their religions as follows:

“Fellow Christians who own Facebook accounts frequently send me scriptures, sermons and preachers’ messages so that I can know what they were learning about at church, services, gatherings and all-night prayers. I find this interesting because through them I can grow spiritually”. (Respondent 9)

“My online friends and I always have conversations on Facebook about church events. When our church hosts events such as crusades and all-night prayers I update my friends and other Facebook users to join us in prayer”. (Respondent 11)

“Facebook highly assists me as a Christian because I can access videos of pastors preaching almost all the time when I want to. There are countless pages that I visit such as those of Pastor Chris of Nigeria and Bishop T. D Jakes of America. Different pastors’ messages I view on Facebook help to uplift my faith”. (Respondent 4)

In this regard, Papadopoulos (2009:39) indicated that when a user is online on Facebook, he or she can manage to fill in religious views, write a biography and give one's favourite quotations.

Theme 2: Content shared by Vhembe District youth on Facebook

The study respondents indicated that they share different content when they are on Facebook. The content they share is different due to their preferences. Respondents also stated that they share content with their online friends to know their interests and understand them better.

A number of respondents indicated that they share created content such as videos, audio and pictures whereas some share written content such as messages and updates. Table 2 below indicates the content that the respondents prefer to share with their online friends:

Table 2: Respondents' content shared on Facebook

Like other data collected in this study, the researcher used interviews to gather data on the content shared on Facebook by the youth from the Vhembe District. The content shared on Facebook included both created and written content.

Respondents	Created content			Written content	
	Photos	Videos	Audios	messages	Updates
1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
3	✓	x	x	✓	x
4	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	x	x	x	✓	✓

7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
9	x	x	x	✓	✓
10	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
11	✓	x	x	✓	x
12	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
13	✓	x	x	✓	✓
14	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
15	✓	x	✓	✓	x
16	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
17	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
18	x	✓	x	✓	x
19	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
20	✓	✓	x	✓	✓

The above table shows that the majority of the Vhembe District youth prefer to share messages, photos and updates than audio and videos. It is also confirmed by Eke *et al.* (2014:8) that users of social media usually exchange photos.

Sub-theme 2.1 Created content (pictures and videos)

A number of respondents indicated that they share created content such as videos and pictures. Some indicated that they usually share videos and pictures when they are getting bored, whilst some say they self-create those videos and images to display their creativity, and still others indicated that they share pictures and videos when they are

attending events such as parties and meetings and when they are at different places such as night clubs, workplaces, stadiums and academic areas.

Some of the respondents explained the reason for sharing created content with other Facebook friends:

“I like attending parties, so whenever I am invited I take pictures and immediately upload them on Facebook. The main reason for uploading those pictures is to show my friends what kind of clothes I am wearing and what kind of drinks I am drinking at that particular event”. (Respondent 2)

“All the time when I go to stadiums I take ‘selfies’ (pictures of one’s self) and after that, I upload, tag and share them with my Facebook friends. My friends usually like and comment on those pictures and when they do so I gain confidence. That is why I keep on sharing my pictures with online friends”. (Respondent 20)

“When I am traveling and visiting fascinating places, I take video clips and upload and share them with my online friends. My online friends like my videos because some of them are inspired by what inspires me such as nature, art and creativity”. (Respondent 10)

“I sometimes send my friends audios of inspirational messages by motivational speakers such as Bishop T.D Jakes of America so that they learn from who I listen to”. (Respondent 15)

The issue of created content was confirmed by John and Catherine (2009:6) who stated that young people are participating in a range of activities, including social networking where they upload and share their creations, and collaborate with others in various ways. To the research findings by Lenhart, Purcell, Smith and Zickuhr (2010:23), youth share self-created content online like photos, videos, artwork or stories.

Facebook enhances creativity among young users because several creative comments, pictures, poems or statements are regularly posted by these users and therefore, they

can get instant feedback from friends and family on their creative outlets which helps them refine and develop their artistic abilities (Chowdhury & Saha, 2015:30).

Sub-theme 2.2 Updates

In this regard, some of the respondents emphasised that they mainly use Facebook to get updated on current information. Some respondents stressed the following about updates:

“When I am online, I like to view entertainment pages, specifically soccer because I like to read updates about new players, profiles and league logs”. (Respondent 17)

“I use Facebook because I want to get updated about celebrities’ news and scandals. For example, I read about the death of Joe Mafela, the former “Sgudi ‘Snaysi” actor on my friend’s timeline. I found this interesting because every day when I login into my account I find something new about both local and international celebrities”. (Respondent 1)

“I get updated in a situation wherein other users would either share something with me or tag me on my timeline as to what is going on at home, church or university. Through Facebook I also get updated about certain events such as fashion shows and where and when are they taking place so that I can attend. Also, as a student, I get updated about academic issues such as scholarships and bursaries’ applications”. (Respondent 5)

“My Facebook friends and I update each other about upcoming events to attend. Also, through Facebook I update my Facebook friends about funny moments while attending events just to express my feelings”. (Respondent 13)

As it was indicated by Tham and Ahmed (2011:1) in Chapter 3, young people are utilising these social networks for information on events, browse through friends’ news feeds and personal updates. Amanda, Kristen and Aaron (2010:3), highlighted that Facebook is currently the most commonly used online social network among young people. Young people lead the way when it comes to using status updating.

Sub-theme 2.3 Messages

Some of the research respondents revealed that they also use Facebook just to share various messages with their Facebook friends and other users they want to communicate with. Some respondents indicated that they enjoy creating messages, especially those that inspire and share with their friends on their Facebook walls.

Respondents explained the reason for sending messages to other Facebook users when they are online:

“All the times when I am online I make sure that I share or send my friends inspirational messages or quotes. The reason why I share inspirational messages is that I want my Facebook friends to know that when they are down in their spirits, there is another way that they can rely on to relieve themselves”. (Respondent 9)

“I enjoy sharing inspirational quotes with my friends when I am online. I am also pleased by the feedback I receive from users because they show that they learn a lot from those inspirational quotes. Some users you find them using inspirational quotes as their statuses and share them with their Facebook friends too”. (Respondent 10)

Revealing personal thoughts and feelings is generally taken as a positive sign that the communicator is willing to reach out to the message receiver, which encourages the receiver’s compensational self-disclosure (Lee, 2015:315).

Theme 3: Challenges faced by Vhembe District youth on Facebook

A number of research respondents mentioned cyberattacks, cyberstalking, sexual bullying, pornographic materials, vulgar language and hacking of accounts as major challenges they face when they are online. They further expressed their discomfort caused by the challenges they face on Facebook.

Sub-theme 3.1 Pornographic materials (Pictures and videos)

Respondents are of concern that they had been exposed to pornographic materials when they are online several times. They further state that it is so disgracing to find a picture or

video of sexual nature when they are online. Respondents described how pornographic materials affect them when they are online:

“Sometimes I receive pornographic pictures and videos from Facebook users I did not add as friends. This process happens randomly on my timeline and it causes me a bad reputation as if I am the one who uploads them”. (Respondent 9).

“For many times, I receive pornographic materials in a form of pictures and videos. Such content worries me a lot in such a way I feel I do not want to own a Facebook account. I do not want to be sent such materials because people will think I also exchange them with other Facebook users”. (Respondent 1)

“It is always disgusting to come across a naked picture of a lady when I am online because I always chat while I am seated next to my girlfriend. I find this as a problem because conflicts emerge and my girlfriend thinks I am cheating on her with online girlfriends”. (Respondent 18)

“Challenge that I always come across online is of receiving friendship requests from unknown users who are always naked on their profile pictures. I find this shocking because I did not know that something mysterious like that can happen in my account”. (Respondent 4)

“Some Facebook users tag me on the picture that I did not agree they should tag me and a majority of them are of naked men whom I do not even know where they come from. I do not want such kinds of pictures on my timeline because I chat with my boyfriend on Facebook”. (Respondent 5)

In their literature, Swist *et al.* (2015:59) state that young people are most concerned about exposure to sexting and pornographic content through their social media and other online interactions. In this regard, Lee (2015:13) indicates that, as norms are learned from observing behaviour of others, social media users who are exposed to others' personalised content tend to follow suit.

Sub-theme 3.2 Cyberattacks

A number of respondents indicate that, when they are online, they receive a number of intimidating messages in their inboxes and some threats on their timelines. Some explained that threats they receive sometimes make them feel like they could deactivate their Facebook accounts due to fear and discomfort.

Some respondents indicated that when they respond harshly to such kinds of messages, some online attackers promise to attack them physically. Some respondents indicated the following about the cyberattack they face on their Facebook accounts:

“Unknown Facebook users whom I did not even add as my friend sends me threatening and harassing messages in my inbox. The day I upload my pictures unknown Facebook users regularly comment that I look ugly, tiny, unhealthy and sick. I do not like such kind of comments and I find them disturbing because I do not like how a user describes me”.

(Respondent 8)

“I once sent a number of threatening messages on my wall by a Facebook user who was in the condition of anonymity. A user promised that if I do not give him my cellphone number, he won’t stop asking for them. I did not send feedback and within that particular day I was scared to walk around my area because I was afraid to be attacked since it was my first time to receive such kind of intimidating messages”. (Respondent 20)

Another respondent indicated the following about the cyberattack challenge:

“Some users fail to attack me physically and they use Facebook as a platform to show their aggressions towards me, calling me names and threatening to damage my reputation online. I find this bad because I do not insult or do any harm when I am online”.

(Respondent 7)

Concerning cyberattacks, Eke *et al.* (2014:11) noted that social networking sites such as Facebook have become perilous as a result of the activities of criminals. Swist *et al.* (2015:61) emphasise that the more time young people spend on social media, the more they are likely to be exposed to risks.

Sub-theme 3.3 Cyberstalking

Respondents also voiced their voices about the issue of cyberstalking which is one of the problems they are facing on Facebook. Some respondents explained how they became victims of cyberstalking when they were online:

“Some Facebook users threatened and stalked me online after I uploaded some of my pictures.” Some unknown users always comment with messages like: “How are you stupid person?”, and “You think you are smart on Facebook?” “Nowadays you think you are the most handsome person”. (Respondent 8)

“I once became a victim of cyberstalking before I deleted my numbers on my Facebook profile. Some Facebook users used to take my cellphone numbers on my Facebook profile and call me on condition of anonymity. “You think you are the owner of Facebook.” That is one of the messages I got from some Facebook users. The message that I got in my inbox shocked me because I never did any harm when I was online”. (Respondent 1)

In literature, it is suggested by Ginger (2008:11) that another danger found with the use of social networking sites is stalkers and predators. Moreover, Ginger (2008:13) states that Facebook is notably conducive to one-sided activity and browsing, or ‘stalking’ as most users refer to it. Lee (2015:315) states that challenges on social media happen because social media users have a higher propensity for self-disclosure than other media users.

Sub-theme 3.4 Sexual bullying

Some respondents agreed that they had been exposed to sexual bullying online. They further explained that sexual bullying happens frequently when they are online. From the experience, two respondents disclosed that:

“I received several naked pictures and messages from a male Facebook user calling me a slut. This happened after I refused his relationship proposal online. I did not like it because I know that I am not a slut”. (Respondent 19)

“A male user sent me messages in my Facebook inbox promising to have sex with me and I refused to do that. The way he told was shocking and I had to tell my sisters and friends to be aware of such deeds”. (Respondent 15)

The problem of sexual bullying is confirmed by Chowdhury and Saha (2015:30) who explained that sometimes some Facebook users spread misinformation and do various types of cybercrimes to do sexual and mental crimes with their unknown friends through chatting. In their literature, Beger and Sinha (2012:21) are concerned that young people may be bullied or stalked and pressured, tricked or persuaded into meeting strangers offline, being groomed for involvement in sexual activities.

Sub-theme 3.5 Vulgar language

A number of respondents indicated that they come across vulgar language when they are online on Facebook. Some respondents indicated that vulgar language disturbs them as is something they did not expect when they registered for their Facebook accounts. Some of the respondents explained the following on how vulgar language affects them:

“Sometimes unknown Facebook users send me insulting messages. I become surprised by such kind of disgracing messages because I do not insult anyone or disturb anyone when I am online”. (Respondent 10)

“All the times when I log in on Facebook I come across the language that is not proper for public consumption. Some users always post statuses full of offensive words. This kind of deed led me to block all users who post insolent words because they upset me”. (Respondent 3)

“Insults are a challenge I come across when I am on Facebook. Some users insult me both in my inbox and timeline. Facebook users who insult me online do this to benefit themselves and tend to forget about my feelings”. (Respondent 2)

“Some users insult me online even though I do not know them whereas some write vigorous comments on my posts. I find this disturbing and boring because I do not exchange with them any disgusting content”. (Respondent 20)

From the social media research conducted in 2014 in Swaziland, Hlatshwayo (2014:16) states that many young social media users complain about insults and vulgar language they receive when they are online.

Sub-theme 3.6 False information

A number of respondents indicated that sharing false information is one of the challenges they face on Facebook. They believe in lies posted or uploaded by someone on Facebook until they are informed later that it was trending false content created by someone. Some respondents defined how the sending of false information affects them when they are online:

“My Facebook friend once sent me a message in my inbox that someone I know has passed away and when I tried to do follow up about the decease, I found out that it was not true, and I could not believe it because I was already told myself that it is true”.

(Respondent 15)

“Some Facebook users sometimes write false statuses about me on their Facebook timelines until some Facebook friends inform me about such deeds. It bores me when somebody lies about me on Facebook”. (Respondent 13)

“I also came across a lot of false messages written about both celebrities and local people. Such kind of information misleads because as a Facebook user you will never have enough time to search or ask whether those messages are true or not. I do not like lies and I do not expect them on my timeline”. (Respondent 1)

False information was also confirmed by Boyd and Ellison (2006:13) who indicated that among the young people who use Facebook in America with completely open profiles, 46 per cent reported including at least some false information.

Sub-theme 3.7 Invasion of privacy

Some respondents were of concern that invasion of privacy is one of the challenges they face when they are online. Respondents indicated that invasion of privacy is also done

by those friends they trust most and know physically. Respondents explained the following about the invasion of privacy when they are online:

“Sometimes when I send my actual friends who use Facebook confidential messages in their inbox, they forward them to other Facebook friends to know. I became bored when someone publicise my privacy online”. (Respondent 12)

“Some Facebook friends who turned to be my enemies invaded my privacy and shared information I used to tell them on Facebook. I found it irritating because I did not know that they could tell anyone, especially through social media”. (Respondent 13)

Ahn (2011:13) highlighted that a study done by Gross and Acquisti (2005) on Carnegie Mellon University students’ Facebook profiles discovered potential privacy threats contained in their personal information.

Sub-theme 3.8 Hacking of account

A handful of respondents complained about the hacking of their accounts by unknown Facebook users. Respondents are of concern that sometimes after a while they receive notifications in their Facebook accounts to confirm their passwords to show that they are the owners of those accounts.

Some of the respondents explained the following experiences with the hacking of accounts:

“I once became the victim of hacking of Facebook account. An unknown Facebook user hacked my account and started uploading naked pictures on my timeline, changing my profile details such as address and photos. This deed has affected my relationship in such a way I ended up breaking up with my boyfriend because he thought I was the one uploading naked pictures on my timeline”. (Respondent 16)

“I once became a victim of account hacking. I find it disturbing because I did not want to register another account until I report so that I can use it again”. (Respondent 10)

“The hacking of my account is one of the worst challenges that I have ever encountered since I registered my Facebook account in 2010. “Unknown Facebook user hacked my account, chatting and uploading pictures on my behalf until I reported the matter”. (Respondent 4)

Eke, Omekwu and Odoh (2014:11) are concerned that the danger found with the use of social networking sites when young people complete their online profiles, they have typically given away much of their personal information and this allows someone to steal their identity. In this regard, John and Catherine (2009:82) emphasise that more sophisticated young people may engage in hacking accounts.

Theme 4: Solution for preventing social media abuse

Respondents came up with different ways as solutions to prevent social media abuse. They believe that by always keeping privacy to users' profiles, having a strong password can help to prevent social media abuse. Some believed that the involvement of parents and social media campaigns can help to prevent social media abuse.

Sub-theme 4.1 Strong password

Respondents agreed that a strong password can help to prevent media abuse. Respondents also strongly emphasised that when the users create passwords that cannot be easily spotted during the time of registration that can help because people cannot easily hack the profile.

Some of the respondents indicated the following about creating strong passwords:

“I would encourage other users to create passwords that cannot be easily used by someone else. It is also important not to also share those passwords with anyone else because once it can be used by someone there is a possibility for an account to be hacked by cyber-criminals”. (Respondent 1)

“When users create passwords they must not be next to anyone they do not trust, because if the passwords can be seen or revealed, it allows someone to own an account without the owners' consent”. (Respondent 13)

In literature, it is suggested by Eke *et al.* (2014:12) that in many social media applications data is distributed in various locations. So, password security would help offset risks.

Sub-theme 4.2 Increase of privacy

The majority of respondents believed that an increase in profile privacy would be another best way of preventing social media abuse. They indicated that some of the users become victims on Facebook because Facebook privacy lacks strong account privacy. Some of the research respondents suggested the following about increase of privacy:

“By keeping profile privacy all the times when users are online can help to solve social media problems”. (Respondent 5)

“Facebook administrators should always be responsible for upgrading privacy so that users should not just come across disturbing content such as pornography or hacking of their accounts by cyber criminals”. (Respondent 13)

It is important to make sure that privacy on Facebook is always kept safe as it is indicated by Eke *et al.* (2014:11) that even if a user of a social site has her privacy settings at the highest level, their information can still be passed on by someone on their friends' list. It does not take much for an angry follower to copy and paste a status or download a picture if they are looking for revenge.

Most social networking sites have privacy settings that allow users to limit access to their profiles to a narrow audience of confirmed friends, and evidence suggests that many young people use them (John & Catherine, 2009:37).

Sub-theme 4.3 Social media law implementation

Some of the respondents suggested that social media law implementation is needed in South Africa. Respondents believe that a law that is strictly focusing on social media will help to punish those who abuse others when they are online.

Some respondents explained the following about the implementation of social media law:

“South African parliament should discuss and implement a law that is strictly focusing on social media and legal charges for those who will break that particular law. The law should also fight acts of cyberbullying”. (Respondent 3)

“The South African government should establish social media law and the section of that law should be featured in the constitution to be accessed by anyone. This will help to prevent challenges my other Facebook friends and I face while online”. (Respondent 7)

“Facebook impact and its terms and conditions should be debated in the parliament. After the debate, there should be an act that can strictly focus on social media in South Africa to punish users who socially disturb other Facebook users when they are online”. (Respondent 19)

In research about managing the risks of social media in South Africa, Davey (2014:5) indicates that since social created tensions in the country, there is a duty on the courts to develop the common law in accordance with Constitutional principles.

Sub-theme 4.4 Social media campaigns (outreaches)

Respondents suggested that social media campaigns could help to mitigate problems young people face when they are online. Some respondents responded as follows:

“Social media experts should have the campaign to talk to users and warn them about the aftermath that can emerge when they attack each other on Facebook.” They should also be advised how they can cope with each other when using the platform rather than attacking and defaming other users’ characters.” “Social media campaigns are very much crucial for preventing challenges by Facebook users. This can also be done by raising awareness on radio and television stations on how to use Facebook properly”. (Respondent 20)

“It would be essential to engage with Facebook users through social media campaigns to advise them to use Facebook ethically and to stop disturbing other users when they are online”. (Respondent 18)

“There is an urgent need for social media campaigns so that users can use Facebook in a way that does not harm but build long-lasting strong friendships. It is important to advise users to use Facebook to their advantage since life does not come with a manual”. (Respondent 16)

“Social media campaigns should also be done online by Facebook administrators so that the users can also know dos and don’ts”. (Respondent 2)

The suggestions above are supported by Swist *et al.* (2015:61) who wrote that:

“Cyber safety campaigns aim to raise young people's awareness of potential online risks. Young people recognise that engaging online comes with responsibilities. They are keen to protect their safety and want to be trusted to use social media safely”.

Sub-theme 4.5 Social media education

A handful of respondents agreed that social media education is important and can help to prevent problems that affect Facebook users. They further indicated that social media experts and developers should speak to millions of Facebook users, informing them about the advantages and disadvantages of using social media such as Facebook.

Two respondents stated the following about social media education:

“There should be lessons at public gatherings, public lectures and government imbizos by social media experts that focus on the dos and don’ts on Facebook. Social media education is important specifically to those who are not yet using the platform”. (Respondent 9)

“It is always important to teach young people how to use Facebook. This can positively help to mitigate challenges such as pornography, insults, hacking of account and cyberattack when users are online”. (Respondent 11)

From the literature, Eke, Omekwu and Odoh (2014:12) state that users should also carefully control what information they post on social networking site accounts and to whom this information is available.

Sub-theme 4.6 Parental support

Some respondents suggested that parents' involvement and their support of the use of Facebook by youth can help to mitigate the problems of social media abuse. Respondents responded as follows in terms of parents' support:

“Our parents should play a role and intervene to teach young people what they should do and what they should not do when they are online. They need to advise young people not to fight, bully and stalk each other when they are using Facebook. They should encourage their children to use Facebook for education and motivation”. (Respondent 8)

Other respondents explained the following:

“I believe young people should listen when parents talk and advise. So parents need to warn young people about the danger that occurs when users are online even though they are not all of them who know what happens on Facebook”. (Respondent 18)

“Parents should teach their children who use Facebook manners that when they are online they should not harm others. This will remind users when they want to attack each other online that what they are doing is not good”. (Respondent 15)

In literature, it is highlighted by Swist *et al.* (2015:61) that some young people prefer to receive cyber safety information from their parents or educators, as opposed to their peers. In other words, this shows that parents' support is vital. Furthermore, Swist *et al.* (2015:62) indicate that it is becoming increasingly clear that parental caregivers, community and institutional perceptions of children and young people's social media practices need to transform to better account for and respond to children and young people's lived experiences of engaging with the social media.

Sub-theme 4.7 Strong age restriction

Some of the research respondents indicated the issue of age restriction. They further indicated that age restriction will help because teens will be unable to use Facebook. Some respondents indicated the following about age restriction:

“Age restriction on Facebook is important. It will help to reduce problems Faced by Facebook users because some they register for accounts with false information such as age, location and names”. (Respondent 17)

“Facebook developers should always consider age restriction. Considering age restriction could help to prevent young people specifically teenagers to own Facebook accounts as they are a soft target by Facebook bullies and criminals”. (Respondent 19)

“Facebook must have a strong age restriction and must allow users to use their authentic identity number when they are registering their accounts. This will help to prevent teenagers not to accessing the website and also to mitigate challenges that occur online”. (Respondent 1)

Telenor Group (2015:10) agrees that the best way to keep track is to make sure that parents know who all their children's social media connections are. The age at which a child should be allowed to have a social media profile is up to a parent to decide.

Sub-theme 4.8 Adding known Facebook users

Some respondents indicated that chatting with known Facebook users could help to prevent challenges faced by youth on Facebook. Their main common reason is that if you chat with known Facebook users there will be limited attacks, insults and hacking of accounts. Some respondents expressed the following:

“It is better to accept Facebook users you know and who are close to you. This will help if ever you have problems with that particular user on Facebook because he or she will be known”. (Respondent 10)

“Users should only chat with people or friends they know rather than chatting with strangers. This will help to mitigate countless challenges encountered online. It is worth nothing to have many online friends who are going to bring discomfort when a user is online”. (Respondent 14)

Chowdhury and Saha (2015:28) are of concern that youth can share their societal information only in front of well-known friends whereas others are not able to access that

information. Therefore, besides accessing information, firstly people should send a friend request to their friends (known or unknown) and if the other side will accept the sent friend request, then a bounded social profile might be formed and that is more important while anyone can join in this social networking circle.

Sub-theme 4.9 Block, unfollow and unfriend

Respondents agreed that to avoid challenges after one another, users should block, unfollow and unfriend users who post annoying messages, upload content with nudity and who chat on condition of anonymity.

“When I come across pornographic materials, cyber bullying and vigorous language, I block and follow senders of such disturbing materials”. (Respondent 14)

Blocking and unfollowing Facebook users who send disgusting content could be the solution to challenges encountered on Facebook because those particular users won’t access your account anymore”. (Respondent 2)

Blocking Facebook users who upload naked pictures and videos of sexual nature could help to mitigate challenges faced by other Facebook users like me”. (Respondent 4)

“Unfriend is another way that users can consider avoiding online challenges. All the times I unfriend Facebook users who send me vigorous messages on my timeline and in my inbox”. (Respondent 5)

“Facebook users should be careful of whom they chat with and if they are unknown they should unfollow because there are bad effects such as hacking of accounts, cyberbullying and cybercrime that could emerge while chatting with them”. (Respondent 11)

Cisco (2010:3) indicates that when a user blocks other users’ Facebook behaviours, users are prevented from performing the intended action, but it is not always clear to users that their actions are explicitly being blocked by the Web security appliance. In this regard, Bevan, Pfyl and Barclay (2012:1459) indicate that unfriending is a common behaviour that can similarly be viewed as purposeful, unilateral avoidance, as interactions with a particular Facebook user cease without notification.

Sub-theme 4.10 Time limitation

Some respondents emphasised that time limitation is important for users to consider preventing challenges that may arise when they are online. The following quotes illustrate the issue of time allocation by the respondents:

“Users should limit time spent on Facebook and they should use the platform for a good course. It will be crucial for users to write and upload content that inspires other users than uploading disturbing content such as pornographic materials”. (Respondent 20)

“Facebook users should have online time limitations per day to balance their everyday duties. Limiting the time while they are online will help them not to encounter problems caused by other users when they are online”. (Respondent 5)

“Facebook developers should upgrade the platform in such a way that allows users to use Facebook for a specific period and control user’s daily limit. This will help to reduce problems reported to the Facebook Company on a daily basis”. (Respondent 7)

Anderson (2016:1) supports this by indicating that parents should take several steps to influence their children's online behaviour, from checking up on what they post on social media to limiting the amount of time they spend on platforms. From the 2016 Pew Research Report, Anderson (2016:1) also indicates that a majority of parents say they place restrictions on their children’s internet use, regardless of their behavior: 55% of parents say they limit the amount of time or times of day their children can go online.

5.6 SUMMARY AND OUTLINE OF CHAPTER 5

In this chapter, data gathered from the respondents who are 20 Vhembe District youth were analysed in a qualitative manner. Themes and sub-themes developed by the researcher depending on the purpose of the study were used to interpret the results of the data gathered from the respondents.

The following chapter is chapter 6, and it contains a summary of findings, recommendations and conclusion of the overall study.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a summary of the findings from analysed data. Also, the recommendations about the measures that could be followed to mitigate the challenges faced by the Vhembe District youth and the rest of the Facebook users are presented in this Chapter. The conclusion of the overall study is stated.

Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:146) state that after interpreting the findings of the study, it is useful to summarise the aims of the research, compare them with the findings and later draw conclusions on how much and in which manner the goal has been achieved.

6.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study explored the uses of Facebook by the youth from the Vhembe District. Ten (10) male and female Facebook users whose age ranges from 18 to 29 years residing in the Vhembe District specifically Thulamela, Makhado, Mutale and Limp 345 (Collins Chabane) municipalities participated in the study. An interview guide with open-ended questions was the instrument used to collect data from the respondents.

The findings disclosed that Facebook is the platform that youth prefer to use over other social media platforms. A central finding of the study is that Facebook is becoming more and more popular in the Vhembe District and has become part of the users' daily lives. It was found that the Vhembe District youth seem to have various preferences in the manner in which they use Facebook. For example, some users engage on Facebook to connect with family members, relatives, friends and sometimes strangers whilst some use it to communicate and disseminate information to online friends. It can be established from data analyses that a majority of the Vhembe District youth especially those whose ages range from 21 and 27 years use Facebook to strengthen their social ties.

A minority of the respondents who are tertiary students revealed that they use Facebook to discuss academic activities such as assignments, send lecturers' notes and information

about bursaries. In this regard, a majority of the respondents revealed that they use Facebook for photo and video-sharing whilst a minority of them use it for sending messages and receiving updates.

The findings of the study also explored the problems faced by some Facebook users. A majority of respondents expressed serious concern about immorality perpetuated by fellow users. In this regard, the challenges are pornographic materials, cyberattacks, cyberbullying, sexual bullying, vulgar language and false information. Furthermore, the respondents indicated that the challenges they encounter are more disturbing because when they register for their Facebook accounts they did not expect such experiences online.

The findings of the study are also reflected in the following explanation: The users indicated several solutions for preventing challenges that emerge on Facebook. A majority of the respondents indicated that challenges emerging on Facebook can be reduced by creating strong passwords, keeping and increasing privacy, initiating social media campaigns and educating users about etiquette. The respondents also highlighted that there is a need for implementing social media law in South Africa to deal with problems that young people face on Facebook such as cyberattacks, sexual bullying and others.

It was also observed that there are many Vhembe District youth who are having problems and some seem if they do not report them due to a lack of information about where to report them such as on Facebook report posts or photo options. Notwithstanding, its numerous advantages and drawbacks, Facebook continues to be the favourite social networking site by young people from the Vhembe District.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study explored the importance of Facebook by the Vhembe District youth, content shared by youth, problems encountered online and solutions to problems faced by the youth. The following are recommendations based on the findings of the study:

6.3.1 Recommendations to the Vhembe District youth

- a) The Vhembe District youth together with local municipalities should launch open discussions to educate themselves on how to use Facebook as a social media of interaction. They should find ways of preventing themselves to use Facebook in an unprincipled manner and resolutions should be carried along in the formulation of new social media policy in South Africa. Further, this can be done by exposing themselves to the importance of face-to-face communication;
- b) Both the Vhembe District male and female youth who are Facebook users should stop uploading pictures and videos of a sexual nature as these kinds of content disturb other users when they are online;
- c) The Vhembe District youth should also use Facebook when it is necessary to avoid addiction. Additionally, they should strike a balance between offline and online lives to avoid addiction and posting content that disturbs other users;
- d) The youth should elect representatives who can attend social media workshops, conferences and presentations around their local towns, universities and social organisations so that knowledge sharing could be transferred to other users. In addition, workshops, conferences and presentations could help to mitigate exposure to pornographic materials and unwanted spoken and written content such as statutes and comments;
- e) It is clear that what makes some Vhembe District youth meet several online problems is that they do not report the problems. In this regard, Vhembe District youth should consider reporting all unwanted materials on the report option on Facebook so that a user who uploads or sends such things can be penalised by Facebook administrators. Alternatively, if problems require legal action they can go to the nearest police station to open a case so that that matter can be investigated.

6.3.2 Recommendation to the Ministry of Communications of the Republic of South Africa

- a) Facebook falls within the division of the Ministry of Communications in South Africa. A principal recommendation lies in the need to have an established active

Cybersecurity Response Committee as indicated in the National Cybersecurity Policy Framework (NCPF) approved by the Cabinet of South Africa in March 2012. The Cybersecurity Response Committee should always create regulations that will help youth and every Facebook user in the Republic of South Africa to stop posting immoral content online;

- b) The Ministry of Communications should propose to the members of the South African Parliament to amend section 14 which is Privacy and section 16 which is Freedom of expression in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. Sections should have subsections that prevent acts of infringement of privacy and well-being of Facebook users. Such sections should be extended for charging young people who engage themselves in pornography and other behaviours intended to hurt and bring discomfort to other Facebook users online;
- c) Also, the Ministry of Communications should always host conferences, seminars and workshops to share ideas with both rural and urban youth on how to create a better understanding of Facebook.

6.3.3 Recommendations to elderly people and parents in the Vhembe District

- a) Elderly people and parents of the Vhembe District youth who are on Facebook also have vital contributions to the usage of Facebook to prevent problems that are emerging online;
- b) Both parents and elderly people should always engage with young people for youth to learn strategies to communicate effectively online;
- c) Elderly people and parents should be taught by the Ministry of Communications to communicate and warn young people about dangers that may arise online. This can help to prevent the uploading of pornographic materials;
- d) Also, elderly people and parents should not be afraid to remind young people to chat with respect if they suspect wrongdoings online such as cyberattacking and cyberbullying.

6.4 CONCLUSION

The present research suggests that Facebook has emerged as the most popular social networking site. At the end of the discussion, it is marked that Facebook as an application of social networking site is a great medium for communication among the Vhembe District youth and other users. There are also various purposes Facebook serves for Vhembe District youth such as connection, communication, socialisation, etc. Therefore, a majority of the youth from the Vhembe District use the platform to connect with their friends, families and other unknown people or strangers.

Due to the improvement of technological advancement in South Africa, much to the delight of the Vhembe Facebook users, the social networking site has changed the way they communicate by making information sharing easier, faster and quicker for everyone who uses it. The users now easily and freely access Facebook, produce and exchange information, messages, ideas and content with other Facebook friends and users. The Vhembe District youth use this empowering platform as a source of information relevant to their social lives on a daily basis. In addition, the youth use Facebook at increasing rates and visit it quite regularly to connect and to know other people's lifestyles and cultures.

Consequently, Facebook is the most powerful social networking site used by the Vhembe District youth who are graduates and students. Some of the graduates are jobless and they use the platform to look for jobs posted on the jobs' fan pages.

More importantly, Facebook has afforded young people an opportunity to speak in their voices and enable them through various fan pages to learn more about other people's lifestyles. As indicated in the literature review, Facebook is a reliable source of entertainment because users can watch funny videos and view funny pictures. In other words, this shows that Facebook is an alternative form of reliable medium for the Vhembe District youth and other Facebook users. However, pornography is seen as a threat to the Vhembe District youth and this makes Facebook sometimes be uninteresting medium to some users. More needs to be done to improve privacy and ethical support in terms of

the use of Facebook by the youth. The Vhembe District youth are directly involved in using Facebook in such a way it becomes part of their daily lives.

Moreover, this study concludes that Facebook has both positive as well as negative impacts on youth, depending on users' interests and how they use Facebook. Some users use the medium for exchanging pornographic materials, cyberbullying and cyberattacks. As long as Facebook is strictly owned by users who are not controlled by anyone, young people will always show interest in it. Vhembe District youth and other youth, in general, should stop doing things that cause discomfort to other users such as uploading pornographic materials, cyberattacking, cyberbullying, etc. There are many things that youth can use Facebook for such as learning, communicating, entertaining and socialisation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

TITLE: USES OF FACEBOOK BY YOUTH IN VHEMBE DISTRICT SOUTH AFRICA

Dear prospective research participant. Date/...../.....

1) INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in this research study undertaken for a Master of Arts degree at the University of Limpopo.

Before you agree to take part in this study you should fully understand what is involved.

If you have any questions, which are not fully explained in this consent letter, do not hesitate to ask the researcher.

If you agree to volunteer to participate, you will be asked to sign the consent letter.

2) THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The aim of this research study is to investigate and describe uses of Facebook by youth, specifically residing in the Vhembe District Municipality in Limpopo Province.

You have been selected for participation in this research study based on your experience as a Facebook user.

3) EXPLANATION OF PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED

Themes of questions are asked by the researcher and the interview could last for approximately 35 to 40 minutes. Please be advised that the researcher will be recording the session using electronic recorder. Although the researcher will be taking some notes during the session, it may not be possible to write fast enough to get it all down. That is the reason for taping the answers.

4) RISK AND DISCOMFORT INVOLVED

The research is not meant to involve any physical, emotional, and psychological discomfort.

5) POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY

Participation in this study will give you the opportunity to share experiences which could contribute to improvements in the implementation of policies by government and social media developers aimed at preventing youth for posting statuses and comments that emotionally disturb other users and to upload pictures of sexual nature and nudity that can cause discomfort to other users when using them.

6) ETHICAL APPROVAL

The study adheres to the guidelines of the ethical committee of the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Research Ethics Committee) and you are free to discuss your participation in this study with the researcher contactable on 072 6384 554 or email: sundanid@gmail.com. If you would like to speak to my research supervisor, you may contact Prof N.C. Lesame in the Department of Media, Communication and Information Studies.

7) INFORMATION

I have read the information contained in the consent form and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction and any further questions concerning this study, I should contact:

Name of candidate: Mr N.D. Sundani

Email address: sundanid@gmail.com

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE

OPEN ENDED-QUESTIONS

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Please state your age.

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2. Please state your gender.

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.....

3. What is your highest level of education?

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.....
.....

4. Please state your local municipality.

.....
.....
.....

SECTION B: INFORMATION ON FACEBOOK

5. When did you start using Facebook? Please specify in the space provided below.

.....
.....
.....

6. Do you benefit from using Facebook? Please state yes or no in the space provided below.

.....
.....
.....

7. If your answer to question 6 above is yes, what do you benefit?

.....
.....
.....

8. Does Facebook meet your social needs?

.....
.....
.....

9. If your answer to question 8 above is yes, what are those social needs?

.....
.....
.....

SECTION C: CONTENT SHARED ON FACEBOOK

10. What kind of content do you share on Facebook? Please elaborate in the space provided below.

.....
.....
.....

11. Is the content you receive from other Facebook users helpful to you?

.....
.....
.....

12. If your answer to question 11 above is yes, how is the content helpful to you?

.....
.....
.....

SECTION D: CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUTH ON FACEBOOK

13. Do you experience challenges when using Facebook?

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.....
.....

14. If your answer to question 13 above is yes, what kind of challenges do you experience?

.....
.....
.....

15. Do you report challenges you face on Facebook somewhere?

.....
.....
.....

16. If your answer to question 15 above is yes, please state where you report the challenges?

.....
.....
.....

SECTION E: SOLUTIONS TO PREVENT FACEBOOK CHALLENGES

17. Are there any possible solutions to challenges you face on Facebook?

.....
.....
.....

18. If your answer to question 17 above is yes, what do you think could be the possible solutions to challenges you face on Facebook?

.....
.....
.....

THE END
THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

APPENDIX 3: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER



University of Limpopo
Department of Research Administration and Development
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 2212, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email:noko.monene@ul.ac.za

**TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS
COMMITTEE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

MEETING: 03 March 2017

PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/16/2017: PG

PROJECT:

Title: Uses of facebook by youth in Vhembe South Africa
Researchers: Mr ND Sundani
Supervisor: Prof NC Lesame
Co-Supervisor: N/A
School: Language and Communication Studies
Degree: Masters in Media Studies


PROF. TAB MASHEGO
CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031

Note:

- i) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee.
- ii) The budget for the research will be considered separately from the protocol.
PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

Finding solutions for Africa

APPENDIX 4: LANGUAGE EDITING LETTER

Confirmation of English language editing

This is to confirm that I have edited this dissertation manuscript entitled:

USES OF FACEBOOK BY YOUTH IN VHEMBE DISTRICT SOUTH
AFRICA

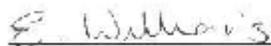
prepared by

Mr ND Sundani

[Student number: 201504905]

I work as a language editor and translator at Unisa, in the Language Services directorate. I also provide freelance editing, translation and proofreading services to private clients including the Department of Higher Education. The abovementioned manuscript was edited by me in my private capacity, in 2017, for language, grammar, punctuation, spelling and sentence structure.

The quality of the language is guaranteed with the understanding that that editing changes have been accepted and that no further changes have been made to the manuscript.



Ms Elmarie Williams

Language Practitioner (Unisa)

Tel: 0832583434

18 January 2019