

**The Role of Social Media in Crisis Situations: A
Case Study of the Zimbabwean Solidarity
March of November 2017**

Valarie Munashe Mutisi

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Approval of the Institute of Graduate Studies and Research

Prof. Dr. Ali Hakan Ulusoy
Acting Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Communication and Media Studies.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Agah Gümüş
Dean, Faculty of Communication and
Media Studies

We certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Communication and Media Studies.

Asst. Prof. Dr. Ülfet Kutoğlu Kuruç
Supervisor

Examining Committee

1. Prof. Dr. Fatoş Adiloğlu

2. Asst. Prof. Dr. Ülfet Kutoğlu Kuruç

3. Asst. Prof. Dr. Sevilay Ulaş

ABSTRACT

Social media play a role in reshaping perceptions that have propelled political and social outcomes. Many communication scholars believe that technology's rapid growth will facilitate easy information access and much freedom to the society. Chokoskvili (2011) stated that when certain societal conditions exist, Internet technology may fuel citizen discontent by providing them with access to larger networks and with the freedom to speak out. In 2010 the world witnessed the Arab Spring "revolution" which was propelled through social media. The Zimbabwean Solidarity March of November 2017 has documented a dramatic freedom of expression through social media.

The purpose of this study is to explore the role played by social media Facebook and Tweeter in mobilizing consensus during the Solidarity March within the restrictive oppressive legal clause of then president Robert Mugabe regime which silenced the voice of the masses. In this study mix methodology was used through survey and interviews. Questionnaires were distributed to a sample size of 351 Zimbabwean students in North Cyprus studying in Eastern Mediterranean, Near East, Cyprus International and Girne American Universities. Questionnaires were distributed using purposive sampling and virtual snowball sampling method. In-depth interviews were conducted to 20 Zimbabwean students from three universities. With the economic crisis as a motivator, social media spear headed the success of mobilizing the society, taking risk of the government attacks. The results revealed that social media played a huge role in mobilizing the Zimbabwean citizens and can influence collective thinking for political change. The Zimbabwean university students in North Cyprus felt safe to

engage in political issues of Zimbabwe on social media and mostly preferred to use it for more reliable and truthful news compared to the traditional media like ZBC (Zimbabwean Broadcasting Co-operation).

Keywords: social media, Solidarity March, political activism, Uses and Gratification theory

ÖZ

Sosyal medya, politik ve sosyal sonuçlar doğurmuş olan algıları, yeniden şekillendirmede önemli bir role sahiptir. Birçok iletişim duayeni, teknolojinin hızlı büyümesinin, bilgiye erişimi kolaylaştırmasına ve topluma daha fazla özgürlük sağlayacağına inanmaktadır. Chokoskvili (2011), belirli toplumsal koşullar mevcut olduğunda, İnternet teknolojisinin vatandaşlara daha büyük ağlara erişim, ve ilişki kurma özgürlüğü sağlamasının, memnuniyetsizliklerini dile getirmede önemli bir unsur olabileceğini belirtmiştir. Dünya, 2010 yılında sosyal medya aracılığıyla yayılan Arap Baharı “devrimine” tanık olmuştur. Kasım 2017'deki Zimbabve dayanışma yürüyüşü, sosyal medya aracılığıyla çarpıcı bir ifade özgürlüğü olduğunu belgelemiştir.

Bu çalışma, sosyal medya özellikle de Facebook ve Tweeter'in, 2017'deki Zimbabve dayanışma yürüyüşü sırasında o dönemin Zimbabve cumhurbaşkanı Robert Mugabe rejiminin kısıtlayıcı ve baskıcı yönetimine karşın, halkı harekete geçirmedeki rolünü araştırmaktır. Bu çalışmada anket ve görüşmelerin yer aldığı karma yöntem kullanılmıştır. Anketler, Kuzey Kıbrıs'taki, Doğu Akdeniz, Yakın Doğu, Uluslararası Kıbrıs ve Girne Amerikan üniversitelerinde eğitim gören, 351 Zimbabveli öğrenciden oluşan örnekleme dağıtılmıştır. Anketler, amaçlı örnekleme ve sanal kartopu örnekleme yöntemleri kullanılarak dağıtılmıştır. Üç ayrı üniversiteden 20 Zimbabveli öğrenciyle derinlemesine görüşmeler de yapılmıştır. Sosyal medya, ekonomik krizin de tetikleyici bir unsur olmasıyla beraber, toplumu harekete geçirme başarısına öncülük etmiştir. Sonuçlar, sosyal medyanın Zimbabve vatandaşlarını harekete geçirmede çok büyük bir rol oynadığını ve politik değişim için ortak

düşünceyi etkileyebileceğini göstermiştir. Kuzey Kıbrıs'taki Zimbabveli üniversite öğrencileri, Zimbabve'nin politik konularına, sosyal medya üzerinden dahil olma konusunda kendilerini güvende hissettiklerini ve çoğunlukla ZBC (Zimbabve Yayın Kuruluşu) gibi geleneksel medyaya kıyasla, daha güvenilir ve doğru haberler edinmek için sosyal medyayı kullandıklarını belirtmişlerdir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: sosyal medya, dayanışma yürüyüşü, politik aktivizm, kullanımlar ve doyumlar teorisi

DEDICATION

To my mother Viola Mutisi and young brother Leon T. Mushangwe

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIU	Cyprus International University
EMU	Eastern Mediterranean University
GAU	Girne American University
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NEU	Near East University
SABC	South African Broadcasting Co-operation
UGT	Uses and Gratification Theory
ZANU- PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZBC	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Co-operation

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a background study of the Zimbabwean Solidarity March of November 2017. It also contains the purpose of the study and the role played by social media like Facebook and Tweeter in mobilizing consensus and providing platform for activism during the Solidarity March.

1.1 Background of the Study

Zimbabwean government over the years has claimed a “democratic” constitution. Democracy is government elected by the people through fair and peaceful election, however Zimbabweans have over the years voted and rumors of rigged elections raised questions on the ruling party ZANU PF. For 37 years Mugabe has repeatedly won the elections in a country with citizens yearning for change from economic crisis and political corruption. R.G Mugabe’s election wins are questionable and above all the democracy is questioned for Zimbabwe. Freedom of speech on political issues is a risk of ones security in the Zimbabwean society. However, on Facebook several Zimbabweans have found a new home, frequently and freely commenting and discussing issues they otherwise would have not openly explored, and in that process, undoubtedly challenging established political and social power structures and reinforcing suggestions that common political agenda is the driving force for political action (Castells 1996; Cleaver 1999).

Going back to past scenarios on Facebook, one Zimbabwean creates an anonymous Facebook page “baba Jukwa” which engaged discussions on the political issues of the nation or rather mirrored the realities of the ruling party ZANU PF. This was an act of self- security from the government. In 2014 a popular journalist was abducted by five unidentified men after a series of campaigns against Robert Mugabe’s government, confronting and questioning the government with political matters of the nation. With such a scenario the society in general is engulfed in fear for their lives later on to air their political views openly.

The Solidarity March of 2017 was a result of the social media activism which had started months before the actual march started. Social media was used as a platform to kick-start a national Protest by activist like Evan Mawarire.¹ His campaigns raised a sense of nationalism where the society was joining in the #tag “This Flag” as a cry to restore the nation’s lost pride. As expected and anticipated in the Zimbabwean society Evan Mawarire was arrested for Protesting against the Government and believed to have a foreign assistance. Many believed he survived because of his constant live updates and the people who followed him constantly checking on his security. His interaction on social media through live videos and posts were an advantage of exposing all ill treatments he could possible get from the government of Zimbabwe. According to Kuruc & Opiyo;

The use of social networks through mediated mobilization creates collective action. Collective action will help citizens to come together and share their ideas. This will make them more powerful. In societies where the public feel

¹ Evan Mawarire is a pastor and a political activist who risked his security and led change campaign against the government of Robert Mugabe of 37 years. For more information check “ social media is emboldening young people of Zimbabwe to finally stand up to Mugabe” <https://qz.com/africa/768868/>

that their opinions are in minority then they prefer not to express them. (2017, p.7)

Evan Mawarire shared common ideas with a majority of the Zimbabwean citizens however his security was a major concern to the citizens as he was looked up to by many who had found a voice to speak for them. Looking back a year prior to Evan Mawarire's social media Protests one well known Zimbabwean activist and journalist Itai Dzamara disappeared after having been abducted by the police for a beating. A report from the International Guardian newspaper on Itai Dzamara's abduction claims that;

Fears are growing for the safety of a political activist in Zimbabwe reported to have been abducted by five unidentified men almost a week ago and bundled into an unmarked truck near his home. The country's high court on Friday ordered police and the state intelligence agency to search for Itai Dzamara, a former journalist who last year staged sit-in Protests demanding the resignation of President Robert Mugabe. Dzamara's disappearance echoes the darkest days of Zimbabwe's political instability and has raised concerns of a fresh crackdown on political opponents, civil society activists and journalists (Smith, 2015, p.1).

The Zimbabwean Solidarity March of November 2017 has documented the dramatic freedom of expression through Facebook, an emancipation dream for the Zimbabwean society. With the economic crisis as a motivator, social media spear headed the success of mobilizing the society, taking risk of the government attacks and eventually achieving a political democratic justice. In a country with restricted freedom of speech against the government the Solidarity March can be recorded as remarkable step for the Zimbabwean nation. The Zimbabwean Solidarity March took place between the 18th and 22nd of November 2017. Thousands of people gathered in the main street of

Harare city leading to the States house with the security of national army. The march was peaceful and somewhat a pre-celebration of stepping down of then President Robert Mugabe. Surprisingly the march was also happening in other main towns of the nation such as Bulawayo, Gweru, Victoria Falls, Mutare and all was captured and recorded by citizens on live social media platforms. The event undoubtedly drew the attention of international news agencies like BBC who had their interpretation of the event.

One of the main medium leading to the mobilization was social media which was used to document the whole Protest. Both influencers and general public had the chance to document and involve the rest of the Zimbabwean nation across the globe through live video streaming, sharing of the Zimbabwean march pictures in progress and posting updates.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the role played by social media Facebook and Tweeter in particular in mobilizing consensus, providing a platform for activism and bringing public awareness during the Solidarity March within the restrictive oppressive legal clause under the presidency of Robert Mugabe regime which silenced the voice of the masses. A political science scholar Jonathan Moyo² gives an insight of their restricted freedom of expression through laws and regulations by the former president Robert Mugabe's regime, he says;

... I used to teach political science at the University of Zimbabwe. Political science is probably one of the most dangerous subjects a professor can ever teach in Zimbabwe, because those who do so are always on the government

² J. Moyo is a political scholar for more information check "Academic freedom and human rights in Zimbabwe social research vol76: no2 2009

radar. I was critical of Mugabe's government both in and outside the classroom. I believe in academic freedom, and more and more my life was in danger because of my academic and political convictions. Spies were planted in my classes; I started receiving threatening telephone calls; I was followed by unknown people. I was arrested and tortured on numerous occasions. My family and relatives' lives were also threatened, and some of them were also tortured. I was seen as "anti-government" and a "threat to national security" because I criticized the government of Zimbabwe and exercised my academic freedom by freely questioning political processes in Zimbabwe (Moyo, 2009, p.613).

This is one in many experiences of restricted freedom of expression pertaining to political issues of Zimbabwe. However the November 2017 Solidarity March facilitated the rising sense of nationality on social media with hashtag “this flag”, “Tajamuka” (Rebelling) rebuilding the lost pride of the nation. Social media enabled the Protest though it cannot be the reason or spark of the Protest. (Pfeifle, 2012). Social media as a new technology has created a platform for collective thinking, a platform for sharing ideas and political participatory for general citizens in a nation where the mainstream media has government agendas and dominated by authoritarian regime ideologies. Social media have also provide platforms for mass mobilization of electorates, most significantly the youths. This is due to the fact that social media have a high presence of youths, who use the platforms for different reasons daily. As such, social media have provided platforms where youths can be mobilized or persuaded to follow a course or ideology (Hong & Na, 2018). Social media undeniably played a role in the Zimbabwean November 2017 Solidarity March. The study explores on the Zimbabwean University students in Northern Cyprus from three major universities CIU, NEU and EMU who are within the ages of 18 to 32. The research involved 351

Zimbabwean university students within the three chosen major universities in Northern Cyprus.

1.3 Relevance of the Study

The study gives a perspective of how social media have expanded their influence in the third world nations like Zimbabwe. After the famous Protests around the world like Arab spring Protest and Gezi park Protest in Turkey, Zimbabwean Solidarity March 2017 Protest was one of a kind particularly in the African region. Moreover, a perspective on how social media work and how they have taken the attention of the 21st century societies as compared to traditional media. The study enlightens on how social media give a participatory platform to the general citizens of Zimbabwe including the ones in the diaspora on political issues of Zimbabwe. Social media have been credited for being influential during political uprisings.

1.4 Method of the Study

In this study mixed method, quantitative and qualitative research methodology was used. The study will involve a survey research by distributing questionnaires to 351 of Zimbabwean university students in North Cyprus. The questionnaire will be distributed to chosen three universities which includes Eastern Mediterranean, Near East and Cyprus international. Research questions sought to know their involvement or participation on social media, how safe they felt in participating, the freedom of airing out their opinions and views, their motivation and how nationalism (national pride) was restored during the march. Qualitative method was used through interviews to 20 Zimbabwean University students studying in CIU, EMU and NEU. Interview was conducted with a guideline of five research questions listed below. The study uses the Uses and Gratifications theory, the theory helps give an insight of how the Zimbabwean university students studying in North Cyprus use social media on

political related issues of Zimbabwe and how social media have created a platform for political participation.

1.5 Research Questions

1. How free the Zimbabwean university students in North Cyprus felt in using social media on political issues?
2. To what extent do the Zimbabwean university students in North Cyprus use traditional media during crisis situations?
3. Do social media have great impact on political issues of Zimbabwe especially during crisis situations?
4. To what extent did social media contribute in mobilizing the Zimbabwean university students in North Cyprus for the Solidarity March November 2017?
5. How social media and physical political activism are handled in Zimbabwe before, during and after the Solidarity March of November 2017?

1.6 Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to the case study of the Zimbabwean Solidarity March of November 2017 with a sample of only 351 Zimbabwean students in North Cyprus from EMU, CIU, and NEU. The survey was carried out within a one month period of December 2018 and questionnaires were distributed on four Zimbabwean students Facebook platforms of the chosen universities.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter consists of the profile background of Zimbabwe, political and economic history and the review of relevant literature in the areas of social media. The chapter creates a conceptual clarification of important concepts in the research work; these include Facebook and Twitter use as tools of mass mobilization, the Zimbabwean crisis as well as the theoretical framework.

2.1 Profile of Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country within the southern region of Africa with neighboring countries South Africa, Zambia, Mozambique and Botswana. It currently holds population of 16 million people of 16 different tribes and language with main ones being Shona and Ndebele. Zimbabwe is a former colony of Great Britain, finalized its independence in 1980. The struggle for land ownership has been a major part of the country's history which continued even after the independence amongst the two main tribes the Shona and the Ndebele. Most noted in the land ownership struggle and dominance of government was the Gukurahundi war of 1983 between the main tribes. Gukurahundi means the early rain which washes away the chaff before the spring rains. The Ndebele tribe was massacred by the national army which mainly consisted of the Shona people. In leadership was the legendary Robert G. Mugabe of the Zanu PF party who was inaugurated as president soon after the country's independence 1980.

Zimbabwe's dominating religion is Christianity with estimated 87% of the 16 million population. 7.9% unspecified their religion, 3.8% claim that they are traditional and 0.9% of them are Islam. Christianity was introduced by British missionaries in the 19th century. Unlike other nations Zimbabwe's religion does not directly affect the governing of the nation thereby no struggle and tension between the religious organizations and the government in the running of the nation.

Zimbabwe has a total of 10 districts which are named using a historic settlement during and post colonization. The provinces are namely Mashonaland North, East, West, South, Central, Matabeleland North and South, Manicaland, Midlands. These provinces divide the major tribes of the nation. Shona tribe holds the majority of the nation dominating the north, south, mid and east of the country. The people have always named places in line with events, shape or appearance of natural phenomena, as well as political power, among others (Mapara, Makawudze 2016).



Figure 2.1: Map of Zimbabwe showing provincial divisions (Pilossof, R. 2012).

Zimbabwe has one of the best mining sectors in Africa with minerals like Nickel, coal, gold, asbestos, copper, iron ore, platinum and diamonds. It has the second largest deposit of platinum in the world. According to (Mupfumi) this potential in the mineral sector requires prudent resource governance. The civil society organization raises their concerns for a proper governance of mineral resources to the government to promote transparency, accountability and security. Weak laws and policy inconsistencies have contributed to corruption, smuggling and illicit financial outflows in the mining sector. The most famous plundering of mineral resource occurred in the Marange diamonds fields to an extent that put Zimbabwe on the international map of conflict diamonds. President Mugabe estimated that more than 15 billion dollars realized out of Marange diamond sales disappeared amid corruption, outrageous salaries and benefits for executive officers running the diamond mining ventures; massive accumulation of wealth by those executives , public officials and security forces in recent years (Mupfumi). The incident of 15 billion was one of the major blow to the nation and a trigger to the Protest against Mugabe’s government in 2017.

2.1.1 Zimbabwean Political Parties

ZANU PF is a political organization which has been the ruling party of Zimbabwe since independence in 1980. The party was led for many years under Robert Mugabe, first as Prime Minister with the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) and then as President from 1987 until 2017 when he was removed as leader. ZANU PF was a militant organization that fought against white minority rule in Zimbabwe then called Rhodesia.

The Movement Democratic of Change (MDC) was founded in 1999 as an opposition party to the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party led

by President Robert Mugabe. The MDC was formed from members of the broad coalition of civic society groups and individuals that campaigned for a "No" vote in the 2000 constitution, in the Zimbabwean Congress Trade Union. MDC was founded by the late Morgan Tsvangirai and currently led by Nelson Chamisa.

Amongst many other parties ZANU PF and MDC have been the most prominent and the bigger parties dominating on all news platforms. Solidarity March activists consisted of activists from both parties and mostly the famous activist Evan Mawarire.

2.1.2 The Socio-Economic and Political Issues of Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe was once claimed to be “the bread basket of Africa in the early 1980s after its independence. Contrary to the statement the current Zimbabwe is considered one of the poorest countries in Africa with a crumbling economy. The economic crisis is greatly blamed on the government ruled by the ZANU PF party. Between the period 1991 to 1996 the ruling government ZANU PF introduced the land reform which entailed the eviction of white people land ownership in the country. The aftermath was a down slope economic disaster. Food production reduced drastically within the years 2000 and 2007.

The year 2008 was the hardest for the nation with 80% of unemployment and currency crisis. An inverse relationship exists between real income and inflation. As inflation steadily rises in Zimbabwe, the average consumer’s real income is drastically falling because wages are not keeping pace. Munangagwa further suggest that “the current economic crisis is above all a political problem that is exacerbated by failed policies” (Munangagwa, 2009, p.110). The currency reached its highest with a \$100 trillion note at the reserve bank of Zimbabwe which led to the abandoning of the currency and

adopting the US dollar and South African Rand. With such a decline of the economy the majority of the Zimbabweans lost faith on the ruling government.

Zimbabwe is a ‘‘democratic’’ country. The questioning of democracy unfolded after the economic problems that started in the 1990s. As the government tried to address the social and economic difficulties, it resorted to repression to contain the demands of an increasingly frustrated population (Muneri, 2016).

Zimbabwe has been in a state of political, economic, and social crisis for the past 15 years. Zimbabwean currency has been abandoned for United States dollar and South African rand. A large number of youths from the year 2000 up to date face a challenge of unemployment. With a crippled agricultural sector the situation in Zimbabwe has down spiraled and causing tension and political fights.

2.2 The Advantages of Social Media Usage in Social and Political Issues

Over the years, social media have become an indispensable tool in communication and information around the globe. Social media were birthed as a result of the new discoveries and development of internet technology. This is due to the development of internet from a Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 platform thereby enhancing interactivity and effective interpersonal communication (Yang & Clark, 2015). The platforms have also transformed from a ‘‘strictly business’’ platform to one that has become a part of life for its users (Brooker, Barnett, & Cribbin, 2016). This is because it has embedded itself in the daily activities and transactions of the people (Nielsen, 2015). According to Hochman (2014) social media are the new dominant culture. This indicates that social

media platforms are the latest world information and communication media that connect the people together in achieving their set goals.

The platforms have increasingly penetrated into every stratum of human endeavor making positive and influential impacts. Social media platforms most especially Twitter and Facebook have continued to become highly relevant in the political sector; this is due to their intrusive features among others, which have continued to accord the relevance mostly among the youth. In Calgary, Canada for instance, social media were instrumental in helping candidates who had little or no public acceptance to record success in the elections. The social media platforms were used to market and sell candidates and their programmes, which served as an effective tool for persuasion (Dumitrica, 2016).

Social media have also become a tool used for mass mobilization of electorates, most significantly among the youths. This results to social media having a high presence of youths who use the platforms for different reasons daily. As such, it has become a place where youths can be mobilized or persuaded to follow a course or ideology (Hong & Na, 2018). Interestingly, political office holders and the political class generally understand the power of social media; they have thereby managed to use the platforms to impose their ideology or belief to the youths, thereby gaining more followers daily.

Social media have facilitated free participation on political issues (Chapman, Raymond, & Powell, 2014). Social media give the platforms to the citizens to express oppose, criticize and accept policies given by the government (Hull & Schmittl, 2015).

With the aid of social media, there have been a synergy between the elected officials and the electorate, as well as ensuring the direct flow of communication between the two classes (Turan & Özçetin, 2017). For instance, social media have aided the people to directly ask their representatives' questions bothering on their welfare as well as the provision of basic and essential amenities for the people. As such political office holders no longer rely on a third party or opinion leaders to deliver or interpret their messages to the electorates (Manduley, Mertens, Plante, & Sultana, 2018).

Politicians are able to intensify their campaigns as well as clearly state their agenda to the people online. This further enhances voter/aspirant interaction (Alzougool, 2018). Non-governmental organizations have also taken the online platforms further by creating opinion pools and online voting platforms where pre-election voting could take place, thereby creating an idea of public acceptance of new candidates and their political ideas.

Due to the fact that politicians are usually desperately in need of power as well as the non-absolute security in the internet space, there has been some level of fraud and insecurity in the online space (Milton, 2014). However, social media have generally been able to create political platform where all forms of political activities take place.

There have been increasing concerns on how the political class uses social media to influence their users unduly, thereby providing a situation where false, untrue and unrealistic political messages are being spread across the electorate (Bode, Vraga, & Troller-Renfree, 2017). Due to the understanding of the people about the intrigues in the political sector, many of the electorates lose interest in the activities, however, with

social media, more individuals have been induced not just to participate, but actively participate and contribute to burning issues in politics.

Social media platforms have gradually taken away the high level of relevance according to the mainstream media, as such, they are now becoming a converging platform where other mainstream media can launch their platform and increase accessibility (Loader, Vromen, Xenos, Steel, & Burgum, 2015). TV and radio stations are now beginning to establish themselves on social media platforms so as to boost their audience, increase their reach and in turn increase their sales and advertisement (Hannan, 2018).

Social media have become the advertiser and the consumer choice. Significantly, the platforms facilitate one-on-one communication between the advertiser and his clients. This has been made possible with the various interactive and instant messaging features (Bal, Grewal, Mills, & Ottley, 2015). For example, in political advertisements, consumers are able to make comments and reactions on a significant number of political advertisements they come across. This also facilitates effectiveness.

With the continuous emergence of technology and its ripple effect of the transformation of the modes and patterns of communication, social media have increasingly aided smooth communication in almost all strata of life including learning (Sapkota & Putten, 2018). Based on their level of adaptability to new trends in technology, the youths have continued to welcome the different twist to which social media presence in the mode and pattern of communication. This has aided smooth connection among them as well as aiding the formation of different groups where communication can be improved. (Trepte, 2015).

With the aid of social media platforms, the way individuals share and receive information have become quite different. Social media have made people access the latest news and happenings around them quite fast as well as provided a platform where information can reach a person or group of person within the shortest possible time (Chapman, Raymond, & Powell, 2014). For instance, through social media, a public sphere has been formed, as such; individuals can now bring up issues for debate online with every member of the community participating effectively. However, with social media, a number of individuals are more careful about expressing their opinions of certain issues to avoid public discrimination or the spiral of silence phenomenon.

Social media have become a highly patronized tool by the elitist, this is because they significantly use the platforms to mobilize, persuade and diffuse the minds and thoughts of the people while indirectly injecting their ideology into the people and the system (Hermida, 2015). Social media have also diffused the ideology of privacy in the minds of the people (Trepte, 2015). For instance, a significant number of users are not continues of what part of their life and activities they should make public, as such, due to the nature of the platforms, they post certain parts of their life online and it becomes accessible to the public.

In public relations, social media have become a vital tool, thereby aiding the works of Public Relations Officers in organizations, thereby helping them prevent or manage a crisis while also serving as a tool of communication with internal and external publics (Graham, 2014). For example with WhatsApp and Facebook groups large and small organizations are able to create a platform where their staff can communicate amongst themselves, thereby aiding effective communication, information dissemination and as well as helping to create a friendly working environment. Also, with Facebook, for

instance, multinationals are able to effectively manage information making the rounds about their organizations as well as debunk fake news or rumors, this has not only helped organizations manage information effectively, it has also established a one-on-one or direct communication between these organizations and their publics.

Social media have become a tool for dialogue, as organizations are able to dialogue with their clients and public on certain pressing issues which may either affect the organizations and the public directly or indirectly. With social media, organizations are also able to give an account of their social responsibility duties and activities which invariably bring about a significant mutual relationship between the organizations and the various categories of the public.

The cost of communication has greatly reduced with the emergence of social media, as a result, the “free” platforms are able to help individuals and organizations improve their communication and information dissemination patterns at minimal or low costs (Hermida, 2015). However, the speed at which information spreads through social media has been remarkable. For instance, when an information that is of high importance to citizens and other members of the society alive are disseminated through social media, tweets, re-tweets, shares, and broadcasts on the different social media platforms help the information spread within a very short time (Kumar, 2014).

Literature has also found out that the different social media platforms have been able to serve as a means of managing conflicts or crisis (Zeitsoff, 2017). This is through the proper and timely dissemination of accurate information, which will help create a better understanding or disseminate true information in the case of fake news or rumors.

During political campaigns, social media has become a dependable tool; this is because politicians use the platform as a means of a direct campaign as well as a means of achieving wide outreach with their supporters (Ross & Burger, 2014). Political campaigns of different kinds such as inter-party campaigns as well as large or public campaigns take place (Karlsen & Enjolras, 2016). As such, social media creates a platform where political aspirants can capitalize on the campaigns executed on the traditional media to reach a wider audience.

2.3 Disadvantages of Social Media Usage

It is quite obvious that as all social media platforms can be significantly useful and helpful, they could as well pose various forms of threat which may be classified as either weakness or disadvantages (Dumitrica & Bakardjieva, 2018).

Because social media connection or use is mostly synonymous with non-verbal communication, it has been ascribed to many forms of miss-interpretations (Al-Jabri & Sohail, 2012). Though the platforms provide a number of graphical representations (smiles) to its users, messages may sometimes be miss-understood by the readers. Social media have provided a license for people to use various forms of hate and unpleasant speeches which have also been known to generate chaos and different forms of crises and disagreement (Manduley, Mertens, Plante, & Sultana, 2018). For instance, some social media users may intentionally open fake accounts or use the wrong identity on the platforms due to their intention to generate conflicts at different forms. This has in many instances proven to become a major problem in the use of social media (Dijck, 2012).

Though the social media platforms help enhance communication among different spheres, studies have shown that it is highly synonymous to generating conflicts at home, in society and among groups. This may be the result of engaging in unpleasant acts like crime or stalking (Trepte, 2015). One of the major disadvantages of social media is its free space facilitating internet bullying, monitoring and unhealthy stalking (Sarwar, Zulfiqar, Aziz, & Chandia, 2018). For example, an unknown person with a fake identity may begin to follow a social media user on Facebook, Instagram or Snapchat in order to monitor his/her activities or harass such individuals. This may significantly result in psychological or emotional stress in an individual.

Social media have also been regarded as a tool for spreading fake news (Bleakley, 2018). For instance, the platforms have been regarded as a tool whereby political parties and their opponents use to spread fake and defamatory news about one another. Due to the existence of the democratic rule in many countries across the world, social media has promoted free expression and publishing of news and information online without verification or confirmation, this has ultimately led to the promotion of fake news (Hemsley, Jacobson, Gruzd, & Mai, 2018).

Due to its consequence, a number of news organizations have made efforts to stem the tide of fake news spreading among citizens, this is because studies have reported that fake news mostly spread faster than the authentic news (Corner, 2017). This may be due to the tilting, slanting, toning, and sensationalism attached to fake news. Fake news has continued to spread untrue and misleading information while presenting them as true and authentic in order to attract an unsuspecting audience, thereby resulting to building more traffic (audience) for the source (Hannan, 2018).

Social media have been regarded as a platform where propaganda and fake news spread quickly as compared to other news platforms (Richardson, 2017). This is because of the free access to the general citizens who can create their own news. In this case the elite class has managed to create fake news and spreading their capitalist ideologies (Nelson & Taneja, 2018). Importantly, the concept of fake news has been attached to the generation, evolution and escalation of global crisis and conflict, however, the phenomenon has been in existence for quite some time (Ross & Rivers, 2018). However, the emergence of high-level political rivalry, conflicts, crisis and ideological believes with the invention of social media platforms, gave a phenomenal rise to the issue of fake news globally (Brummette, DiStaso, Vafeiadis, & Messner, 2018).

One important factor that has given rise to the escalation of fake news on social media is the low level of media literacy (Wasserman, 2017). The inability of the media audience, especially those on social media have promoted the concept of fake news (Bhaskaran, Mishra, & Nair, 2017). As such, it is important for social media users to understand how to dissect and verify social media information especially the ones without an authentic source (Kruger, 2017).

2.4 The Use of Social Media in Crisis Communication

Crisis in the human world has become a part of life. However, social media have been attributed to the organization, promotion, and escalation of crisis in different parts of human life (Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014). Social media has increasingly played an important role in raising awareness about various forms of crisis. For instance, during elections, electorates use the platforms to inform and educate themselves about areas that are currently experiencing a crisis or may experience such due to the records

available. Sometimes, the platforms are also used to educate the people on what to do and how to escape violence whenever they find themselves in one.

Though many of the citizens have continued to ask if social media contributes more to escalating violence to subsiding or preventing it from happening at all, the fact still remains that the role of social media in these aspects cannot be overemphasized (Snoeijs, Poels, & Nicolay, 2014). Interestingly, social media have been used as a platform where people can express their opinion on issues that may generate or is the cause of disagreement in a crisis.

In a study conducted by Sadri, Hasan, Ukkusuri, and Cebrian, (2018) on how victims of Hurricane Sandy communicated with one another and sought relief in the crisis, the study found out that social media was the most significant tool the people used to seek relief from government and helpers. The platform was also used to locate family and friends who were nowhere to be found or almost out of communication. Due to their inability to use the mainstream media, social media became highly dependable in such a crisis-ridden circumstance. The study also found out that various patterns were adopted during such incidents such as direct messages, twits, posts on the Facebook wall and others. As such, Facebook and Twitter were highly sought after in such a situation (Dalrymple, Young, & Tully, 2016).

The societal crisis has over the years attributed to misinformation or inappropriate distribution of information (Georgakopoulou, 2014). This could be giving the right information at the wrong time or providing the wrong information at an inappropriate time. This, therefore, emphasizes the fact that in order to avoid crisis as a result of the

provision of information, there must be the strategic management of the situation in order to avoid crisis due to the provision of information.

Due to the fact that social media roles in preventing or managing crisis cannot be overemphasized, many countries have adopted the use of social media in providing information and education to their citizens (Meis, 2017). For instance, Japan is a country with high population, provided its citizens adequate access to the internet and encouraged them to use social media properly especially to seek for help when in distress or whenever necessary (Cho, Jung, & Park, 2013).

Organizations have also been able to effectively use social media in preventing and managing organizational crisis and others (Xu & Wu, 2017). For instance, many corporate bodies have continually used social media in reaching out to their people and public in order to ensure they appropriately manage any form of crisis. They, therefore, use social media to give an account of their efforts at meeting the demands of their public or ensuring adequate information when necessary.

2.5 Facebook

Facebook is a social networking platform that facilitates connectivity and interactivity among its users across the globe (Dijck, 2012). Being a Web 2.0 social platform Facebook allows two or more people send and receive messages almost instantly. These messages could be in form of texts, videos, audio, graphics, and other multi-media patterns. Before the advent of Facebook, online communication was significantly a one-way process with little and delayed feedback. This is because users had to sometimes send e-mails and wait until the receiver has time to reply.

Facebook is an internet platform that allows users to share and receive information at any given time and place depending on the access to the internet. Without mincing words, it has become obvious that with the internet, the world has further moved from being a global village to being a global room (Robards & Lincoln, 2016). This is because the internet has created a means through which users can share and receive information that will transform and make life easy for them.

Facebook allows its users to act as the content creator, thereby revolving the platform as a user based content generating platform (Good, 2012). For instance, users become friends by requesting and adding members on the platform, after which they post contents on their walls for other users to see, like and make comments. Some comments also generate further discussions thereby turning the platform into an online public sphere.

Facebook was established and has significantly grown to a figure of over 2 billion users who seek various forms of gratification on the platform (Ellison, Gray, Lampe, & Fiore, 2014). The users engage in producing, sharing, and consuming information of different kinds, which has been considered as the use of the platform. The platform allows users from a wide range of places to become members by creating a profile for themselves and adding other users as friends (Tsay-Vogel, 2016). These users may or may not share anything in common with them; as such, it has proven to become a dependable medium for making new friends as well as maintaining or sustaining existing friendships.

Over the years, Facebook has proven to be highly relevant in different areas of human endeavors and existence (Kumar, 2014). These areas include health, education,

politics, agriculture, entertainment, and other areas that drive the daily activities in the society. Facebook has become highly relevant in uniting families and friends who are resident in different parts of the world, thereby breaking the barriers distance cause.

The platform has over the years transformed from an application where users can only access it through their desktop computers to a mobile application, which can be accessed on mobile devices (Goggin, 2014). This has created a significant improvement in the way a number of people use Facebook daily. These attribute has also enhanced connectivity among users, thereby facilitating connectivity and communication at any point in time.

A significantly new generation network, the Facebook platforms have become highly flexible and easy to operate; thereby allowing people from a different generation and spheres of life operate and use it (Moreno, et al., 2014). For example, the users are not only those who may be classified as educationally literate, with its Facebook translator, but users can also write in different languages of the world and communicate with their friends and families. In addition, users can use the "Facebook translate" to translate messages written in different languages, thereby facilitating ease in communication (Hong & Na, 2018). These features have made Facebook a highly sought after platform by different people in various parts of the world.

Facebook accords its users equal access and grants them an opportunity to access other users' status by reading the contents therein as well as making comments where they wish (Caers, et al., 2013). This has been a debate among social media scholars most especially in the area of privacy of users. However, the trend of privacy has continued to generate many comments globally.

With its unique attributes and the opportunity to allow other users to share the contents as well as indirectly publicize contents by tagging other users, Facebook has become a toast of activists and labor leaders who organize mass Protests (Alzougool, 2018). This is because it helps draw the attention of millions of other users as well as allow users to share contents created with many other members of the society.

2.6 Facebook as a Tool of Mass Mobilization

With the advent of social media platforms like Facebook, public and mass mobilization at various levels have significantly increased (Amtzis, 2014). This is as a result of the assumed freedom of speech or democracy that is present with the use of social media. However, with countries like Iran and China where social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter are banned, one can begin to assume the power of social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter in mass mobilizations and Protests globally. This is because these countries intend to reduce the freedom of speech as well as the ability to form a public sphere on social media, with social media public sphere citizens of many countries have been able to debate their opinion online and challenged the government to work. This has obviously yielded a significant result for the people and made their demand from government met.

With the advent of Facebook, the frequency of various kinds of civic Protest have also sporadically increased (Enjolras, Steen-Johnsen, & Wollebæk, 2012). This is because of the flexibility of the platform as well as the opportunity to carry news and information to the public sphere within a very short period of time as well as on a very low budget. Because Facebook does not only serve as a means of news or information sharing, the platform has been quite significant in major Protests like the Egyptian Revolution of Muhamed Morsi, the Arab Spring, the Gezi Park Protest in Turkey, as

well as the Zimbabwean Revolution in ousting longtime ruler Robert Mugabe among others.

Facebook Protests in different parts of the world have taken different forms and patterns, these include uploading armature videos, incriminating and provoking videos and voice, as well as the use of pictures and graphics that will spoor people to revolt and Protest (Dumitrica & Bakardjieva, 2018). In addition, the issue of citizen journalism, which has become a global concern, has facilitated Protests in various parts of the world due to the tinting and slanting of news stories and events so as to provoke people. Importantly, though Facebook as a tool of mass mobilization during crisis situations and Protest has given rise to the practice of citizen journalism.

In 2015 for instance, Facebook contributed to the international refugee crisis, which gave birth to the xenophobic attitudes displayed in the different parts of the European Union (EU) (Good, 2012). As such, Facebook can be regarded as a platform that has given rise to the fast and sporadic rise to issues, however, it should be noted that a significant amount of the news that spread fast are usually negative (Goggin, 2014). This emphasizes the fact that Facebook has contributed to the recent rise in the number of global Protests as well as mobilizations being witnessed.

Facebook also contributes to the recruitment of people who will either participate in an event or act such as Protests, rallies as well as campaigns. Facebook does not only serve as a means of recruiting people in certain localities or geographical locations, but it has also facilitated mass recruitments as well as mass mobilization globally. For example, the platform has been used by the fundamentalist group ISIS to recruit and initiate members across the world. This further emphasizes the strength of the

platform. This is done by brainwashing their minds and appealing to their emotions on the need for them to become members of the group. Based on the level of intelligence of these young citizens, they easily fall for their appeal and become members of the group.

Facebook has been described as a platform that is used to carry out self-mediation at various levels and categories. Activists, for instance, use Facebook to promote and inject their ideological beliefs about an issue, system or government. Facebook may be radically used by the opposition or a set of people who do not believe in the government of the day to dissect the people's mind on a particular government program or policy. Sometimes, it may be a positive move most especially when such policies being Protests against is in favor of a few members of the society, however, it may be an opposition drive to dis-stabilize the government of the day. The activists may form a closed group on Facebook where they carry out their discussions and plans, however, public pages on social media serve as a general platform where many people are carried along or involved (Ekman, 2018). In addition, Facebook has taken over from the mainstream media due to its abilities to involve more people at the same time as well as the opportunity to access Feedback instantly. However, the emergence of the public sphere on Facebook has led more credence to its ability to self-mobilize and facilitate Protests globally.

Many scholars have tried to conceptualize the role of social media in the Arab Spring, most especially the role of Facebook and twitter in the mobilization. The event started with the uploading of various forms of videos shot with mobile cameras on Facebook as well as Twitter. These events were the activities of groups, which began the seizing

of public squares, however, there was nothing new or phenomenal in the videos show or uploaded on Facebook.

The Arab Spring was one of the major events that heralded the use of social media in mobilizing and organizing Protests (Christensen & Christensen, 2013). However, it is important to state that Facebook itself was not enough to mobilize the people, it was only used as an effective tool of mass communication which was used by the people to organize the Protest. The Arab spring signified a voice of the people, with Facebook power the people aimed at changing the government and its policies (Alagha, 2014). However, the change had been in existence for a long time before the actual event, the birth and effective use of Facebook brought the event to life.

Due to sufficient access to information, social media platforms like Facebook have provided additional access to information. It has become quite difficult for the government to hide from the people information they desire not to have access to (Oz, 2016). Now, people are able to think on their own, form a public sphere on Facebook as well as make a decision on their own due to the series of information they are able to access. Indeed, these mass Protests in different categories and forms have brought to fusion the practice of democracy in different parts of the world. Interestingly, social media platforms like Facebook have also gradually reduced the trend and strength of the authoritarian governments in different parts of the world (Valentine, 2013). The Solidarity March of November 2017 proved the power of social media in mobilizing the Zimbabwean citizens to dethrone then President Robert Mugabe who had ruled for thirty seven years, which was totally undemocratic. With the various activities and events unfolding in different parts of the world, social media platforms, most especially Facebook have continued to gain prominence. Today, there is now the

“Facebook Revolution”, this is due to the power and effects of Facebook and its records of mobilizing the masses at various levels (Wolfsfeld, Segev, & Sheaffer, 2013).

2.7 Twitter

Twitter can be classified as a micro-blogging platform, which creates an opportunity for the people to post comments known as tweets on their timelines (Hochman, 2014). These tweets, which are usually not more than 140 words, can also be re-tweeted by other users thereby spreading the message to a very large and unknown number of users. As such, Twitter has created a platform where its users can self-mass communicate (Yang & Clark, 2015). This is because of the unknown reach of such messages. Also with the creation of HashTags, tweets have further spread and become visible to users who are not following the other user where the message originally came from.

The platform requires users to sign up and create their own page where they can post tweets on their timeline which creates an opportunity for those who follow them to have direct and immediate access to their tweets (Hong & Na, 2018). Users can also view tweets of those whom they follow and other retweets as well as comments of the handles they follow; the platform also has an avenue for one- on- one or two-way communication between users who follow each other on the platform (Mäkinen & Kuira, 2008). As such, they can engage themselves in direct messaging without the notification of a third party or being visible to other users.

With over 500 million registered users, Twitter has continued to expand its horizons as the platform can boost of over 200 million users monthly. Unlike other social media

platforms, the level of privacy on Twitter is quite limited as users can decide not to follow other users who follow them. As such, they will be significantly limited to the tweets of those whom they follow except they are keenly interested in happenings around or trending issues. Twitter has created a platform where a subject issue can be made popular globally making it “trending”. This is with the continuous posting of tweets related to the issue at hand and attaching a “hashtag” to it to increase its reach. Over the years, Twitter has continued to gain more relevance and acceptability by the mass populace most especially in the political scene.

Twitter remains one of the most used social media platforms in crisis. For instance, in the case where a place is ravaged by war or wanton killings, social media served as a means through which citizens called for succor from the military and governments (Hagen, Keller, Neely, DePaula, & Robert-Cooperman, 2018). This came in form of tweets and retweets by citizens who found themselves in such an unpleasant situation. This and many other forms of the use of social media in crisis has exhibited social media as a tool that grants citizens access to help in times of need.

2.8 Twitter as a Tool of Mass Mobilization

Twitter is being regarded as one of the strongest and most powerful social media platforms particularly in the political arena. The platform has a strong attachment to mobilizing people in times of election and Protests (Ekman, 2018). This is quite evident in a number of mass Protests and revolutions that took place in different parts of the world. This has accorded the platform as one of the strongest social media tools for mass mobilizations and political movements (Brooker, Barnett, & Cribbin, 2016). For example in the 2013 general election in Italy, Twitter was used by politicians to mobilize support from the electorates especially those that use social media. Those

social media users became gatekeepers and further helped spread the messages they accessed on Twitter.

Twitter has become a highly sought after social media platform when it comes to mass mobilization and Protests in the world (Choi & Park, 2014). The platform has become highly popular and relevant in practicing professional journalism, yet amateur or citizen journalism has also embedded itself into the use of the platform. It is quite important to also state that, Twitter is one of the social media platforms that has promoted the trend of citizen journalism globally. Twitter has continually encouraged a participatory community, where people can freely interact, exchange ideas and discuss trending issues among themselves (Lim, 2018). In addition, Twitter has given a voice to the voiceless in the society. As such, the people in the society are able to voice their opinion on government policies and programs (Veenstra, Iyer, Park, & Alajmi, 2015). This has further strengthened democracy and made it highly participatory.

Twitter was a major platform in mobilizing and achieving success at the 2011 Wisconsin labor Protests. This event further highlighted the power of Twitter in organizing Protests and expressing an opinion about events by the citizen (Ekman, 2018). However, it is important to state that social media platforms like Twitter are not the only platforms that help in creating awareness about issues and topics, in addition, the mainstream media has also continued to become a relevant avenue to disseminate accurate and reliable information among the people in the society. With the aid of Twitter, adequate information is provided to the public most especially the youth who in most cases require appropriate information and are willing to engage in the Protests (Enjolras, Steen-Johnsen, & Wollebæk, 2012). Twitter also serves as a

means of sharing and re-sharing prompt, fast, and timely information while making sure that it reaches a large and wide audience.

Twitter also allows any user to share information about current happenings which has proven as a powerful way of distributing information and mobilization (Lee & Campbell, 2016). For example, during a number of successful Protests, Twitter was used by Protesting members to share live information of events and happenings at the scene. Such information will encourage more citizens to join the Protests while encouraging others who are not active on social media to be active as well.

Research has also shown that Twitter is instrumental to sharing news and information before, during and after many Protests while also serving as a means of measuring the reaction and opinion of the people towards a particular Protest (Hull & Schmittl, 2015). Because sharing news or information does not need any form of verification or approval unlike the mainstream media, it has facilitated users at various levels to continually use the platform to spread different kinds of information which may not be available on the mainstream media.

Twitter has also created a platform where people with a similar opinion constitute a public sphere in order to debate and express their opinion on certain issues (Dumitrica & Bakardjieva, 2018,). For instance, with the aid of Twitter, users with like minds may begin a public debate by continuing a trend on twitter or making such issue go viral with the use of hashtags. However, the platform has become a great source of motivation in organizing mass Protests or revolutions.

The Gezi Park Protest which took place in Turkey in 2010 can be described as one of the mass revolutions in which social media was used as a tool while Twitter served as a major stakeholder in the mobilization (Odabaş & Reynolds-Stenson, 2018). Just like any other Protest, the movement started in a light, small and mild way and soon grew out of hand. This was in response to the building of a shopping mall by the Turkish government which will see to the demolition of the Gezi Park. As such, the people vehemently went against the idea and mobilized one another to Protest against this act by the government (Oz, 2016). Gezi was a center of attraction and a public park in Istanbul which was quite important and significant to the people.

The people of Turkey then mobilized one another mostly through the use of social media. During the Protest in order to disperse the people the police sprayed tear gas, and this act blew the Protest out of hand (Giglou, Ogan, & d'Haenens, 2018). One of the major reasons for the escalation of the Protest was due to the use of social media. As soon as the police set fire on the tents of the Protesters, the issue went viral, spread on social media and gain a significant level of sensationalism (Baysu & Phalet, 2017). This sparked social media users and erupted the Protest. In addition, opposition parties capitalized on this event and used social media to outburst the issue thereby raising the tempo of the Protest and mobilizing more people through the use of social media (Ors & Turan, 2015). As such, the Protest also grew out of proportion and did not only become a Gezi Protest, instead became a nationwide Protest. The opposition also used the event to deem the image of the government in power thereby facilitating the Protest (Ors, 2014). The Gezi Park Protest shares a very common attribute with other national Protests in many parts of the world as social media was highly significant in the mobilization and the success of the Protest (Turan & Özçetin, 2017). With the

effectiveness of Twitter in mobilizing people for the various Protests, scholars have generated a new name which is commonly referred to as the "Twitter Revolution" this is due to the significant role the platform played in bringing people together for a common cause (Vatikiotis & Yörük, 2016).

Twitter has, however, been described as a platform that aids Protest by lowering the cost of organizing the Protest through the transmission of information. The platform also has a uniquely fast way of spreading the information.

2.9 Political Communication and Social Media Usage in Zimbabwe

According to Mutsvairo (2013), in 2006, the Zimbabwean government introduced the Interception of Communications Bill, which would have allowed the military, intelligence services, police and the office of the President to monitor email correspondence, and telephone conversations. Even though the bill became law in 2007, the lack of technological capability, manpower and monitoring equipment needed to prevent communication appears to have quickened the government's plans. As a result the Zimbabwean activists have hid their identity on social media for example 'Baba Jukwa'. A Facebook page with the name 'Baba Jukwa' openly exposed secrets, mismanagements and corruption of the ruling government of Zimbabwe. On this note social media can be used as a base by activists to rebuke the government.

When a supposed authoritarian ruler loses an election, questions will be raised, especially when the defeat is the first in nearly 30 years of uninterrupted rule. That happened when President Mugabe lost the first round of voting in March 2008 to Tsvangirai of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The expansion of internet has helped Zimbabwean citizens to establish NewZimbabwe.com were

Zimbabwean discuss political events and issues in the website. This also provides the Zimbabwean ‘‘viewpoint’’ unlike the mainstream news providers.

According to technomag.com, the population of internet users is 6,721,947 out of a 16 million general population. Active internet penetration rate increase by 1.3% to reach 52.1 in the first quarter of 2018 from 50.8% recorded in the last quarter of 2017. Facebook has been cited as the nation’s most popular social media platform in Zimbabwe, taking over a total market share of 47%. According to Mutsvairo (2013) the introduction of Information and Communications Technology powered principally by the ever-increasing use of Internet and mobile phone networks and their perceptible potential provides an excellent opportunity for changing the operations of political landscapes in Africa and beyond. Social media usage has grown extensively in Zimbabwe. According to figure 2.2 social media usage was high within the months leading to the Solidarity March November 2017.

Statcounter social media sites in Zimbabwe from August 2017 to August 2018.

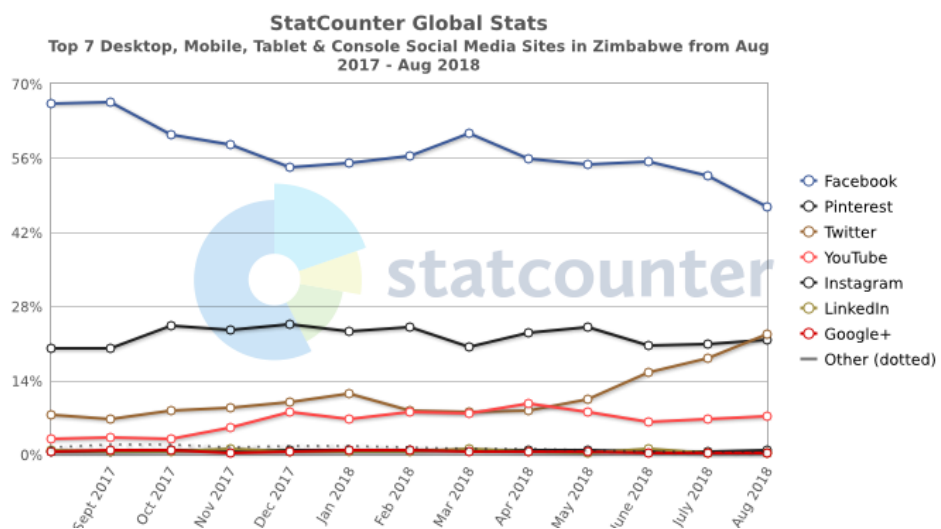


Figure 2.2: Social media usage (technomag.co.zw)

2.10 Social Movement and Mobilization

The use of social media platforms seem to be mobilizing collective action and provide a mode of democratic information exchange within the presence of censored mainstream media like television, radio and newspapers. Within the records of mass mobilization social media has been a useful tool and powerful medium used around the world. Arab Spring brought a series of anti-government Protests, uprisings, and armed rebellions that spread across North Africa and the Middle East in the early 2010s. It began in response to oppressive regimes and a low standard of living, starting with Protests in Tunisia. The Arab Spring was a huge Protest organized on social media (Christensen & Christensen, 2013). In the Arab Spring case Facebook played a huge role in mobilizing for the Protest, social media gave voice to people.

Another social movement was Gezi park Protest in Turkey, a demonstration and civil unrest in May 2013 contest on the urban development plan for Istanbul's Gezi Park. Gezi Park Protest took an interesting turn after police staged a dramatic operation on the small crowd of Protesters. According to (insight turkey) one of the most important factor that increased the number of Gezi Park Protesters was social media. Activists call through social media led to a major gathering at the park with more than ten thousand Protesters

The Zimbabwean Solidarity March can however be related or compared to these two major Protests with a common denominator of social media use for social movement mobilization. Social media was used to mobilize for the Zimbabwean Solidarity March. The internet is enabling groups previously incapable of political action to find their voices (Freidland & Rogerson, 2009). Social movements across the political

spectrum use new technologies to effect change and influence party politics (Klein 2012). With political, economic and social issues as motivators Protests are developed and planned online or social media by activists. Social media is used in all three cases as a platform to mobilize Protests and freely exercise freedom of expression challenging the authoritarian systems of the ruling parties and government.

2.11 Authoritarian Theory

The authoritarian theory is one of the four theories of the press that illuminates our understanding of the press and the government (Zhang, 2017). The authoritarian theory has become one of the most prevalent theories in the history of the media-government relationship even in modern society. This theory became more applicable and relevant as the world began to experience technological transformation with the emergence of mass media channels and even more applicable in the current era where social media platforms are the order of the day (Miller, 2017). For example, the theory is now being seriously put to practice in China and Iran where the government has limited the citizens' access to technologically inclined media platforms like social media. Zimbabwe is a 'democratic' country and yet still has some authoritarian traits like China and Iran. In January 2019 the Zimbabwean government was accused of cutting down the Internet after hearing of a possible Protest mobilizing on social media.

The authoritarian theory establishes a background for the press in many societies, as such; it controls what information is being provided to the people through the various media platforms in many countries (Hrubec, 2012). However, some countries do not fully practice the authoritarian regime, there are still some elements of autocracy in the form and manner in which the government relates and manipulates the press (Maerz, 2018).

The authoritarian principle has continued to influence the form and manner in which government at different levels operate (Zhang, 2017). For instance, with the authoritarian principles, the government is able to control the kind of information the people receive, thereby constituting a system where the information available to the people is only what the government wants.

To state further, however, social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter have changed the face of authoritarianism in society (Kumar, 2014). The platforms have brought about a twist in the mode and manner in which the government limits access of the citizens to information. In addition, information in which government will ordinarily deny the people access on the mainstream media has been provided by the social media platforms.

With social media, platforms like Facebook and Twitter, which have allowed the people to make their own news, as well as access information of whatever kind they want, the regime of authoritarianism has been gradually reduced (Bhaskaran, Mishra, & Nair, 2017). Governments of various countries understanding the power of social media therefore they limit the people's access to social media.

Authoritarianism gives power to the government while it suppresses the voices of the citizens. However social media usage has enabled the citizens to speak freely and Protest against the authoritarian government for example the cases of Arab Spring, and Gezi Park. The Zimbabwean Solidarity March November 2017 was a breakthrough for the Zimbabwean citizens who freely expressed their concerns on social media and mobilize a Protest.

2.12 Diffusion of Innovation Theory

When there are new ideas, innovations and discoveries, there is a mode and pattern at which information about such phenomenon spread (Dearing, 2009). As such, the core assumption of the diffusion of innovation theory is to study how and why information about such innovation or phenomenon spread. The diffusion of innovation theory further explains the process through which innovations are being communicated to the citizens as well as how this innovation is received by society over time (Dingfelder & Mandell, 2011).

The theory which was propounded by Edward Rogers focuses on how media uses its strength to propagate and promote issues and ideas until it is generally accepted by all or significant members of the society (Al-Jabri & Sohail, 2012). For example, when a group of people uses the media to mobilize or convince people to accept a particular ideology, not everyone will accept immediately. A small population of the people will accept at the initial stage while the number increases when there is consistency in the message until a majority is convinced. In furtherance to that, when the Zimbabwean crisis was to begin, not many people agreed it will work, however, based on the frequent use of social media in mobilizing the people, minority of the citizens were convinced and also entered into the Protest. This phenomenon is common and can be attached to the diffusion of innovation.

Interestingly, the diffusion of innovation theory eventually creates a means through which people can be made to accept new innovations, ideologies or concepts through the use of the media (Syahadiyanti & Subriadi, 2018). This indicates that the media are effective means through which citizens are convinced and mobilized to adopt a

cause. In addition, it has shown that even when people are ignorant or not entirely aware of some of the activities in the society, the media can be used as an eye-opener and thereafter facilitate the citizens to believe in the new ideas and innovations (Yap & Chen, 2017). It is important to state that the adoption of new ideologies does not happen at a time, it requires a significant use of the media. As such, with the aid of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and many others, it has become easier now than it was before. This indicates the effects of technological innovation on other new discoveries and innovation.

The theory explains that the adaptation of innovations can be classified under the five categories of adopters as follows:

Innovators: These are the first set of people who accept any new innovation or ideas. They want to be known and recognized as the first set of people who are associated with such ideology or innovation

Early adopters: These people are categorized as opinion leaders in society. They usually have easy access to new information or innovation after which they will dissect the information and consider to accept or reject the message. If the new idea is accepted, they then pass the information to their people who accept their opinion and follow it.

Early majority: These are people who want evidence or proof that the new innovation will work or want to see how the Protest will be welcomed by others and then measure if it will be successful before joining in it.

Late majority: These members of the society are usually not receptive when something new is about to happen. As such, they wait for other members of the society to try or participate in the movement before they join.

Laggards: these are highly conservative people and are not friendly when change comes. They are the last set of people in the society who cue into the change that comes to the society; however, they occupy a small proportion of the society (Lien & Jiang, 2017).

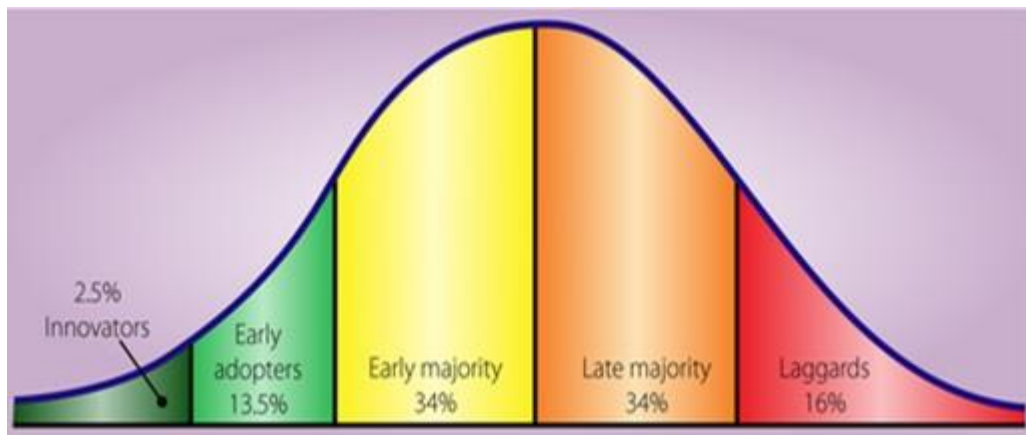


Figure 2.3: The diffusion of innovation chart (Lien & Jiang, 2017)

2.13 Theoretical Framework

In this section of this research, Uses and Gratification Theory was chosen. This theory helps in identifying how the influence of social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter create a space for political discussions and activism, the interaction of activists to the general citizens of the society through social media.

2.13.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory

The core assumption of the Uses and Gratifications Theory is to elucidate the use of media (mainstream and social media) is gratifying their specific needs (Li, Liu, Xu, Heikkilä, & Heijden, 2015). The Uses and Gratification Theory has been generally referred to as a theory that places premium on the media audience, and their use/selection of the media rather than how the media influence its users (Joo & Sang, 2013). As such, the theory explains that the power of the media may be limited at this point, due to the selection of the audience and lack of dominance of a particular

medium. In addition, the theory explains further on what the media audience use the media for and what satisfaction they desire in such use (Grellhesl & Punyanunt-Carter, 2012). For example, the media audience may use any of the platforms as a means of mobilizing or eliciting crisis, which ultimately provides a form of gratification when the purpose is achieved.

The theory can be regarded as a positivist driven theory because of its approach and style of use in research (Li, Guo, Bai, & Xu, 2018). However, it is important to state the Uses and Gratification Theory is one of the most prominent limited effect theories based on its postulations and approach. The Uses and Gratification Theory has over the years remained a dominant theory when studying the psychological uses an effect of media audience (Choi, Fowler, Goh, & Yuan, 2016). One of the distinctive aims of the Use and Gratification Theory is to understand the motivations behind the use of a particular media platform over others and not how they use the media. invariably, the ultimate aim of the use is the most important in this case, and this is the user's satisfaction and gratification received upon the use of a particular platform (Gallego, Bueno, & Noyes, 2016). The U&G theory further emphasizes and established the high level of consciousness of the media consumers stating that they can be regarded as most important (Florentha, 2015). It also states that the audience has the power to choose, consume, dissect and process whatever information they consume through the media, however, they are conscious of the media influence and are able to manipulate their choice (Huang, Bao, & Li, 2017).

A new perspective to the uses of the media emerged along with the limited effect era when it was quite obvious that the media's roles in influencing the people were dependent on the frequency of exposure to the same content (Rui & Stefanone, 2016).

As such, with the emergence of multiple media platforms providing variance of information, education and entertainment content, it was obvious that the audience is provided too many contents and may not be exposed to the same content on the same platform (Luo, Chea, & Chen, 2011). However, in order to reach the target audience, content providers have now moved to provide the same content on different platforms to achieve their goal.

With the emergence of mobile technologies like mobile phones, iPad, PC tablets and many more, citizens are further able to gratify their needs (Huang, Bao, & Li, 2017). For example, because of the durability of these technological devices, media audience is able to access any kind of media at any point in time; most especially the social media platforms. As such, they are able to seek a different form of gratifications at any point in time (Li, Guo, Bai, & Xu, 2018). With the aid of social media platforms, individuals and groups have been able to use the different social media platforms to mobilize their fellow citizens as well as generate one voice in order to Protest, reject or disagree with the different government policies and programs.

Social media users have also been able to gratify their need to seek information and update themselves about the happenings and events around them (Gallego, Bueno, & Noyes, 2016). This has created a robust impact as well as facilitate up-to-date knowledge of happenings not only around them but globally as well. However, it is quite important to state that the developments witnessed as a result of the World Wide Web created a huge and significant milestone in the history of the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Choi & Park, 2014). With the aid of the internet facilities and most especially the social media, citizens are able to speak for themselves and gratify

their desire to voice their opinion on various issues and policies in the society (Manduley, Mertens, Plante, & Sultana, 2018).

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter consists of five sections which state the approach and methods employed by this research; it includes the research design, instruments used in the research, sampling procedure, data collection procedure and validity and reliability of the study.

The study aims to explore the role of social media in crisis situations by using a case study of the Zimbabwean students studying in Northern Cyprus. This study inspired by the Zimbabwean Solidarity March of November 2017 seeks to answer the following listed research questions relating to social media usage of the Zimbabwean students studying in Northern Cyprus.

1. How free the Zimbabwean university students in North Cyprus felt in using social media on political issues?
2. To what extent do the Zimbabwean university students in North Cyprus use traditional media during crisis situations?
3. Do social media have great impact on political issues of Zimbabwe especially during crisis situations?
4. To what extent did social media contribute in mobilizing the Zimbabwean university students in North Cyprus for the Solidarity March November 2017?
5. How social media and physical political activism are handled in Zimbabwe before, during and after the Solidarity March of November 2017?

3.1 Research Design

The study uses mixed method a qualitative approach through interviews and a quantitative method through a survey research to get the primary data from respondents. In-depth interviews were conducted to 20 Zimbabwean University students in North Cyprus studying in Eastern Mediterranean University, Cyprus International University and Near East University. Questionnaires were also distributed to a sample size of 351 Zimbabwean University students in Northern Cyprus studying in Eastern Mediterranean University, Near East University, Cyprus International University and Girne American University. Questionnaires were distributed on Zimbabwean students Facebook pages for the selected universities with permission taken from the Zimbabwean student presidents of each university. Questionnaires were left open on the Facebook pages for response for one month period. Due to lack of responses from the Zimbabwean students studying at Girne American University, this university was omitted on the final analysis in chapter 4. Before the research a pilot test was conducted on 50 randomly selected students in Eastern Mediterranean University for clarity and relevance. An application was sent to the ethics committee board before the distribution of questionnaires. After the approval data was collected and entered into the Social Science Statistical Package (SPSS) version 18 for analysis.

3.2 Data Collection Method

Qualitative method through interviews was used to collect in depth data for the study. Interviews were conducted using the research questions of the study. A quantitative method through survey research was also used for data collection procedure for this study. Prior to the conduct of the main survey research, a pilot test was conducted on 50 randomly selected students at Eastern Mediterranean University using purposive

sampling method which involves the reachable population for clarity. The main survey questionnaire consisted of 41 questions and was distributed to 351 Zimbabwean students in the chosen 4 universities which are EMU, NEU GAU and CIU respectively. The research was conducted online for convenience. Questionnaires were sent on the Zimbabwean students Facebook pages of the above mentioned universities. Additional surveys were sent on Whatsapp and Instagram to reach to the total of 351 students. Results were collected, recorded and entered on SPSS version 18 for analysis.

3.2.1 Instruments of Primary Data Collection

The instrument used for this study is the use of a questionnaire, 351 questionnaires were administered using virtual snowball sampling and purposive sampling method. Questionnaires were posted on four Facebook pages with selected Zimbabwean participants of 4 different universities as listed above. The questionnaire had 41 questions which consisted of 3 sections. The questionnaire consisted of 5 demographic questions, 1 rating scale question, 10 close – ended questions, 6 other answer option questions and 19 likert scale questions.

The most commonly used instrument for collecting a research data from participants of a study is the questionnaire. It seeks to get the opinion of individuals in a sample or population directly related to issues, and objectives of the study (Aina, 2004). The third part of the questionnaire consists of the five point Likert Scale questions which aims at measuring the attitude of the participant towards the usage of social media in crisis situations focusing mainly on their perceptions concerning the Zimbabwean Solidarity March 2017.

3.3 Sampling Procedure

Purposive and Virtual sampling was used in this study. A purposive sample is used with researcher's knowledge on which population rightfully fits the research, it also helps researcher save time. "A non-probability sample that is selected based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study. Purposive sampling is also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling." (Thoughtco) Similarly virtual snowball sampling helps researcher in saving time through use of digital technology in conducting the survey. Virtual snowball sampling gives the respondent time to answer at a convenient time making the survey flexible on both the researcher and participant. According to the International registration offices of the four selected universities, currently registered number of Zimbabwean students at Eastern Mediterranean university is 146, followed by 384 students in Near East university, 28 students in Girne American university and 215 students in Cyprus International university. The approximated number of the Zimbabwean students in the chosen 4 Universities was 773, due to no response from the Zimbabwean students in Girne American university the number of Zimbabwean students in the remaining three universities was 745. In the survey research, virtual snowball and purposive sampling method was used which gives a subset representation of the large population of Zimbabwean university students studying in Northern Cyprus.

3.4 Validity and Reliability of Research

The validity of a research entails its truthfulness, authenticity and is based on how ideas suit with actual reality. The validity of a research question addresses how social reality is being measured through the survey and compatible with the construct that the researcher understands the best. For the quantitative approach of this research a questionnaire consisting of 41 questions was administered to 351 Zimbabwean

students in three different major universities in North Cyprus and the collected data was imputed and analyzed through SPSS version 18.

A pilot test consisting of 50 questionnaires were conducted before the main survey to ensure that the questions were clearly understood. These 50 participants were randomly selected within the Zimbabwean students studying at EMU. In conducting the pilot test, unclear questions were clarified and adjusted to ensure the better understanding of the participants. The reliability of this research was tested through the use of Cronbach's Alpha.

Table 3.1: Reliability Statistics

	Cronbach's Alpha
Pilot Study	.832
Main Study	.876

The reliability statistics shows that the data set in both pilot and main study are all reliable and of high value. The table results indicates that the Cronbach's alpha for the pilot study was 0.779 while the result for the main was 0.821, indicating that the data for the study can be said to be reliable. All tests have Cronbach's alpha coefficient score above 0.7 which is acceptable and a highly consistent therefore the questionnaire is proved to be reliable (Tavakol, M., & Dennick, R. 2011).

$$\alpha = \frac{N \cdot \bar{c}}{\bar{v} + (N - 1) \cdot \bar{c}}$$

N = Number of items, \bar{c} = average variance between item pairs, and \bar{v} = average variance

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This chapter presents the statistical analysis of the data collected from the respondents. These analyses not only help providing answers to the research questions but also pave way for further discussions of the findings. The chapter consists of demographic analysis as well as the descriptive analysis of the results.

4.1 Demographics

Table 4.1: What is your nationality?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Zimbabwean	351	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 4.1 displayed the nationalities of the respondents; this was to ensure that all those who filled the questionnaire were Zimbabweans. All of the 351 respondents (100%) were Zimbabweans.

Table 4.2: What is your gender?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	154	43.9	43.9	43.9

	Female	197	56.1	56.1	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.2 displayed the gender of the respondents. 154 participants (43.9%) were males while 197 participants (56.1%) were females.

Table 4.3: What is your age?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18 to 22	52	14.8	14.8	14.8
	23 to 27	209	59.5	59.5	74.4
	28 to 32	66	18.8	18.8	93.2
	Above 32	24	6.8	6.8	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.3 showed the age distribution of the respondents. According to the findings the respondents between the ages 18 to 22 were 52 (14.8%), the respondents between the ages 23 to 27 were 209 (59.5%), the respondents between the ages 28 to 32 were 66 (18.8%) while the respondents above the age of 32 were 24 (6.8%).

Table 4.4: What is your University?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	EMU	102	29.1	29.1	29.1
	NEU	197	56.1	56.1	85.2
	CIU	52	14.8	14.8	100
	Total	351	100	100	

Since the respondents are spread across various parts of North Cyprus, Table 4.4 showed the universities in which the respondents are currently studying. Result indicated that respondents from EMU were 102 (29.1%), NEU were 197 (56.1%), while those from CIU were 52 (14.8%).

Table 4.5: Your educational level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Undergraduate	238	67.8	67.8	67.8
	Master	73	20.8	20.8	88.6
	PhD	40	11.4	11.4	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.5 showed the educational level of the respondents. Findings indicate that the number of undergraduate students were 238 (67.8%), those who were doing master program were 73 (20.8%), while the PhD students were 40 (11.4%).

4.2 Descriptive Analysis for Social Media Usage

Table 4.6: Which social media are you active on the most?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Facebook	207	58.9	58.9	58.9
	Twitter	33	9.4	68.3	68.3
	Instagram	88	25.1	93.4	93.4
	Snapchat	23	6.6	6.6	100
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.6 displayed the social media platforms respondents in this study often use. According to the results 207 participants (58.9%) stated that they used Facebook the most, 33 participants (9.4%) affirmed that they used Twitter the most, 88 participants (25.1%) used Instagram the most while 23 participants (6.6%) used Snapchat the most. Hence, Facebook was the most popular social media platform among the participants.

Table 4.7: How many hours do you spend on social media in a day?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 to 5 hours	154	43.9	43.9	43.9
	6 to 10 hours	142	40.5	40.5	84.3
	11 to 15 hours	54	15.4	15.4	99.7
	More than 15 hours	1	.3	.3	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

While measuring the distribution of the number of hours spent on social media by respondents, the result as seen in Table 4.7 indicated that those that spent within 1 to 5 hours on social media were 154 (43.9%), respondents that spent within 6 to 10 hours on social media were 142 (40.5%), respondents that spent within 11 to 15 hours on social media were 54 (15.4%), while only 1(0.3%) respondent affirmed that he/she used social media more than 15 hours in a day. Hence, majority of the respondents spend 11 to 15 hours on social media in a day.

Table 4.8: For which purposes do you use social media?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Entertainment	59	16.8	16.8	16.8
	Getting news	94	26.8	26.8	43.6
	Making and Sharing News	42	12.0	12.0	55.6
	Communicating for Personal Purposes	108	30.8	30.8	86.3
	Activism	48	13.7	13.7	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.8 showed the results on the question, for which purposes the respondents used social media. Findings indicated that respondents that used social media for entertainment were 59 (16.8%), those who used it for news were 94 (26.8%), 42 participant (12.0%) used social media for making and sharing news, 108 respondents (30.8%) used it for communicating personal purposes, while 48 participants (13.7%) used social media for activism. Hence, the majority of the respondents (30.8%) used social media in communication for personal purposes while only 48 of them (13.7%) confirmed that they used it for activism.

Table 4.9: Are you active on Facebook?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	331	94.3	94.3	94.3
	No	20	5.7	5.7	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Findings indicated that not all the respondents used Facebook actively. According to the results in Table 4.9, 331 participants (94.3%) agreed that they used Facebook actively, while 20 participants (5.7%) confirmed they did not use Facebook actively.

Table 4.10: Are you active on Twitter?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	171	48.7	48.7	48.7
	No	180	51.3	51.3	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Findings indicated that not all the respondents used Twitter. According to the results in Table 4.10, 171 participants (48.7%) agreed they were active on Twitter while 180 participants (51.3%) pointed out that they were not active on Twitter. Hence, it could

be said that Twitter was not as popular as Facebook among the Zimbabwean university students studying in North Cyprus.

4.3 Descriptive Analysis for the Usage of Social Media in the Solidarity March 2017

Table 4.11: Were you involved in the online Zimbabwean Solidarity March of November 2017?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	338	96.3	96.3	96.3
	No	13	3.7	3.7	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

In table 4.11, respondents were asked if they were involved in the online Zimbabwean Solidarity March of November 2017. According to the responses, 338 participants (96.3%) were involved in online Zimbabwean Solidarity March of November 2017 while only 13 participants (3.7%) were not involved online. However, this minority may be indirectly involved by talking about the event with their friends offline.

Table 4.12: Which social media were you active on the most during the Zimbabwean Solidarity March of November 2017?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Facebook	306	87.2	87.2	87.2
	Twitter	45	12.6	12.6	100.0

	Total	351	100.0	100.0	
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As shown in table 4.12 respondents were asked which social media they were active on the most during the Zimbabwean Solidarity March of November 2017. Findings revealed that 306 participants (87.2%) used Facebook while 45 participants (12.6%) used Twitter. Hence, it could be said that during the Solidarity March Facebook was a more popular platform than twitter among the participants.

Table 4.13: How did you engage in the Zimbabwean Solidarity March of November 2017 through social media?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Live videos	69	19.7	19.7	19.7
	News Threads	20	5.7	5.7	25.4
	Shared and Posted News, Pictures and Videos	103	29.3	29.3	54.7
	All of the above	113	32.2	32.2	86.9
	None of the Above	46	13.1	13.1	100.0
	Others please specify	0	0	0	0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

In table 4.13, respondents answered how they were engaged in the Zimbabwean Solidarity March November 2017 through social media, according to the responses, 69 respondents (19.7%) were engaged through live videos , 20 respondents (5.7%) were engaged through news threads,103 (29.3%) were engaged through sharing and posted news, pictures, and videos. 113 respondents (32.2%) were engaged in all mentioned means, video likes, news threads, shared and posted news, pictures, and videos, while 46 respondents (13.1%) did not engage on the listed activities on social media.

Table 4.14: Did you feel free in participating in the Zimbabwean Solidarity March 2017 considering your own security?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	299	85.2	85.2	85.2
	No	52	14.8	14.8	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.14 is a breakdown of responses stating if the Zimbabwean University students studying in North Cyprus felt free in participating in the Zimbabwean Solidarity March 2017 considering their security. 299 participants (85.2%) said yes while 52 (14.8%) said no. Hence, it could be said that the majority of our respondents felt free in participating in the Zimbabwean Solidarity March 2017 considering their security.

Table 4.15: Your involvement or participation through social media in the Zimbabwean Solidarity March 2017 was by:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Personal choice	239	68.1	68.1	68.1
	Influence of friends and family	39	11.1	11.1	79.2
	Influence of activists	49	14.0	14.0	93.2
	Influence of political leaders	24	6.8	6.8	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

In table 4.15 respondents were asked about their motivation for the involvement or participation through social media in the Zimbabwean Solidarity March 2017. According to the responses, 239 participants (68.1%) said it was due to their personal choice, 39 participants (11.1%) said they were influenced by friends and family, 49 participants (14.0%) said it was due to the influence of activists while 24 participants (6.8%) said it was due to the influence of political leaders.

Table 4.16: Was the Zimbabwean November 2017 Solidarity March the first time that you have been involved in an online activist movement?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	208	59.3	59.3	59.3
	No	143	40.7	40.7	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.16 displayed responses on whether the Zimbabwean November 2017 Solidarity March was the first time that the participants have been involved in an online activist movement. 208 respondents (59.3%) said yes while 143 respondents (40.7%) said no.

Table 4.17: Have you ever posted, shared or discussed Zimbabwean politics on your own social media platform?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	253	72.1	72.1	72.1
	No	98	27.9	27.9	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.17 showed a breakdown of responses stating if respondents have ever posted, shared or discussed Zimbabwean politics on their own social media platform, 253 participants (72.1%) agreed that they have posted shared or discussed Zimbabwean

politics on their social media platform while 98 participants (27.9%) disagreed with this question.

Table 4.18: Did you contribute to the Zimbabwean Solidarity March 2017 through social media? If you contributed online, state how?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Likes	145	41.3	41.3	41.3
	sharing posts and comments	152	43.3	43.3	84.6
	creating a live video to discuss the Protest	54	15.4	15.4	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

As shown in table 4.18, respondents were asked if they ever contributed to the Zimbabwean Solidarity March 2017 through social media. Though some of the respondents might not be interested in sharing the events on their personal page, however, they were involved through other means. 145 respondents (41.3%) stated that they were involved through likes, 152 respondents (43.3%) stated that they were involved through sharing posts and comments while 54 respondents (15.4%) stated that they were involved through creating a live video to discuss the Protest.

Table 4.19: I criticize the government on political issues on social media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	320	91.2	91.2	91.2
	No	31	8.8	8.8	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.19 aimed at finding out if respondents criticized the government on political issues on social media. Findings revealed that 320 respondents (91.2%) agreed to have criticized the government on political issues on social media while 31 respondents (8.8%) disagreed on criticizing the government on political issues on social media.

Table 4.20: I have posted and shared anti-government videos and/or posts on social media before the Zimbabwean Solidarity March November 2017

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	268	76.4	76.4	76.4
	No	83	23.6	23.6	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

In table 4.20, respondents answered the question if they have posted and shared anti-government videos and/or posts on social media before the Zimbabwean Solidarity March November 2017. Findings revealed that 268 respondents (76.4%) agreed to have posted and shared anti-government videos and/or posts on social media before the Zimbabwean Solidarity March November 2017 while 83 respondents (23.6%)

disagreed on posting and sharing anti-government videos and /or posts on social media before the Zimbabwean Solidarity March November 2017.

Table 4.21: I have posted and shared anti-government videos and / or posts on social media during the Zimbabwean Solidarity March November 2017

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	213	60.7	60.7	60.7
	No	138	39.3	39.3	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

In table 4.21, respondents answered the question if they have posted and shared anti-government videos and/or posts on social media during the Zimbabwean Solidarity March November 2017. Findings revealed that 213 respondents (60.7%) agreed to have posted and shared anti-government videos and/or posts on social media during the Zimbabwean Solidarity March November 2017 while 138 respondents (39.3%) disagreed on posting and sharing anti-government videos and / or posts on social media before the Zimbabwean Solidarity March November 2017.

Table 4.22: I have posted and shared anti-government videos and /or posts on social media after the Zimbabwean Solidarity March November 2017

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	253	72.1	72.1	72.1

	No	98	27.9	27.9	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

In table 4.22, respondents answered the question if they have posted and shared anti-government videos and or posts on social media after the Zimbabwean Solidarity March November 2017. Findings revealed that 253 respondents (72.1%) agreed they posted and shared anti-government videos and / or posts on social media after the Zimbabwean Solidarity March November 2017 while 98 respondents (27.9%) disagreed to have posted and shared anti-government videos and or posts on social media after the Zimbabwean Solidarity March November 2017.

4.4 Analysis of Likert Scale Questions

Table 4.23: Traditional media (e.g. Newspaper and ZBC) is used more than social media by Zimbabweans

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	68	19.4	19.4	19.4
	Disagree	134	38.2	38.2	57.5
	Undecided	56	16.0	16.0	73.5
	Agree	49	14.0	14.0	87.5
	Strongly Agree	44	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.23 showed findings from respondents on whether traditional media (e.g Newspaper and ZBC) is used more than social media by Zimbabweans. According to the findings, 68 respondents (19.4%) strongly disagree, 134 respondents (38.2%) disagree, 56 respondents (16.0%) are undecided, 49 respondents (14.0%) agree, while 44 respondents (12.5%) strongly agree. As such, findings have been able to affirm that traditional media (e.g. Newspaper and ZBC) is not used more than social media by Zimbabwean university students studying in North Cyprus.

Table 4.24: Social media give more reliable news than Zimbabwean Broadcasting Co-operation (ZBC)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	64	18.2	18.2	18.2
	Disagree	27	7.7	7.7	25.9
	Undecided	61	17.4	17.4	43.3
	Agree	93	26.5	26.5	69.8
	Strongly Agree	106	30.2	30.2	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.24 showed responses concerning the question whether social media give more reliable news than Zimbabwean Broadcasting Co-operation (ZBC). According to the

findings, 64 respondents (18.2%) strongly disagree, 27 respondents (7.7%) disagree, 61 respondents (17.4%) are undecided, 93 respondents (26.5%) agreed, while 106 respondents (30.2%) strongly agree. These findings have been able to affirm that social media did give more reliable news than ZBC Zimbabwean Broadcasting Co-operation (ZBC).

Table 4.25: Zimbabweans would rather be involved in an online activism than physical activism/Protest

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	16	4.6	4.6	4.6
	Disagree	39	11.1	11.1	15.7
	Undecided	93	26.5	26.5	42.2
	Agree	116	33.0	33.0	75.2
	Strongly Agree	87	24.8	24.8	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.25 displayed answers to the question if Zimbabweans would rather be involved in an online activism than physical activism/Protest. According to the findings, 16 participants (4.6%) strongly disagree, 39 participants (11.1%) disagree, 93 participants (26.5%) are undecided, 116 participants (33.0%) agree, while 87 participants (24.8%) strongly agree. As such, findings have been able to affirm that

Zimbabweans would rather be involved in an online activism than physical activism/Protest.

Table 4.26: Zimbabweans would rather be involved in a physical activism/Protest than an online activism

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	38	10.8	10.8	10.8
	Disagree	214	61.0	61.0	71.8
	Undecided	89	25.4	25.4	97.2
	Agree	6	1.7	1.7	98.9
	Strongly Agree	4	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.26 displayed responses on the question whether the Zimbabweans would rather be involved in a physical activism/Protest than an online activism. According to the findings, 38 respondents (10.8%) strongly disagree, 214 respondents (61.0%) disagree, 89 respondents (25.4%) are undecided, 6 respondents (1.7%) agree, while 4 respondents (1.1%) strongly agree. As such, findings have been able to affirm that Zimbabweans would have rather not be involved in a physical activism/Protest than an online activism.

Table 4.27: Social media played a huge role in mobilizing people for the Solidarity March November 2017

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0
	Disagree	15	4.3	4.3	4.3
	Undecided	23	6.6	6.6	10.8
	Agree	193	55.0	55.0	65.8
	Strongly Agree	120	34.2	34.2	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

In table 4.27 findings presented responses whether social media played a huge role in mobilizing people for the Solidarity March November 2017. According to the findings, 15 participants (4.3%) disagree, 23 participants (6.6%) are undecided, 193 participants (55.0%) agree, while 120 participants (34.2%) strongly agree. As such, the findings have been able to affirm that social media played a huge role in mobilizing people for the Solidarity March November 2017

Table 4.28: Social media facilitated your involvement in the Zimbabwean Solidarity March 2017

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	30	8.5	8.5	8.5
	Disagree	50	14.2	14.2	22.8
	Undecided	0	0	0	0
	Agree	192	54.7	54.7	77.5
	Strongly Agree	79	22.5	22.5	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

In table 4.28 the findings presented responses on social media facilitating the Zimbabweans involvement in the Solidarity March of 2017. According to the findings, 30 participants (8.5%) strongly disagree, 50 participants (14.2%) disagree, 192 participants (54.7%) agree, and 79 participants (22.5%) strongly agree. As such, findings have been able to affirm that Zimbabwean's involvement in the Solidarity March 2017 was facilitated by social media. Social media facilitated involvement of the Zimbabwean students in the Solidarity March 2017.

Table 4.29: People were free (secure) to speak about political issues on social media before the Solidarity March 2017

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	35	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Disagree	130	37.0	37.0	47.0
	Undecided	120	34.2	34.2	81.2
	Agree	47	13.4	13.4	94.6
	Strongly Agree	19	5.4	5.4	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.29 findings showed how free (secure) the respondents felt on speaking about political issues on social media before the Solidarity March 2017. According to the findings, 35 respondents (10.0%) strongly disagree, 130 respondents (37.0%) disagree, 120 respondents (34.2%) are undecided, 47 respondents (13.4%) agree, while 19 respondents (5.4%) strongly agree. As such, findings have been able to affirm that Zimbabweans were not absolutely free (security) to speak about political issues on social media before the Solidarity March 2017.

Table 4.30: Political leaders used social media for their political agendas more before the Solidarity March 2017

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	19	5.4	5.4	5.4
	Disagree	108	30.8	30.8	36.2
	Undecided	30	8.5	8.5	44.7
	Agree	93	26.5	26.5	73.5
	Strongly Agree	101	28.8	28.8	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.30 displayed responses on the question of political leaders using social media for their political agendas before the Solidarity March 2017. According to the findings, 19 respondents (5.4%) strongly disagree, 108 respondents (30.8%) disagree, 30 respondents (8.5%) are undecided, 93 respondents (26.5%) agree, while 101 respondents (26.5%) strongly agree. As such, findings have been able to affirm that political leaders used social media for their political agendas more before the Solidarity March 2017.

Table 4.31: Political leaders used social media for their political agendas more during the Solidarity March 2017

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	6	1.7	1.7	1.7
	Disagree	11	3.1	3.1	4.8
	Undecided	35	10.0	10.0	16.5
	Agree	166	47.3	47.3	63.8
	Strongly Agree	133	37.9	37.9	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.31 gave the responses by the participants on the question of political leaders using social media for their political agendas more during the Solidarity March 2017. According to the findings, 6 respondents (1.7%) strongly disagree, 11 respondents (3.1%) disagree, 35 respondents (10.0%) are undecided, 166 respondents (47.3%) agree, while 133 respondents (37.9%) strongly agree. As such, the findings have been able to affirm that political leaders used social media for their political agendas more during the Solidarity March 2017. This indicates that social media played an important role during the Solidarity March 2017 as political leaders were able to reach out to their followers and other users to make propaganda about their political agenda and programmes.

Table 4.32: Political leaders used social media for their political agendas more after the Solidarity March 2017

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	60	17.1	17.1	17.1
	Disagree	10	2.8	2.8	19.9
	Undecided	6	1.7	1.7	21.6
	Agree	173	49.3	49.3	70.9
	Strongly Agree	102	29.1	29.1	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.32 findings presented respondents thoughts on whether the political leaders used social media for their political agendas more after the Solidarity March 2017. According to the findings, 60 participants (17.1%) strongly disagree, 10 participants (2.8%) disagree, 6 participants (1.7%) are undecided, 173 participants (49.3%) agree, while 102 participants (29.1%) strongly agree. As such, findings have been able to affirm that political leaders used social media for their political agendas more after the Solidarity March 2017.

Table 4.33: Zimbabweans felt safe to post political issues during the Solidarity March 2017

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	25	7.1	7.1	7.1
	Disagree	2	.6	.6	7.7
	Undecided	48	13.7	13.7	21.4
	Agree	198	56.4	56.4	77.8
	Strongly Agree	78	22.2	22.2	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.33 displayed responses on whether the Zimbabweans felt safe to post political issues during the Solidarity March 2017. According to the findings, 25 respondents (7.1%) strongly disagree, 2 respondents (0.6%) disagree, 48 respondents (19.4%) are undecided, 198 respondents (56.4%) agree, while 78 respondents (22.2%) strongly agree. As such, findings have been able to affirm that Zimbabweans felt safe to post political issues during the Solidarity March 2017.

Table 4.34: Zimbabweans feel safe to post political issues after the Solidarity March

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	28	8.0	8.0	8.0

	Undecided	45	12.8	12.8	20.8
	Agree	202	57.5	57.5	78.3
	Strongly Agree	76	21.7	21.7	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.34 presented responses if the Zimbabweans felt safe to post political issues after the Solidarity March 2017. According to the findings, 28 respondents (8.0%) disagree, 45 respondents (12.8%) are undecided, 202 respondents (57.5%) agree, while 76 respondents (21.7%) strongly agree. As such, findings were able to affirm that Zimbabweans felt safe to post political issues after the Solidarity March 2017.

Table 4.35: During the Solidarity March social media were more effective than traditional media such as Television, Radio, and Newspapers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0
	Disagree	38	10.8	10.8	10.8
	Undecided	22	6.3	6.3	17.1
	Agree	173	49.3	49.3	66.4
	Strongly Agree	118	33.6	33.6	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.35 presented responses on whether during the Solidarity March social media were more effective than traditional media such as Television, Radio, and Newspapers. According to the findings, 38 respondents (10.8%) disagree, 22 respondents (6.3%) are undecided, 173 respondents (49.3%) agree, while 118 respondents (33.6%) strongly agree. As such, the findings were able to affirm that during the Solidarity March social media were more effective than traditional media such as Television, Radio, and Newspapers.

Table 4.36: Social media have the potential to influence the collective thinking and contribute to social change during Protest/Solidarity March

		Frequenc y	Percen t	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	6	1.7	1.7	1.7
	Disagree	1	.3	.3	2.0
	Undecided	32	9.1	9.1	11.1
	Agree	229	65.2	65.2	76.4
	Strongly Agree	83	23.6	23.6	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.36 presented responses on whether social media had the potential to influence the collective thinking and contribute to social change during the Solidarity March 2017. According to the findings, 6 respondents (1.7%) strongly disagree, 1 respondent (0.3%) disagree, 32 respondents (9.1%) are undecided, 229 respondents (65.2%)

agree, while 83 respondents (23.6%) strongly agree. As such, these findings affirmed that social media have the potential to influence the collective thinking and contribute to social change during Protest/Solidarity March 2017.

Table 4.37: Social media should be used as the primary communication tool during Protest/Solidarity March

		Frequenc y	Percen t	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Vali d	Strongly Disagree	29	8.3	8.3	8.3
	Disagree	33	9.4	9.4	17.7
	Undecided	83	23.6	23.6	41.3
	Agree	142	40.5	40.5	81.8
	Strongly Agree	64	18.2	18.2	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.37 presented responses on whether social media should be used as the primary communication tool during Protest/Solidarity March 2017. According to the findings, 29 respondents (8.3%) strongly disagree, 33 respondents (9.4%) disagree, 83 respondents (23.6%) are undecided, 142 respondents (40.5%) agree, while 64 respondents (18.2%) strongly agree. As such, findings have affirmed that social media should be used as the primary communication tool during Protest/Solidarity March 2017.

Table 4.38: During the Solidarity March social media have the ability to disseminate accurate information

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	.3	.3	.3
	Disagree	52	14.8	14.8	15.1
	Undecided	82	23.4	23.4	38.5
	Agree	168	47.9	47.9	86.3
	Strongly Agree	48	13.7	13.7	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.38 presented responses on whether during the Solidarity March in November 2017 social media have the ability to disseminate accurate information. According to the findings, 1 participant (0.3%) strongly disagree, 52 participants (14.8%) disagree, 82 participants (23.4%) are undecided, 168 participants (47.9%) agree, while 48 participants (13.7%) strongly agree. As such, findings affirmed that during the Solidarity March social media have the ability to disseminate accurate information.

Table 4.39: Social media provide symbolic participation rather than active participation in the Zimbabwean Solidarity March

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	.3	.3	.3
	Disagree	60	17.1	17.1	17.4
	Undecided	85	24.2	24.2	41.6
	Agree	195	55.6	55.6	97.2
	Strongly Agree	10	2.8	2.8	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.39 presented responses on whether social media provided symbolic participation rather than active participation in Zimbabwean Solidarity March. According to the findings, 1 participant (0.3%) strongly disagree, 60 participants (17.1%) disagree, 85 participants (24.2%) are undecided, 195 participants (55.6%) agree, while 10 participants (2.8%) strongly agree. As such, findings affirmed that social media provided symbolic participation rather than active participation in Zimbabwean Solidarity March.

Table 4.40: The movement #Thisflag rebuilt national pride

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	23	6.6	6.6	6.6
	Disagree	33	9.4	9.4	16.0
	Undecided	73	20.8	20.8	36.8
	Agree	150	42.7	42.7	79.5
	Strongly Agree	72	20.5	20.5	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.40 presented responses on whether the movement “this flag” rebuilt national pride. According to the findings, 23 respondents (6.6%) strongly disagree, 33 respondents (9.4%) disagree, 73 respondents (20.8%) are undecided, 150 respondents (42.7%) agree, while 72 respondents (20.5%) strongly agree. As such, findings have affirmed that the Zimbabwean Solidarity March 2017 restored and re-built the national pride.

Table 4.41: Zimbabwean Solidarity March was a success because of social media

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	10	2.8	2.8	2.8
	Disagree	34	9.7	9.7	12.5
	Undecided	96	27.4	27.4	39.9
	Agree	148	42.2	42.2	82.1
	Strongly Agree	63	17.9	17.9	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.41 presented responses on whether Zimbabwean Solidarity March was a success because of social media. According to the findings, 10 participants (2.8%) strongly disagree, 34 participants (9.7%) disagree, 96 participants (27.4%) are undecided, 148 participants (42.2%) agree, while 63 participants (17.9%) strongly agree. As such, findings have affirmed that Zimbabwean Solidarity March was a success because of social media.

4.5 Statistical Analysis of the Likert Scale Questions

Table 4.42 presents the mean and standard deviation of the responses by the participants. Balci's scale division is used where the measurement is as follows; 1 = Strongly Disagree, (1-1.79 SD) 2 = Disagree, (1.80-2.59 D) 3 = Undecided, (2.60-3.39 U) 4 = Agree (3.40-4.19 A) and 5 = Strongly Agree (4.20-5 SA) (Balci, 2004).

Table 4.42: Mean and standard deviation of respondents

Items	Mean	SD	Likert scale division attitudes
Traditional media (e.g Newspaper and ZBC) is used more than social media by Zimbabweans	1.72	1.45	SD
Social media give more reliable news than ZBC(Zimbabwean Broadcasting Co-operation)	4.64	1.27	SA
Zimbabweans would rather be involved in an online activism than physical activism/Protest	3.42	1.44	A
Zimbabweans would rather be involved in a physical activism/Protest than an online activism	1.61	1.10	SD
Social media played a huge role in mobilizing people for the Solidarity March November 2017	4.50	1.00	SA
			A

Social media facilitated your involvement in the Zimbabwean Solidarity March 2017	4.15	1.25	
People were free (secure) to speak about political issues on social media before the Solidarity March 2017	1.88	1.08	D
Political leaders used social media for their political agendas more before the Solidarity March 2017	4.65	1.42	SA
Political leaders used social media for their political agendas more during the Solidarity March 2017	4.01	1.06	A
Political leaders used social media for their political agendas more after the Solidarity March 2017	4.59	1.33	SA
Zimbabweans felt safe to post political issues during the Solidarity March 2017	3.74	1.32	A
Zimbabweans feel safe to post political issues after the Solidarity March	4.81	1.01	SA
During the Solidarity March, social media were more effective than traditional media such as Television, Radio, and Newspapers	4.51	1.17	SA

Social media have the potential to influence the collective thinking and contribute to social change during Protest/Solidarity March	4.01	1.09	A
Social media should be used as the primary communication tool during Protest/Solidarity March	4.06	1.35	A
During the Solidarity March social media have the ability to disseminate accurate information	4.48	1.14	SA
Social media provides symbolic participation rather active participation in the Zimbabwean Solidarity March	3.60	1.33	A
The movement #Thisflag rebuilt national pride	4.43	1.23	SA
Zimbabwean Solidarity March was a success because of social media	3.61	1.11	A

4.6 Statistical Analysis (T-test) Results Concerning Gender

This table provides a statistical explanation to gender and their perspectives to how social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter were used as tools of Protest in Zimbabwe 2017. The table presents the T statistics results and Level of Significance.

Table 4.43: Independent samples t-test between Male and Female Zimbabwean students measuring the statistical difference in their perceptions on the role of social media in the 2017 Zimbabwean Protest/ Solidarity March

Items	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>P</i>
Traditional media(e.g newspapers and ZBC) is used more than social media by Zimbabweans	14.819	.000	5.508	349	.000
			5.392	297.445	.000
Social media give more reliable news than ZBC(Zimbabwean Broadcasting Co-operation)	106.513	.000	-9.447	349	.000
			-8.929	239.050	.000
Zimbabweans would rather be involved in an online activism than physical activism/Protest	1.476	.225	1.059	349	.290
			1.051	319.133	.294
Zimbabweans would rather be involved in a physical activism/Protest than an online activism	1.308	.254	-.597	349	.551
			-.590	312.187	.556
Social media played a huge role in mobilizing people for the Solidarity March November 2017	1.094	.296	-5.040	349	.000
			-4.864	273.668	.000
Social media facilitated your involvement in the Zimbabwean Solidarity March 2017	41.662	.000	-7.032	349	.000
			-6.707	253.650	.000
People were free(secure) to speak about political issues on social media before the Solidarity March 2017	6.716	.010	-4.559	349	.000
			-4.671	348.270	.000
	4.437	.036	-2.656	349	.008

Political leaders used social media for their political agendas more before the Solidarity March 2017			-2.595	294.371	.010
Political leaders used social media for their political agendas more during the Solidarity March 2017	33.031	.000	-2.715	349	.007
			-2.577	246.127	.011
Political leaders used social media for their political agendas more after the Solidarity March 2017	22.179	.000	.274	349	.785
			.259	243.791	.796
Zimbabweans felt safe to post political issues during the Solidarity March 2017	3.352	.068	-.911	349	.363
			-.902	315.265	.368
Zimbabweans feel safe to post political issues after the Solidarity March	60.092	.000	2.991	349	.003
			3.133	341.667	.002
During the Solidarity March social media were more effective than traditional media such as television, radio and newspapers	.659	.418	-1.629	349	.104
			-1.643	338.208	.101
Social media have the potential to influence the collective thinking and contribute to social change during Protest/Solidarity March	8.696	.003	-2.581	349	.010
			-2.530	299.537	.012
Social media should be used as the primary communication tool during Protest/Solidarity March	6.359	.012	-6.202	349	.000
			-6.365	348.635	.000
During the Solidarity March social media have the ability to disseminate accurate information	2.308	.130	-.842	349	.400
			-.833	313.522	.405
Social media provide symbolic participation rather than active participation in Zimbabwean Solidarity March	6.114	.014	4.170	349	.000
			4.196	335.826	.000

The movement #Thisflag rebuilt national pride	33.247	.000	-3.072	349	.002
			-2.937	257.806	.004
Zimbabwean Solidarity March was a success because of social media	4.890	.028	-1.598	349	.111
	14.819	.000	-1.586	318.856	.114

P is ≤ 0.05, f = Variation between means, Sig= level of significance, T = T statistics, df = degree of freedom, P = P value

Among the 19 items measured in order to find out if there is a statistical significant difference between males and females in their perceptions on the role of social media in the 2017 Zimbabwean Protest, findings indicate that there were differences between 12 items measured. As such, there were statistical significant difference between males and females on questions examined. Results were as follows;

For instance there was a statistical significant difference between males ($M = 3.03$; $SD = 1.35$) and females ($M = 2.30$; $SD = 1.13$) $t(351) = 5.39$, $p = 0.00$ respondents who believe that traditional media (e.g Newspaper and ZBC) is used more than social media by Zimbabweans. Also, there was a statistical significant difference between the following items;

- Male ($M=2.69$; $SD= 1.61$) and Female ($M= 4.01$; $SD = .98$) $t(351) = -8.93$, $p = 0.00$ respondents who believe that social media give more reliable news than ZBC (Zimbabwean Broadcasting Co-operation).
- Male ($M = 3.69$; $SD = 1.15$) and Female ($M = 3.95$; $SD = 1.08$) $t(351) = -4.86$, $p = 0.00$ respondents who believe that social media played a huge role in mobilizing people for the Solidarity March November 2017.

- Male ($M = 3.58$; $SD = .95$) and Female ($M = 4.17$; $SD = .63$) $t(351) = -6.01$, $p = 0.00$ respondents who believe that social media facilitated their involvement in the Zimbabwean Solidarity March 2017
- Male ($M = 2.85$; $SD = 1.17$) and Female ($M = 3.15$; $SD = .96$) $t(351) = -4.67$, $p = 0.00$ respondents who believe that people were free (secure) to speak about political issues on social media before the Solidarity March 2017.
- Male ($M = 3.48$; $SD = .94$) and Female ($M = 3.71$; $SD = .60$) $t(351) = -2.60$, $p = 0.01$ respondents who believed that political leaders used social media for their political agendas more before the Solidarity March 2017
- Male ($M = 3.79$; $SD = 1.02$) and Female ($M = 3.76$; $SD = .64$) $t(351) = -2.58$, $p = 0.01$ respondents who believed that political leaders used social media for their political agendas more during the Solidarity March 2017
- Male ($M = 3.63$; $SD = .93$) and Female ($M = 3.42$; $SD = .63$) $t(351) = -2.62$, $p = 0.03$ Zimbabwean respondents feel safe to post political issues after the Solidarity March.
- Male ($M = 3.98$; $SD = .75$) and Female ($M = 4.17$; $SD = .64$) $t(351) = -2.53$, $p = 0.01$ respondents who believe that social media have the potential to influence the collective thinking and contribute to social change during Protest/Solidarity March.
- Male ($M = 3.10$; $SD = .95$) and Female Male ($M = 3.83$; $SD = 1.18$) $t(351) = -6.37$, $p = 0.00$ respondents who believe that social media should be used as the primary communication tool during Protests/Solidarity March 2017.
- Male ($M = 3.64$; $SD = .74$) and Female ($M = 3.28$; $SD = .81$) $t(351) = 4.20$, $p = 0.00$ respondents who believe social media provides symbolic participation rather than active participation in Zimbabwean Solidarity March.

- Male ($M = 3.41$; $SD = 1.31$) and Female Male ($M = 3.28$; $SD = .81$) $t(351) = -2.94$, $p = 0.00$ respondents who believe that the movement “ #thisflag” rebuilt national pride.

In summary, the statistical findings indicate that there is a significant difference between male and female respondents’ perception on the roles of social media platforms in the 2017 Zimbabwean Protest concerning the above mentioned categories. In addition, the findings significantly show that the females believe that social media platforms played a significant role in the Protest than the male respondents did. For example, the females believed that social media give more reliable news than ZBC (Zimbabwean Broadcasting Co-operation) more than their male counterparts do.

4.7 Statistical Analysis (Anova Test Results for Zimbabwean Students Based on their Universities)

Table 4.44 provides the statistical results among the Zimbabwean students in the universities sampled in this study, which are Eastern Mediterranean University, Near East University and Cyprus International University. The findings are presented and discussed.

Table 4.44: ANOVA measuring the statistical difference among students of EMU, NEU and CIU to find out their perceptions on the role of social media in the Zimbabwean November 2017 Solidarity March

	<i>Sum Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Traditional media(e.g newspapers and ZBC) is used more than social media by Zimbabweans	7.714	2	3.857	2.343	.098
	572.889	348	1.646		
	580.604	350			
Social media give more reliable news than ZBC (Zimbabwean Broadcasting Co-operation)	36.983	2	18.491	9.207	.000
	698.915	348	2.008		
	735.897	350			

Zimbabweans would rather be involved in an online activism than physical activism/Protest	26.362	2	13.181	11.354	.000
	403.997	348	1.161		
	430.359	350			
Zimbabweans would rather be involved in a physical activism/Protest than an online activism	11.028	2	5.514	5.600	.004
	342.636	348	.985		
	353.664	350			
Social media played a huge role in mobilizing people for the Solidarity March November 2017	14.039	2	7.020	13.866	.000
	176.172	348	.506		
	190.211	350			
Social media facilitated your involvement in the Zimbabwean Solidarity March 2017	16.837	2	8.418	12.769	.000
	229.426	348	.659		
	246.262	350			
People were free / (secure) to speak about political issues on social media before the Solidarity March 2017	31.748	2	15.874	17.073	.000
	323.574	348	.930		
	355.322	350			
Political leaders used social media for their political agendas more before the Solidarity March 2017	33.541	2	16.770	16.063	.000
	363.320	348	1.044		
	396.860	350			
Political leaders used social media for their political agendas more during the Solidarity March 2017	11.337	2	5.668	9.843	.000
	200.407	348	.576		
	211.744	350			
Political leaders used social media for their political agendas more after the Solidarity March 2017	2.452	2	1.226	1.813	.165
	235.315	348	.676		
	237.766	350			
Zimbabweans felt safe to post political issues during the Solidarity March 2017	89.293	2	44.647	59.106	.000
	262.866	348	.755		
	352.160	350			
Zimbabweans feel safe to post political issues after the Solidarity March	55.788	2	27.894	22.002	.000
	441.186	348	1.268		
	496.974	350			
During the Solidarity March social media was more effective than traditional media such as television, radio and newspapers	17.116	2	8.558	10.879	.000
	273.745	348	.787		
	290.860	350			
Social media have the potential to influence the collective thinking and contribute to social change during Protest/Solidarity March	9.980	2	4.990	10.834	.000
	160.282	348	.461		
	170.262	350			
	6.893	2	3.446	2.672	.071
	448.822	348	1.290		

Social media should be used as the primary communication tool during Protest / Solidarity March	455.715	350			
During the Solidarity March social media have the ability to disseminate accurate information	9.960	2	4.980	6.181	.002
	280.399	348	.806		
	290.359	350			
Social media provide symbolic participation rather active participation in Zimbabwean Solidarity March	10.840	2	5.420	8.517	.000
	221.467	348	.636		
	232.308	350			
The movement #Thisflag rebuilt national pride	34.299	2	17.150	15.033	.000
	397.006	348	1.141		
	431.305	350			
Zimbabwean Solidarity March was a success because of social media	21.291	2	10.645	11.767	.000
	314.818	348	.905		
	336.108	350			

$P \leq 0.05$ f = Variation between means, Sig= level of significance, df = degree of freedom, P = P value

Table 4.44 is the ANOVA result presenting the variance among EMU, NEU and CIU respondents, measuring the difference in their perception on the role of social media in the 2017 Zimbabwean Protest. Result indicated that out of the 19 items tested, only sixteen (16) were found to be statistically significant ($P \leq 0.05$). For instance, findings show that “social media give more reliable news than ZBC (Zimbabwean Broadcasting Co-operation)”, $F(2, 348) = 9.207, p = .00$. EMU students ($M = 3.65, SD = 1.44$) were more statistically significant to CIU students ($M = 3.40, SD = 1.20$) and NEU ($M = 2.82, SD = 1.58$). Statistical findings of other items that had significant difference were as follows:

- “Zimbabweans would rather be involved in an online activism than physical activism/Protest”, $F(2, 348) = 11.354, p = .01. p = .00$. NEU students ($M = 4.04, SD = .78$) were more statistically significant to CIU ($M = 3.83, SD = .91$) and EMU students ($M = 3.40, SD = 1.22$).

- “Zimbabweans would rather be involved in a physical activism/Protest than an online activism”, $F(2, 348) = 5.600, p = .01$. EMU students ($M = 2.60, SD = 1.10$) were more statistically significant to NEU ($M = 2.51, SD = .89$) and CIU students ($M = 2.16, SD = .80$).
- “Social media played a huge role in mobilizing people for the Solidarity March November 2017”, $F(2, 348) = 13.866, p = .00$. EMU students ($M = 4.34, SD = .71$) were more statistically significant to NEU ($M = 4.14, SD = .61$) and CIU students ($M = 3.84, SD = .80$).
- “Social media facilitated your involvement in the Zimbabwean Solidarity March 2017”, $F(2, 348) = 12.769, p = .00$. EMU students ($M = 4.05, SD = .80$) were more statistically significant to NEU ($M = 3.94, SD = .79$) and CIU students ($M = 3.51, SD = .87$).
- “People were free (secure) to speak about political issues on social media before the Solidarity March 2017”, $F(2, 348) = 17.073, p = .00$. EMU students ($M = 2.93, SD = 1.07$) were more statistically significant to CIU students ($M = 2.24, SD = .85$) and NEU students ($M = 2.42, SD = .77$).
- “Political leaders used social media for their political agendas more before the Solidarity March 2017”, $F(2, 348) = 16.063, p = .00$. NEU students ($M = 3.58, SD = 1.06$) were more statistically significant to EMU ($M = 2.96, SD = 1.13$) and CIU students ($M = 2.66, SD = .62$).
- “Political leaders used social media for their political agendas more during the Solidarity March 2017”, $F(2, 348) = 9.843, p = .00$. NEU students ($M = 3.88, SD = .58$) were more statistically significant to EMU ($M = 3.62, SD = .89$) and CIU students ($M = 3.32, SD = .47$).

- “Zimbabweans felt safe to post political issues during the Solidarity March 2017”, $F(2, 348) = 59.106, p = .01$. EMU students ($M = 4.18, SD = .72$) were more statistically significant to CIU ($M = 3.92, SD = .64$) and NEU students ($M = 2.89, SD = 1.22$).
- “Zimbabweans feel safe to post political issues after the Solidarity March”, $F(2, 348) = 22.002, p = .01$. EMU students ($M = 3.65, SD = 1.44$) were more statistically significant to CIU ($M = 3.40, SD = 1.20$) and NEU ($M = 2.82, SD = 1.58$).
- “During the Solidarity March social media was more effective than traditional media such as television, radio and newspapers”, $F(2, 348) = 10.879, p = .01$. EMU students ($M = 3.89, SD = 1.15$) were more statistically significant to CIU ($M = 3.17, SD = .80$) and NEU students ($M = 3.00, SD = 1.34$).
- “During the Solidarity March social media have the ability to disseminate accurate information”, $F(2, 348) = 6.181, p = .01$. NEU students ($M = 4.47, SD = .50$) were more statistically significant to EMU ($M = 4.00, SD = .98$) and CIU students ($M = 3.83, SD = .91$).
- “Social media provide symbolic participation rather than active participation in Zimbabwean Solidarity March”, $F(2, 348) = 8.517, p = .01$. NEU students ($M = 4.40, SD = .49$) were more statistically significant to EMU ($M = 4.04, SD = .70$) and CIU students ($M = 3.91, SD = .76$).
- “The movement #Thisflag rebuilt national pride”, $F(2, 348) = 15.033, p = .01$. CIU students ($M = 3.91, SD = 1.13$) were more statistically significant to EMU ($M = 2.59, SD = .74$) and NEU students ($M = 3.44, SD = 1.12$).
- “Zimbabwean Solidarity March was a success because of social media”, $F(2, 348) = 11.767, p = .01$. NEU students ($M = 3.71, SD = .83$) were more

statistically significant to EMU ($M = 3.44$, $SD = .79$) and CIU students ($M = 3.17$, $SD = .80$).

In essence, the results indicate that there is a statistical significant difference among the Zimbabwean university students who participated in the 2017 Zimbabwean Protest.

4.8 Interviewing Process

In depth interviews were conducted in three universities, EMU, CIU and NEU. Interviews were conducted on a focus group of 20 Zimbabwean University students studying in North Cyprus. 7 students were selected both from EMU and NEU and 6 students from CIU. Five research questions of the study were used on the interviews in order to have a deeper understanding of the perceptions of the Zimbabwean students on the impact of social media during the Solidarity March of November 2017. I conducted the interviews face to face with the participants writing the response as the interview proceeded.

4.9 Findings from the Interviews

Question 1: How free the Zimbabwean university students in North Cyprus felt in using social media on political issues?

According to the findings, 16 Zimbabwean student participants felt very free in using social media for political issues. They view social media as platforms that help them to express their concerns about political situations without any direct threats from the government. Social media provide them total and complete freedom of expression.

However, according to the findings four Zimbabwean university students studying in North Cyprus did not feel free in using social media on political issues. These participants feel that posting and discussing politics on social media could make them

a target as government critics. Two of them gave me the example of political activists who have been abducted by the government after using social media to criticize the government. These activists have been missing for years, therefore there is a fear of being victimized in the process of using social media for political issues.

Question 2: To what extent do the Zimbabwean university students in North Cyprus use traditional media during crisis situations?

Twelve Zimbabwean students studying in Northern Cyprus agreed on using traditional media in crisis situations. Some of the participants use traditional media to compare news from other media platforms like social media. They agreed on wanting to use it to have different views on a crisis at hand.

Eight of the participants do not use traditional media during crisis situations. The main common reason mentioned by the participants was the credibility on the news on traditional media particularly in Zimbabwe. Traditional media do not directly criticize the government in an economic or political situation in Zimbabwe. Other participants do not use traditional media in crisis situations mainly because they can not get access to Zimbabwean newspapers and Zimbabwe broadcasting Co-operation TV channel easily while they are in Cyprus. A few participants claim that they don't use Zimbabwean traditional media, "since I was young ZBC TV channel was faulty" meaning constantly had technical problems therefore they alternatively used SABC (South African Broadcasting Co-operation) and other international channels.

Question 3: Do social media have great impact on political issues of Zimbabwe especially during crisis situations?

Social media clearly have great impact on political issues especially during crisis situations, 18 of the Zimbabwean participants agreed to the notion. The participants confirmed that social media allow the Zimbabwean citizens to know different versions of the story depending on who is telling it. Social media allow the Zimbabwean citizens to participate by responding to politicians posts or tweets about a possible crisis and challenging the status quo. One of the great impact of social media that has been mentioned by the Zimbabwean students is how fast social media news spread around among the Zimbabweans citizens including the ones in the diaspora. The Solidarity March was given as a reference by some participants. They mentioned how social media impacted political situation within Zimbabwe. The 2017 November Solidarity March mobilized on social media and it was successful therefore with this reason they believe that social media have great impact on political issues of Zimbabwe. Two of the Zimbabwean student participants had their doubts on social media making a great impact on political issues on Zimbabwe especially during crisis situations. They believed to a less extent that social media impact politics due to its nature prone to fake news and information. They believe people could circulate wrong information and make situations worse.

Question 4: To what extent did social media contribute in mobilizing the Zimbabwean university students in North Cyprus for the Solidarity March November 2017?

Majority of the interviewed Zimbabwean university students studying in North Cyprus agreed that social media contributed to the mobilizing of the Zimbabwean students in North Cyprus. Eighteen of the Zimbabwean students believed that social media played a role in mobilizing the Zimbabwean students in North Cyprus for Solidarity March

of November 2017. Amongst the raised reason was that the Solidarity March was only done in the capital city of Zimbabwe and not in other cities of the Zimbabwe. They could not be physically present for the Solidarity March. Others made a point of how Zimbabwean citizens in the diaspora were influenced and felt connected to the March through social media. For other interviewees social media are the only medium that help them connect with what is happening back home in Zimbabwe. For this reason social media gave them the opportunity to be connected to the Solidarity March. Two of the Zimbabwean student participants stated that they were physically present for the Solidarity March in 2017. They mentioned the influence and hype they got from their friends and families and yet they still believed that social media played a role in mobilizing the Zimbabwean citizens.

Question 5: How social media and physical political activism are handled in Zimbabwe before, during and after the Solidarity March of November 2017?

Fourteen of the respondents claim that social media provided a platform for activists; for political changes in Zimbabwe before the Zimbabwean Solidarity March yet there was no breakthrough. Among these participants are those who have used their social media platform for political activism fearless of the government. Six of the Zimbabwean students studying in Northern Cyprus did not use social media for activism for different reasons; some are not interested in political issues and others fear of discussing politics on a public platform. Concerning physical activism fifteen participants mentioned that physical activism was not safe in Zimbabwe and four referred to recent peaceful Protests where police brutally beat Protesters with the permission of the government.

Social media activism during the Solidarity March 2017 was highly recommended by the Zimbabwean students studying in North Cyprus. All participants think that social media activism was handled peacefully. Majority believed that it was because of the unity or a mutual agreement between the ruling party and opposition parties to Protest against the former president Robert Mugabe who had been in leadership for 37 years. Accordingly, physical activism during the Solidarity March was eulogized by the Zimbabwean student participants. They highly recommended the Solidarity March 2017 and could not compare it with any other Protest that has happened in Zimbabwe before. Majority said that it was handled peacefully and in unity. Other participants mentioned how proud they felt of being Zimbabwean because of how peaceful the physical activism was handled.

Majority of the Zimbabwean students mentioned how social media activism have been increased after the Solidarity March 2017. Others mentioned on how social media activism have gained popularity after the Solidarity March 2017. For five participants social media activism has gone back to its state before Solidarity March, where social media activism is mainly done by activists. Some Zimbabwean student participants felt that social media activism has reduced due to discouraged Zimbabwean citizens who were hyped by the Solidarity March 2017; thinking that Zimbabwean political and economic issues would change after the Protest. All twenty Zimbabwean student participants raised their concerns on physical activism after the Solidarity March. Majority mentioned that the physical Protest which took place in the capital city of Zimbabwe on the 1st of August 2018 ended on a bad note with six Zimbabwean citizens shot dead by the national soldiers and many injured by beating. No justice was made

for those who lost their lives therefore participants felt that physical activism is mishandled after the Solidarity March.

4.10 Discussions of Analysis

Findings in the study indicated that a significant number of Zimbabwean university students in North Cyprus felt quite free in using social media on political issues. For example, they were able to express their opinion on various issues including political activities as well as the Protest. This may be attributed to the fact that social media provide its users an opportunity to express their opinion and views and at the same time criticize government anywhere they are. In addition, it did not matter that the students were not at home, they were still able to express themselves. They were also able to use social media platforms to tweet, share and broadcast various issues concerning them most especially issues with political orientation. However, these students were conscious and careful of the way they used social media, protecting themselves from the government. As such, they were able to avoid any form of conflicts amongst themselves or even the general social media users.

Findings in the study indicated that social media played a significant and critical role in mobilizing Zimbabweans during the 2017 Protest. As such, individuals were able to create videos, put up write-ups, share/broadcast-live videos and many more. These acts on Facebook and Twitter contributed significantly to mobilizing the Zimbabwean university students in North Cyprus for the Solidarity March November 2017. The findings also displayed the power of social media use during Protests generally and most especially during the Zimbabwean Protest. For example, 55% of the participants agreed and 34.2% respondents strongly agreed in the study that social media

contributed in mobilizing the Zimbabwean university students in North Cyprus for the Solidarity March November 2017

To a greater extent, the Zimbabwean university students in North Cyprus use social media during crisis situations. This is evident in the findings in the study as the respondents stated that they used social media. For example, some used Facebook more often while others used twitter. In addition, the study found out that the use of social media during the crisis situations were influenced mostly by personal choice, followed by the influence of activists and influence of political leaders. As such, many of these students used the social media effectively in order to gain support with regards to their opinion and views on the issue.

According to the findings of the study, social media have an influential role in mobilizing people for the Solidarity March 2017. The platforms provided opportunities for other indigenes to share their thoughts and opinion as well as informing others about the ongoing issues. This created an opportunity for active online participation of citizens worldwide.

In the findings of the study, social media had great impact on political issues of Zimbabwe especially during the crises times. This was evident because political office holders and other members of the society were able to actively participate online in the Protest. For example, many of the respondents posted and shared anti-government videos and or posts on social media before, during and after the Zimbabwean Solidarity March November 2017. This gave them the opportunity to mobilize people to be part of the Protest, thereby creating a significant impact in the Protest.

Findings indicated that there was a statistical significant difference between male and female respondents who used social media as a means of Protest during the 2017 Zimbabwean Protest. This indicated that males found social media more useful compared to the females during the Zimbabwean Solidarity March November 2017. However, significantly, the males used social media more during the Protest compared to the females.

In addition, the results in the study opens up statistical understanding that there are differences in the ways students at EMU, NEU and CIU used social media during the 2017 Protest. Zimbabwean university students studying in EMU felt safe to post political issues on social media during the Zimbabwean Solidarity March compared to the CIU and NEU students. Based on the findings, there is an obvious indication that there is a variance between the student participants from the three universities on their perception of the role of social media in the Zimbabwean Solidarity March, for instance during the Solidarity March a large number of Zimbabwean university students studying in NEU believed that social media was used to disseminate more accurate information than those studying in CIU and EMU. More importantly, from the findings it can be stated that social media played a significant role in the 2017 Zimbabwean Protest.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

This chapter consists of a brief summary of the study, conclusion drawn from the study, reflection on the research questions to see to what extent the survey have answered them, a general discussion on the research and suggestions for further research.

5.1 Summary of the Study

The study was conducted to understand the role of social media in crisis situations with a case study of the Zimbabwean Solidarity March November 2017. This study was conducted to understand the contribution and role of social media in mobilizing consensus in the Zimbabwean political Solidarity March of November 2017 among the Zimbabwean University students studying in North Cyprus. The universities considered were EMU, CIU and NEU. The essence of the study is to examine the usage of social media before, during and after the Zimbabwean Solidarity March of November 2017, using the uses and gratification theory as the theoretical framework. The study also examines the extent at which social media contributed in mobilizing the Zimbabwean university students studying in North Cyprus and how free they felt in contributing to a political movement on social media platforms. Social media created a platform where Zimbabwean university students freely shared their ideas and opinions on political issues and the government.

Qualitative and quantitative method was used in this study through interviews and survey. Interviews were conducted on twenty Zimbabwean students studying in North Cyprus from three universities CIU, EMU, and NEU. A purposive and virtual snowball sampling methodology was used for the quantitative research in this study. 351 respondents were drawn from the three universities, Cyprus International University, Near East University and Eastern Mediterranean University. From the administered questionnaire, the findings or results indicated that social media played a significant role during the Zimbabwean Solidarity March of November 2017.

5.2 Conclusions Drawn from the Study

The study was conducted to understand the role of social media in crisis situations with a case study of the Zimbabwean Solidarity March of November 2017. Having conducted interviews on 20 Zimbabwean Students and collected survey data from 351 Zimbabwean university students studying in North Cyprus, conclusion were drawn to answer the down listed research questions:

1. How free the Zimbabwean university students in North Cyprus felt in using social media on political issues?
2. To what extent do the Zimbabwean university students in North Cyprus use traditional media during crisis situations?
3. Do social media have great impact on political issues of Zimbabwe especially during crisis situations?
4. To what extent did social media contribute in mobilizing the Zimbabwean university students in North Cyprus for the Solidarity March November 2017?
5. How social media and physical political activism are handled in Zimbabwe before, during and after the Solidarity March of November 2017?

Of the Zimbabwean university students studying in EMU, CIU and NEU, 96.3% agreed to have been involved in the online Zimbabwean Solidarity March while 3.7% disagreed to have been involved. 87.2 % of the participants agreed to have been mostly active on Facebook while 12.6% were active mostly on Twitter. On the question of how free the Zimbabwean university students in North Cyprus felt in using social media on political issues a large number of participants (91.2%) agreed to have been involved in criticizing the government online showing a high level of security behind the media than physical Protest against the government. Moreover, on that note 57.8% of the participants revealed that they would rather be involved in an online activism than a physical activism or Protests. Looking back before the Zimbabwean November Solidarity March there was once again a large percentage of 76.4% of participants who agreed to have posted and shared anti-governmental videos and posts on their social media platforms. A large percentage again agreed to have posted and shared during and after the Solidarity March meaning that to a greater extent the participants of Zimbabwe felt free in using social media on political issues. According to the interview findings 16 Zimbabwean student participants felt very free in using social media for political issues. They view social media as platforms that allow them to express their concerns about political situations without any direct threats from the government.

Concerning their social media usage 32.2% of the participants agreed to have been engaged in the Solidarity March through sharing, posting news, picture and videos. 68% participants were engaged on social media by personal choice, with absence of Zimbabwean television in Cyprus many felt the need to keep updated through social media. Undeniably on crisis situations influence also came from the political leaders and activists. 14% of the participants confirmed that they were influenced from

activists that they follow online and 6.8% participants were influenced from political leaders. Political leaders are part of the influencers on social media particularly to the youths. A large number of the participants believed that political leaders mostly used social media for their political agendas during the Solidarity March 2017 than before and after the Solidarity March. 28% strongly agreed while 26.5% agreed that political leaders used social media for political agendas before the Solidarity March. 37.9% strongly agreed while 47.3% agreed that political leaders used social media during the Solidarity March. 29.1 of the participants strongly agreed while 49.3 agreed that political leaders used social media for their political agendas after the Solidarity March of November 2017.

Based on the survey findings it is to a greater extent that social media contributed in mobilizing Zimbabwean university students in North Cyprus for the Solidarity March 2017. 60.1% of the participants based the success of the march to social media and 55.6% agreed that social media provided symbolic participation in the Solidarity March rather than active physical participation. According to the interview findings, Zimbabwean students were in Cyprus during the Protest therefore social media played a huge role in mobilizing for the Solidarity March 2017. Question 27 on the survey stated that social media played a huge role in mobilizing people for the Solidarity March of November 2017, directly answered the question 55% of the participants positively agreed and 34.2% strongly agreed the huge role played by social media. To a lesser extent the Zimbabwean students studying in North Cyprus use traditional media during crisis situation. According to the findings, a total of 57.6% of the participants disagreed that traditional media was used more than social media and 82.9% of the participants agreed that social media was used more during the Solidarity

March. The findings on social media versus traditional media confirm the assertions of many scholars including Kuruç & Opiyo who claim that;

Social media help citizens to break through the boundaries or walls of even the most authoritarian societies. In such societies the mainstream media are usually under the monopoly of the elite and can hardly effectively perform the media's traditional watchdog role as the 4th estate that safeguards the interests of the public against possible abuses and excesses of government (2017, p.132).

Social media are flexible and accommodating for the Zimbabwean student participants during crisis and none crisis times. Therefore, according to the survey among Zimbabwean university students in North Cyprus a large percentage of 33 participants agreed and 24.8% of the participants strongly agreed that they preferred social media activism to physical activism.

Social media have a great impact on political issues of Zimbabwe especially during crisis situations. According to the findings, 61.6% of the participants agreed and strongly agreed that social media disseminated accurate information and 88.8% participants agreed and strongly agreed that social media have potential to influence the collective thinking of the society during Protests. According to Austin et al, social media is used more on crisis situations because of its ability to provide unfiltered, unique and up to date information that the society cannot get anywhere else (2012, p. 191). In this case participants were asked whether social media gave reliable news than ZBC, 30.2% of the participants strongly agreed while 26.5% agreed. Hence, a large percent of the participants trust social media on giving reliable news, for example through live videos from the physical crisis points.

Social media users have also been able to gratify their needs to seek information and update themselves about the happenings and events around them (Gallego, Bueno, & Noyes, 2016). Social media have impacted as well as facilitate up-to-date knowledge of happenings not only around the Zimbabwean University students studying in North Cyprus but globally as well. The Zimbabwean university students studying in North Cyprus have used social media to gratify their need to seek information of situation in Zimbabwe. With the aid of social media platforms, the participants have been able to use mostly Facebook platforms to mobilize their fellow citizens as well as generate one voice in order to Protest, reject or disagree with the government policies and programs in Zimbabwe.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research

The focus of this research was the role of social media in crisis situations on Zimbabwean University students studying in North Cyprus only, the study could be done on general Zimbabwean citizens living/staying in other parts of the world outside Zimbabwe who were also participating on social media. A research can also be conducted on the Zimbabwean citizens who were in Zimbabwe during the Solidarity March November 2017 who may have contributed to the Protest both physically and online.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

This questionnaire is for a thesis research on the role played by social media in mobilizing consensus during the Zimbabwean November Solidarity March 2017.

Please answer the following questions accurately, all information will be kept confidential and for research purposes only. Thank you for your participation.

1. What is your nationality?

- a) Zimbabwean b) Other

*If you are Zimbabwean please continue filling this questionnaire

2. What is your gender?

- a) Male b) Female

3. What is your age?

- a) 18 to 22 b) 23 to 27 c) 28 to 32 d) above 32

4. What is your university?

- a) CIU b) EMU C) NEU d) GAU e) Other please specify.....

5. Your educational level

- a) Undergraduate b) Master c) PHD

6. Which social media are you active on the most?

- a) Facebook b) Twitter c) Others please specify.....

7. How many hours do you spend on social media in a day?

- A) 1 to 5hours b) 6 to 10hours c)11 to 15hours d) More than 15 hours

8. For which purposes do you use social media?

*You may choose more than one option

- a) Entertainment b) Getting news c) Making and sharing news d) Communicating for personal purposes e) Activism f) Other please specify.....

9. Are you active on Facebook?

A) Yes b) No

10. Are you active on Twitter?

B) Yes b) No

11. Were you involved on the online Zimbabwean Solidarity March of November 2017?

A) Yes b) No

*If the answer for question 11 is yes,

12. Which social media were you active on the most during the Zimbabwean Solidarity March of November 2017?

a) Facebook b) Twitter c) None d) Other please specify.....

13. How did you engage in the Zimbabwean Solidarity March of November 2017 through social media?

*You may choose more than one option

a) Live videos b) news threads c) shared and posted news, pictures and videos

d) all of the above e) none of the above f) other please specify.....

14. Did you feel free in participating in the Zimbabwean Solidarity March 2017 considering your own security?

a) Yes b) No

15. Your involvement or participation through social media in the Zimbabwean Solidarity March 2017 was:

a) Personal choice b) Influence of friends and family c) Influence of activists d)

Influence of political leaders e) Other please specify.....

16. Was the Zimbabwean November 2017 Solidarity March the first time that you have been involved in an online activist movement?

A) Yes b) No

17. Have you ever posted, shared or discussed about Zimbabwean politics on your own social media platform?

A) Yes b) No

18. Did you contribute to the Zimbabwean Solidarity March 2017 through social media? If you contributed online, state how?

a) Likes b) sharing posts and comments c) creating live video to discuss the Protest d) others please specify.....

19. I criticize the government on political issues on social media

A) Yes b) No

20. I have posted and shared anti-government videos and or posts on social media **before** the Zimbabwean Solidarity March November 2017

a) Yes b) No

21. I have posted and shared anti-government videos and or posts on social media **during** the Zimbabwean Solidarity March November 2017

a) Yes b) No

22. I have posted and shared anti-government videos and or posts on social media **after** the Zimbabwean Solidarity March November 2017

a) Yes b) No

	Likert scale	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
23	Traditional media(e.g Newspapers and ZBC is used more than social media by Zimbabweans					
24	Social media give more reliable news than ZBC(Zimbabwean Broadcasting Co-operation)					
25	Zimbabweans would rather be involved in an online activism than physical activism/Protest					
26	Zimbabweans would rather be involved in a physical activism/Protest than an online activism					
27	Social media played a huge role in mobilizing people for the Solidarity March November 2017					
28	Social media facilitated your involvement in the Zimbabwean Solidarity March 2017					
29	People were free (secure) to speak about political issues on social media before the Solidarity March 2017					
30	Political leaders used social media for their political agendas more					

	before the Solidarity March 2017					
31	Political leaders used social media for their political agendas more during the Solidarity March 2017					
32	Political leaders used social media for their political agendas more after the Solidarity March 2017					
33	Zimbabweans felt safe to post political issues during the Solidarity March 2017					
34	Zimbabweans feel safe to post political issues after the Solidarity March					
35	During the Solidarity March social media were more effective than traditional media such as Television, Radio and Newspapers					
36	Social media have the potential to influence the collective thinking and contribute to social change during Protest/Solidarity March					
37	Social media should be used as the primary communication tool during					

	Protest/Solidarity March					
38	During the Solidarity March social media have the ability to disseminate accurate information					
39	Social media provides symbolic participation rather than active participation in Zimbabwean Solidarity March					
40	The movement #Thisflag rebuilt national pride					
41	Zimbabwean Solidarity March was a success because of social media					