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THE RISE OF 'THE JOSHUA GENERATION?': PERSPECTIVES AND ATTITUDES ON FACEBOOK ACTIVISM IN ZIMBABWE.

By

NYASHA. G. SHUMBA

Reg Number R132783P

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Supervisor: Professor Cuthbeth Tagwirei

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late parents Mr Patrick and Mrs Prisca Shumba. I am what I am today because of the dreams you had for me since I was a little girl when you gave me all the education you could.

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'The Lord Is Good. A Strength and Stronghold in The Days of Trouble He Knows Those Who Take Refuge and Trust in Him' (Nahum 1 verse 7).

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ABSTRACT

The research focuses on Facebook users' perceptions and attitudes of social media activism in Zimbabwe. Following a rise in social media campaigns in Zimbabwe, particularly in 2016, political participation has shifted to social media with a number of people demonstrating awareness and interest in the national issues. Drawing insights from Critical Discourse Analysis, this research discusses how the Facebook community responds to this new dispensation of social media activism. By focusing on the comments posted on Facebook handle "ThisFlag-IfulegiLeyi-Mureza" in response to a video posted as part of the fight against state failure in Zimbabwe, the research examines how Facebook users imagine new leaders in the mould of the Biblical Joshua and share insights on the several aspects which are deemed to matter as far as changes in the political field are concerned.

CHAPTER 1

1.0 Introduction

This research examines Facebook users' perspectives of, and attitudes towards, social media activism in Zimbabwe. The discussion revolves around a video posted on the Facebook handle ThisFlag-IfulegiLeyi-MurezaUyu which came into existence following a social media campaign by the #thisflag movement led by a pastor, Evan Mawarire. The video in question features a lawyer, Fadzai Mahere, in a legal presentation against the Zimbabwean government's proposal to introduce a surrogate currency known as "Bond notes." The video generated several comments, one of which referred to social media activists as "the Joshua generation" in respect of the role social media activists were playing in Zimbabwe. The title of the dissertation owes much from this comment. In this regard, the research examines how social media activists are perceived on Facebook.

1.1 Background of the Study

Technology provides a number of advantages to societies while impacting on people's daily experiences. It brings with it social media platforms where people share their experiences from different parts of the globe. Valenzuela (2014) observes that Facebook and Twitter provide a platform for individuals to create groups where they share videos and pictures. One key attribute of these platforms is that they enable users to fearlessly express their views and engage in dialogue. Moyo (2007) argues that the restriction of democratic space has spawned a multiplicity of an alternative public sphere that enables groups and individuals to engage in debates on the issues that have been affecting the country.

Sheedy (2011) asserts that social media tools enable people to interact and unite on a crisis. In Zimbabwe social media has emerged as an alternative space to discuss issues of national interest. In 2016, for instance, the number of social media campaigns, particularly on Facebook and Twitter, increased and rose to prominence. Some of these campaigns are #tajamuka, #digdeeper, #Thisflag and #rovapoto. These campaigns were used to invite the public, especially those who use social media, to discussions of socio and political issues and to protest against government mismanagement. Of note is that these campaigns became to set the agenda even for mainstream print media which took a sustained interest in them.

Notably, the 2016 campaigns do not represent the beginning of social media dissent. In 2013, a self-proclaimed ZANU PF (Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front) character known as Baba Jukwa opened a Facebook account where s/he disclosed information on politicians who abused state funds and exposed illegal practices within the government. Baba Jukwa became phenomenal but did not prevail after the 2013 elections which ended a government of national unity comprising ZANU PF and opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) formations. Until 2016, there appeared to be a lull in social media political activism. This nevertheless changed when Evan Mawarire posted a picture with the Zimbabwean flag on his Facebook wall and wrote "There is only one thing left to do and to do it wholeheartedly and without reservation. From Zambezi to Limpopo let something PHENOMENAL breakout! My God is not dead and certainly not deaf."

The message was followed by a video posted on the 20tth of April, two days after Zimbabwe held its annual independence celebrations, where Mawarire challenged the government to account for the unfulfilled promises the colors on the Zimbabwean flag stood for. This video

went viral on Facebook. A few days after its release, he urged people via his Facebook wall, to post pictures of themselves wrapped in the national flag as a show of protest to the Zimbabwean government's economic and political failures. He later introduced what was known as the 1-7 May #thisflag challenge where people had to move around with the flag as a way of showing the government that they have had enough. The challenge was later extended to the 30th of May. By adopting the Zimbabwean flag as a symbol of resistance, Mawarire gave birth to the #Thisflag movement.

There are several events associated with the #Thisflag campaign and some included the 13 July stay away and the arrest and trial of Evan Mawarire. Many videos were posted on Facebook with a hashtag #Thisflag to address issues that were affecting the country and among these is the video featuring Fadzai Mahere in debate against the proposed introduction of Bond Notes by the Zimbabwean government. Mahere, a lawyer by profession, is an active social media activist who uses the #Thisflag signature in most of her Facebook posts. Internet activism involves the use of online platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, You-Tube and Google + by citizens to enable activism and the spread of information on social movements. As Zimbabwe experienced an upsurge in social media or internet activism by various citizens, Fadzai Mahere emerged as a prolific activist fighting on the side of #Thisflag led by Evan Mawarire. Her main role in the campaign was to address issues affecting Zimbabwe through her legal experiences. She has addressed various issues on Facebook and Twitter regarding the injustice and unfairness of the ZANU PF government towards the citizens. She is also known for her argument over the Bond Notes issuing in Zimbabwe.

As can be noted from the ensuing discussion, Facebook creates a public sphere where people can fearlessly engage in political protests without adhering to media censorship rules. Valenzuela (2014) notes that Facebook and Twitter are effective tools for social interaction, operating as spaces for conversation and connecting people. It is this aspect that has made Facebook a popular tool of communication where people share their ideas on political issues.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The development of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter has allowed people to discuss issues affecting the globe while creating a platform for people to express how they feel. Because we are living in internet based societies everything that happens in our lives is mainly influenced by the internet and several social media players. While the significance of social media has been recognized in a number of studies there appears to be virtually nothing on social media protagonists themselves. In particular, this study recognizes the need to examine how Facebook users perceive social media activists and their role in contemporary Zimbabwe.

1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the research is to examine Facebook users' perspectives of social media activism in Zimbabwe. The objectives may be stated as follows:

- To analyze Facebook users' appreciation of social activism in Zimbabwe

- To discuss the demographic aspects Facebook users associate with media activists in Zimbabwe

- To analyze the use of Facebook as a site of protest in Zimbabwe.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Social media has shown that it is a potential tool for democratization. Michaelsen (2011) argues that online communications transcend geographical boarders permitting the formation of transitional communities based on shared language, culture or interest. The internet has been considered to be an ideal means of communication for social movements challenging established power structures. These issues may be economical, political and social or gender based. Facebook videos have proved to be the new radio and television in addressing public issues and communicating to a large number of people while enabling a significant number of Zimbabweans to have a say in these issues rather than being on the receiving end.

While a lot has been said about how social media is changing the way people interact and how it is being used to challenge governments particularly after the Arab Spring, less attention is paid on how social media actors are perceived on social media sites. This study seeks to address this hiatus. It contributes to the debate on the role social media can play in citizen politics, particularly how activists are perceived by those who follow social media posts. It is important to observe the salient uses of social media in Zimbabwe and examine how Facebook users, in particular, turn the site into a sphere of public discussion and debate on burning issues of the day.

1.5 Provisional Chapter Layout

This research consists of five Chapters. Chapter one is the introduction which covers the background of study, statement of problem, aims and objectives and significance of study. Chapter two is the literature review where the researcher discusses existing literature on the

subject. The chapter will also include a section on the theoretical framework which will govern the discussion. Chapter three is the methodology where the researcher explains methods of data collection and analysis. Chapter four analyses data. Chapter five summarizes and concludes the research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the research. It provided a background on social media activism in Zimbabwe, stated the objectives of the research and explained why the research is important. The present chapter discusses literature on the subject of social media and its use for dissent. Webster and Watson (2002) define literature review as a firm foundation to advance knowledge which facilitates the development of theory and also unveils areas where research is needed. This means a literature review provides information on what has been said and what still needs further clarification or where the study requires further researches. Literature review also provides information on particular theories to carry out the study as suggested by Shaw (1995) who argues that literature review should explain how a piece of research builds on another. Literature review also aims at showing how the research will contribute something new on the subject of study.

The purpose of this literature review is to evaluate existing knowledge or information on social media protests, that is, what is already known concerning the study. It is also important to justify how the proposed research will contribute new information to the area of study. The second part will focus on what has been said concerning social media protests in Zimbabwe and highlight what other scholars contribute to the subject while also explaining how such studies relate to the present study.

2.1 Social Media protests: An overview

Shirky (2011) focuses on the political power of social media, highlighting how the social media has the power to mobilize social movements. Shirky is of the view that despite the creation of a platform to communicate and share information, social media only creates social movements depending on which state these movements are being mobilized. He is of the view that social media movements are easy to prevent and there is no guarantee that they will be successful in bringing out social change since carrying out the movement does not mean the government is no longer in power to control the people. Supporting Gladwell's (2010) argument that the revolution will not be tweeted, Shirky's arguments are more based on the political power of social media but he does not clearly highlight how citizens use the media to mobilize social movements. He also fails to look into future movements that might be successful in bringing out social change and also fails to note the changes in protests being carried on social media. He nevertheless agrees with other scholars that social media has provided a platform for people to gain information about political issues across the globe. He suggests that social media has become a place for political movements since both the government and the citizens can interact on various social media platforms.

Sheedy (2011) discusses the use of social media for social change. She focuses on how social media is used to address social issues and how this can be effective in bringing out social change. Sheedy argues that social media tools are often personified and she suggests that for social media to be used for social change there should be people behind it. She also argues that social media can be used to pass information and increase awareness to the world on certain issues. Sheedy also highlights how the use of social media for social change can be dangerous and also how on the other hand social media can be used by people to assist each other regardless of location. Sheedy's arguments are more based on who controls the social media. She argues that social media cannot be more effective in bringing social change unless

there is someone with effective ideas to start a social movement and these ideas should be long-term.

Sheedy's argument about social media for social change does not clearly show which social changes can be accomplished by using social media as a tool of communication. She does not shed more light on why the use of social media is a threat to the government and does not explain her argument why social media use for protests is dangerous. She however, agrees that social media allows people to be connected and share ideas that can be useful in bringing out social change. She also agrees that among other reasons people protest using the social media because of the need to address their grievances.

Breuer (2012) focuses on the power of social media in mobilizing political protests. She argues that social media has more power to mobilize political protests in democratic states than in an autocratic state. She argues that social media enables the creation of a personal network that circumvents the national media but this power is more effective depending on the environment. She however fails to shed more light on the power of the citizens in controlling or using social media. There is still need to investigate how powerful the citizens are in controlling social media despite the environment they are. Breuer agrees that social media transcends geographical and socio-economic disparities through providing a shared mobilizing element of emotional grievances.

Lopes (2014) focuses on the impact of social media on social movements, highlighting on the movements that emerge when using social media as a tool of protest. She highlights how internet access as a social media proxy variable has given birth to protest activity. She also

argues that social media movements can be used as important tools to achieve social and political change. Lopes also indicate that social movements depend on social networks that will act as the social core to link people and lead to mobilization. She also indicates various reasons that may lead to social movements through social media. She divides these into three that is, social well-being, institutional well-being and economic well-being. These three can lead to social mobilization but for a social movement to get through there should be a network.

Lopes does not give a clear picture on how these social movements are mobilized and the issues that lead to social movements. Her research somehow points at internet as the main reason why citizens may mobilize. She also doesn't provide information on which of the social media platforms influences social movements and how these protests are carried out. This research will look specifically into Facebook campaigns in Zimbabwe and how these were carried out in order to shed a clear picture on how social media platforms like Facebook help in addressing social grievances and how Facebook users respond to the social movements. However, Lopes agrees that social media movements are mainly conducted by ordinary citizens because of the grievances they face. She also supports the view that social media allows communication among individuals and it is used as a tool to connect people to mobilize at a low cost.

Valenzuela, Arriagada and Scherman (2014) focus on the effects of social media in mobilizing protests for social movements. They argue that effects of social media on social change vary across network and platform. They argue that Facebook and twitter have significant effects on protests. Valenzuela and crew's arguments are based on the effects of social media on social movements depending on the platform used. They argue that Facebook

and twitter are the two platforms that are mainly used for protests and mobilizing information. They also argue that people who use these two platforms, that is Facebook and twitter, have additional reasons (e.g. to co-ordinate political action or mobilize information) than those who are less interested.

The trio, however, do not explain the main reason why social media protests are mainly conducted through Facebook and twitter and how these two platforms contribute to the formation of social movements. Their research also supports the view that social media use by young people has increased the spread of information on political issues and that social media is a tool for passing information and ideas though they argue that the rate of information spread depends with the platform used.

Cammaerts (2015) focuses on social media and activism. He looks at the impact of social media on social movements. Cammaerts argues that internet has enabled real time communication. He is of the view that social media is used to combine different forms of communication into one social platform. Social media allows activists to 'self-mediate' and it also enables communication between a small audience and a larger audience. Cammaerts' arguments are mainly based on the impact of social media and he does not clearly show how activists use social media to organize social movements. His focus is mainly based on the use of social media as a communication tool and he fails to address issues that lead people into using social media as a demonstrating platform. These arguments however still point to the issues of social media as a tool for organizing and mobilizing social protests. He notes that

social media enables people to communicate and share ideas and information about their opponents

Druzin and Li (2015) focus on the power of social media towards political protests. They are of the view that social media has the power to create public opinion. Social media has the power to bypass government controlled media that allows rapid dissemination of information as seen in other forms of print media. They argue that social media platforms give voice to millions of citizens and those voices cannot be silenced. Druzin and Li argue that despite all the power that social media has in controlling public opinion and spreading information it still has its limits and cannot control public protests for a long time since it fizzles with time. Their main argument is that social media power on political interest has been exaggerated but however they fail to look into the future where people are not just using the media to share information but they are using it to air their grievances and social media has potential to create a self-governed state where citizens are able to state what they expect from the government, for example activists in Zimbabwe have used social media to make their followers sign petitions. This research will focus on how social media, despite being a platform to voice the people's grievances, is also a platform to bring out change. They however agree to the notion that social media has the power to usurp the historic reign of the state over information.

Ranganath, Morstatter, Hu, Tang, Wang and Liu (2016) focus on the effects of social media in protests on the social media user. They are of the view that social media can be used to recruit potential members for a political protest depending on how the user is interested in the political issues. They argue that leaders of protests on social media recruit people through

looking at social media users posts on political issues. They note that a social media user is subject to various types of influence in their past and many of them may conflict with each other thus the mechanism by which protests affect people cannot be observed. Their argument on social media protests mainly focus on the user. They do not give a clear picture about the issues or causes that lead people to engage in social media protests, which is an issue that needs to be investigated. They are mainly focused on how social media users are affected by social movements but do not look at the other side of the coin as to what influences a social media user to be involved in protests on social media. However, they do agree with other scholars that social media is not only a platform to obtain information but also a platform where people express their view points on political protests.

2.2 Social media protests in Zimbabwe

Moyo (2007) focuses on the use of social media as an alternative media by Zimbabweans in the diaspora. Moyo argues that Zimbabweans in the diaspora use social media platforms to discuss issues affecting the country. He argues that social media enables group and individual participation and engagement in debates on political issues. Moyo's main focus is on the Zimbabweans in diaspora and this obviously ignores Zimbabweans who use and continue to use social media to challenge government policies and conduct while residing in Zimbabwe. Although the present study is not particular in this regard, it has the potential to tap into both sets of social media users. Moyo, nevertheless, views social media platforms as an area where people come together to discuss issues affecting the country.

Bugalo (2011) focuses on the issue of social media campaigns in Zimbabwe. She suggests that a single post from an opinion leader has the power to influence people to support or go against a political candidate, something the number of likes, shares or comments on

Facebook, for instance, may demonstrate. It however need to be verified whether it is the posts that influence people or it has to do with people's personal desires to be involved in political issues. It may also have to do with the grievances being faced. Bugalo, however, bases her arguments on politicians' use of social media to gain support. This research, on the other hand, looks at how the same people who are lured to vote through social media use the same platform to protest against the country's leaders. Bugalo also supports that social media, especially Facebook, in Zimbabwe has opened a place of discourse and public sphere to share ideas and goals.

Mpofu, S. (2013) focuses on the issue of social media politics and ethnicity in Zimbabwe. Though his study is mainly on the issues of ethnicity issues in the media he also covers the issue of social media for political issues. Mpofu argues that social media offers a hegemonic voice to the marginalized society. The question raised from this point of view is what do people do when they have this hegemonic voice? What issues do they discuss? How do people respond to these issues raised? These questions will be given more clarity in this study. Despite the fact that Mpofu does not respond sufficiently to these questions, he agrees that social media acts as a 'connecting tissue' among the citizens and that it offers a platform to discuss issues that are viewed as a taboo by public media.

Chiweshe (2012) regards social media as anti-revolutionary. He argues that social media has imprisoned Zimbabwean youths. Instead of mobilizing in the streets, youths use keyboard strokes to carry out protests. The use of Facebook in Zimbabwe has created an anti-revolutionary society where people demand their rights over the internet instead of marching into the streets as was the situation before internet. Chiweshe argues that social media in Zimbabwe has become the modern day public sphere, a place that promotes debate and

common sharing of ideas. He however does not shed more light on how Facebook users in Zimbabwe have managed to use social media platforms like Facebook to mobilize protests. Chiweshe also supports the view that social media in Zimbabwe has the power to share, organize and discuss political issues of the day and strengthen movements against the regime. This view show that the use of social media in Zimbabwe did not just give people the ability to share ideas but also provided an opportunity for citizens to take action on the political issues of Zimbabwe.

Gondo (2014) focuses on hash tags and freedom on social media. He highlights that social media offers a natural outlet for people to discuss issues. He is also of the view that the numbers of people who use or engage in social media protests in Zimbabwe on Facebook makes it difficult for the government to silence or ignore people's voice or stop them from protesting. This however explains why the Zimbabwean government has failed to silence Facebook campaigns despite the threats it has made against social media users. Gondo also looks at the gendered use of social media. She states that only a few women engage in Facebook protests compared to men. This leads us to question how women air their grievances and how they respond to social media campaigns led by men.

Bugalo (2015) focuses on the use of social media to create citizen journalism. She argues that citizen journalism in Zimbabwe has improved through the use of social media. Social media has helped create a new breed of journalists different from the ones provided by print media. Social media is free from censorship policies in Zimbabwe. As argued by Bugalo, the introduction of the internet has allowed more information to be imparted to citizens and lessened gate-keeping. Her arguments are mainly based on the use of social media to give out information but she does not explain how people use social media to spread information, how

they engage in citizen journalism through social media and how the audience respond to the information spread through social media. However, Bugalo also views social media platforms like Facebook as a site through which people are discussing important questions of the day in Zimbabwe.

Santos and Ndlovu (2015) focus on the 'democratic unfreedom' of Facebook in Zimbabwe. They argue that Facebook is an emancipatory and revolutionary medium. They argue that social media has provided 'multi-mediality' through the use of videos, images, audio and texts. Santos and Ndlovu argue that Facebook has more impact in airing people's views in Zimbabwe than any other social media platforms. They argue that social media breaks away from the traditional mainstream of mass communication. Their argument that social media shows how social interaction has been disrupted through fake identities still needs more clarification looking at how Zimbabwean citizens who are Facebook users have avoided this disruption. Santos and Ndlovu also support that social media has opened a platform for people to discuss issues affecting the country.

Dube (2015) focuses on the use of social media for activism. She argues that in Zimbabwe it is the politicians that advocate the use of social media. She suggests that there should be evidence to link social media and protests. Dube argues that politicians in Zimbabwe use social media to express their political views. Her arguments however fail to look at the other side of how social media use in Zimbabwe would influence citizens to use social media to gather political information and mobilize protests. She however believes that social media platforms such as Facebook are used as tools for protests.

2.3Theoretical Framework

The research will use Critical Discourse Analysis, an approach to the study of language that defines language as a form of social practice. Critical Discourse Analysis focuses on the use of language, ideology and power within texts. Post (2009) postulates that the main aim for CDA is to highlight the utilization of language within texts to produce or create specific ideological positions that entail unequal relations to power. CDA can be understood from three different perspectives. These are Fairclough's (2001) social and discourse practice which focuses on social relations. In this approach CDA examines social and cultural methods that can be used to counter those in power and do away with the oppression from the elite group on other people in the society. The approach also focuses on how classes relate to each other and what distinguishes the other group from the other. One has to look at how the discourse being used relates to the society. The other approach is Wodak's (1995) discourse – historical approach. It mainly focuses on the societal problems and how language is used to ratify those issues. The approach suggests that discourse can only be appreciated from its historical context and that discourse can be regarded as a form of social norm where everything is done and produced by the society.

The third approach is van Dijk (2001) socio-cognitive model. Van Dijk (2001:96) characterizes his approach as 'a solidarity with the oppressed'. It looks at the relationship between discourse structures and social structures. Socio-cognition can be defined as the beliefs or ideas that people share in their groups or community. Opinions shared in these groups or community are not evaluated in the truth criteria but focus on the good or bad criteria. Social cognition can also be defined as shared representations in society which also includes ideologies and attitudes towards a situation. CDA is therefore a broad approach that covers various issues such as power and language, society and discourse and even covers the issue of agency where one takes the responsibility to bring about change in the society. The

most important aspect to consider is power since it binds all the other issues together when using CDA.

This research will use CDA to analyze the use of language on Facebook to discuss issues affecting Zimbabwe. Van Dijk (1996:90) states that "CDA is an important diagnostic tool for assessing the extent to which social and political dominance is maintained within that power". This means that CDA is important in evaluating how political and social dominance is kept within the force of language. This research uses CDA not because it can only provide us with an analysis of language and power but also because it can offer a valid explanation on why the Facebook community uses a specific language of protest against those in power.

Fairclough (2003) argues that logical relationship between language and social reality is realized through social activities, events and social structures. This assertion shows that the use of language in a particular society relates to real social activities. This can be seen on social media platforms like Facebook. Ideologies created through the use of language relate to the circumstances being faced by the society. Facebook users in Zimbabwe are eager to have leaders arising from the younger generation in opposition to the old generation. It can be noted that CDA is more focused on investigating social inequalities and social dominance. This provides an insight of the power relations that characterize Facebook users and the targets of their anger and frustrations.

Ideologies in a society are shaped through the interaction of different social groups. Habermas (1977) states that language as a medium of dominance approves relationships between social powers. People in society are differentiated by power, its either they are

powerless or they have power. As noted by Van Dijk, notions of power are not regular. This means that despite the fact of having a controlling group, those being controlled can choose to resist the dominance. Van Dijk (1993) terms this 'counterpower'. Facebook as a site for social activism shows the instability of the notions of power, when those with less power question and attack the ideologies of those in power. Habermas (1977) argues that power relations are only visible on the establishment of domination on the dominated. This shows that power can only be realized when one focuses on how the powerful group dominates the powerless group. Power domination can be seen in politics, gender issues, class and or religion. Those who are less privileged or the dominated tend to be the ones who resist dominance by countering the ideologies of the dominant.

The use of language in CDA is not innocent; everything that people say is related to something either politically or socially. When Facebook users respond to a Facebook post or video all their responses will be coming from a specific ideology. One cannot use language without considering the discourse they are using, therefore one can conclude that the use of language is socially constructed. Van Dijk (1995) argues that CDA investigates the ways of manipulation that are used by the powerful to influence the minds and action of those who are dominated. CDA is applied depending on the discourse it is being used and the choice of medium also guides the purposes in which the communication is meant to serve. When Facebook users communicate, their main focus is to address political issues hence their language is guided by political discourse and they find a medium of communication that helps them fulfill this goal. This means that one has to consider the medium being used in order to appreciate CDA.

2.4 Conclusion

The literature review above shows the arguments by other scholars concerning the use of social media platforms as tools for protests. Social media platforms have become a place where people share their ideas and different opinions and from the arguments above it is important to note that the question of what causes people to use these platforms for social movements is still unclear. Some argue that people protest on social media because it is cheaper whereas some believe it is because of the situations people face. A glaring omission in the literature discussed concerns the attitudes and perceptions of social media users regarding social media activists. It is important, particularly in these times where these activists are getting a lot of attention to examine how those who follow protests on social media perceive the actors.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter is a presentation of the research methodology and it serves to outline the methods and techniques used to carry out and analyse the research data. Research methodology, according to Kothari (2004), should be understood as a scientific way of carrying out research. This study will be carried out through a qualitative approach; it is concerned at developing social issues and how they affect the world we are living in. According to Degu and Yigzaw (2006) a qualitative research answers questions like why people behave in a certain way, how people's opinions and attitudes are formed, how the events around people affect them and how and why culture develops in a certain way. According to Sandelowski (2004), qualitative research is a container of attitudes towards and strategies for conducting inquires that are aimed at discovering how human beings understand, experience, interpret, and produce the social world. This research focuses on some of these questions, basing on a discussion of a Facebook campaign video and the comments it generates.

3.1 Methods of Data Collection

Data was collected in two forms: primary data and secondary data. Primary data was collected from ThisFlag-IfulegiLeyi-MurezaUyu, a Facebook handle which has become synonymous with Mawarire's #This flag movement. On this page, a number of videos, pictures and messages which are seen to promote the protest ethos represented by #Thisflag are posted. A video, entitled "ThisFlag Advocate Fadzai Mahere Gives Legal Argument Against Bond Notes to Governor Magudya" which featured Fadzai Mahere arguing a case

against Bond Notes was used. The video itself, was not the primary source of data, but the comments which it incited from Facebook users. Secondary data was used to back up primary data and this was collected from theses, journals and online sources which focus on social media.

Data collection for this research was be done through a method known as Netnography. According to Kozinets (2010), netnography is a participant-observational online research method that follows a distinct set of processes and protocols. Data was collected around online interaction, that is, from the Facebook community represented by ThisFlag-IfulegiLeyi-MurezaUyu. Data collection involved observation and verbalization of relevant data and this was selected from the campaign video which enabled me to observe the behaviours and actions of Facebook users. Netnography enabled me to observe performance and identify the members involved in the social movements. Netnography follows six stages of Ethnography (a method that uses data collected through face to face cultural interactions). These are research planning, entrée, data collection, interpretation, research ethics and research presentation. This method enabled me to understand the representation of cultural phenomena since data was collected from computer mediated communications. I used this method to collect archival data where I directly selected information from a pre-existing online community.

3.2 Population

A research population is a defined collection of individuals or objects with binding or common characteristics. Polit and Hungler (1999) define a research population as the totality of all subjects that conform to a set of specifications, comprising the whole group of people

of interest to the research and where the research can be generalized from. The research is based on Facebook users' perspectives on Facebook activism. As already noted, the comments to be discussed are taken from the video "ThisFlag Advocate Fadzai Mahere Gives Legal Argument Against Bond Notes to Governor Magudya" posted on the Facebook handle "ThisFlag-IfulegiLeyi-MurezaUyu" on 16 June 2016. The video had 651 comments from 16 June to 26 September 2016. These comments focused on several issues which include a debate on the legality of Bond Notes, issues of constitutionalism, an appreciation of #Thisflag and discussions about the role of social media activists in Zimbabwe.

3.3 Sampling method

A research sampling method is a procedure for selecting or choosing a sample from a selected population. Research sampling methods are in two categories, the probability and non-probability sample. Each member of the population in a probability sample has a known zero probability of being selected while a non-probability includes sampling methods like random sampling, systematic sampling and stratified sampling. This research used non-probability sampling where data was selected using a convenient sampling method. Du Plooy (2001) asserts that non-probability sampling is not guided by mathematical guidelines, but it enables the researcher to control the choice of units. This sampling method was important to use in this research because it allowed me to avoid over-representing or under-representing the population under study. It also enabled me to classify or divide my population into thematic sets and analyse the data.

3.5 Interpretation of Data

The research used Critical Discourse Analysis in the interpretation of data. Critical discourse analysis is an approach to the study of language that defines language as a form of social practice. Critical Discourse Analysis focuses on the use of language, ideology and power within texts. Post (2009) postulates that the main aim for CDA is to highlight the utilization of language within texts to produce or create specific ideological positions that entail unequal relations to power. This research used CDA to analyze the use of language on Facebook to discuss issues affecting Zimbabwe. Critical Discourse Analysis was used to review the insights in which ideologies are being shared through Facebook campaign videos and the comments they incite and to note the ideological positioning of Facebook users. Van Dijk (1996:90) states that "CDA is an important diagnostic tool for assessing the extent to which social and political dominance is maintained within that power". This means that CDA is important in evaluating how political and social dominance is kept within the force of language.

3.7 Conclusion
This chapter detailed how data was collected and designed. It identified the research population and the Facebook handle from which data was collected. Various data collection methods and procedures were highlighted and the sampling method discussed. The next chapter analyses Facebook users' comments on social media activism.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter is the core part of the research. It analyses the data that was collected using the methods and techniques highlighted in the previous chapter. In this chapter I present and analyze a Facebook video and the responses that it got to demonstrate how Facebook has attracted a new generation of activists who are recognized by the social media public as "the Joshua generation." I well on selected Facebook user comments which define this generation and what it stands for vis-à-vis the socio-economic and political situation in post-2000 Zimbabwe. Key to the discussion are questions of political agency, gender and education as they inform social media activism in Zimbabwe.

The discussion which therefore follows is consistent with the overall belief that social media has taken over the lives of most people and resultantly, activists are increasingly using it to ignite public debate. While one video, featuring Fadzai Mahere, and the debate it sparked regarding the role of Facebook, will be looked at, the results can be generalized to most other videos which were shared on Facebook at the height of social media activism in Zimbabwe in 2016. The choice of the video has been justified in chapter three.

4.1 The Bond Notes Debate

Still image taken from the video posted on ThisFlag-Ifulegileyi-MurezaUyu Facebook Page

Above is a still image taken from a video posted on Facebook on June 16 2016 on ThisFlag-IfulegiLeyi-MurezaUyu Facebook page. The video which is 6 minutes and 38 seconds long, got 2 300 reactions, 651 comments and 1 036 views during the period between 16 and 29 September 2016. The video was titled 'The Law Argument, Advocate Fadzai Mahere gives the legal argument against "Bond Notes" to RBZ Governor Mangudya. #Thisflag'. On the video was a post 'Are Bond Notes Legal? Say No to bond notes.' In the video was a debate on the legality of issuing the bond note.

Citing section 68(1) of the Zimbabwean constitution which states that 'Every person has a right to administrative conduct that is lawful, prompt, efficient, reasonable, proportionate, and impartial and both substantively and procedurally fair', Fadzai Mahere built her case against

the issuing of Bond notes in Zimbabwe. She stated that the RBZ governor as the administrative authority is subject to section (68) where his actions to the administrating of Zimbabwe's finances should be lawful and reasonable. She also argues that nowhere in the constitution is the RBZ given the right to issue bond notes and, further, that there is no mentioning of the term 'Bond note' in the Constitution indicating that the decisions to introduce the Bond note is therefore unlawful and violates citizens' constitutional rights to administrative justice.

Mahere poses a question to the governor: 'Is it fair to take my money and give me paper in return?' Her legal perspective on bond notes creates a debate on Facebook with many people exhibiting different sentiments on the issue. Some of the issues raised will be interpreted and analyzed from the selected Facebook comments taken from the Facebook post on ThisFlag-IfulegiLeyi-MurezaUyu Facebook page. Below I dwell on selected comments and their points of view regarding the role of Facebook activism in Zimbabwe.

4.2 Embracing the younger generation

A number of comments addressing the questions raised by Fadzai Mahere arose. Significantly, there were a number of such comments which dealt with the question of social media activism, particularly how Facebook users regard the social media actors. One recurring issue has to do with the youthfulness of activists. The question of age is not coincidental. Questions over President Mugabe's old age, and, by extension, health have dominated the public sphere for over two decades. This debate has intensified during the last two or three years with reports and sights of the president stumbling and being rushed to hospital in other countries with the President, and state media, insisting on his youthfulness.

Indeed, "Newspaper articles have complemented [Mugabe's] own declarations that he remains as "fit as a fiddle"' (Siziba and Ncube 2015: 516). Besides the attention given to the president, the current government boasts of people who were involved in the struggle against Smith's racist government in the 1970s, which makes them fall outside the bracket of youth. The question of age is therefore a key point in Zimbabwe's political struggles and may explain some Zimbabweans' affinity towards social media activists.

Arguably, the comment which encapsulates Facebook users' faith in the potency of social media activism made intertextual references to the Bible. It reads:

> Comment one: *Thank you for rising up Joshua generation. It's your time to bring a new season of integrity, commitment and good governance to our beautiful nation. God bless and increase you a thousand more.*

The comment supports Mahere on her argument concerning bond notes and her commitment to help raise awareness on what the law says about the notion of bond note issuing. The reference to "the Joshua generation" is clearly in respect to Joshua's calling and exploits on behalf of the Israelites on their journey to Canaan. The book of Deuteronomy, Chapter 31 Verse 7 (King James Bible), sheds light on the task that was set before Joshua: 'And the Lord called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it'. Apparently, the comment insinuates a number of parallels: Zimbabweans/Israelites; post-ZANU PF

governance/Pharaoh; Social media activists/Joshua. In this regard, a Joshua generation would be a fearless team of leaders whose mission is to take Zimbabweans out of ZANU PF bondage. The comment reflects, among other issues, some Zimbabweans' disappointment with the traditional opposition politicians hence the need to embrace a new crop of leaders, albeit who take the struggle to the internet. The Biblical Joshua is depicted as a great leader chosen by God to help the Israelites reach their destination, a land God had promised them. It suffices to say that the user refers to the social media activists as the God chosen generations that will help Zimbabweans reach their destiny.

The sentiments raised above are not isolated as can be witnessed in comment two below:

Comment two: *It's time for the younger generation to take over. When these old guys started they had no experience saka (*so*) let us take over totangirawo pedu* (we start on our own). *Hatidi zvigaro tachembera isu* (we don't want to be in power when we are old).

The comment supports the rise of young leaders to free Zimbabweans from perceived bondage. The Facebook user shows their disappointment with the ZANU PF government and calls it an inexperienced government. This comment shows that Zimbabweans are eager for a new blood, new age and young generation to lead the country. When Joshua was selected to lead the Israelites God encouraged him to be courageous and in this case Mahere is considered courageous enough to stand up to the government and speak out. This reflects that

Facebook activism has ushered a new group of vibrant and young people who are willing to take Zimbabweans to a Canaan of sorts.

The issue of age in Zimbabwean leadership becomes an important aspect as the society is willing to get rid of an incompetent government and introduce new ideas and new governance through the younger generation. The comment highlights the inexperience of the government which therefore brings us to the notion that having the younger and new generation as leaders will means new skills will be established within the governing of the country. A vibrant generation is active and responses to situations faster than an aging and an inexperienced government. In regards to the comment it can be concluded that giving the new generation, given a chance to leadership, will make Zimbabwe strong and active again. Bennet (2008) argues that young people have been exposed to the digital environment and have become involved in collective experience based on shared interests therefore they introduce new forms of citizenship. With this assertion in mind it is therefore vital to point out that Mahere as a young leader who has been exposed to the world of digital media uses her knowledge of this world to represent the young people of Zimbabwe where her interests, like the rest of every citizen, is to have a government that respects the constitutional rights of its citizens.

It is interesting that some comments underlined the importance of youth-driven change. The comment below is a typical example:

Comment three: *'Look at that, YOUNG BLOOD. Zimbabwe has so much potential if they gave us a chance. Well done girl.'*

The comment also supports the idea of a new generation leading the country. The Facebook user is of the belief that the 'young blood' has great potential to make a difference if given the chance to rule. Zimbabwe has been led by the ZANU PF government since independence in 1980. It has known one political party at the helm for 36 years. Thus having a new government with young people and new blood to replace the old blood or the ZANU PF government means the country for the first time will be exposed to a different rule and to new ideas different from those that have been used since 1980. Young blood resonates with the transition to the Biblical Joshua who was assigned to lead the Israelites after Moses. Young blood, it appears, will enable the country to regain the momentum lost during the ruling of the ZANU PF government. The younger generation has potential to change the country's situation. The apparent admiration of Mahere is obviously in recognition of the fact that young people have been indifferent to national politics or, at worst, have only been used to fight the political wars of the older generation during election periods.

An almost similar sentiment goes:

Comment four: *We need more such young Zimbabweans who will defend the constitution and defend human dignity without fear or favor*.

This comment also focuses on the issue of age and governance in Zimbabwe. This shows how eager the Zimbabwean citizens are willing to have a younger leader taking over from the older generation of leaders. The future of the country is seen to lie in the hands of the

younger generation, just as was the case during the liberation struggle when the younger generation of that time that took responsibility of the future of the country and went to war. Unlike the generation of the liberation struggle, the young generation of this era takes their war to social media. Engaging in social protests on Facebook shows that young people are claiming a new era that is different from the one that is ruling the country and they are doing so on a new turf characterised by citizen participation through social media. Facebook has made it possible for people to see the qualities of good leaders they need and in this case they are defined by youthfulness.

4.3 Notes on Female agency
The Joshua generation consisted of young people, new blood, new generation, new leadership and new ideas. More importantly, it represents a departure from tradition. In the case of Zimbabwe, one key departure would be the movement from a male dominated politics to a gender-inclusive politics. Politics, of late, has been a man's world and women were merely recognized in it. Matingo, Madongo, Daka, Dube, Zhou, Puthi, Bvumira, Mundoza, Dube and Moyo (2012) assert that women constitute 14 percent of the parliamentary seats which was reduced from the original 16 percent. From this report it can be noted that decision making in the parliament is male dominated. Taking for instance that before 2016, ZANU PF consisted of three presidiums where there were two males and one female, same situation in MDC-T which consist of 9 members in the party's National Standing Committee where only one female Thokozani Khupe is the only female representative in the Committee Matingo et al (2012). This assertion shows that women have limited positions in the political world. As noted by Bari (2005), the system of male domination in politics tends to put female politicians in marginalized positions. This assertion shows that male politicians use patriarchal ideologies to place women in private arenas such as homes where they play the

motherly or wife role, for example female politicians are known as mothers taking the instance of President Mugabe's wife Dr Grace Mugabe who is known as 'Amai' (mother). Placing women in these arenas has made it difficult for women to exercise their political roles and have the same status with male politicians.

The history of Facebook activism in Zimbabwe shows that few women are involved in political affairs; women tend to lag behind men's leadership. It is no exaggeration to say women like Mahere have taken a bravery step and broken into a world mainly dominated by men. The comments below highlight people's attitudes towards women involved in political issues and how this gives out the notion of a Joshua generation.

Comment five: *I always wonder why we can't have more brilliant female politicians like her (Fadzai) in Zim. Our women are not interested in politics at all; they prefer taking the back seat. Women shouldn't be just for singing 'the Mbare Chimurenga Choir'. They should leading advocates [sic] for democracy and good governance from the fore-front. Well done Fadzai you're not just a pretty face.*

The sentiment above captures how women have been sidelined when it comes to political issues. The rise of Fadzai as a woman to represent the new generation shows how brave she is. The comment also highlights other issues about women that are merely talked about in the society. There is a general belief that most women are mostly interested in how they look and their personal traits instead of what they have to offer. Media representations also contribute towards this view (Matingo etal 2012). The media associates women with physical attributes

and appearance. For example, soon after her marriage to the Prime Minister Tsvangirai, the media referred to Elizabeth Tsvangirai as 'Queen Elizabeth'. In one story in the *Daily News* she was described as a goddess.

The comment challenges women to rise above petty political participation as the reference to Mbare Chimurenga Choir suggests. Women, as suggested by this Facebook user, are merely involved in politics to entertain the male politicians and sing praise songs for men. The author challenges women to step up and be active in political issues rather than remaining in a place where they are just dancers in politics with nothing important to do. Mahere's challenge to the government, and her breaking the boarders of politics, is what is expected in a new generation, comprising empowered women and a youthful, vibrant generation with new expectations.

The appreciation of women in politics, particularly in the debate on national issues, is a significant stance on Facebook as the following comments demonstrates:

> Comment six: *I like the educational gesture rendered by this lady; very few women are bold enough to this level, albeit capable. However, I am not sure if this parcel of intelligence has anything to do with 'this flag' movement though. You can appreciate mutualities but you have to keep bond to your own criterion of protocol. Fadzai Mahere spoke the legalities involved with monetary governance and the rule- making therewith which was good, but for a general citizen like me who is not well*

acquainted with entire systems of government, I might want to know what the law says

about crisis reticulation […] I like the start gear by Mahere though.

The comment points out Mahere's boldness to stand up to the government. It is noted that not many women are capable to challenge the government, especially a government controlled by men. The comment recognizes Mahere's female agency but, nevertheless, questions some of her ideas. The Facebook user, critically, does not question Mahere on the basis of her gender, but on matters of intellect. This demonstrates a strong respect and awareness of Mahere as an integral voice in the national issues at hand.

Facebook perspectives on women in politics hint that women are not strong enough to challenge the government. The new generation is nevertheless identified with women joining politics and taking the lead role, albeit in a society dominated by men where women in politics are not largely recognized. Social media has made it easier for the Joshua generation to arise with different young and strong leaders who include women. Women have been disadvantaged from acquiring information of what happens in their communities mainly because society views that as men's business and all women need to do is look beautiful. The idea of having more women involved in politics will enable more voices especially from the female's side. Society is starting to accept women as human beings and not as second class citizens.

Other comments, nevertheless exhibited deep-seated prejudices against women. An example is the comment below:

Comment seven: '*OK ko Fadzai uyu is she married…I think she deserve an economist husband Lol'.*

This comment shows the issue of gender inequality in politics. Instead of admiring Fadzai as a great advocate, this Facebook user sees her as a woman who needs a man to play the other role of her argument. Women have been involving themselves in political issues but they are still prone to the risk of being considered a political demographic, their main role in politics is either to address issues about the girl child or what should be done to empower women and anything that involves economic development is considered male territory. Women are limited to specific roles and it has become a norm that men are better than women when it comes to politics. The comment is just a glimpse of how women in politics are viewed in Zimbabwean and African societies. The case of the Nigerian President, Muhammad Buhari, who is quoted as saying 'I don't know which party my wife belongs to, but she belongs to my kitchen and my living room and the other room' by BBC NEWS online (2016) is revealing. Buhari made the comment after his wife Mrs. Aisha Buhari had suggested that she would not support her husband in his run for Presidency in 2019. This comment made by Buhari shows how women are viewed in political issues; it shows that they have no position in political issues. Male activists are not discriminated from political issues on the basis of their gender but in the case of Mahere, a pretty face, an unlikely profession and her political agency seem to get her the attention from Facebook users.

4.4 Education for freedom

Besides the issue of gender and age in Zimbabwean politics, Facebook users also focused on the issue of education. Education was used as an empowerment tool even during the liberation struggle. The same applies in today's politics. Young people have attained education and are able to engage in debates with the government and they have found the right place to do so on social media. Below are a few comments that show people's perspective towards education and Facebook activism:

Comment eight: *Isn't amazing (sic) how such a smart well educated, intelligent, good looking and presentable person lives in the poorest country in the world? It's like a farmer living in a desert and wondering why he cannot use his skills.*

The comment above reflects the Zimbabwean situation where people are educated but cannot utilise this education to their full potential. This situation is compared to that of a farmer in a desert. A desert is known for dry lands and no vegetation to the point where it becomes absurd to find a farmer living in a desert and expecting to use their farming skills there. This comment is therefore an indictment on the Zimbabwean government, on one hand, and a celebration of skill and potential, on the other. Despite the skepticism with an education possessed under the unconducive circumstances, Mahere is seen as a beacon. Her usefulness is recognized. Perhaps, the comment is very fitting considering that Joshua, at one point, had to fight the battle of Jericho using trumpets which are the unlikeliest of weapons Joshua chapter 6 verse 8 to 26. Mahere will therefore stand out as an exceptional fighter who keeps on against the odds.

Another appreciation of education follows:

> Comment nine: *'Arise over comer. Unbeknown to the government, the exceptional education system afforded to Zimbabweans would come back to bite them. Vakuru, we are not STUPID, even though you have made a mockery of us. It's time to retire and let the youth prove to you, just how well you educated us. #ittakesawomen [sic].'*

Education does not only give people qualifications for a good job but it is also a tool of empowerment and it is even helpful in making choices and decisions. The comment above points out how the education system has enabled people to speak up to the government and say enough is enough. Mahere is cited as an example of an empowered woman. She is bold and courageous and she speaks without fear in a world that has been known to be dominated by men. Through education women in Zimbabwe have broken the patriarchal barriers and the ordinary citizens of Zimbabwe are empowered enough to speak out and protest against unfair governance, albeit taking the issues to Facebook.

This comment highlights the fact that education is a tool for social change and helps in passing information from generation to generation. It is through education that the Zimbabwean citizens have acquired the boldness to speak out to the government. In short, education influences people's decisions in various life aspects. The comment reflects how the education system in Zimbabwe has helped to see when to take action towards the government. During the liberation struggle education was also important in empowering the

black people. The comment therefore extols the merits of an education which makes possible the emergence of a generation which is willing to challenge the government when it errs.

The final two comments persist on the issue of education. In praising Mahere for the role she plays, the authors underline the aspect of education:

Comment ten: *She is smart and on point. Now is the younger generation going to be privileged and have the same educational opportunities we got. If we let this current government go on. I don't this so enough is enough indeed.*

Comment eleven: '*That's one educated Zimbabwean woman that's wat [sic] we looking for! Well-spoken Fadzai.*'

While bemoaning the threat the current government poses on Zimbabwe's education system, comment ten seems to recognize that the current generations, most of whom fraternize social media, have enjoyed a good education. Comment eleven praises Mahere for presenting her views to the governor. It articulates the issue of educated women, and it even appreciates Mahere as the kind of leader society is looking for, that is, someone who is well-read. In this regard, the Joshua generation is a crop of young people who have, as one of the potent weapons, an education which they can use to their advantage.

4.5Conclusion

To conclude, the discussion highlighted three aspects which Facebook users foreground in

their recognition of Facebook activism in Zimbabwe. These factors are age, gender and education. The involvement of a younger generation in politics in Zimbabwe is essential for the future of the country and also brings new ideas to a politics that has been dominated by an older generation who fought the 1970s war against Ian Smith's colonial government. The aspect of gender demonstrates how women, still marginalized in Zimbabwean politics invade the social media spaces to break from a male-dominated political tradition. Finally, the significance of education as a necessary tool social media activists utilise to their advantage was observed.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.0 Introduction

The previous chapter was an analysis and presentation of data. I looked at the various perspectives that are shared on Facebook regarding the issue of Facebook activism. I looked at the various aspects of age, gender and education in Zimbabwe and these aspects have been addressed by different people and they link to Facebook activism in Zimbabwe. This chapter serves to summarize and conclude the study.

5.1 Summary

Chapter one introduced the research. It covered the background of the research and highlighted the necessity for this study. It covered the background history of Facebook activism and some of the incidents that were experienced through the use of Facebook in Zimbabwe. Owing to socio-economic challenges in Zimbabwe, there has been an increase in Facebook activism with key players rallying people into social movements which serve as public arenas for discussing national issues. Chapter one also highlighted the objectives and aims of the study. It also gave a brief background on the rise of Zimbabwean social media campaigns in 2016.

Chapter two focused on literature related to the study. It covered what other scholars have researched and covered concerning the issue of social media activism and how citizens have reacted or used social media for social change. The first part of this chapter covered literature that discusses the use of social media as a tool of protest, while the second section discussed the literature that focused on social media protests in Zimbabwe.

The third chapter of the research discussed the methodology of the study. It focused on the methods and samples that were used to carry out the study. Methods and procedures of

carrying out the research were explained and the data that was used in the study described. Data used was collected from Facebook. Chapter four presented and analysed the data collected through the methods indicated in chapter three. This chapter analyzed comments made in reference to a video posted as part of Facebook activism in Zimbabwe. Analysis on various issues that were raised from these Facebook comments was done to show the different perspectives being raised concerning the new generation of digital activism. These comments helped to see the different ideologies being shared among the Zimbabwean citizens and the shaping of a new propaganda in the political arena.

5.2 Conclusions

Facebook activism is the new method of resistance being used by citizens in Zimbabwe. Ideologies of resistance are being shaped through the use of social media. This has incited interest among users of online platforms such as Facebook who contribute to debates on social media in several ways. The research sought to examine Facebook users' perceptions of social media activism. The objectives were set forth as follows:

- To analyze Facebook users' appreciation of social activism in Zimbabwe

- To discuss the demographic aspects Facebook users associate with media activists in Zimbabwe

- To analyze the use of Facebook as a site of protest in Zimbabwe.

It was observed that there is a general appreciation of social media activism in Zimbabwe particularly because spaces of dialogue seem to be lacking. Social media space has therefore afforded people the chance to discuss issues of national concern. It lends itself to people as a site for dialogue and conversations. Naturally, media houses are taking advantage of this space so that they can engage in dialogue with readers while companies and some politicians

have opened Twitter and Facebook accounts in order to keep channels of dialogue with stakeholders open. More importantly, political activists in Zimbabwe are increasingly taking advantage of social media to challenge the government to account for its actions to the citizens.

This research concludes that Facebook activism in Zimbabwe addresses various issue affecting the society. Facebook users believe that to rebuild Zimbabwe again there is need to have a youthful and vibrant generation. This viewpoint derives from an aversion towards aging politicians in the ZANU PF government whose policies are considered old and dated. Facebook users seem to agree that a new generation in power would bring in new ideas and new skills. It can also be noted that female agency in politics has increased and women are no longer passive when it comes to political issues. The research also highlighted that Facebook activism brought about the issue of education as a tool to emancipate citizens of Zimbabwe and it is the right of every Zimbabwean citizen to attain this education. Facebook activism is seen to have enabled citizens to express themselves without fear. In more ways than one, Facebook activists are embraced by social media adherents as a Joshua generation.

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