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FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF MEDIA AND SOCIETY STUDIES

Zimbabweans' Goats Memes Social Media Jokes As Representation of Zimbabwean Economic and Political Problems in 2017

BY

SANDRA NOENSIE KHUMALO

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Supervisor: Professor N.A Mhiripiri

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CHAPTER 1

1.1   Introduction

This study analyzed the social media jokes surrounding Zimbabwe's economic and political deterioration which began in the year 2000 due to the Zimbabwean government taking a number of decisions that resulted in hyperinflation, the total collapse of the economy, a massive humanitarian crisis with 7 million people on food aid and a third of the population migrating to other countries especially South-Africa. This resulted in the intervention of the South-African government and eventually the Government of National Unity (GNU) with the Movement for democratic Change (MDC). The study also looks into the social media movements and also the participation of new media in democracy in Zimbabwe. The researcher focused the study on the social media jokes in particular the goat memes that have been and circulating on WhatsApp, twitter and facebook. Memes are defined by Shifman (2013) as "digital content units with common characteristics, created with awareness of each other and circulated, imitated and transformed via the internet with many users".

Social media is defined by McAdams (2014) as "digital systems that enable people, identified by profiles, to share information." These are platforms which allow people who have aspects that they share or have in common to exchange information within their circles. Social networking sites are defined by Boyd and Ellison (2008) as "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site."

1.2   Background of the Study

The memes formation about the reforms which the government of Zimbabwe intends to introduce as a method of improving the Zimbabwean economic and political depreciation have been in existence for a long time now. Resentment and disapproval of Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Dr Lazarus Dokora's reforms began in 2016 after his introduction of the recitation of the national pledge by primary and secondary school pupils which a lot of church

schools and parents did not approve of and therefore made use of the social media platforms to circulate the jokes and memes formed around those reforms. The next reform which the minister tried to introduce was that teachers wear uniforms to work which was quickly shot down through memes by both the teachers and the vicinity at large. This resulted in the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education refuting the claims.

Zimbabwean government's plan to introduce a law which permitted parents and guardians to pay school tuition using livestock and work became a barrel of jokes on social networking sites which went viral as misery stricken citizens made their sentiments recognized in performances that provided comic relief. Primary and Secondary Education minister Lazarus Dokora told the State media in April, 2017 that some schools had already entered into arrangements with parents and guardians who were unable to foot their children's tuition bill to do so by either manual labour or livestock. This move almost broke the Internet with unimpressed Zimbabweans using memes and jokes to express their anger and disbelief. When interviewed and asked about the goats' payment issue, Dokora then altered his statement and said that what he meant was that people should sell their goats and pay the school fees in cash. He even went further to say that generations of students have had their parents and guardians sell their livestock so as to pay for their children's fees.

Zimbabwe is in the throes of a huge economic crisis which has seen government failing to pay its workers on time on the back of dwindling revenue stemming from company closures and job losses. The president of the country R.G Mugabe stands accused of ruining the once-vibrant economy through bad policies. The reason why the student wants to research on the topic is that the Zimbabwean economic and political environment did not start deteriorating now but it has been deteriorating since the millennium therefore the citizens of the country have created a culture of circulating jokes which would have been created around any certain reform or decision which they do not approve of on social media, either as a way of expressing their concerns or as a revolt against the reforms or the ideas proposed by the government of Zimbabwe. The citizens have their own ideas which they feel should be implemented so as to better the economic and political environment of Zimbabwe.

Outspoken activist lawyer, Fadzayi Mahere took to micro-blogging site, Twitter to share her thoughts. "Cows and goats to secure bank loans. Cows and goats to pay school fees. Very soon we shall need a Reserve Kraal of Zimbabwe," tweeted Mahere. Another user, Prophet Cynic, tweeted a meme of a prominent charismatic preacher with the caption, "When your followers bring goats to pay as tithes and offerings…" Social influencer and businesswoman, Nomathemba Primrose Ndebele, also took to her Facebook wall in jest and wrote, "How are you paying? Swipe, Ecocash, Cash or Goat?" Renowned writer and filmmaker Tsitsi Dangarembga also tweeted, "If we had been told in 1970 'We are fighting to introduce cattle and goats as currency. Please help & die for this' what would we have said?" A joke which circulated on WhatsApp had a picture of a goat and the words: "BREAKING NEWS: Zimbabwe introduces a new currency." A video of a man carrying a goat taking it to a liquor store as payment for alcohol was also circulated on twitter, facebook and whatsapp. There is also another picture which circulated of currencies for other countries written with the Zimbabwean currency having a picture of a goat.

1.3 Statement of the problem

The problem statement of the study is how the social media contributes to democracy in Zimbabwe. The study seeks to analyze the social media's contribution to democracy in Zimbabwe and also to explore why Zimbabweans have resorted to social media jokes in trying to address and solve their economic and political problems through the social media.

There is also a need to bring understanding the role played by social media platforms in the lobbying of either rejection or acceptance of reforms brought by the minister of education Dr Lazarus Dokora. Melucci in Atton (2006:83) states that "the media action is the key to spearhead social movement. The media act as advocators for certain ideas and ideologies." Social media in this case advocates for the acceptance of the nation's views, resentments and outcries which brings back the concern of how the new media alter the acceptance levels of the audience.

1.4   Significance of the study

The student intends to clarify or rather look deeper into social media jokes and the usage of social media as a political battlefield in Zimbabwe and Africa as a whole. The study contributes significantly to the literature on the use of social media jokes in the lobbying of "counter hegemonic public spheres" or "Subaltern public spheres" Fraser (1992) in a bid to contribute to the practice of democracy in Zimbabwe.

Unlike the western literature, this study serves to contribute to the local and also African literature as it is based on Zimbabwe. The study also contributes significant to literature in the modules that have been undertaken by the researcher throughout her Media and Society Studies modules such as introduction to information technology, Global media structures, understanding the press in Zimbabwe, Political economy and the media and Journalism and contemporary issues in Zimbabwe.

The research will provide a basis for future researchers on Zimbabweans making use of social media to try addressing the country's political and economic crisis. The researcher noted that as much as there is literature that has been written on Zimbabweans making use of social media platforms to challenge the government's decisions and new reforms, none has been written specifically on the use of social media jokes to challenge Dr Lazarus Dokora's introduced reforms in the education sector and what has been done so far to address the Zimbabwean citizens concern.

The study may help the Zimbabwean government specifically the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to take into account the citizens of Zimbabwe's grievances, resentments and views towards the newly introduced reforms in the Ministry. It may also assist him to involve the Zimbabwean community in addressing problems encountered in the education sector so as to improve it.

1.5   Research objectives

- To explore why Zimbabweans address their problems, views and resentments towards newly introduced reforms through the social media instead of the channels placed by the government.

- To explore why Zimbabweans circulate created jokes and memes around reforms proposed instead of saying out their views directly.

- To explore the impact of the social media to the government of Zimbabwe when it comes to decision making.

- To assess the contribution of social media jokes in the rise of counter hegemonic public spheres.

1.6   Research questions

Main research Question

- How do Zimbabwean social media users make use of social media jokes and memes to address their problems, views and resentments towards newly introduced reforms?

Sub-research questions

- Why do the receivers of these jokes and memes then circulate them instead of saying out their thoughts directly to the government?

- What then was the government's response to these memes and jokes?

- How much do jokes and memes on twitter, whatsapp and Facebook contribute to the rise of counter hegemonic public spheres?

1.7   Delimitations

The alternative media has become a hub of deviant ideas. The study will be focusing on the emergence of deviant revolutionist ideologies in the alternative media; with the main thrust beaming on whatsapp, twitter and Facebook jokes on social media networking sites therefore data is readily available from whatsapp, twitter and Facebook archives.

1.8   Limitations

In conducting a critical appraisal in the research, the researcher is most likely to face logistical problems. Some of the social media users and participants are in the diaspora therefore because of limited resources, the researcher will have to use the internet to communicate with them instead of a face to face communication process. The researcher will have limited time to conduct her research of which some aspects of her research might surface after the submission date is due.

1.9   Assumptions

The study was motivated by the following assumptions:

- The Zimbabwean community has had fear instilled in them for so long that they grew accustomed to not bluntly airing their views and sentiments towards a reform that the government has introduced and are now using the counter- hegemonic public spheres as they seem safer and convenient for them.

- The Zimbabwean community has also lost confidence in its own system and the people whom it has elected into power therefore they turn to social media jokes as comic relief and with a speck of faith that maybe the government will hear their cries and respond in a desired manner.

1.9.1   Structure of the study

The study will consist of six chapters. Chapter one will give an introduction to the research problem and outline the background of the study. Chapter two will mainly focus on the literature review and theoretical framework. Chapter three will look at the research methodology, data collection methods, sampling techniques and data analysis techniques. Chapter four will consist of an analysis of the social media platforms, the administrative structures if they do exist and their relations with the rest of the news and information dissemination platforms. Chapter six then provides a summary of the study, recommendations and conclusions to the study.

1.9.2   Conclusion

This chapter was an introduction to the study. It focused on the background of the study, significance of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, limitations, delimitations and assumptions of the study. It gave light to the areas which the study is going to address.

Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical framework

2.1   Introduction

This chapter is a review of the studies that have been conducted regarding analyzing the potential of the new media technologies in transforming the democratic role of the internet. The chapter will also discuss the conceptual framework through which findings shall be analyzed and interpreted. The main argument in the literature is that the new media have a constantly increasing effect on democratic participation using social media jokes and memes and through user generated content, internet users can take part in these discussions which take place in the cyber-space without the government's interference.

2.2   The use of social media for democracy and political purposes

The expansion of long range interpersonal communication destinations such as whatsapp, Facebook and twitter has made numerous people re-evaluate how individuals comprehend political activism and citizen engagement. Joyce (2010) articulates that a greater part of the level headed discussion of the social media's plausible outcomes for activism happens between the poles of 'valuable apparatus that can lead towards an effective social change' and liberal medium that advances slacktivism. Morozov (2011) describes the social media in such a manner which goes along with the idea that people can make and join communities of interest. He proposes that the easiness of registration and distinctive proof lessens more frank undertakings to inspire social

change. The optimistic feeling connected with affiliating with a development may fulfil one's yearning for social association without them suffocating with formal political power.

Whatsapp, Facebook and twitter are like any other social media tools being used in this modern day of digital technology to counter power. Metz and Cade (2015) described whatsapp as a "freeware and cross-platform instant messaging service for smartphones". Twitter on the other hand is an online news and social networking service where users post and interact with messages which they term 'tweets'. Rouse and Dean (2014) articulate that "Facebook is a popular free social networking website that allows users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues". These social media tools have been used as a tool to counter power in Zimbabwe like it has been done in other African countries.

Amin (2011) talks about the use of the social media in the 2011 revolution in Egypt against Mubarak. She talks about how social media jokes were composed and made use of in Egypt in January 2011 were the Egyptian authorities ended up being forced to respond to the mass protests in the streets by shutting down access to the internet. This she says was an unprecedented move which had never occurred on a large scale before. At that time Egyptians were seriously making use of the internet to convey messages and social media jokes in a bid to have Mubarak step down from the ruling seat. At that time in Egypt, major transformations were introduced in the media arena as a result of satellite Television as well as the increased access to the internet and the rise of blogs together with other forms of social media such as twitter and Facebook which Khamis (2007; 2008) refers to as "…a shift from a monolithic to a more pluralistic media scene".

Khamis (2007; 2008) argues that "… the Egyptian media were largely acting as 'safety valves' that allowed the public to vent anger and frustration at many political, economic and social ills and injustices, especially given that people were not granted the chance to exercise real political rights or actual decision making, but without taking effective action on the ground". This brought

upon a situation which Seib (2007) describes as the new media being a substitute instead of promoting actual democratic practice and exercise of real political rights. Khamis (2007; 2008) states that "This trend was encouraged by the Egyptian government for the purpose of absorbing the public's anger and frustration at major political, economic, or social grievances, or diverting the public's attention away from them". Often, the underlying hypothesis was that, if the public was offered some sort of relief for their anger and frustration, worse actions and situations like revolutions and protests could be avoided or at best delayed.

Amin (2011) says the use of social media jokes was a form of activism which had a great impact to Egypt in 2011. Humor was used as a revolutionary tactic and it broke the fear barrier. Humor made being an activist look like something of class as Amin (2011) says "humor makes it cool to be an activist". This won the hearts of the young people as they joined in the revolution, they were motivated and encouraged to participate because of the humor that existed online and at Tahire square.

Zayani (2008) postulates that "while governmental hegemony and control were widely exercised in the political domain without genuine political participation, many alternative, resistant voices were creating their own media as platforms to express their political thoughts an oppositional views". Khamis (2011) uses the *Kafaya* opposition movement as a good example as the Arabic name conveyed a clear message to the Egyptian president who had been in term for a long time as it means 'enough'. Like many other secular political groups in Egypt, this one succeeded in making use of the internet websites and blogs to spread their views. The Muslim brotherhood or the Ikhwan also had a similar situation and according to Radsch (2012) they created some political alliances with their liberal counterparts, such as kefaya and April 6 movement, and, thus, became part of the general movement for change that swept through Egypt leading up to the revolution of 2011".

The broad access to the internet and the rise of "blogs" as termed by Atia, (2006) and Iskandar, (2006) particularly meant that this space was available to the public and to political activists

which did not exist before to express their views, ideas and criticisms to talk about everyday issues and discussion of various topics. The 2012 revolution of Egypt however translated media activism into some form of on the ground political activism through the important role that social media channels such as twitter, Facebook and YouTube and new communication technologies such as digital cameras and smart mobile phones played in fast-tracking political change, motivating civil society and promoting public recruitment.

Zimbabweans on the other hand like the Egyptians had been accustomed to living in fear of their government but resorted to making use of humor to get around the situation. Humor can be said to be a coping mechanism used in a way to ease the economic and political hardships people are going through in the country. The Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Lazarus Dokora introduced reforms which the Zimbabwean social media users did not agree on, amongst them being the proposal that 'those parents or guardians who are failing to pay for their children's school fees but have livestock to do so using the livestock or labor'. The social media users therefore took it to microblogging sites to argue upon the issue, making use of the spreading of social media jokes and memes around that proposal. This was their way of challenging the proposed reform by the Minister who later changed and said what he merely meant was that people should sell the livestock and pay for the school fees not that they should bring the livestock to pay fees.

2.3   Social media and citizen journalism

With the coming of the internet and the new media technology devices, people cover events and disseminate content easily and immediately using the social media. Deuz (2007) refers to social media as "audience participation in online media". Citizen journalism is also referred to by Deuz (2007) as 'amateur journalism' or 'accidental journalism'. The digital media tools have allowed people to publish their own stories and cover their own communities. Grabowicz (2013) states that "the phenomenon of citizen journalism and the wider trend of user generated context are creating new challenges and opportunities for the mainstream media." The aspect of any ordinary person who is not a trained journalist writing stories and being able to post them has been coined as 'citizen journalism'.

Before the internet, the main input in the media by the broader public had been writing "letters to the editor" and giving out news tips, among other things. The amalgamation of web 2.0 features and digital technologies, like digital cameras or video camcorders and camera supported mobile phones made it easy to gather and capture videos and photographs and post them online. In numerous ways, this slowly marked the commencement of audience participation in online media which is commonly referred to as 'citizen journalism', the aspect is simply referred to as 'user generated content' or USG.

Allan (2007) says that "we are all journalists". Everyone has the capacity now to produce, disseminate and also consume content. Citizen journalism as he says has given everyone the zeal and also platform to practice unlicensed journalism. Ureke and Chibuwe (2016) discuss the use of social media in the liberation of the public sphere due to the "sometimes anonymous nature of its communication…" Gerhards and Schafer (2009) and Gripsrud (2002) define the public sphere as "…an arena of public debate which crystalizes into public opinion and keeps the elite in check." In the case of Zimbabwe the public sphere has been silenced for so many years through the use of certain means and therefore with the coming of the social media, the people have somehow regained their power and freedom to air their views. The social media have been used as a tool to communicate with less if not any fear of victimization in Zimbabwe. Chibuwe and Ureke therefore state that the social media works as the public sphere's liberator.

Khamis (2013) states that the vitality of citizen journalism originates from the fact that citizen journalists who are dissatisfied with traditional media's version of events get the chance to tell their own stories. Howard (2011, p.182) says that "these patterns of political expression and learning are key to developing democratic discourses" because they promote participatory democracy. This pattern of reporting not only reaches the local or domestic audience but also has the ability to reach a broad international audience promoted by the increasing effect of transnational satellite channels such as Al Jazeera and al Arabiya which spread this type of content globally by requesting citizens to send them their videos and to upload them online.

The theory of "the public sphere" which was propounded by Habermas (1989) and said that "it is ideally a platform were everyone regardless of class, income, creed, gender and ethnicity has the right to sit and share ideas with the others on any socio-economic and political issues that are of public interest and concern, through fearless critical and rational debate." Holub (1991:3) went on to define it as "…a realm in which individuals gather to participate in open discussions. Potentially, everyone has access to it and no one enters into this realm with a better advantage than the other." This brings out the concept of equality in the public sphere and the freedom to contribute in any matter which is supposed to be present in a public sphere.

The internet is seen as giving a voice to those that have not been able to freely air their views. Chibuwe (2012) states that "the internet provides the public with an opportunity to talk back, to be heard, not only to hear. It gives a voice to the previously marginalized, they never get an opportunity to be heard and sometimes to be radicalized and to communicate with many people who may be displaced in time and space but spiritually bound…" The public gets to unite for one similar cause and be able to air their views and argue on that particular cause.

Citizen journalism can be said to have improved the media as it allows users to immediately capture and disseminate news. Gillmor (2008) articulates that citizen journalism can assist "capture the moment not the aftermath". Some survivors of the Indonesian earthquake and tsunami of December 26 2004 used cam-corders, digital cameras and mobile phones to capture the event as it happened and the extent of the damage and sent to media houses like BBC, MSNBC and CNN and many other news organizations and also posted them on blogs. The same applied during the London Bombing and Virginia Tech shooting. Eye-witnesses captured images using their mobile smart phones and cameras and sent them to media organizations or published them on blogs and social media tools. This rarely happens with conventional news coverage making use of reporters to bring to light the full extent of the damage. In all incidents, the material from these people contributed a new dimension to the coverage of the disasters. Outing suggested that the earthquake and Tsunamis in South-Asia and their aftereffects signified "a

tipping point in so-called 'citizen journalism'". New media tools have progressed to an extent that people on the scene share with expert journalists the capacity to reach a wider audience to share and display to the world what they saw and experienced.

Olorunissola and Douai (2013) state that "it is more common for practitioners in the local media to report scoops that originate in the citizens' media located online…" Social media has in a way improved the old or traditional media such that it helps in obtaining news and is complementary to traditional media according to these scholars. They articulate that "At structural level, new media enable users to circumvent the problems that hamper traditional media, specifically the dominance of corporate or state control." In a way, the problems that are being faced by the traditional media in producing and disseminating news effectively are being solved by the social media and citizen journalism. The political economy of the traditional media being one of them. The funders and shareholders of the organizations are the ones who determine the content produced and disseminated. Issues of licensing also are another filter in content therefore by the time news reaches its audiences, it would be refined and some aspects of the original story removed meaning credibility being compromised with.

Zaid (2010) states that "[s]ocial media triggered a revival of the watchdog function of the media and paved the way for it to act as a fourth estate in controlling the misconduct of the political regime". This adds on to complementing the old media as citizen journalism covers the watchdog gap left by traditional media. Olorunnisola and Douai (2013) state that "…World Wide Web's porous nature offers reporters, activists and citizens multiple and accessible ways of disseminating information without fear of official retaliation". Citizen journalism has allowed anyone with the ability and with resources to create and disseminate news without fear of retaliation from the government which means participatory democracy in play. Communication is no longer one way but has proven to be definitely two way as the audiences would freely contribute their feedback and thoughts on any contemporary issue and have discussions and argue on social media without fear.

Berger (1996), Mabweazara (2010) in Mhiripiri and Mustvairo (2013) articulate that new ICTs are alternatively viewed as presenting African journalists with new opportunities for improved practice, or as a threat to normative practices. This all depends on how these platforms are used. In this study, the social media platforms are used to assist Zimbabwean journalists in obtaining people's views about the 'goats as payment for school fees' issue. This improves their day to day practice in a way as they disseminated information knowing fully how people felt about the proposed reform.

In Zimbabwe, citizen journalism was used to disseminate the word that Primary and Secondary Education Lazarus Dokora said that parents and guardians could pay school fees using livestock and labor. The same was used in dissemination again of the jokes and memes surrounding the reform. Social media users therefore made use of Whatsapp, Twitter and Facebook to spread these jokes and memes without fear of the government intervention and this proved to be a practice of their democratic right and freedom of expression and freedom to receive and impart information as stated in section 61 Zimbabwean constitution which provides that a) "Every person has the right to freedom of expression which includes the freedom to seek, receive and communicate ideas and other information" and b) " freedom of artistic expression and …creativity and academic freedom".

2.4   WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook as tools to counter power

Citizens ruled by authoritarian governments have been exploited using systems employed by the ruling regime to disseminate their ideologies. Castells (2002) acknowledges the capacity by social actors to challenge and at the end succeed to change the power relations entrenched in society. He talks of the self-communication, counter power and points out that the flow of the internet, mobile communication, digital media and variety of tools of social software have impelled the growth of horizontal networks of a multi-way of communication that connect locally and globally in chosen time. These tools are therefore real in fast-tracking the rate at which people react and respond to issues and discuss upon them without fear of government interface.

The idea of *Facebook, Twitter and whatsapp* being used as armaments to counter power has been buttressed much by Castells (2002) on the rise of mass self-communication. He asserts that, politics is centered on socialized communication on the capability to sway people's minds. His point is based on the issue of the mainstream media's ability to choose what content to give out to its audiences and which content to leave out. The idea behind it is that what does not exist in the mainstream media is not in existence even in reality according to the public mind even though it could have a patchy presence in individual minds.

The media exist as a yardstick to the public which gives direction to their thoughts, this however has not succeeded in influencing people's reaction towards a matter. The privately owned mainstream media were successful in making people think about the issue of goats as payment for school fees in primary and secondary schools, however they were not able to make them think of how that would assist them in making their lives easier in fees payment for their school attending children. The mainstream media are no longer holders of power but instead they constitute by a larger space where power is decided. Today, politics is dependent upon media politics.

The way in which the media present and represent matters becomes a yardstick which points the people's minds to a certain direction of thinking. Hall (1997) describes representation as the production of meaning through the use of images and language discourse. He argues that the process of representation on its own constitutes the very world it expects to represent and explores how the shared culture of a society, its signs and images, give a realistic guide that offers a meaning to the word rather than just reproducing it.

The cyber space is becoming a space for power making, though not a space for influence maintenance. The dispersion of internet, mobile communication, digital media and variety of tools of social media have provoked the expansion of horizontal networks of shared communication that connect the local and global at any given time. Castells (2002) refers to it as the self-mass-communication as it is self-generated in content, self-directed in giving out content, and self-selected in reception by numerous that communicate with many.

The idea being put across is based on user generated content, the ideas posted and the comments that come from the social media users are independent from any political party influence. The social media users have access to sharing information, jokes and memes which would have been suppressed in the mainstream media. This diverges from the government intervention aspect in the electronically produced and spread information, jokes and memes. Which supports the potential of the social media users on social media networking sites to counter power.

The limit by social performing artists to challenge and in the long run determine how their society should be run and them participating in decision making is uniform to the public. It is the task of the society to participate in vital decision making of the day to day running of their country. This is what the social media users were trying to do in spreading social media jokes about the 'goats, livestock and labor as payment for school fees' issue through spreading the social media jokes and memes around the issue. Human rights activists also have the right to counter injustices from any spheres though the only platform they can participate on which gives them such freedoms is the cyberspace, thus the prevalence of social media participation particularly *whatsapp, Facebook and twitter.*

Mhiripiri and Mutsvairo (2013) speak of the hate language and common obscenities in the unregulated social media sites frequented by Zimbabweans of which most of them make use of pseudonyms and make use of the vernacular languages. They quote Mbembe (2001) as he calls it "aesthetics of vulgarities", of which Mhiripiri and Mutsvairo (2013) describe as a situation "when in nearly ineffectual subversive ways the subaltern throw scatological insults both at themselves and at a repressive Party-State system."

2.5   Conceptual Framework

This section focuses on the concepts that guide this study and these are social shaping of technology, democratic participatory theory and revisiting the theory of the public sphere.

2.6   Social shaping of technology

In defining this theory, Williams and Edge (1996) argued that technological developments are socially shaped. They state that in the implementation of new technologies and innovation, there

are both technical and social factors that are considered as resultantly affecting the technological content and its social implications. Lievrouw (2006) defines social shaping of technology as a concept of demystifying technological development from being detached from political, ethical and social scrutiny. This basically means that technology is not immune to such social factors and hence is affected one way or the other. The social shaping of technology is an extension of Marshal Mcluhan's technological determinism theory and rendered the theory of technological determinism as a theory of partial truth. Lievrouw and Livingstone (2006) state that technological determinism is an inadequate explanation of technological development or innovation or of social change. In their explanation, these scholars use an illustration of a hammer and nail in which technology is the hammer and society is the nail and regards where it implies that technology hammers societal changes.

According to Livingstone (1999) technological changes must be located within the cultural process hence he further asserts that more scholars are skeptical about societal changes that follow technological innovations as social changes are rather a result of complex political, environmental and economic factors. Technological determinism theory is based on the premise that a society's technology drives the development of its social structure and cultural values. Mumford (1970) argues that technology drives social change. It talks of a new superior technology, ultimately pushing aside its competitors and forcing the society to adopt it.

Baran (2006) however is of the view that technology and technological changes do not have an effect on social and cultural communication but rather changes the basic elements of communication. This means that mass communication improves with the changes in technology, for example the invention of internet downloads has revolutionized the music, film and book industries. The Social Shaping of Technology concept examines the content of technology and the process involved in innovation. Mckenzie and Wajcman (1985) argue that this cannot be done without considering the political, social organisational, and cultural factors in contrast to the more traditional approaches which address the outcome or impacts of technological change.

According to Williams and Edge (1996), "central to social shaping of technology is the concept that there are choices inherent in both the design of individual artefacts and systems, and in the direction or trajectory of innovation programs." This theory is concerned with exploring the material consequences associated with different technical choices but also criticizes technological determinism which says that technology follows its own developmental path, detached from human influences and in turn influences society. In this manner, social shaping theorists conceive the relationship between technology and society as one of mutual shaping.

Central to the shaping of technology concept as Williams and Edge (1996) assert are choices to be made, though at times not deliberately and such choices render technological developments reversible and negotiable, which is contrary to technological determinism. In that manner technology becomes liable to social factors such as policy claims and objectives. Mackay and Gillespie (1992) explore the sociology of technology and denote that the role of ideology, marketing and consumer appropriation of technology can be understated in understanding social shaping of technology. The study use of the theory to highlight and assess how the same concept affects professionalism in a converged newsroom. Newsroom convergence therefore, illustrates the technology being appropriated into society whereas how it shapes journalists into uploading or shunning social values informs the basis of the study.

Appropriation of technology products by consumers and the value they attach may go beyond the intended use. Thus, the smart phone apart from its numerous cell phone functions can be used as a tool for democratic participation or a symbol of wealth thus society attaches meaning to technology. Understanding such concepts is important for this study as it aims at understanding how new media technologies promote participation of the previously marginalised citizens in vital decision making in Zimbabwe. The social shaping of technology theory will assist in understanding how social media users respond to and react to information disseminated on the social media.

2.7   Cyber activism; online activism theory and practice

The study will hypothesize cyber activism through which social media users reactions and responses are helpful in creating a democratic participation sphere on whatsapp, twitter and Facebook on the issue of 'goats as school fees payment' proposed reform. Howard (2011) articulates that digital activism is the demonstration of utilizing the internet to propel a political cause that is hard to progress disconnected from the net. He also adds on that it assists in civic engagement. In other words, it can be said that this is what the online activists were fostering. Civic engagement refers to the process through which civil society is called upon to participate in ongoing political, economic and social efforts that are meant to bring about change to the community. Browers (2006) argues that "according to much contemporary democratic theory, civil society forms the bedrock of good democratic governance…and this sentiment is echoed in more popular political discourses".

The aim of activism is constantly to make mentally and candidly convincing advanced antiques that tell stories of bad form, translate history and patron for specific political results. Cyber activism is a vital concept which enabled the Egyptian revolution to be a success. Thus, the social media users were advocating for the revoking of the 'goats, livestock and labor as school fees payment' reform. The social media is being used by activists as alternative media. The main argument embodied in this study is that, 'the social media users' reactions and responses are being influenced by the nature of cyber interactivity'.

Social media users' participation and what they produce are regarded with the hope to contribute to an informed citizenry and democracy. In this instance, the social media users' responses assist in the democratic participatory framework where they have to air out their opinions on how it is not such a good idea to accept the reform proposed by Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Dr Lazarus Dokora.

Social media users through Whatsapp, Twitter and Facebook platforms have been given the opportunity to make their own judgments and opinions on the issue of 'goats, livestock and labor as payment for school fees'. The power lies in the hands of social media users to choose to accept and which side to advocate for. For example when Minister of Primary and Secondary Education tried to have teachers at schools wear uniforms to work, people took it humorous as they did with the goats as payment of school fees.

The goal of activism is often to create intellectually and emotionally compelling digital artefacts that narrate a story of injustice, interpret history and advocate for a particular political outcomes. Through the Facebook, whatsapp and twitter platforms used to spread the goats memes, the users were trying to engage more users to see the 'ridiculousness' of the reform that was proposed by Dr Lazarus Dokora. Browers (2006) argues that;

> "The most noticeable change has been a distinct shift of focus in discussions of democratization from the state to society-that is, from the theories that view the state as the locus of political change to theories that see the impetus for change as arising in a non-governmental realm."

This supports the claim that the internet can lead to a greater democratization of society which is founded on the tenets of unlimited access to information and equal participation in cultural discourses. Puttnam (2001) articulates that, researchers were at the beginning enthusiastic about the abilities of the internet to advance civil society, and the mass communications were confronted with cruel feedback for their charged undermining of common society. He stated that the range to which the web fits in supposition is still open for discussion. Whatsapp, Facebook and Twitter give social media users a platform to vent out their anger, let out their feelings which is reasonable in light of the fact that they are an important part of the issues being discussed by the first class.

Cyber idealists like Rheingold (1995), Toffler and Toffler (1995) and Dyson (1998) note that at first a significant part of the compositions on the web fitted into the 'digital idealistic' school of thought, proposing that the internet gave extraordinary and energizing chances to upgrade society. Digitally confident individuals saw the internet, with its capacity to enable citizens to respond to content promptly and be acquainted to new computerized advances as the key rebuilding of egalitarianism and native liberation. Through the commonness of the internet, there are optimistic Zimbabweans with an increasing drive towards the acceptance of technological advancements.

Lynch (2011) on the Egyptian revolution said that;

> "It was not a matter of knowing, or not knowing, hoe their fellow citizens felt about the regime, rather it was a matter of calculating the risk involved in protesting and the chances of success, how much people are ready to sacrifice, and whether they are willing to pay the price of freedom."

Twitter and Facebook were tools used to mobilize people. These platforms were best suited in informing people in large numbers and for the task of organizing the protesters. As Idle and Nunns (2011) state that this is where information can be spread to multitudes of people in an instant and then shared between friends. The same applies to whatsapp, as social media users make use of the platform to spread information on whatsapp groups which have a maximum of two hundred and fifty six from the previous one hundred participants. Khamis (2011) notes that,

> "The new media operates as an effective tool for promoting civic engagement, through supporting the capabilities of the democratic activists by allowing forums for free speech and political networking opportunities; providing a virtual space for assembly, and supporting the capability of the protesters to plan, organize and execute peaceful protests."

He also supported his statement saying that "if you want a free society, just give the internet access." The success of the Egyptian revolution due to the effectiveness of the social media tools

in fostering about change and democratic transformation during that time exhilarated their argument. Social media enabled an effective form of citizen journalism through providing platforms for ordinary social media citizens to document their protests. Social media users in this case were trying to stimulate feelings or similar sentiments from more social media users in spreading the goats' memes around the 'goats as payment for school fees' issue. Rahman (1985, 2002), Boyd (1999) and Rugh (2004) contends that at that time, the Arab media were mostly under governmental control which was meant to keep laypeople clueless and subsequently unequipped for adequately taking an interest in political discussions and discerning civil arguments. This is what social media users were trying to counter through perpetuating a discursive forum through whatsapp, twitter and Facebook platforms, and the aim was focused at civic engagement so that the social media users bring forth social and political change against the reforms introduced by the ruling government.

The significance of the introduction of the internet sterns form the fact that it defies boundaries, challenges governmental media censorship and provides an alternative voice to traditional media outlets which echo official, governmental policies and views. It in a way enables the in-flow and outflow of content simultaneously through what Salman, Fernandez and Post (2010) describe as that it 'virtually defined…emerging cyber world that knows no physical boundaries", it therefore provides invaluable opportunities public mobilization to those audiences across borders. Howard (2011) articulates that through online networking, national columnists who are disappointed with the conventional media's variant of occasions are telling their own stories and there are these political expressions and learnings that are critical in creating democratic discourses.

He also goes on to argue that the social media does not only assist in starting democracies but they also give a hand in upholding the existing ones and at the networked design the social media is the key factor threatening authoritarian regimes. This is an outcome of the inclusive nature of the cyberspace where people can be anonymous and make use of pseudo names, sex and age. It therefore becomes difficult to know the person you are interacting with on twitter, Facebook and

whatsapp hence they can say whatever they feel like saying. Whatsapp has an end to end encryption which does not allow a third party access to two people's conversation which allows people to freely share news, jokes and memes. Freeland (2011) argues that opponents of a dictator have the need to feel that their views are widely shared and that enough of their fellow citizens are willing to join them. This study also assumes the same sentiments, that the social media users who circulated the 'goats memes' wanted their views and sentiments to be appreciated by social media users.

2.8   Revisiting the theory of the public-sphere

In the contemporary high technology societies, there is emerging a significant expansion and redefinition of the public sphere. It would be important in this research for the researcher to revisit the Habermasian public sphere theory in new media regime. This is because its relevance has been assessed in the new media regime. It also looks at the possibility of making the public sphere more robust and vibrant in a cyber-age that has widened the gap between information rich and information poor.

Habermas theory of the public sphere provides a way of solving some confusions that have infested progressive social movements and the political theories linked to them. A confusion that entails the use of the very same expression "the public sphere," but in a sense that is less precise and less useful than Habermas's. This expression has been used by many feminists to refer to everything that is outside the domestic or familial sphere. Thus, "the public sphere" in this usage conflates at least three analytically distinct things: the state, the official-economy of paid employment, and arenas of public discourse.

Papacharissi (2010) asserts that the potential of online media generates a multitude of responses and reactions of which most are centred on the ability of digital and online media to simultaneously restrict and empower individuals as they interact with each other in the public life. The use of the internet is thus the operative medium in this instance as it converges and sustains multiple technologies, becomes and asset or detriment depending on how it is used.

According to Papacharissi (2002) the internet serves as a tool and does not contain the agency to effect social change. Individuals on the other hand have different levels of agency based on that they can use the internet for various reasons, effects and gratification. While it is of importance to avoid the deterministic viewpoint that online technologies are able to on their own 'make or break' an existing public sphere, it is also of importance to understand that technologies usually embed assumptions about their potential uses which can be traced back to the political, cultural, social and economic environment that brings them to existence. Therefore, it is not the nature of technologies themselves, but instead the discourse that surrounds them which guides how these technologies are appropriated by a society.

Kranzberg (1985) and Lasch (1987) describe technology as 'non-neutral' or a 'mirror of society', and this attains meaning as technology is positioned with a particular discourse. Kranzberg (1985) identifies technology as a historically relative construct that has neither good nor evil intrinsic features and at the same time is not neutral as it is actualized by and within the historical context that delivered it. Lasch (1987) frames technology as a mirror that exposes inadequacies, merits and societal hopes. Individuals therefore are most likely to respond to technologies but even more to the discourses that surround them. The future of technology rests on the metaphors and the language we employ to describe it.

Lasch (1987) frames technology as the mirror that exposes the inadequacies, the merits, and the hopes of a society. Thus, individuals are likely to respond to technologies, but even more so, to the discourse that surrounds them. Gunkel and Gunkel (1997) and Marvin (1988) are of the view that the future of technology rests on the metaphors and language we employ to describe it. The tension between the 'public' and 'private' media is the one that has the discourse surrounding the political potential of online media as articulated in present-day democracies. Online media lend themselves to multiple uses but they acquire agency as they enable the re-negotiation of what is considered public in public life. Therefore a political opinion posted on the social media sites presents an effort to inhabit the public agenda and a potential privately voiced challenge to a public agenda determined by others.

In a realistic form of democracy, compromise of that which is considered public and that which is considered private takes place within the public sphere. As Habermas (1974) defines it, the public sphere presents "a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed". He initially propounded the theory of the public sphere and in his study, he set his focus on the organic sphere were people gathered, discussed and made political and economic decisions. There were inclusions and exclusions as women and children were not allowed. Nancy Fraser in 1992 as well as Zizzi Papacharissi revisited the notion of the public sphere and renegotiated it with the advent of new technology. Online media has become more appreciated by those who are able to access it and has become the preferred public sphere as it allows free discussion of what can be perceived as right and wrong. This can be related to the issue of the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Dr Lazarus Dokora trying to introduce that people be able to make use of livestock and labour as payment for school fees. People's opinions on the issue were deliberated on whatsapp, twitter and Facebook through the use of jokes and memes spread through these platforms.

Garnham (1990) and Habermas (1974) agree that, relatively different from but dependent on the ideas of the public, public space and public opinion, the public sphere expedites a balanced discourse of public affairs directed towards public interest and operates separately form the state and the economy. Today's public sphere according to Habermas is polluted by demons of commercialization and compromised by corporate conglomerates, produces discourse dominated by the intentions of advertising and public relations. The public sphere therefore becomes a transporter for capitalist ideology reproduction and hegemony. Naturally, an unregulated digital medium like the internet, with an infrastructure that guarantees unlimited and unregulated discourse that functions beyond geographic boundaries would suggest a virtual rebirth of the public sphere.

Utopian rhetoric habitually extols the democratizing potential of the new media (Bell, 1981; Davis, Elin and Reeher, 2005; Johnson and Kaye, 1998; Kling, 1996; Negroponte, 1998;

Rheingold, 1993). Dystopian rhetoric advises against eagerness pertaining the democratizing potential of the medium which currently operates on a 17% global penetration rate. Blumler and Gurevitch (2001) characterise the democratizing of the internet as just vulnerable. Habermas qualms the democratizing potential of the internet as he saw it developing in a commercial direction with a political orientation that was largely circumstantial.

The public sphere presents a field of social life in which public opinion is expressed by means of rational public discourse and debate. The vital objective of the public sphere is to promote public consensus and at the end of the day assist in decision making, although these goals may not essentially regularly be achieved. Settlement and balance are desirable outcomes; however, the value of the public sphere lies within its ability to enable dissolute and diverse discussion of the public affairs, thus epitomizing democratic ethnicities.

Papacharissi argues that the public sphere must not be mistaken with the public space. While the public sphere delivers the area that permits the public sphere to set up, it does not assure a vigorous public sphere. The public sphere also serves as a medium for the public but is practically different from the public, public affairs or public opinion. Habermas (1974) denotes that, "public opinion can only come into existence when a reasoning public is presupposed," and that is what differentiates it from people expressing simple opinions about public matters, thoughts expressed within simple proceedings that are made public, or a public that has individuals who gather. According to Habermas (1973), the public sphere has been compromised to such a point where its actual existence is questionable, which is best understood as what he describes as "a sphere which mediates between society and state, in which the public organizes itself as the bearer of public opinion, accords with the principle of the public sphere-that principle of the public-information which once had to be fought for against the arcane politics of monarchies and which since that time has made possible the democratic control of state activities".

The historical context aroused by this definition place the public sphere at odds with feudal authorities and in the modern era, with the state. Within the liberal model of the public sphere, mass media play a critical part in informing and directing public opinion, especially since mass society instantaneously shortens gender, class and race borders and renders direct communication among varying public constituencies more difficult. Habermas' argument is that the commercialized mass media have turned the public sphere into a space where the rhetoric and objectives of public relations and advertising are prioritized. Habermas (2004) articulates that "commercial interests, a capitalist economy and mainstream media content have colonised the public sphere and compromised rational and democratic public discourse extinct, with television frequently playing a vanguard role".

Fallows (1996) and Patterson (1993) denote that;

> "Re-appropriation of the public sphere combined with the mainstream media narratives that commodify or simplify complex political issues, summon public scepticism among citizens who already have narrowly demarcated ways of becoming involved in public affairs within a representative democracy model. It is therefore no simply that the media crowd the public sphere with commercial rhetoric, it is also that when they do choose to focus on public affairs they do that using frames that prioritize politicizing an issue rather than encouraging rational deliberation of it."

Cappella and Jamieson (1996; 1997) suggest that the viewpoint of civic participation is de-emphasized and scepticism is reinforced through undesirable or mocking coverage in the mass media, growing cynicism spreads in a spiral manner therefore producing an audience that is further detached from the public sphere.

Shockingly, these potentially powerful acts of rebellion originate from a private sphere of interaction, meaning that the citizen absorbs and is enabled politically through a private media environment located within the individual's personal and private space. While in the exact iterations of democracy, the citizen acts politically from a private sphere of reflection, expression

and behaviour. Within this private sphere, the citizen is alone but not lonely or isolated. Associated, the citizen operates in a mode with political language determined by them. Primarily still in monitorial orientation, the citizen is able to become an agonist of democracy, if needed but in an atomized mode.

2.9   Conclusion

The literature review and theoretical framework have provided a critical view of the works that have been researched in the field of social media jokes in the context of Africa's economic and political environment which can be coined as social media jokes participation in democracy. All these will be Juxtaposed with the reality of Zimbabwe's setting, in particular the goats memes created around the minister of primary and secondary education's attempted reforms to improve the ministry.

Chapter 3

Research Methods and Methodology

3.1   Introduction

Research can be understood as an investigation of data through unbiased and reliable strategies for finding explanation to the problem in search. It is the systematic investigation into and the study of materials and sources to establish facts and reach new conclusions. This section will describe how the data collected on the social media jokes are a representation of the deterioration of Zimbabwe's economic and political environment will be gathered, analyzed and presented.

Dawson, (2002), Kothari (1985) and Kumar (2005) are of the notion that a study incorporates describing and re-defining problems expressing speculation or prescribed clarifications, assembling, systematizing and survey information, making assumptions and achieving conclusions. The research design applied in this research will be deliberated with the unit of analysis, sampling methods, methods of information gathering, data analysis as well as methods of data presentation.

3.2   Research approach

This study utilizes qualitative research. Qualitative in its form is for creating meaning and occurrences to be interpreted. Benbasat (1985) in Baroudi (1989) argues that "the choice of research approach depends on the characteristics of the problem being researched". This approach was used to create and interpret meanings from the responses from 'netizens' on Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp on the jokes that emerged after the Minister of Education proposed the use of goats as currency for payment of school fees in Zimbabwean schools. The approach then gives the researcher the opportunity to come up with a mode of inquiry for an in-depth examination of a phenomenon. Given the constant efforts to change the education sector for the 'better' through reforms getting introduced by the minister and the public questioning as to if the reforms are sensible or not and if they will be taking the country back to what it was when our forefathers still lived and practiced barter trade.

3.3   Research design

The research design of this study in an interpretive case study that is analyzed through qualitative methods. Kumar (2011) argues that a research design is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions or problems. A case study as explained by Crowe et al (2011) is a study approach used to make a thorough, multi-sided perception of an intricate issue in its real-life concept. There are three sorts of case studies and these include explanatory, descriptive and exploratory case studies. This study uses an explanatory contextual analysis which is defined by Krippendorf (1969) as "the use of replicable and valid method for making specific inferences from text to other states or properties of its

source". The researcher used contextual analysis so that she could organize and elicit meaning from the data she collected. She also used contextual analysis so she could draw realistic conclusions from the analysis. The researcher is analysing the responses and reactions from the posts on WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook around the issue of goats as payment of school fees.

The choice is according to the study's research questions and objectives which attempt to explore the discourses embedded in the social media users' reactions, explain how they read and interpreted the media texts posted about the goats as payment for school fees issue. Therefore, the researcher selected sixty of the social media users who used the microblogging sites to respond to the reform by the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Dr Lazarus Dokora, she selected twenty respondents from the three platforms which are WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter. The use of explanatory research design was premised on the researcher's attempt to describe an apparent fact and conceptualize it inclusive of statements that create a situation that needs to be interpreted and explained.

Virtual ethnography will be used to evaluate the responses by social media users on the reform to use livestock as payment for school fees issue. Virtual ethnography is also referred to as cyber-ethnography which is an online research method that adapts ethnographic methods to the study of virtual communities and their cultures formulated through online mediated social interaction. Clifford (1997) states that cyber-ethnography addresses limitations in the traditional notion of a field-site as a localized space. He says it also understands that virtual communities can formulate a shared culture through digitally mediated interactions. Online archival research will be employed to obtain more information about their perceptions on the issue. This study will also make use of a semiotic analysis to analyze the different levels of anger by the citizens of Zimbabwe about the deteriorating political and economic environment of the country.

3.4   Target population

The population of this study are some of the relevant jokes and messages about the goats' issue posted on whatsapp, Twitter and Facebook by social media users. Fourie (2007) expresses that a population refers to the pool from which a sample is drawn. It is vital that the researcher states the level at which the suggestion that 'livestock and labour be used as payment for school fees'

was taken at by the social media users. This issue received quite significant coverage on the social media and caught the attention of liberation struggle fighters, activists, Zimbabweans abroad using the cyberspace and ordinary social media users. The researcher's focus is on the social media jokes and memes surrounding the suggestion of 'goats as payment of school fees' by the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Dr Lazarus Dokora and how the jokes are a representation of the Zimbabwean situation.

The researcher shall look at these reactions and responses from 15 April 2017, the day when the minister announced until a period of one month which ends on 15 May 2017. This is because the issue of goats as payment of school fees in Zimbabwe was a trending on WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook platforms from the day the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education announced that parents could pay for their children's fees using goats and labour to three weeks after he retracted his statement saying that people misunderstood him, what he simply meant was that they should sell their goats and pay for school fees.

There are a lot of social media jokes that were formulated around the issue and social media users reacted and responded to each of these in a different manner. From those posts, their reactions and responses, the researcher made use of purposive sampling because sometimes the social media users will be posting some issues that have nothing to do with the goats' issue.

3.5   Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis for this study is each post which has something to do with the goats as payment of school fees issue and its resultant comments. For every existing comment, there should be a post. A unit analysis refers to a portion which the research is rooted in. Babbie (2001) asserts that a sample is drawn from a large pool or elements. These elements are also known as units of analysis. This research is more concerned with the social media users' responses and reactions to the jokes and memes that were circulated around the goats as school fees payment issue. The researcher knows fully well that the issue received much criticism and received much coverage on the cyberspace than in the mainstream media were there was not so much of dwelling into it. The study however focuses on the discussions of the 'goats as payment

of school fees' issue, the jokes created and shared among social media users through WhatsApp, twitter and Facebook.

3.6   Sampling

The research employed in this study is purposive sampling to select the posts and the responses they evoked. Fankel and Warren (2006) note that sampling is an accurate representation of a larger group of people's actions and beliefs. This entails the selection of people from a large group and drawing conclusions from there. This study uses purposive sampling through focusing on the posts that received more reactions and responses.

3.7   Purposive sampling

Kothari (1985) describes purposive sampling as, when the researcher uses their own judgment to select population participants who would make good prospects of accurate information. This technique is used to select relevant posts and their corresponding responses. It should also be considered that people also created GIFs with goats or created memes with goats and spread them and there were a lot of social media users who spread those jokes and memes, some were written in words. Purposive sampling serves the purpose of selecting posts with many responses and were informative. Purposive sampling is useful in generating solid artefacts for analysis. The researcher is aware of the existence of some social media users that partake in the behaviour of forwarding issues that are incoherent with the topic of discussion at that moment, the researcher also considered them in explaining the irrationality of discussions.

Purposive sampling is also known as judgmental sampling. Babbie (2001) asserts that purposive sampling implies that elements are selected based on knowledge of the population and the aims of the study. Ncube (2010) declares that it must be heighted that the fact that purposive sampling heavily relies on the considerations of the researcher, which makes it inclined to uncontrollable results. The social media users responded to political discourses therefore a critical analysis would be required. This sampling technique is relevant in selecting the posts and their corresponding responses relevant to this study.

3.8   Methods of data collection

For a research to be successful, there should be suitable and relevant in data gathering for the study. Ranjit (2005) postulates that methods of data collections or tools for data collection are the most important aspects of a research project. This research is more qualitative in nature; therefore, the researcher will make use of virtual ethnography and online archival research as methods of data collection. Instead of conducting interviews and other types of collecting methods, the researcher will take the social media users' reactions to the issue of goats as payment of school fees and analyse the data.

3.9   Virtual ethnography

Vin Dijk (1993) articulates that types of communities which exist around the globe have been discussed. Due to the existence of these types of communities, new methods of data gathering are emerging. The virtual communities that are on cyber space cannot be investigated using ethnography which is generally used for offline audience. This study therefore made use of virtual ethnography. The researcher was added to a WhatsApp group called 'Inside Zim', which consists of activists and journalists and the groups where she is already a member were she actively participated in the discussions and dissemination of the social media jokes and memes to see more people's comments and reactions. Jones (2005) describes virtual ethnography as a qualitative approach to data collection in virtual communities. In this capability, its drive is customarily to look beyond volumes and distribution and to try excavating the deeper reason for behaviours and sentiments. The researcher used this data gathering technique to understand the discourses embedded within the social networking sites. The main aim was to investigate how these discourses influenced certain social media users' reactions and responses to these posts.

3.10   Online archival research

This research utilized online archival research. Gilliland (2011) says that archival research studies is the characteristics of records in their social and cultural contexts and how they are created, used, selected and transferred through time. It is done through reading the already existing chronicles of information and most of the times, this is data gathered and collected from documents stored in archives as Rutman (1984) and White (2005) say.

Online archival research is a technique of gathering data from the Cyberspace and it is secondary data. This study uses this type of technique to gather data from WhatsApp groups, social media users Twitter accounts and Facebook pages. The research focuses on posts regarding Lazarus Dokora's proposed reform that people pay school fees using goats and labour and the social media users corresponding responses on these memes and jokes around the proposed reform.

3.11 Methods of data analysis

This research is informed by qualitative methods of data analysis which is viewed by Lee (2000) as a method of describing and interpreting the artefacts of a social group or society. Therefore, methods which borrow from qualitative data analysis will be used and they include semiotic analysis which is the main anchor of data analysis and critical discourse analysis.

3.12 Semiotic analysis

To study social media jokes and the economic and political deterioration of Zimbabwe with reference to the goats' memes, why the social media users prefer to circulate social media jokes and memes, the researcher utilizes semiotic analysis. Fiske (1990) defines semiotics as the study of signs and the way they are expressed leading to communication and understanding between human and society. He also referred to it as the meaning making process. With such understanding signs refer to wording and imagery used to share information with others on the cyber space by social media users. The researcher therefore used this technique to analyze the images that were forwarded by social media users to each other. Signs also refer to the texts, therefore semiotic analysis hall be vital in unpacking the hidden meanings embedded in the messages spread by the social media users.

Semiotics have also been defined by Sebeok (1974:108) as the study of the exchange of any messages or whatsoever and of the systems of signs which underlie them, the main concept of semiotics remaining the sign. This technique helps in unravelling the denotative and connotative meanings hidden in the goats' social media jokes and memes. Some social media users responded through words, GIFs and some using emojis. Semiotic analysis is therefore relevant in analyzing the responses and their signification. Baudrillard (2005; 2007) supports this as he argues that the classical Marxian critique of political economy needed to be supplemented by

semiotic theories of the sign which articulated the diverse meanings signified by signifiers like language organized in a system of meaning. His emphasis was grounded upon the politics embedded in science of signs. Hall (1997) therefore says that meaning is polysemic thus people read texts differently. This technique is key in exploring the discourses embedded in the social media users' interpretations of the goats' memes circulated on WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook.

3.13   Critical Discourse analysis

This study also made use of the critical discourse analysis as a technique to analyze text, socio-political and economical influences of the discourses and power relations. Foucault (1998) notes that discourse is power and power is everywhere. Van Dijk (1997) describes critical discourse analysis as a type of discourse analytical research that principally looks deep into the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, duplicated and counterattacked by text and talk in the social and political context. This data analysis techniques are important for the researcher in this study because it is key in analyzing the discourses embedded in the use of social media jokes and memes in countering the government of Zimbabwe's authorities. The researcher borrowed this type of analysis from Fairclough and Mitchel Foucault discourse. Fairclough and Wodak (1997:271) provide a summary of main beliefs of critical discourse analysis which are;

Critical discourse analysis addresses social problems

➢ Power relations being discursive
➢ Discourse constitutes society and culture
➢ Discourse does ideological work
➢ Discourse is historical
➢ The link between text and society is mediated
➢ Discourse is interpretive and explanatory
➢ Discourse is a form of social action

The researcher used critical discourse analysis as directed by these tenets to interpret and analyze data on politics and social issues from the social media users' reactions and responses emanating

from the social media jokes and memes around the goats as payment of school fees proposed reform. The emphasis is on the ways in which the proposed reform by the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education is a form of harassment among the social media users on the internet. Van Dijk (1998) points that critical discourse analysis deals with the affiliation between discourse structures and those of local and global context. It is not usually made explicit and appears usually in terms of the philosophies of information and dogma. This transition from the mainstream media to social media reveals a paradigm shift of discursive spaces. This means that discourse structures also change. In this understanding, critical discourse analysis is used to critique the choice in wording as well as figurative language that has certain meaning in the social media users' reactions and responses. Since this research seeks to explain why social media users made use of social media jokes to contest the reforms introduced by the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education instead of making use of alternative methods, critical discourse analysis becomes vital because it proves how language is powerful in countering certain discourses.

3.14   Methods of data presentation

The researcher made use of a thematic analysis to present her findings. In the process of reading into the social media users' reactions and responses towards the proposed reform by Dr Lazarus Dokora, themes came up, therefore the researcher used these themes to present findings. Braun and Clarke (2006) articulate that thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally systematizes and describes data in rich detail. Boyatzis (1998) supports that notion when he says that thematic analysis is further effective in interpreting various aspects of a research topic. The researcher acknowledges key themes and concepts from the reactions and responses of social media users analyzed for this research.

The study utilized descriptive thematic coding. This approach helps in explaining the discourses embedded in the social media users' reactions and responses and in explaining what they wanted to achieve in spreading the goats' memes and jokes. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that "Themes capture something important about the data in relation to the research question, and it presents

some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set". The researcher therefore read the posts and their corresponding responses and looked at the memes and their responses and reactions from the social media users and came up with themes. These themes were later used in presenting the findings. To show the authenticity of the study, the researcher extracted some parts of the social media jokes and social media users' responses to them to show how the themes were established.

3.15   Organisational analysis

Inside Zim WhatsApp group was founded by one human rights activist who is the main group administrator and founder. He then selected fellow human rights activists in Zimbabwe whom he has worked with and knew to be human rights activists and added them to the group. The added members also identified other journalists and activists to add into the group. The founder of the group is the one who selected other group administrators so that they govern the group which means they have the power to add members, remove members, add more group administrators and remove each other from being administrators by removing the administrator from the group and then re adding them.

3.16   Conclusion

This chapter looked at the methods of data gathering and analysis that were utilized by the researcher and those were; virtual ethnography and online archival research to gather information from Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp. This data was analyzed using semiotic analysis and critical discourse analysis to unveil the discourses embedded in the social media users' reactions and responses. They also assisted the researcher to explain how the freedom being provided by social media tools influence these discourses. The chapter also briefly looked at the organizational analysis of the WhatsApp group which the researcher was added to for observation purposes.

CHAPTER 4- PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1   Presentation and analysis of data

This chapter is the core of the research as all data collected is presented and analyzed. The research explores the reasonableness of the discussions on the proposal of Dr Lazarus Dokora to have livestock and goats as payment of school fees. Critical discourse analysis was employed to

analyze the data gathered as (Fairclogh and Wodak, 1997; Van Dijk, 2007:108 and Mazid, 2008) state that it is a type of analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.

This research also employed semiotic analysis which Sebeok (2008) says is "the study of exchange of any messages whatever and of the systems of signs which underlie them, the key concept of semiotics remaining the sign." A sign as defined by Hall (1997) is anything that signifies or has meaning in that certain code or given text. Mazid (2008:434) argues critical discourse analysis and semiotic analysis can successfully be used to complement each other during research. The techniques used to analyze the study trace from scholarly arguments and are rich in unbundling and unpacking hidden meanings embedded in social media users disseminated jokes and memes around the goats as payment of school fees reform. Some of these jokes were in the form of pictures but had an explanatory text, some were audio visuals, and some were in text form. The first theme found from the jokes is that the ZANU-PF government has proved total failure in governing Zimbabwe therefore political change is requested by the social media users. The other themes to be discussed in this chapter are Zimbabweans bravery in demanding the ZANU-PF government to step down from the ruling seat, Social media, the key to fearless communication to the government and memes and jokes an escapism tool from the problems Zimbabweans are facing.

4.2   The ZANU-PF government's total failure in governing Zimbabwe therefore need for political change

The pictorial joke was obtained from Facebook. The message denoted by it is that even a mentally ill person can tell that the proposal by Minister of Primary and Secondary education to pay school fees with goats means that Zimbabwe is almost rubbish just like the garbage in the dustbin right next to the post.

Social media jokes around the goats as payment of school fees proposed reform have denoted certain messages in the media. The government's failure to implement strong and reasonable policies for the betterment of Zimbabwe has caused Zimbabweans to lose confidence in the very government which they elected. While other countries are progressing, Zimbabwe on the other hand is moving backward.

Follow

ThisFlag KE   @ThisFlag_Kenya

What we understand by this new goat currency:
Left: Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe
Right: Reserve bank of Zambia
11:35 AM - Apr 16, 2017

The joke above was obtained from twitter and denotes that the way Zimbabwe is functioning is hard to understand. Kenya and Zimbabwe are juxtaposed. While Kenya has gold as their currency Zimbabwe has goats as its currency, those two are incompatible in their value and nature.

The government has run out of options to mend Zimbabwe's ailed economic and political environment and therefore is resorting to the old school way of doing things. In this instance they are proposing 'Barter trade' which is archaic and labelled ridiculous, especially considering that

this is where Zimbabwe came from a long time ago. O'Sulivan, Arthur, Steven and Sheffrin (2003) describe Barter as "a system of exchange where goods or services are directly exchanged for other goods without using the medium of exchange, such as money".

Some social media users' reaction towards the proposed reform are that the ZANU PF government has failed Zimbabwe and has reduced the country to a barbaric one by proposing an old reform that was changed for purposes of improvement. The government is perceived as a government that works at pulling the country behind instead of further ahead. The Zimbabwean government is seen proposing a reform that is not feasible to the Zimbabwean nation which is taken as neglect by the nation and useless. The social media users are therefore for the idea that they should lay down the ropes of power for the younger generation with new and innovative ideas that will revive Zimbabwe. The reform does not accommodate those that are in the urban areas, it accommodates only those individuals in the rural areas. This is because majority of the people that own livestock reside in the rural areas. One social media user commented on the issue that:

> "I do not think that is sustainable with regards to parents in urban areas. This is so because due to the learner population in both urban and rural areas, so many parents have outstanding balances."

Of which another social media user concurred with him saying that:

> "I think it works for people in rural areas, not people like us in town. Government should just address the issue of money shortages so that everyone has access to the dollar and pay school fees."

The government of Zimbabwe has been presented as one that does not care about addressing the problems of the whole of Zimbabwe but just a simple fraction of the Zimbabwean nation and temporarily.

The solution of paying school fees making use of livestock can only last for a short time and then after that the same money problems resume in Zimbabwe. It is better off for Zimbabwe to find a more permanent solution to run and sustain its nation than to work on temporary solutions that would only work for a short time.

The government is also presented as one that gives very little concern about the very same children whom they say they are building a future for. The paying of school fees can be said to be a reform that puts children first but there is a blind side to it. Children are vulnerable beings who easily succumb to pressure and partake in actions which they are not aware of the consequences. For instance, bullying each other which has horrible implications on the bullied child's life. One concerned social media user lamented that paying school fees through labor would subject the student to bullying from other school mates. The commotion caused at the school because of parents wanting to pay for their children's school fees with goats and labor was also a matter of concern. The social media user expressed his concern over the child's esteem and the ridicule that the child would go through if they were to provide physical labor at the school in exchange for their child's education. Through one of the social media jokes on Facebook, the picture below was circulated of parents dragging the goats to school to pay school fees. It served the purpose of showing the commotion that the proposed reform would cause at schools.

Opening day term 2 2017

One of the social media users' exact words concurring with the picture were that:

> "…I am trying to imagine those 1000-plus parents coming to work at school. There will be commotion! Talk about self-esteem…children will be subject to ridicule and bullying, and the concerned parents themselves will not feel good about it. Why spend time doing manual labor at a school when they can go there to look for a good job?"

Bullying is described by Olweus (1993) as "aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing by peers that is carried out repeatedly and involves imbalance of power, either actual or perceived, between the victim and the bully". This behavior has negative implications on the victim's life in

the future. Olweus (1993) considers the importance of bullying as a major risk factor for poor physical and mental health and reduced adaptation to adult roles including forming lasting relationships, integrating into work and being economically independent. He denotes that everyone should instead of brushing aside the psychological implications of certain actions, take them into great consideration as a significant risk factor and safeguarding issue. The concerned social media user places their concerns were the government does not in the proposal of the reform, the psychological needs of any child. For a child to grow up well with no problems that would have negative implications on their future, there is a need for a conducive environment were the child is not subjected to psychological torture of which bullying is part of psychological torture.

The constitution of Zimbabwe provides in section 19 of the 2013 constitution that:

"1. The State must adopt reasonable policies and measure, within the resources available to it, to ensure that children-

d) are protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse, exploitation, corruption or degradation."

This includes subjecting the child by any means to any form of bullying by other children in and out of school.

Another joke that emanated from twitter showed goats on a tree when they heard that they would be used to pay school fees which does not happen. This joke had a hidden message that the reform that parents pay school fees using goats is no feasible because it is not everyone who has the goats and even if they use goats to pay now, they will later be extinct in Zimbabwe in the

kraals of the rural populace and will be filled up in the school kraals and Zimbabwe will be back to the monetary problems it has been facing.

A parent and social media user commented that:

> The assumption also is that parents in rural areas have some sort of wealth. What if they don't? and then what? Go and work? The ministry should look for viable options."

This proves that the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Lazarus Dokora proposed a reform without looking into it and therefore does not have any options just in case that plan does not work out. The parent has questions which actually prove the incompetence of the government of Zimbabwe's ability to rule the country and improve its economic and political environment.
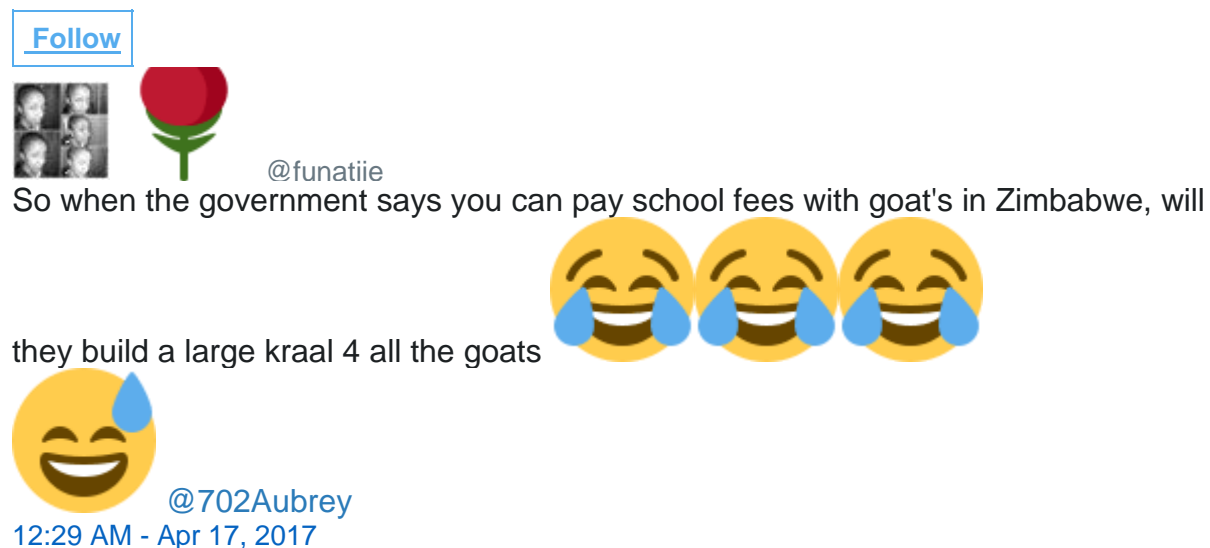
The general assumption in proposing that reform is that parents in the rural areas have some sort of wealth of which in fact statistics prove that the most underprivileged of the Zimbabwean society resides in the rural areas thus most of that populace is poor according to statistics. Financial gazette 20 June report stated that 76 percent of the rural households are poor compared to the 38.2 percent in the urban areas also an indication that 30.4 percent of the rural populace of Zimbabwe are 'extremely poor' compared to only 5.6 percent in urban areas. The 2015 report by Zimbabwe Statistical agency (ZIMSTATS) states that Nkayi district in Matabeleland North has the highest rural household poverty prevalence of 95.5 percent followed by Gweru rural in the Midlands province with 91.8 percent. Matebeleland South province was reported at fourth highest poverty prevalence with general household poverty at 72 percent and extreme poverty at about 21.8 percent followed by Manicaland province general poverty and 18 percent in extreme poverty.

The assumption that the people in the rural areas have the wealth is not true, therefore the reform is not feasible in both the rural and the urban areas as the only method of payment that the parents may possibly be able to provide will be labor. When it comes to labor, it is also debatable especially in the rural areas as most of the populace are people of the old age who are unable to partake in any hard labor therefore the older people of society who are guardians to their grandchildren are phased out.

The government of Zimbabwe has therefore proven that it has failed to govern and represent everyone in society fairly. The goats as payment of fees reform has fueled social media responses through jokes and memes which are a representation of the Zimbabwean economic and political deterioration. The government was seen intending to resort to the old way of doing things which is Barter trade which is old and proves that they have failed dismally to get alternative means to revive the country.

Zimbabwe is represented as a country in need of a total government change from the current one to a new government which has not been contaminated by the existing one.

Follow

@funatiie

So when the government says you can pay school fees with goat's in Zimbabwe, will

they build a large kraal 4 all the goats

@702Aubrey

12:29 AM - Apr 17, 2017

The joke from twitter above shows the ludicrousness of the proposed reform and defies the behavior of the Primary and Secondary Education Minister for proposing such a reform. The joke evaluates the feasibility of the proposed reform as it states that it means that a large kraal has to be built for the school fees goats for the whole ministry which again is not doable or rather would be insane to do.

The social media users have brought up a matter of concern as they state that those that have stayed in government for a long time now are corrupt and therefore like rotten tomatoes which affect the good ones, the same has applies in the Zimbabwean government. Critical thinking is no longer present in the minds of the newbies in the government as they have adopted the corrupt

government's manner of thinking which will not assist Zimbabwe's already deteriorated political and economic environment.

This is an outcry from the social media users for the president to step down and hand over power to someone else who can govern it better and make Zimbabwe a better country to live in. Blame is put on the president of Zimbabwe for the country's economic and political collapse and therefore there is an outcry for a change in governance with the hope that there will be improvements in the governance of Zimbabwe.

The goats as payment of fees reform are the last kicks of a dying horse. These are efforts to revive or improve the education sector in Zimbabwe which seem fruitless as the ministry is trying to introduce old reforms that are not feasible anymore in the Zimbabwean context. With the improvements that have been incorporated into Zimbabwe's system, it would not be possible or practicable to get back to the old way of doing things. Having school fees paid for with livestock would mean that there would have to be a kraal were the livestock would be kept before they get a buyer and it means someone taking the livestock for grazing which will give more work to the schools instead of money which made it easy to trade with.

One social media user indirectly through a joke said that, for change for the better, governance must be changed, which meant removing the president and everyone else in positions of governance. He tweeted that:

> "Before dictator Mugabe goes, am sure Zimbabweans will **pay** school **fees with** "hair" - - if schools can keep **goats**... fb.me/63b94VNpb

The social media user was expressing that the issue of the governance change in Zimbabwe would have to be addressed as a matter of urgency before more ridiculous reforms are proposed or even introduced. The social media user's use of the notion "…pay school fees with 'hair'... if schools can keep goats" meant that the goats as fees reform is ridiculous and their comparison of goats and hair proves the ludicrousness of the reform. The social media user's outcry is that something should be done to change the government of Zimbabwe as it is going crazy introducing absurd reforms in the country.

On social networking sites and news forums on the internet, the updates read "Dokora strikes again…" which denotes that the minister of Primary and Secondary Education Lazarus Dokora has been introducing reforms that in a way have been aimed at striking down the Zimbabwean education sector. Before that reform, he had introduced the national pledge, tried incorporating Islam in every school's scripture union and tried introducing that teachers wear uniforms to work. These were all seen as useless in the improvement of the country's education, political and economic sectors as they added nothing to improve those sectors. This shows that there is an urgent need for the change of governance especially if the leaders of the ministries are failing to improve the ministries that they head.

Another social media joke was circulated which spreads the notion that the government that was selected was selected by goats who are ZANU-PF supporters and now there is a need for the people to act upon that and change the system so as to improve the economic and political environment. The user said that there is even a need for a new pool to select those people from not the same old people that have constantly depreciated the economic and political environment. The joke circulated on Facebook was that:

Q: Who did the goats vote for as president?

A: Lazarus Dokora.

Asocial media user commented on the joke that:

"Do you see why we need, not only a new President, but a complete overhaul of Ministers? Why we need a new pool to select them from? This is the empirical evidence of shortcoming in leadership. We are heading back to the Stone Ages, one Cabinet meeting at a time while the rest of the world storms forward."

The user says that the proposal of such a reform at cabinet is empirical evidence of shortcoming in leadership. He says that Zimbabwe is headed back to the stone age period. The stone age period is as far as barter trade can be traced. The user says that with each cabinet meeting Zimbabwe seems to be taking a step back while the rest of the world moves forward proving

how backward the reforms that are being proposed and introduced are and has negative repercussions to the political and economic environment in Zimbabwe.

Mwine @mwineedgar
Do you have a goat? The headmaster can eat it and forget about School fees. #Zimbabwe
12:07 PM - Apr 16, 2017

The joke above that circulated on Twitter and served the purpose of showing the value of goats. They are shown to be temporarily useful in a sense that once one eats it, it can easily be forgotten just like the reform that was proposed that school fees be paid using goats. The joke also portrayed the issue of corruption the Zimbabwe government. The goats were meant to assist in running the schools but the social media user says that "Do you have a goat? The headmaster can eat it and forget about school fees" showing that funds are easily diverted by those in power to serve their own interests.

Rufaro Kaseke, a known activist went on to record a video which he posted on YouTube where he was lashing out at the issue of goats as payment of school fees issue. He mourned the perishing of Zimbabwe's economic and political environment while the citizens keep reinstating the party that is responsible for the running into the ground of the country's economic and political environment. He said that the ZANU-PF government had graduated "from stupidity, idiocy, murder and now they have become totally mentally insane". He inquired the quality of education the child will receive from paying school fees with goats and if they are set on building a future Zimbabwe with goat education. He sent a request to those that keep voting ZANU-PF into power to desist from doing so as the country's economy and political environment has collapsed already and needs immediate revival which can be done through immediate governmental change.

4.3   Zimbabweans brave enough to demand the ZANU-PF government to step down

The above picture with the crying emoji was derived from Whatsapp and was meant to be the proposed fees structure since Dokora said that school fees could now be paid with goats. The image of the crying emoji represents the Zimbabwean nation mourning their now almost dead beloved country therefore taking action to remove the ZANU-PF government.

Zimbabweans have been presented as brave people as they have tirelessly confronted their government and presented their grievances, their views and demanded a change in governance. They have since resorted to the use of social media as it provides platforms where they present them with an opportunity to present themselves and gain the support of the rest of the world. The social media through the social media tools have united for one cause to present what they want to say to the existing government. Zimbabweans have been labelled as a bunch of cowards since they are still putting up with the ZANU PF regime. It should be noted that a lot of injustices have been happening to those that are brave enough to stand up to the government, for instance Itai Dzamara who since disappeared and his whereabouts are unknown and can only be assumed. He practiced his freedom of expression enshrined in the Zimbabwean constitution and received no freedom after that expression.

Even after the disappearance of Dzamara, the capturing and torture of those that have dared to practice their freedom of expression and speech and those journalists who publish negative stories about the government and also expose secrets Zimbabweans still made use of the social media to discuss the goats as payment of school fees issue and opened the discussion to social media users worldwide. The social media platforms are in a way safer to use as one can register

on a platform anonymously and keep their identity hidden. Measures can also be taken by the social media user to make sure that they are untraceable and that ensures the safety of a social media user. This however does not mean the user is a coward but it means they are clever enough to look out for their own safety while airing out their views.

Most people in the country have tried standing up to how the ZANU PF regime has systematically eroded the freedoms and human rights which include freedom of expression freely. Zimbabweans have resorted to the use of WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms where they post and express themselves anonymously as they prefer to keep their identities unknown. People thought that these freedoms and rights did not matter right after independence as long as the black people's regime delivered mass opulence which they promised after attaining Zimbabwe's independence. Later in the 1990s, it became clear that the only thing that ZANU PF was delivering was instead mass poverty as the living standards deteriorated and the people started calling out for democratic change.

Zimbabweans have called their own fellow citizens cowards for putting up with the situation and yet the vast majority of Africans who live in extreme poverty all show great courage, fortitude and mental toughness just in dealing with every-day life. More than that, the humor they show, always sunny and laughing, obviously makes survival living easier which is something that not a lot of people can match especially in the West.

Zimbabweans are not cowards and are not foolish, they are peaceful people. They would rather be involved in online protests than on the ground protests that would have them involved in violent activities as they have seen and experienced their fair share of violence in the country therefore they avoid a scenario whereby they subject their children to the violence which they suffered when they were children during the war of the liberation struggle and post-independence. They choose to take their protests to the street occasionally when they want to stress a point. This alone proves they are not cowards and they are not scared of their faces out there in the public and in the forefront of protests. The videos circulating of people airing their views on the goats as payment of school fees proposed reform proves the bravery of Zimbabweans. Rufaro Kaseke and Dereck Tafuma are some of the Zimbabwean citizens who

were brave enough to record videos, aired and expressed their views on the goats issue fearlessly and had them circulate on the social media.

The Zimbabwean situation can be likened to that of the Westerners who suffered extreme poverty while a small privileged elite had all the wealth. They too were being controlled by repressive governments but there came a point when the citizens go fed up and realized the governments were not interested in helping them and no one else was. They ganged together and got rid of their repressive governments. Each citizen accepted personal responsibility and did not expect anyone else to do the job for them. The Westerners now fully understand that citizens get the government they deserve. The same applies in Zimbabwe, if the Zimbabweans do not like the government that they have then they should do something about it because no one else will do it for them and if enough of Zimbabweans do something about it then it would be possible to attain the change they are demanding.

The concept democracy should be understood fully by Zimbabweans. It means the citizens controlling the government not the other way around. Africans exercise citizen power and get their governments to work in their best interests and rapidly get rid of those that do not work in their interests. In most cases, those social media users that are more vocal on the social media, demanding change do not register to vote and determine their ruling party. ZANU PF in presidential elections have been winning with a huge margin from the opposition as its supporters stand up to go and vote. The assumption from the opposition supporters being that ZANU PF is always rigging elections therefore people do not stand up to go and register to vote. If people want change in governance in a democratic country, they should vote in their large numbers to implement change in governance.

Brave as they are in standing up against the injustices they suffer under the ZANU PF regime, they should also be brave enough to stand up, go and register to vote and vote for a change if that is what they desire. While the social media users exercise their freedom of expression online and demand for a change they should do so also in exercising their democratic right to vote to administer the change they want.

4.4   Social media the key to fearless communication to the government of Zimbabwe

Q: "What do you call a goat with a beard?

A: It is Dokora"

Read one of the Whatsapp jokes.

Follow

#shoes2schoolzw @keithmovoZW
@kryzedj @SaintValz @DearAngelbert we need to buy data in goat currency as well

😎😎

Zimbabwe jus became niiiice
12:23 AM - Apr 17, 2017

Another twitter joke was addressing the issue of expensive data tariffs in Zimbabwe together with the goats as currency issue. The social media users said that if school fees can be paid in goats then the same should apply for data tariffs. The social media user in a way said that data is expensive as school fees in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabweans like other African countries have discovered that the social media tools provide them with a platform to communicate freely and fearlessly to the government. They have thus extensively used the social media to discuss, inform and above all contest on issues presented to them. The livestock and labor as payment of school fees reform was presented to them by the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Lazarus Dokora of which they found ridiculous, but they had to find ways in which to contest the approval of the reform. They therefore made use of the social media tools to contest through the circulation of jokes and memes to prove its ridiculousness and to in a way prevent the rest of the government from even considering approving the reform.

Darling, Shiffman, Cote and Drew (2013) articulate that these social media platforms allow dialogue between social media users and offers those social media users that have feared joining political conversations a chance to take part in these conversations on social media. On the

proposed reform by the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Dr Lazarus Dokora, the story was posted on social media networking sites and social media users could talk about the issue, pass it on to the other social media users and express how they feel about such a reform being proposed to them.

Social media users express their anger of the Zimbabwean economic and political problems using strong language. The ZANU – PF regime is described as stupid, idiotic, murderers and a mentally unstable government. Derrida in his discourse and called for the deconstruction of language. These scholars were inspired by Foucault who says that discourse is power yet to be seized. The social media users are optimists who believe that through the use of vulgar and strong language they can get the ZANU-PF regime to step down from governance. Mbembe (2001) argues that vulgar should not be interpreted as a sign of backwardness, banality exists in unofficial cultures of celebration, carnival and protests. The use of the words insane, idiot and stupid are strong words, especially when talking about someone who has not been medically proven to be mentally unstable and they mean that one is ridiculous and thoughtless. Connotatively it is used to relate the message that what they are doing or suggesting does not make sense and is not feasible.

Mbembe also argues that the use vulgar is a sign of power. Social media users express their anger using vulgar therefore popular culture in the name of new media becomes an assertion of vulgarity. Foucault (2009) notes that discourse always involves some form of violence in a way that it imposes its linguistic orders in the world. Foucault (1998:101-1) notes that discourse transmits and produces power, reinforces it, but also determines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart.

The discourse of freedom enabled by the social media is reinforcing the ability of social media users to change their leaders. At the same time exposing the ruthlessness of the ruling ZANU-PF party and its injustices. Mhiripiri (2008) postulates that the media are a site of struggle, a battle where distinctive ideological contestations occur. The mainstream media in Zimbabwe has failed to provide a platform where political debates could be done without government interference. Mazango (2005) described it as a polarized media fraternity in Zimbabwe, where the publicly

owned media in Zimbabwe is now called ZANU-PF media and the privately-owned media in Zimbabwe is called the MDC media. Power therefore is in the hands of those that own the means of production. The social media however does not censor any information. The power is in the social media users hands to disseminate their opinions and views.

4.5   Memes and jokes an escapism tool from the problems that Zimbabweans are facing.

The picture of a dog dressed in a costume was derived from whatsapp and was circulated as a joke on the goats as school fees payment reform. Fake monetary currency has been manufactured before but since Dokora is suggested goats as currency then this would have been the fake currency.

The Zimbabwean memes are very telling of the reality Zimbabweans are living while also functioning as a coping mechanism. As much as they are fun, they are also a serious business and are representative of the reality that Zimbabweans are living. Humor during these times of crisis is not new to Zimbabwe, however the extent to which it has become integral to the culture and to the language of Zimbabwe's changing identity through digital tools and social media is, what if anything do these memes tell us about contemporary Zimbabwean culture and what can they predict about Zimbabwe's uncertain future.

Zimbabweans have adopted a culture of circulating jokes and memes around anything which they do not agree to but the government wants to incorporate into the system. This is an escapism tool from the actual political and economic problems that they are facing. Amin (2011) articulates that in Egypt the memes were used as an escapism tool as they provided laughterism to the devastated Egyptians under Mubarak's rule. 'Laughterism' is a term coined by Serbian political activist Srdja Popovic as "an activity which is designed to put the authorities in a position so that no matter how they respond they cannot win". Zimbabweans are devastated and frustrated by their own economic hardships and political instability therefore they have resorted in providing themselves with a temporary escapism tool from thinking about these problems that they are facing.

People found it within themselves to express humor publicly in a time of crisis revealing a lot about how people have coped with repression were political opposition or criticism is usually met by arrest and torture. These kinds of tactics have worked for the regime for the most part as people feared capture and torture. Zimbabweans have become accustomed to living in fear of their government but have been using humor not only to get around censorship but also to cope with the country's dreadful situation. Amin (2011) says that humor was and is still used as a revolutionary tactic and has developed over 3 regimes in Egypt dating back to 1952 and has also been used under the monarchy and the British empire and before that. Humor therefore can be said to be one of the oldest and most subversive political tools there is. It breaks the fear barrier and today's activists have turned to satire, shifting protests away from anger by using 'laughterism'.

The governments options can either be cracking down on humor of which risking the backlash from making themselves look humorless or ignore and risk strengthening political opposition. Therefore, either way it's a lose-lose situation for the government. Parliamentarians are seen also making a joke out of the reform as in the next parliament meeting Nelson Chamisa is seen in a video explaining about bleating noises heard in a parliament meeting. The speaker of parliament demanded order and an explanation to the bleating of people, Nelson Chamisa then stood up and explained that when Dokora entered parliament that is when people started bleating like goats.

Nelson Chamisa: "Pangopinda vaDokora"

Speaker of parliament: "Ndo zvadii"

Nelson Chamisa: "Ndo patanga kungonzi mee"

The parliamentarians laughed at the reform of paying school fees using goats and made fun of it to an extent that they likened Dokora to a goat. This is so ironic as Dokora keeps a beard that looks like one of a Billy goat. Seen therefore when the goats memes were circulated on social media, the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Dr Lazarus Dokora retracted his statement that parents can pay their children's school fees using goats and said that what he merely meant was that the parents should sell the goats and pay school fees not to drag the goats to school.

Active 'laughterism' moves beyond pranks as they help break down the essence of what keeps most dictators in place which is power. Amin (2011) says that "humor makes it cool to be an activist as this was clear in the Egyptian revolution as a lot of youth were motivated and encouraged to participate because of the humor that existed online and on Tahire square". In the Zimbabwean situation, it became cool to be an activist as the youths were seen more active on WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter circulating the jokes and memes on the goats as payment of school fees proposed reform. Some youths in teasing each other would instead of saying their peer is a goat would say:

"urischool fees yemunhu"

Meaning that you are school fees instead of simply saying "urimbudzi yemunhu" meaning you are a goat. Somehow the name goat was changed to school fees which is humorous.

Humor is infectious therefore it is much easier to engage through jokes, but this is not unique to Zimbabwe, it has happened before. In the proposed reform by the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Dr. Lazarus Dokora that teachers wear uniforms to work, the social media users made a barrel of jokes around the issue until he changed and said he did not say that the teachers should wear uniforms to work. What makes Zimbabwe different though is that it is one of the few countries in Africa were the citizens have used social media and made the discussion accessible to the rest of the people around the world. Memes and jokes won the heart of the

international community and gave the rest of the world access to inside jokes and allowed them to participate and so some of the jokes continued from country to country.

The Zimbabwean government has been presented as one which has failed its people and therefore has had itself and the nation that it governs as the laughing stock of Africa. The issue of goats and labor as payment of school fees reform by the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Lazarus Dokora, became a barrel of jokes on social media, was placed on informal pages.

Facebook page 'South-Africa latest News and Jokes' placed a headline which read 'Zimbabwe schools accept goats for tuition fees…you can pay school fees with goats in Zimbabwe'. The issue on its own being placed on such a page on the Facebook platform already makes it a joke on its own. The Cambridge dictionary defines a joke as

> "Something, such as a funny story or trick that is said or done in order to make people laugh…informal a person or thing that is very bad or silly."

This makes the proposed reform by the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Lazarus Dokora that 'parents or guardians who do not have money to pay for their children's school fees can do so making use of goats and labor as payment seem as a funny story therefore people did not take it as a formal proposal to be taken into consideration.

Not only has the Zimbabwean government provided the Zimbabweans with relief but also the rest of Africa and the rest of the world that participates on social media. South-Africans had a time of their lives as they had the loudest laugh when the 2017 second term of primary and secondary schools in Zimbabwe began. They found it ironic that while they are fighting for school fees to fall with their social media's #feesmustfall motto, the Zimbabwean government on the other hand seemed to be advocating for them to pay their children's school fees using goats and labor. One recipient of the news on social media and participant on the Facebook page even stated that:

> "Sithi eMzantsi fees must fall eZim bathi "goat must fall"😆😂😆😂😆"

> <u>Reply</u> · <u>April 21 at 6:26am</u>

Meaning that while South Africans are fighting for school fees to be totally eliminated, the Zimbabweans have to fight against the new proposed reform by their Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Lazarus Dokora that school fees can now be paid using goats and labor which to them was a ridiculous, absurd, funny and too desperate to be true. Some social media users bluntly said that the headline was a blatant lie and some said it was a joke and they were making fun of the country as it is on a brink of economic and political collapse.

The Zimbabwean government has also been perceived as one which makes hasty decisions and is stupid enough to publicize a reform which they intend to propose before they access its feasibility. The issue of the goats as payment of school fees was announced by the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Lazarus Dokora, who later retracted the statement after social media users made jokes and circulated the issue and was criticized by social media users worldwide. He said that people got the concept all wrong and all he meant was that they should sell livestock and pay their children's fees. Even though-so, with an economy and political environment that's a foot in the grave, how would one expect the citizens to have riches in the form of riches. One social media user commented that:

> "How can the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education ask parents to sell goats that they do not have?"

The concept could have been feasible if the citizens had the livestock, but they do not have the livestock as said by one of the social media users.

One social media user sent and inquiry of a job opportunity as a joke with the hashtag #NewOpportunities#Zimbabwe, asking if he could get a job as a goat evaluator. The tweet reads:

> Can I get a job as a goat evaluator? #NewOpportunities#Zimbabwe
> 6:08 AM - Apr 17, 2017

A Nigerian social media user also tweeted that she wants to pay off her school fees on her own and then buy her father a farm in Nigeria with endless goats. This was a laughing matter to her as it was ridiculous. She in a way says that school fees has been ridiculed in such a manner. She

said it mockingly that if that is the situation in Zimbabwe then it means that she can afford her own fees and buying her father the farm and filling it with goats.

> **Osun Mermaid** @MermaidTingz 14 Dec 2011
>
> I want to **pay** off my school **fees** by myself, then buy my fada a farm in nigeria, **with** endless **goats**. Amin.

Primary and secondary fees payment has always been known as the duties of the parents or guardians as the fees will be paid for minors. The age of majority in Zimbabwe is eighteen and mostly those in upper six, the last stage of high school are mostly turning eighteen during that last year of high school meaning that when they begin their upper six, they are still minors in need of parental care. Having this social media user mentioning that she can even manage to fund her own school fees would be belittling of the Zimbabwean situation as minors are expected to be dependent on their parents and a part of that dependency being to have their school fees paid by their parents or guardians.

4.6   Conclusion

This chapter focused on data presentation and analysis. Semiotic analysis and critical discourse analysis were used in the analysis of the social media jokes and memes and their responses from the social media users on the social media platforms. The social media tools have been able to provide platforms where social media users and some politically marginalized groups can air their views and be heard. In some instances, it was difficult for some social media users to denote the preferred meaning from the posts. However, the discussions were mostly rationale.

Chapter 5- CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   Introduction

This chapter is a synopsis of the whole research, drawing conclusions from the findings. This research focused on the goats' memes as a representation of Zimbabwean economic and political problems in 2017. Its mandate was to explain the discourses implanted in the social media users' reactions and responses to the circulated goats' memes. It also sought to explore how the social media users read and interpreted the goats' memes.

5.2   Summary and concluding remarks

A joke is something that is said by someone with the intention of amusing someone or to make them laugh. A meme is a virally transmitted cultural symbol or social idea. Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp are social media networking sites whose availability has been welcomed in Africa in the 21st century and have been used extensively in the spread of jokes and memes. Social media jokes and memes have been made use of in the Arab Spring in Egypt and WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook have been used in the revolt against the suggested reform by the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe to have primary and secondary school teachers wear uniforms to work. While the mainstream media announced the reform proposed by the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education to pay school fees using livestock and labour, there was less audience interactivity and feedback. Many scholars have viewed the social media attributes in extending the public sphere. It has become an alternative platform to the mainstream media. This study set on a mission to explain how the goats' memes and jokes circulated on social media represented Zimbabwe's economic and political problems in the year 2017.

Before the introduction of the internet in developing countries and Zimbabwe, the laws that safeguard the ruling elite were acknowledged and followed with no negotiations. POSA hindered people from gathering or engaging in demonstrations without police clearance. AIPPA serves to protect the president and the ruling elite from any criticism. The advent of the internet however enabled people to bridge these laws. This resulted in the existence of social media jokes which were circulated through these social media platforms by the previously marginalised citizens who can access the social media. The study was informed by the theory of revisiting the public sphere focusing on how the social media has been able to give social media users the platform to circulate the social media jokes and partake in the discussions and engage the rest of the world.

The main stream media have not been providing an ideal public sphere anticipated by Habermas, the internet then through the social media platforms have been able to provide such discursive spaces. This study therefore took a positive stance in explaining how the social media users countered power making use of the social media tools. While the media in Zimbabwe were said to be 'polarized' (Mazango, 2005) to the extent that the publicly owned state controlled media are now called ZANU-PF media, and the private media called the MDC media the social media users embraced appreciation of the channels through participation in the discussions. The social media users were enabled to counter power through language. The nature of the social media networking sites have enabled the anonymous citizens to remain unidentified.

Mbembe (2001) studied jokes and humour in the African society and called it 'aesthetics of vulgarity' meaning the beauty of using strong language. He explains that the previously marginalised subalterns make use of language and humour to air their grievances to their rulers. Mhiripiri and Mutsvairo (2010) describe the act as a situation "when in nearly ineffectual subversive ways the subaltern throw scatological insults both at themselves and at a repressive Party-State system." The marginalised make use of humour and laughterism to challenge the repressive government that rules them.

Mbembe profoundly renews the understanding of power and subjectivity in Africa through 'the banality of power and aesthetics of vulgarity'. In this chapter he re-interprets meanings of death, utopia and the divine libido as part of the new theoretical perspectives he offers on the

constitution of power. Working with the complex registers of bodily subjectivity, violence, wonder and laughter to profoundly contest categories of oppression and resistance, autonomy, subjection and state and civil society that marked the social theory of the late twentieth century, Mbembe examines the challenging of power through the use of vulgarity and cartoons in 'the banality of power'.

In the next chapter 'the thing and it doubles' Mbembe speaks of the 'father' who is the autocrat and its representation in the Cameroonian cartoons of the 1990s. These were published following "operation Ghost Towns" which was a wave of protests and resulted in a period of authoritarian softening in 1991. In this essay, the scholar establishes the context of the cartoon images and spells out their anthropological status and effectiveness. He goes on to show how as a crude cartoon "the autocrat acts as both text and pretext for a general commentary on power in the post-colony". Both these chapters explore the thoughts of the citizens about the post-colonial government and how the citizens use language to challenge the repressive government.

Another objective of the study was to to explore why Zimbabweans circulated jokes and memes around reforms proposed instead of saying out their views directly. While discussions of the proposed reform took place on the social media networking sites through jokes, some of the social media users set on attacking the whole government. Given that, the researcher successfully engaged with the data which was qualitatively gathered and analyzed the reactions and responses in that regard.

5.3   Recommendations for Further studies

A research done always exposes other gaps. After conducting this research, the researcher realised that this research is a broad topic in which more research can be done through looking at the coverage of the goats' memes and jokes by the mainstream media. The proposed reform by the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education has been discussed in discursive arenas worldwide. The social media users in the diaspora are the ones who mostly participate in

political issues as they are far away and are not scared of what the government can do to them compared to those that are in Zimbabwe.

5.4   Conclusion

This chapter was a summary of the whole research. It gave a brief synopsis and investigating if the research managed to fulfil its objectives and answer the research questions. It has succeeded in bringing out the requirements. The social media users have presented the ZANU-PF regime as one that has totally failed to govern Zimbabwe therefore there is a need for political change, they have also presented themselves as brave enough to demand the ZANU-PF government to step down, presented the social media as the key to fearless communication to then government of Zimbabwe and presented memes and jokes as an escapism too from the problems that Zimbabweans are facing. This has assisted the researcher to answer the research questions and achieve the research's objectives.

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