

## Facebook Usage as a Community Engagement Tool by Residents in the Sauyemwa Location, Kavango East Region, During COVID-19 Lockdown

P. LEEVI & S. P. SHIHOMEKA

### Abstract

*This qualitative study investigates the nature in which residents of Sauyemwa made use of Facebook as a community engagement tool during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are 875 000 active Facebook users in Namibia, and having said this, there are still a few Namibians who own smart phones and have access to the internet at the same time active on Facebook. Facebook has had an increase in the number of users. People are connecting using Facebook as it was easy, cheap, and safe during the pandemic. Since Kavango East has the lowest percentage of the population with access to cellphones and the internet, the study's goal was to find out how locals there used Facebook as a tool for community involvement during the epidemic. In order to try and glean a theory of a procedure, action, behaviour, or interaction from participants on the use of Facebook during the epidemic, the researcher employed grounded theory to direct the study. The study also aimed at assisting different communities to create new alternative ways to engage with each other using social media platforms like Facebook during the pandemic. The author used a qualitative sampling method to randomly select 10 participants (8 males and 2 females) who were interviewed using a semi-structured interview. The findings reveal that Sauyemwa residents used Facebook to communicate with others to share and receive trending information around the world. Moreover, residents used Facebook Messenger to comment on posts, like and possibly share them, to stream and share live videos and events. This study suggests that Sauyemwa residents should use Facebook as an alternative mode of communication during the pandemic, as it allows people to connect remotely.*

**Keywords:** mobile computing, smartphones, digital divide, innovation, gamification, digital communication, COVID-19, community engagement, Facebook

### Background of the study

The Covid-19 lockdown has resulted in a devastatingly high number of deaths and infected persons; it has infected communities around the world very unevenly (Lowenthal et al., 2020). The lockdown has not only infected communities, but it has caused an effect on the economy and decision-making in different communities. Communities have turned to using Facebook during the pandemic in order for them to engage with each other. In the process, information and discussions about COVID-19 spread rapidly across the internet, especially on Facebook. At present, social media has become an important channel to promote communication during the epidemic crisis. Communities around the globe are using video calls, recorded or live videos, and pictures within the groups created on Facebook in order to engage without having to meet each other physically (Yang et al., 2021). Facebook has become an important channel to promote communication during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, (Yang et al., 2021). Increasing numbers of public health departments and individuals tend to use Facebook to communicate and share information online. In the previous literature, many studies have applied social media as a tool to engage the communities and public, for example, the studies on the Ebola virus, Zika virus and the H7N9 outbreak (Yang et al., 2021).

According to Jing, et al. (2016), Facebook has become the world's most social networking site, with more than 1.65 billion monthly active users, who spend 6 days a week, 2.6 hours per day on Facebook. As advancements in technology are rapidly becoming accepted in society, interpersonal communication is better at creating awareness and interest and serving as a form of evaluation and trial (Graybill, 2010). Facebook, in particular, allows people to connect using different modes. New

technologies that are being created for online interaction aid in building interpersonal communications and relationships, which helps get information and issues covered on a large scale (Graybill, 2010). The residents that have access to smartphones and the internet in the region took part in the study which showed how they engage on Facebook.

Community engagement around the globe declined as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, and physical gatherings have been limited or prohibited in certain countries. Social distancing policies are being implemented, which produce sudden changes in communities and have led to a rise in social media engagement. In Canada, social media platforms like Facebook allow community members to connect and support each other virtually and facilitate community engagement (Schmidt, et al., 2020). According to the study that was conducted by Gruzd and Mai (2020), 94% of Canadian adults who use the internet have an account on at least one social media platform, with Facebook being the highest with 83 percent of people, followed by Instagram with 51 percent and Twitter with 42 percent (Gruzd & Mai, 2020). A Facebook page called #eastwellciv19 was created during the lockdown in Saskatchewan, Canada, for the residents to share their experiences and engage. According to this study, the people of Canada have responded well to this gesture, and a high number of posts on the page have been recorded.

### **Problem statement**

In Namibia, about 875,000 percent of the whole population are active Facebook users (Bloomfield & Jacobs, 2018). They typically interact with each other by posting messages or pictures about their personal lives, popular trending issues and their opinions or experiences of their communities on Facebook. According to Jing et al. (2016) this form of communication is considered more important during the pandemic as it increases the level of risk the pandemic causes. A study by Pang et al., (2021), in Macao, showed how the government used Facebook to engage and provide updates to the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it was not emphasized how communities were able to engage during the pandemic and the lockdown restrictions that were imposed on them. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there were no dedicated government Facebook pages that allowed people to engage with each other in different communities or allowed the government and people to engage (Pang et al., 2021). There are few studies on the use of Facebook by communities to interact in rural places like Sauyemwa, despite the growing number of Facebook and social media users in Namibia. This inspired the researcher to look into how Facebook was utilized to engage people during the COVID-19 lockdown in Namibia. Thus, this study aimed at investigating and exploring the nature in which Facebook was used as a community engagement tool during the COVID-19 pandemic in Namibia.

### **Research Objectives**

The main objective of this study was to explore the nature in which Facebook was being used as a community engagement tool in the Kavango East region, Sauyemwa settlement during the pandemic. The specific objectives were:

- To identify the types of tools being used to engage the residents during the Covid-19 lockdown.
- To investigate the nature in which Facebook is being used as a tool for community engagement during the COVID-19 lockdown.
- To determine the impact that Facebook has on the Sauyemwa residents during the COVID-19 lockdown.

- To propose an alternative way that Sauyemwa residents can use Facebook as a tool to engage with each other during the Covid-19 lockdown.

### **Literature review**

#### **Tools being used to engage the residents during the Covid-19 lockdown**

There are more alternative tools that communities around the world are using to engage with each other. Facebook is one of the tools being used; there are also Zoom meeting, Wikis, Blogs, Microblogs, Social network sites, image and file sharing, Skype, Google meeting, WhatsApp audio and video calls, all other social media platforms for those with access to the digital world (Cosentino, 2020). Facebook allows users to create profiles that give other Facebook users a description of the user's beliefs, interests, opinions and goals and expressive relationships with other users, who are most often listed as "friends" (Ernala et al., 2021). Among what is considered valuable information is what people post on their profiles, including personal contact information and additional data that is rarely available on other social networks.

The new Facebook tool that has been released is designed to make it easier for people to request and offer help during the Coronavirus pandemic called Community Help. It was released in the United States and four other countries. The online hub displays fundraisers and posts from Facebook users within 50 miles of their location who are requesting or offering assistance. Sarbadhikari and Sarbadhikari (2020) found that many users have already seen the community help tool and are using it because it was being tested in several US cities. Community Help tool will roll out in the US, the UK, France, Canada and Australia first, making it available to hundreds of millions of users. Facebook works through the capability to recruit members and disseminate messages easily through different groups on the application, diverse political, social, and other special-interest organisations use Facebook groups to create online interaction and make use of valuable information and community developments (Park et al., 2009).

In a study published in March 2021 in Macao, the government used Facebook to provide updates and engaging with the public during the time of the pandemic. In the study, it stated that Facebook is one of the popular social media platforms used by the government, but there is only a scant of research on this platform (Pang et al., 2021). The paper aimed to understand how government social media should be used and how its engagement changes in the prodromal, acute and chronic stages of the pandemic on Facebook. The government in Macao used Facebook to create a page where residents could share and/or post comments and engage with the government. In this study, Facebook had a large variety of functions that people used to partake in; it includes private massaging, a wall where people can post public messages and personal information, photo albums with unlimited storage space, videos, groups, notes, blogs which allows users to organize social gatherings, join the communities and lots of applications developed by third-party developers (Rossini et al., 2021).

#### **Overview of Facebook usage as an engagement tool for the residents during the pandemic**

The main purpose of the literature review is to critique and review other literature that has been written about how Facebook is used as an engagement tool for residents. The latest data shows there are over 223 million Facebook active users in the US alone (Haji & Stock, 2021), and that's 3.17 million more users compared to 2019. This shows an increase in the number of users, which means more people are choosing to engage on Facebook during the Covid-19 pandemic. Groups are created by

users, which allow users to take part in smaller communities within Facebook that support certain interests or beliefs that are shared by others. It helps residents to engage with each other without having to compromise their safety to attend meetings or other gatherings to contribute to the social issues in their communities. The new Facebook tool that has been released is an example, designed to make it easier for people to request and offer help during the Coronavirus pandemic in the United States called Community Help (Sarbadhikari & Sarbadhikari, 2020).

### **The nature of Facebook as a tool to engage communities during the COVID-19 lockdown**

Around the globe, social media platforms have been the most effective way for people to interact with each other. Since most countries were on lockdown because of the Covid-19 pandemic, travelling was limited or prohibited in certain countries, and the use of Facebook to engage has been considered. According to Haji and Stock (2021), the latest report for January 2021 states there are a whopping 2.8 billion active Facebook users around the world. The number has increased, as more people are considering engaging online to stay safe during the pandemic. Facebook can be broken into parts based on how it is used as an engagement tool: profiles, groups, pages and events. Profiles are how people present themselves to others. Groups are created by users and allow users to take part in smaller communities within Facebook that support certain interests or beliefs that are shared by others. Although similar to groups, they are different because they allow users to become fans of something they like such as a favourite band or brand of clothing, instead of joining a group to support a cause (Kabani, 2010).

Facebook users are already using features such as groups to reach each other. Drawing on Sarbadhikari and Sarbadhikari (2020), the Community Help tool on Facebook makes it easier for people to request and offer help during the coronavirus pandemic. This new tool is another example of how Facebook is responding to the changing ways the social network is being used, as more people stay at home to slow the spread of COVID-19. Facebook has seen a surge in video calls and live videos. According to Graybill (2010), the radio took 38 years to reach a target audience of 50 million, while Facebook took a mere two years. This shows how Facebook is one of the most popular and universal social media and networking sites in the world.

### **The impact that Facebook has on residents during the COVID-19 lockdown**

The outcomes of using Facebook as a tool for engagement are magnificent; people can reach out to each other without having difficulties moving from one place to another. According to the study of Pang et al., (2021) in Macao, they collected 1664 posts and 10 805 comments from the Facebook pages, which was a convincing sign. They added that the results suggest that engagement was relatively low at the beginning but surged in the acute stage. Communities also found it effective and efficient to use Facebook as a tool to engage residents. Since many people are asked to remain home, they have turned to social media to maintain their relationships and to access entertainment to pass the time, as well as to engage with others. According to Sarbadhikari and Sarbadhikari (2020), social media platforms like Facebook have more users than usual during the pandemic; a total of 2.6 billion people are using the social network every month.

The value of social media platforms has changed; people around the world are not seeing social media as a medium for entertainment only but as a platform for sharing information (Pang et al., 2021). This idea is further supported by Kaya (2020), who notes that over the same period last year, users spent

46% more time on news websites. Since people can't spend time with their buddies, they connect electronically on all available platforms. Not only are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram seeing more traffic, but Zoom and Skype users have also surged dramatically since the start of the global pandemic (Khan et al., 2022). Perhaps what is most interesting about this perhaps, is that we should consider how these behavioral changes are likely to shape the future of our world. Undoubtedly, this form of behaviour involves individuals using more online communication tools to keep in contact with others who are distant from them and to stay current with the rapidly changing global environment. A study done to find out factors affecting the amount of time spent on Facebook in Yaser revealed that the main factors affecting the amount of time spent on Facebook were social networking, brand community engagement, writing on walls or pages, entertainment, searching for friends and free time (Ulusu, 2010). This has shown that using social media to interact with one another is important and encourages community participation.

### **Alternative ways that rural citizens can use Facebook as a tool to engage with each other during the pandemic**

Facebook is one of the most popular social networking platforms of all time, and it helps to cut down on physical boundaries. The platform is free and one of the best social media for communication; it helps one to connect to different people from anywhere in the world as almost every living person around the world uses it (Mosconi et al., 2017). According to Mosconi et al. (2017), participating in Facebook activities can help you connect with and share information with people in your life and community. Additionally, it can keep you informed about various news stories that are trending locally or globally.

Creating interest groups on Facebook is another popular way residents can use Facebook to engage (Brindha et al., 2020). For instance, the founder of an open community group on Facebook might permit or invite members of the community to join the group, participate in conversations, provide information, and interact with other group members as a representative of the community. This form of engagement is more significant as Facebook users are now engaging with more content from groups. During the time of the pandemic, creating a Facebook group to share information about COVID-19 is vital, as residents will be interested and eager to respond, like, share and engage with others in the group. According to Karr et al., (2019), there are more than 1.8 billion people in groups that they find meaningful, and this can increase community engagement. This shows how important Facebook groups are in a community; more people are likely to join the groups of their interest where they can engage with others. Even businesses use Facebook groups to build their customer networks. They sell and market their products or services in their respective groups, which is most effective. Residents can also engage in marketing local businesses using Facebook to build their customer networks. Relevant content should be shared in the community engagement groups, - content that will allow the residents or members of the group to interact and engage (Karr et al., 2019).

Facebook is a communication platform that keeps growing as the world changes, which makes it easy for communities around the world to engage. Facebook Live is the latest feature that communities can use to engage with each other during COVID-19. Facebook Live is the easy public access channel of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and is the new way to reach and engage your target audience (Medows & Marith, 2020). It enables people to interact with others in new ways and make their broadcasts on Facebook.

Residents can make use of this new Facebook function by broadcasting events like briefings, meetings, festivals, and anniversaries on their community sites.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

A qualitative research design was used to explore the residents' attitudes, behaviours, opinions and experiences with Facebook. To also highlight and suggest many alternative methods or techniques on how locals in Sauyemwa might use Facebook as a community involvement tool throughout the pandemic. The qualitative research design is found to be the most efficient method for obtaining the type of data required for the investigation. Using a qualitative research design, researchers can better comprehend the meaning that people create (Merriam, 2009, p. 13). One main advantage that influenced the approach is that the qualitative approach allowed the study of individuals use of Facebook in their natural setting. Additionally, the data that is collected is based on the participant's views, feelings and opinions on using Facebook. Grounded theory was chosen to guide the study. This theory seeks to generate theory from data that has been collected and analysed (Mohajan & Mohajan, 2023). The researcher developed a theory that explains the concern within the community and how it could be addressed using Facebook.

### **Sampling method**

The study used a random sampling method to select the research participants. The researcher was able to interview each Sauyemwa resident who indicated that they had an active Facebook account. This is the purest and clearest probability sampling design and strategy, as the population being studied consists of a larger number of people. The study used a sample of ten participants (10 males and 2 females) who had access to cellphones, and internet to access Facebook platform.

### **Data collection**

Firstly, a supporting letter from the University of Namibia (UNAM) that indicated that the study was a partial requirement to fulfill the Bachelor of Education (Lifelong Learning and Community Education) Honours (10BLCE) was attached to the letters requesting consent to carry out the study in Rundu urban Constituency in Kavango-east region, Sauyemwa and to inform the participants that their responses were recorded using a tape recorder during the interview. Furthermore, the researcher used participants' pseudonyms to record and present the collected data.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen to collect data for the study that required interaction with the participants in their natural setting. The advantage of using interviews is that the researcher obtains the verbal information and data from reading the facial and body gestures of participants as well. The collected data was backed up by confirming the Facebook accounts (digitally) of participants. Equally important, the researcher during the interviews was able to probe the existing pre-setup questions to get more data from participants. Lastly, the researcher used semi-structured interview questions and digital data available on Facebook to collect and record the data. Data was recorded using a tape recorder and on a notebook. The nature of the study required descriptive data and aimed to explore how Facebook is used as an engaging tool; thus, this approach was most fit for the study.

**Data analysis**

The collected data was further transcribed and then categorized using key thematic analysis. The data was categorized for classification, summarising and tabulation. The data collected was analysed using thematic analysis. It is typically used with a collection of texts, such as an interview or transcripts, and the researcher carefully analyses the information to find recurring themes, concepts, and meaning patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2019). In this analysis, the researcher tape-recorded and transcribed conversations with participants, and paraphrased what the participants responded and arranged it accordingly.

Table 1: The key thematic issues from the participants' responses

Responses (the nature that Facebook was used)	Codes	Key themes
Residents used Facebook for communication, for updating themselves with trending information,	To be updated with information Sharing information	Communication tool
Responses (Tools being used on Facebook)	Codes	Key themes
Posting pictures, videos and sharing posts. Creating and joining groups on Facebook, commenting on posts, and chatting using Facebook Messenger and Facebook live.	Posting Sharing Commenting or chatting liking and sharing Creating groups	Posting pictures, videos and Facebook live Facebook Messenger for commenting Live-streaming videos using Facebook live Creating and joining Facebook groups
Responses (Usage of Facebook)	Codes	Key themes
Participants made use of Facebook to engage with each other. They recommended others to use Facebook. They criticized the use of Facebook as well, as it was considered a medium to share and promote unethical posts. They advised others to be conscious when using the platform.	Promoting information to reach a larger audience. Reaching out to friends and family. Unethical, misinformation by Facebook users.	Community engagement tool during the pandemic Users and the Facebook platform

**Limitations**

Limitations of this study include the sample size, which was only ten participants out of the entire area of Sauyemwa. This might have affected the results of the study as well as the conclusions drawn from

it. Moreover, this study is limited to a qualitative research design that provides the participants' views, opinions and beliefs about the usage of Facebook.

## **Findings and Discussions**

### **Nature in which Facebook is being used as a community engagement tool**

Participants were asked to mention how they made use of the Facebook platform during the pandemic. Each respondent gave their responses on how they decided to make use of Facebook as an engagement tool. Out of all the respondents that were interviewed, most of them mentioned that they mainly use the Facebook platform for communication, sharing and seeking information around the globe. The same respondents added that besides using the Facebook platform for communication, they also use it to update themselves with the trending news and other stories within their surroundings and about the pandemic. Some respondents mentioned that they make use of Facebook to connect with their friends by using Facebook Messenger and Facebook - Live to chat with friends. A few of them mentioned using Facebook for entertainment as well as using the platform to advertise their businesses and engage with their customers during the pandemic. During the data collection process, the researcher got a chance to interview Emmy, a 23-year-old female resident of Sauyemwa, who uses her "smartphone" to access Facebook. When asked how she made use of Facebook during the pandemic.

She stated that:

The main reason I use Facebook is for information seeking. Let's say, for instance I'm travelling to a new town and I would like to book for accommodation. I use Facebook to look out for cheaper accommodation that I can afford. I also use Facebook to look at trending issues such as politics, weather condition or anything, since the platform has it all.

Gold John, a 26-year-old male, said that:

Facebook is a nice platform that, I use on a daily basis to communicate with my friends or get information that I cannot get from the newspapers if I don't buy it. This is where I engage with people from different countries, especially on different pages. I joined different types of pages where people discuss important things, some of which are petty things about social life.

The responses above tell us, confirmedly, that during the pandemic, people made use of Facebook to communicate with others who are not in the same area as them. Also, to engage in business activities that will help them earn a living, unlike using the platform for entertainment purposes only.

P. Star, a 31-year-old male, added that:

I use Facebook a lot; it's like it's my main social media platform. On Facebook, what I do is that, I comment most of the time and that where I get my information most of the time, as you can see, I do not have a television at my place, I don't want it, all the information I need I get straight from Facebook. I am updated with information.

The responses above revealed that Facebook, like other social media platforms, plays a major role in connecting people during the pandemic and lockdown. Sauyemwa residents join Facebook to mainly communicate, share and receive information, which shows that the platform is still a significant one in connecting people around the globe, just like other social media platforms. The results also showed a few residents who use the platform for entertainment and business marketing. This type of Finding can be related to those of Xun et al., (2021) and Chu et al., (2020), who discovered that Facebook is a



vital social media platform for information sharing, resource sharing and professional opinions. Chu et al., (2020), added that during this time of the Covid-19 pandemic, Facebook was found to be a communication tool and that it is of value to many with its engagement efficacy. My findings can also be viewed as a continuing justification for the usage of Facebook as a communication tool similar to those of Lwin et al., (2018), who stated that Facebook can be a tool for community engagement or a communication medium during the outbreak of the Zika virus. Lappas et al., (2018), stated or found out how the Greek government used Facebook as a strategy to provide or share information about services, online attitude expression, liking Facebook posts, online engagement through commenting, and advocacy behaviour (sharing Facebook posts). The results also showed how the government used a top-down approach on Facebook to promote events and push one-way information sharing or communication with citizens on services and actions.

### **Tools used on Facebook during the COVID-19 pandemic**

For the researcher to find out the types of tools participants use on Facebook, the researcher asked them to mention different tools they make use of when engaging with others on Facebook. They mentioned, posting pictures and videos, using or going live on Facebook using Facebook - live, commenting, liking and sharing posts, and lastly, creating and joining groups on Facebook.

Posting pictures, videos and using Facebook Live

Most of the participants mentioned posting pictures, going live on Facebook using Facebook Messenger, and recording live videos on their pages or Facebook accounts for their Facebook friends to view, like, comment and possibly share. Diiye, a 19-year-old female, was one of the many participants who mentioned that they post pictures and videos for others to like or reach out to. She stated that:

I communicate with others on Facebook by sending messages, posting live videos and commenting on her friends' posts and so on.

### **Facebook Messenger for commenting**

Some participants indicated, commenting on posts from their Facebook friends using Facebook Messenger. They also used Facebook Messenger to communicate through live chatting or live videos. While in the field, the researcher came across Musho, a 25-year-old male, who mentioned using Facebook on a daily basis, Musho:

When I use Facebook, I do communicate with others, through Facebook Messenger, sending messages and commenting on other people's statuses and posts.

### **Creating and joining Facebook groups**

Few participants mentioned that they create and join groups on Facebook, for others to join and share information and having conversations on the comment sections using Facebook Messenger. Emmy contributes to this information, when mentioned how she created a Facebook group for a family wedding.

She added that:

Facebook has really been helpful; I will give an example where I had to create a group to facilitate a family wedding since most of them [family members] were far away and some had contracted the virus [COVID-19] so they only needed to join the group and contribute to the discussions.

P. Star, 31 years old male, mentioned how he uses the platform to engage:

I communicate through Facebook Messenger, with my cousin who went to Angola and since we cannot call each other, I use Facebook to reach her.

The quote above tells us that Facebook users engage with others using a variety of tools. They choose the most suitable tools to use, according to their own comfort and that of the person they are communicating to. Mainly they use Facebook Messenger to chat with their Facebook friends and Facebook-Live for live-streaming videos.

N.G, 30-year-old male, states how he uses Facebook to communicate, thus:

Facebook is a source of communication this nowadays, all news and everything, even now currently the City of Windhoek the conducted the CEO interview using Facebook-Live.

This study shows that posting and liking pictures and videos in groups, using Facebook Messenger for comments, and going live on Messenger are the most used tools by Sauyemwa residents. This finding can be connected to those of Medows and Marith (2020) who claimed that Facebook users also make use of Facebook-Messenger for commenting and chats, they use Facebook-Live to go live on Facebook as well. The other features or tools in the case of my study showed that they use tools like Facebook-Wall, making friends, posting, and liking pictures and news feeds. Lee, et al., (2014) added, the use of Facebook Messenger for chats with friends online and Facebook status.

### **Facebook as a community engagement tool during the COVID-19 pandemic**

Sauyemwa residents made use of Facebook during the pandemic. The researcher's goal here was to investigate the use of Facebook during the pandemic, and whether they would recommend others to make use of the platform. This is what it revealed, most of the participants or residents stated that Facebook is indeed a good platform, since it allows people to communicate or share information without being in physical contact with each other. They added that the platform is a cheap social media platform that is easy to use and that they do not need to buy newspapers all the time in order to read about the news.

P. Star, added that:

I would definitely recommend people to use Facebook, be it during the pandemic or in general life, it's just a modern era, and information is instantly being updated, so everyone needs to be updated, that why it is important for everyone to have Facebook.

### **Users' perception of the Facebook platform**

Although most of the participants mentioned they use Facebook in a positive way, which is for sharing of information, few of them opposed these facts and mentioned that Facebook is one of the social media platforms where bad (Unethical) content is being promoted and recommended that people who make use of these platform including himself should be sensible and conscious when putting out information on the platform. Another added that people should switch to making use of other platforms for communication because the use of Facebook as a communication tool is outdated and it sends you a lot of unnecessary notifications.

Kanji, a 36-year-old male, encouraged other people to make use of Facebook by stating that:

Facebook should always be used because it's a platform that connects us in wide range, it is a mass medium of communication. But encouraging people to use Facebook we should still have to caution that Facebook brings with it a lot of information and we should be conscious of the

type of information we share from Facebook. Let us use Facebook to get in touch, I mean the world is moving towards a digital world and we cannot run away from the fact that Facebook is doing a lot to connect us with different people from different parts of the world.

Joi, 18-year-old male, said:

In general, Facebook has a good impact on people, but I would advise we move to the more updated platforms, as Facebook sends a lot of unnecessary notifications.

Musho stated that:

Facebook is a good platform, and I would recommend people to make use of it during this pandemic, it is a good way to keep in touch with people you haven't seen for a while.

According to Diiye,

Yes, Facebook is a great social media platform to use because it is safe way to engage with others during COVID-19.

The above quote tells us that most of the residents in Sauyemwa are positively impacted by Facebook as they were able to recommend others to make use of the platform and how they can use it. It means, they find the platform helpful during the pandemic and the users were cautioned to be conscious of the information they share on the platform. As the world moves to a digital world, more social media platforms are emerging which puts Facebook in a challenge to keep upgrading to fit in.

N.G, stated that:

I would recommend others to make use of the Facebook platform as it is a source of communication, communication is everything, whether you are doing business, in a relationship, or in entertainment, without communication you are doomed. The other thing I would advise people should engage through Facebook because during this pandemic it is the only way we can conduct our business [marketing], and meet friends and it is a cheap platform, only if you have data then you are good to go.

The quotation above reveals that Facebook has a positive impact on the Sauyemwa residents during the pandemic and also even before this pandemic. They recommended others who face communication challenges, such as reaching out to friends and families who are in different countries to use Facebook Messenger. These findings contribute to the study of Joo and Teng (2017), who found results that show that Facebook has a positive impact on people and other institutions like family as it improves communication and enhances the level of a united family. They added that Facebook brings about a positive impact on family members and friends, and it would build a better and more harmonic community. Raamkumar et al., (2020) and Chu et al., (2020), concluded that social media platforms like Facebook, could provide effective and efficient communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. They also believed that Facebook would be helpful to both health organizations and the engagement of the public worldwide during the global battle against COVID-19. My study extends this conclusion in the areas of the positive impacts that social media and Facebook specifically, have on community engagement during this period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

According to the study, Facebook was used by Sauyemwa locals to communicate with one another both during and after the outbreak. They shared and accessed information about hot topics throughout the world via Facebook. Residents used Facebook as a platform to communicate with distant relatives and friends and exchange information. This result shows us that, social media platforms are of significance to people around the world, they exist to assist people in connecting with each other, especially in times like these of the pandemic. This study demonstrated that residents mostly used social media tools like publishing photos and videos for friends to respond to by commenting, liking, and sharing. They also used Facebook Live, primarily for broadcasting live video sessions and recording live videos on personal Facebook profiles for friends to view, like, and comment on. They also used Facebook Messenger, primarily for comments and direct discussions with Facebook friends. The locals developed and joined Facebook groups to address or attend to specific societal issues like political debates, crime, and other social issues. The locals further agreed that Facebook was an important tool for communication and encouraged others to utilize it as well. In conclusion, locals advised others to use the site and enter the digital industrialized world, but to use caution because it has certain users who publish unethical content. The findings also revealed that a small percentage of locals simply used Facebook for amusement, while the majority used it for business objectives, such as for those engaged in business.

This study recommends that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, social media platforms should be incorporated into all aspects of learning. Facebook users should be made aware that the platforms were not created for entertainment purposes only but to be an alternative within the communication industry, examples like the live streaming of the Chief Executive Officer interview on Facebook and the Ombudsman public interview in Namibia. Facebook users should explore new tools like, Facebook Creative Hub for ads plus Facebook community engagement purposes. Those who are in the business market can use Facebook Business Manager, to manage their businesses, Facebook pages and business accounts. The use of Facebook as a medium for communication has seen an increase in the past years as stated in the background article of this study. There is still a growing concern about the issues of cyberbullying in Namibia, identity defamation and all the unethical practices on social media. The state and other stakeholders in this aspect should incorporate the significance of social media, the right values and ethics on the use of social media.

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### About the Author

**Mr. Peter Ihalo Leevi** is a Bachelor of Education in Lifelong Learning and Community Education Graduate from the Department of Higher Education and Lifelong Learning, School of Education, Faculty of Education and Human Sciences, University of Namibia. Currently, Mr Leevi is busy with his Master of Education in Adult Education researching Digital Detoxing as A Tool to Mitigate The Impact Of Social Media Usage On Young Peoples' Digital Lifestyles In Kavango East Region, Rundu in the same department.

**Dr Sadrag Panduleni Shihomeka** is a media and communication practitioner, specialised in social media and youth politics. He presented, and published in digital human rights, and gender studies, as well as conferences, projects and seminars associated with e-Mourning and Post-death Digital Presence, online violence, e-ethics and marginalisation of women online areas. Dr Shihomeka serves as an external moderator and theses examiner for Journalism and Media Technology at various institutions. He holds a PhD in Media and Communication from Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands, MBA, and a B. Ed (Secondary). Currently, he is the Head of the Department for Higher Education and Lifelong Learning and a Senior Lecturer for Educational Media and Technologies at the University of Namibia. As an ICT4D researcher, Dr Shihomeka, collaborated with several NGOs, Universities, and Institutions to promote digital literacy, digital romance, e-democracy, e-addiction, e-deception, and cyberbullying to empower citizens with digital skills.