EXPLORING KNOWLEDGE SHARING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA AMONG

MEMBERS OF THE AFRICAN COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

SARLOMIE FARISAI MBASERA
BSc LIS, HONS, NUST
MLIS, UFH

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy (Information Studies) in the School of Social Sciences, College
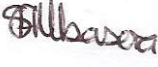**of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa**

Supervisor: Prof Stephen Mutula

Submitted: 29 August 2019

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I, **Sarlomie Farisai Mbasera**, declare that:

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Signed: Date: 29 August 2019

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Dedication

To my mother, Dr. Miriam Mbasera. Thank you for being a woman of faith and strength. Thank you for leading the way and showing that nothing is impossible for she who puts her faith in God and works with Him. This is for you, dear mother!

Abstract

This study sought to examine the extent of social media use for knowledge sharing among members of the African Community of Practice (AfCoP), a distributed community of practice of development practitioners. It also sought to find the factors affecting knowledge sharing through social media among AfCoP members.

The study followed a pragmatic approach using mixed methods to collect data through a survey, semi-structured interviews and content analysis on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform.

The study revealed that social media is providing new ways through which tacit and codified knowledge is shared in distributed communities. Several types of social media were found to support various knowledge sharing activities including learning, networking, collaboration and expert location.

Social Capital and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) factors were found to play an important role in knowledge sharing behaviours among AfCoP members. Social interaction ties, trust, norms of reciprocity, identification, shared language and shared vision significantly correlated with the knowledge sharing intentions of AfCoP members and the quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform. Perceived usefulness also correlated with both knowledge sharing intentions of members and the quality of knowledge shared on the platform, while perceived ease of use correlated with the quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform. Members were also motivated to participate on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform by a desire to improve their career practices and to encounter professional opportunities on the platform.

The challenges members encountered in their pursuit of sharing knowledge on the AfCoP platform included: lack of time and an unwillingness to exert the necessary effort to

meaningfully participate on the platform, lack of participation, insufficient incentives for participation and lack of financial guarantee for the sustainability of AfCoP.

The study demonstrates that social media can bridge challenges of distance and physical location through facilitating the sharing of tacit and explicit knowledge despite one's location. To encourage knowledge sharing through social media, social capital and TAM factors must be addressed. The study also adds to empirical evidence on the role of social media in facilitating knowledge sharing among development sector practitioners from an African context.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Appendices

List of Acronyms

AfCoP   African Community of Practice

Afrik4R   Africa for Results

COP   Communities of Practice

DOI   Diffusion of Innovation

ICT   Information and Communication Technology

IT   Information Technology

KM   Knowledge Management

KMS   Knowledge Management System

KS   Knowledge Sharing

KSP   Knowledge Sharing Platform

M & E   Monitoring and Evaluation

MfDR   Managing for Development Results

NM-AIST   Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology

NUST   National University of Science and Technology

PBC   Perceived Behavioural Control

PEOU   Perceived Ease of Use

PU   Perceived Usefulness

RBM   Results Based Management

SC   Social Capital Theory

SET   Social Exchange Theory

TAM   Technology Acceptance Model

TPB   Theory of Planned Behaviour

TRA   Theory of Reasoned Action

UFH   University of Fort Hare

US   United States

USMC   United States Marine Corps

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1   Introduction

Knowledge is increasingly recognised as a critical and strategic resource for achieving

sustainability and competitive advantage in organizations (Ipe, 2003; Mladenović & Krajina,

2020; Wang & Noe, 2010a; Wenger, McDermott, Snyder, McDermontt, & Snyder, 2002).

The creation, sharing and leveraging of individual and collective knowledge has therefore

become an important preoccupation of knowledge management in organisations (Al-Taee,

2013; Ipe, 2003).

Knowledge Management (KM) is defined as *"the deliberate and systematic coordination of*

an organisation's people, technology, processes, and organizational structure in order to add

value through reuse and innovation"(Dalkir, 2011, p. 4)*.* Knowledge management is

achieved by applying knowledge as well as incorporating valuable lessons learned and best

practices into corporate memory in order to foster continued individual and organisational

learning (Dalkir, 2011, p. 4). It is therefore vital for many organisations to engage knowledge

management strategies and tools to leverage knowledge for strategic and competitive

purposes.

KM emerged primarily as a techno-centric process when organisations focused on capturing

unstructured information, making it searchable and easily accessible to employees, using

Knowledge Management Systems (KMS) such as intranets, organisational web portals, web

search engines and electronic mail (Gurteen, 2012). KM was then technology driven,

centrally controlled and mainly aimed at improving efficiency (Gurteen, 2012). The techno-

centric view of knowledge management, however, failed to cater for the embeddedness of

1

knowledge in people and their social structures (Panahi, Watson, & Partridge, 2012). This led a number of researchers to believe information and communications technologies (ICT's) and traditional knowledge management systems were inadequate in tacit knowledge management (Panahi, Watson, & Partridge, 2013) because they were not people-centric. The need for strategies that focus on improving communication among people to enhance better decision making, greater creativity and innovation was expressed (Gurteen, 2012). One such people-centric strategy to KM has been the emergence of Communities of Practice in organisations.

1.2   Knowledge Sharing in Communities of Practice

Communities of practice (CoPs) are considered as the ideal social structures for harnessing organisational knowledge for competitive advantage, because it has been proved that it is in groups that knowledge can be created and nurtured sustainably (Hildreth, Kimble, & Wright, 2000; Wenger et al., 2002). Communities of practice (CoPs) are defined as groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in the common area of interest, by interacting on an ongoing basis (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 4). CoPs have also been defined as flexible groups of professionals, who are informally bound by common interests and who interact through collaborative tasks, guided by common goals and who share a common knowledge-base (Widen-Wulff, 2004). All types of CoPs are beneficial because they enable organisations to pool resources, to access outside expertise, learn from others' experience, develop common training materials, assess the merits of different practices and build a baseline of knowledge (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 223).

There are various types of CoPs that include self-organised CoPs, sponsored CoPs, distributed CoPs, and online or virtual CoPs. The distributed CoPs which are the focus of this study cut across multiple geographic boundaries and organisations. Distributed CoPs link

people across vast distances, organisational boundaries and different cultures (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 116). However, enabling knowledge seeking and access to knowledge sources in distributed communities to effectively share knowledge is often a significant challenge (Hildreth & Kimble, 2004, p.20). This is because distributed CoPs hardly depend on face to face interactions as a primary vehicle for connecting members, but instead rely on information technologies to help people collaborate over remote areas (Jeon, Kim, & Koh, 2011). Distributed CoPs therefore need appropriate tools and platforms to facilitate the sharing and exchange of knowledge and ideas by individuals within or across groups. Social media and other related Web 2.0 technologies such as intranets, extranets and groupware have emerged as effective platforms for knowledge sharing in distributed CoPs to facilitate exchange and sharing of knowledge (Al-Taee, 2013) .

According to Hendriks (1999), the common motivation for leveraging technologies to manage CoPs is the belief that they have the potential to empower the individuals, support and boost their knowledge sharing skills. Anecdotal evidence, however suggests that using information communication technologies does not always result in significant improvement in knowledge sharing (Hahn & Wang, 2009; Hendriks, 1999). One main reason is that first generation information and communication technologies have limitations in facilitating the transfer of tacit knowledge that is largely dependent on the social dynamics of individuals and groups within and across organisations (Davison, Ou, & Martinsons, 2013).

1.3   Use of Social Media for Knowledge Sharing in Communities of Practice

Social media, a second generation of information and communication technologies (ICT's) that are characterised by distinct dynamic and collaborative features, are playing crucial roles in facilitating knowledge sharing in CoPs. In this study, the term *social media* is used to denote a group of Internet-based technologies that allows users to easily create, edit, evaluate, and/or link to content or to other creators of content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media are

used to create highly interactive platforms that enable individuals and communities to share, co-create, discuss and modify user generated content (Ahmed, Ahmad, Ahmad, & Zakaria, 2018; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011; Mladenović & Krajina, 2020). Social media include, among others, a variety of applications such as micro blogging; wikis; RSS feeds; social tagging and electronic social networks (Majchrzak, Faraj, Kane, & Azad, 2013). These features make social media suitable for facilitating knowledge exchanges within the context of CoPs and for enhancing the processes of tacit and experiential knowledge sharing among individuals in and across organisations (Panahi, 2014).

Many organisations, particularly in the western world, have joined the bandwagon of implementing social media, in an effort to improve their organisational knowledge sharing processes (Majchrzak et al., 2013; Treem & Leonardi, 2012). However, in emerging and developing economies, such as Zimbabwe, the use of social media for knowledge sharing in organisations is still in its infancy, although there is growing evidence that the trend towards adopting the use of social media for knowledge sharing is gaining pace (Musungwini, Zhou, Zhou, & Ruvinga, 2014). The use of social media in managing tacit and explicit knowledge is still limited. Consequently, there is a dearth of empirical research and theory that explain the nature and role of social media in knowledge sharing within CoPs. This study is thus aimed at addressing the question: *What is the extent of social media use in knowledge sharing within the African Community of Practice (AfCoP)?*

1.4 The Study Site

The study site was the African Community of Practice. This is an online based community of practice of development professionals. The site was chosen because of its unique characteristic of using different social media for sharing knowledge among its membership.

1.4.1 Evolution of African Community of Practice

The African Community of Practice (AfCoP) was established in 2007 with the aim of building capacity in Managing for Development Results (MfDR), among development practitioners, across the African continent (African Community of Practice, 2007, p. 17). MfDR is a framework designed to incorporate results-based management practices in development projects and processes globally. MfDR therefore focuses on development performance and on sustainable improvements in country outcomes. It also embodies the tenets of good governance, clear objectives, evidence based decision making, transparency and continuous adaptation and improvement of development processes (African Community of Practice, 2008, p. 1). The mission of AfCoP is to build MfDR capacity in Africa through sharing experiences, networking and building strong learning relationships between development practitioners in Africa and around the world (African Capacity Building Foundation, 2014; African Community of Practice, 2010, p. 9). Its focus is on five thematic areas which are: leadership, monitoring and evaluation, accountability and partnership; planning and budgeting and statistics (African Community of Practice, 2007, 2010, p. 13).

1.4.2 AfCoP's Knowledge Sharing Platform

Knowledge sharing between AfCoP members was facilitated through the social media based AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, which was built on Ning, a subscription based social networking platform. It was accessible only to registered members of AfCoP and it included social media features such as a discussion forum, blog, private chat and emailing. AfCoP also maintained public social media accounts with Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. The AfCoP knowledge sharing platform had the mandate to provide a forum for MfDR practitioners to share knowledge, express concerns, exchange opinions, solicit ideas and develop practical solutions on MfDR in a timely and cost effective manner, while focusing on practical

problem solving, hands on use of results-based management techniques (African Community of Practice, 2008, p. 4)

1.4.3 AfCoP Membership

AfCoP had 4179 individual members from 43 different African countries at the time of conducting the study. Membership consisted of practitioners of the Management for Development Results (MfDR) who work for African governments, civil society, academia , the private sector, independent experts, media experts and donors (African Community of Practice, 2013, p. 3).

1.4.4 AfCoP Management

AfCoP is a member driven community which defines its own strategy and action plan. It had a core management team (CMT) of nine members who set the strategic direction of the community (African Community of Practice, 2012, pp. 12–14). The CMT represents five African sub regions, namely: Western, Northern, Eastern, Central and Southern Africa. There were also two members of the CMT drawn from two Regional Economic Communities (REC) which are the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) (African Community of Practice, 2012, pp. 12–14). In addition to the CMT, AfCoP also has an advisory committee, which has 11 members who represented each of the key MfDR themes of interest to AfCoP. AfCoP was coordinated as a partnership between The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) and the African Development Bank (ADB).

1.5 Statement of the Problem

AfCoP, a distributed community of development professionals, links members across multiple geographic boundaries, organisations and cultures. In its distributed capacity, the mission of AfCoP is to enable professionals across the continent share work experiences and best practices

on Managing for Development results (MfDR); network and build strong and learning relationships between MfDR practitioners in Africa and around the world; collaborate on projects; identify experts on various development issues for example those related to results based management as well as leadership, gender, youth and policy development. Enabling AfCoP members in this distributed community to effectively share knowledge is therefore key to AfCoP's ability to achieve its core objectives (Hildreth & Kimble, 2004, p. 20). The challenge however is that as a distributed community AfCoP cannot depend on face to face interactions as a primary vehicle for connecting members for knowledge sharing purposes. This is because setting up physical meetings among all AfCoP members is difficult to achieve since the members are dispersed in different geographic locations around the world. Moreover, the associated hosting costs such as accommodation and transport would be prohibitive. AfCoP must then fundamentally depend on communication technology that replace, but closely matches, the dynamics found in face to face human interactions, to help members to collaborate and to share knowledge over remote areas (Jeon, Kim, & Koh, 2011). Consequently, AfCoP has implemented a knowledge sharing platform using social media tools which include a discussion forum, blog, and public social media accounts on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook to enable and encourage knowledge sharing among its members.

Social media are being considered important platforms for knowledge sharing in distributed communities by providing cheap, easy, efficient and productive means to share knowledge among members (Burnage & Persaud, 2012). They enable members debate in open forum; host web-based discussions; identify experts; exchange advice and resources; as well as facilitate rich informative dialogue; building new networks and giving access to key stakeholders; decision makers and the sharing of good practices among members (Burnage & Persaud, 2012; Panahi, 2014).

The use of social media for knowledge sharing in different organisations is therefore growing rapidly worldwide (Treem & Leonardi, 2012). Researchers however acknowledge that the implications of adopting social media for knowledge sharing in organisations are not well understood (Treem & Leonardi, 2012). Moreover, little is known about how social media may be used by individuals and groups for sharing knowledge across organisations (Majchrzak et al., 2013). In addition, studies on the adoption and use of social media in organisations seem to have been carried out ostensibly in large private and multinational enterprises in the developed western countries (Majchrzak et al., 2013; Panahi, Watson, & Partridge, 2012; Treem & Leonardi, 2012) and little, if any, in the developing world context. Therefore, it is important for AfCoP to gain an empirical and deep understanding of how social media can be leveraged in knowledge sharing within and across organisations. This study therefore seeks to answer the question: What is the extent of adoption and use of social media for knowledge sharing within AfCoP?

1.6 Research Objectives

The study seeks to address the following three main research objectives:

1. To examine the extent and use of social media in facilitating knowledge sharing in AfCoP.

2. To investigate the factors influencing the use of social media among AfCoP membership.

3. To provide recommendations for the adoption and use of social media for knowledge sharing in AfCoP.

1.7   Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How are social media being used for knowledge sharing among members of AfCoP?

2. What are the factors influencing the use of social media in sharing knowledge among AfCoP members?

3. What are the perceptions of AfCoP members towards the use of social media for sharing knowledge?

4. What kind of knowledge is generated and shared using social media among AfCoP members?

5. What are the challenges of using social media for sharing knowledge among AfCoP members?

1.8   Significance of the Study

Different organisations and CoPs throughout the world are increasingly making attempts to use social media for knowledge sharing. However, scholarly literature on the role of social media in knowledge sharing within organisations is limited. In order to understand the role of social media in AfCoP, the current study sought to address the following questions: How are social media used for knowledge sharing among members in AfCoP? What are the factors affecting the use of social media in sharing knowledge among AfCoP members? What are the perceptions of AfCoP members towards the use of social media in sharing knowledge? What kind of knowledge is generated and shared using social media among AfCoP members? And what are the challenges of using social media for knowledge sharing among AfCoP members?

Moreover, research shows that studies related to the role of social media and knowledge sharing have tended to focus on different professions and types of organisations, including physicians,

management consultants and US Marines (Baehr & Alex-Brown, 2010; Cao, Guo, Liu, & Gu, 2015; Jarrahi & Sawyer, 2013; Mastrom, 2013; Panahi, 2014). The current study sought to fill this gap, by providing empirical evidence on the phenomena of knowledge sharing through social media, within a bilingual (French and English) community of practice, for development practitioners. This is important because there is a demand for knowledge sharing among development organisations and practioners who increasingly encounter diverse experiences in their field of work, which requires the exchange of new ideas and approaches as well as learning from each other's experiences (World Bank, 2009).Knowledge sharing is therefore viewed as a central challenge the development sector must resolve (Van Der Velden, 2002).

Empirical literature on social media uses in organisations also reveals a focus on single applications such as wikis and blogs; while the reality is that many professionals and organisations are exploring a diversity of social media in knowledge sharing (Jarrahi & Sawyer, 2013). The current study seeks to add to an empirical understanding of the role of a diversity of social media that include discussion forum, blog, Twitter and Facebook, in the knowledge sharing practices of AfCoP.

Finally, the literature review reveals that current scholarly research on the phenomena of social media use in organisational knowledge management is based mainly on studies from the developed countries, such as the Netherlands; United States; Australia and Scotland (Fulk & Yuan, 2013; Jarrahi, 2013; Leonardi et al., 2013; Mansour et al., 2013; Mladenović & Krajina, 2020). Very few studies on the role of social media in knowledge sharing in CoPs can be identified from developing nations' contexts even though knowledge is recognised as a pillar for equitable and sustainable development in these regions and knowledge sharing is considered a central challenge to be addressed(Van Der Velden, 2002). Developing contexts such as Africa are confronted with a myriad challenges including reducing poverty and hunger; enhancing food and energy security; strengthening macroeconomic management; combating

the negative effects of climate change and improving development prospects of future generations (Hanson & Kararach, 2011). Efficient knowledge management, exploitation and utilisation is necessary for Africa to launch itself on a sustainable development path (Hanson & Kararach, 2011). Through the results of this study, development practitioners on the African continent can consider empirically tested recommendations to improve knowledge sharing practices towards building a more sustainable and developed continent.

With respect to method, the study followed a mixed method approach in examining the role of the use of social media for knowledge sharing among members of a distributed community of practice. This brought about a richer and multi-dimensional understanding of the phenomenon under study, as data derived from the survey of AfCoP members was further enriched by qualitative data obtained through interviews with AfCoP members, secretariat and content analysis of posts on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform's blog, discussion forum, Twitter and Facebook accounts.

With respect to the theoretical approach, the study proposed a model for knowledge sharing through social media, which combined the Social Capital Theory and the Technology Acceptance Model factors (Figure 4). The results of the study indicated that 15 of the 16 proposed hypotheses were supported, revealing the important role of social capital and perceptions of usefulness and ease of use of social media in influencing knowledge sharing behaviour and outcomes. The research model used in this study can also be used as a theoretical basis to analyse relationships between knowledge sharing enablers, processes and outcomes in contexts where social media based platforms are used, as it is an integrative model.

1.9   Scope and Limitations of the Study

Although AfCoP is a bilingual community and the knowledge sharing platform has two sites, one for English speakers and one for French speaking members, the study was primarily focused on the activities of the English knowledge sharing platform, in whose language the researcher is competent.

1.10   Definition of Key Terms

Communities of Practice (CoP)- Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 4). The distinct characteristics of communities of practice include the members' commitment to a domain of interest; their engagement in community with joint activities and discussions, a commitment to help each other and share information and being affiliated to a specific practice as a practitioner or professional (Wenger, 2011).

Distributed communities of practice- Distributed communities of practice are communities of practice that cannot rely on face-to-face meetings and interactions as their primary vehicle for connecting members, but link large numbers of people across vast geographic distances, major organisational boundaries and different cultures (Wenger et al., 2002, pp. 115–116)

Knowledge management- This is broadly defined as the process of systematically creating, sharing, and applying an organisation's knowledge, which includes valuable lessons learnt, and best practices, thus fostering continuous organisational learning (Dalkir, 2005, p. 3)

Knowledge sharing-Knowledge sharing is the act of making the needed knowledge available to other people in an organisation and involves a process of communication in which two or more parties exchange information, leading to the creation of new knowledge (Aliakbar, Yusoff, & Movaghar, 2013).

Social Media-Social media, also known as Web 2.0 or social software, refers to a generation of community driven web services such as social networking sites, blogs, wikis, microblogging sites among many others, which support a socially connected web where users are able to communicate, participate, collaborate and to add and edit information (Paroutis & Al Saleh, 2009). A key feature of social media is participation and interactivity, where users can freely produce, locate and share content.

1.11 Structure of Thesis

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter outlines the background to the phenomenon of knowledge sharing through social media, highlighting important debates and positioning the problem under study. It spells out the research objectives governing the study, as well as the research questions the study seeks to answer. The chapter demonstrates the significance of the study, and also provides the outline of the rest of the study.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

Chapter two presents a review of literature on theories related to the phenomenon of knowledge sharing and technology adoption. The researcher also justifies the choice of the Social Capital Theory and Technology Acceptance Model which were combined and adapted to formulate the research model used in some aspects of the current study.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

This chapter reviews literature related to the constructs of research questions, theory and broader issues around the research problem. It highlights current debates in the role of information and communications technologies (ICTs) in knowledge sharing.

Chapter Four: Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the research philosophy adopted and justifies the associated research approach, research design, description of the population of the study, the sampling procedures followed, as well as the techniques for data collection and analysis. The chapter also describes how the reliability and validity of the study was achieved. It also outlines how ethical issues were addressed.

Chapter Five: Presentation and Analysis of Quantitative Data

The chapter presents findings from quantitative data obtained through the AfCoP member survey.

Chapter Six: Presentation and Analysis of Qualitative Data

This chapter presents qualitative data obtained through the open-ended questions of the AfCoP member survey; interviews with AfCoP members and secretariat; content analysis of posts from AfCoP's discussion forum, blogs and public social media accounts, Facebook and Twitter; and documentary evidence from AfCoP reports and other publications. Data are arranged according to related themes.

Chapter Seven: Discussion of Findings

This chapter discusses the findings of the study, informed by extant literature and theory.

Chapter Eight: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

A summary of key findings, conclusions and implications of the study is given in this chapter. Recommendations are made towards the adoption of social media for knowledge sharing. Areas needing further research in the field are outlined.

1.12 Summary

This chapter introduces the background of this study highlighting the strategic importance of knowledge and knowledge management practices in organisations. The need for appropriate technology for facilitating knowledge sharing is also highlighted. The chapter presents the problem of investigation, the key objective being the examination of the extent and use of social media in facilitating knowledge sharing among members of a distributed community of practice, AfCoP. The significance of the study is highlighted, as well as the scope and limitations of the study. The definitions of key terms used in the current study are presented, and the structure of the study outlined.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The theoretical framework is considered to be the "blue print" for the entire dissertation

enquiry (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). It serves as a guide for the researcher on which to build

and support his or her study, thus providing a structure that defines how the researcher will

philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically and analytically approach the research

study as a whole (Fari, 2015; Grant & Osanloo, 2014). The theoretical framework therefore

provides a grounding base or an anchor for the entire research process (Grant & Osanloo,

2014).

The current study is an examination of the process of knowledge sharing through a recent

innovation: social media. The study therefore combines two subject disciplines, namely

knowledge management and information systems. This chapter therefore presents an

examination of appropriate theories that have guided previous research processes in the

knowledge management domains as well as theories that have undergirded research in

information systems. This is to ensure that the study is adequately informed by relevant

theory that caters for both domains of study. The chapter then justifies the choice and

combination of the Social Capital Theory (SC) and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM),

into a research model that serves as a blueprint, guiding the process of enquiry of the current

study.

2.2 Knowledge Sharing Theories

Past research in knowledge sharing has been underpinned by social theories including but not

limited to the Social Exchange Theory (SET), Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), Theory of

Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Social Capital Theory (SCT). Most of these theories explain

the relationship of social interaction, intrinsic as well as extrinsic benefits that might have a positive effect on the individuals attitudes towards knowledge sharing (Wasko & Faraj, 2005; Yassin, Sahari, & Salim, 2011). Models based on these theories can be useful in identifying circumstances under which organisational measures to promote knowledge sharing may be more effective (Orhun & Hopple, 2008). The following is a brief discussion of some relevant theories in the knowledge sharing domain, as well as a justification of the choice of the Social Capital Theory in combination with the Technology Acceptance Model as a conceptual framework to guide the current study.

2.3   Social Exchange Theory and Knowledge Sharing
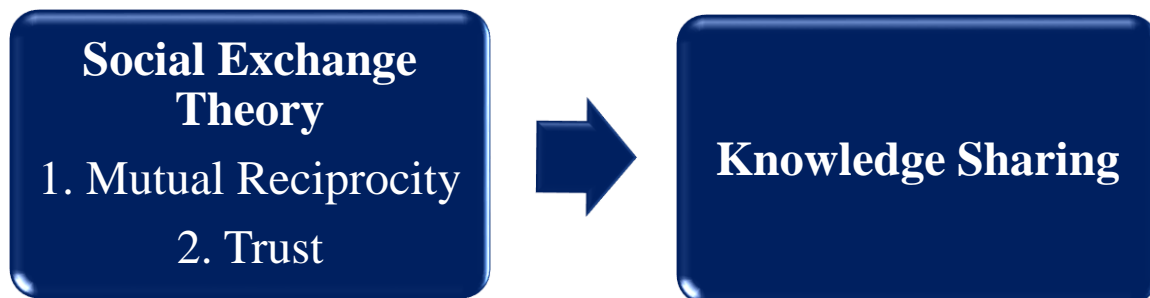
Figure 1: Social Exchange Theory (Adapted from Okyere-Kwaye & Noe, 2011)

The Social Exchange Theory (SET), has been used commonly as a theoretical base for investigating individual's knowledge sharing behaviour (Liang, Liu, & Wu, 2008). The fundamental dimension of the SET is individual cognition which may include perceived benefits (Liang et al., 2008). SET posits that individuals regulate their interactions with other people after considering the costs and benefits of such interaction (Liang et al., 2008; Okyere-Kwaye & Nor, 2011). Thus, with SET, individuals are said to engage in social interactions, based on the expectation that it will maximise their benefits and minimise their costs. These benefits are not necessarily tangible, but may include an individual expecting to gain approval, status and respect through their interaction within a social group (Liang et al., 2008). SET also posits that individuals may not engage in certain activities unless they view

the outcomes as being positive (Okyere-Kwaye & Nor, 2011). With SET therefore, the motivating factor on whether or not an individual will engage in certain behaviour, will be based on their perceptions of what they will gain or lose through the action.

The fundamental constructs of SET are mutual reciprocity and trust (Okyere-Kwaye & Nor, 2011). Mutual reciprocity denotes that people are more likely to socially interact with the intention of accruing positive rewards from others (Okyere-Kwaye & Nor, 2011). The concept of trust is also an important consideration for social interaction using SET. Individuals are likely to exhibit co-operative behaviour based on their level of trust in a system or community and will not consider certain activities when they feel uncertain about the associated future returns (Okyere-Kwaye & Nor, 2011). Trust among individuals grows when they are guaranteed that their dealings with another will not cost them negatively (Okyere-Kwaye & Nor, 2011). In addition, when individuals perceive other partners as untrustworthy they will not exchange or cooperate with them (Okyere-Kwaye & Nor, 2011).

The SET has been found to be useful in contributing to the understanding of knowledge management in general and knowledge sharing specifically (Widen-Wulff, 2004).When applied to knowledge sharing, it can be hypothesised that knowledge sharing by individuals in a community may be motivated by perceived benefits. By exhibiting a particular knowledge sharing behaviour, people may be interested in obtaining desired resources from others, while minimising costs and maximising rewards (Widen-Wulff, 2004). Thus individuals shape their knowledge sharing behaviour, or the likelihood of developing a relationship with someone based on their expectation of a positive outcome (Widen-Wulff, 2004). Conversely, where there is a likelihood of a negative outcome through engaging in knowledge sharing, the individual will not be motivated to share their knowledge.

As an example, community members may expect that their knowledge contributions will help them build a good reputation and improve their status within their social group (Liang et al., 2008). This would motivate them to actively engage in knowledge sharing activities. Conversely, individuals will not share their knowledge when they perceive the activity as a mere cost (Okyere-Kwaye & Nor, 2011). The costs can include time, or effort or even possible fears of how the information they share might be used. It can also be hypothesised that where trust between members of a community exists, this may encourage them to share their knowledge. The main link between SET and trust being that the knowledge being shared would not cause harm to the giver (Okyere-Kwaye & Nor, 2011).

While SET, has been successfully used in many studies to explain the knowledge sharing behaviour of individuals in communities, it has been found to have some drawbacks (Liang et al., 2008). For example, the SET constructs such as organisational rewards and trust used in previous studies, have produced inconsistent results (Liang et al., 2008). These contradictory findings then pose a significant challenge when it comes to theoretical interpretation and practical implementation.

2.4   Social Cognition Theory and Knowledge Sharing

The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) posits that people make causal contribution to their own motivation and action within a system of triadic reciprocal causation (Bandura, 1989). In this model of reciprocal causation, action, cognitive, affective and other personal factors and environmental events are said to operate as interacting determinants of behaviour (Bandura, 1989). The SCT therefore postulates that individuals consider a combination of triadic factors that are personal, social and environmental to make decisions on either to or not to exhibit a certain behaviour (Okyere-Kwaye & Nor, 2011).

A central argument of the SCT is that the mind of a person is an active tool guiding the individual towards formulating expectations, abilities and outcomes (Okyere-Kwaye & Nor, 2011). How they think about their personal circumstances or abilities, other people's experiences or their environment, shapes how they will behave in a specific instance.

The key constructs of SCT are self-efficacy, outcome expectation and altruism (Chiu, Hsu, & Wang, 2006; Okyere-Kwaye & Nor, 2011). Self-efficacy is a judgement of one's ability to organise and execute given types of performances (Chiu et al., 2006). It is also defined as a person's confidence in his or her ability to take action and persevere in the midst of challenges (Glanz, 2001). Positive beliefs about their capabilities will motivate them to perform a specific action. Outcome expectation is a judgement of what the likely consequences of performing a certain behaviour will produce (Chiu et al., 2006). When the individual believes the outcome of a certain behaviour will be positive, they are likely to be willing to engage in it. Another construct of the SCT is altruism, which refers to behaviour that costs an individual while benefitting another, without the giver thinking of any return (Okyere-Kwaye & Nor, 2011). Altruism is behaviour that is motivated by the selfless generosity of an individual, where the individual derives satisfaction from charitable acts.

When applied to knowledge management, the SCT argues that if individuals are unsure of their capabilities, that is self-efficacy and the outcome of the act of sharing, they are likely not to share it. Thus SCT posits that an individual will only share their knowledge when they are confident in their ability to share a valuable contribution and are expecting a positive outcome. It can further be argued that individuals may engage in knowledge sharing activities in a community without necessarily thinking of the personal benefit they might receive from sharing, thus exhibiting altruistic behaviour (Okyere-Kwaye & Nor, 2011). Altruism links with SCT in that individuals weigh psychological benefits before getting involved in sharing their knowledge.

The SCT has been found to have some limitations, which include that it assumes a direct relationship between changes in the environment and the behavioural change of the individual, when this may not always be true (LaMorte, 2018a). Through personal development, the individual's behaviour may change, without there necessarily being a change in their environment. The SCT also ignores the influence of biological processes and hormones in influencing one's behaviour, instead emphasising on the processes of learned behaviour, past experience and expectations (LaMorte, 2018b). Although biological processes are not key in this study, they can have influence in the behaviour of individuals. The SCT has also been criticised for being loosely organised, based solely on the dynamic interplay between person, behaviour and their environment (LaMorte, 2018b). Without having one unifying principle, it is difficult to implement the theory in its entirety. The SCT has also been found to have a minimal focus on emotion and motivation, when these are considered key factors in influencing individual behaviour (LaMorte, 2018b). While being able to explain some aspects of knowledge sharing behaviour among individuals, the SCT is limited in addressing the variables that are within a social network and how these influence an individual's behaviour (Chiu et al., 2006). The SCT was therefore not incorporated in this study.

2.5   Theory of Reasoned Action and Knowledge Sharing

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) is another popular theory that has been used by researchers to explain human behaviour. It was developed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). TRA postulates that an individual's intention to perform an action has two basic antecedents which are attitude and subjective norm (Kuo & Young, 2008). Intention refers to the degree to which people are willing to try or the amount of effort one is willing to exert in order to perform a behaviour (Kuo & Young, 2008). Attitude is defined as the degree to which a person has a positive and negative evaluation of the behaviour in question, while subjective

norms toward a behaviour are defined as the perceived social pressure on whether to perform an action or not (Kuo & Young, 2008). Thus the combination of a positive attitude towards a behaviour together with a positive subjective norm forms an individual's intention to engage in a behaviour(Jasaragic, n.d.). This in turn leads to action.

The TRA has been extensively applied and successfully used in knowledge management research, with attitude, subjective norms and knowledge sharing intentions exhibiting significance in relation to knowledge sharing (Bock, Zmud, Kim, & Lee, 2005; Bock & Kim, 2001).
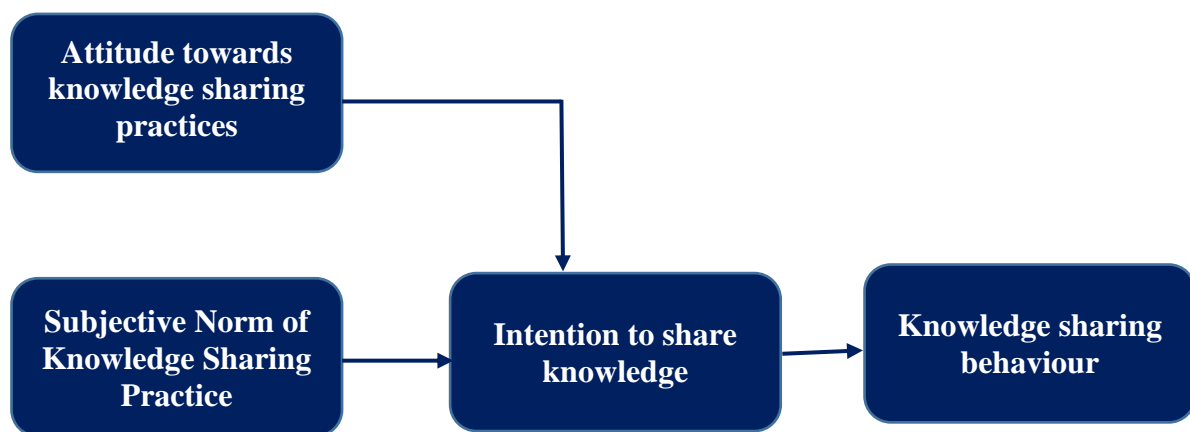
Figure 2: Theory of Reasoned Action (Adapted from Ajzen 1975)

In knowledge sharing research, attitude has been shown to be a critical factor because one's knowledge about how to solve problems within an organisation influences one's trade value (Kuo & Young, 2008). People are more likely to share their knowledge and expertise in the context of an organisation if they believe that it will be personally important and valuable to them (Kuo & Young, 2008). Subjective norms have been found to influence knowledge sharing practice as well, whereby positive organisational climate influences the formation of subjective norms which in turn affect an individual's intention towards knowledge sharing behaviours (Bock et al., 2005; Kuo & Young, 2008). In a study of Russian organisations, the

belief that mistakes should be avoided at all costs which is deeply rooted in Russian culture, was found to discourage employees from engaging in critical thinking which in turn was found to hinder innovative thinking (Husted & Michailova, 2002). Russian employees were therefore found, not to be favourably disposed towards knowledge sharing, showing that negative organisational subjective norms, can hinder knowledge sharing.

According to TRA, the intention to engage in a behaviour is a good predictor of the behaviour itself. The main assumption of the TRA is that the behaviour an individual exhibits is entirely under the volition of the individual, meaning that the subject always has control on whether to perform a particular behaviour or not (Jasaragic, n.d.). This is said to be the TRA's biggest limitation (Jasaragic, n.d.). The predictive power of TRA suffers for behaviours that are not under the individual's total volitional control.

2.6   Theory of Planned Behaviour and Knowledge Sharing

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), also extensively used in knowledge sharing research, is merely an extension of the TRA by adding the construct of perceived behavioural control (PBC), to TRA's original constructs of attitude and subjective norms (Kuo & Young, 2008a). Perceived behavioural control (PBC), refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing an activity and the amount of control one has over the achievement of personal goals. PBC was introduced after the recognition that there are some circumstances where people do not have complete control over performing a behaviour in question(Kuo & Young, 2008).

PBC assists in providing information about potential facilitators and constraints on actions as understood by the individual, which may influence whether or not a behaviour is executed, despite the individual's intention toward that behaviour (Kuo & Young, 2008).

In knowledge sharing research, PBC is highly correlated with perceived ease of use, or difficulty related to the use of some technology, which has been shown to significantly predict intention to use the technology (Kuo & Young, 2008). Thus, it has been shown that the easier a system is to use, the greater the belief that the system will support information needs.

The TPB has been shown to have limitation in explanatory power towards the determinants of knowledge sharing behaviour, and some researchers advocate that the integration of other theories, such as social capital theory into TPB represents an opportunity to improve the explanatory power of TPB.

2.7 Discussion of the Theories

The Social Exchange Theory (SEC) and Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) have constructs included in the Social Capital theory. A general limitation of models that have borrowed from TRA and SEC is their consideration of the dimensions of the SC theory separately (Orhun & Hopple, 2008). Nahapiet and Goshal (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) recommended that the application of the SC theory in research should include its three structural; relational and cognitive dimensions, as well as incorporating the various facets under each dimension. According to Orhun and Hopple (2008), a fuller understanding of knowledge sharing requires an examination of the ways in which social capital may influence these complementary processes of knowledge sharing. A more comprehensive theory is thus needed to fully explain the processes of knowledge sharing. Therefore, the main theory underpinning this study is the Social Capital Theory. Variables from the structural, cognitive and relational dimensions of the Social Capital theory were therefore adapted to understand the factors that affect knowledge sharing in a community of practice.

2.8   Social Capital Theory and Knowledge Sharing

The Social Capital (SC) theory integrates important aspects of collaborative knowledge sharing and is therefore a suitable framework for this study (Widen-Wulff, 2007). Social capital is defined as the sum of actual and potential resources embedded within, available through and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). The central proposition of the social capital theory is that networks of relationships constitute a valuable resource for the conduct of social affairs, and that much of this capital is embedded within networks of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Social Capital has three dimensions namely, structural capital, relational capital and cognitive capital (Table 1). Structural capital represents the overall pattern of connections between members in a community; relational capital reflects the kind of personal relationships in a group, while cognitive capital refers to the shared frame of reference that provides motivations for purposive exchange.

In the knowledge management and information science domain, the dimensions of the SC theory have proven to provide a useable framework in explaining how group resources which are available in individual social settings can contribute to the understanding of knowledge sharing dynamics (Widen-Wulff, 2004). Although fairly new in the knowledge management domains, several studies have now adopted the social capital theory to explore knowledge sharing (Cao et al., 2015; Fari, 2015; Hall & Widén-Wulff, 2008; Law & Chang, 2008; Wang & Noe, 2010a; Wasko & Faraj, 2005). Researchers advocate that all three social capital dimensions in relation to knowledge sharing should be studied in different contexts as the outputs of such research is likely to be affected by the context in which it is built up (Widen-Wulff, 2004).

When adapted to knowledge sharing processes, the SC theory posits that information exchange is affected by structural, cognitive and relational aspects of members in a community. Thus, in

this study, it was hypothesised that members of the African Community of Practice (AfCoP) were more likely to contribute knowledge to one another on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, where network ties between them existed: structural capital; where they communicated in a shared language and had a shared vision-cognitive capital and where their relationships were characterised by strong, positive aspects such as identification, trust and norms of co-operation and reciprocity-relational capital (Law & Chang, 2008).

Table 1 below shows the three dimensions of social capital.

Table 1: Social Capital Dimensions (Adapted from Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998)

Structural Dimension	Cognitive Dimension	Relational Dimension
• Network Ties (access, timing, referrals) • Network Configuration (density, connectivity, hierarchy) • Appropriable Organisation	• Shared Codes and Language • Shared Narratives • Shared Vision	• Trust • Norms of reciprocity (Open disclosure of information, teamwork, co-operation, value and responsiveness to diversity, openness to criticism, tolerance to failure) • Obligations • Identification

2.8.1 Hypotheses Derived from the Social Capital Theory

Social capital is often approached as being made up of three dimensions which are a structural opportunity; cognitive ability and relational motivation, which can affect individual or collective action (Cao et al., 2015; Huysman & Wulf, 2006; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

2.8.1.1 *Measures of Structural Capital*

The structural dimension of social capital relates to the overall pattern of connections between people, showing whom you connect with and how you connect with them (Cao et al., 2015).

The structural dimension of social capital describes the overall pattern of social interaction ties found in a collective, showing if and how members of a network are connected (Seebach, 2012). The aspects that are considered important in the structural dimension are the presence or absence of network ties between individuals as well as their corresponding network positions (Chiu et al., 2006). Network ties also represent the strength of relationships, represented by the amount of time spent interacting, and the communication frequency among members of a community (Chiu et al., 2006). Social interaction ties have been found to significantly influence the extent to which knowledge sharing occurs among individuals, as they enable them to enhance the depth, breadth and efficiency of the knowledge they share with one another(Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015; Chiu et al., 2006). Thus, structural capital may be considered as a contributing factor to one's intention to share knowledge as well as to the quality of knowledge shared by individuals. The following hypotheses were therefore made:

H1a Social interaction ties are positively associated with AfCoP members intention to share knowledge

H1b Social interaction ties are positively associated with the quality of knowledge shared by members

2.8.1.2 Measures of Relational Capital

The relational dimension of social capital denotes the nature of personal relationships among individuals in a network which they have developed with each other through a history of interactions (Cao et al., 2015; Huysman & Wulf, 2006, Seebach, 2012). The kinds of personal relationships in a community can be represented by the extent to which the community members trust each other, their level of commitment to each other, how they identify themselves with the network and their commitment to the norm of reciprocity (Cao et al., 2015; Huysman & Wulf, 2006, Seebach, 2012). Relational capital is said to increase the

efficiency of action (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). It has also been proved that an individual's relational capital will affect their willingness to share knowledge via technology (Wasko & Faraj, 2005).

Trust is a set of specific beliefs, dealing primarily with integrity, benevolence and ability of another party (Chiu et al., 2006). Trust describes the expectation individuals have that a community is based on honesty, cooperation and joint norms (Li & Li, 2010). Some authors believe that relationships built on trust increase the willingness to provide valuable knowledge (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015). Trust can also decrease perceived uncertainty, facilitate risk taking behaviours and foster a constructive environment which enhances a willingness of individuals to share knowledge (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015). Thus, it can be hypothesised that members of a community of practice might be disposed towards sharing knowledge through social media, if they trust other members of the community. In this study the following hypotheses related to the trust dimension of so relational capital were made:

H2a Trust is positively associated with AfCoP members intention to share knowledge

H2b Trust is positively associated with the quality of knowledge shared by members

Norms of reciprocity refers to the sharing of knowledge that is mutual and that both parties perceive to be fair (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015; Chiu et al., 2006). A basic norm of reciprocity is a sense of indebtedness, that usually leads to individuals reciprocating the benefits they receive from others, ensuring ongoing supportive exchanges (Shaqrah, Al-Hhashem, & Alqirem, 2013). Researchers have observed that reciprocal benefits provide motivation for knowledge sharing and increase individual's intentions to share knowledge (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015). We therefore hypothesise that:

H3a Norms of reciprocity are positively associated with AfCoP members intention to share knowledge

H3b Norms of reciprocity are positively associated with the quality of knowledge shared by AfCoP members

Another measure of relational capital is identification, which is regarded as the process by which individuals identify as one with another person or group of people (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). In a virtual community, identification refers to an individual's sense of belonging and positive feelings toward a virtual community, which is similar to emotional identification (Chiu et al., 2006). Social identification helps individuals comprehend who they are, how they construe their connections to other people around them and how they should act in social situations (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015). Based on shared organisational membership, individuals who greatly identify with a group, are more likely to cooperate with group members and contribute to it (Choi, 2015). Researchers have also found a positive relationship between group identification and knowledge sharing behaviours (Choi, 2015). We therefore offer the following hypothesis:

H4a Identification is positively associated with AfCoP members' intention to share knowledge

H4b Identification is positively associated with the quality of knowledge shared by AfCoP members

2.8.1.3   Cognitive Capital Measures

The cognitive dimension of SC, refers to the common resources found among people that provide shared representation, interpretations, and sense of meaning among community members (Cao et al., 2015; Huysman & Wulf, 2006; Seebach, 2012). These can include shared frames of reference, shared language, shared narratives, shared codes and goals (Cao et al., 2015; Huysman & Wulf, 2006). Wasko and Faraj (2006) argue that a person's cognitive capital can influence the knowledge sharing behaviour of individuals. Furthermore, other researchers have found that if there is a high level of cognitive capital in a social group, members are likely

to share knowledge (Choi, 2015). The cognitive dimensions that were considered in this study were shared language and narratives, and shared vision.

Shared language is the means by which individuals engage in communication (Shaqrah et al., 2013). Chiu et al (2006) believe that shared language goes beyond language, by addressing the acronyms, the subtleties and underlying assumptions that characterise group interactions. Through shared language and narratives over time, individuals can exchange their experiences more (Choi, 2015). Shared language facilitates people's ability to gain access to people and their information, provides a common conceptual apparatus for evaluating the likely benefits of exchange and combination and enhances the capability of different parties to combine the knowledge they have gained through social exchange (Chiu et al., 2006).In virtual communities, shared language is important as it provides the means through which participants understand each other and build common vocabulary in their domains, thereby enhancing the efficiency of communication between people with similar backgrounds (Chiu et al., 2006). Shared language is therefore likely to motivate members of a community to engage in knowledge sharing activities as well as improve the quality of shared knowledge. We therefore hypothesise that:

. H5a Shared language is positively associated with AfCoP members' intention to share knowledge

H5b Shared language is positively associated with the quality of knowledge shared by AfCoP members

Shared vision, another measure of cognitive capital, refers to the collective goals and aspirations of the members of an organisation (Chiu et al., 2006). Shared vision is believed to have the potential to hold a loosely coupled system and promote the integration of an entire organisation (Li & Li, 2010). A shared vision can therefore be considered to be a bonding

mechanism that helps different parts of an organisation to integrate and combine resources (Chiu et al., 2006; Li & Li, 2010). Shared goals, interests and vision in a community have been found to enhance members' intentions to share knowledge, with recent empirical studies providing evidence that shared goals can improve knowledge sharing among individuals (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015; Chiu et al., 2006). Thus, we hypothesise that:

H6a Shared vision is positively associated with AfCoP members' intention to share knowledge

H6b Shared vision is positively associated with the quality of knowledge shared by AfCoP members.

2.9   Knowledge Sharing Intention and Quality of Knowledge

The dependent variables in this study were knowledge sharing intention and quality of knowledge shared. Researchers have previously determined an individuals' behavioural intention to share knowledge by their attitude and beliefs about knowledge sharing (Shaqrah et al., 2013). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), concluded that the more favourable the attitude an individual has towards performing a behaviour, the stronger their intention will be to perform the behaviour; while the stronger their intention of the individual to engage in the behaviour, the more likely they will perform it. Knowledge sharing intention of the AfCoP members were examined through constructs adapted and derived from a study by Vuori and Okkonen (2012).

Quality of knowledge sharing has been used as an indicator of productivity in an organisation that engages in knowledge sharing (Shaqrah et al., 2013). Quality of knowledge can be measured through beliefs about the attributes of the content of knowledge shared in a group including: the relevance; the ease of understanding; accuracy, completeness, reliability, and timeliness of the knowledge shared (Chiu et al., 2006; Shaqrah et al., 2013)

2.10   Criticism of the Social Capital Theory

Some criticisms of utilising the Social Capital Theory as a theoretical framework in research include that it has been largely focused on the individuals of a social network, while placing less emphasis on the attitudes and characteristics of the individual contributors, the factors influencing their willingness to contribute to organisational efforts, their acceptance or adoption of knowledge sharing platforms (Fari, 2015). The SC theory has also been criticised for undermining the capabilities of individuals outside socio-economic and organisational boundaries (Fari, 2015).

Despite the criticisms, the significant contribution of the SC theory is that it can be used to understand the mechanisms that bring people together for collective action through knowledge sharing and the exchange of ideas (Fari, 2015). Social capital can facilitate the development of knowledge and expertise through knowledge exchange and the cross pollination of ideas. Seasoned researchers, therefore advocate for the use of social capital as a theoretical framework in understanding knowledge sharing in communities (Hall & Widén-Wulff, 2008; Widen-Wulff, 2004). They emphasise that the understanding of knowledge sharing dynamics in different contexts, is promoted by a theoretical framework that includes the dimensions of social capital; the concepts of each social capital dimension; how concepts are investigated in the field of social science; possible measures for each dimension and the context (Hall & Widén-Wulff, 2008; Widen-Wulff, 2004). The researcher therefore chose to include the three dimensions of social capital: structural, cognitive and relational, to be able to understand the mechanisms that affect the sharing of knowledge among members of a virtual and distributed community of practice- AfCoP.

2.11   Information Systems Theories

It was necessary for the study to also adapt an information systems theory, since it was concerned with the process of knowledge sharing through social media- a technological aspect

32

not covered by the Social Capital Theory. Several theories have been used to try and explain technology adoption by individuals, which include Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) by Rogers (1995) and various adaptations of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989, 1993; Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989; Venkatesh & Davis, 2000; Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2003). In this study the TAM (Davis, 1989) was adapted to assist in explaining the factors that influence community members' acceptance of social media. A brief discussion of the DOI theory follows.

2.12 Diffusion of Innovations Theory

The diffusion of innovations theory by Rogers (1983, 1995), serves as a comprehensive framework for understanding individuals motivations and behaviours towards the adoption of a new technological innovation (Chang, 2010). Rogers (1995) defines Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) as a process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among members of a social system. The diffusion process consists of four (4) key elements which are the innovation, time, the social system in which the innovation is introduced and the communication channels of that social system (Chang, 2010; Rogers, 1995). The focus of the DOI theory is the means through which information about a new innovation is disseminated (Chang, 2010).

The DOI proposes that, the likelihood that an innovation will be adopted is dependent on five (5) attributes which are relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, observability and trialability (Rogers, 1995).

- Relative advantage refers to the degree to which an innovation is seen a better than the idea, program or product it replaces (Robinson, 2009; Rogers, 2003). Therefore, innovations that intended users perceive as having greater relative advantage than their predecessors, were more likely to be adopted.

- Compatibility refers to how consistent the innovation is with the values, experiences, and needs of the potential adopters(Robinson, 2009; Rogers, 2003). An innovation incompatible with the user's needs, was unlikely to be adopted.

- Complexity refers to how difficult an innovation is to understand and/or use. New ideas that are simpler to understand are adopted more than those that require the adopter to acquire new skills and understanding(Robinson, 2009).

- Trialability refers to the extent to which the innovation can be tested before full adoption. An innovation that is trialable represents less uncertainty to the individual who is considering it, which would make them more likely to adopt it (Robinson, 2009).

- Observability refers to the extent to which the innovation provides tangible results (Rogers, 2003). Thus, the easier it is for individuals to see the results of the innovation, the more likely they are to adopt it (Robinson, 2009).

Although Rogers model has been widely adopted and used in information systems research, some researchers have found it to have some limitations with regard its predictive power related to the dissemination of an innovation (Chang, 2010). Much of the evidence for the DOI was not developed to explicitly apply to the adoption of new behaviours (LaMorte, 2018b). DOI also does consider an individual's resources or the social support necessary to adopt the new behaviour or innovation (LaMorte, 2018b). In reality however, many societies lack the necessary infrastructure or networks necessary to promote or adopt a new technology. They may also face economic and legal constraints which would render the benefits of an innovation obsolete. Thus a more wholistic theory which encompasses societal, cultural, economic and other factors may be more useful in drawing meaningful conclusions, in innovation adoption studies.

2.13 Technology Acceptance Model and Hypotheses

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), was developed by Davis (Davis, 1989); as an adaption of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). TAM is therefore an intentions based model derived from TRA but tailored to meet the broad needs of information technology research (Money & Turner, 2004). TAM posits that people will tend to use an innovation based on two basic beliefs- Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU). PU is defined as the extent to which a person believes that using an information technology (IT) innovation will enhance his or her performance, while PEOU is defined as the degree to which a person believes that using the IT innovation will be free from effort (Davis, 1989). TAM further postulates that the effect of external variables will be mediated by PU and PEOU (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). The external variables may include system design characteristics, user characteristics, for example a person's cognitive style and other personality variables (Money & Turner, 2004). The external characteristics may also include the task characteristics, the nature of the development or implementation process, political influences as well as the organisational structure (Money & Turner, 2004).

TAM has been widely used in the information systems research domain and consistently explains about 40% of the variance in individuals' intention to use an IT as well as their actual usage of it (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). Some researchers in the knowledge management domain have advocated the use of TAM as a basis for investigation of knowledge management system user acceptance, because of its simplicity, and usefulness in explaining the adoption behaviour of intended IT users (Money & Turner, 2004).
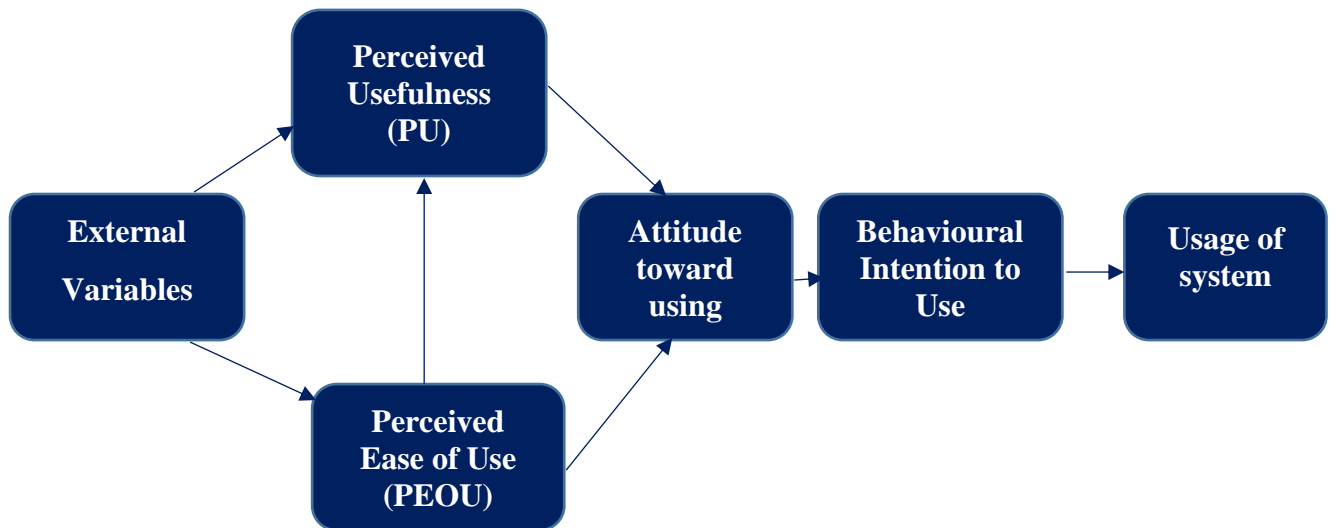
Figure 3: Technology Acceptance Model (Davis et al. 1989)

In this study it was hypothesised that members intention to share knowledge via the AfCoP platform and the quality of knowledge they shared on the platform, were positively associated with their perceptions of usefulness of the social media platform. It was also hypothesised that the members intention to share knowledge and the quality of knowledge shared via the AfCoP platform, is positively associated with their perceived ease of use of the platform. The following hypotheses were therefore derived from adapting the technology acceptance model to the study:

H7a AfCoP members perceived ease of use (PEOU) of the AfCoP platform is positively associated with their intention to share knowledge.

H7b AfCoP members perceived ease of use (PEOU) of the AfCoP platform is positively associated with the quality of knowledge shared by AfCoP members.

H8a AfCoP members perceived usefulness (PU) of the AfCoP platform is positively associated with their intention to share knowledge.

H8b AfCoP members perceived usefulness (PU) of the AfCoP platform is positively associated with the quality of knowledge shared by AfCoP members.

TAM has also been found to have some weaknesses, and particularly in the domain of knowledge management research, researchers find that factors associated with the complex sociocultural organisational implications of knowledge sharing are not covered by TAM and must be explored and included in a more complete theoretical model (Legris, Ingham, & Collerette, 2003; Money & Turner, 2004). Money and Turner (2004), advocated that to increase the explanatory power of TAM in knowledge management research, it was necessary to add other theory based on individual beliefs to the current belief constructs of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. They also suggested that antecedents to the current TAM beliefs of PU, and PEOU, could be developed to capture some of the unique cultural implications thought to surround organisational knowledge management (Money & Turner, 2004). This is also supported by Legris et al. (2003), who suggested that in order to increase the predictive power of TAM, it must be integrated into a broader model that includes organisational and social factors. The current research therefore considered the combination of the TAM with the Social Capital Theory, to formulate a theoretical model that examined social capital and technological factors, and their influence on AfCoP members' knowledge sharing intention and the quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platforms. The resulting research model on knowledge sharing through social media is shown in Figure 4 below, was used in the study.
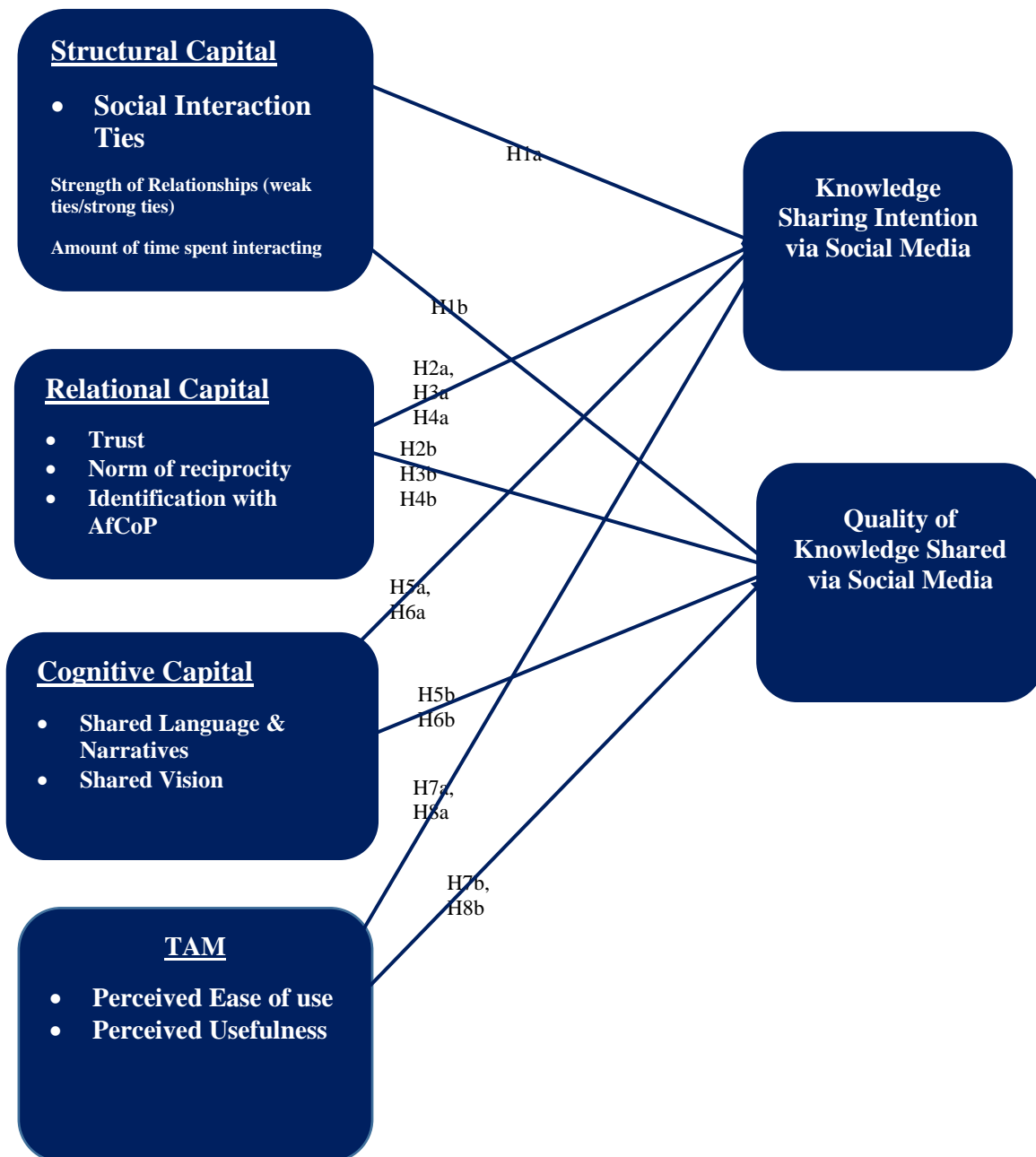
Figure 4: Research Model on Knowledge Sharing Through Social Media

The Table 2 below shows how the research questions map onto the constructs of theories underpinning the study;

Table 2: Mapping of Research Questions on Constructs of Theoretical Models

Research questions	Theoretical model	Constructs being studied
1. How are social media used for knowledge sharing among members of AfCoP?	Theory relating to how social was used for knowledge sharing was derived from the literature review of the study.	Social media use, Knowledge sharing, Frequency of Use, Types of Social Media
2. What are the factors affecting the use of social media in sharing knowledge among AfCoP members?	Social Capital	Structural Capital (Social Interaction Ties - Centrality within AfCoP' Weak Ties/Strong Ties, Time Spent interacting); Relational Capital (Trust; Norm of Reciprocity; Identification); Cognitive Capital (Shared language and narratives, shared vision)
	Technology Acceptance Model	Perceived Ease of Use of the AfCoP Platform Perceived Usefulness of the AfCoP Platform
3. What are the - perceptions of AfCoP members towards the use of social media for sharing knowledge?	Technology Acceptance Model	Perceived Ease of Use of the AfCoP Platform Perceived Usefulness of the AfCoP Platform Individual Characteristics (familiarity with social media; experience with social media) Organisational Characteristics (e.g. policies, coordination)
4. What kind of knowledge is generated and shared using social media among AfCoP members?	This was derived from the study and from	Types of knowledge: codified knowledge, tacit knowledge
5. What are the challenges of using social media for knowledge sharing among AfCoP members?	This was derived from the study and from literature on technology acceptance	Perceived Ease of Use of the AfCoP Platform Perceived Usefulness of the AfCoP Platform Individual Characteristics (familiarity with social media; experience with social media) Organisational Characteristics (e.g. policies, coordination)

2.14 Summary

This chapter presented the theoretical framework that was used to guide the current study. As the study was informed by developments in two disciplines of research, namely knowledge management and information systems, the bases from which various relevant theories from the two disciplines were discussed. These included; the Social Exchange Theory, the Social Cognition Theory, the Theory of Reasoned Action, the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the Social Capital Theory, Diffusion of Innovations theory and the Technology Acceptance Model. A research model on knowledge sharing through social media was devised. It was the result of a combination of the Social Capital Theory and the Technology Acceptance Model and became the theoretical framework that was used to guide aspects of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1   Introduction

All research needs to be informed by existing knowledge in a subject area (Rowley & Slack,

2004). This makes the literature review chapter necessary in a study. A literature review

distils the existing literature in a subject field surveying, summarising and synthesising the

previous research done in an area of interest (Rennison & Hart, 2019, p. 63; Rowley & Slack,

2004). It is a summary of information from related research documents, which is organised,

and integrated into a logical justification for the author's research(Jaidka, Khoo, & Na, 2013;

Silverman, 2000, p. 228) . A literature review serves several purposes including:

demonstrating the researcher's grasp of the subject area and his or her understanding of the

problem; it contextualises the current study related to previously published works; it helps the

researcher to distinguish what has been done from what needs to be done; it helps to identify

important variables relevant to the topic; it rationalises the significance of the problem under

investigation and it provides a justification for the research topic; design and methodology of

a study (Hofstee, 2006; Jaidka et al., 2013; Rennison & Hart, 2019, p. 63). This chapter

discusses the current state of the available literature on issues related to the use of social

media for knowledge sharing by professionals and organisations around the world.

3.2   Steps Taken in Conducting the Literature Review

There are several steps that can guide the literature review process. Having identified

appropriate research questions for the study, Rennison and Hart (2019) recommend a 9 step

literature review process that includes the following:

- Developing appropriate search terms, using appropriate search tools available in most research databases;

- Searching for relevant articles using selected search terms, Boolean operators and filters;

- Identifying the initial list of primary sources for use in writing the literature review;

- Reading abstracts and additional sections of a source to narrow the results;

- Summarising important information from the sources in paragraph format, including citations;

- Creating a thematically focused table of summarised information;

- Organising the information strategically in preparation of the first draft of the literature review;

- Writing the first draft of the literature review and finally;

- Editing, proof reading and polishing the literature review section

A literature review can be historical, thematic, theoretical or empirical and a researcher can choose to focus on one or more of these (Kaniki, 2006, p. 21).

The current study adopted a combination of the theoretical, thematic and empirical types of literature reviews to provide a summary of the extant literature on the use of social media for knowledge sharing among different professionals and organisations. The theoretical review was presented in the previous chapter, while the thematic and empirical literature review is presented in this chapter.

The literature review was guided by the research objectives and questions of the study. The study sought to examine the extent and use of social media in facilitating knowledge sharing in AfCoP; investigate factors influencing the use of social media for knowledge sharing; as well as provide recommendations for the adoption of social media for knowledge sharing

among professionals in a variety of work settings. Thus the scope of the literature review was arranged thematically and included works providing a background on the key concepts related to the study; investigating the use of social media for knowledge sharing among professionals in a variety of work settings; providing evidence of how social media was being used to facilitate knowledge sharing among professionals in various organisations; giving empirical evidence of factors that have been found to affect knowledge sharing in general as well as through social media; providing findings on the perceptions of users on the use of social media for knowledge sharing in work contexts; providing evidence on the kinds of knowledge that are amenable for sharing via social media and finally evidence on the challenges encountered by different professionals when using social media for knowledge sharing.

To conduct the literature review, the researcher formulated search strategies for searching in relevant research databases, including Emerald, Science Direct, Ebscohost and Sage Publications. The search strategy included identifying key search terms from the research questions of the study, and then entering them into the relevant research databases, using a combination of appropriate Boolean operators to increase the relevancy of the results. Relevant research articles were downloaded; compiled and reviewed. The results of the review were then arranged thematically as presented in the sections that follow.

3.3   Knowledge Management in the Fourth Industrial Revolution

We are living in an era of rapid technological change and intensifying competition, where knowledge remains a crucial resource for organisations to establish and maintain competitive advantage (Sarina, 2018). This era, now known as the Fourth Industrial Revolution or Industry 4.0, is characterised by a world where individuals move between digital domains and offline reality, with increased dependency on the use of technology to enable and manage their lives (Xu, David, & Kim, 2018). There is a fusion of technologies, blurring the lines

between the physical, digital and biological spheres, with technologies such as cloud computing, internet of things, artificial intelligence, 3D printing, nanotechnology among others evolving at an exponential pace (Hirschi, 2018; Schwab, 2015; Xu et al., 2018). The result has been the disruption of every industry and country, while at the same time, entire systems of production, management and governance are being radically transformed.

In this Fourth Industrial Revolution, knowledge and knowledge based skills are considered to be the engines and anchors of economic growth and social development (Zheng, Li, & Zheng, 2010). Knowledge and the knowledge worker are of primary importance, where organisations heavily rely on the knowledge workers to produce goods and services with their minds (Xu et al., 2018). Knowledge is seen as an integral part of total management, with the main challenge for organisations, lying in their ability to motivate their knowledge workers to release their human potential. As a result organisations and individuals alike seek to acquire and manage knowledge continually to gain the necessary and competitive advantage (Zheng et al., 2010).

The domain of knowledge management, represents a deliberate and methodical approach to ensure the full utilisation of an organisation's knowledge base, together with the potential of people's skills, competencies, thoughts, innovations and ideas, thereby creating a more efficient and effective organisation (Dalkir, 2011, p. 3).

3.3.1 Definition of Knowledge

Some defining characteristics of knowledge include that it is an intangible resource, difficult to measure and only exists in the mind of the individual (Usoro, Sharratt, Tsui, & Shekhar, 2007). Knowledge has been defined as a fluid mix of framed experiences, values, contextual information and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Alavi and Leidner, (2001),

defined knowledge as being personalised information possessed in the mind of an individual which may be new, unique, useful and accurate; while also relating to facts, procedures, concepts, interpretations ideas, observations and judgements. Knowledge is a valuable commodity that is embedded in especially high technology products as well as in the tacit knowledge of highly mobile employees (Dalkir, 2011, p. 2). It is through knowledge that individuals and organisations alike respond to external stimuli, thereby determining the organisational and individual decisions to be made or course of action to be taken, in response to what is known (Usoro et al., 2007). Knowledge may also be considered as the most important organisational asset, as it ensures a sustained ability to innovate, remain competitive and relevant in an increasingly dynamic environment, thus enabling the organisation to survive.

3.3.2   Types of Knowledge

Knowledge can either be categorised as explicit or tacit. Explicit knowledge is that which can be articulated, codified and communicated in symbolic forms or natural language (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). It is the result of knowledge presented in written form (Mladenović & Krajina, 2020). Explicit knowledge can also be explained as knowledge that is well understood and put into a reusable format (Conger, 2014). Some examples of explicit or codified knowledge include documents related to routines, processes, practices and norms of a particular organisation, or an owner's manual for an electrical gadget (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Some characteristics of explicit knowledge include that it can become obsolete quickly; it is possible to be formally articulated and can be digitally processed and stored for reuse; it can be easily communicated and shared; and it can be copied, imitated, and transmitted easily, although this requires previously developed retrieval systems which require significant investment and time for development (Daniel, Schwier, & McCalla, 2003; Mladenović & Krajina, 2020). Researchers have also found that knowledge

workers tend to share explicit knowledge unless management unequivocally states expectations in terms of knowledge sharing (Mladenović & Krajina, 2020).

Tacit knowledge on the other hand, is knowledge that is drawn from the experience of an individual, and includes privately held insights, feelings, culture and values (Daniel et al., 2003). It is knowledge that is subjective and informal that is diffused in face to face interactions (Mladenović & Krajina, 2020). It is thought to be difficult to articulate formally as it resides mostly in the mind of the individual and is rooted in an individual's actions, experiences and context (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). Tacit knowledge is said to pose a larger challenge to knowledge management as expertise and reasoning processes are difficult to clearly identify, with professionals often unable to articulate their reasoning processes (Conger, 2014). Tacit knowledge is also said to be difficult to communicate and share; and is shared only when individuals are willing to engage in social interaction (Daniel et al., 2003). This is because tacit knowledge is more technical and cognitive in structure and it incorporates mental models, values, perceptions or insights, which implies the need for it to be conveyed through personal contacts characterised by strong relational ties (Mladenović & Krajina, 2020).

However, while both explicit and tacit knowledge are considered important to the success of an organisation, tacit knowledge is recognised as most useful (Daniel et al., 2003).

It is therefore crucial for all kinds of organisations to be able to manage knowledge, by deliberately and systematically cultivating a knowledge base, which is populated by valuable lessons learned and best practices, through which an organisation can learn from past errors without having to reinvent the wheel (Dalkir, 2011). Knowledge workers must also be encouraged to share both explicit and tacit knowledge and their commitment to this process

represents a crucial element in the management of knowledge in organisations (Mladenović & Krajina, 2020).

3.3.3 Definition of Knowledge Management

There is no consensus on the definition of knowledge management (KM). An attempt to incorporate facets of organisational KM can be found in Dalkir's (2011, p. 4) definition of KM which states that:

"Knowledge management is the deliberate and systematic coordination of an organisation's people, technology, processes, and organisational structure in order to add value through reuse and innovation. This is achieved through the promotion of, creating, sharing and applying knowledge as well as through the feeding of valuable lessons learned and best practices into corporate memory in order to foster continued organisational learning"

KM has also been described as the process of simplifying, developing, and improving knowledge creation, acquisition, sharing and dissemination among individuals or organisations (Abili, Thani, Mokhtarian, & Rashidi, 2011).

Another definition recognises KM as an organisational management tool, for achieving its objectives through creating, acquiring, integrating, and sharing information, insight, wisdom, thoughts, inductions, and the experiences of all members. A similar definition of KM is that it is a set of processes that involve planning, production, generation, organisation and dissemination of knowledge in addition to its use for the objectives of improving performance of both employees as well as that of the whole organisation (Al-Ghamdi & Al-Ghamdi, 2015). What is apparent in these definitions is that KM is an attempt to harness the full potential of the knowledge an organisation or an individual has, to achieve ultimate goals.

3.3.4 Definition of Knowledge Sharing

As this study hinges on the issue of "knowledge sharing through social media", it becomes necessary to define knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing (KS) is an important component

of knowledge management and is defined as an individual's behaviour related to distributing their acquired knowledge to other members of an organisation (Aliakbar et al., 2013). It is the transference of knowledge among individuals, groups, teams, departments and organisations, availing the necessary knowledge to concerned stakeholders (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016; Razmerita, Kirchner, & Nielsen, 2016). It includes a process of communication between two or more individuals who are involved in the provision and acquisition of knowledge (Aliakbar et al., 2013; Usoro et al., 2007). Knowledge sharing involves the provision of knowledge by a source, followed by interpretation of the communication by one or more recipients, which results in the creation of new knowledge (Usoro et al., 2007).

Knowledge sharing can foster enhanced effectiveness among individuals and organisations as knowledge increases when used and shared (Majewsky & Usoro, 2011). It is therefore considered a key success factor for organisations as they seek to leverage both personal and collective knowledge for organisational survival and sustainability in this new global economy (Aliakbar et al., 2013; Razmerita et al., 2016). However, knowledge sharing has been found to be a challenge in many organisations, having many factors affecting its occurrence in organisations and communities (Usoro et al., 2007).

3.3.5 Knowledge Management as a Key and Strategic Resource in Organisations

Knowledge management is increasingly recognised as a strategic and success factor, in all types of organisations for the reason that it enables organisational learning, allowing organisations to learn what they need to know in order to implement their strategies(Abili, 2010). Knowledge is a strategic resource that enables the formulation of winning strategies in organisations, as it has the power to influence and enable organisational strategy (Snyman & Kruger, 2004). Managing knowledge strategically also enables organisations, to offer their clientele high quality and innovative services, thereby contributing to organisational sustainability and growth (Abili, 2010).

The growing recognition of the importance of knowledge management in all types of organisations worldwide has given rise to the formation of knowledge-based organisations. These knowledge based organisations thus seek to find ways to make effective use of existing knowledge, while seeking ways of creating new knowledge (Abili, 2010). Such organisations realise that there are more benefits in sharing knowledge than in hoarding it and they align their knowledge management processes with their organisational strategies in order to achieve sustainable organisational success (Abili, 2010; Snyman & Kruger, 2004).

Knowledge based organisations also recognise the critical importance of knowledge workers as being a major source of knowledge for sustainable competitive advantage. Such organisations appreciate the role of knowledge workers in creating and maintaining a conducive social, political, cultural and economic environment necessary for the growth and sustainability of the organisation (Abili, 2010). To be successful, knowledge management strategies should therefore be about the people who make up the organisation, because it is through their social interactions that knowledge necessary to the advancement of an organisation is generated. Some important characteristics of today's knowledge worker include that they:

- Consider professional security to be a priority over job security

- are good sources of knowledge

- have a determination to learn continuously and achieve self-actualisation

- are motivated by performance-based rewards

- desire to be independent, and have freedom of action

- they expect management transparency; social networking; just-in-time feedback, opportunities for the creation of ideas; flexible working conditions with an open working culture

- contemporary knowledge workers find routine work cumbersome and monotonous and always seek new challenges and

- arguably devote more time and attention to their profession rather than to a work-life balance (Abili, 2010).

3.4 Evolution of Knowledge Management Practices

According to Dalkir (2011, p. 24), three generations of knowledge management practice can be recognised, these being the first generation whose emphases was on knowledge containers; second generation being the evolution of knowledge communities and the third which we are moving towards having a focus on the knowledge content. Some researchers however recognise the first two KM generations describing the first generation as the conventional or traditional centralised repository framework and the second being, the conversational and collaborative approaches for example, Communities of practice (Lee & Lan, 2007).

The first generation of KM placed a lot of emphasis on containers of knowledge or information technologies (Dalkir, 2011, p. 24). It was a largely techno-centric approach, whose strategy was to collect all the information and knowledge an organisation had, which was subsequently deposited into knowledge repositories in the form of intranets and internal KM systems for intra-organisational use (Cao et al., 2015; Dalkir, 2011, p. 24; Gurteen, 2012; Lee & Lan, 2007).   The knowledge deposited into the KM systems was commonly represented by documents on "reusable best practices" and "lessons learnt" (Dalkir, 2011, p. 24). Thus the emphasis of this repository model was on the codification and storage of knowledge to promote explicit knowledge reuse rather than bringing experts together so that knowledge is integrated and amplified (Al-Ghamdi & Al-Ghamdi, 2015; Cao et al., 2015). The techno-centric approach of the first-generation KM practices leaned heavily toward a top-down organisation-wide monolithic KM system, which failed to cater for the social

nature of knowledge. Consequently, it failed to attract buy in from knowledge workers, who did not populate these "digital libraries" as had been anticipated (Dalkir, 2011, p. 24). Another challenge of this first generation approach to KM was the inability of staff to use the KM technologies as these were developed with poor information and communication technologies infrastructure; there was also a lack of co-operation between staff working in KM and thus they were unable to share knowledge effectively; new knowledge and information was not easily accessible, thus knowledge workers were unable to constantly update knowledge (Al-Ghamdi & Al-Ghamdi, 2015).Thus this conventional approach to KM, did little to promote the accumulation, integration or generation of new intelligence, leading to the belief that traditional or first generation KM systems failed.

With the growing realisation that human and cultural dimensions were important to effective KM, the second generation of KM practices evolved to a more people centric and more conversational focus (Dalkir, 2011, p. 24; Lee & Lan, 2007). There was a deliberate focus on the personalisation of KM, which focused primarily on the linkages or networks among people for the purposes of knowledge exchange (Cao et al., 2015). This new conversational and collaborative approach to KM manifested itself in the creation of Communities of Practice (COPs) (Gurteen, 2012, p. iii; Lee & Lan, 2007). As has been defined earlier, Communities of Practice (CoPs), refer to a group of people, who share an interest, or practice within the same period, and may be from differing organisations, geographic locations, time zones or cultures, but may share the same knowledge networks (Gurteen, 2012; Lee & Lan, 2007; Wenger et al., 2002). In a community of practice members are characterised by tightly knit relationships, where they work together towards common goals and are willing to collaborate to solve common problems, share best practices, supporting each other and having a common identity (Daniel et al., 2003). Communities of practice are considered good vehicles to stimulate knowledge sharing, reuse of knowledge, for greater individual and

organisational efficiency and also knowledge creation for greater innovation (Lee & Lan, 2007). Communities of practice are also a good organisational strategy to promote collaboration, teamwork and group learning (Daniel et al., 2003).

New ICT's that promote this conversational and collaborative approach to KM have emerged in the form of social media, including Wiki's, Web Blogs and Discussion Forums (Gurteen, 2012; Lee & Lan, 2007).

The third generation of KM in which we are moving towards focuses largely on content management, which came about with the realisation of the importance of effectively describing and organising content to enable its intended users to be aware of its existence, to access as well as to apply content (Dalkir, 2011, p. 24). This third generation of KM is characterised by metadata which helps to describe the content in addition to the format of the content, content management, and knowledge taxonomies (Dalkir, 2011, p. 24).

The focus of this study is however on the second generation of KM, communities of practice approach-which is characteristic of most KM initiatives.

3.5   Characteristics of Communities of Practice

The three major characteristics of a community of practice of any kind are having a shared domain, the existence of a community and affiliation to a professional practice. The domain is the area of knowledge that brings the community together, that needs to be explored and developed (Wenger, 2006). This domain for AfCoP was Managing for Development Results (MfDR). The community refers to the group of people to which the domain is relevant, the quality of relationships among members and the definition of the boundary between the inside and outside (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). These people interact and develop relationships that enable them to share knowledge and address problems. Practice refers to the body of knowledge, tools, stories, cases, documents which members share and

develop together (Wenger, 2006). It brings together practitioners who are involved in doing something together (Wenger, 2011). In the instance of AfCoP, members sought to build capacity and promulgate the practice of MfDR, a result-based management framework across the continent of Africa.

3.6   Knowledge Management Through Communities of Practice

Communities of practice (CoPs) are one of the most recognised as well as highly regarded tools for knowledge sharing (Majewsky & Usoro, 2011). A communities of practice (CoPs) approach to KM has many benefits, which include that it helps develop professional skills among people belonging to a specific field or discipline; it promotes peer to peer mentoring among members of a practice; it facilitates more effective networking and collaboration; it helps members to develop a professional code of ethics which members can adhere to and also assists community members to develop a common language (Dalkir, 2011, p. 25).

3.7   Types of Communities of Practice

Successful CoPs are organised around the needs of their members and as such exhibit a wide range of sizes, structure and means of communication (Daniel et al., 2003). Different types of CoPs are thus observable including those which rely on face-to-face interactions and are offline; those that are distributed in nature and are online, also known as virtual communities of practice (Wenger et al., 2002, 24). They can also be informally structured arising on the voluntary whims of the members involved; or alternatively they may arise as a formal structure, arising as an organisational sponsored community (Wenger et al., 2002, 26-27).

3.8   Knowledge Sharing in Distributed Communities of Practice

Distributed and online COPs which are the main subject of this study cut across multiple geographic boundaries and organisations and link people across vast distances and different cultures (Majewsky & Usoro, 2011; Wenger et al., 2002, p. 115). Members of distributed

communities are not co-located and seldom communicate through face-to-face communication, while at the same time physical meetings among members are often not practical (Friberger & Falkman, 2013). It is significantly more difficult to enable knowledge sharing and access to knowledge in a dynamic and distributed community, where factors such as distance, size, organisational affiliation and cultural differences present challenges that need to be overcome (Wenger et al., 2002).

3.8.1 Characteristics of Distributed Communities of Practice

A distributed community of practice refers to a group of geographically distributed individuals who are informally bound together by shared expertise and interests. They depend on collaboration processes and information and communications technology (ICT) to connect to each other (Daniel et al., 2003; Friberger & Falkman, 2013). A distributed community of practice can be said to be a learning community, in which the members have explicit goals of learning (Daniel et al., 2003). Such a learning community requires highly skilled or knowledgeable members; however less knowledgeable members are also required so that the community grows and learns together (Daniel et al., 2003). In an era of globalisation, distributed communities of practice are increasingly the norm Wenger et al., 2002). The key features of distributed communities of practice are outlined in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Features of a Distributed CoP (Adapted from Daniel et al., 2003)

Feature	Description
Shared Interests	Membership is organised around topics or domain issues
Common identity	Members develop shared understanding and common identity

Shared knowledge	Members share information and knowledge and they are willing to develop a culture of sharing voluntarily responding to requests for help
Voluntary Participation	Members normally voluntarily participate in activities of the community
Autonomy in setting goals	A distributed community of practice sets its own agenda based on the needs of its members and these needs change over time as the membership and the environment changes
Awareness of social protocols and goals	Members of a distributed community of practice are normally aware of acceptable social protocols and goals of the community
Awareness of membership	Members of a distributed community of practice are normally aware of each other in the community with individuals having a reasonable knowledge of who is who and what they do in the community
Effective means of communication	Effective means of communication is key to the success of a distributed community of practice, and robust means of communication includes: face-to-face meetings; and technology mediated communication which includes email, videoconferencing, discussion forums, blogs

3.9   The Importance of Knowledge Management in Development Organisations

As knowledge is increasingly being recognised as an essential asset in a variety of organisational settings, this is also true for development organisations. The development sector is beginning to recognise knowledge as a pillar of equitable and sustainable

development and this sector also views knowledge sharing as one of the central challenges

the development sector must resolve (Van Der Velden, 2002). Development agencies such as

the World Bank have recognised the contribution of knowledge to international development

and have put knowledge at the centre of their organisational strategies (Talyarkhana,

Grimshaw, & Lowe, 2004). This has ushered in an era in the development sector known as

knowledge based development, with a variety of knowledge management strategies being

employed by development organisations (Talyarkhana et al., 2004).

As in mainstream corporate organisations, knowledge management in development

organisations has evolved to focus on bottom up participatory approaches, supporting

communities to take control of the means of communication and to participate in decision

making processes.

Knowledge sharing is central to the knowledge management activities of development

organisations and practitioners. According to the World Bank (2009); there is a demand for

knowledge sharing as development organisations and practitioners, encounter increasingly

diverse experiences in their field of work. Thus, development practitioners and policy makers

express the need to explore new ideas and approaches; learn from each other including

through sharing their own experiences and building horizontal partnerships based on equity,

trust; mutual benefit and long-term relationships. This has led to the creation of development

focused communities of practice, many of which are being enabled by the continuous

expansion of information and communications technologies; including the new generation of

rich interactive technologies-social media (World Bank, 2009). Table 4 below outlines the

characteristics of knowledge sharing in communities of practice focused on development

issues. These include that communities of practice of development practitioners share best

practices and solutions proven to work in other regions, having access to tacit knowledge

from development experts; as well as on public policies and having the ability to adapt

knowledge to strengthen capacities for sustainable development and the generation of

development results.

Table 4: Characteristics of Knowledge Sharing in Development-Based Communities of

Practice (Adapted from World Bank, 2009).

1. Organisations and individuals share development models and solutions which have proven successful in one or several countries and can possibly be transferred and adopted in others
2. Members of development-based communities of practice have direct access to valuable and hard to codify information on public policies for development constructed on evidence-based approaches, built on the expertise of policy makers and development practitioners.
3. Knowledge sharing enables members, organisations and society, to adapt knowledge generated by others to strengthen their own capacities over time. This is an effective tool for sustainable development and generation of results

3.10 The Role of Technology in Communities of Practice

Information and communications technologies are also seen as strategic tools for facilitating

knowledge sharing between stakeholders in international development (Talyarkhana et al.,

2004). These technologies must enable development practitioners to overcome challenges of

geographic distances and share knowledge. Van Der Velden (2002), emphasises that the

development sector needs information and communications technology tools that help to

address local needs; support decentralisation of authority, build transparency and

understanding and strengthen the diversity, ownership and validation of the knowledge. He

sees ICT role in development communities of practice, as one of supporting the sharing,

creation, integration and validation of the different knowledges brought by a community, in

order to empower members as well as to build sustainable communities and economies (Van

Der Velden, 2002).

Advances in technology are therefore enabling the formation of development based

distributed communities of practice, which rely on interactive internet-based technologies

57

such as social media which include features such as video conferencing among others (Talyarkhana et al., 2004) .

Technology such as social media can affect seven broad areas which are important in the development of successful communities of practice. These include: time and space; participation of members; value creation; connections; identity; community membership and community development. Within these broad areas are 13 key principles that are important in the development of successful cops and the table below shows some technological factors that influence communities:

Table 5: Technology Implications for Successful Communities of Practice (Wenger, 2001)

#	Principle	Technology Implications	Examples
1	Presence and visibility: a community needs to have a presence in the lives of its members and make itself visible to them. There is also a need for members to know what others know, do or care about, as well as an ability to facilitate impromptu interactions	• Pointers to community • Directories of communities • Some "push distribution", such as electronic newsletters, reminders, questions • Member directories • Who is doing what • Presence awareness • Instant Messaging	• Personalised subscriptions to information resources • Member directories • Discussion boards • Instant messaging • Push notifications
2	Rhythm: Communities live in time and they need a rhythm of events and rituals that reasserts their existence over time	A web-based presence can contribute to a sense of communal time: • Community calendar • Reminders • Synchronisation of calendars • Synchronous events, such as teleconferences,	• E-Calendars • Virtual conference software

#	Principle	Technology Implications	Examples
		virtual conferences or online meetings • Invitations • Minutes of recent events made available quickly afterwards • Hot topics	
3	Knowledge-generating interactions: Members of a community of practice need to be able to interact regularly and meaningfully to develop their shared practice. There is need for the facilitation of: • Multiple channels and forms of interaction • Forms of thinking together • Problem solving • Discussing ideas • Exchanging views • Sharing news • Lectures/workshops	Each community has unique needs and it is important to support the kind of interactions that enable community members to develop their knowledge. There are Asynchronous and Synchronous tools for this: Asynchronous • Email and discussion boards • Document checkout/version control Synchronous • Lectures and large meetings • Application sharing • Web tours	• Online meeting/ conference software e.g. TeamViewer/Zoom/ WebEx
4	Efficiency of Involvement: Communities of practice usually compete with other priorities in the lives of members. It is crucial to make participation as easy and efficient as possible through facilitating: ease of participation, integration with other aspects of life, like daily work or other communities, management of attention and flexibility in time management	Systems can include: • Some integration with work systems • Personalised knowledge/ application portals • Subscriptions • Tours of new activity • Content filtering and ordering • Archiving of interactions-leaving a trace of interactions online	
5	Communities of practice thrive on the value they deliver to their members as well as to the	The technology that creates short term value must provide:	• FAQs • Discussion forums • Knowledgebases

#	Principle	Technology Implications	Examples
	organisation. They need to find short term value through: • Quick access to information • Access to expertise • Answer to questions • Help with problems • Preserving time of experts where only really difficult questions and problems come to them	• a mechanism for asking questions • lists of FAQs' • Databases of answers • Intelligent access to experts, including good search facilities • Forums for getting help with problems • Brainstorming facilities	• Expert-search
6	Long-term value: Members derive long term value from a sense of accumulation over time: • Define best practices or common methods and processes • Produce and store artefacts, tools, documents • Maintain the knowledge base to keep it up to date and usable • Learning agenda- a community can take charge of its practice and agree on a list of areas to develop • Practice-building projects: mature communities of practice often spawn project teams to work on specific practice-development tasks on their learning agenda, such as developing a template, a tool or a manual	• Repositories for artefacts • Taxonomies • Search mechanisms • Discussing and updating a learning agenda • Project space for practice development projects	• Full text search tool • Discussion forums • Repositories
7	Connections to the world-having access to peers and to the leading edge in the broader world: • What is happening • What is hot in the field • New developments, new technologies • Evaluation and reviews • External experts • Reference material	Technology cannot replace one's network of connections in a field, but it can provide: • News • Announcements of external events • Directory of external experts • Links to other sites • Library of references	

#	Principle	Technology Implications	Examples
8	Personal identities: Personal identities are crucial aspects of participation. Over time community participation creates both community and differences between people. • Personal passions • Competences • Areas of specialisation • Reputation/assessment/rewards • Various roles people play in the community • Multi-membership-people belong to more than one community at any one time • Personal trajectory-people's identities change over time within a community or as they move from community to another	• Member profiles • Synchronising profiles, across communities • Reputation and ranking • Preferences • Personal history • Private places	• Smart recognition of new members • Synchronised profiling • Expert search • Q & A • Personal spaces • Private messaging
9	Communal identity: a cop thrives of a sense of communal identity: • Clarity about domain and sense of mission • Personal passion • Reputation of the community • Value to the organisation • Success stories • A distinctive style	• Being able to have and furnish a communal place • Give the community a public presence • Giving public access to the "source documents" of the community (mission, domain definition, constitution, policies) • News about the effects of the community-success stories • Having a distinctive look and feel	• Provide a virtual place for participation • Members can point others to the home page of their community • Many systems have an area for explaining what the community is about • News area • Customisable interface
10	Belonging and relationships: Belonging to a CoP can be an intensely personal experience	• Personal profiles • Supporting private interactions and	

#	Principle	Technology Implications	Examples
	based on deep relationships with other members: • Professional connections • Peer interactions • Personal relationships • Trust • Helping, mentoring, teaching • Reciprocity • Finding a voice	interpersonal relationships • Supporting mentoring relationships • Self-publishing • Chat	
11	Complex boundaries Managing boundaries is an important challenge for CoPs. Boundaries are both unavoidable and useful. Managing community boundaries is difficult. Need for a design that allows multiple levels and types of participation • Core group • Peripheral participation • Subcommunities and special interest groups	Boundaries in CoPs are both porous and fluid. A technology must give: • Differential access rights • Lurking facilities • Public areas/restricted community spaces • Subspaces • Nested features •	• Password authentication • Read only areas • Unlimited conversation spaces
12	Evolution: maturation and integration A community evolves over time: • It goes through development stages internally • It changes relationship with its environment	It is important for the platform to evolve with the community so members do not have to move to another platform and learn a whole new system. This creates tension in developing a general platform: • Not too expensive to start so that initial commitment can be somewhat tentative • Flexibility in configuration • Ongoing reflection, assessment and redirection	
13	Active community building Thriving CoPs usually have members who take an active role in cultivating the community.	Systems to support CoPs must offer a variety of administrative tools to monitor and configure	

#	Principle	Technology Implications	Examples
	• Coordination and administration • Self-governance • Managing the repository • Reflection on the vitality of the community • Evaluation of its achievements • Assessment of value delivered • Monitoring the health of the community	the use and effectiveness of the community space. • Logs and statistics for monitoring • Polling and voting facilities • Assessment tools and surveys • Health indicators • Administrative help and reminders • Switches and policy enforcement algorithms	

3.11 Social Media Facilitating Knowledge Sharing in Distributed Communities

The deployment of appropriate technology has been found to be a key enabler for knowledge sharing in distributed or online communities of practice (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016; Majewsky & Usoro, 2011; Rathi, Given, & Forcier, 2014; Razmerita et al., 2016). Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs), when used appropriately enable members of communities of practice to enjoy membership benefits irrespective of their geographic location and time zones (Majewsky & Usoro, 2011).

Social media are increasingly considered as enablers of social networking, promoting the development of relationships and collaboration which is necessary for knowledge sharing and integration (Ahmed et al., 2018; Al-Ghamdi & Al-Ghamdi, 2015; Cao et al., 2015; Mladenović & Krajina, 2020; Pirkkalainen & Pawlowski, 2014). They are a set of technologies that support communication, group building and cohesion (Pirkkalainen & Pawlowski, 2014). Social media are highly interactive and allow users to freely produce, locate and share content (Cao et al., 2015; Mladenović & Krajina, 2020).

3.11.1 Definition and Characteristics of Social Media

Social media are a network of web-based collaborative applications that enable social interaction, social information aggregation and sharing (Widen-Wulff & Totterman, 2009; Zheng et al., 2010). They enable users to consume, create and recreate information from several sources resulting in the production of new content and structure (Widen-Wulff & Totterman, 2009). Social media encourage participation, conversation, openness, creation and socialisation amongst a community of users (Gaal, Szabo, Obermayer-Kovacs, & Csepregi, 2015). Community members of a social media platform are therefore able to work collaboratively to create compile and update knowledge, resulting in a collective knowledge base (Cao et al., 2015).

There are different types of social media currently in existence, which support the following functions of communication, collaboration, connecting, completing, combining (Gaal et al., 2015; Jalonen, 2014). The social media applications that fall in this category include: blogging (such as Blogger); microblogging (such as Twitter); forums; video sharing tools (such as YouTube); presentation sharing tools (such as SlideShare), instant messaging (such as Skype) (Gaal et al., 2015; Zheng et al., 2010).Social media provides new ways of communicating, enabling members to discuss, share, store and publish contents.

Collaboration is enabled by social media, with members able to collectively create and edit content, without the need for being in the same place and time(Jalonen, 2014). Collaborative social media tools include Wiki's (e.g. Wikipedia); groupware or shared workspaces (e.g. Google Docs) (Gaal et al., 2015).

Connecting with other people online is facilitated through social media applications that support social networking. In the category of social networking software are applications such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Second Life (Jalonen, 2014).

Social media are also used to complete content by describing, adding, or filtering information as well as tagging and showing a connection between content (Gaal et al., 2015). Social media software used for completing activities include visual bookmarking tools such as Pinterest and news aggregators such as Digg (Jalonen, 2014).

Social media applications are also useful for combining content. Thus a user is able to mix and match content, for example while using a particular platform, a user can use another application, without necessarily leaving the originally visited platform (Ahmed et al., 2018; Gaal et al., 2015; Jalonen, 2014). Social media tools in this category include Mash-ups e.g. Google Maps.

Different social media may have different technical and social characteristics. Some may be based of text, video, audio or a combination of two or more of these; some may offer synchronous or asynchronous communication; and some differ in message distribution, facilitating communication on a one to one, one to many, many to one, or many to many basis (Zheng et al., 2010). Differences in social media may also be observed in their operability, reliability and availability (Zheng et al., 2010).

As shown in Figure 5 below, social media also have the characteristics of user-friendliness; interactiveness; openness; transparency; participation; democracy; uncontrollability; velocity and realtimeness (Jalonen, 2014).

Features:
- Openness
- Participatory
- User-driven
- Interactiveness
- Uncontrollability
- Velocity
- Real-timeness

Content
- Texts
- Graphs
- Photos
- Podcasts
- Videocasts

Means
- Social networking
- Discussion forums
- Shared workspaces
- Media sharing
- Wikis
- Blogs
- Microblogging
- Mash-ups

SOCIAL MEDIA

People
- Leaders, workers, customers, stakeholders, within and across the organisation's boundaries

Purpose
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Connecting
- Completing
- Combining

Figure 5: Social Media-Features, Content, Means, People and Purpose (Adapted From Jalonen(2014)

3.11.2 Benefits of Social Media for Knowledge Sharing

Social media has several benefits for knowledge sharing. They have been found to assist in discovering potential social ties, by making personal profiles visible, which in turn enables community members to easily identify those who share the same speciality and expertise (Ahmed et al., 2018; Cao et al., 2015). This is enabled by the fact that content shared on social media has additional information attached, such as the introduction of the source; who contributed to the aggregation of the content and who is interested and who is an expert, thus enabling users to identify possible collaborators or experts (Ahmed et al., 2018; Zheng et al., 2010). The visibility of profiles or contact lists provides greater network transparency, which

may lead to the building of trust and provides signals of credibility which are both necessary for encouraging knowledge sharing in a community (Leonardi, Huysman, & Steinfield, 2013).

Social media is also complementary of traditional knowledge management systems, being more effective when large numbers of individuals are involved (Cao et al., 2015; Zheng et al., 2010). Traditional media was mainly about "broadcasting", content transmitted to an audience, discouraging conversation, while social media is better seen as enabling two way conversations (Zheng et al., 2010). Emerging research in the field also indicates that in a many to many communication setting, a network-generalised exchange such as a wiki is more effective than a group generalised exchange such as an electronic bulletin (Sohn & Leckenby, 2007). Additionally, compared to the more traditional genres of communications technology such as email which must be targeted to specific recipients, social media allow members of a community to connect with geographically or organisationally dispersed readers, bridging otherwise disconnected people (Ahmed et al., 2018; Cao et al., 2015; Mladenović & Krajina, 2020). This therefore makes social media ideal for enabling knowledge sharing in distributed communities of practice.

Social media tools are increasingly being seen as strategic in overcoming traditional KMS challenges. For example, where traditional KMS failed to assist in capturing tacit knowledge, social media is seen as an enabler of tacit knowledge sharing as it has tools that support dialogue, social interactions and collaboration among employees (Al-Ghamdi & Al-Ghamdi, 2015; Mladenović & Krajina, 2020). Unlike traditional KMSs, social media also offer exceptional opportunities for cooperation as well as enabling the sharing of diverse knowledge, expertise and ideas (Ahmed et al., 2018; Al-Ghamdi & Al-Ghamdi, 2015). Users can post what they know; important information; useful answers to questions posed in the form of solutions or feedback or opinions (Ahmed et al., 2018). Social media tools ultimately

facilitate innovation, by enabling individuals and organisations to gain access to innovative solutions to problems, while also facilitating the creation of applied knowledge that is beneficial to the success of organisations.

Knowledge sharing motivation levels have also been found to be enhanced through social media (Zheng et al., 2010). Researchers have shown that when social media users expect to have more followers, they are more likely to actively publish content, which facilitates knowledge sharing (Zheng et al., 2010).

Social media are also cheap and easy to maintain; thus reducing the economic costs of implementing a knowledge management system (Cao et al., 2015; Widen-Wulff & Totterman, 2009). They are accessible, public and easy to use, enabling users to quickly adopt them(Widen-Wulff & Totterman, 2009).

However, social media does have some drawbacks. The informality of social media that allows for lapses in grammar and typographical errors may elicit critical views from members (Widen-Wulff & Totterman, 2009). The fact that anyone on a platform can share, flattens the hierarchy of expertise which may undermine the basis of quality assurance (Widen-Wulff & Totterman, 2009). The openness for social media to being edited by anyone, could result in individuals with malicious intent, publishing misleading or irrelevant information which also may affect the quality and reliability of information shared on such platform(Widen-Wulff & Totterman, 2009). On social media, the reliability of sources that are sharing knowledge online can be questionable, it is also not always possible to verify the credibility of a source which may lead to false or distorted knowledge being shared (Mladenović & Krajina, 2020). Nevertheless, social media does have characteristics that would be immensely beneficial for the purposes of knowledge sharing in an organisation.

3.12 The Benefits of Social Media to Policy Makers and Development Organisations

As this study focuses on the use of social media by a development-practitioner based community of practice, it is necessary to identify some benefits of social media specific to this sector. Ali (2011), identifies four benefits of social media that are particularly beneficial to policy makers and these include: the capacity of social media to attract a wider user base; stimulate content creation; promote basic ICT Skills and foster participation and democratisation in developing nations. Social media have been made simply as channels of communication which appeals to anyone with a desire to interact and self-express. They also require little if any knowledge of familiarity with technological underpinnings in order to publish on the web, and this is particularly key when considering that one of the key challenges in bringing development is the lack of technological skills by the people to whom development is brought(Ali, 2011). Many social networking sites such as YouTube, Facebook, LinkedIn have been made available for free, which makes the communication technology affordable for organisations and individuals serving in impoverished situations(Ali, 2011). Social media are thus seen as possibly able to transcend socioeconomic and racial barriers (Ali, 2011).

3.13 Current Perceptions on the Use Of Social Media for Knowledge Sharing in a Variety of Professional Settings

Research on the use of social media for knowledge sharing in a variety of professional contexts is slowly emerging (Ahmed et al., 2018; Mladenović & Krajina, 2020). Ahmed et al. (2018), conducted a systematic literature review on the subject of social media for knowledge sharing. The study analysed 103 research articles on the topic published between the years 2010 and 2016. The findings of the studies revealed that research on the use of social media for knowledge sharing was gradually increasing and had a very short history. (Ahmed et al., 2018). Research in this area is therefore still in its infancy and this presents a research gap.

The study identified three key uses of social media for knowledge sharing including knowledge seeking, knowledge contributing and social interactivity (Ahmed et al., 2018). Social media such as Facebook and Wikis were found to enable knowledge seekers to connect with each other and access knowledge sources including those beyond geographical borders (Ahmed et al., 2018). Social media was also found to enable users to easily combine their knowledge, ideas and skills with that of other users globally, while enhancing social interactivity through two way communication (Ahmed et al., 2018).

Ahmed et al. (2018) also identified challenges encountered by users when using social media for knowledge sharing. These include difficulties in distributing tacit knowledge; a lack of willingness by users to reuse codified knowledge; fear of losing knowledge power; costs and time associated with codifying knowledge; lack of trust regarding use of social media for knowledge sharing and lack of leadership and managerial direction towards the development of a vision that shapes online knowledge sharing culture in an organisation (Ahmed et al., 2018).

In their systematic literature review on research publications on the subject social media for knowledge sharing, Ahmed et al. (2018) found that researchers in this field had used a variety of methodologies including qualitative and quantitative methods, with quantitative methods being the predominant method used. The researchers identified a gap in that mixed methods studies were not many in the period under review. The current study therefore covers this gap by following a mixed method study design.

The theories mostly used to study the phenomenon of using social media for knowledge sharing were the Social Capital Theory , followed by the Technology Acceptance Model, Theory of Planned Behaviour and the Social Exchange Theory (Ahmed et al., 2018). The current study combined the Social Capital Theory and Technology Acceptance Model, thus

capturing the strengths of each theory to explore the use of social media for knowledge sharing in a distributed community of practice.

The study found that the contexts in which publications on the use of social media for knowledge sharing were predominantly in Business (27%), followed by the Education sector (20%), Health (12%), professional learning or training (10%) and Disaster management (8%) (Ahmed et al., 2018). A gap in similar studies in the development sector is therefore apparent, which makes the current research pertinent. The georgraphic coverage of research publications on knowledge sharing through social media covered Asia-Pacific, North America and Europe regions, while Africa only contributed two papers (Ahmed et al., 2018). More studies on the use of social media for knowledge sharing in African context would go a long way in covering this research gap, and the current study is a step towards realising that goal.

Mladenovic and Krajina (2020) conducted a systematic literature review on the use of social media for knowledge sharing among employees for research publications up to July 2019. Their study revealed that social media are powerful and interactive platforms that enable individuals to freely, effortelessly share knowledge expertise and perceptions (Mladenović & Krajina, 2020). Social media technologies were also found to create suitable and fertile environmenst for sharing large quantities of tacit and explicit knowledge, while enabling rapid knowledge sharing between employees located across different geographical areas (Mladenović & Krajina, 2020).

The study revealed some challenges related to sharing knowledge through social media including: organisations risking knowledge leaks, that is loss of knowledge that is intended to stay within the organisation; the variability in employees' motivation and interest to share their knowledge; and the difficulties of verifying the credibility of online sources of

knowledge, which might lead to false or distorted information being shared (Mladenović & Krajina, 2020).

The study revealed that trust and loyalty were important factors for knowledge sharing through social media. Knowledge shared via social media platforms was also found to significantly influence prepurchase decisions of tourist destinations (Mladenović & Krajina, 2020).

This literature review study revealed that qualitative methods were predominantly employed in the research publications on the use of social media for knowledge sharing (Mladenović & Krajina, 2020). Studies in this field were also found to have been conducted mainly in the IT and Management fields, distantly followed by Psychology, Marketing, Toursim, Pedagogy, Physics , Medicine and Neuroscience (Mladenović & Krajina, 2020). Research on the use of social media for knowledge sharing in the field of development is conspicuously absent, which is a gap addressed by the current study.

Mladenovic and Krajina (2020) found that there is a global interest in the study of the use of social media for knowledge sharing, with studies carried out mainly in the USA, China, UK, Spain and Malaysia. There was however a glaring lack of insights on the phenomenon from developing contexts including Africa, which the current study seeks to cover.

Panahi et al. (2013) conducted a literature review on studies related to knowledge sharing over social web tools. Their study revealed that there are currently different perspectives regarding the potential role of ICT's in facilitating the sharing of tacit knowledge, and that there is a lack of academic research investigating the contributions of the social web to tacit knowledge sharing. They concluded that most of the studies on knowledge sharing through social media available in the literature lacked empirical data to show the potential of social web towards enhancing knowledge sharing (Panahi et al., 2013). The researchers identified

the following research questions that needed to be addressed related to knowledge sharing through social media: How and to what extent are social web tools effective in facilitating tacit knowledge sharing? What are the potentials of social web technologies in this regard? How do social web platforms comply with the requirements of tacit knowledge sharing? What is needed to improve capacity of social web initiatives in this regard? What are the differences between face to face versus online tacit knowledge sharing via social media? What are the capabilities of different social web tools for knowledge sharing? What are the barriers (technical, legal and motivational) against knowledge sharing through social media?

The current study sought to address some of the questions raised in the literature review conducted by Panahi et al., (2013), by looking specifically at the potential role of social media in facilitating knowledge sharing within distributed CoPs. The study also sought to address the question regarding the factors that affect knowledge sharing through social media in distributed CoPs.

Panahi et al., (2013) also recommend that Information Systems (IS) research needs to address how social media can help organisations and individuals adapt to the changes in the workplace. They also argue that more exploration and deeper understanding is needed to capture and share experts' experiential knowledge of how social media, can be used for knowledge sharing in organisations (Panahi et al., 2013).

3.14 The Use of Social Media to Share Knowledge among Professionals and Organisations in the Advanced Digital Economies

Studies that investigate the use of social media for knowledge sharing among practitioners in specific disciplines have also emerged. Panahi (2014), conducted a study on social media and tacit knowledge sharing among physicians dispersed around the world. These physicians were specifically using social media tools such as blogs, wikis, microblogging to share their

expertise, tell stories, locate experts with fellow physicians throughout the world. The findings of this study revealed five key contributions of social media to tacit knowledge sharing among working professionals. The contributions of microblogging (Twitter) and blogging towards knowledge sharing among physicians included that these tools provided space for physicians to socialise, converse and dialogue and they also provided a quick and easy way for physicians to learn their practice, through imitating, demonstrating and benchmarking clinical skills and best practices. Panahi's (2014) study also revealed that social media facilitated networking, allowing physicians to locate peers and also facilitating the development of an international professional network and collaboration. What was also unearthed from the study was social media's potential to provide a platform for storytelling as it provided physicians opportunities to share their workplace stories. Social media were also found to facilitate physician's encounter with existing and new knowledge through increasing its visibility and enabling physicians to interact with it (Panahi, 2014). The results of the study therefore suggest that social media do have the potential to improve knowledge sharing among practitioners of a specific discipline, in this case of medical physicians.

Mastrom (2013), explored the potential of social media in enhancing the tacit knowledge sharing within the United States Marine Corps (USMC) community of practice. The findings led the researcher to draw the conclusion that social media indirectly enhanced existing tacit knowledge sharing within the USMC, by improving expert awareness, building social networks, enabling dialogue and improving interactions among individuals, which are the key aspects of knowledge sharing.

Jarrahi (2013), explored the use of social media amongst professionals from multiple management consulting firms in the United States (US). The key findings of his study were that knowledge workers from management consulting firms performed five knowledge practices that were supported by multiple social media. It was revealed that knowledge

workers in the study used multiple technological options in performing knowledge practices (Jarrahi, 2013). Social structure, such as the organisational policies and emerging norms were found to influence decisions by knowledge workers from management consulting. Knowledge workers from the management consulting firms studied were found also to use different social media in practice due to their contrasting assumptions, expectations, intentions and interpretations (Jarrahi, 2013). Knowledge workers in management consulting firms were also found to appropriate social media for reasons of organisational contexts and personal preferences (Jarrahi, 2013). This shows evidence therefore that the use of social media for knowledge sharing is influenced by a variety of factors, including organisational and individual factors, which must be studied to understand the phenomenon better.

Al-Ghamdi and Al-Ghamdi (2015), conducted a descriptive theoretical review of literature that sought to determine how virtual communities of practice that employ social media overcome common knowledge management challenges. Their study revealed that social media incorporate important applications for personal knowledge management and they support participation, communication and interaction among members (Al-Ghamdi & Al-Ghamdi, 2015). The study also supported the view that social media based virtual CoPs play a major role in capturing tacit knowledge, facilitating innovation as well as knowledge sharing and collaboration.

Cao et al (2015), investigated the role of social media in supporting knowledge integrations from a social capital theory perspective. Using a survey results of 262 Chinese professionals in the IT sector, the study demonstrated that social media are valuable informal KMS in the work place and that experience with social media by workers had significant impact on knowledge integration (Cao et al., 2015). Thus, employees that were found to be familiar with social media appeared to have the capacity to integrate resources and knowledge effectively. The researchers also observed that while social media provide certain capabilities

and potential, they do not guarantee their use by employees as knowledge management systems; therefore they recommended that organisations should sponsor knowledge-related activities by organising them through these platforms so as to make social media a knowledge management tool (Cao et al., 2015). In this instance, the results of this study show evidence that where social media is introduced as a medium for knowledge sharing, there is need to provide incentives to encourage use of the technology for knowledge sharing.

From a theoretical perspective, the study by Cao et al (2015), revealed that social capital fully or partially mediates the relationship between social media use and knowledge integration. In this study, social media was found to be instrumental in the formation and accumulation of social capital as indicated by social networking, trust and shared language. The study therefore supported their proposition that social media are a form of informal knowledge management system, which support social interactions, critical to personal knowledge integration. This study however represents the limited number of studies that incorporate a theoretical base to be able to understand the phenomenon of knowledge sharing via social media.

Baehr and Alex-Brown (2010), conducted a study on the impact and value of blogs on organisational social capital and knowledge sharing at Dell Inc. The results from their study indicated the usefulness of corporate blogs in fostering a shared understanding of organisational roles; increasing a sense of group cohesiveness; improving work processes and improved professional and personal network ties among employees in the organisation (Baehr & Alex-Brown, 2010). From this study it was therefore evident that social media is a tool that can foster the development of social capital which in turn also encouraged knowledge sharing among the employees at Dell Inc.

Naeem (2019), conducted research investigating the use of social networking applications among employees of universities in the UK. The study followed an interpretivist research design using grounded theory. The researcher conducted 52 semi-structured interviews with purposively selected participants from public and private universities in the UK. The study revealed that social media tools can be used to effectively and efficiently foster knowledge sharing practices in the workplace, through enhancing new knowledge; increasing employee skills; promoting a knowledge sharing culture; fostering effective communication and increasing employee involvement in research activities (Naeem, 2019). The study revealed preconditions for successful knowledge sharing via social media to include: a supportive culture; interpersonal trust; social trust; intentions to share knowledge; shared goals and teamwork (Naeem, 2019). Conversely, low levels of interpersonal trust and leadership commitment; knowledge hoarding; poor infrastructure; lack of appropriate knowledge and a lack of a supportive socialised environment and organisational culture were found to negatively impact knowledge sharing on social media among university employees (Naeem, 2019).

3.15 The Use of Social Media among Professionals and Organisations in Developing Economies

There are a few studies on the role of social media in knowledge sharing that are also beginning to emerge from the developing countries (Ahmed et al., 2018). Adamovic, Potgieter and Mearns (2012), conducted a case study investigating social media trends and their role in creating a knowledge creating culture among employees of a global marketing organisation-Nielsen. From data obtained through semi structured questionnaires and interviews with the organisation's employees, it was revealed that respondents had a positive attitude to sharing knowledge with co-workers through the medium of social media. The organisation's employees made use of a variety of social media tools to share knowledge

amongst themselves, with the most important tool being Skype. This was used for videoconferencing and chatting with colleagues based in Nielsen's international branches. The organisation had implemented social media tools for knowledge sharing, however, it was revealed that not all employees of Nielsen were aware of the availability of these tools, nor were they all willing to share their knowledge with colleagues using social media as a tool.

Mosha, Holmner and Penzhorn (2015), investigated the extent to which social media tools are utilised to enhance knowledge sharing among ICT and Library professionals from the Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology (NM-AIST), in Tanzania. Through the conduct of semi-structured interviews, the researchers were able to establish that the use of social media to enhance knowledge sharing at the university was still in its infancy as no social media tools specifically designed and adopted for knowledge sharing at NM-AIST were available. The respondents however revealed their interest and willingness at integrating and utilising social media and were already using publicly available social media tools such as Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn, Wikis, and blogs for knowledge sharing. The study also highlighted several challenges that prohibited knowledge sharing through social media at NM-AIST. These were organisational, individual and technological in nature. Some of the challenges highlighted included: lack of social media policies and strategies to govern social media use for knowledge sharing at NM-AIST; lack of incentives from management to support knowledge sharing via social media; lack of an organisational culture that supports knowledge sharing via social media; inadequate human and financial resources (Mosha et al., 2015). The technical challenges that were revealed to be an impediment to using social media as tools for knowledge sharing included: a deficit of adequate technology; high costs of internet connectivity; inadequate ICT technical support and unreliable power supply. Individual challenges observed included a lack of awareness on the available social media tools for knowledge sharing; technophobia among knowledge workers; negative attitudes and

beliefs about social media as well as a general lack of motivation to use social media for knowledge sharing among knowledge workers.

3.16 Factors Influencing Knowledge Sharing

One of the research questions in this study sought to investigate the factors affecting use of social media for knowledge sharing among members of AfCoP. To examine the factors that influence knowledge sharing, the study devised a research model on knowledge sharing through social media (Figure 4). This incorporated variables from the Social Capital theory (SC) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as antecedents for knowledge sharing intention and the quality of knowledge shared. In this section, studies that have previously incorporated the SC theory to explain knowledge sharing behaviour of individuals are discussed. In addition, other significant factors have been found to influence knowledge sharing in knowledge management literature are also discussed. Although these factors are not specific to knowledge sharing through the use of social media, some researchers have concluded that key issues enabling the success of using a collaborative social media platform for knowledge sharing were similar to general factors influencing knowledge sharing in a variety of contexts (Vuori & Okkonen, 2012).

3.16.1 Social Capital Theory Factors Influencing Knowledge Sharing Behaviour

Several researchers in the knowledge management field have anchored their studies on the social capital theory and found it to have explanatory power in explaining the antecedents to knowledge sharing behaviour of individuals. Akhavan et al. (2015) investigated the causal relationships among knowledge sharing enablers based on variable from the social capital theory, knowledge sharing intention and knowledge sharing outcomes within research and development teams from Iran. The researchers administered a survey of 230 employees, and the findings of their study revealed that social interaction ties (structural capital), and trust, reciprocity and team identification (relational capital) were significantly associated with

knowledge sharing intention. They concluded that once an individual builds up relationships with other team members and feels comfortable to share his/her thoughts, their intention to share knowledge would be stronger. They also concluded that a high level of interpersonal trust among community members encourages open discussion, understanding of work related problems and effective communication within a team, while tangible and intangible barriers to knowledge sharing were also reduced by the level of trust in a team (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015). Reciprocity was also found to be a significant determinant of knowledge sharing intention in their study, and they concluded that where there is a strong norm of reciprocity, members may feel obliged to share their knowledge (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015). The researchers also found that team identification influences knowledge sharing intentions in research and development teams, and they concluded that members would only unsparingly share knowledge if they identified with other people in the team (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015). The study however showed that shared goals did not relate with knowledge sharing intention, and they believed that this was because they had overlooked other important factors such as cultural values, which may have likely affected the attitudes of respondents to knowledge sharing (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015).

Chiu et al. (2006), combined the social capital theory and social cognitive theories to construct a model for investigating the motivations behind people's knowledge sharing behaviours in virtual communities. The study argued that facets of social capital including social interaction ties, trust, norms of reciprocity, identification, shared vision and shared language, influence knowledge sharing in virtual communities (Chiu et al., 2006). The study revealed that: social interaction ties significantly and positively affected quantity of knowledge sharing, while they had an insignificant association with the quality of knowledge shared (Chiu et al., 2006). Trust, shared language and shared vision also showed to have a positive and significant relationship with knowledge quality, while reciprocity had no

significant influence on knowledge quality (Chiu et al., 2006). Their study concluded that it is the social capital factors that lead to greater levels of knowledge sharing in terms of quantity and quality of knowledge shared (Chiu et al., 2006).

Adopting a social perspective and drawing on the social capital theory, Li and Li (2010), investigated how the dimensions of a members' social capital influenced knowledge sharing in an online community. The study tested hypotheses about social interaction ties, reciprocity, trust, shared vision and knowledge sharing behaviour. The results of the study demonstrated that social interaction ties and reciprocity exerted significant impacts on knowledge sharing in learning communities (Li & Li, 2010). They however did not find a positive and significant relationship between shared vision and trust to knowledge sharing behaviour. They concluded that social capital plays an important role underlying knowledge sharing behaviour (Li & Li, 2010).

Shaqrah et al. (2013), used a theoretical model based on the social capital theory to investigate the factors influencing knowledge sharing among 141 employees and researchers within knowledge stations in Jordan. They hypothesised that the dimensions of social capital increase knowledge sharing, attitude and expectations about knowledge sharing and the quality of knowledge shared. The findings of the study revealed that social interaction ties, trust, norm of reciprocity and attitude and expectations about knowledge sharing significantly contributed to knowledge sharing quality (Shaqrah et al., 2013). Trust was the most significant predictor on the attitude and expectations of knowledge sharing, followed by social interaction ties and norms of reciprocity (Shaqrah et al., 2013). Shared language and shared vision were however found to insignificantly contribute to the quality of knowledge shared (Shaqrah et al., 2013).

Other researchers conducted a study to investigate the determinants of knowledge sharing quantity and quality in a professional hybrid virtual network from the central Eurasian region (Ford, Ziegler, Fang, Holmes Iv, & Jindal, 2018). The authors replicated a previous study by Chiu, Hsu and Wang (2006), which examines the influence of social capital factors on knowledge sharing in virtual communities. The study by Ford et al. (2018), revealed that social interaction ties positively influenced members quantity of knowledge sharing and not knowledge quality. Contrary to their hypotheses however, the norm of reciprocity was not found to have any influence on knowledge sharing (Ford et al., 2018).

These studies demonstrate the capability of the social capital theory to examine the factors influencing knowledge sharing in a variety of contexts. Variables that have been found to influence knowledge sharing behaviour from the social capital theory include: social interaction ties, trust, norms of reciprocity, shared language, shared vision and goals, attitudes and expectations about knowledge sharing and quality of knowledge. In this study, the social capital theory variables incorporated in the research model on knowledge sharing via social media included: social interaction ties, trust, norms of reciprocity, identification, shared language, and shared vision. These were combined with variables from the Technology Acceptance Model, perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness to derive the research model on knowledge sharing through social media as shown in Figure 4.

3.16.2 Other Factors Influencing Knowledge Sharing

The other characteristics that are believed to influence knowledge sharing behaviour can be categorised into personal, organisational and technological factors.

3.16.2.1 Personal Factors Influencing Knowledge Sharing

Personal characteristics that have been found to influence knowledge sharing behaviour include, demographic variables such as age and gender as well as the individual's personal

attitudes towards knowledge sharing (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016; Wang & Hou, 2015). The individuals' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation has been found to positively influence knowledge sharing behaviour (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016; Nielsen & Razmerita, 2014). Intrinsic motivation does not depend on external pressure or reward, while extrinsic motivation focuses on goal driven reasons for performing a certain behaviour such as to gain monetary rewards or career advancement (Razmerita et al., 2016). Individuals who are extrinsically motivated typically consider the costs and benefit associated with knowledge sharing, before they engage in the activity (Razmerita et al., 2016). Intrinsically motivated individuals on the other hand, are driven by an interest in the activity, enjoyment of the task of knowledge sharing or finding joy in helping others (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016; Razmerita et al., 2016). Researchers have also argued that individual motivations, such as the intrinsic desire to help others, can directly affect their knowledge sharing behaviour (Wasko & Faraj, 2005). For example, if the individual perceives that sharing knowledge will enhance their reputation amongst peers, they are also likely to be disposed towards sharing knowledge (Wasko & Faraj, 2005)

The nature of relations an individual has in an organisation has also been found to influence their knowledge sharing behaviour. When individuals have developed friendly and collegial relations with others in a community, there are more chances for knowledge sharing to occur (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016). Several fears can also hinder individuals from sharing knowledge. These could be fear of criticism after sharing knowledge; fear of losing face; fear of giving up power and authority after having shared knowledge; fear of exploitation; fear of misleading community members; fear that job security will be reduced and fear of exploitation (Razmerita et al., 2016).

Another key factor that has been found to affect the knowledge sharing behaviour of individuals, is the level of their organisational commitment. Three levels of organisational

commitment are said to be observable in individuals: affective commitment, related to the degree of emotional attachment an individuals has to the organisation; normative commitment, which is the level of obligation an individual feels towards the organisation and continuance commitment, which is the individuals perceived or calculated costs related to staying with the organisation (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016). Members who strongly identify with the organisation are more likely to share their knowledge as they adopt the organisational goals as their own (Razmerita et al., 2016).

3.16.2.2 Organisational Factors Influencing Knowledge Sharing

Several organisational factors have also been found to influence knowledge sharing in organisations. These include: organisational culture; top management support; provision or lack of incentives and rewards (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016; Pirkkalainen & Pawlowski, 2014; Razmerita et al., 2016; Vuori & Okkonen, 2012).

Culture refers to a system of beliefs rooted in an organisation, expressed through the behaviour of the people within the organisation (Mcdermott & O'Dell, 2001). It also refers to the vision, values, mission philosophy of the organisation, together with the norms, and values of the organisational members, that guide their behaviour and actions (Razmerita et al., 2016). For example; if the organisational culture does not support knowledge sharing, the technology or channel used for knowledge sharing is of no consequence; it will be a barrier to knowledge sharing among members (Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). Therefore, culture can enable or impede knowledge sharing in the organisation.

Various types of organisational cultures are observable, which either impede or enhance knowledge sharing among members. A clan culture, where there is the prevalence of teamwork; a high commitment to colleagues as well as the organisation and the availability of programs for members' involvement, has been found to enhance knowledge sharing in

organisations (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016). An innovative or entrepreneurial culture in an organisation emphasises creativity, thereby enabling members to generate solutions to problems, and share knowledge with others (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016). Conversely, an organisational culture where there is no equality among members in the organisation, where there is high power distance between members; where wealth is not evenly distributed; leaders are not questioned and where risk is avoided, is likely to impede knowledge sharing among members (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016). Therefore, in order to make the most of social media tools in organisational knowledge sharing, there must be an underlying culture that promotes and supports knowledge sharing (Vuori & Okkonen, 2012).

The quality of leadership or top management has also been identified as an enabler or barrier to knowledge sharing among members in an organisation (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016; Pirkkalainen & Pawlowski, 2014; Razmerita et al., 2016). Managers have been found to have a strong effect on the knowledge sharing behaviour of their subordinates. Leaders who work towards the development of trust among members as well as motivate members to share knowledge, will enhance knowledge sharing in the organisation (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016). Empowering leadership, characterised by leading by example; coaching; participative decision-making; showing concern for others and informing; has also been found to significantly improve knowledge sharing in organisations (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016).

The provision or lack of reward systems and incentives for knowledge sharing in organisations, has also been found to influence knowledge sharing in some studies (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016; Razmerita et al., 2016; Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar (2016), are of the view that when reward is integrated into the culture of the organisation, it strongly encourages members to share knowledge. Appropriate reward systems should therefore be developed and these could be given in the form of recognition, praise and

financial rewards to those members who actively engage in knowledge sharing activities (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016; Razmerita et al., 2016).

3.16.2.3 Technological Factors Affecting Knowledge Sharing

Technology has also been found to be an important enabler for knowledge sharing in organisations (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016; Rathi et al., 2014; Razmerita et al., 2016; Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). Technologies such as groupware, email, intranets among others are good for managing knowledge and supporting global collaboration (Rathi et al., 2014). Social media tools such as blogs, wikis, microblogging and instant messaging (IM) are playing important roles in facilitating formal and informal knowledge sharing in organisations (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016; Pirkkalainen & Pawlowski, 2014; Rathi et al., 2014). Some of the technological factors that have been found to affect knowledge sharing in organisations include: the functionality and usability of the knowledge sharing platform; structure of the platform; interface design and user needs; training provided for using the platform; information overload; lack of understanding of social media, its possibilities and its benefits for knowledge sharing; high costs of the knowledge sharing platform; security of the system, among others (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016; Razmerita et al., 2016; Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). It has also been proved that people use technological tools that they find useful and practical for knowledge sharing (Vuori & Okkonen, 2012).

3.16.3 Uncategorised Factors Affecting Knowledge Sharing

From the literature review, there were other factors that have been found to influence knowledge sharing in organisations, that were not categorised as individual, organisational or technological factors. These include: geographic distance of individuals or organisations, which can affect the level of trust among members; time zone differences, which can cause challenges in collaboration such as lack of communication and co-ordination; and differences

of cultures and languages among members from different geographical and organisational contexts (Pirkkalainen & Pawlowski, 2014).

Time and effort required to share knowledge has also featured as a key factor affecting knowledge sharing among members in organisations (Rathi et al., 2014; Razmerita et al., 2016; Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). When employees are subjected to heavy workloads and lack of time, knowledge sharing becomes difficult (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016). Increased competition in organisations around the world, results in increased work pressure for individuals, which makes it difficult for them to dedicate time and effort to knowledge sharing activities (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016).

Availability or lack of resources to support knowledge sharing activities has been found to hinder or enhance knowledge sharing activities in an organisation. This can include financial and human resources (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016). An absence of an administrative function or coordination for the knowledge sharing activities will hinder knowledge sharing among members (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016; Razmerita et al., 2016). This study therefore sought to investigate the individual, organisational, technological and other factors affecting knowledge sharing on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform.

3.17 Gaps in the Literature Reviewed

The literature reviewed reveals that increasingly different organisations and CoPs throughout the world are making attempts to use social media for knowledge sharing. The literature review also highlights the importance researchers are placing on the study of the use of social media for knowledge sharing through out the world as studies on the topic are gradually increasing (Ahmed et al., 2018). Previous studies show the potential that social media tools have in facilitating knowledge sharing activities among individuals and organisations. The literature review posits social media as being complementary to traditional knowledge

management systems by encouraging two way cpmmunication among geographically and organisationally dispersed members, thus bridging otherwise disconnected people (Ahmed et al., 2018; Cao et al., 2015; Mladenović & Krajina, 2020). Furthermore, the review of previous research on the subject indicate that where traditional knowledge management systems failed to facilitate tacit knowledge sharing, social media is seen as an enabler of both tacit and explicit knowledge sharing as it has tools that support dialogue, social interactions and collaboration among knowledge workers (Ahmed et al., 2018; Mladenović & Krajina, 2020). It was therefore critical for the current research to ascertain whether or not social media was enabling all types of knowledge sharing among members of AfCoP.

 While previous research highlighted key contributions of social media to knowledge sharing among individuals and in organisations; the literature review also revealed that there are preconditions required for effective knowledge sharing to take place through the use of social media. These factors include: the presence of a supportive organisational culture; interpersonal trust; strength of relationships; members intentions to share knowledge; shared goals; norms of reciprocity; intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015; Naeem, 2019; Razmerita et al., 2016). Conversely, literature also highlights factors that negatively impact knowledge sharing through social media. These include: low levels of interpersonal trust; knowledge hoarding; poor infrastructure; lack of knowledge; lack of a supportive organisational culture and environment; lack of technical skills to use the technology; lack of time and unwillingness to exert the effort required to share knowledge (Mosha et al., 2015; Naeem, 2019; Razmerita et al., 2016; Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). The current study was ceased with the objective of identifying the factors that influence knowledge sharing on social media among members of the African Community of Practice.

Additionally, the literature review also highlights challenges arising from the adoption of social media for knowledge sharing. One key challenge identified is the difficulty in verifying

the authenticity and credibility of of users on social media, which can render the quality of knowledge shared on such platforms questionable (Mladenović & Krajina, 2020; Widen-Wulff & Totterman, 2009).

The literature review revealed that studies on the use of social media for knowledge sharing have been largely carried out in the Business, Management, IT and Education fields (Ahmed et al., 2018; Mladenović & Krajina, 2020). However scholarly literature on the role of social media in knowledge sharing within development professional organisations is limited. Thus the current study sought to address the following questions to address the issue of the role of social media in AfCoP: How are social media used for knowledge sharing among members in AfCoP? What are the factors affecting the use of social media in sharing knowledge among AfCoP members? What are the perceptions of AfCoP members towards the use of social media in sharing knowledge? What kind of knowledge is generated and shared using social media among AfCoP members? And what are the challenges of using social media for knowledge sharing among AfCoP members?

Moreover, literature reviewed also shows that studies related to the role of social media and knowledge sharing, have tended to focus on different professions and types of organisations, including physicians, management consultants and US Marines. A search for related studies specific to the development profession from Emerald Publishing, Sage Publications, and Science Direct databases, did not return any results, hence the current study sought to also fill this gap, by providing empirical evidence on the phenomena of knowledge sharing through social media, within a bilingual community of practice, for development practitioners.

 The studies above also reveal that social media have the potential to support knowledge sharing in a variety of work contexts. However, these studies seem to have an application specific focus covering wikis, blogging, social networking sites and micro blogging among

others (Mansour, Askenäs, & Ghazawneh, 2013); (Hsu & Lin, 2008; Ramirez, 2007); (Fulk & Yuan, 2013; Leonardi, Huysman, & Steinfield, 2013). Many of these studies provide valuable insights on individual and organisational applications of a single social media tool for knowledge sharing, yet they do not cater for uses of social media in combination (Jarrahi, 2013). Evidence exists that professionals in a variety of settings; rather than preferring to use one social media platform such as blogging for knowledge sharing, are likely to use different social media for example Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook, in combination. The current study therefore sought to add to an empirical understanding of the role of a combination of a diversity of social media that included an organisational social networking platform with a discussion forum and blog, and public social networking tools such as Facebook and Twitter, in the knowledge sharing practices of the African Community of Practice (AfCoP). AfCoP was also a distributed community of development professionals, which also adds to the empirical literature on the use of social media for knowledge sharing among this category of practitioners.

From a methodological point of view, the literature review revealed that previous studies on the subject have used mainly either a qualitative or quantitative methods, with very few studies adopting mixed methods, even though it would have been useful to do so (Ahmed et al., 2018; Mladenović & Krajina, 2020). The present study sought to fill this gap, by adopting a mixed methods study design, which was expected to provide deeper and more meaningful insight on the use of social media for knowledge sharing among members of the African Community of Practice.

Theoretically, the literature review showed the popularity and effectiveness of the social capital theory and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) in previous similar studies (Ahmed et al., 2018; Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015; Chiu et al., 2006; Ford et al., 2018; Li & Li, 2010; Shaqrah et al., 2013). In the present study, the researcher combined the strengths of the

social capital theory and TAM in seeking to explain the factors that influence knowledge sharing on social media in the distributed community of practice AfCoP.

Finally, the literature review reveals that current scholarly research on the phenomena of social media use in organisational knowledge management were based mainly on studies from the Western and East Asian countries, such as the Netherlands; United States; Australia, Scotland and China (Ahmed et al., 2020; Aliakbar et al., 2013; Fulk & Yuan, 2013; Jarrahi, 2013; Leonardi et al., 2013; Mansour, Askenäs, & Ghazawneh, 2013; Mladenovic & Krajina 2018). However, very few studies on the role of social media in knowledge sharing in Cops can be identified from developing economies contexts (Mladenović & Krajina, 2020). In view of different cultural characteristics and economical situations, which influence the type of organizational structure as well as interpersonal communication between members, more investigations on knowledge sharing are needed to be conducted in other areas such as the Middle East and African countries (Aliakbar et al., 2013). The current study was therefore significant in that it sought to cover an empirical gap in literature, by providing evidence on the role of social media in knowledge sharing practices in CoPs from an African context.

3.18 Summary

In this chapter, the importance of knowledge sharing through social media is explained in the context of the current study. Definitions of the key concepts of knowledge management are provided, while the evolution of knowledge management practices in organisations is explained, including how communities of practice have become central to the knowledge management practices of most organisations. The chapter also unravels the role of technology in knowledge management, including how new social media are playing a critical role in the knowledge sharing practices of distributed communities of practice, as they promote social networking, assist in developing networks, and facilitate remote collaboration. The review of

related literature also provided findings on the uses of social media for knowledge sharing in a variety of professional contexts. Some of the findings revealed that the use of various social media tools for knowledge sharing, in diverse professional contexts is on the rise. Social media use was found to support knowledge sharing activities including facilitating networking, locating experts, collaboration and socialising. Social media was also revealed to support tacit knowledge sharing, which had been a challenge in traditional knowledge management systems. The chapter also highlighted several organisational, individual and technological influencing factors that affect the use of use of social media for knowledge sharing. These include choice of social media used, availability of social media policies, provision of incentives, organisational culture, availability of appropriate technology among others.

The chapter also highlights the growing importance of the study of knowledge sharing through social media as shown by the increasing number of research studies on the subject from several regions in the world. There is a gap of such studies from developing contexts, particularly from Africa, which positions the current study as pertinent. Previous studies in the field have mainly taken a largely qualitative or quantitative stance, with very few adopting a mixed methods stance. The current study thus adopted a mixed methods approach to fill this gap. From a theoretical perspective, the literature review also revealed the importance of the social capital theory and Technology Acceptance Model in explaining the phenomenon of the use and adoption of social media for knowledge sharing among knowledge workers. The present research thus combined these powerful theories in seeking to explain the use of social media for knowledge sharing among members of the African Community of Practice.

<center>**CHAPTER FOUR**</center>

<center>**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**</center>

4.1   Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology that shaped the design of the current study. In research, methodology comprises of the research paradigm that is the blueprint for the study, the research approach adopted to conduct the study, and the research design. Also included and explained in the chapter are the population from which participants in the study were drawn, the sampling procedures followed to draw the sample of participants who took part in the study. A detailed explanation of the data collection procedures is also given, as well as a demonstration of how the study's reliability and validity were achieved. Because the study involved drawing data from human participants, the chapter also gives an account of how ethical issues related to the study were resolved. The chapter then concludes by outlining how analysis of the data collected in the study was conducted.

4.2   Research Paradigm

The research paradigm is the research philosophy underpinning a study. It describes the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying the research approach. The two main aspects of ontology are objectivism and subjectivism (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Objectivists believe that social entities exist independently of social actors and that the world is patterned and predictable, while subjectivists believe that a social phenomenon is created from the perceptions and consequence of social actors (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009). There is however a third philosophical stance, which is known as pragmatism. Pragmatism argues that the most important determinant of epistemology and ontology one adopts is the research question (Saunders et al., 2009).

An epistemology is a philosophical belief system that constitutes what is acceptable knowledge in a field (Saunders et al., 2009). There are three main epistemological stances in qualitative research which are post- positivist, interpretive position and critical perspectives (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Post-positivism posits that the social world is patterned and that causal relationships can be discovered and tested via reliable strategies (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). In contrast the interpretive stance assumes that the social world is constantly being constructed through group interactions and thus social reality can be understood via the perspectives of social actors enmeshed in meaning making activities (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Critical perspective on the other hand views social reality as an ongoing construction. It posits that discourses created in shifting fields of social power shape social reality and our study of it. Thus, the critical realists argue that we will only be able to understand what is going on in the social world if we understand the social structures that have given rise to the phenomenon we are trying to understand.

For the purposes of this study the researcher adopted a pragmatist research philosophy. This philosophical stance was chosen because knowledge sharing is a complex phenomenon that cannot only be studied objectively. Widen-Wulf (2004) argues that knowledge sharing is a multidimensional activity that involves several contextual, cognitive and communicative skills, and because of its complexity the mechanisms behind knowledge sharing are better investigated through a qualitative approach. The objective of the current study was to understand the phenomena of knowledge sharing among members of a community of practice through social media. The study therefore relied on investigating most of the research questions on analysing and interpreting the experiences of the participants, as well as the meanings they assigned to the phenomenon of sharing knowledge via social media. However, the question that sought to find the extent to which social media were being used to share

knowledge within communities or practice were studied objectively to arrive at a credible answer.

4.3 Research Approach

Philosophical considerations lend to the research approach that is adopted in a study. A research may adopt a deductive or inductive approach. The deductive approach is emphasised in post-positivism, and seeks to test theory against the data (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). It is considered to be the "top-down" approach because the researcher first formulates hypothesis and develops a priori model, and then they aim to collect data to confirm or reject the model (Neuman, 2011). The inductive or "bottom-up" approach, is emphasised in interpretive and critical belief system and generates theory out of the data (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). In practice, however both approaches can be used to enable a researcher to have a convincing answer to the research questions under study.

Following on the choice of a pragmatic philosophy to conduct the research, this study used a combination of the deductive and inductive approaches. While there are not many studies that have investigated the phenomenon of sharing knowledge using social media, knowledge sharing on its own has been studied quite considerably.

4.4 Research Design

The design of the study was a case study. Robson (2002:178) cited in Saunders et al. (2009), defines a case study as "a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, using multiple sources of evidence". The case study strategy is appropriate when the researcher seeks to gain a rich understanding of the context of the research and the processes being enacted (Saunders et al., 2009). It is most often used in exploratory research, making it an appropriate strategy for studying a relatively new phenomenon of sharing knowledge via

social media. AfCoP was therefore chosen as a special case, as it provided a real-life example of the phenomenon being investigated.

4.4.1   Population of Study

The population of the study consisted of 4179 persons representing the current members of the AfCoP virtual platform at the time of conducting the study. The sampling frame was the AfCoP membership platform.

4.4.2   Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to select 103 current members of the AfCoP platform invited to attend the third Afrik4R Forum in 2016. This group was invited to complete a self-administered questionnaire during the meeting.

Seven (7) members of the AfCoP were interviewed by the researcher as key informants. These members of AfCoP included 2 members of the AfCoP Secretariat and 5 members who represent the Leadership Forum, the Youth for Results Forum and the Gender for Results Forum. These forums are workgroups of AfCoP responsible for Leadership, Youth and Gender related issues of the community.

4.4.3   Data Collection Procedures

Data collection procedures employed in case study research vary but generally include one or a combination of the following: interviews, observation, documentary analysis and questionnaires (Saunders et al., 2009). To ensure the reliability and validity of instruments used in this study, this study employed triangulation. Thus, data collection techniques including survey questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis were used in combination to elicit data which were used to answer the research questions in this study

4.4.3.1 *AfCoP Member Survey Design and Administration*

A self-administered questionnaire was designed and administered physically to members of AfCoP, who were invited to attend the Third Afrik4R/AfCoP meeting held in June 2016 in Nairobi, Kenya. These invited members represented the core AfCoP members key to the strategic objectives of AfCoP. The questionnaire contained both open and closed ended questions to capture qualitative and quantitative data. The questionnaire sought to elicit data on the AfCoP members' use of AfCoP's online social media platform, such as their frequency and nature of use of the platform. The questionnaire also had Likert scale type questions that examined the influence of variables from the social capital theory and Technology Acceptance Model on knowledge sharing intention and quality of knowledge shared as represented in the research model on Knowledge Sharing Through Social Media (Figure 4). Questionnaire items were adapted from previous similar studies including (Chiu et al., 2006; Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). The questions also sought to elicit AfCoP members' experience of sharing knowledge via social media. Table 6 below shows how the questionnaire was designed.

The questionnaire was administered to the AfCoP members who attended the third Afrik4R/AfCoP meeting in Nairobi, Kenya by the AfCoP secretariat who distributed it during one of the Afrik4R/AfCoP meeting sessions. After completion, the secretariat then collected the completed questionnaires from the participants and returned them to the researcher in Harare.

Table 6: AfCoP Member Survey Design

AfCoP Member Survey Design			
Research Question	**Theory/Literature**	**Construct**	**Question Number on Survey Form**
How are social media used for Knowledge Sharing?	**Demographic Details**	Gender	1
		Age	2
		Academic Qualification	3
		Area of Expertise	4
		Sector of Affiliation	5
		Position in Organisation	6
		Tenure in Field of Work	7
		Country of Residence	8
	Use of AfCoP's Knowledge Sharing Platform	Membership to AfCoP	9
		Frequency of Use	10
		Social Media Preferences	11
		Knowledge Sharing Activities	12
What kind of knowledge is generated and shared on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform?	**Type of Knowledge Shar**	Type of knowledge shared on the AfCoP Platform	13
What are the factors influencing use of social media in sharing knowledge among AfCoP members?	**Structural Capital** (Social Interaction Ties)	Maintainance of close relations with AfCoP Members	14
		Personal Knowledge of other AfCoP Members	15
		Frequency of communication with AfCoP Members	16
	Relational Capital (Trust, Identification, Norms of Reciprocity)	Trust	17, 18, 19, 20, 21
		Norms of Reciprocity	22,23
		Identification with AfCoP	24,25, 26,27
	Cognitive Capital (Shared Language and Narratives, Shared Vision)	Shared language on platform	28, 29
		Shared narratives	30
		Shared vision/goals	31, 32
	Technology Acceptance Model	Perceived Ease of Use	39
		Perceived Usefulness	40,41
	Quality of knowledge shared on the platform	Accuracy, completeness, reliability, timeliness, ease of understanding, trustworthiness	33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38
	Knowledge Sharing Intention	Attitudes about sharing knowledge on the AfCoP Platform	42
What are the challenges of using social media for sharing knowledge among AfCoP members?	**Barriers to Knowledge Sharing**	availability of time, sufficiency of content, feelings of insecurity, need for incentives, fear of criticism, fear of losing ownership of knowledge,	43
	Challenges Encountered on AfCoP Platform	Challenges encountered on AfCoP, Suggested Solutions	44, 45
What are the perceptions of AfCoP members towards the use of social media for sharing knowledge	**Perceptions of AfCoP Members towards Social Media Use for Knowledge Sharing**	Perceptions towards social media use for knowledge sharing	46, 47

4.4.3.2 *Semi-Structured Interviews*

Face-to-face and telephone semi-structured interviews were conducted with 7 members of AfCoP. These included 2 members of the AfCoP secretariat team to gain an organisational perspective on the phenomena of knowledge sharing via social media among AfCoP members. Five key informants representing the Leadership, Youth and Gender forums of AfCoP were also interviewed. The interviewees were contacted via email, after which telephone and face-to-face interviews were held, depending on their countries of residence. The members were purposively selected to include AfCoP's Secretariat members, chosen mainly because they understood and drove the vision and mission of AfCoP. These members of the AfCoP secretariat were also involved closely in the day to day and strategic activities of the organisation. Five other members of AfCoP who were interviewed were key participants in the main workgroups of AfCoP namely the Leadership Forum, Youth for Results Forum and Gender for Results Forum of AfCoP.

4.4.3.2.1 *Interview Schedule Design*

The interviews sought to elicit data from a managerial as well as a member perspective, on how AfCoP's organisational structure, support and design of the knowledge sharing platform affects knowledge sharing via social media among AfCoP members. The researcher developed two interview schedules, one for the AfCoP Secretariat and another for the AfCoP members. These interview schedules were used to guide the researcher as she conducted the interviews. The questions on the interview schedules were developed after an extensive literature review including questions from a study by Baehr and Alex-Brown (2010).

4.4.3.3 AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform Documentary Analysis

The researcher also employed documentary analysis and observation to collect data related to the characteristics of knowledge shared and level of participation by AfCoP members on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. In order to assess social media's impact or value of these communications technologies are to an organisation Baehr and Alex-Brown (2010), recommended the basic analytics such as page hits, time stamps and number of posts. The researcher used the knowledge sharing platform content analysis tool, in Table 7, to analyse the content of posts on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. Using this tool, the researcher was able to:

- Explain the features available on the main AfCoP knowledge sharing platform;

- Describe level of activity on the associated social media that belong to AfCoP: Discussion Forum, Blog, Twitter and Facebook

- Demonstrate, how the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform facilitate the various facets of Knowledge Sharing, including; expert locating, networking, interacting, collaborating, sharing stories, socialising and learning.

Table 7: Knowledge Sharing Platform Content Analysis

Component of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform	Description	Total Number of posts	Number of Replies/Comments/Retweets/Downloads
Discussion Forum Posts			
Blog Articles			
Reports			
Briefs			
Case Studies			
Tools & Guidelines			
Training Materials			
Twitter Account			
Facebook account			

4.4.4   Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the self-administered questionnaires were analysed using SPSS version 25, for descriptive analysis to generate the mean, frequency and percentages of data. Qualitative data obtained from the various data collection instruments, were organised into categories or themes and patterns identified (Leedy, 1997, p. 165). This qualitative data included responses to the open-ended questions of the AfCoP member survey; interviews with the AfCoP secretariat and members; content analysed from posts on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platforms (discussion forum, blog, Facebook and Twitter). Thematic analysis was conducted using the qualitative data analysis software, NVivo 12. The researcher also sought to identify any links from the data to the theories related to knowledge sharing and technology adoption. Other documentary evidence analysed included the knowledge products on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform such as case studies, briefs, reports; tools and guidelines. AfCoP management reports and policies were also examined to ascertain factors influencing the creation and use of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform.

4.4.5   Reliability and Validity of Instruments

To ensure the reliability and validity of instruments to be used in this study, this study employed several methods. Reliability refers to the degree to which a research instrument is able to yield consistent results and is measured through internal-consistency of the instrument- the intercorrelations between items that operationalise an instrument (Patterson et al., 2018). To measure internal consistency of questionnaire items, Cronbach's alpha is a commonly accepted and reported measure of internal consistency, with values >0.7 considered as acceptable internal consistency reliability (Patterson et al., 2018). The Likert scale items in this study were subjected to Cronbach's alpha reliability test using SPSS v.25 and the items that retained values above the acceptable Cronbach's Alpha of 0.7 were retained Table 8. All the items in the questionnaire appeared to be reliable and worthy of

retention, as removing any of the items did not significantly change the Cronbach's alpha coefficient as shown in Table 9 below.

Table 8: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Statistics

Reliability Statistics				
	Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
Structural Capital	Social Interaction Ties	0.788	0.792	3
Relational Capital	Trust	0.739	0.768	5
	Norm of Reciprocity	0.776	0.786	2
	Identification	0.881	0.881	4
Cognitive Capital	Shared Language	0.818	0.816	3
	Shared Vision	0.829	0.829	2
Technology Acceptance Model	Perceived Usefulness of AfCoP Platform	0.78	0.78	2
	Knowledge Sharing Intention	0.828	0.828	11
	Quality of Knowledge Shared	0.871	0.884	6

Content or face validity was also employed to measure the validity of the survey instrument. Content validity can be achieved through conducting an extensive literature review on the concepts to be measured (Muijis, 2004). Content validity can also be measured through subjecting the research instrument to expert judgment for review before improving it and using it to collect data (Maree, 2007) In this study, the survey questionnaire items were identified after an extensive review of related knowledge sharing literature. Examples of knowledge sharing studies that have used constructs from the social capital theory include those by Chiu, Hsu, & Wang, 2006; Seebach, 2012; Steinfield, Ellison, Lampe, and Vitak, 2012. Questionnaire items from these studies were therefore adapted for use in the current study, including the constructs of trust, norm of reciprocity, identification, shared vision and

shared language Chiu, Hsu and Wang (Chiu et al., 2006). This is known as content or face validity.

In addition, expert judgement was also employed to refine the questionnaire. After the initial draft of the questionnaire was developed, it was given to four (4) knowledge management experts who were able to review and critique its contents. The knowledge management experts all held PhD's in the fields of Information Science and Knowledge Management, are lecturers at university level in the same field and they all had more than 10 years practising as knowledge management experts. The final version of the questionnaire was administered after changes suggested by the knowledge management experts were made.

The study also used triangulation of data collection techniques including survey questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis in combination to elicit data that was used to answer the research questions in this study.

4.5   Ethical Considerations

Gaining ethical clearance is important prior to any data collection activities of any study. Most ethical issues fall into one of four categories: protection from harm; informed consent; right to privacy and honesty with professional colleagues (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Acceptable ethical standards were thus employed. These included: obtaining permission to conduct research from AfCoP and obtaining consent from participating interviewees using a consent form. The researcher also informed the participants the purpose of data collection, as well as assured both AfCoP secretariat and the participating members of confidentiality for whatever information they supplied. The ethical protocol of UKZN was also fully complied with, and the researcher only proceeded to collect data after receiving the ethical clearance certificate from the university.

Ethical issues specific to survey research were also addressed. These include: anonymity; confidentiality; the right to withdrawal and omission of items; data security and obtaining consent. Before proceeding to complete the questionnaire, the invited participants were asked to read and accept or decline an informed consent form which was attached to the questionnaire.

In terms of storage of data, the data were stored in a Google Drive account that was created for the purposes of this study and is password protected. The researcher intends to cancel and delete the account as well as the data collected after the 5-year retention period required by the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

4.6 Summary

In this chapter, the researcher explained and justified the adoption of a pragmatist philosophy that enabled the use of both inductive and deductive approaches, culminating in a mixed-methods study. The design of the study was a case study, AfCoP being chosen because of its uniqueness to the complex phenomenon of knowledge sharing through social media in distributed communities of practice. The population and sample of the study were described, while the data collection procedures that were employed, including the triangulation of survey, interviews and documentary analysis were described. An explanation of how the various types of data were analysed and the procedures for how data used in this study were stored are given. The ethical dimensions of the study were also addressed. In the next chapter, a presentation and analysis of quantitative data collected via the AfCoP member survey is given.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent and use of social media in facilitating knowledge sharing in AfCoP. The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How are social media used for knowledge sharing among members of AfCoP?

2. What are the factors affecting use of social media in sharing knowledge among AfCoP members?

3. What are the perceptions of AfCoP members towards the use of social media for sharing knowledge?

4. What kinds of knowledge is generated and shared using social media among AfCoP members?

5. What are the challenges of using social media for sharing knowledge among AfCoP members?

In this chapter, quantitative data collected during the study through the AfCoP member survey are presented, while the AfCoP member survey, interviews with key informants from AfCoP and documentary analysis are presented in Chapter Six.

5.2 AfCoP Member Survey Results

In this section, data from the AfCoP member survey are presented. The AfCoP survey was administered to a purposive sample of 103 members who were selected to attend the annual conference of AfCoP in 2016. This group represents AfCoP members key to the activities of AfCoP. The group was invited to complete a self-administered questionnaire. A total of 54 responses were recorded, yielding a response rate of 51%. Although this was a low response

rate, the study combined several data collection methods including interviews with AfCoP members and the AfCoP secretariat, content analysis of posts on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform and documentary analysis of reports and other documents which supported the validity of the study.

5.2.1 Demographic Characteristics

The following are the demographic characteristics of the respondents who completed the survey.

5.2.1.1 Gender

There were 54 respondents who took part in the AfCoP Member survey. Figure 6 below shows that, 12 (22%) of these were female while 42 (78%) were male. AfCoP is largely dominated by male members and this is also reflected in the respondents to the survey.
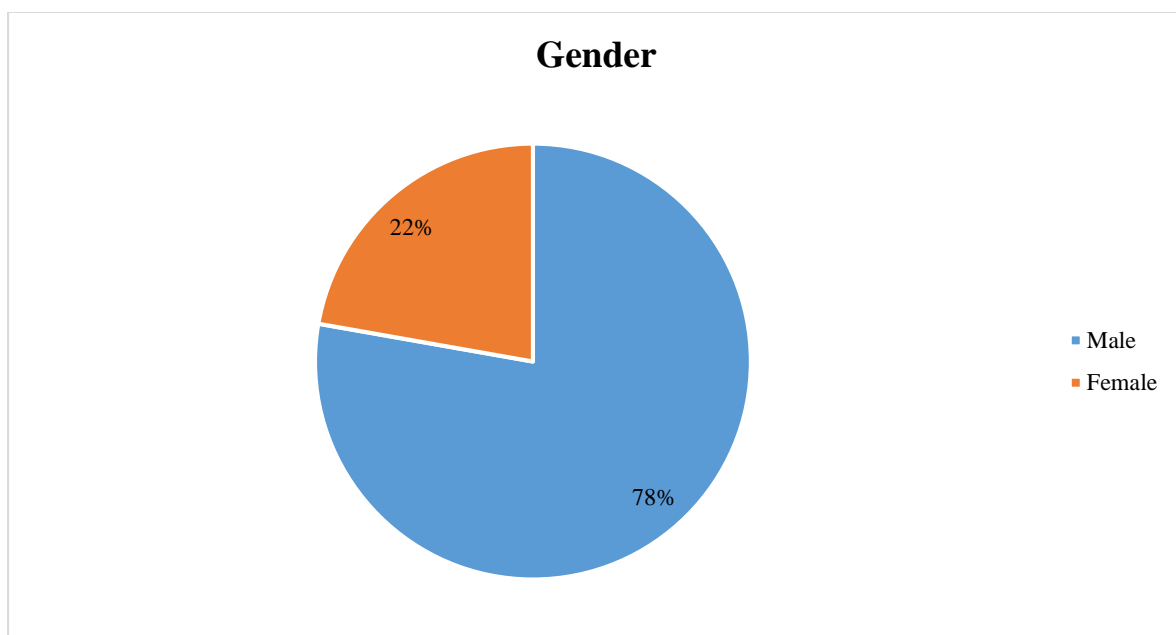
Figure 6: Gender of AfCoP Members

5.2.1.2 Age Categories of Participants

AfCoP has a membership that is drawn from a wide spectrum of age groups as represented in Figure 7 below. The majority as represented by 30% of the respondents were in the 40 to 49-

year bracket; and another 30% of the respondents were aged between 30 and 39 years old. There were also 20% of the respondents who were aged between 50 to 59 years old; while 11% of the respondents represented those AfCoP members who were over 60 years old. In the 20 to 29 years bracket there were only 11% of the respondents. AfCoP therefore attracted mature, middle aged and older individuals who are well established in their careers.
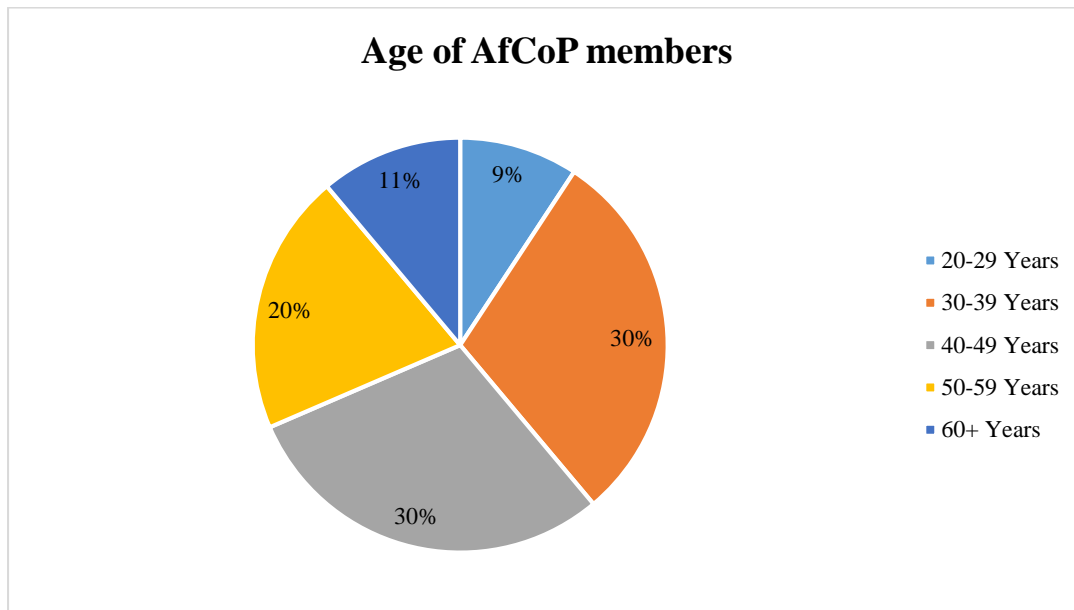
Figure 7: Age of AfCoP Members

5.2.1.3   Respondents' Level of Education

Figure 8 shows that AfCoP respondents who took part in this study are well educated, with 78% of the respondents holding a Master's degree, nine percent of the respondents having a PhD, while another nine percent (9%) of the respondents indicated that they hold a Bachelor's degree. Only four percent (4%) of the respondents indicated that they have a diploma level qualification.
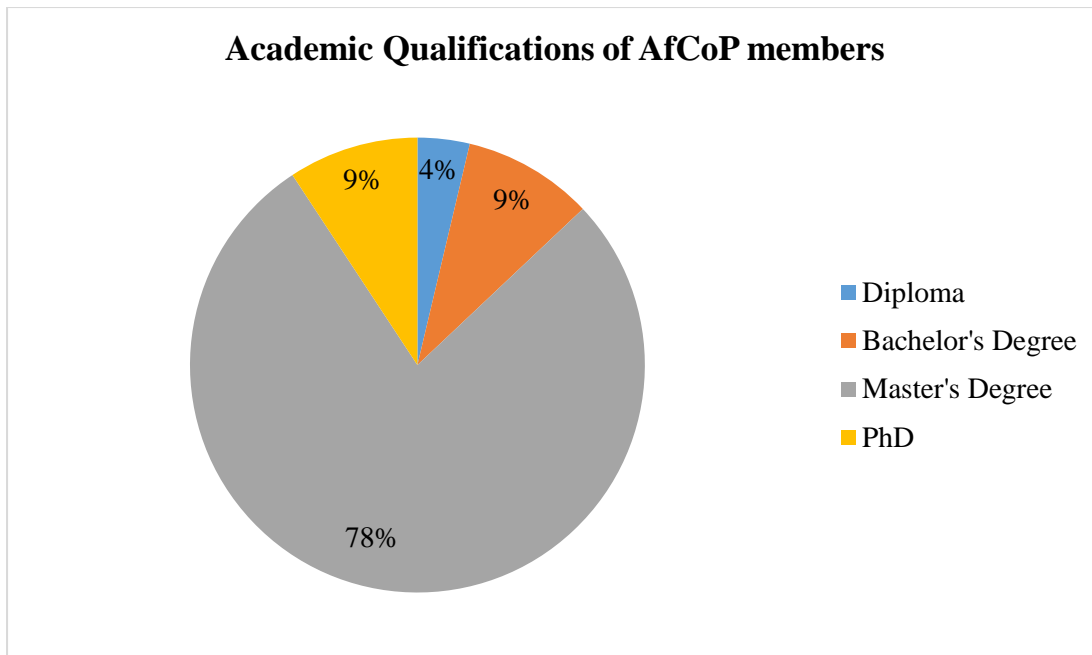
Figure 8: Academic Qualifications of AfCoP Members

The high level of education among the AfCoP members is consistent with a knowledge intensive community, where complex issues such as those related to Managing for Development Results (MfDR) or other developmental issues are discussed.

5.2.1.4 Areas of AfCoP Member Professional Expertise

To be a member of AfCoP one must indicate their area of expertise in the 5 key areas of strategic importance to AfCoP which are monitoring and evaluation, leadership, planning and budgeting, accountability and partnership and statistics. In a multiple response question, respondents were asked to indicate their area of expertise. Figure 9 below shows that 54% of the respondents were experts in monitoring and evaluation, 50% of the respondents were experts in leadership, 46% had expertise in planning and budgeting, 26% were experts in accountability and partnership, while 20% of the respondents had expertise in statistics. There were also 28% of the respondents who indicated that they had expertise in areas beyond those of strategic importance to AfCoP.

Areas of AfCoP Member Expertise

Category	Value
Accountability & Partnership	26%
Planning & Budgeting	46%
Monitoring & Evaluation	54%
Statistics	20%
Leadership	50%
Other Expertise	28%
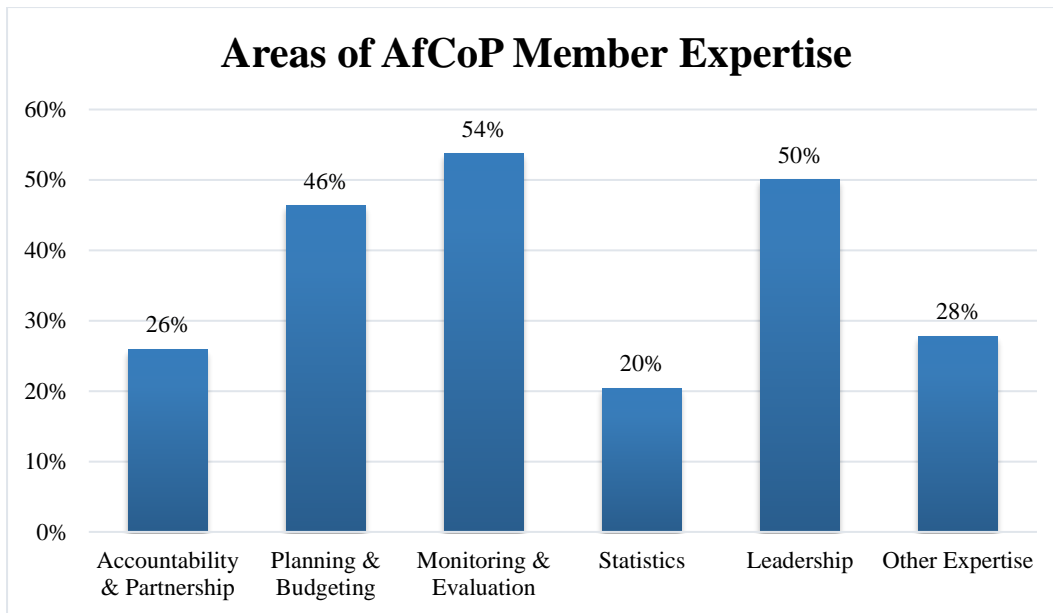
Figure 9: Areas of Expertise among AfCoP Members

5.2.1.5   Sector of Affiliation of Participants

Respondents were asked to indicate the economic sectors to which they were affiliated. Figure 10 shows that, 37% of the respondents were employees of governments; 26% of the respondents were affiliated with non-governmental organisations; 20% of the respondents were independent consultants; eight percent (8%) of the respondents were academic; seven percent (7%) of the respondents were from other sectors while two percent (2%) of the respondents were affiliated with business and industry. AfCoP therefore attracted development professionals from diverse backgrounds making it a very unique organisation.

Economic Sector Affiliated to AfCoP Members

- Independant Consultant
- Government
- Non-Governmental Organisation
- Academic
- Business & Industry
- Other
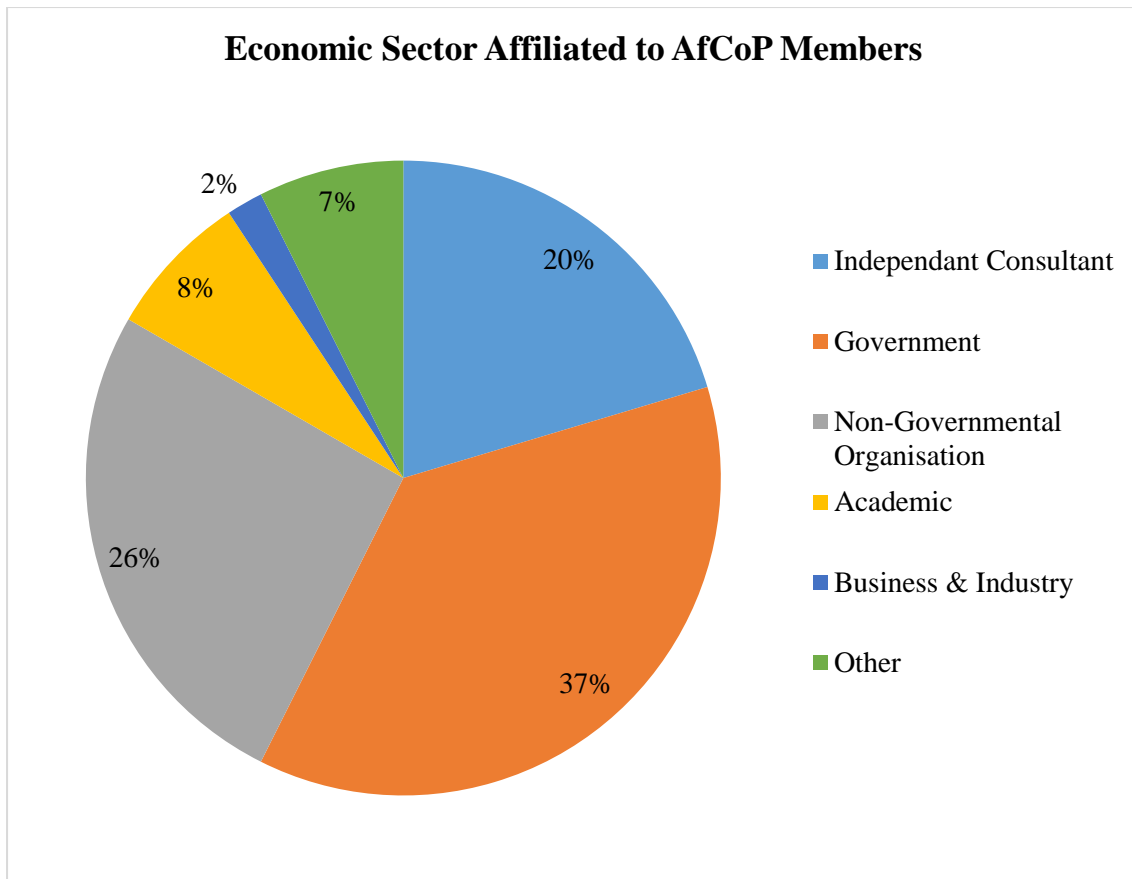
Figure 10: Economic Sectors of Affiliation of AfCoP Members

5.2.1.6 Position of AfCoP Members in their Organisations

Figure 11 below shows that, most respondents (67%) in the survey held senior management level positions within their organisations, while 29% of the respondents were in middle management positions and four percent of the respondents were support and administrative staff in their respective organisations.

Administrative Position in Organisation

- Senior Management
- Middle Management
- Support Staff

4%

29%

67%
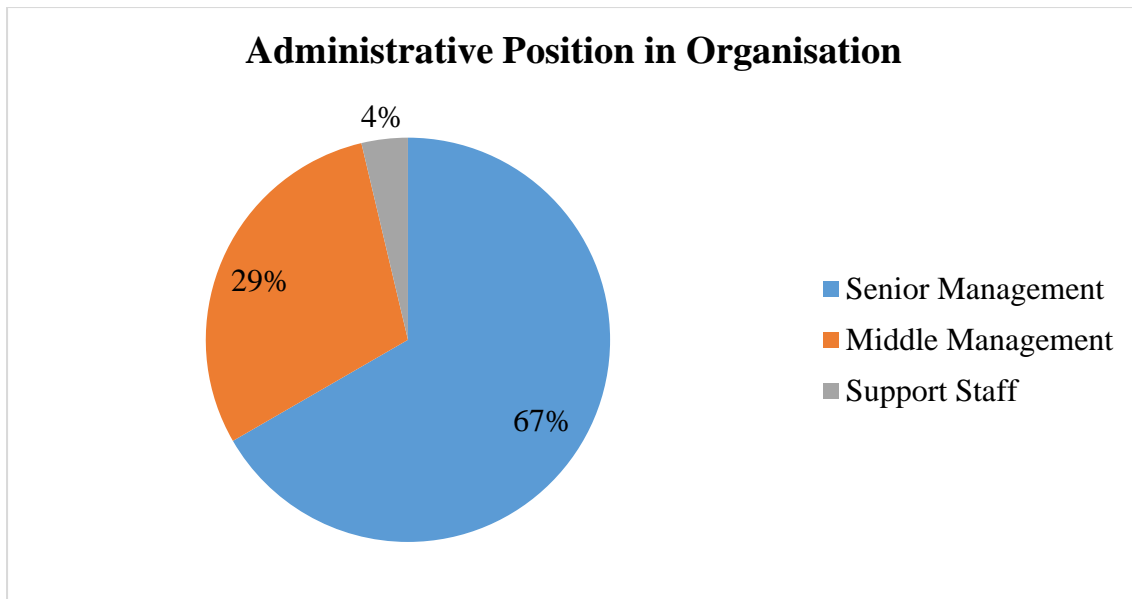
Figure 11: Administrative Positions of AfCoP Members

5.2.1.7   Duration of Work Experience of Participants

Figure 12 below shows that respondents who took part in this study were AfCoP members who were well experienced in their field of work, making them experts in the field of development. This is represented by 46% of the respondents, who had more than 10 years of work experience, while 30% of the respondents had between 4 and 6 years' experience, nine percent (9%) had between 7 and 9 years' work experience and only 13% of the respondents had between 1 and 3 years of work experience.
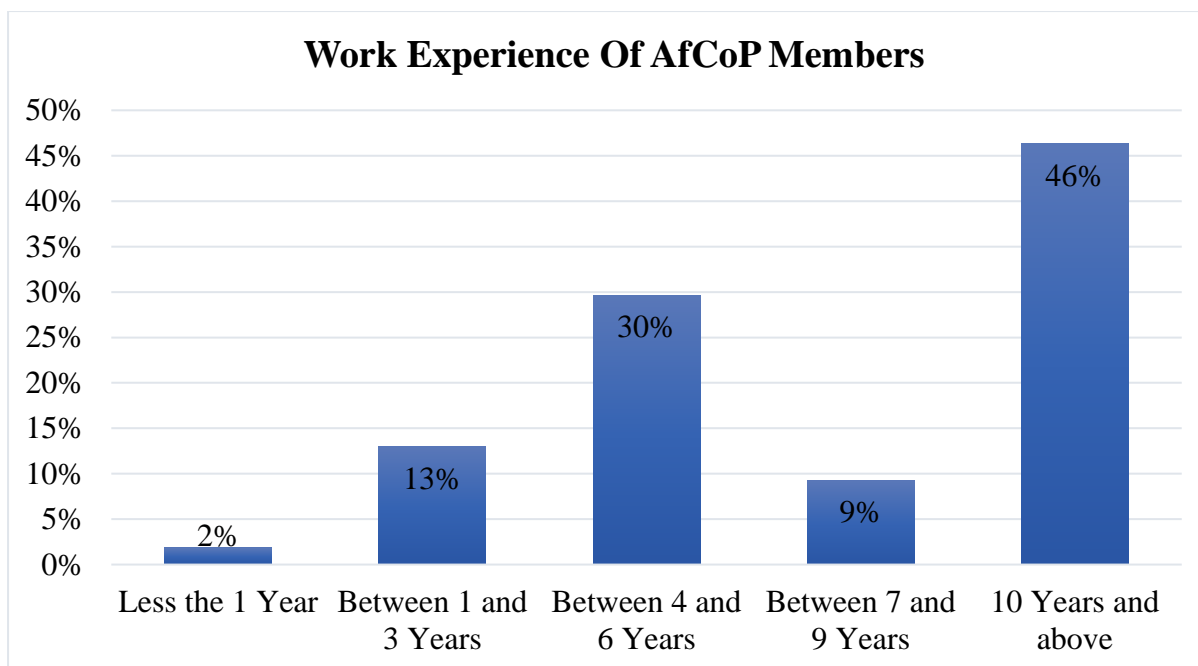
Figure 12: Years of Work Experience of AfCoP Members

5.2.1.8 Countries of Residence of Participants

AfCoP draws membership from a variety of countries, the majority of whom are from Africa (Figure 13). Respondents to the survey were drawn from at least 25 countries, with the greatest number coming from Kenya (13%); Zimbabwe (9%); Benin (9%); Nigeria (7%); Uganda (7%); DRC (6%) and South Africa (6%). Other countries represented included France, Malawi, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cote d'Ivore, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Italy, Lesotho, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo, United Kingdom and Sierra Leone. There were however, four percent (4%) of the respondents, who did not indicate their country of origin.
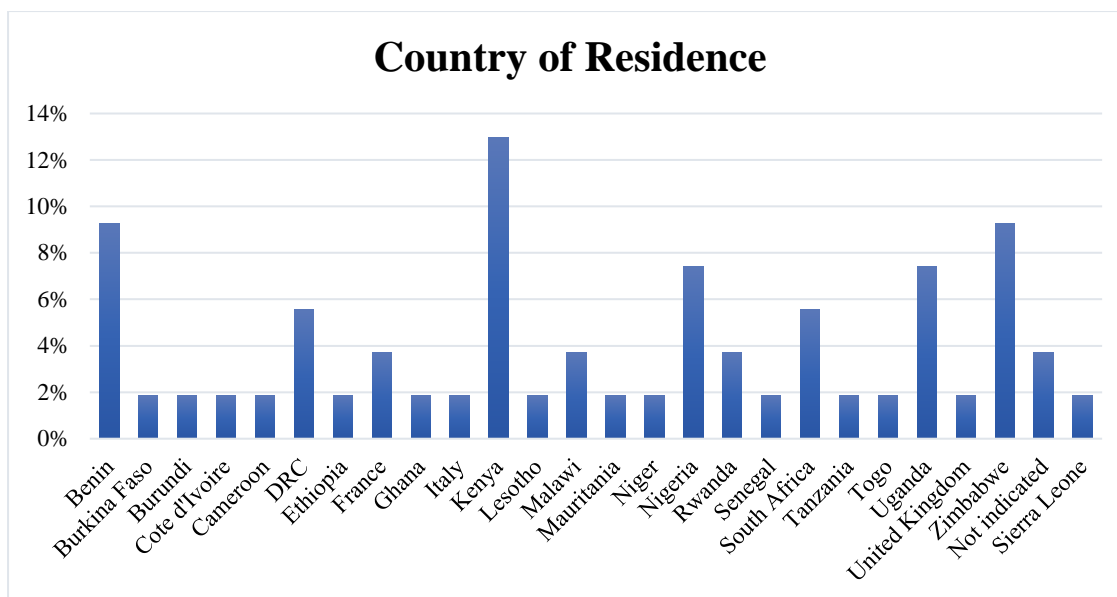
Figure 13: Country of Residence of AfCoP Members

5.3   Use of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

In Section B of the questionnaire, the researcher sought to discover how AfCoP members were making use of the available social media tools provided on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. The questionnaire had questions pertaining to the use of the knowledge sharing platform including: frequency of use; length of membership on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform; purpose of use of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. The questionnaire also sought to reveal other social media tools used by AfCoP members, apart from the ones availed by AfCoP.

5.3.1.1 *Number of Years of Knowledge Sharing Platform Use*

Most of the respondents were fairly new users of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform as represented by 48% of the respondents, who had used the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform between 1 and 3 years; and 30% who had used the platform for less than a year (Figure 14). There were 18% of the respondents who had used the platform between 4 and 6 years while only four percent (4%) had used the platform for over 7 years.

Years Using AfCoP Platform

- Less than 1 Year
- Between 1 and 3 Years
- Between 4 and 6 Years
- Above 7 Years

4%
18%
30%
48%
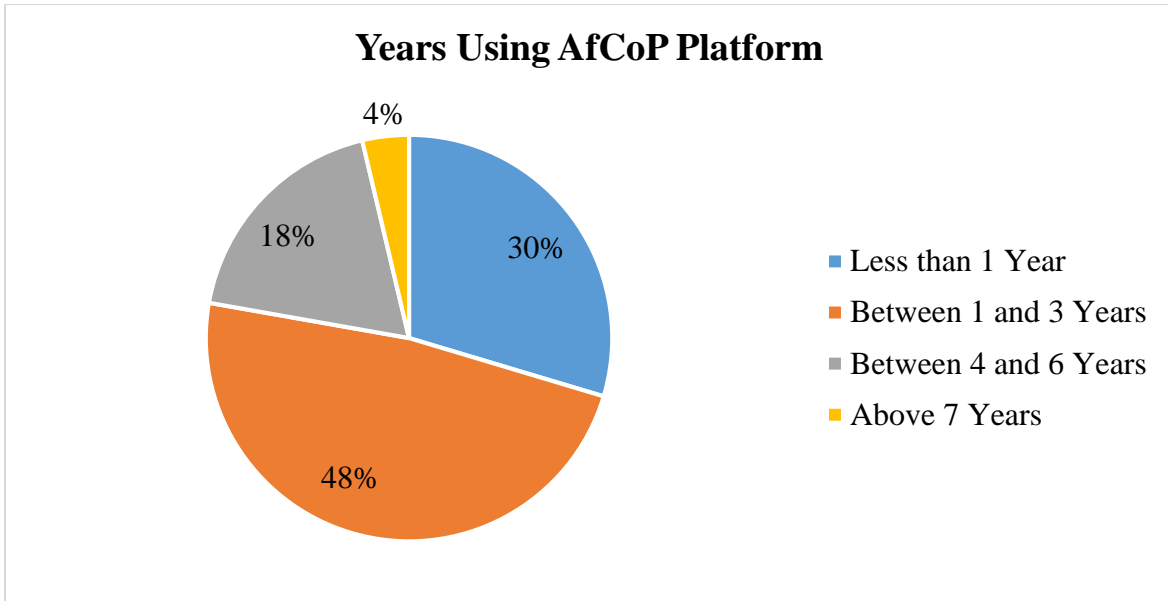
Figure 14: Years of Using AfCoP Platform

5.3.1.2 *Frequency of Use of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform*

The AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was visited frequently by 35% of the respondents to
the survey, who visited it once a week and four percent (4%) of the respondents who visited it
daily. There were 30% of the respondents who visited the platform only when they needed
specific information; while 15% of the respondents visited it once a month. A further nine
percent (9%) of the respondents indicated that they seldom visited the platform (Figure 15).
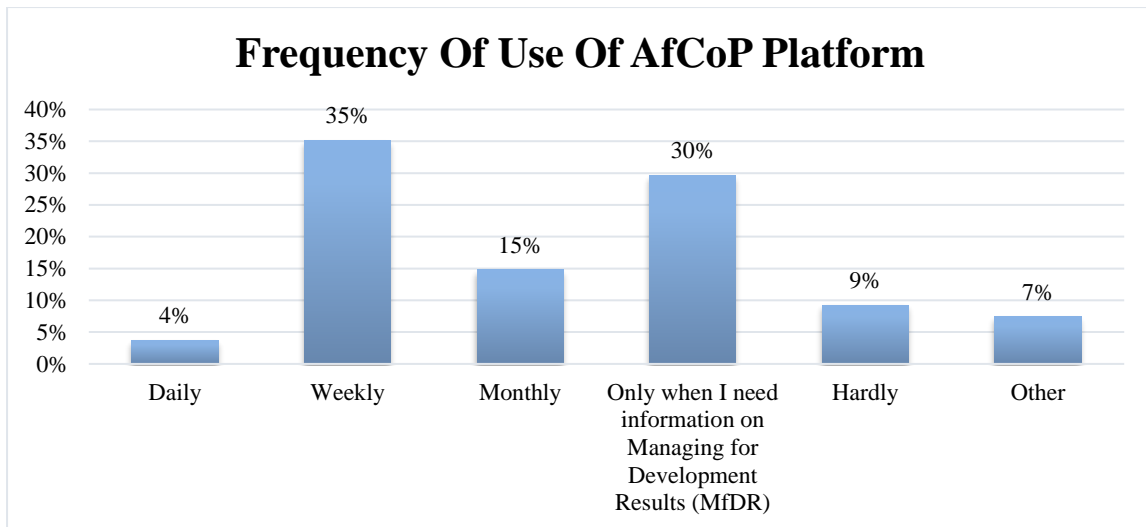
Figure 15: Frequency of Use of AfCoP Platform

5.3.1.3 *Use of Social Media Tools*

Respondents were asked to indicate the social media tools they used apart from the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. This was a multiple response question. From a total of 107 responses, most of the respondents (76%) indicated that they used social networking tools such as Facebook. This was followed by 41% of the respondents who preferred private messages; 30% of the respondents used blogging tools; 26% of the respondents used microblogging tools; 17% used live chat; six percent (6%) use other social media and four percent (4%) used wikis in their lives (Figure 16).

Social Media Tools Used by AfCoP Members

Chart values:
- Other Social Media: 6%
- Wikis: 4%
- Social Networking: 76%
- Microblogging: 26%
- Private Message: 41%
- Live Chat: 17%
- Blogging: 30%
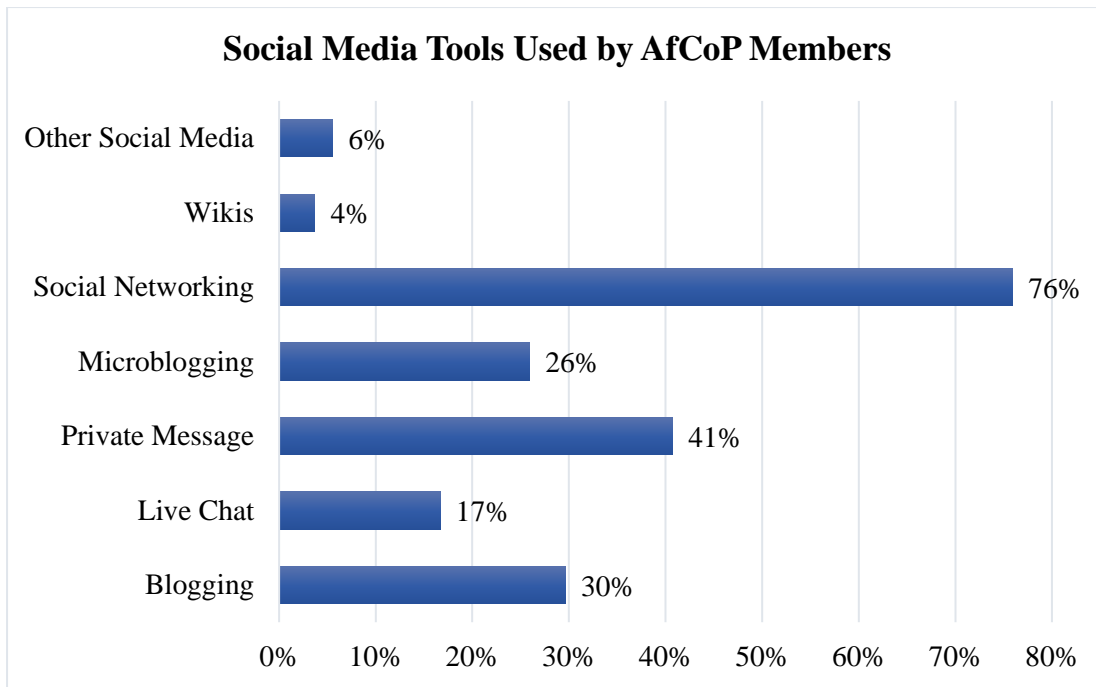
Figure 16: Social Media Tools Used by AfCoP Members

5.3.1.4 *Knowledge Sharing Activity on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform*

The knowledge sharing activity that respondents to the survey engaged in the most, through use of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was for "Learning" (Figure 17). This was indicated by 78% of the respondents who selected learning as one of their knowledge sharing activities through the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. There were 56% of the respondents who indicated that they used the platform for networking; 43% of the respondents used the knowledge sharing platform for collaborating; 35% of the respondents used the platform for socialising; 30% of the respondents used the platform for sharing stories; 24% percent of the respondents used the platform for locating experts, while two percent (2%) of the participants used the platform for other purposes. Thus, the AfCoP platform is therefore being mainly used for knowledge sharing activities.
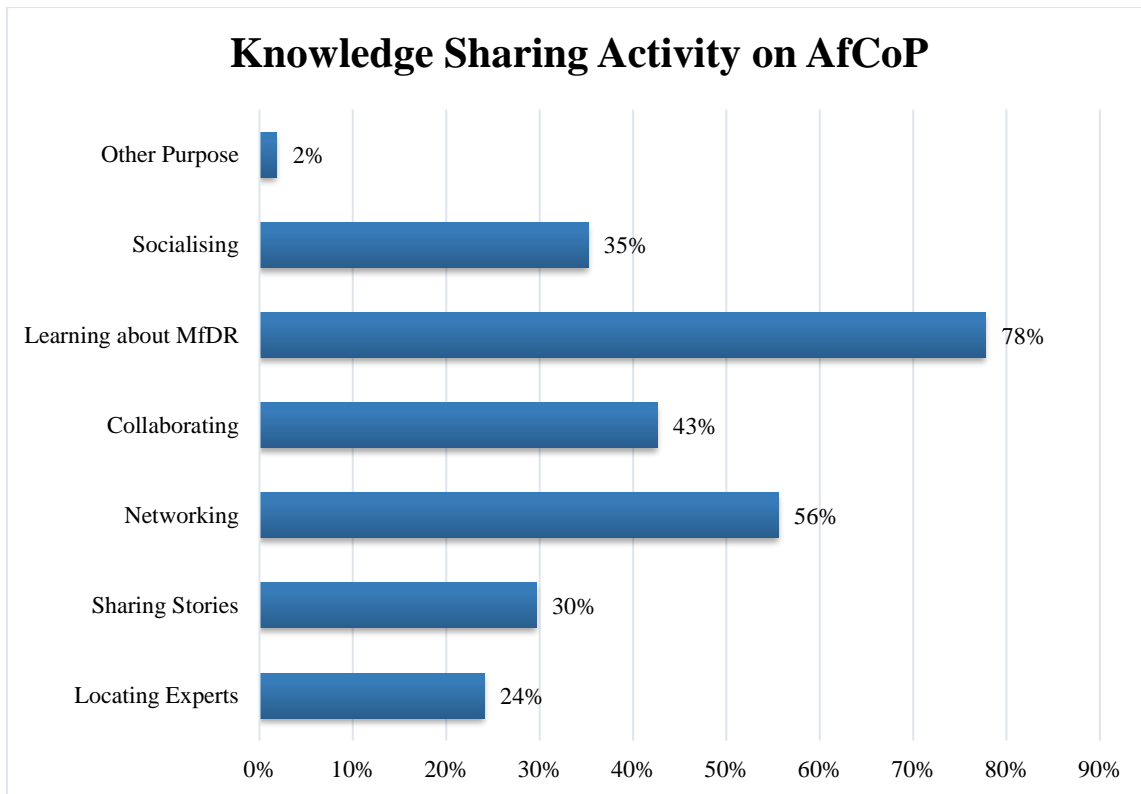
Figure 17: Knowledge Sharing Activities on the AfCoP Platform

5.3.1.5 *Types of Knowledge and Media Shared on the AfCoP Platform*

A question sought to solicit the type of knowledge respondents shared through the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. The most widely accessed or shared type of knowledge via the AfCoP platform included reports; best practices and policy documents, each being used by 70% of the respondents (Figure 18). There were 48% of the respondents who indicated that they accessed documents that were related to their work. The least shared or accessed types of knowledge on the platform included pictures used by 13% of the respondents, videos used by nine percent (9%) of the respondents; audio used by two percent (2%) of the respondents and other types of knowledge used by two percent (2%) of the respondents.

117

Types of Knowledge and Media Shared on AfCoP

Category	Percentage
Other Knowledge	2%
BestPractices	70%
Pictures	13%
Audio	2%
Videos	9%
Policy Documents	70%
Reports	70%
Work Documents	48%
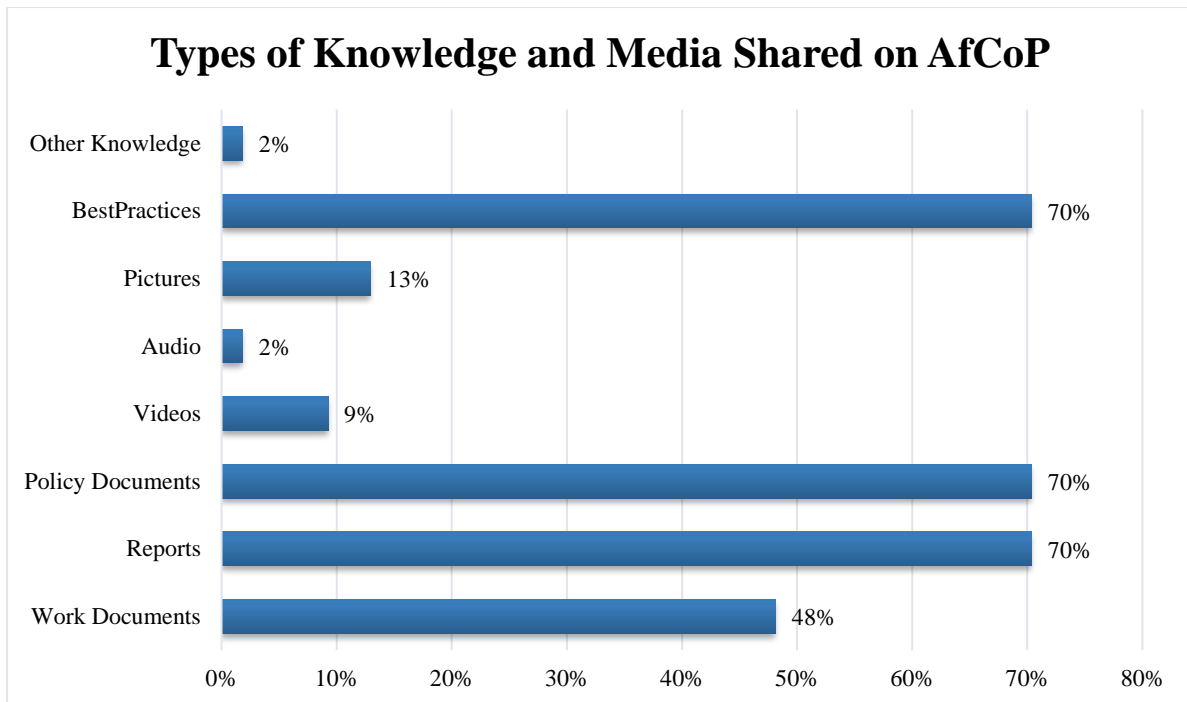
Figure 18: Types of Knowledge Shared on the AfCoP Platform

5.4   Factors Affecting Knowledge Sharing on the AfCoP Platform

To investigate the factors affecting knowledge sharing on the AfCoP platform, the model on Knowledge Sharing Through Social Media was devised (Figure 4). The model hypothesised an association of Social Capital theory factors, Technology Acceptance Model factors with the knowledge sharing intention and quality of knowledge sharing on the AfCoP platform. The knowledge sharing through social media research model included several Likert scales measuring various constructs from both the Social Capital theory and the Technology Acceptance Model, including: social interaction ties (structural capital), trust, identification, norm of reciprocity (relational capital), shared language, shared vision (cognitive capital), perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness (Technology Acceptance Model), quality of knowledge shared and knowledge sharing intention.

For descriptive data analysis of data collected through the Likert scales on the questionnaire, the researcher used means of scales to measure central tendency, of responses. To test the hypotheses proposed by the model on Knowledge Sharing Through Social Media (Figure 4),

the researcher computed the Pearson's r product moment coefficient which analysed the presence and strength of associations between dependent and independent variables Boone and Boone (2012). In the following section the researcher presents mean scores for constructs used in the model for Knowledge Sharing Through Social Media (Figure 4). This is followed by hypothesis testing for associations between variables in the research model.

5.4.1 Structural Capital Among AfCoP Members

Structural capital is described as the pattern of relationships found in a community (Seebach, 2012). To measure the structural capital among AfCoP members, the construct social interaction ties was used in this study, in keeping with previous similar studies (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015; Chiu et al., 2006).

5.4.1.1 Social Interaction Ties Among AfCoP Members

Three items made up the Likert scale that measured social interaction ties in AfCoP, including an item that measured the strength of relations an AfCoP member maintained in the community, the amount of time individuals spent interacting with other members as well as the frequency of communication among members of AfCoP. The mean score for the Social Interaction Ties scale was 3.34. The distribution of the scores showed that the majority of respondents were in the midpoint category of scores between 2.34 to 3.67 (Figure 19). It was therefore concluded that the social interaction ties among AfCoP members were moderate.
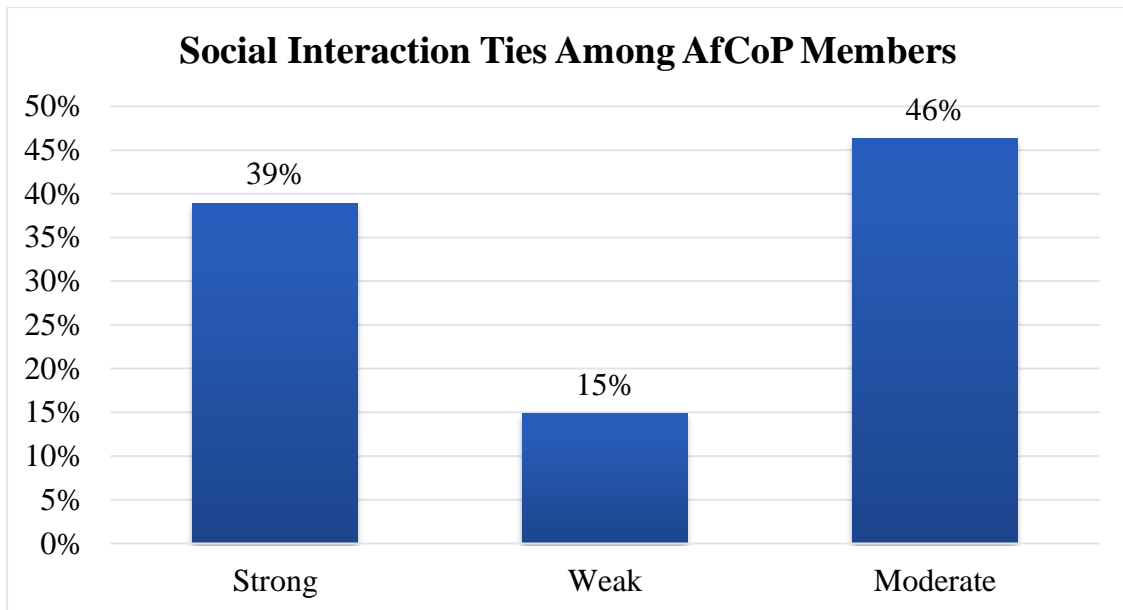
Figure 19: Social Interaction Ties Among AfCoP Members

5.4.2 Relational Capital Among AfCoP Members

To measure relational capital within AfCoP, three scales that investigated the level of trust among members; norms of reciprocity; and the level of a member's identification with AfCoP were adapted from previous studies and included in the survey questionnaire (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015; Chiu et al., 2006).

5.4.2.1 Level of Trust Among AfCoP Members on The Platform

The Likert scale trust was measured by 5 items that measured respondents' beliefs about whether other AfCoP members would not take advantage of others, keep the promises they make to others, would not knowingly disrupt conversations, behaved in a consistent manner and were truthful. The mean score of the Trust scale was 3.49, which was also close to the midpoint. The distribution of scores among respondents, revealed that most fell within the midpoint scores between 2.34 and 3.67 (Figure 20). It was concluded that the level of trust among respondents to the survey was moderate.
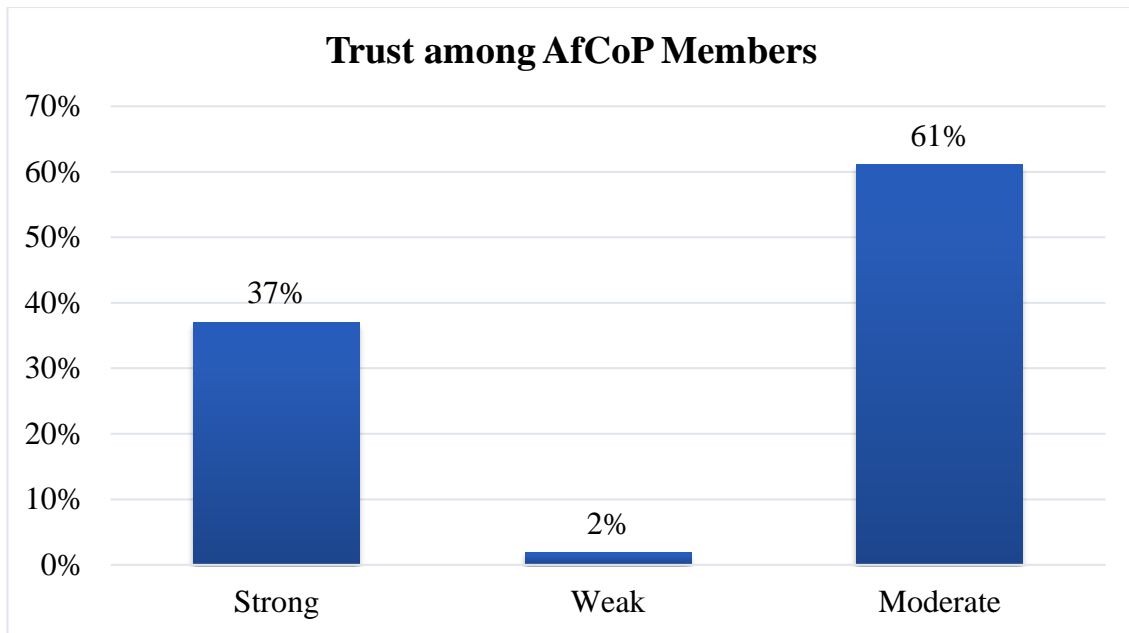
Figure 20: Level of Trust Among AfCoP Members

5.4.2.2 *Level of Norms of Reciprocity Among AfCoP Members*

Research has shown that some people share knowledge motivated by the norm of reciprocity; that is members in a social media community share knowledge with the expectation that at a later time they may need information/knowledge and they expect that when such a time comes, other members of the community will return the favour (Aliakbar et al., 2013; Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). Other members also share knowledge, because others have shared previously and helped them.

The norm of reciprocity was measured by two items that investigated beliefs about whether AfCoP members help because its fair as they receive help from others, and also that they help because they expect to receive help from other AfCoP members when in need. The mean score for the norm of reciprocity scale 3.93, which fell in the high category. The distribution of the individual scores for most of the respondents was between 3.67 and 5 (Figure 21). It

was concluded that the level of the norms of reciprocity among respondents in the study was strong.

Norms of Reciprocity Among AfCoP Members

Figure: Bar chart showing percentages — Strong 67%, Weak 4%, Moderate 30%. Y-axis ranges from 0% to 70%.
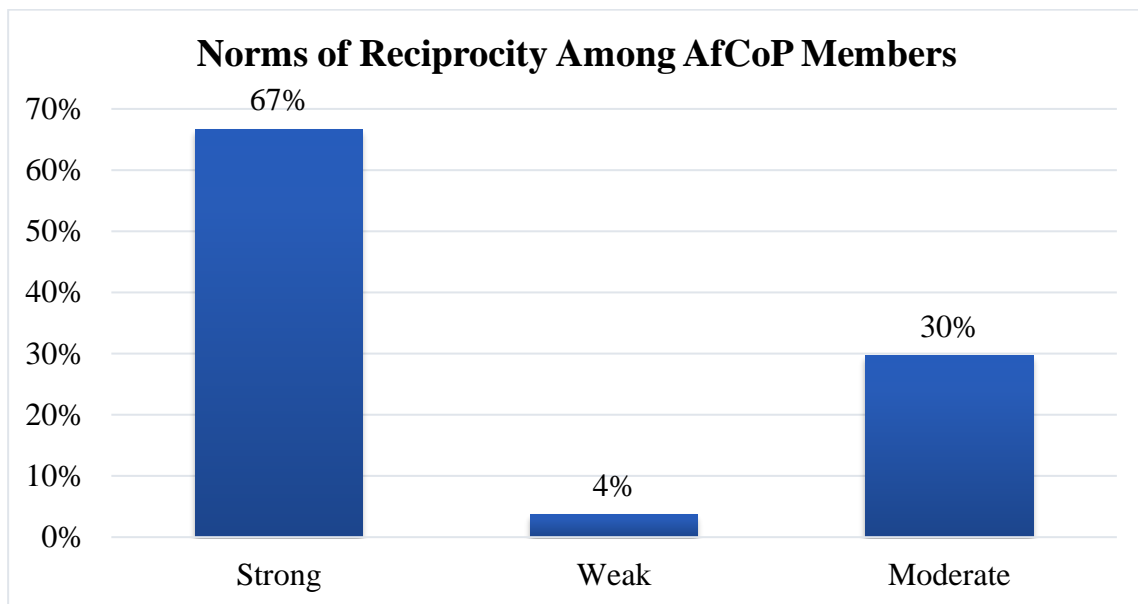
Figure 21: Norms of Reciprocity Among AfCoP Members

5.4.2.3 *AfCoP Members Identification with AfCoP Platform*

A member's identification or sense of belonging within a social category represents the social and psychological tie binding people to an organisation, even when they are dispersed (Davenport & Daellenbach, 2011). The degree to which members feel they belong to the group is a strong indicator of relational capital in a community (Aliakbar et al., 2013). Identification was measured by four Likert scale items that investigated respondents' beliefs about their sense of belonging to the AfCoP community, whether they felt close with other members on the platform, whether they had strong positive feelings towards the AfCoP community and whether they felt proud of their membership to AfCoP. The mean score of the identification scale was 3.99, which was on the high end. The distribution of the scores for identification also showed most respondents scores were in the strong category between 3.67 and 5 (Figure 22). Respondents' identification with AfCoP was therefore considered to be strong.
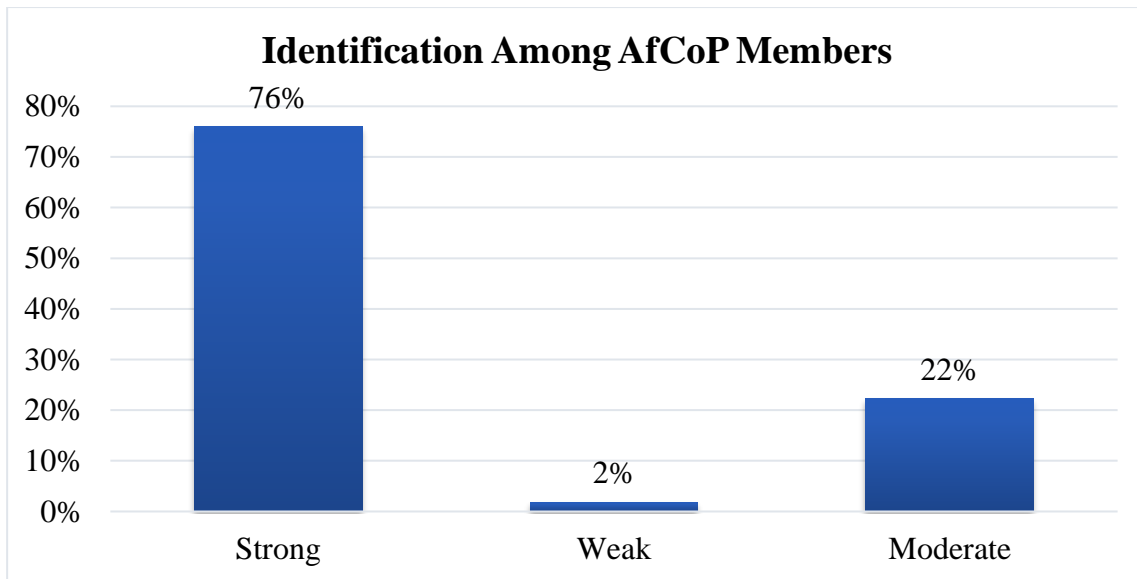
Figure 22: Members Level of Identification with AfCoP

5.4.3 Cognitive Capital

Cognitive capital refers to those resources providing shared representations, interpretations and systems of meaning among parties and these can be recognised through shared language; codes and shared narratives (Darvish & Nikbakhsh, 2010; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). In order to investigate the level of cognitive capital in AfCoP, Likert scales for shared language and shared vision were adapted from previous similar studies (Chiu et al., 2006).

5.4.3.1 *Use of Shared Language Among AfCoP Members*

Shared language was measured by three Likert scale items that investigated whether AfCoP members used common terminology, understood the language used on the platform and also used standard narrative forms to post messages, discussions or blog articles. The mean score for the shared language scale was 3.840, while the distribution of scores for most of the respondents in the study fell in the strong category denoted by scores between 3.67 and 5 (Figure 23). It was therefore concluded that there was a strong sense of shared language among respondents in the study.
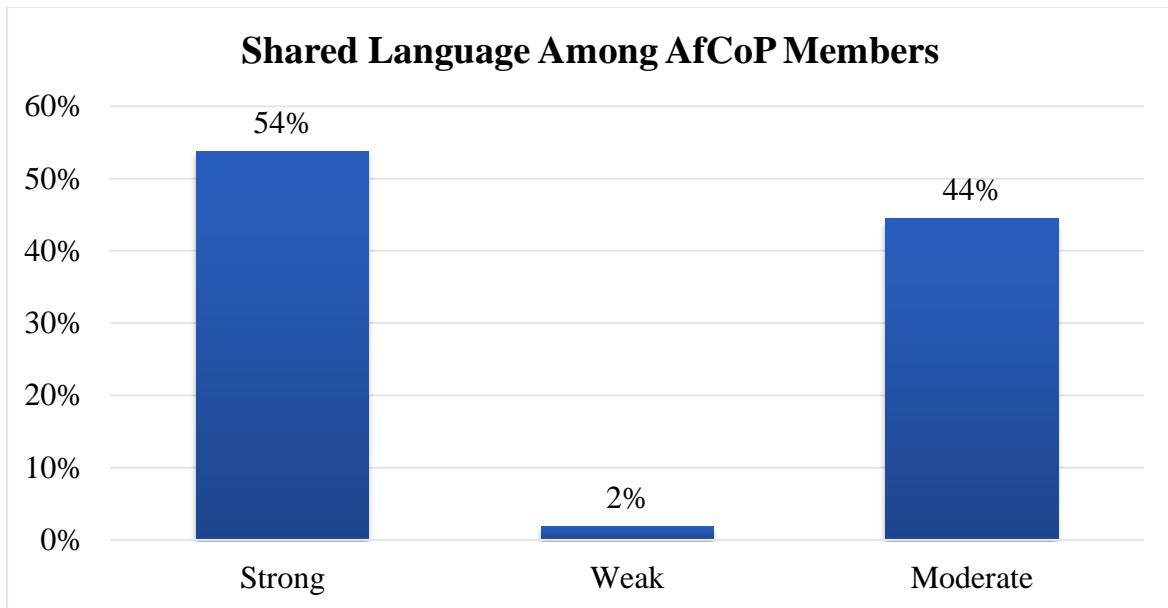
Figure 23: Shared Language Among AfCoP Members

5.4.3.2 *Shared Vision Among AfCoP Members*

Shared vision was measured by two Likert items adapted from Chiu et al.(2006), that investigated whether respondents shared a vision of helping others solve their professional problems and whether they believed AfCoP members shared a goal of learning from each other. Most of the respondents seemed to be motivated to participate on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform by a shared vision of helping other members solve their professional problems and also shared learning goals. The mean score for the Likert scale for shared vision was 3.833, while the distribution of individual scores for most respondents (61%) in the study fell within the strong category of scores between 3.67 and 5 (Figure 24). It was therefore concluded that there was a strong sense of shared vision among the respondents in the study.
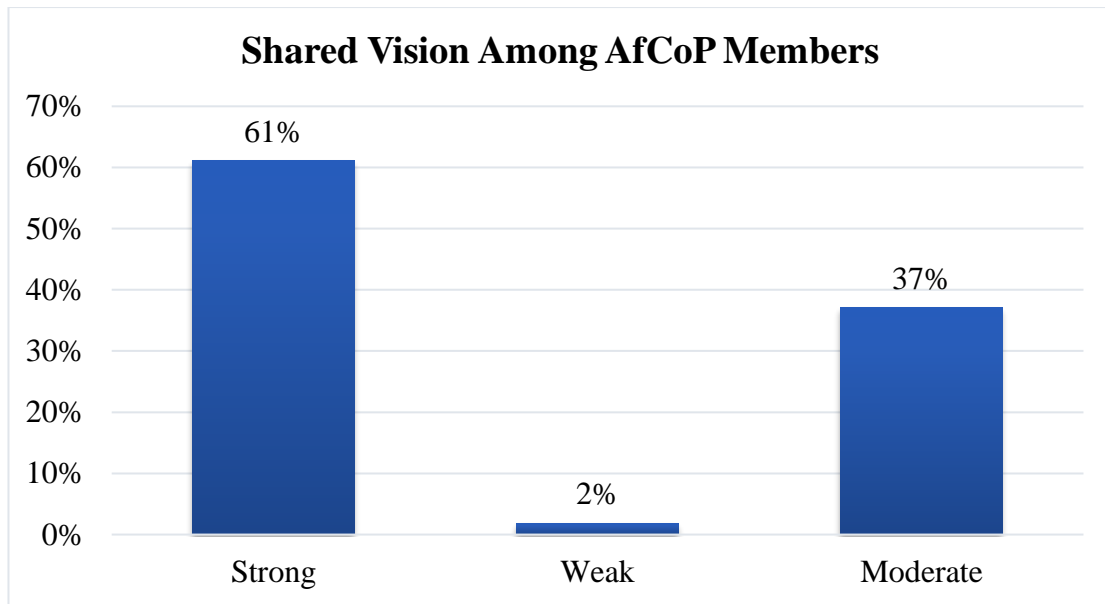
Figure 24: Shared Vision Among AfCoP Members

5.4.4 Quality of Knowledge Shared via the AfCoP Platform

In this study, we sought to discover the respondents' attitudes towards the quality of knowledge that is shared on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. The six items that were used measure this construct include shared included accuracy; completeness; reliability and timeliness of the knowledge shared, as used in previous similar studies (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015; Chiu et al., 2006). The mean score for the Likert scale quality of knowledge shared was 3.513, while the distribution of scores of most of the respondents fell within the category between 2.34 and 3.67 (Figure 25). The conclusion reached was that the quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform was moderate for most of the respondents in the study.
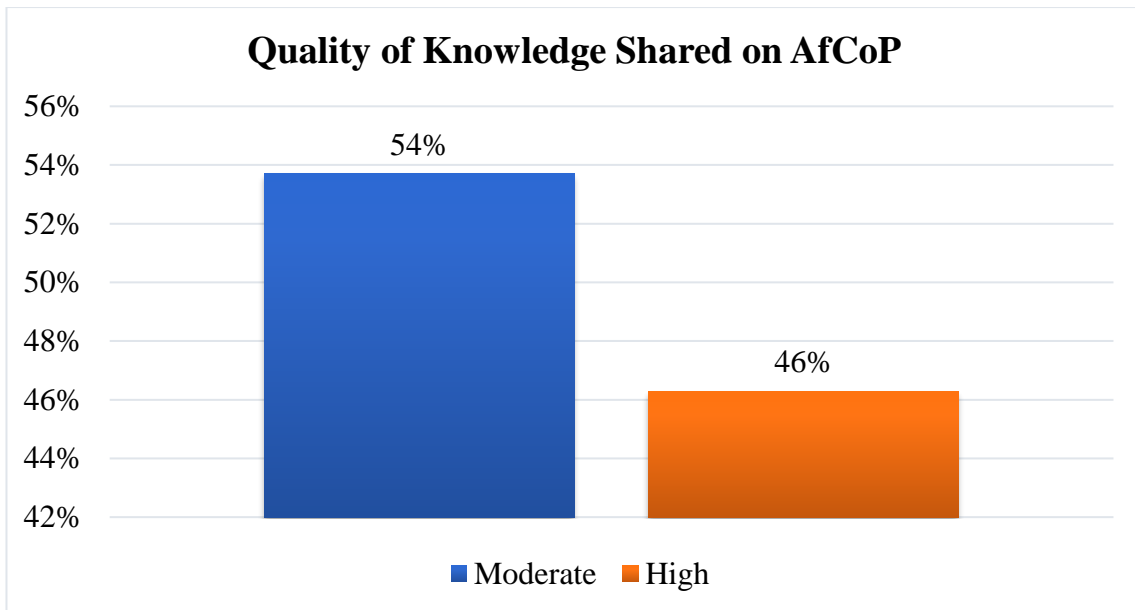
Figure 25: Quality of Knowledge Shared on the AfCoP Platform

5.4.5 Knowledge Sharing Intention

The knowledge sharing intention construct was measured by 11 Likert scale items, that investigated various attitudes and expectations of respondents towards sharing knowledge on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. The items were adapted and derived from previous research (Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). The mean score for the Likert scale knowledge sharing intention was 3.854. The spread of scores of most respondents in the study fell within the category above 3.67 which represented strong knowledge sharing intentions among respondents in the study (Figure 26). It was therefore concluded that the knowledge sharing intention on the AfCoP platform of respondents in this study was strong.
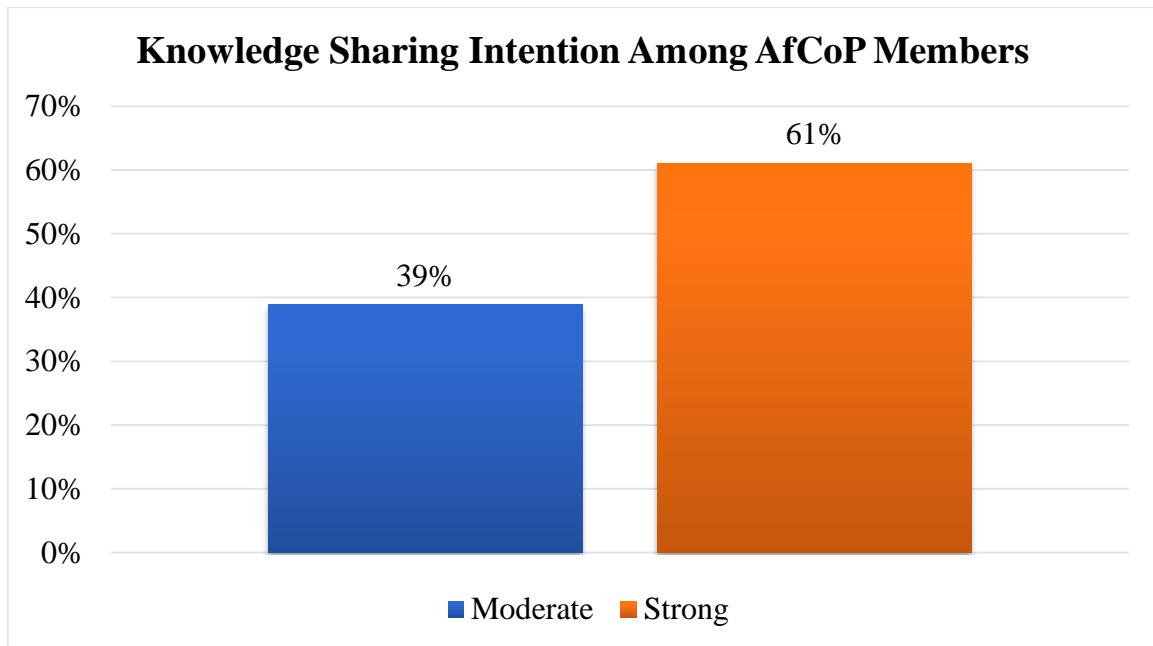
Figure 26: Knowledge Sharing Intentions of AfCoP Members

5.4.6 Technology Acceptance of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

In order to ascertain the level of technology acceptance among the participants, as well as their willingness to adopt social media as a tool for knowledge sharing, two constructs which were perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness were adapted from the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989).

5.4.6.1 Perceived Ease of Use of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

To measure respondents beliefs about the ease of use of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, they were asked to respond whether they agreed with the statement "I find the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform easy to use". Most of the respondents (82%) agreed with the statement (Figure 27). This shows that for the majority of the respondents it was fairly uncomplicated for them to use features of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. However, there were 15% of the respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement and a further four percent (4%) who disagreed with this statement, showing they had negative

perceptions about the ease of use of the platform. This may indicate that respondents in the moderate and negative perceptions category lacked confidence in their own ability to use the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform.
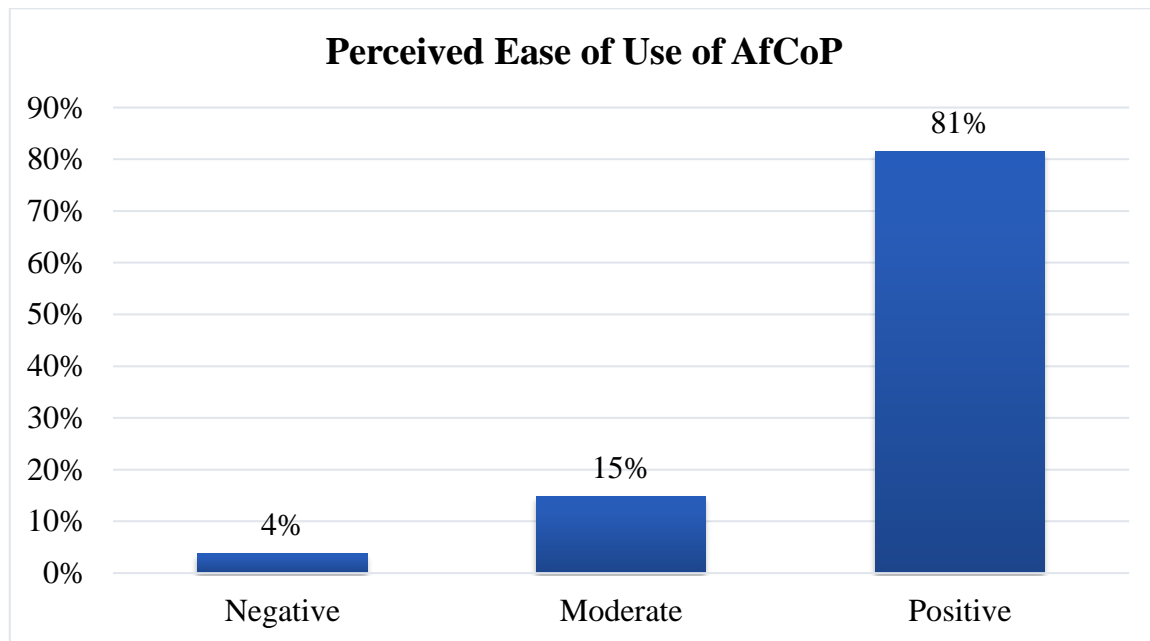
Figure 27: Perceived Ease of Use of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

5.4.6.2 *Perceived Usefulness of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform*

The perceived usefulness of AfCoP (PU) construct was measured by two Likert scale items that sought to measure respondents' beliefs about whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements "I find the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform useful for my needs" as well as "I would highly recommend the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform to others in my field of work". The mean score for the perceived usefulness of AfCoP scale was 4.074, with the mean scores of most of the respondents falling in the positive category of scores between 3.7 and 5. It was therefore concluded that the usefulness of AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was positively viewed by most of the respondents in the study.
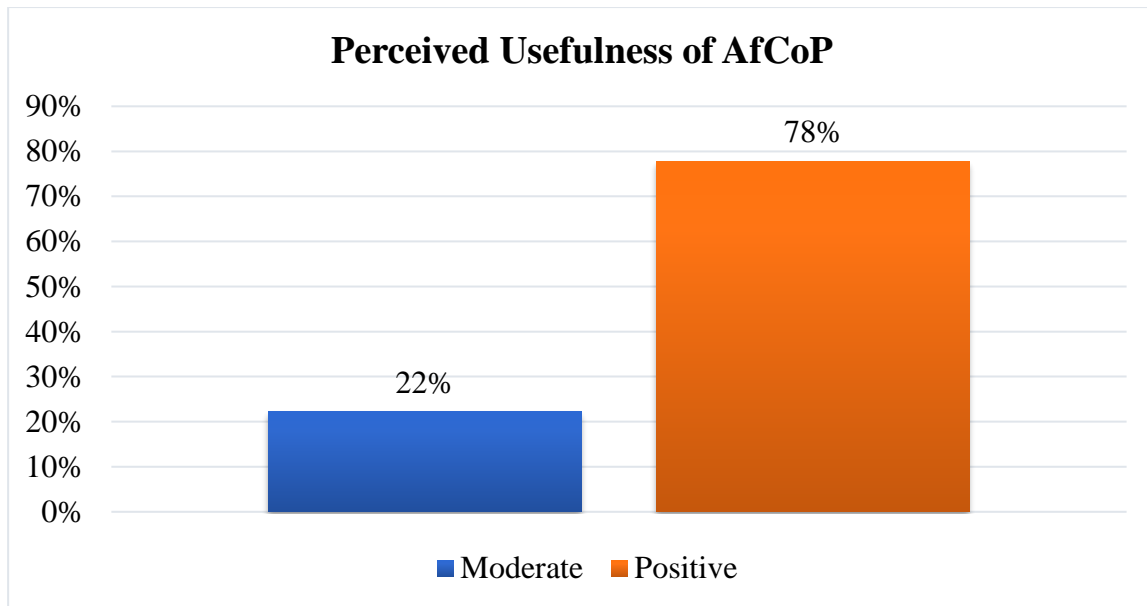
Figure 28: Perceived Usefulness of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

5.4.7 Hypotheses Testing of the Model on Knowledge Sharing Through Social Media

The hypotheses from the model on Knowledge Sharing Through Social Media, were tested

using Pearson's *r* correlation. Correlation analysis is used to describe the strength and

direction of the relationship between two variables (Pallant, 2016). Pearson's correlation

coefficient *r*, is a measure of the strength of the association between two variables. Several

hypotheses were proposed concerning the associations of various social capital and

Technology Acceptance Model variables, with the quality of knowledge shared and the

knowledge sharing intentions of AfCoP members on the AfCoP platform. The resulting

Pearson's Correlation matrix is shown in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Correlation Matrix

		Knowledge Sharing Intention	Quality of Knowledge	Social Interaction Ties	Trust	Norm of Reciprocity	Identification	Shared Language	Shared Vision	Perceived Usefulness of AfCoP	Perceived Ease of Use of AfCoP
						Correlations					
Knowledge Sharing Intention	Pearson Correlation	1									
	Sig. (2-tailed)										
Quality of Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	.508**	1								
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000									
Social Interaction Ties	Pearson Correlation	.277*	.276*	1							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.043	0.043								
Trust	Pearson Correlation	.288*	.463**	0.234	1						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.034	0.000	0.089							
Norm of Reciprocity	Pearson Correlation	.385**	.429**	0.161	.406**	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.004	0.001	0.245	0.002						
Identification	Pearson Correlation	.470**	.661**	.437**	.449**	.443**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.001					
SharedLanguage	Pearson Correlation	.376**	.600**	0.094	.422**	.526**	.472**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.005	0.000	0.500	0.001	0.000	0.000				
Shared Vision	Pearson Correlation	.396**	.656**	0.088	.532**	.393**	.536**	.598**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.003	0.000	0.525	0.000	0.003	0.000	0.000			
Perceived Usefulness of AfCoP	Pearson Correlation	.459**	.733**	.302*	.537**	.297*	.634**	.584**	.718**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.027	0.000	0.029	0.000	0.000	0.000		
Perceived Ease of Use of AfCoP	Pearson Correlation	0.150	.453**	0.252	.333*	0.238	.356**	.497**	.390**	.530**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.280	0.001	0.066	0.014	0.083	0.008	0.000	0.004	0.000	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

5.4.7.1 *Social Interaction Ties, Knowledge Sharing Intention and Quality of Knowledge Shared*

The model on knowledge sharing through social media proposed an association between social interaction ties and members knowledge sharing intention (H1a) as well as an association between social interaction ties and the quality of knowledge shared by members (Figure 4). A Pearson product moment correlation was computed to assess the relationship between the variables. The results indicated a weak positive relationships between social interaction ties and both knowledge sharing intention, r=0.277, n=54, p= 0.043 and quality

of knowledge shared, $r=0.276$, n=54, $p=0.043$. Increases in social interaction ties were therefore correlated with increases in knowledge sharing intention of AfCoP members as well as increases in the quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform. Both relationships were found to be statistically significant at the 0.05 level and so both H1a and H1b were supported.

5.4.7.2   *Trust, Knowledge Sharing Intention and Quality of Knowledge Shared*

The correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationships between Trust and Knowledge Sharing Intention (H2a) and between Trust and Quality of Knowledge Shared on the AfCoP Platform (H2b). The results revealed a weak and positive relationship between Trust and Knowledge Sharing Intention, $r=0.288$, n=54, $p=0.034$. The relationship between Trust and Quality of Knowledge Sharing was also found to be weak and positive, $r=0.463$, n=54, $p=0.000427$. Increases in levels of trust were correlated with increases in the knowledge sharing intentions and the quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform. Both relationships were found to be statistically significant at the 0.05 level and so H2a and H2b were supported.

5.4.7.3   *Norms of Reciprocity, Knowledge Sharing Intention and Quality of Knowledge Shared*

H3a and H3b proposed an association between the norms of reciprocity and knowledge sharing intention and quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform respectively. The relationship between the norms of reciprocity and knowledge sharing intention was weak and positive, $r=0.0385$, n=54, $p=0.004$. The relationship between norms of reciprocity and the quality of knowledge shared were also weak and positive, $r=0.429$, n=54, $p=0.00120$. Increases in norms of reciprocity were therefore correlated with increases in both knowledge sharing intention and quality of knowledge sharing on the AfCoP platform. Both

relationships were found to be statistically significant at the 0.01 level and so H3a and H3b were both supported.

5.4.7.4 *Identification, Knowledge Sharing Intention and Quality of Knowledge Shared*

H4a and H4b proposed associations between identification and knowledge sharing of AfCoP members and quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform respectively. The path between identification and knowledge sharing intention was weak and positive, $r=0.470$, n=54, $p=0.00$. On the other hand the path between identification and quality of knowledge sharing was moderate and positive, $r=0.661$, n=54, $p=0.00$. Overall, increases in levels of members' identification with AfCoP were correlated with increases in the knowledge sharing intention of AfCoP members and the quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform. Both correlations were statistically significant at the 0.01 levels and so both H4a and H4b were accepted.

5.4.7.5 *Shared Language, Knowledge Sharing Intention and Quality of Knowledge Shared*

The researcher proposed an association between shared language and knowledge sharing intention of AfCoP members (H5a) and between shared language and quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform (H5b). The results of the Pearson products moment correlation coefficient revealed a weak and positive relationship between shared language and knowledge sharing intention, $r=0.0376$, n=54, $p=0.005$. The relationship between shared language and quality of knowledge shared was moderate and positive, $r=0.600$, n=54, $p=0.000002$. It was therefore concluded that increases in shared language were correlated with both increases in knowledge sharing intention and the quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform. Both relationships were statistically significant at the 0.01 level and so H5a and H5b were supported.

5.4.7.6 Shared Vision, Knowledge Sharing Intention and Quality of Knowledge Shared

A Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationships between shared vision and the knowledge sharing intention of AfCoP members (H5a) and the relationship between shared vision and the quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform (H5b). The relationship between shared vision and knowledge sharing intention was weak and positive, $r=0.396$, n=54, $p=0.003$; while the relationship between shared vision and the quality of shared on the AfCoP platform was moderate and positive. It was therefore concluded that increased shared vision was correlated with increases in the knowledge sharing intention of AfCoP members and quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform. The relationships were statistically significant at the 0.01 levels and so H6a and H6b were supported.

5.4.7.7 Perceived Ease of Use, Knowledge Sharing Intention, Quality of Knowledge Shared

H7a and H7b proposed associations between perceived ease of use (PEOU) and knowledge sharing intention and the quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform. The results of the Pearson's r correlation coefficient computation revealed no significant relationship between PEOU and knowledge sharing intention of AfCoP members, $r=0.150$, n=54, $p=0.280$. However, the relationship between PEOU and the quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform was weak and positive, $r=0.453$, n=54, $p=0.001$. Increases in positive perceptions were correlated with increases in the quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform. The relationship between PEOU and quality of knowledge shared was statistically significant at the 0.01 level and so H7b was supported, while H7a was rejected as there was no statistically significant relationship between PEOU and knowledge sharing intention

5.4.7.8 *Perceived Usefulness, Knowledge Sharing Intention and Quality of Knowledge Shared*

A Pearson's r correlation coefficient was computed to assess the association between perceived usefulness (PU) of the AfCoP platform and the knowledge sharing intention of members (H8a) and the association between PU and quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform (H8b). It was revealed that the relationship between PU and quality of knowledge shared was very strong and positive, $r=0.733$, n=54, $p=0.000$. The relationship between PU and knowledge sharing intention was weak and positive, $r=0.459$, n=54, $p=0.000$. Since both relationships were statistically significant at the 0.01 level, H8a and H8b were both supported. Increased positive perceptions of the usefulness of the AfCoP platform were correlated with increases in both the knowledge sharing intentions of members and the quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform.

5.4.8 Other Factors Influencing Knowledge Sharing Through Social Media

There are many other factors derived from literature which may influence knowledge sharing through social media, apart from those related to social capital and technology acceptance model. The survey included questions that sought to elicit the extent of the influence of these factors among members of AfCoP. Question 43 requested respondents to indicate why they would share knowledge from a list of different motivating factors, while question 44 requested respondents to indicate the impeding factors to sharing knowledge on the AfCoP platform. The following is a presentation of the results from this section of the questionnaire.

5.4.8.1 *Commitment of Members to AfCoP Goals*

A considerable majority of the respondents indicated that they are motivated to participate on the platform by a desire to help AfCoP achieve its goals. This is represented by 48% of the participants who agreed, with a further 43% of the participants who strongly agree that they wanted to help AfCoP to achieve its goals (Figure 29). This shows a strong commitment to

the organisational goals of AfCoP among the majority of the participants in the survey. There were, however, nine percent (9%) of the respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.

I Want To Help AfCoP Achieve Its Goals
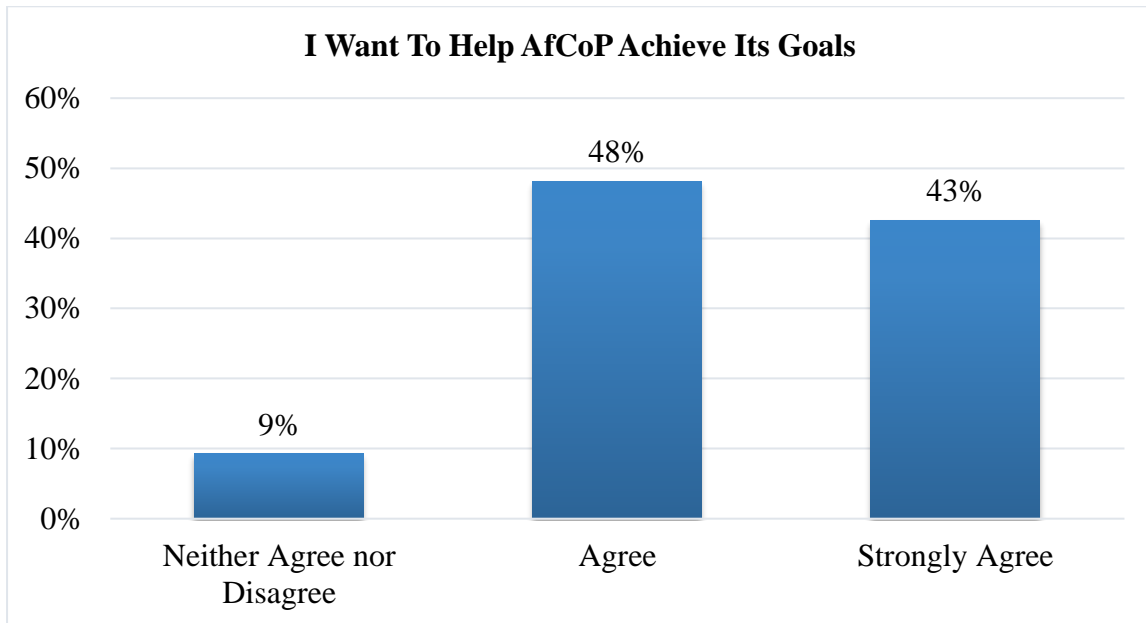
Figure 29: Commitment of Members to AfCoP's Goals

5.4.8.2   *AfCoP Knowledge Platform's Ability To Make Members' Jobs Easier*

Respondents were also asked to register their attitude to the statement that "sharing knowledge on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform makes my job easier". Figure 30 shows that, 56% of the respondents agreed, and an additional 7% of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement. This shows that participation on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was bearing work-related fruit for most of the respondents in the study. There were, however, a minority of the respondents who were not realising these work-related benefits, as indicated by six percent (6%) of the respondents who disagreed and an additional two percent (2%) of the respondents who strongly disagreed with this statement. 30% of the respondents also refrained from agreeing or disagreeing indicating their lack of absolute confidence in the AfCoP platforms' ability to assist in their work-related activities.

135
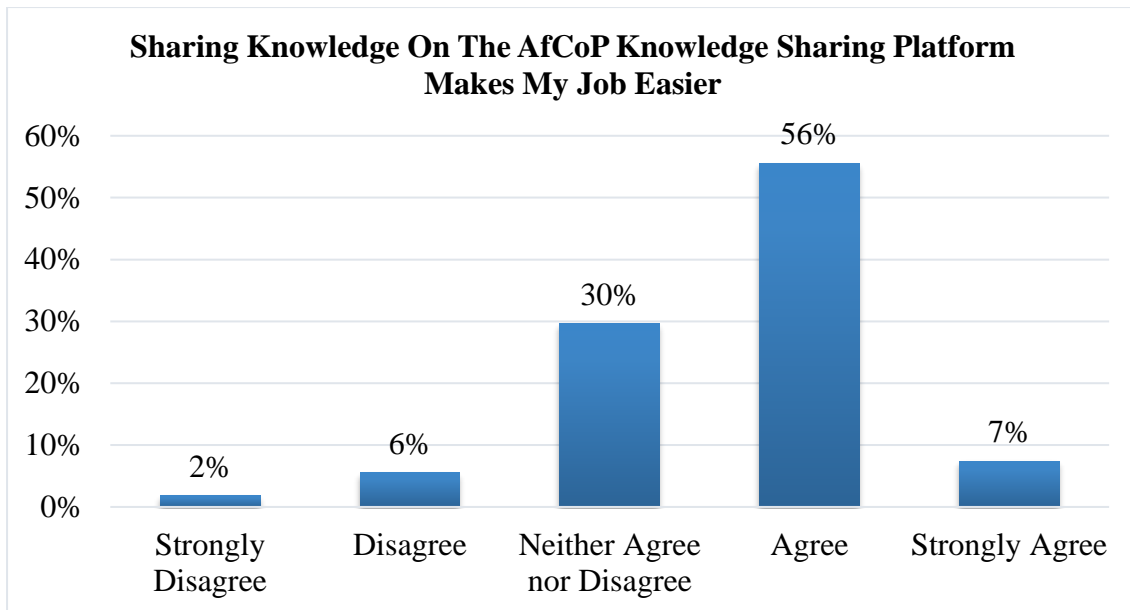
Figure 30: Ability of AfCoP Platform to Make Jobs of Members Easier

5.4.8.3 *Desire To Receive Help in the Future*

In response to a statement that sought to elicit whether participation on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was motivated by the respondents' desires to receive help in the future, 59% of the respondents agreed, with a further 20% who strongly agreed to the statement (Figure 31). This further strengthens the conclusion that there was a strong sense of the norm of reciprocity among respondents as they expected to receive answers from other AfCoP community members for challenges or questions they might have in the future. There were however 20% of the respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, which may indicate that these respondents were not necessarily motivated by the norm of reciprocity to participate on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform.

I Believe My Future Requests On The AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform Will Be Answered

Figure shows three bars: Neither Agree nor Disagree = 20%, Agree = 59%, Strongly Agree = 20%.
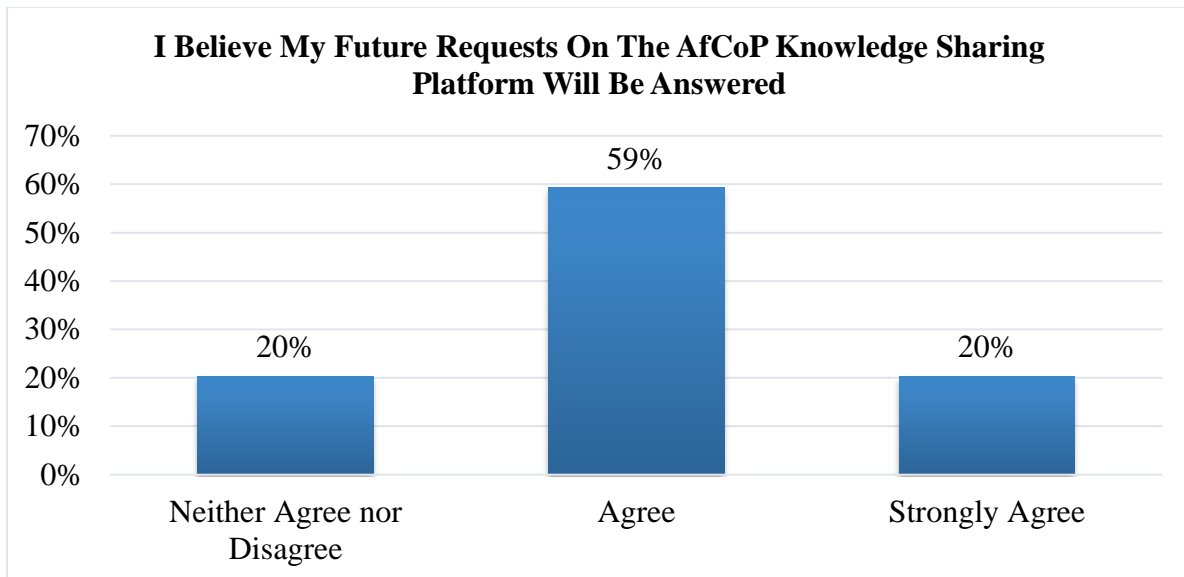
Figure 31: Desire to Receive Help in the Future

5.4.8.4 *Motivation to Improve Relationships Among AfCoP Members*

Most of the respondents in the study seemed to be motivated to participate on the AfCoP platform by a desire to strengthen relational ties between themselves and other members of the community. This is represented by 57% of the respondents who agreed with a further 39% who strongly agreed with the statement "I would like to strengthen ties between other members of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform and myself" (Figure 32). Only four percent (4%) of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, which may indicate an indifference by the participants towards building relationships on a social media-based platform.

I Would Like To Strengthen Ties Between Other Members Of The AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform And Myself
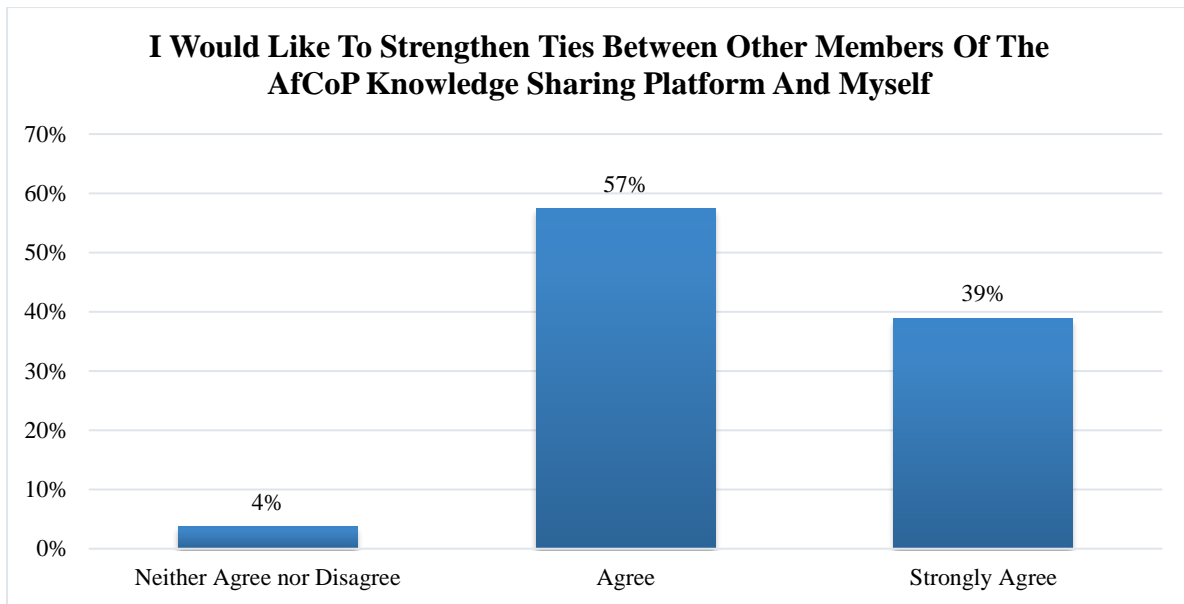
Figure 32: Desire to Strengthen Relations with Other Members on the Platform

Desire to Contribute to the AfCoP Community

A clear majority of respondents to the survey had a strong sense of belief in their ability to make a positive contribution through their participation on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. This was indicated by 57% of the respondents who agreed, while 37% more respondents strongly agreed with the statement that "I feel I have something to give to the AfCoP knowledge sharing community" (Figure 33). This finding suggests that many of the respondents in this study understood the benefits of knowledge sharing and were committed to it. There were however 6% of the respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement, indicating perhaps that they were uncertain about the quality of contribution they were able to make on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform.

I Feel I Have Something To Give To The AfCoP Community
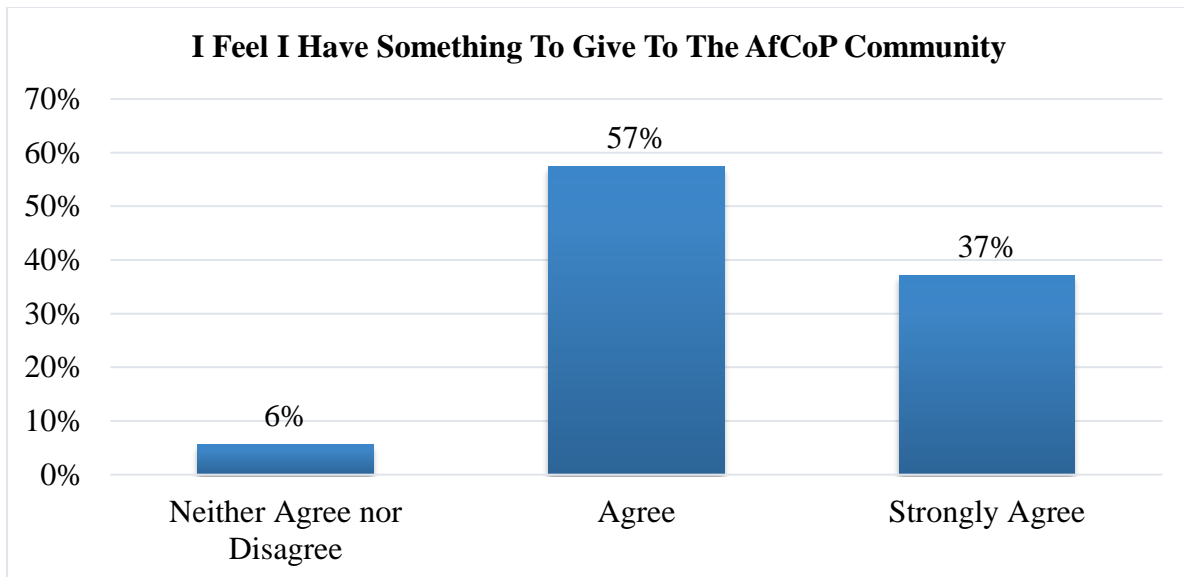
Figure 33: Desire to Contribute to the AfCoP Community

5.4.8.5   *AfCoP Platform's Ability to Fulfil Personal Goals*

When members join a social media-based knowledge sharing platform, there may be a motivation to achieve personal goals (Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). In response to a statement related to the issue of fulfilling personal goals, 35% of the respondents agreed, while 24% of the respondents strongly agreed that sharing knowledge on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform helped them to achieve their personal goals (Figure 34). There were some who were doubtful of the platform's ability to fulfil their personal goals as indicated by 33% of the respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. There were also a minority of the respondents who were not motivated by achieving personal goals on the platform as represented by four percent (4%) of the respondents who strongly disagreed and a further four percent who disagreed with the statement.
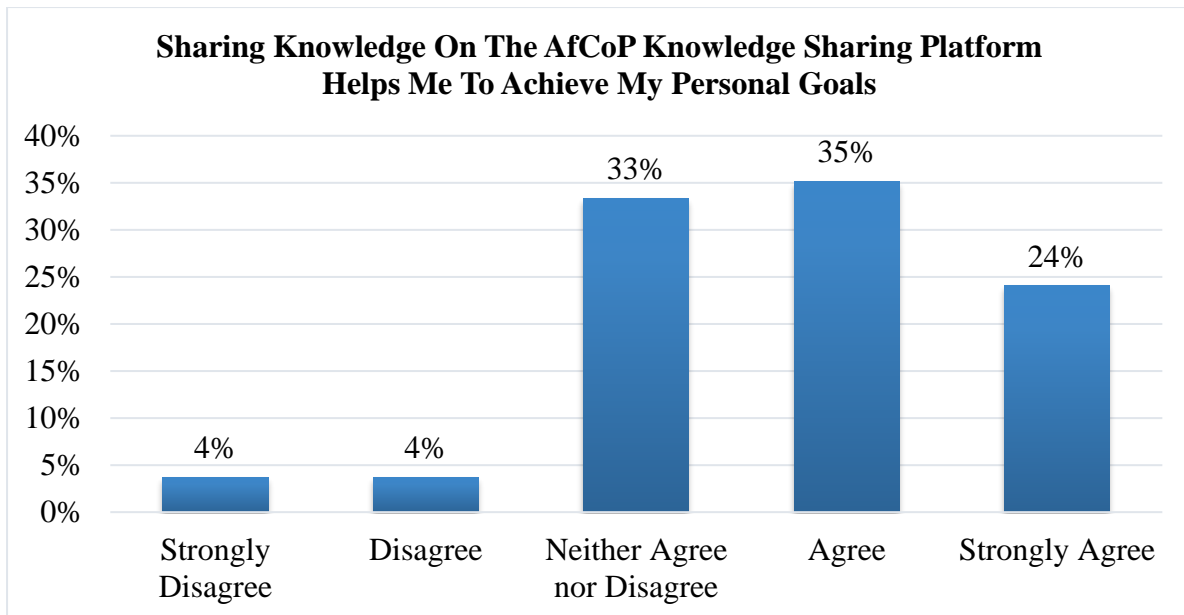
Figure 34: AfCoP Platform Ability to Fulfil Personal Goals

5.4.8.6 *AfCoP Platforms Ability to Broaden Members' Scope of Association*

Some members join social media-based knowledge sharing platforms motivated by the need to extend their networks or broaden their scope of association, which may be beneficial to their career (Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). In response to the statement "sharing knowledge on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform broadens my scope of association", 54% of the respondents agreed, while a further 39% strongly agreed with the statement (Figure 35). There were however seven percent (7%) of the respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. This may be indicative of AfCoP having some members who were unsure of their ability to broaden their professional network through the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform.
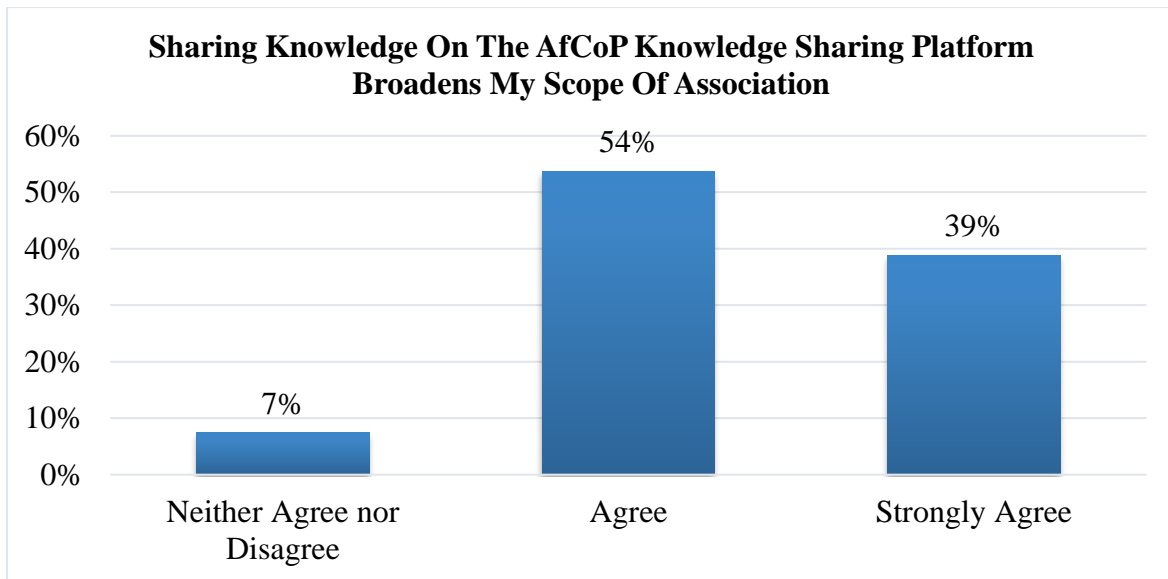
Figure 35: AfCoP Platform's Ability to Broaden Members' Scope of Association

5.4.8.7 *Promotional Opportunities From Participating on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform*

Most of the respondents believed their participation on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform brought them promotional opportunities. This was represented by 39% of the respondents who agreed as well as 28% of the respondents who strongly agreed with the statement that "sharing knowledge on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform brings me promotional opportunities" (Figure 36). Some respondents however did not seem to have realised promotional opportunities, or possibly did not expect to receive promotional opportunities through their participation on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. This was represented by nine percent (9%) of the respondents who disagreed and a further six percent (6%) of the respondents who strongly disagreed with the statement. A few other respondents demonstrated that they were unsure of receiving promotional opportunities as represented by 19% of the respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.
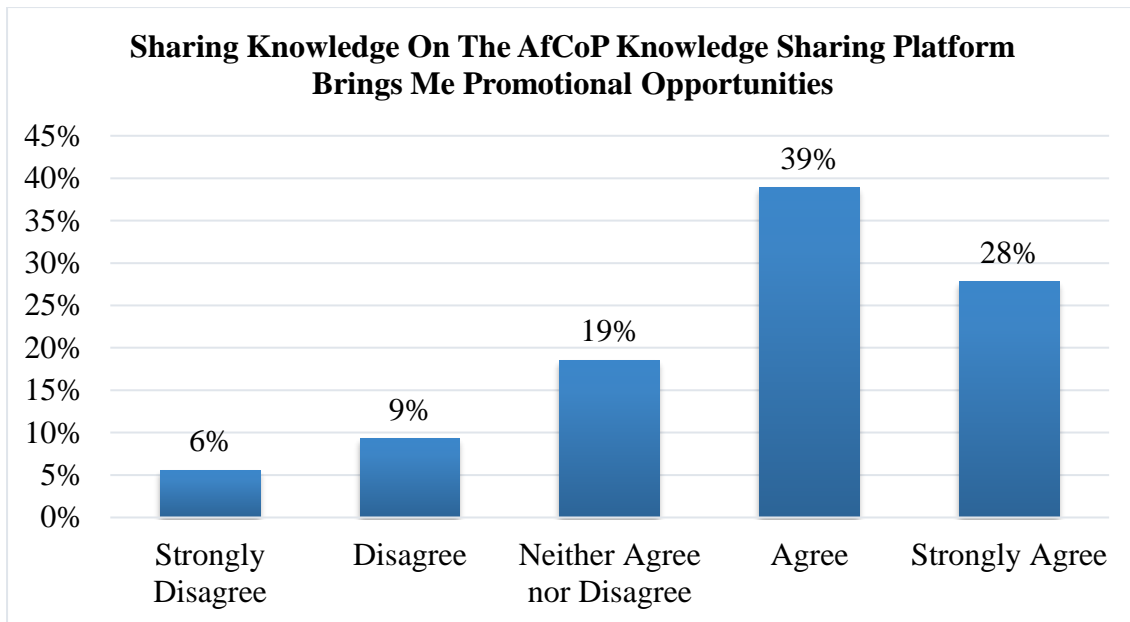
Figure 36: AfCoP Platforms Ability to Bring Promotional Opportunities for Members

5.4.8.8 *The Desire to be Acknowledged and Accepted*

It has been suggested that some people participate in virtual communities motivated by the desire to receive acknowledgment and acceptance of themselves and their ideas and to be considered skilful (Chiu et al., 2006). In response to the statement "sharing knowledge on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform helps me obtain acknowledgement and better acceptance of my person and ideas, 39% of the respondents agreed, while 28 % strongly agreed with the statement (Figure 37). This may indicate a general desire for acceptance on the AfCoP platform, among most of the respondents, which may or may not affect their participation. However, 22% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, six percent (6%) strongly disagreed and an additional six percent (6%) disagreed with the statement.
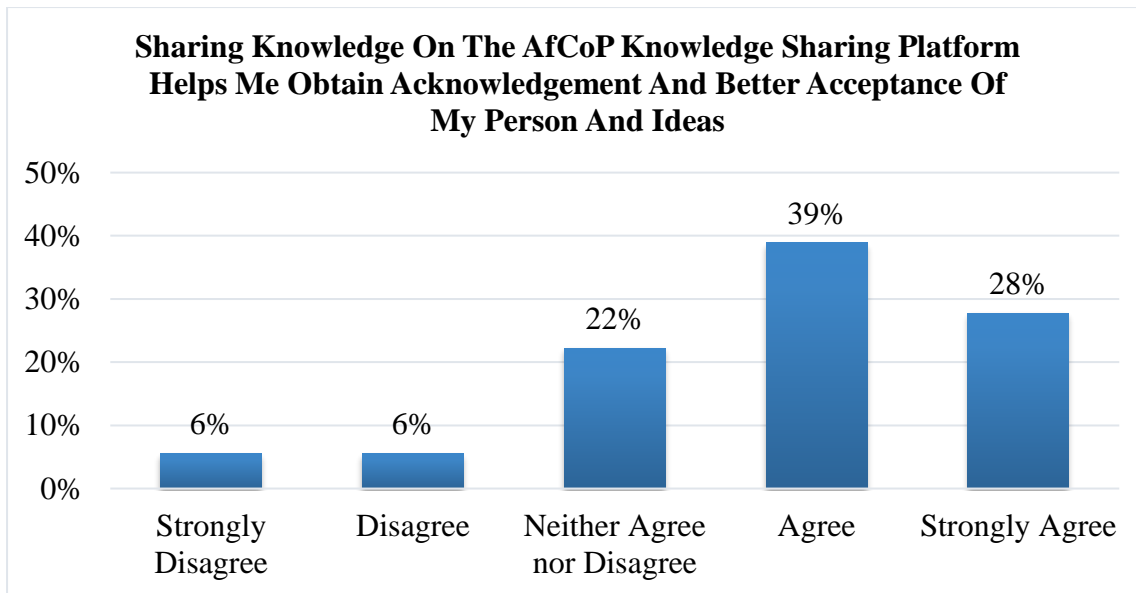
Figure 37: AfCoP Platform's Ability to Help Members Obtain Acceptance of Self and Ideas

5.4.8.9 *Recognition from Colleagues and Superiors*

Some people are motivated to participate in social media based communities of practice, by their belief that it would help them gain recognition from colleagues and superiors (Jeon et al., 2011). In response to a question that sought to elicit the respondents' attitude towards participating on the AfCoP platform for personal recognition, 35% of the respondents agreed, with a further 15% of the respondents who strongly agreed that sharing knowledge on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform helped them gain recognition from their colleagues and superiors (Figure 38). This shows that the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform helped some participants to achieve work and career goals. There were, however, 30% of the respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement, which may have been indicative of those members whose motivation to participate was beyond the need for recognition by peers and superiors, perhaps because they were self-employed or because they were intrinsically motivated. There were also 11% of the respondents who strongly disagreed with this statement with a further nine percent (9%) of the respondents who disagreed with this statement. These respondents did not expect to have their participation on the AfCoP

knowledge sharing platform to translate to recognition by work colleagues or superiors in their places of work, and probably did so because their motivations were intrinsic such as "enjoying participation" (Vuori & Okkonen, 2012).

Sharing Knowledge On The AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform Helps Me Gain Recognition From My Colleagues And Superiors
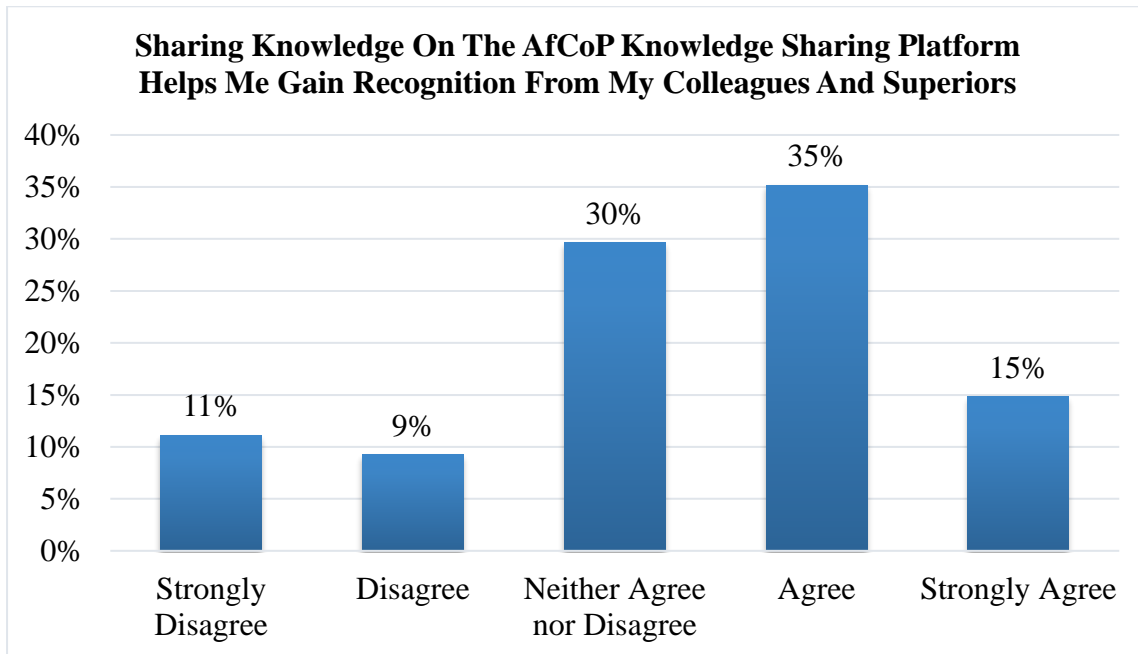
Figure 38: AfCoP Platforms Ability to Increase Recognition of Members

5.4.8.10 Ability of AfCoP Platform to Secure Job Security

In response to the statement "I believe sharing knowledge on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform secures my job", 39% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement (Figure 39). This category may represent those members on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform to whom participation indirect bearing on their job security. There were 26% of the respondents who agreed, with an additional six percent (6%) of the respondents who strongly agreed with the statement. In this category may have been those who worked directly for AfCoP as core management team, AfCoP secretariat, or thematic group discussion leaders.

There were, however, 19% of the respondents who strongly disagreed that participation on the AfCoP platform secured their job and a further 11% of the respondents who disagreed. In

this category may have been those employed outside AfCoP structures, whose job security was not dependent on participating on the platform.

I Believe Sharing Knowledge On The AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform Secures My Job
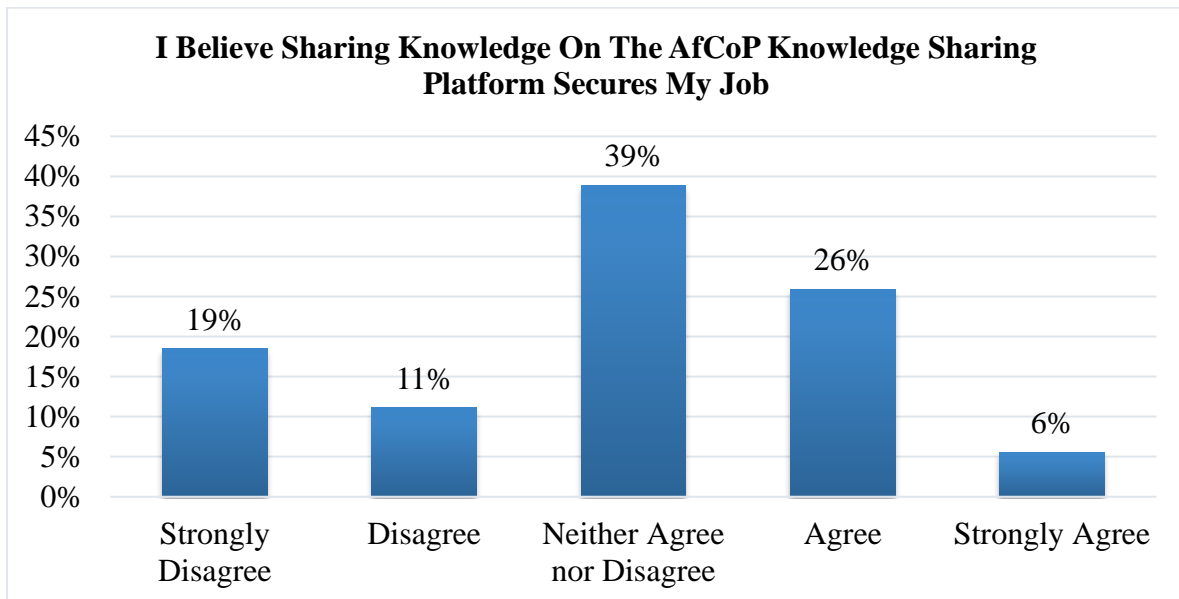
Figure 39: AfCoP Platform and Job Security

5.4.9 Organisational Factors That Influence Knowledge Sharing on the AfCoP Platform

Some organisational factors are said to influence knowledge sharing through social media (Chiu et al., 2006). In this study the organisational factors that were considered include management support; infrastructure for knowledge sharing; opportunities for knowledge sharing.

5.4.9.1 *Management Support of the AfCoP Platform*

For most of the respondents in the study, the AfCoP secretariat and management actively supported knowledge sharing through the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. This is represented by 50% who agreed and 26% who strongly agreed with the statement that the "AfCoP secretariat and management support knowledge sharing on the platform" (Figure 40). This may indicate a general satisfaction with the tools; opportunities and support availed by the AfCoP management to facilitate knowledge sharing on the platform. However, there were

some respondents who registered uncertainty with AfCoP management's level of support for knowledge sharing on the platform, as represented by 20% of the respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. There were also four percent (4%) of the respondents who were out-rightly dissatisfied with the level of support for knowledge sharing on the platform by the AfCoP management and secretariat.

AfCoP Secretariat And Management Support Knowledge Sharing On The Platform
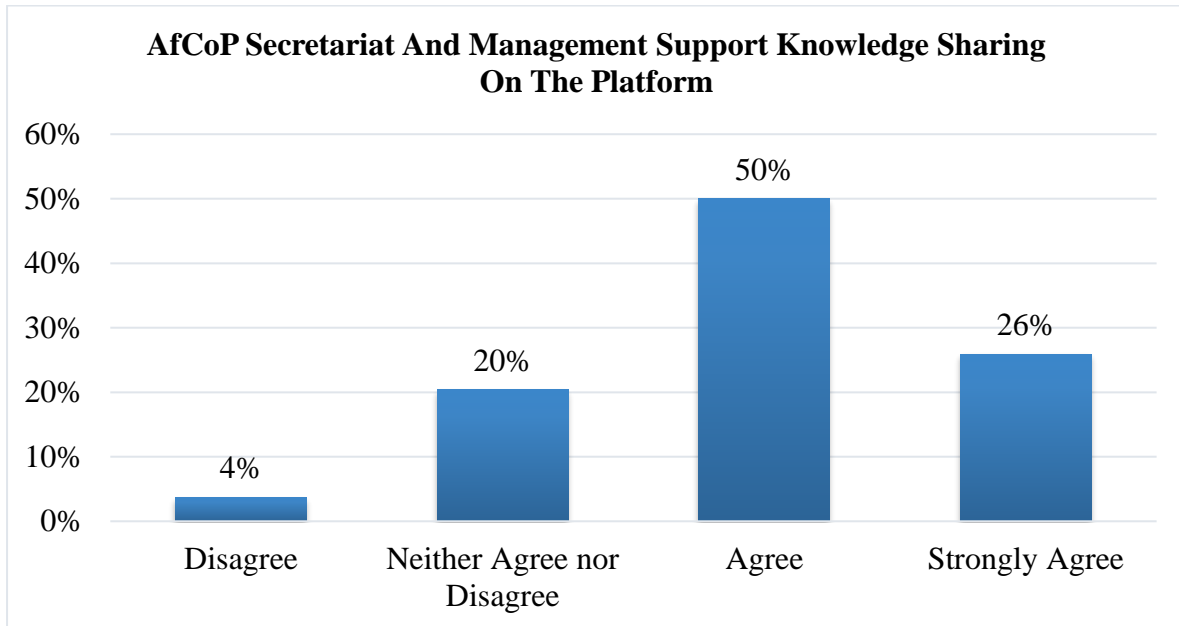
Figure 40: AfCoP Secretariat's Support of the Platform

5.4.9.2 *Sufficiency of Knowledge Sharing Opportunities via the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform*

The respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they agreed with the statement that the "AfCoP secretariat and management provide sufficient knowledge sharing opportunities through the platform". In response, 11% of the respondents strongly agreed; while 44% agreed with the statement (Figure 41). There were, however, 43% who neither agreed with this statement, which shows that these participants may have believed that the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform offered some degree of knowledge sharing opportunities, but with a need for some improvements. There were also two percent (2%) of the participants

who disagreed with this statement, thus registering dissatisfaction with the AfCoP management's role in providing knowledge sharing opportunities on the platform.

AfCoP Secretariat And Management Provide Sufficient Knowledge Sharing Opportunities Through The Platform
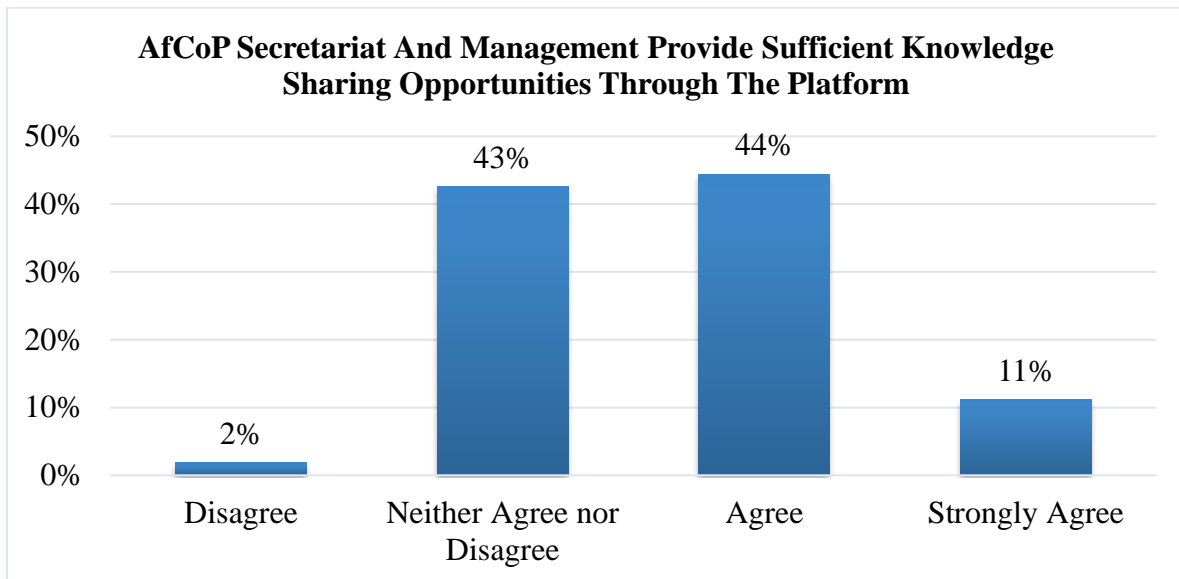
Figure 41: Sufficiency of Knowledge Sharing Opportunities Provided on AfCoP Platform

5.4.9.3   *Validity of Available Channels for Knowledge Sharing on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform*

Many of the respondents had a favourable disposition towards the AfCoP management's ability to provide valid channels for knowledge sharing on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. This was represented by 56% of the respondents who agreed, with a further 17% of the respondents who strongly agreed with the statement that "AfCoP management provide valid channels for knowledge sharing through the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform" (Figure 42). There were however 28% of the respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement, which may show some dissatisfaction with the channels/media availed for knowledge sharing among the respondents.

AfCoP Management Provide Valid Channels For Knowledge Sharing Through The AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform
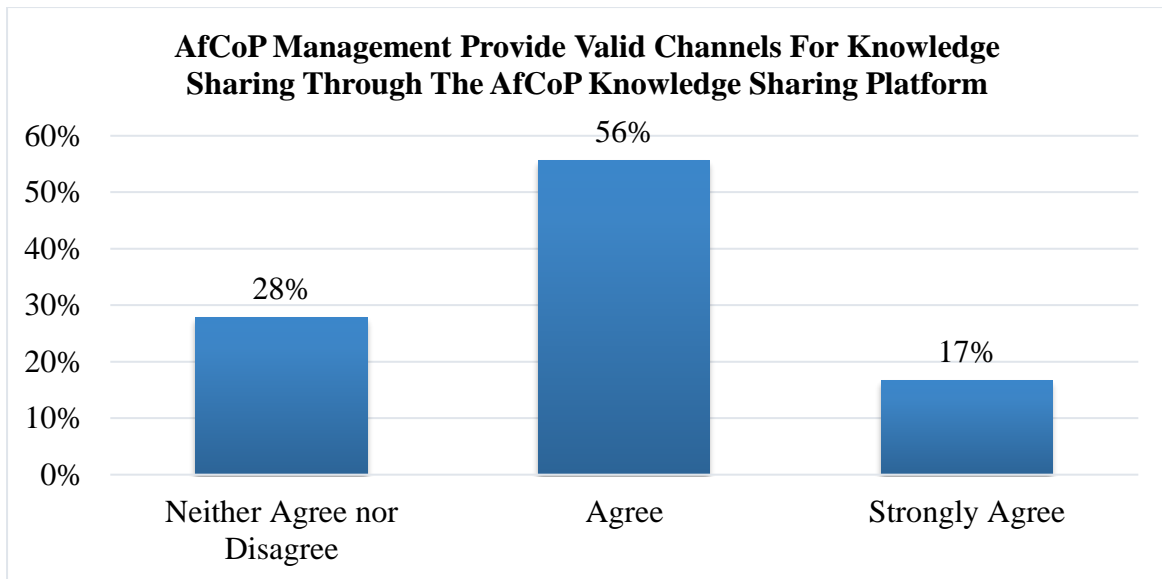
Figure 42: Validity of Channels Availed for Knowledge Sharing on the AfCoP Platform

5.4.10 Barriers to Knowledge Sharing on the AfCoP Platform

In this section, we present findings on possible barriers to knowledge sharing on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform.

5.4.10.1 Time and Effort for Sharing Knowledge on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

The unavailability of time and the required effort necessary for sharing knowledge on a social media platform is often cited as a deterring factor for busy professionals to participate actively on a knowledge sharing platform (Riege, 2005). Respondents were asked to respond on whether they agreed with the statement "It takes too much time and effort to share knowledge via the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform". In response, 35% of the respondents disagreed with the statement, while six percent (6%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement (Figure 43). This therefore shows that a moderate number of the respondents were not discouraged by the required effort and time necessary to actively participate on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. There were however, 39% of the respondents, who neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, indicating that they may

148

sometimes face challenges of giving time and effort towards actively participating on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. There were also 17% of the respondents who agreed and a further 4% of the participants who strongly agreed with this statement. This may indicate that there were some respondents who struggled to actively participate on the AfCoP platform through responding to discussion threads or starting conversations, because they lacked the time and/or were unable to exert the effort required.
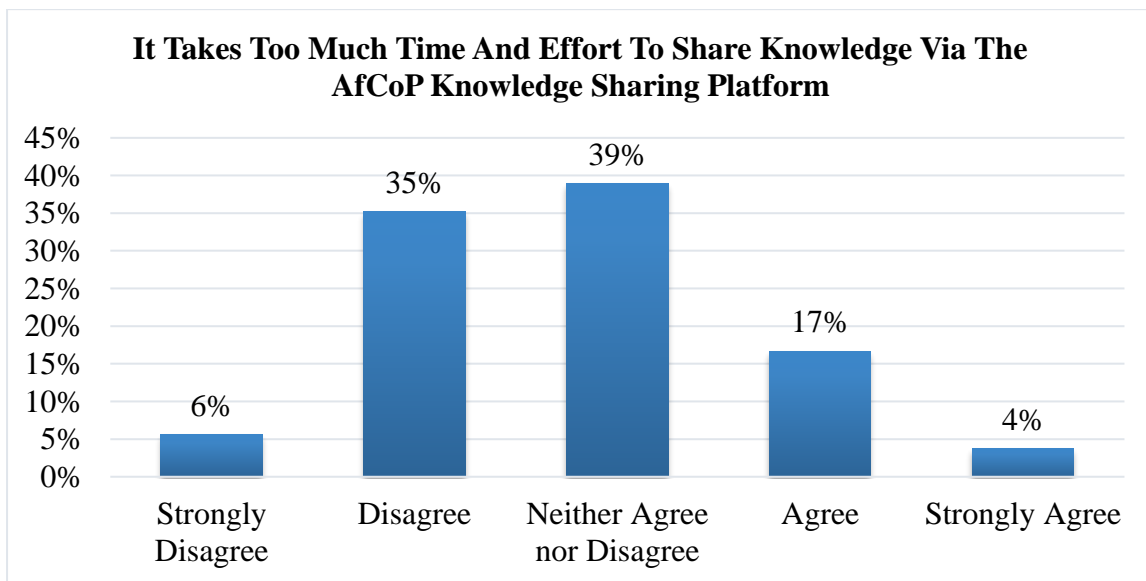
Figure 43: Time and Effort Required to Share Knowledge on AfCoP

5.4.10.2 Adequacy of the Content Shared on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

An issue related to the quality of knowledge that is shared via social media communities relates to its adequacy or sufficiency to meet the needs of members of the community. Respondents were invited to indicate whether they agreed with the statement "I'm not getting enough content from the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform". Figure 44 shows that 37% of the respondents disagreed with this statement, with a further six percent (6%) of the respondents who strongly disagreed with this statement. These may have represented AfCoP members who were satisfied with the sufficiency, of the knowledge that is shared via the platform. There were however 37% of the respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with

149

this statement. This may have represented a group of respondents who were somewhat satisfied with the amount of content shared on the AfCoP platform, but may have preferred more information. There were also 20% of the respondents who completely agreed with this statement, thus representing a group of respondents who may have been dissatisfied with the amount of the content shared on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform.

I'm Not Getting Enough Content On AfCoP
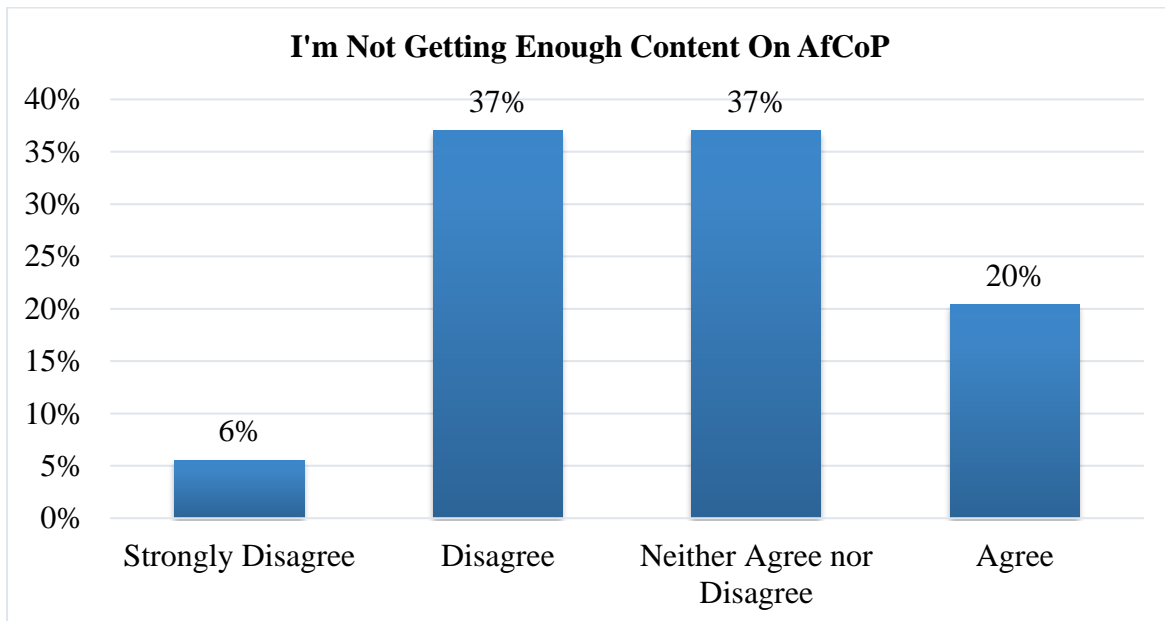
Figure 44: Adequacy of Knowledge Shared on the AfCoP Platform

5.4.10.3 Insecurity When Sharing Knowledge via Platform

Sharing knowledge via social media-based knowledge sharing platform, may arouse feelings of insecurity, particularly when sharing with distributed members, with whom one may not have personal knowledge of them or their intentions (Hubert & Lopez, 2013; Majewsky & Usoro, 2011; Riege, 2005; Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). Participants were asked to agree or disagree with the statement that "I feel insecure about how my information might be received or used via the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform".

The majority of the respondents seemed to feel secure to share their information on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. This was represented by 44% of the respondents who

disagreed, as well as a further 11% of the respondents who strongly disagreed with the statement (Figure 45). There were 30% of the respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, which showed a moderate level of mistrust of other members' intentions with information shared. Then there were those respondents who outrightly felt insecure about sharing their knowledge via the platform as represented by 13% of the respondents who agreed, and a further two percent (2%) of the respondents who strongly agreed with this statement.

I Feel Insecure About How My Information Might Be Received Or Used Via The AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform
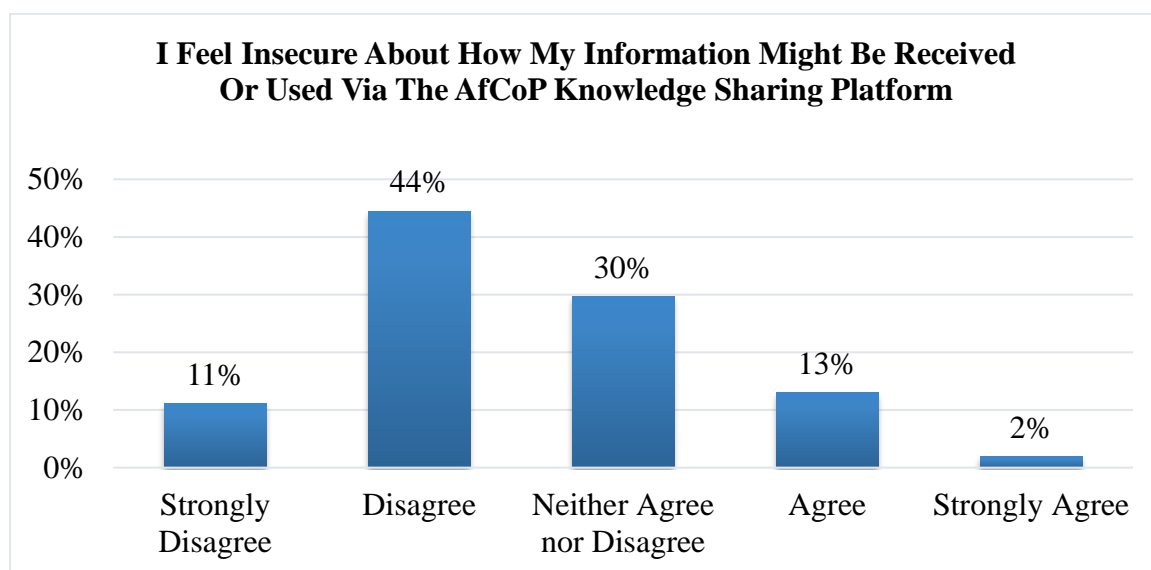
Figure 45: Feelings of Insecurity on the AfCoP Platform

5.4.10.4 Incentives for Knowledge Sharing on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

In some knowledge sharing studies, giving members incentives for knowledge sharing has been shown to improve knowledge sharing (Ramirez, 2007). In this study, most of the respondents did not feel inadequately rewarded when sharing their knowledge via the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. This is represented by 39% of the respondents who disagreed, with a further 19% of the respondents who strongly disagreed with the statement that "I am not being adequately rewarded or acknowledged when I share my knowledge via the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform" (Figure 46). Their participation on the platform may have been

intrinsically rather than extrinsically motivated (Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). There were

however, 39% of the respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement and a

further 19% of the respondents who disagreed with the statement. This may have represented

a minority group of participants who may have preferred some measure of rewards and

recognition for participation on the platform and were possibly extrinsically motivated.

I Am Not Being Adequately Rewarded Or Acknowledged When I Share My Knowledge Via The AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform
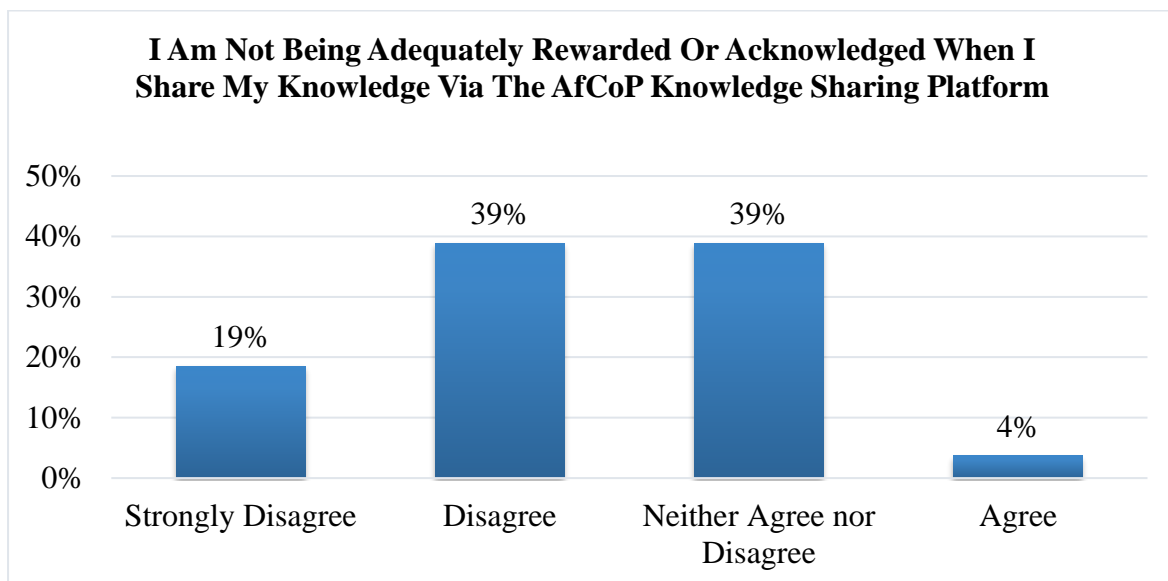
Figure 46: Incentives for Knowledge Sharing on AfCoP

5.4.10.5 Risk of Receiving Criticism When Sharing Knowledge via the AfCoP Platform

When one shares knowledge on a publicly shared platform, there is the possible risk of one's

person or ideas being criticised (Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). Respondents were asked to indicate

whether they agreed with the statement "I am afraid of criticism by other members of the

AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. The results revealed that most of the respondents did not

seem to fear this risk, as represented by 48% of the respondents who disagreed and a further

20% of the respondents who strongly disagreed with this statement (Figure 47). It was therefore

concluded that the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was generally believed to be a safe place

for sharing knowledge among the respondents. They did not seem to fear receiving negative

feedback. There were however 26% of the respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. This perhaps represents a minority group of respondents who may have been hesitant of participating on the platform, due to the fear of being criticised. There were also six percent (6%) of the respondents who agreed with this statement, perhaps indicating their inherent fear of receiving criticism for their contributions on the platform. This would have demotivated the minority group of respondents from sharing knowledge on the AfCoP platform.
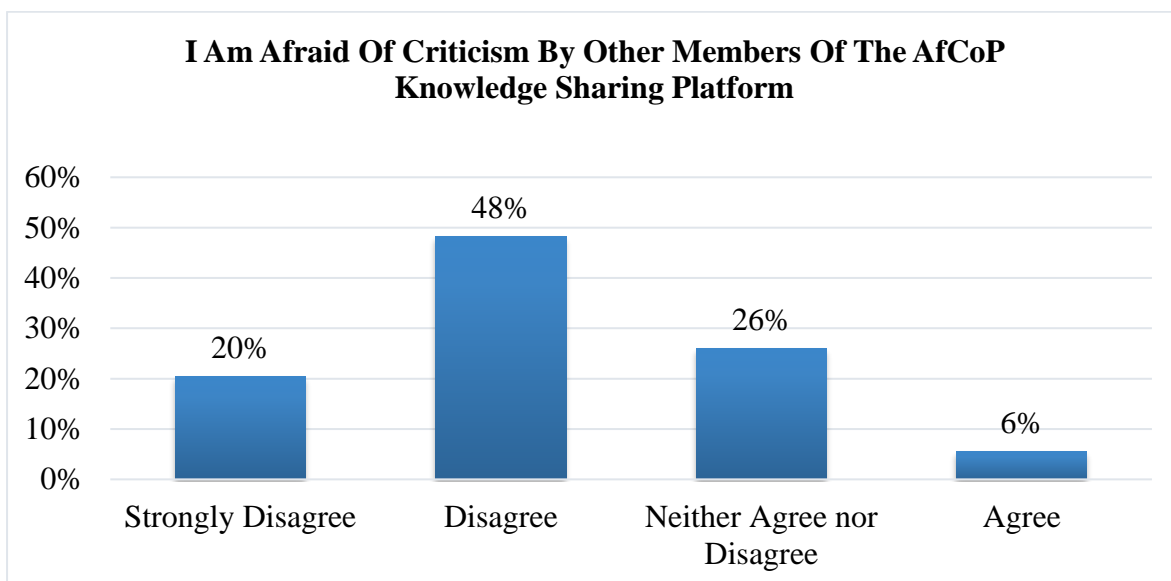
Figure 47: Fear of Receiving Criticism on AfCoP Platform

5.4.10.6 Reluctance to Share Knowledge with Strangers

People will generally feel comfortable to share knowledge with people with whom they are familiar and have a reasonable relationship with (Aliakbar et al., 2013). In distributed virtual communities, it may be impossible to have such personal knowledge of those participating on the platform. In response to the statement "I do not want to share my knowledge with people I do not know well on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform", 44% of the respondents disagreed while 37% of the respondents strongly disagreed (Figure 48). This indicates that having an existing relationship with other AfCoP members was likely not a prerequisite for

sharing knowledge on the AfCoP platform for the most of the respondents. There were however, 13% of the respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement, while six percent (6%) of the respondents agreed. This may indicate that a minority group of the respondents may have appreciated having a personal history background and relationship with other members on the platform, before they were willing to share their information.

I Do Not Want To Share My Knowledge With People I Do Not Know Well On The AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform
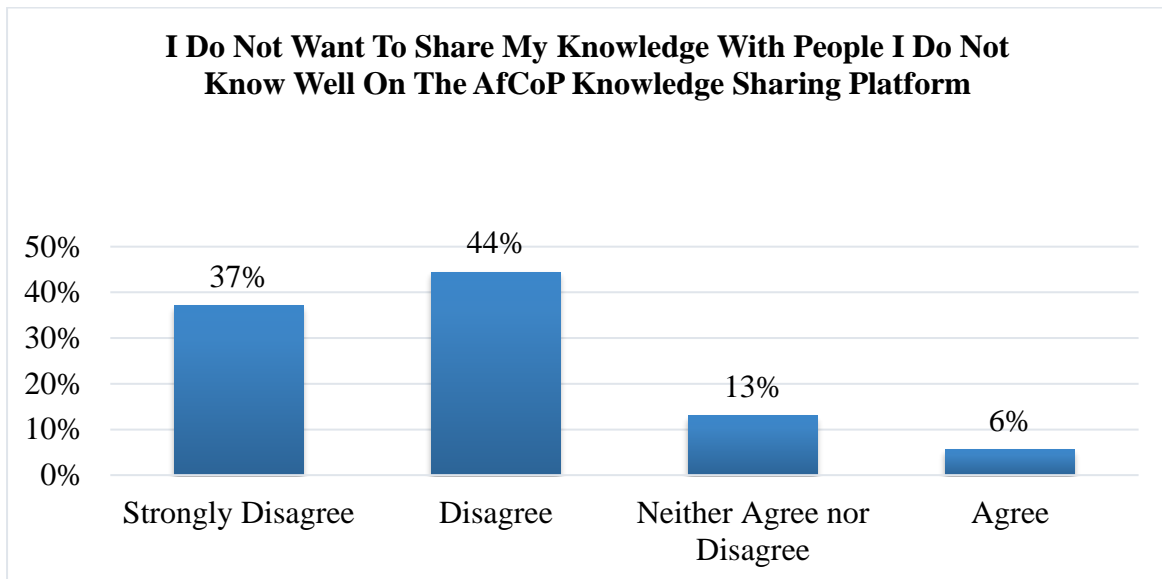
Figure 48: Reluctance to Share Knowledge with Strangers

5.4.10.7 *Fear of Losing Ownership of Knowledge*

In some knowledge sharing studies, a fear of losing ownership of information has been a cause for hindering knowledge sharing in organisations (van Baalen, Bloemhof-Ruwaard, & van Heck, 2005). Possession of knowledge therefore is said to give some people a sense of power or edge over peers, and therefore sharing knowledge is deemed to erode that power or influence. Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the statement "I am afraid of losing ownership of the knowledge I have on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform". In response to this question most respondents did not seem to feel threatened by the fear of losing knowledge through sharing with others. This was represented by 46% of the respondents who strongly disagreed and a further 43% of the respondents who disagreed with

the statement (Figure 49). Therefore, among the respondents in this study, there appeared to be a strong willingness to share knowledge with other members. It also demonstrated a strong commitment to knowledge sharing among most respondents in the study. There were however nine percent (9%) of the respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement, as well as two percent (2%) of the respondents who differed in opinion. A possible reason for this may have been that this minority group of respondents, may have been new, and had yet to embrace the culture of knowledge sharing. They may also have believed that sharing knowledge had the effect of eroding their perceived power or influence, and hence would have hesitated to actively participate on the platform..
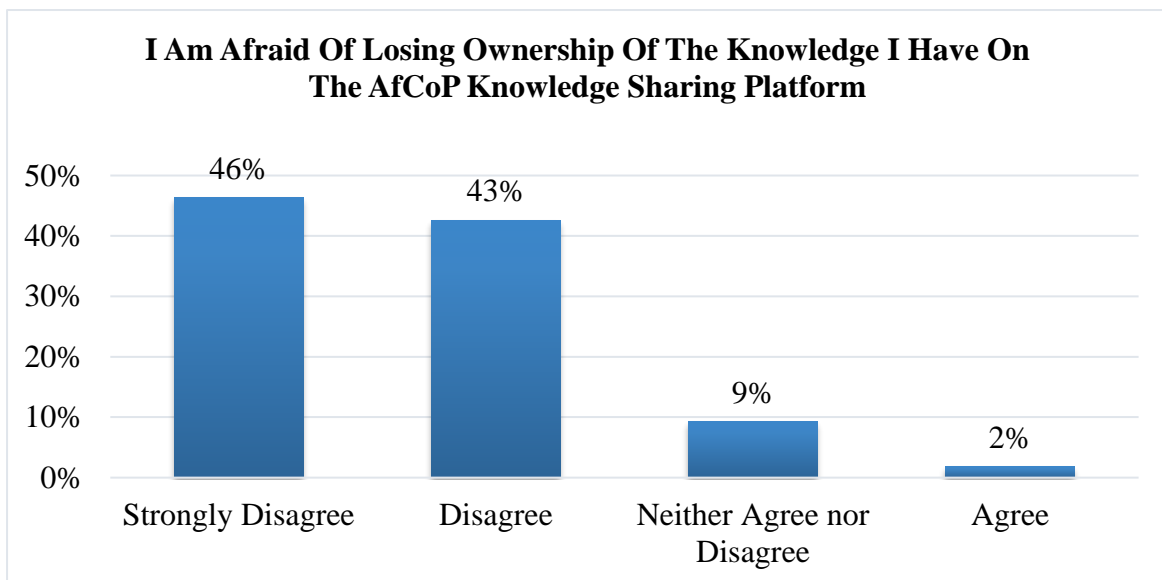
Figure 49: Fear of Losing Ownership Of Knowledge

5.4.10.8 Efficiency of the AfCoP Knowledge Management Platform

The efficiency of a knowledge management system can hinder or aid knowledge sharing. To be efficient, social media-based knowledge management platforms, needs to enable members to find information they need efficiently. Figure 50 shows that 35% of the respondents as well as an additional 24% of the respondents strongly disagreed that "The knowledge on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform is located in silos and not shared efficiently. Therefore,

there was a degree of satisfaction with the knowledge sharing platform's efficiency amongst the participants. There were however, 26% of the respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement indicating a measure of dissatisfaction with the efficiency of the platform. A further 15% more of the respondents agreed with this statement, thus registering outright dissatisfaction with the degree of efficiency of the knowledge sharing platform among this minority group of respondents. This may have indicated a need to improve the platform's ability to share knowledge efficiently.

The Knowledge On The AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform Is Located In Silos And Not Shared Efficiently
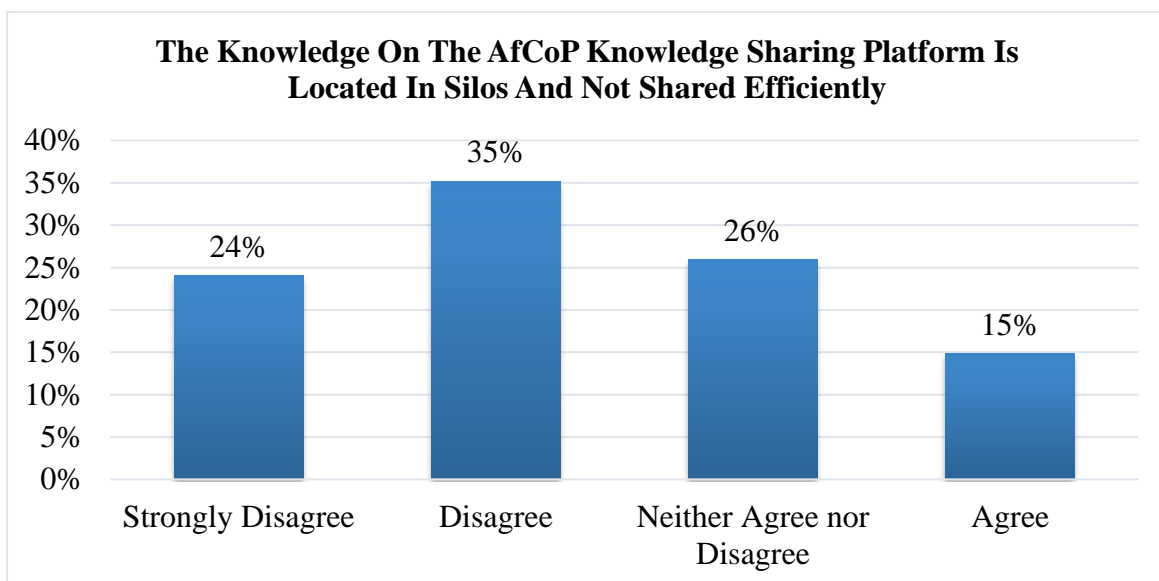
Figure 50: Efficiency of the AfCoP Platform to Help Members Locate Knowledge

5.4.10.9 Difficulties Encountered by Members in Written Communication

Some individuals may find it easier to share knowledge in ways other than written conversational discussions. They may feel uncomfortable contributing knowledge to a platform where they are requested to write, self-edit and post. Respondents were therefore asked to indicate whether they agreed with the statement "It is hard to share knowledge in other ways than in conversational discussions because it is hard to express what I know in written form on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform". In response 39% of the respondents disagreed; while 31% of the respondents strongly disagreed (Figure 51). This shows that for

most of the respondents, conversational discussions in written format were not a challenge. There were however 22% of the respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. This may reflect a minority group of respondents who may have faced difficulties in written communication some of the times. Another seven percent (7%) of the respondents out rightly declared that it was hard to express themselves in written form. These respondents, although a significant minority, may have preferred a platform for sharing knowledge that allowed for physical and verbal conversational forms, rather than through a social media based platform.

It Is Hard To Share Knowledge In Other Ways Than In Conversational Discussions Because It Is Hard To Express What I Know In Written Form On The AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

[Bar chart: Strongly Disagree 31%, Disagree 39%, Neither Agree nor Disagree 22%, Agree 7%]
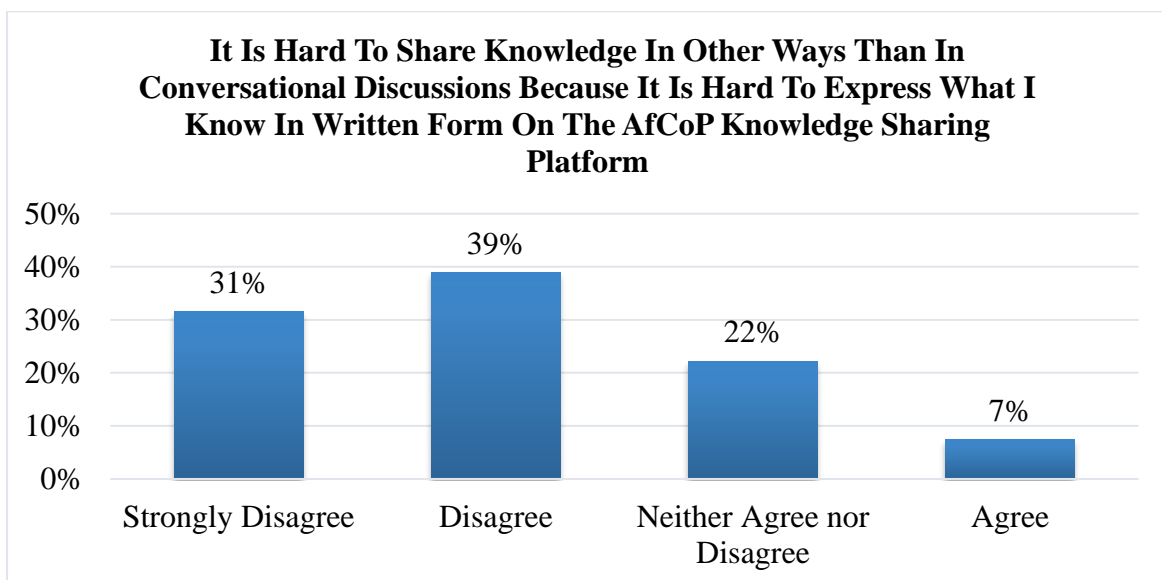
Figure 51: Difficulties in Expressing Knowledge in Written Forms

5.5 Summary

In this chapter, data from the AfCoP member survey, administered to 103 members of AfCoP who attended the 2016 annual AfCoP meeting were analysed and presented. The results showed that most of the respondents were drawn from at least 25 mostly African countries, were predominantly male; mature adults, who were highly educated. Most of the respondents had at least a Master's degree level education. The respondent's level of expertise was also

high, with practitioners in the development sector drawn from a wide spectrum of society, including those working in government and non-governmental organisations. The respondents to the survey also consisted mostly of individuals belonging mostly to the middle and top management levels in their places of work.

Most of the respondents in the study were found to have been using the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform for between one and three years showing moderate experience in the use of the platform. A significant percentage of the respondents also used the knowledge sharing platform at least once a week. Apart from the knowledge sharing platform, the most used social media tool in the daily lives of respondents were social media networking tools such as Facebook.

The knowledge sharing activities mostly engaged in by the respondents on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, included learning, networking and collaborating. The types of knowledge mostly shared via the platform were best practices, reports, and policy documents.

The chapter also presented results on the factors that affect knowledge sharing among AfCoP members. Results on the hypotheses testing of the model for Knowledge Sharing Through Social Media were presented. Overall, significant and positive correlations were found between the Social Capital theory constructs-social interaction ties, trust, identification, norms of reciprocity, shared language, shared vision with the knowledge sharing intentions of respondents and quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform. From constructs of the Technology Acceptance Model, perceived usefulness correlated positively and significantly with both knowledge sharing intentions of respondents and the quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform. However, perceived ease of use of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform correlated positively and significantly with quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform, while it had no relationship with knowledge sharing intentions of

respondents in this study. The overall outcome of the hypotheses testing had 15 out of the 16 proposed associations supported.

In addition, the scale means of the constructs of the Knowledge Sharing Through Social Media Model, revealed that there were moderate levels of social interaction ties and trust among AfCoP members who participated in the study. It was also revealed that there was a strong sense of the norms of reciprocity, identification, shared language and shared vision among most respondents in the study. These were the social capital theory constructs, that were motivating respondents to participate on the AfCoP platform. These results also revealed that most of the respondents in the study were willing to participate on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, despite the moderate levels of trust and social interaction ties. Most respondents were also positive about the ease of use and usefulness of the AfCoP platform, which may also have contributed to their willingness to use the AfCoP platform .

Other factors that were revealed to influence knowledge sharing through the AfCoP platform among the respondents included the desire to help AfCoP to achieve its goals. Most of the respondents also believed that participation on the AfCoP platform made their job easier and helped them fulfill personal goals. There was also a strong sense of the norm of reciprocity with most of the respondents (79%) motivated by an expectation to receive help from other AfCoP members in the future. Participants also felt a considerable sense of responsibility to share knowledge, with a considerable majority of the respondents (94%) believing they had something to give to AfCoP.

Most respondents also believed that their participation on the platform would help them to improve relations with other AfCoP members. Many respondents also believed that their participation on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform broadened their scope of association; brought promotional opportunities; helped them obtain acknowledgement and better

acceptance by others; and won them recognition from colleagues and superiors. There was also a belief that participation on the AfCoP platform helped to secure jobs by about half of the respondents.

The organisational factors that were considered to influence knowledge sharing on the AfCoP platform were management support, and the sufficiency and validity of channels for communication. In this study, most of the respondents were positive about the level of organisational support towards the knowledge sharing activities on the AfCoP platform. Most of the respondents were also of the opinion that valid channels for communication were availed by the AfCoP management for knowledge sharing. However, there appeared to be some dissatisfaction with the sufficiency of the communication channels as 43% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that the provided channels were enough, perhaps indicating a need for improvement in the variety and quality of channels for communicating on the AfCoP platform.

Most of the respondents did not seem to have been affected by the factors that were considered barriers to knowledge sharing in literature. However, some factors that affected a minority of the respondents included the lack of time and unwillingness to exert the effort required to share knowledge on the AfCoP platform. A minority of the respondents (15%) also felt insecure about how their shared information might be used and only six percent (6%) of the respondents were afraid of receiving criticism. For 20% of the respondents, the content shared on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was inadequate for their needs. However, most of the respondents in the study did not seem to be hindered by any of these factors and this reflects a community of members who understand the benefits and goals of knowledge sharing as seen by their positivity towards participating on the AfCoP platform. The findings may also prove that that AfCoP knowledge sharing platform is generally a safe place for sharing knowledge.

CHAPTER SIX

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter qualitative data collected during the study are presented and analysed. Still guided by the overarching purpose of the study which was to examine the extent and use of social media in facilitating knowledge sharing in AfCoP, the study collected qualitative data through the open-ended questions section of the the AfCoP Member Survey. Interviews were also held with with seven key informants from AfCoP including key members from AfCoP's leadership, youth for results (Y4R) and gender for results (G4R) subgroups, and the AfCoP secretariat to ascertain the individual and organizational factors influencing the use of social media for knowledge sharing in AfCoP. Documentary analysis of members' posts on the AfCoP knowledge sharing social media platforms were also analysed to show how social media were being used for knowledge sharing; as well as to determine the types of knowledge generated and shared using social media. Other organizational documents were also analysed for evidence.

6.2 Analysis of Qualitative Data from the AfCoP Member Survey

The AfCoP Member Survey had the following open-ended questions, which solicited for respondents to fill in qualitative data:

1. What challenges have you encountered when using the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform to share knowledge?

2. How can the challenges have you encountered when using the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform be addressed?

3. Do you think public social networks such as Facebook, Blogger etc, are useful in relation to work related knowledge sharing? Please explain your answer.

4. Is there anything else you would like to say about the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform or using social media for knowledge sharing or work-related purposes in general?

In this section, data gathered from the open-ended questions of the questionnaire will be presented and analysed.

6.2.1 Challenges AfCoP Members Face on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

The researcher was able to identify and categorise six major challenges AfCoP members faced when using the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform (Figure 52). Twenty-six (26) respondents indicated the various challenges they faced, and these were categorised in the following themes: user interface issues; issues related to the content on the knowledge sharing platform; lack of participation by members; financial constraints; time constraints and technical challenges.
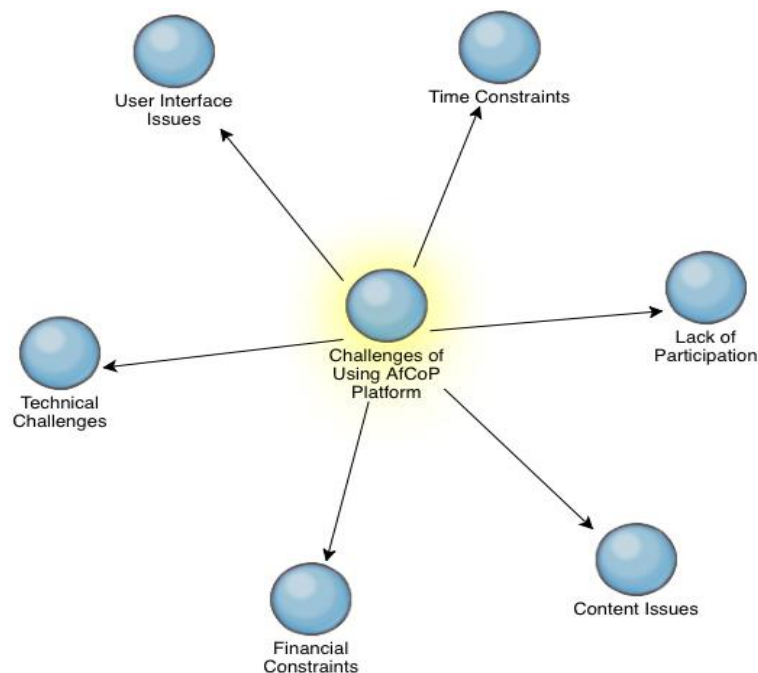
Figure 52: Challenges Faced on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

6.2.1.1 *Content Issues Faced on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform*

Five (5) members of AfCoP indicated that they faced issues related to the content of knowledge shared via the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. Respondent 9 felt that the breadth and depth of the discussions were too demanding; Respondent 49 lacked knowledge on the topics being discussed on the platform; respondent 40 seemed to mistrust the credibility of the information which was shared; respondent 17 felt that the quality of the content shared on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform needed improvement while respondent 51 felt that there were unclear licencing and ownership of information. The table 10 below shows the subthemes of the Content challenges faced by AfCoP members, with the corresponding example quotations from participants responses.

Table 10: Content Issues Faced on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

Sub-theme	Example Quotations	Respondent ID
Breadth and depth of the discussions demanding	"Some topics are too wide and require more effort for research and yet the time may not be enough for such side work"	9
Lack of knowledge on topics being discussed	Sometimes the thematic areas being discussed are not within my knowledge or area of expertise, as a result, I just read the conversation without making any contribution.	49
Mistrust of information shared	The credibility of the shared knowledge/information is sometimes questionable	40
Poor quality of content	There is need to improve on content.	17
Unclear licencing and ownership of information	Intellectual property of documents is unclear	51

6.2.1.2 *Lack of Participation by AfCoP Members*

There were six (6) respondents who highlighted lack of participation by AfCoP members, as a major challenge faced on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform (Table 11). The subthemes of lack of participation included that AfCoP members did not provide feedback on time as Respondent 24 indicated that "it sometimes takes a lot of reaching out with extensions to deadlines for contributions…". Some respondents felt that other AfCoP members did not respond to calls for discussion, with Respondent 49, indicating that they "just read the conversations without making any contribution". Another subtheme which emerged was an unwillingness by members, to share on certain topics as indicated by Respondent 31. Some respondents also felt that it required too much effort to participate on discussions on the platform.

Table 11: Lack of Participation by Members on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

Subtheme	Example Quotations	Respondent ID
Unwillingness to share on certain topics	"sometimes the topics are not ones I might be eager to comment on."	31
Members not giving timely feedback	most members don't easily provide feedback on time. It sometimes takes a lot of reaching out with extensions to deadlines for contributions. It seems members just read and don't bother to feedback."	24
Members not participating	"It's is ok, however sometimes members do not respond"	23
	"Members hardly participate in online discussions. Very few do."	3
	"I just read the conversation without making any contribution."	49
Too much effort required to encourage participation	"It sometimes takes a lot of reaching out with extensions to deadlines for contributions"	24
	"Some topics are too wide and require more effort for research and yet the time may not be enough for such side work"	9

6.2.1.3 User Interface Issues

Another major theme derived from responses to the question on challenges faced on the AfCoP platform was the issue of challenges related to the user interface of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform (Table 12). Some respondents felt that the platform had limited interactivity, with respondent 31 indicating that *"the site is not captivating as social media which 'provokes' you to contribute, or to comment on other people's posts"*. This indicates that this user expected a more interactive platform, with the ability to prompt users, if they were to participate more on the knowledge sharing platform. Respondent 14 also felt that the platform was not so easy to use.

Table 12:User Interface Challenges Faced on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

Subtheme	Example Quotations	Respondent ID
Limited interactivity	"Create active links on other social media such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter."	1
	"The site is not captivating as social media which "provokes" you to contribute, or to comment on other people's posts"	31
Not easy to use	"Exchanges are difficult because the platform is not sufficiently fluent."	14

6.2.1.4 Technical Challenges

Technical challenges were also a major theme from the responses to the question on challenges members encountered on AfCoP (Table 13). At least four respondents faced internet connectivity challenges, with respondent 33 indicating "poor internet connectivity" as a challenge while respondent 5 encountered "slow internet connection". Other technical challenges included issues including challenges in uploading documents; inability to see latest posts; logging in issues and challenges on flexibility when navigating the platform.

Table 13: Technical Challenges Encountered on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

Subtheme	Example Quotations	Respondent ID
Uploading documents	"Uploading documents is a challenge"	13
Viewing	"I am not able to see the latest posts"	28
Logging in issues	"Personally, I hate logging in; to use the site. The site is not captivating as social media which "provokes" you to contribute, or to comment on other people's posts…"	31
	"I was not able to log in for more than one year because I forgot my password. I have managed to reset it and for sure I will be able to contribute or share knowledge as necessary."	54
	"I face difficulties when logging in"	43
Platform navigation issues	"there is need for flexibility between different internal links"	48
	"for a beginner, it is challenging to identify on the platform where to create a disseminate a blog post."	53
Internet Connectivity	"1. It's not for rural setting 2. Getting quality internet connectivity is a challenge to sustain following and sharing of knowledge"	30
	"Poor internet connectivity"	33
	"Connection problems as there is no reliable internet connection from where I connect from."	47
	"Slow internet connection from my end sometimes"	5

6.2.1.5   *Financial Constraints*

Another challenge faced by members of AfCoP related to their participation on the AfCoP

knowledge sharing platform was a lack of adequate financial resources. Respondent 2

indicated that they had a *"lack of capacity to finance researches and paper writing"*. This

would most likely adversely affect their ability to contribute to the discussion forum or the blog section of the platform.

6.2.1.6 Demands of Time and Effort to Participate on the AfCoP Platform

Three respondents also indicated time as a major challenge they faced when interacting with the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. Respondent nine indicated that *"some topics are too wide and require more effort for research and yet the time may not be enough for such side work"*, while respondent 22 faced *"time constraints to always access the platform as needed"*.

6.2.2 Suggestions for Improving the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform from Participants of The AfCoP Survey

The respondents were invited to make suggestions on how challenges they had encountered on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, could be mitigated. Of the respondents, 23 of the 54 respondents made suggestions for improvement including: delegation of tasks to members; encouraging member participation; conducting evaluation exercises; availing research funding to members; improving internet connectivity in Africa; improving the platforms functionalities; improving the quality of content; improving the technical skills of users; improving the usage of existing social media tools and platform features; marketing, advertising and publicising the knowledge sharing platform; providing opportunities to meet and providing digital literacy training for members (Figure 53).
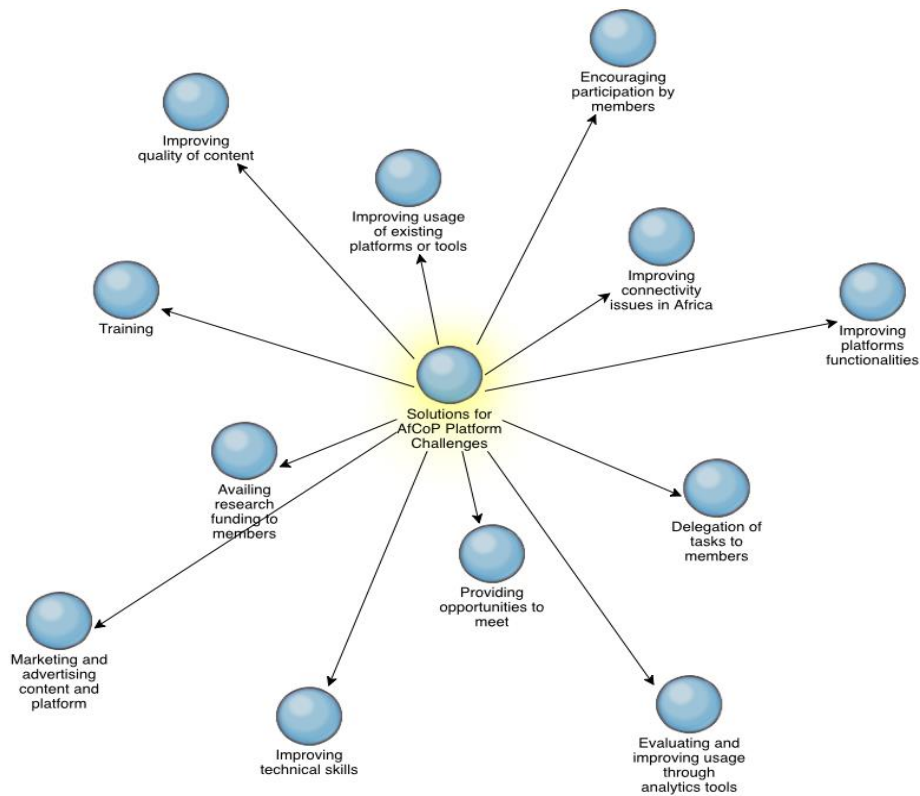
Figure 53: Solutions for Addressing AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform Challenges

6.2.2.1 Delegation of Tasks to Members

Respondent 22 felt that delegating tasks to specific AfCoP members would improve the interactions on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. They suggested that AfCoP *"assign specific questions so that we give it more time and attention"*. This would possibly improve participation as well as improve on the quality of content shared on the platform.

6.2.2.2 Encouraging Member Participation

Another respondent felt that encouraging member participation could improve interactions on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. Respondent 33 had three contributions including:

"1. Encourage more participation from members. 2. Let members feel comfortable to share their experiences and ideas 3. No idea is stupid or inexperienced".

168

Thus, for this respondent it was important for the AfCoP secretariat to actively encourage participation as well as to create an environment where members felt safe and comfortable to share their contributions and where members contributions were valued.

6.2.2.3 *Evaluation of the AfCoP Platform*

Respondent six (6) suggested that the AfCoP secretariat could *"encourage use of social media analytics to evaluate impact and use"* of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform.

6.2.2.4 *Availing Research Funding*

One suggested solution to improve participation on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform by respondent two was on *"associating with AfCoP to find sources of funding nationally and internationally"* that would assist them to conduct the necessary research and be able to publish or post articles on AfCoP.

6.2.2.5 *Improving Internet Connectivity*

A few respondents cited internet connectivity as an issue affecting their ability to participate on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform (Table 13). As suggestions for improvement, respondents 30 and 33 cited the need to *"expand internet connectivity/ coverage"* and to *"improve internet connection".* The challenge of internet connectivity was however a result of insufficient internet infrastructure or access on the side of the concerned AfCoP members, which AfCoP could not directly influence.

6.2.2.6 *Improving Platform Functionalities*

At least six (6) of the respondents offered suggestions on how to improve the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform functionalities (Table 14). These included:

- Creating links on other public social media such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn or Twitter (Respondents 53 and one)

- Making the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform mobile friendly (Respondents 30, 47)

169

- Increasing the platforms ability to be interactive, including prompting users to participate (Respondents 31, 48)

- Making the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform more user friendly (Respondents 31 and 53)

Table 14: Suggestions for Improving AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform Functionalities

Main Theme	Sub-theme	Example Quotations	Respondent ID
Improving platform functionalities and appearance	Linking to social media	"Create active links on other social media such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, twitter."	1
	Mobile-friendliness	"There is need to expand the AfCoP shared platform to allow easy access. Need to keep pace with technological advancements and the dynamics of the ICT Sector and mobile telephone technology"	30
	Mobile-friendliness	"Maybe have an AfCoP KSP app for phones and tablets, just like Twitter and Facebook; make the website a bit more appealing and inviting; send alerts to people's phones via the app, but give them options to regulate."	31
	Increasing interactivity	"Maybe have an AfCoP KSP app for phones and tablets, just like Twitter and Facebook; make the website a bit more appealing and inviting; send alerts to people's phones via the app, but give them options to regulate."	31
	Improving appearance	"Maybe have an AfCoP KSP app for phones and tablets, just like Twitter and Facebook; make the website a bit more appealing and inviting; send alerts to people's phones via the app, but give them options to regulate."	31
	Mobile-friendliness	"Perhaps using mobile data connection as this is cheaper, which would mean that AfCoP must also invest in availing their platform in a mobile friendly format."	47
	Links	"hyperlinks should be use to direct users to outside sources"	48

	User-friendliness	"These above challenges can be addressed by making the website more user friendly. Indeed, a great effort has already be done since 2 years where the platform has been revised. However, there is still room to improve it."	53
	Improving usage of existing platforms or tools	"Just to mention that AfCoP platform is doing great to engage its members and it will succeed more if it really associated the social networks (Facebook and Twitter for instance) in its knowledge sharing activities."	53

6.2.2.7 Improving Quality of Content

Several respondents had also highlighted issues of content quality as challenges they encountered when participating on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform (Table 10). Table 15 shows respondent's suggestions for improving the quality of content, which included:

- Focusing discussions on relevant topics (Respondent 14)

- Having an editorial team to edit content posted (Respondents 15 and 17)

- Assigning questions to specific individuals who would give it more time and attention (Respondent 22)

- Verifying copyright and information credibility (Respondents 40 and 51)

- Increasing variety of topics discussed (Respondent 49)

- Narrowing topics initiated to enable quick reply and engagement (Respondent 9)

Table 15: Suggestions for Improving Quality of Content on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

Main Theme	Sub-theme	Example Quotations	Respondent ID
Improving quality of content	Relevant Topics	"By making more improvements on the platform for discussions on relevant topics."	14
	Editing	"It would be good if AfCoP had a committee to edit members work"	15
	Editing	"There is need to improve on content"	17
	Assigning questions	"Assign specific questions to individuals so that we give it more time and attention"	22
	Verifying information	"Establishing a way by which shared knowledge is certified/validated"	40
	Increasing variety of topics	"Varied topics should be shared."	49
	Copyright checks	"By having a person in charge of clearing copyrights from international organisations and donors"	51
	Narrowing topics	"The topics ought to be narrowed to enable quick reply and engagement"	9

6.2.2.8 Marketing, Advertising and Publicity of the Knowledge Sharing Platform

To improve participation of members on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, respondents suggested marketing and publicising the platform (Table 16). Suggestions under this theme included:

- Giving periodical updates of posts on the AfCoP knowledge sharing site

- Publicising the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform during physical AfCoP meetings

- Improving the appearance of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform to make it more appealing

- Using prompting and alerting services to trigger participation by members on the platform

- Using social media to publicise the platform

Table 16: Suggestions for Marketing, Advertising and Publicising the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

Main Theme	Sub-theme	Example Quotations	Respondent ID
Marketing, advertising and publicising the knowledge sharing platform	Updates	" keep weekly updates to draw attention to it"	22
	Publicising at forums	"More sensitisation to members during AfCoP (physical) forums."	24
	Publicising at forums	"A sensitisation drive be done during physical AfCoP forums"	3
	Improving appearance	"make the website a bit more appealing and inviting; send alerts to people's phones via the app but give them options to regulate."	31
	Prompting and alerting services	"make the website a bit more appealing and inviting; send alerts to people's phones via the app, but give them options to regulate."	31
	Using social media	"Facebook can be useful in popularizing the link to the conversations."	49
	Using social media	"use social media you will reach so many people"	50
	Using social media	"Having it linked to LinkedIn or other pages like Facebook for easy access"	54

6.2.2.9 *Providing Training Opportunities on How to Use the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform*

It was apparent that some of the respondents lacked technical skills on how to navigate the social media tools on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, therefore some respondents suggested that there was need for AfCoP to provide some training as indicated by respondent 51 who wrote *"we would need webinars and tutorials to better use these media"*. Another

respondent 28 also mentioned that they needed *"to learn more…use the platform more"* to improve their own ability to navigate and use tools on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform.

6.2.2.10 Providing Opportunities to Meet Physically

Some respondents felt that providing opportunities to meet physically might improve participation on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. This was indicated by respondent 2 who wrote that *"more socialisation and academic discourse meetings make sense in exchanging invaluable knowledge researched by various committed academics"*. Perhaps this respondent was not in favour of knowledge sharing platforms via social media tools as provided by the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform.

6.2.3   Usefulness of Social Media for Knowledge Sharing

Respondents were asked to respond to the question "Do you think social networks such as Facebook or blogging are useful in relation to work related knowledge sharing?". There were 36 respondents who completed this question and their responses where coded in three main themes which are: positive attitude towards use of social media for knowledge sharing, cautious attitudes towards use of social media for knowledge sharing and negative attitudes towards use of social media for knowledge sharing (Table 17).

6.2.3.1   Positive Attitude Towards Use of Social Media for Knowledge Sharing

At least 31 respondents had a positive attitude towards the use of social media for knowledge sharing. The major subthemes of respondents' views that showed positive attitude towards the use of social media for knowledge sharing included that:

- Social media enables access to knowledge (Table 17)

- Social media is useful for knowledge sharing (Table 18)

- Social media enable the creation of social groups for knowledge sharing (Table 19)

- Social media use for knowledge sharing builds influence (Table 20)

6.2.3.1.1 Social Media Enables Access To Knowledge

At least four respondents felt that social media enables flexible access to knowledge (Table 17). The reasons they gave for this include the ubiquitous nature of social media as it is available to many people daily; as well as social media's accessibility through mobile phones, which enables members to have access to shared knowledge wherever they are.

Table 17: Social Media Enables Access to Knowledge

Main Theme	Subtheme	Examples of Quotations	Respondent ID
Positive attitude towards use of social media for knowledge sharing	Enables flexible access to knowledge	"Yes because of their access especially with advent and extended use of mobile phones."	1
		"Yes, this is because they are accessed by everyone on a daily basis which might not be the case with the platform."	19
		"Yes. Social networks create platforms to share and exchange ideas. With the availability of social networks services in mobile phones, they provide a cheaper and accessible option of sharing related knowledge and experiences"	33
		"yes they are: the medium from which Facebook can be accessed like phone make it easy for one to continue the discussion even outside the office"	9

6.2.3.1.2 Social Media Is Useful For Knowledge Sharing

At least 25 respondents felt that social media is useful for knowledge sharing (Table 18). Some felt they were useful because people were familiar with using them; they were quick and inexpensive ways to share knowledge and they can reach many people at once.

Table 18: Social Media is Useful for Knowledge Sharing

Attitudes towards Social Media	Sub-theme	Examples of Quotations	Respondent ID
Positive attitude towards use of social media for knowledge sharing	Social media is useful for knowledge sharing	"Yes they are useful but need to be well managed ."	10
		"I think yes"	12
		"Yes I do because social media are used differently by people. While some people have time to blog post, some do not but there is possibility to exchange knowledge through social networks such as Facebook and/or microblogging such as twitter."	14
		"AfCoP is doing great in knowledge sharing especially recently with the regular sharing of knowledge products on relevant topics and opportunities. Thus, I think that by boosting social networks such Facebook and twitter, they will reach more AfCoP members and actually promote the transformation of Africa"	14
		"Yes, these social media platforms, enable you to know where to go for any knowledge you need"	15
		"They are useful, it makes access to information easy"	17
		"These provide down to earth experiential knowledge on matters we espouse academically"	2
		"Yes- these days people are quite familiar in using social networks"	22
		"Yes, it has large coverage and access to many people at once"	27
		"Twitter, LinkedIn, but not Facebook. Yes as it is easier more instant and real time."	28
		"Yes. These are quick and inexpensive ways of sharing information. However in a number of cases I have observed a lot of junk although not on AfCoP."	29
		"Yes they are useful. People tend to be more inclined towards social media platforms e.g. Facebook thus, it is easier to get their audience from a social media site by sharing a link, text or a short video which will lead the to the main website with the full information."	3
		"Yes, but they expose materials and information to cybercriminals who may interfere with the networks for malicious and selfish ends"	30
		"Yes. Some of us might share, reshare, contribute, react there"	31
		"Blogging is key and the information can be shared"	32
		"Social media is useful as it can reach a lot of people, even beyond AfCoP members"	36

		"Knowledge sharing is essential and so is social media. Twitter, Facebook are useful social media tools to share knowledge"	36
		"yes because this is the trend"	40
		"These public social networks are effective tools for knowledge sharing and increase usage of the AfCoP website"	41
		"Yes. Social networks are the in thing. many progressive organisations are tapping into their potential in sharing and managing information and knowledge for competitive advantage. Social media is cheap, increasingly innovative and has the potential in reaching to a wide audience...on a global scale."	47
		"Yes- they provide a gateway to broader community of practice beyond our immediate group"	48
		"Facebook can be useful in popularizing the link to the conversations"	49
		"Yes the social media is the best way to reach out to many people"	50
		"Yes. Because they are more common than the unique platform of AfCoP"	51
		"Facebook and Blogging (twitter) are useful in knowledge sharing because it quickly increases the reach of the information and the community members. More than a platform, these social networks have easy contact with people in and out of the community. Hence, by using the latter, the community will easily grow and get used by many people."	53
		"I think they are. Because personally I have shared a lot of information on Facebook. The problem with social networks is that they lose focus and even people who may not contribute in specific areas of expertise, end up being members."	54
		"I think it is a great platform. Social media is changing things in Africa. From fighting corruption in some countries, to social campaigns like fundraising for disaster, to the political arena; social media is the way to go. For work, it is something to explore. I know of people using WhatsApp, twitter to share social information that is work-related."	54
		"yes, quite useful. people visit social networks more than several other sites and therefore it is important to share knowledge where people visit daily"	8

6.2.3.1.3 Social Media Enables The Creation Of Groups And Builds Influence

There were two respondents who felt social media promotes the creation of groups and enable quick interactions with others while others felt the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was powerful and that the social media tools provided enable the growth of one's influence (Table 19).

Table 19: Social Media Enables the Creation of Groups and Builds Influence

Main Theme	Subtheme	Examples of Quotations	Respondent ID
Positive attitude towards use of social media for knowledge sharing	Social media enables the creation of social groups for knowledge sharing	"Yes, there is power in social media . Groups have been established with common interests e.g. syndicate Group which shares economic issues / topical areas via Facebook"	18
		"Yes. They enable quick interaction with others"	23
	Social media use for knowledge sharing builds influence	"The platform is powerful in information sharing. There is a lot of influence through the social media."	18

6.2.3.2 *Cautious Attitudes Towards the use of Social Media for Knowledge Sharing*

There were seven respondents who were cautious about the adoption of social media for knowledge sharing (Table 20). Some respondents believed that social media is targeted for a youthful audience and therefore a platform such as the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, should be supplemental rather than be the main source of sharing knowledge. They also felt that the knowledge shared on the platform was targeted to older people as well. Similar sentiments were also raised by respondents 28 and nine (9) who also felt that social media was casual in nature, which required monitoring and control while "serious developmental topics may not get the serious attention they deserve" (Respondent 9). Respondent 10 felt that

social media needed to be well managed, while Respondent 30 felt that social media exposed

members to the risk of cyber-criminal activity. Respondent 54 also felt that the quality of

knowledge shared via social media could be questionable and wrote "…in a number of cases

I have observed a lot of junk although not on AfCoP". This shows their reservations about the

use of social media for knowledge sharing although they tended to trust the AfCoP

knowledge sharing platform.

Table 20: Cautious Attitudes Towards Use of Social Media for Knowledge Sharing

Main theme	Sub-Theme	Examples of Quotations	Respondent ID
Cautious attitudes towards use of social media for knowledge sharing	Social media is for youths	"It depends on the target audience. Social media mostly target youthful population."	24
		"Online knowledge sharing platform should be supplemental, not the prime source of knowledge sharing especially if the older generation is also the target of such knowledge."	
	Social media is largely casual in nature	"It is important but requires great monitoring and control as social media is naturally casual in nature and thus members may lose focus"	28
		"the challenge with information shared on social media is that it becomes useful for at only that material time, therefore someone can easily forget it, or even fore go it. With Social media, a person usually expects exiting social posts and as such serious developmental topics may not get the full attention that they deserve"	
	Sharing knowledge on social media needs to be managed	"Yes they are useful but need to be well managed. "	10
	Sharing knowledge on Social media is risky	"Yes, but they expose materials and information to cybercriminals who may interfere with the networks for malicious and selfish ends"	30
	Quality of knowledge shared via	"Yes. These are quick and inexpensive ways of sharing information. However in a number of cases I have observed a lot of junk although not on AfCoP."	29

	social media is questionable	"I think they are. Because personally I have shared a lot of information on Facebook. The problem with social networks is that they lose focus and even people who may not contribute in specific areas of expertise, end up being members."	54

6.2.3.3 *Negative Attitudes Towards Use of Social Media For Knowledge Sharing*

There were two respondents 21 and 25, who were out-rightly negative towards the use of social media for knowledge sharing as they feared information could be misrepresented or that social media platforms were "too open" (Table 21).

Table 21: Negative Attitudes Towards Use of Social Media for Knowledge Sharing

Main Theme	Subtheme	Examples of Quotations	Respondent ID
Negative attitudes towards use of social media for knowledge sharing	Fear of misrepresentation	"No. I guess formal/ information could be misrepresented"	21
	Social media is open for all	"I am not favourable to too open platforms"	25

6.2.4 **General User Perceptions Of The AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform**

There were nine (9) respondents who completed the optional question that invited them to give their general perceptions of AfCoP (Table 22). These shared mostly positive sentiments towards AfCoP including that the knowledge sharing work of AfCoP was benefitting communities; promoted the transformation of Africa; engaged members and was a positive innovation as well as a lifelong learning opportunity as it was for Respondent 15 "school after school".

Table 22: Perceptions of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

Subtheme	Examples of Quotations	Respondent ID
Benefits communities	"Keep up the good work of sharing knowledge for the benefit of communities"	**10**
Promotes transformation of Africa	"AfCoP is doing great in knowledge sharing especially recently with the regular sharing of knowledge products on relevant topics and opportunities. Thus, I think that by boosting social networks such Facebook and twitter, they will reach more AfCoP members and actually promote the transformation of Africa	**14**
Lifelong learning opportunity	"Thank you, this is a school after school"	**15**
Powerful for information sharing	"The platform is powerful in information sharing."	**18**
Innovation	"It is a good initiative"	**27**
Promotes transformation of Africa	"It's ideal to continue with it to develop Africa"	**32**
Innovation	"It's great that AfCoP is using social media tools to disseminate knowledge. That's a very welcome innovation...especially for an African centred organisation."	**47**
Engages members	"Just to mention that AfCoP platform is doing great to engage its members and it will succeed more if it really associated the social networks (Facebook and twitter for instance) in its knowledge sharing activities."	**53**
Promotes transformation of Africa	"I think it is a great platform. Social media is changing things in Africa. From fighting corruption in some countries, to social campaigns like fundraising for disaster, to the political arena; social media is the way to go. For work, it is something to explore. I know of people using WhatsApp, twitter to share social information that is work-related."	**54**

6.3   Analysis Of Transcripts From Interviews with AfCoP Members And Secretariat

The researcher conducted interviews with 7 key informants who consisted of five AfCoP members and two members of the AfCoP secretariat. In this section data analysed from transcripts of these interviews will be presented.

6.3.1   Presentation of data from Interviews with AfCoP Members

The five key informants were members of AfCoP who represented the various subgroups within AfCoP, including one who participated in Youth for Results (Y4R) forums; another who represented the Gender for Results (G4R) group and three who represented the Leadership group of AfCoP.

6.3.1.1   How AfCoP Members Joined AfCoP

The interviewees were asked to explain how they became involved with AfCoP. Two (2) of the participants joined AfCoP through work-related projects. Participant AG mentioned that "…my interest in AfCoP started when it became part of a project for ACBF…it was like part of our activities…that's how I joined". Participant DH got involved with AfCoP through a response to a call for submission to an AfCoP related meeting, during their Agricultural related work.

Participant AP stumbled upon AfCoP "through searching for a colleague online"; while two other participants GK and PS were invited to join AfCoP through friends.

Thus, one can join AfCoP through various avenues, either during one's development related work; through online searching or through referrals from friends.

6.3.1.2   Level of Member Awareness of Available Social Media Tools Used by AfCoP

Apart from the main AfCoP knowledge sharing platform which has a discussion forum and blog as the main social media tools for knowledge sharing among members, AfCoP also had Facebook, Twitter and Linked In accounts. These are public social media accounts. The

participants were asked to share whether they were aware of the existence of these public social media accounts related to AfCoP.

Three of the participants were aware of their existence. Participant PS was aware of two but not all, while participant AP indicated "No, do they have those?... they are not advertising well". This shows that only a segment of the AfCoP members has knowledge of the existence of their public social network accounts and are thus not well publicised.

6.3.1.3   Ease of Use of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

All the participants felt that the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was easy for them to use, with an expressed need for improvement. This is reflected by their responses. Participant AG thought the platform was "…very straightforward…easy to use… not crowded".

Participant GK found it easy to use "because I am technically oriented"

Participant DH and PS however felt that there was need for the platform to be improved. Participant PS said "…I don't think we have arrived yet…I think it can be made better than what it is today" while participant DH said that "…some things can be improved… to make it ...more fluent".

6.3.1.4   Member Participation on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

All the five AfCoP members mentioned that they participated on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform at varying degrees. Participant AG indicated that they posted "a few times…to alert the AfCoP community of the availability of this new knowledge product". Sharing on AfCoP therefore was closely intertwined with his work in his organisation. Participant DH indicated that " I have posted many…many times…on the platform". Some were less frequent participants on the platform as indicated by participant GK who said that "…I would say six months ago…that's when I last posted something".

6.3.1.5 *Motivation for Participation on the AfCoP Platform*

Participants in the interviews were asked to share what motivated them to contribute on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. There were several motivating factors that emerged including for marketing and publicity of their own products; having an interest in the topics of discussion; having a desire to share knowledge; the need to acquire new knowledge and seeking opportunities on the platform (Figure 54).
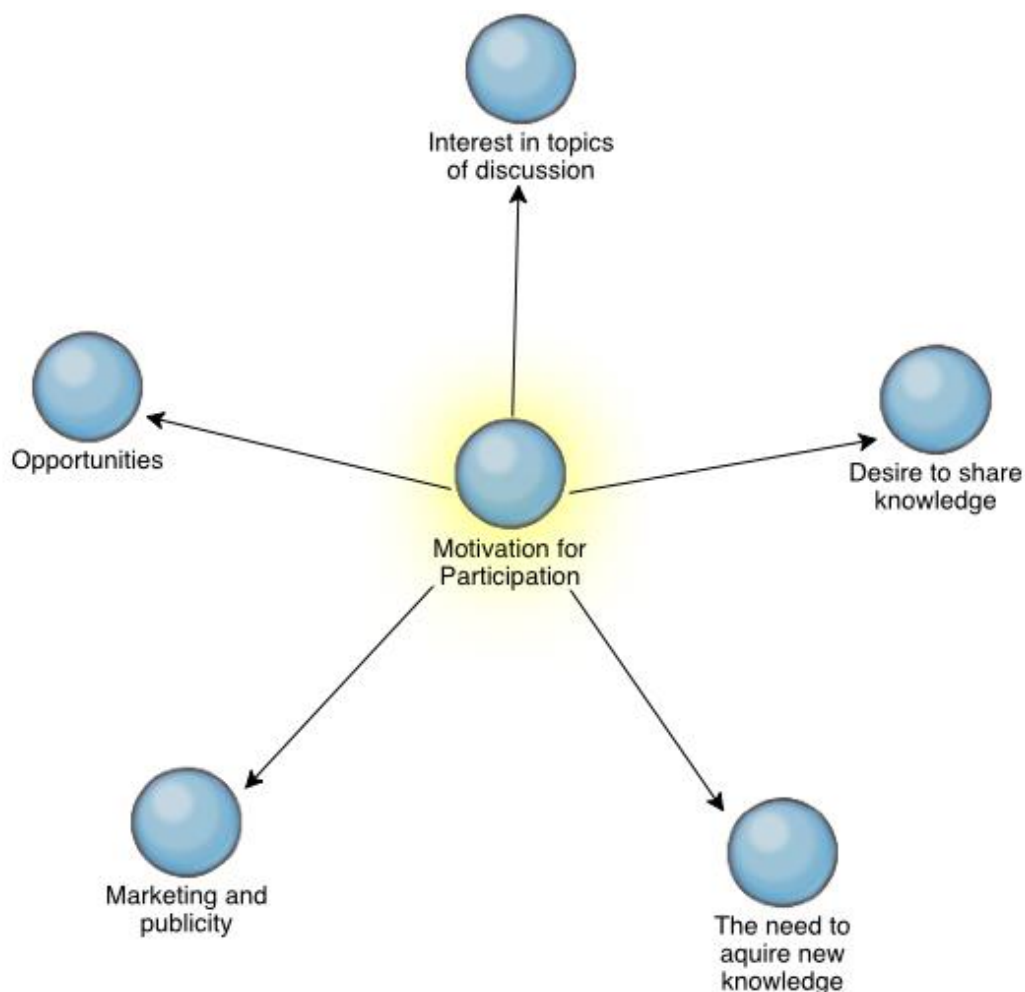
Figure 54: Motivating Factors for Participation on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

6.3.1.5.1 Marketing and Publicity Purposes

For participant AG, there was a strong drive to participate on the platform because it gave them a relevant forum to publicise knowledge products that were produced during his day-to-day work. He said "every time when ACBF produces a new product, we post it on AfCoP just to alert the AfCoP community of the availability of this new product…what motivated me to post was to reach out to this wider community that is based all over Africa and beyond".

6.3.1.5.2 Interest in Topics of Discussion

For participant AP, they were motivated to participate if the topic being discussed interested them. She said *"If I feel that it is a topic of interest…I want to hear people's views…and when I want people to be aware of a particular topic…I want to share with other members"*

6.3.1.5.3 Desire to Share Knowledge

Three of the participants expressed that they are motivated to participate on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform by a desire to share knowledge. The following quotations from participants express this:

> *"…I feel that when people post something, they want input. I also want people to share their knowledge, so mainly its. because I want to share knowledge that I have and also to stay abreast with what's happening"* (AP)

> *"To post what motivates me is the quest, or the need to just share what I would have learnt"* (GK)

> *"I have found that AfCoP has that ability to harvest and then err package and share …information with the rest of the continent through these platforms. So it's really one as a consumer of knowledge…two for me to also share what I know"* (PS)

6.3.1.5.4 The Need to Acquire New Knowledge

Three of the interview participants were motivated by the need to learn new things. Participant DH indicated that *"…usually I go there and download all the documents…on managing development results…the topic was a bit new for me…so I am trying to read the MfDR resources documents so that I will get…acquainted with the knowledge"*.

6.3.1.5.5 Seeking Opportunities

Participant DH, indicated that one the reasons he participated on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was the belief that he would encounter opportunities. He said *"…the third reason was the opportunities sharing. Usually when there are opportunities from ACBF or from AfDB they share it on the platform…so I also go there to get opportunities easily"*.

6.3.2 Factors That Affect Participation on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

From the responses of the AfCoP member interviewees, the researcher was able to decipher three categories of factors that affect the participation of members on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. These include individual, organisational and technical factors (Table 25; Figure 74, 75).

6.3.2.1 Individual Factors Influencing Participation on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

The individual factors that could be drawn from responses AfCoP member interviews include: levels of literacy of the individual; languages used on the platform; demands of time and effort required to meaningfully participate; personal motivation; health and disabilities of the individual; personal interest and knowledge of the individual; the individual's alignment with the organisational vision of AfCoP and the preference of physical meetings by some members (Figure 55).

6.3.2.1.1 The Level of Literacy of the Individual

For participant PS, the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform did not cater for varying levels of

literacy in society, even though the knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform could benefit

many who cannot read and write. Concerning the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform he said

"the target group for knowledge sharing are people like you and me, and yet in the society

there are other groups of people who need certain knowledge systems and some of those

people could be, may have disabilities of some sort like for example impairment, and they

cannot read that stuff. And yet they need the knowledge. Some people may be illiterate, and

yet we normally present information there in English and French."
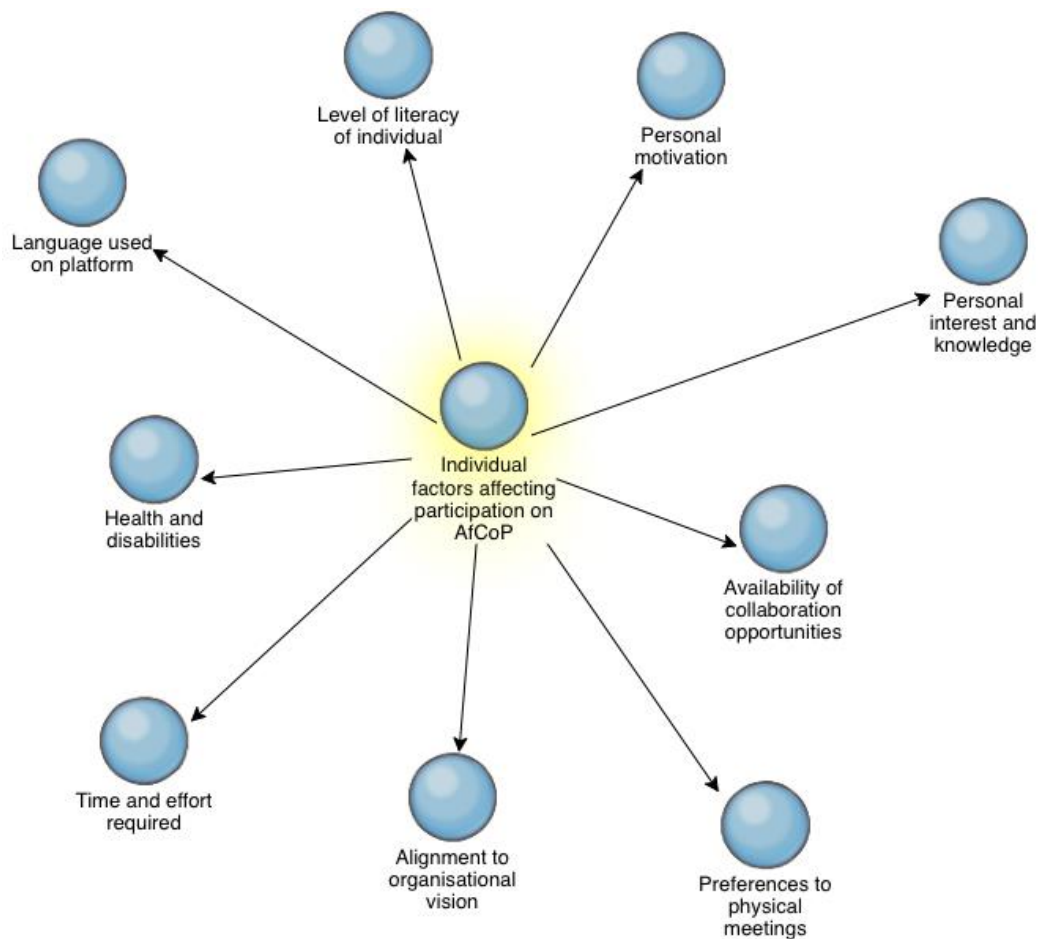
Figure 55: Individual Factors Influencing Participation on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

6.3.2.1.2 Language of Communication on the Platform

Related to the issue of an individual's level of literacy, the restrictedness of languages to the use of only English and French on the platform also influences who is able to participate and who is not. Members of AfCoP therefore need to be able to speak either French or English or both to be able to meaningfully participate as demonstrated by participant PS who said

> *"it's Francophone and Anglophone and that's it. When I can speak Shona, or Ndau or Ndebele. So, this is where I am saying somewhat … that the knowledge sharing is not filtering across the society. Er when you get from there. It should be possible to say I download information and then I know that so and so may not understand English so I will take the other version of it …"*

6.3.2.1.3 Time and Effort Required to Participate

To participate meaningfully on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform requires that members dedicate time and effort related to doing research, reading and writing their post or article. This may not be easy for everyone as indicated by participant AP who mentioned that:

> *"I also used to post, like if you check on my page. But then it takes time because you need to research before you post, its time consuming, you have to read and write something that's relevant even when someone just posts. You can't just respond without researching. So that takes a bit of your time."*

6.3.2.1.4 Personal Motivation of AfCoP Members

The level of participation on AfCoP is also dependent on the personal motivation of the individual member such as their desire to learn or share new knowledge. This is supported by responses from participants DH, GK, PS and AP. Participant DH was also motivated by the belief that participation on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform brought him growth and advancement in his life and career. Participants DH and PS were also motivated to participate

on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform because they built networking relationships useful for their career advancement.

6.3.2.1.5 Health and Disabilities

Participant PS revealed that although he had initially been active on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, a health-related issue had required that he limited his participation on the platform as he could not remain on the computer for long. In his own words

> *"I reduced my participation because of my health problem. Er in 2011 I was operated. So this operation yah... reduced my participation on the computer to start with. Yah I had to stay away from the screen for a while, because it also affected my eyes. So that is why I reduced."*

Health and disabilities can therefore affect the level of participation on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform.

6.3.2.1.6 Personal Interest and Knowledge in the Subject of Discussion

Personal interest and knowledge of the subject of discussion was also revealed to be a factor that affects participation on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. Referring to the question on what motivates him to visit and participate on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, participant DH said

> *"...usually I go there for three main reasons. The first one is for just to see the discussion that were launched, so that when I know something about the topic I usually participate, sometimes people participate and share some document that I download"*

6.3.2.1.7 Alignment with Organisational Vision

From responses to the interview with AfCoP members, it was revealed that at least one participant was not very sure about the goals and missions of AfCoP. This may influence

their level of participation. Alignment of members with the organisational vision of AfCoP may therefore be necessary if participation is to improve in quality and quantity. Misalignment of some members to the vision of AfCoP was revealed by participant AP who said:

> *"I think they first need to outline the objectives of the whole umm learning, whatever they call it, learning and knowledge sharing. So they need to share the objectives of that, the mission, the vision."*

6.3.2.1.8 Availability of Collaboration Opportunities

For participant PS, the ability to collaborate on projects with other AfCoP members was an important issue that motivated participation on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform.

6.3.2.1.9 Preferences for Physical Meetings

Participant AP felt that augmenting the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform with physical meetings for members would increase participation on the platform. AP said: *"if we can have more workshops where people can really interact face to face, know who they are sharing the information with, it's not just something online"*. It may therefore build trust for some to share knowledge on social media with people they would have seen physically in a meeting.

6.3.2.2 *Organisational Factors Influencing Participation on the Platform*

The organisational factors that AfCoP members identified as influencing participation included its lack of focus on indigenous knowledge systems as well as organisational strategies for motivating participation (Table 23).

6.3.2.2.1 Lack of Focus on Indigenous Knowledge Systems

For participant PS, the AfCoP secretariat did not focus on indigenous knowledge systems as a way of driving dialogue to solve human problems on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. He said:

"I think they should also deliberately focus on indigenous knowledge systems as forms of solving the human challenges. Yes. Um especially documenting and making repositories of local knowledge systems. So that we will see how they can come into the mainstream or integrate with the conventional knowledge. When we talk about knowledge, there is a perception that knowledge is Eurocentric. Ehe, and that has not solved er a lot of our problems in Africa because the knowledge is defined as Eurocentric. So it will be good also to look at the local knowledge which means Afrocentric knowledge. ehe. and see how it could be integrated."

An indigenous Afrocentric approach to knowledge sharing would perhaps widen the participation base on the platform, as well as help AfCoP achieve its goal to develop Africa through results.

6.3.2.2.2 Motivation Strategies for member Participation

For at least two of the key informants in the AfCoP member interview, they felt very strongly the need for the AfCoP secretariat to have motivation strategies to encourage participation. These strategies included personal invitations for AfCoP members to participate on the platform. Participant AP felt strongly about this when she said:

"Maybe they need to engage people. Before people used to contribute, but I don't know what has happened now. It has just gone down. Maybe they are no longer probing people on that a personal level. People need to be addressed personally like "Hi Auxillia can you please contribute, what are your thoughts" and all that, instead of just posting and keeping quiet. People need to be engaged at a more personal level."

Giving incentives in different ways such as monetary incentives or free training may also influence participation on the platform (Table 23). Participant AP further said:

"But maybe if they could give incentives for people who are sharing on the platform, it could help. Because you find that you are just writing, you are just writing. I know it's a free thing, but maybe if people could get incentives to write, people would write, because people are really busy. And there are so many platforms these days. Ya. So People need incentives to post stuff. Ya."

Table 23: Organisational Factors Influencing Participation on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

Organisational Factors affecting participation of members on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform			
Theme	**Subtheme**	**Example Quotations**	**Respondent ID**
Indigenous knowledge incorporation	Lack of Afrocentricity	"I think they should also deliberately focus on indigenous knowledge systems as forms of solving the human challenges. Yes. Um especially documenting and making repositories of local knowledge systems. So that we will see how they can come into the mainstream or integrate with the conventional knowledge. When we talk about knowledge, there is a perception that knowledge is Eurocentric. Ehe, and that has not solved er a lot of our problems in Africa because the knowledge is defined as Eurocentric. So, it will be good also to look at the local knowledge which means Afrocentric knowledge. ehe. and see how it could be integrated."	PS
Motivation strategies for members to participate	Personal invitations to participate	"Maybe they need to engage people. Before people used to contribute, but I don't know what has happened now. It has just gone down. Maybe they are no longer probing people on that a personal level. People need to be addressed personally like "Hi Auxillia can you please contribute, what are your thoughts" and all that, instead of just posting and keeping quiet. People need to be engaged at a more personal level."	AP

	Provision for incentives for participation	"Not really, Not really, I don't know what they would need to do. Maybe they need to engage people and motivate people. You know, because sometimes people are busy with their schedules already, like we are already busy. So going there to share is more like in your free time. But maybe if they could give incentives for people who are sharing on the platform, it could help. Because you find that you are just writing, you are just writing. I know it's a free thing, but maybe if people could get incentives to write, people would write, because people are really busy. And there are so many platforms these days. Ya. So People need incentives to post stuff. Ya."	AP
	Monetary payment for contributions	"And even like for posting, when somebody posts, they need to initiate, *ivo kutanga* (they should take the lead*),* maybe to look for people who are willing to post stuff and be paid, even kaminimal fee. Because these days people don't have time. *Zvemahara zvinonetsa* (free things are complicated). Because even for me I used to post. But then I was like iii…Laughs. It's like you are pushing somebody's agenda, somebody's job. I also used to post, like if you check on my page. But then it takes time because you need to research before you post, its time consuming, you have to read and write something that's relevant even when someone just posts. You can't just respond without researching. So that takes a bit of your time. So if they if there are incentives, or I don't know, free trainings, but just incentives, people will participate more."	AP
	Opportunities for career advancement	"And the third reason was the opportunities sharing. Usually when there are opportunities for the ACBF or from AfDB, they share it on the platform so that it is easy to get many opportunities from many organisations there, so I also go there to get opportunities easily. So that are the three main reasons why I shall go to the platform."	DH
Advertising and publicity	Advertising and publicity	"They are not advertising them well."	AP

6.3.2.2.3 *Opportunities for Growth and Career Advancement*

It was also evident that some members such as participant DH were deeply motivated by
opportunities such as calls for proposals that were posted by the AfCoP secretariat on the
knowledge sharing platform. Therefore, by sharing more relevant opportunities on the AfCoP

knowledge sharing platform, the AfCoP secretariat could improve participation by AfCoP members.

6.3.2.3 *Technical Factors Influencing Participation on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform*

The researcher was also able to identify six technical functions which interview participants mentioned as desirable, which could improve participation on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform (Figure 56). These include: compatibility of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform with mobile technologies; for the platform to generate desktop and mobile notifications; as well as for the platform to offer prompting and alerting services that include email alerts of new content on the platforms or reminders to participate. The AfCoP members also highlighted the need to have language translation on the platform, as well as a functional expert search tool
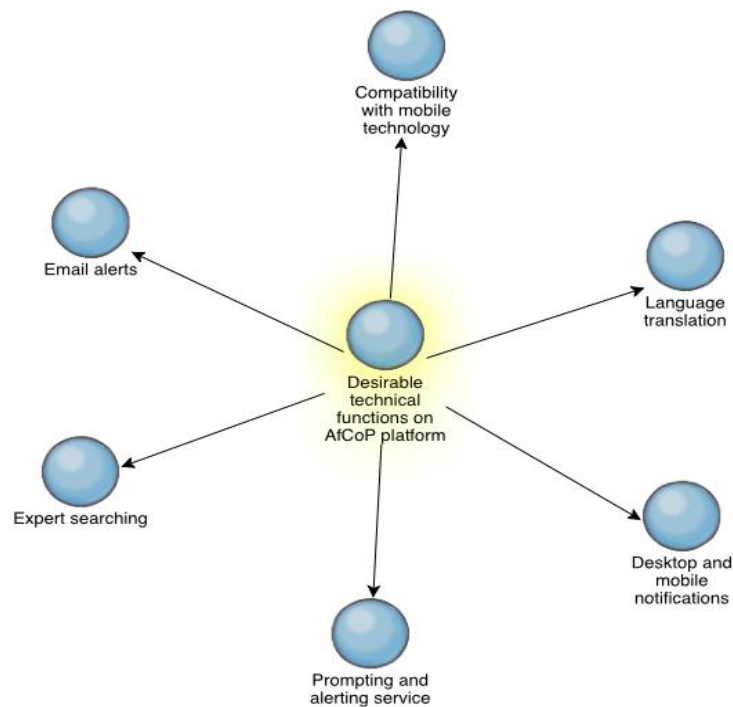
Figure 56: Technical Factors Influencing Participation on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

Table 24 shows the desirable technical functionalities that participants mentioned as desirable

along with the example quotations from the interview transcripts.

Table 24: Technical Factors Influencing Participation of Members on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing

Platform

Technical factors affecting participation of members on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform			
Theme	**Subtheme**	**Example Quotations**	**Respondent ID**
Desirable functions of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform	Compatibility with Mobile technologies	"If it can go mobile, it will reach a wider audience. Yah. In fact it is our recommendation that it should actually try to go mobile as much as possible. Ehe... so that those people are connected today more on the mobile platforms than on the web based and desktop based platforms." "Which is that it doesn't have facilities for mobility and yet mobility is key."	GK
	Desktop/mobile notifications	"Um.. like earlier on you were asking me how do I go on to the platform, am I prompted, am I what thats what you were saying. Perhaps something can be linked to my... there are other social media that I have , I have got Skype, i have got email what, what, what. I don't know how if there are members of AfCoP I don't know how if there are members of AfCoP, I don't know what should happen to my screen to just improve the interactive part of it. Ehe. I don't know what can be done.	PS
		"Ehh, thats not good, ehh for AfCoP, and for a streaming media such as the one that we are trying to use. Because it should actually trigger you to visit by way of twitters, by way of accessing, communicating through the mobile platform, because i am with my phone almost always, so if it can send SMS to just say looks like you have not visited us for the last two months, can you visit us and so on...we have posted this new and so on...notifications on the mobile platform can help enhance"	GK
		"Ehh, thats not good, ehh for AfCoP, and for a streaming media such as the one that we are trying to use. Because it should actually trigger you to visit by way of twitters, by way of accessing, communicating through the mobile platform, because i am with my phone almost always, so if it can send sms to just say looks like you have not visited us for the last two months, can you visit us and so on...we have posted this new and so on...notifications on the mobile platform can help enhance"	GK

	Email alerts	"I wouldn't like to say as active, but ah what was triggering more the visits were the email alerts, that we used to receive about new things posted so we visit, but of late I haven't been receiving the emails, so I visit it once in a while."	AG
		"It's usually because when someone posts something, I have clicked on the option "Would you want to receive notifications when someone posts something". So when somebody posts something and then I get an email that prompts me to go to the website and then check and I am able contribute if it is a topic of interest. SO usually when someone has prompted."	AP
	Expert searching	"Ya. I will start with for example the expert search. It's this aspect for example needs to be improved, so that we can easily know what expertise do we already have in the platform and not suffer to search for, I mean to go to another website to see if we have some aspect in this domain for example, because AfCoP is more than 3000 members, so I do know we can easily have some people who are knowledgeable in some domain, so if this aspect for example is improved, it will be again very effective. Ya"	DH
	Language translation	"And also, the design of it like i was saying they can include the aspect of language translator. It's not a difficult thing these days. Yah language translator."	PS
	Prompting and alerting services	"Laughs. I know. I knew it you were going to ask questions. Not quite because one, like I was saying, that it would be good to have the tool, the language translator . It will also be good to have a tool or a technique for prompts on some important things like in the database they already know that Pindai has interests in this area; so if something like that is happening, maybe it should trigger people in that category and interest, so that they know that there is something like that. You know what I mean. ehe."	PS

6.3.3 The Usefulness of the AfCoP Platform for Supporting Knowledge Sharing Activities

The participants were invited to share their opinions on whether they believed that the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was useful in supporting various knowledge sharing activities of AfCoP. These knowledge sharing activities included: socialising, learning about MfDR and other subjects; collaboration; networking; sharing stories; locating experts; communication

and learning about AfCoP vision, mission and activities. This section presents the findings from the interviews.

6.3.3.1 *Usefulness of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform for Socialising*

Four of the interviewees believed the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was useful for socialising. Participants AP and GK mentioned that they made friends through the platform (Table 25). However, participant AG was strongly of the opinion that the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was not for social purposes and therefore not useful for socialising (Table 25). For him it was strictly a professional forum.

Table 25: Usefulness of the AfCoP Platform for Socialising

Knowledge sharing activity	Status	Example Quotations	Participant ID
AfCoP Platform for Socialising	Useful for Socialising	"Ya its very useful. Like I said you can find out where somebody is. There was a time, when I was coming to Zambia, I wanted to network with people working in Zambia, I just searched on Zambia. And up until now we are still friends. We found each other on the website, and we get to do some assignments together."	AP
		"Socialising with others. Ya its very useful, very useful."	DH
		"Yes of course, in fact i met new people and new friends through the platform. Yeah."	GK
		Very useful. Very useful.	PS
	Not useful for socialising	"mmm.... i don't think it's a very social ...it's a social platform...i think to me it was more professional...so i never used it for socialising...ya... I never used it. so i am not sure if I would rate that its. Ya i can say it's not useful for that purpose... it's not useful for socialising, i just used it for professional work and engagement."	AG

6.3.3.2 *Usefulness of the AfCoP Platform for Learning about MfDR and Other Relevant Subjects*

Four of the participants were of the view that the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was very useful for learning about MfDR, results-based management and other relevant topics (Table 26). However participant AP felt that they had not found the platform useful in terms of learning about MfDR.

Table 26: Usefulness of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform for Learning

Knowledge sharing activity	Status	Example Quotations	Participant ID
Learning about MfDR and other related subjects	Useful for learning	"Ya I think it's very useful because almost, most, i think over 50% of the resources there are on MfDR. So ya it's a source that is very reliable for such type of information. Though myself I am not i was not so much interested in particular...as an information disseminator you know i am not an expert in any one of the subject areas. but i could see from my clients wherever i share this information that ah they really liked it yah."	AG
		"Yes, I have gained new knowledge, especially on RBM. And even on M & E itself. And for Regional Integration as well, even on Regional Integration. There were some discussions that were going on, I think in 2014, they were very useful. I gained new knowledge."	AP
		"Ok. Ok. Great. For the E. Learning about MfDR. It is Very Useful, because all my knowledge on MfDR, I got it from the AfCoP platform. Ya. Very Useful."	DH
		"Through the platform? Eh, the topics usually for which we discuss on the platform are not mainly concentrated on MfDR. Usually they are general discussions on some emerging issues which Africa is facing again for example Agriculture is easy for me, Youth in Agriculture is easy for me, Knowledge management is easy for me, Project Management is easy for me, Gender Issues is easy for me. Eh new things for example is about, for instance, we even discussed once about Ebola, when Ebola was 2014/2015. When we were suffering from Ebola. We discussed a bit about it. There was a discussion about it on the platform and I learnt I learnt from the people. Because when the discussions are launched, sometimes I don't have any information to share, because I'm not an expert on the issue, but when I follow the discussions from the insights of the members, so I really get insights, so this one is like this, Ya I really get many information from the platform, apart from the domain in which I am already involved.	DH

		There are many other domains in which I got some new knowledge."	
		"It's also very useful, yah because there is a lot of content there that was posted especially during those times when it was very active. So, if you revisit those you can actually see the development of the concept and the principle and the philosophy behind MfDR. Yah, from inception and all the way to what it is like today."	GK
		"Ok, yes. It has been good. One thing I learnt er, at some point we had a theme about data for development. It was very useful to conscientise governments or public sector so to speak to say data and statistics is very important for planning for development, if you don't have the statistics it will be difficult to plan. So, I confirm that it has been very useful, and because such topics have helped."	PS
		"Yes, like er...you know, this concept of results-based management, i did not have that knowledge. It has really developed from my being a member to AfCoP. And then participating in the subsequent or the various platforms, conferences, yah."	PS
	Not useful for learning	"Umm, I would rate it as not useful, because they are not very clear on that subject. I wish they could do maybe an introductory level to that subject and then people can progress. Like maybe take online courses on Managing for Development Results. You know. Like people maybe take an online course, maybe one hour a day. But they just post it and I am sure most people have no idea what it is about. Ya, if they could do online training on some of these. Even for RBM as well. Ya they need more online trainings. Ya because I think they just assume that everybody who is on that website understands what Managing for Development Results is. People don't understand what it is. Some people join because they want to network, some people join because they are seeking for opportunities. So, it will be good to actually offer trainings and Ya."	AP

6.3.3.3   *Usefulness of the AfCoP Platform for Learning about the Vision, Mission and Activities of AfCoP*

The participants were also asked to share their perceptions on whether the AfCoP knowledge

sharing platform was useful in helping members gain knowledge about AfCoP's vision,

mission and activities (Table 27). Three (3) of the participants learnt much of what they know

about AfCoP through the platform. Participant PS felt that he was among the founding

members of AfCoP, and therefore he knew about the vision, mission and activities of AfCoP

before the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was created. Participant AP, felt that the

vision, mission and activities of AfCoP were not very clear through the platform. This shows

that although most may identify with the vision and mission of AfCoP, there are some

members who are still not clear about the direction of the organisation and need guidance if

they are to participate optimally.

Table 27: Usefulness of the AfCoP Platform for Learning about AfCoP

Theme	Subtheme	Example Quotations	Participant ID
Facilitating knowledge of AfCoP's Vision, Mission & Activities	Fully supports knowledge of AfCoP	Yes. Because even when AfCoP was, when AfCoP started I hardly knew much about it, but when I became a member of the community that's when I realised that this is a very powerful networking tool	AG
		Ya. Usually when they have activities, or they are upcoming events, they post them on the platform and you already know that there are some activities that are coming. Some activities they have maybe in which you are not involved in, but you get a report you read, and you know that they had last week or maybe one month ago a meeting in this country for this purpose.	DH
		Of course! Aha! I would say 60 percent of what I know about AfCoP is because from the platform, and the other 40 percent is from other interactions, not necessarily the platform. So be very careful when you report on that.	GK
	Does not support knowledge of AfCoP's vision, mission and activities	"Umm Ya to some extent. Though it's not very clear. Like we don't know what they are trying to achieve. Maybe they need to be clear. Like when we go for those workshops, we need to know the purpose of AfCoP. Like the real purpose, where we are going. Cause, like I said you are just put in a group, Gender for Results, but when you go back to your country after the workshops, they don't make follow ups, you are just on your own, it's like you are not even representing anybody, and then they'll invite you again the following year. So, their goals, and missions, and visions they are not clear."	AP
		"No not really...er... maybe because I was in the steering committee at some point. So, I actually know these activities not necessarily through the people, but actually after we had discussed and then now presented this to the membership, yah. So, it was almost like the other way round."	PS

6.3.3.4 Usefulness of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform for Collaboration

The five (5) interviewees were of the view that the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was useful for collaboration (Table 28). The platform had enabled four of the participants (AP, GK, DH, PS) to identify experts and collaborate on specific projects

Table 28:Usefulness of the AfCoP Platform for Collaboration

Theme	Example Quotations	Participant ID
Useful for collaboration	"I think it's very, it's very useful as well. Very useful, like you identify that this person is an expert let's say in climate change and you are doing a publication you quickly identify the person and collaborate, and you come up with an excellent piece of work."	AG
	"Ya its very useful. Like I said you can find out where somebody is. There was a time, when I was coming to Zambia, I wanted to network with people working in Zambia, I just searched on Zambia. And up until now we are still friends. We found each other on the website, and we get to do some assignments together."	AP
	"Collaborating with others, I don't know. I can say it's very useful because, you know when I submitted for example a bid to a call for proposal which does not have any link with AfCoP activities, but i submitted to this call for proposals with some members that i knew in AfCoP, so for this aspect its very useful, but I don't know...I mean it will be in the middle of Very Useful and Somewhat useful, Let me say it is Useful and useful for me between Very Useful and Somewhat Useful, because if I have to search for under experts it will be challenging for me, it will be very difficult. I don't know if you are getting me in my response." "Ya. Ya, because for example the example I just gave now we submitted with other members because I really got what their expertise, what they do in their countries, so when I got the call for proposals i said this guy is in Kenya. It was with a guy in Kenya, it was with another guy in Malawi and another one is Zambia or Tanzania." "So it's because and i know that the one in Kenya for example is involved in development of organisations, organisational development, the one from Malawi is an economist so we submitted the bid together so my knowledge about other AfCoP members expertise has improved since the introduction of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform."	DH
	"Very useful, because of what I said earlier on to say if I post something people comment, they give feedback and that feedback sometimes it's quite instant. Yah. Especially if there are people online."	GK

	"Very useful, very useful"	PS
	"Yes, umm, like i mentioned up to now my colleague in Malaysia, it was through this platform. I also networked with Africa Development Bank in a big way ah and I have got networks there, so it has been very useful in terms of collaborating. And doing some joint work, research and some consultancy work yeah. It has been useful."	

6.3.3.5 *Usefulness of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform for Networking*

All the five participants believed the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was useful for networking with other professionals as they had met other colleagues and professionals on it (Table 29). For AP, most of her current professional colleagues were met through the AfCoP platform. This shows that the AfCoP platform plays a significant role in building the professional networks of members, which may motivate their participation on the platform.

Table 29: Usefulness of the AfCoP Platform for Networking

Subtheme	Example Quotations	Participant ID
Useful for networking	"I think its excellent. Ya its very useful. Because you could see that one is online and if you want to chat you can chat…"	AG
	"Very Useful. I would rate it as very useful." "I have really managed to network. Most of my colleagues now are actually from the website. And even like from Gender for Results, we have created networks. And the last workshops I attended people were allowed to bring in, to empower women. They also managed to do that. Though it needs to refine more, it was just a pilot test. So, women brought in the stuff that they sell from their countries. Like I brought stuff from Zimbabwe, and then Zambians brought their maZambia from Zambia, and then people from Senegal. People brought different things. And then we were given an opportunity to sell the stuff that we had. So, it also broadens your mind, because you get to know what's happening in other countries. They were also trying to promote women entrepreneurs. So, I think that was a good initiative. Though it just needed more panel beating. But since it was a pilot test, I think it went well."	AP
	"I got contact with many people, through this platform. I met some during their events, and I did not meet some until now, but I mean we are still in contact"	DH

	"Ya ya. You know from the introduction of the knowledge sharing platform, I with some members we discussed through emails, I got call for which I cannot submit to, and I know that this guy has a good profile to submit to, I usually I will send them through emails. We even created a youth for results group, social group, in which we share information, we share opportunities when we get them so that it can be useful for other members."	
	"Personally, very relevant. A. in that it provides a platform for interaction with colleagues and other professionals and B. it gives us opportunity for consultancy work. Ya. So i would say very very useful to me personally, as well as to the organisation that I work for."	GK
	"Yes of course, in fact i met new people and new friends through the platform. Yeah."	GK
	"Very useful, very useful. There is also, I also managed to go to parts of Africa, I didn't think I would have done. It was through networking. So, you meet people and they say aw can you come to our platform what what what. So that has been very useful for me."	PS

6.3.3.6   Usefulness of AfCoP Platform for Sharing Stories

The five participants found the AfCoP platform useful for sharing stories, with participant AP having written and published a case study via the platform (Table 30). Participants DH and GK affirmed that the platform was designed for members to share stories so that they learn from each other.

Table 30: Usefulness of the AfCoP Platform for Sharing Stories

Subtheme	Example Quotations	Participant ID
Useful for sharing stories	"Ya. This one I didn't use it much. I dint use it much, but I think I can say it's useful. It's useful. Like stories are life experiences like I mentioned earlier on about tacit knowledge its more or less related."	AG
	"I actually found it very useful, because I was also able to share a story, a case study. So, I found it useful in that you are given the opportunity to share. You are not limited to how many case studies you post, and you are not limited to what you post about. So, it's up to you. So, in that sense it's actually an encouraging tool, an encouraging website. And also, it also teaches you on how to write the case study, the format, because they sent the format, and everything. So, it helps you… because they send the template and you just fill in the specific information that you want."	AP

203

	"Sharing stories, this one is Very Useful. It's very useful because ya for many times, we already share stories, and ya on which people interact, or they send their comments, in the same time many people share their stories and we really send our comments in a way we think about it. So, it's very useful. Ya."	DH
	"Very useful"	GK
	"Erm... sharing knowledge...that platform is actually about sharing and learning of course. so, in view of that i am saying its very useful because it's actually a platform that is provided to us as practitioners to be able to share our stories and to share our so on. in fact, it is one of the objectives of having it there. ya yah."	
	"No, I would say it's useful"	PS

6.3.3.7 Usefulness of the AfCoP Platform for Locating Experts

An important aspect of knowledge sharing is the ability to locate experts, who have insight or expertise in a subject area. The interviewees were asked to share whether they believed the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was useful for locating experts. All five participants believed that the AfCoP platform was useful for locating experts, and some participants including AP and PS were located on the platform and invited to work on some projects (Table 31). However participant DH highlighted that the expert search function needed to be improved as it was currently not efficient. He mentioned the difficulties of having to read through each AfCoP member's profile on the platform to search for the required expertise. He suggested that the search engine be optimised to enable users to search by field of expertise or country.

Table 31: Usefulness of the AfCoP Platform for Locating Experts.

Sub-theme	Example Quotations	Participant ID
Useful for locating experts	"I think it's very useful, very useful. Ya. It's very useful especially for my own use ah and also the nature of my work, myself and my colleagues in the departments. Like any organisation ACBF it works in partnership and network with others. So, it actually helped us a lot in identifying key... key... key partners and networks. Because even as we produce our knowledge, we don't do it all on ourselves. We identify an expert wherever they are based, and they do the work, so it was fine."	AG
	"Ya i think it definitely improved. Ya It improved, I got to know even here in Zimbabwe who else is an AfCoP member, know who is an AfCoP member, and ya we could chat in the inboxes and we got to know each other even when we initiate our own seminars because thats one activity that i coordinate. I could identify that in Zimbabwe we have got so and so, and the person is an expert in this area, if it is gender, we invite them whenever we are having a seminar in that area. Yeah"	AG
	"Yes, it does…. Because they put the list. A person puts their profile. So, if you want to search for anybody like people in Zambia, you can just search "Zambia" and all the people from Zambia will just pop up."	AP
	"These people put their profile, so if you have something in common with a particular individual, you are able to inbox them."	
	"Yes, actually the guys who were doing the RBM training, we found each other on that site. Even the other consultancy firm that I worked for, we found each other on that website. Because I just looked for people with common interests, common backgrounds, then I just emailed them and we started working together, so it's very good for networking."	AP
	"Yes, it has, it has improved. And I forgot to mention… um...I think it was in 2014, I think 2014/2015, the government of Zimbabwe wanted to introduce the M & E policy for Zimbabwe. So, one guy, I think he is the director for the policy something something in Zimbabwe. So, he just posted on the website asking if there were any M & E experts and me and my colleagues saw that post, and then we emailed him, and then we had a meeting. And then we actually helped in facilitating for the drafting of that policy. And they would invite us. The government of Zimbabwe would always invite us to help with the draft, and the workshops and everything. So, we actually saw it through by meeting each other on that platform. Because they had no idea on how to go about it."	AP
	"Ya. Ya, because for example the example I just gave now we submitted with other members because I really got what their expertise, what they do in their countries, so when I got the call for proposals i said this guy is in Kenya. It was with a guy in Kenya, it was with another guy in Malawi and another one is Zambia or Tanzania."	DH
	"So it's because and i know that the one in Kenya for example is involved in development of organisations, organisational development, the one from Malawi is an economist so we submitted the bid together so my knowledge about other AfCoP members expertise has improved since the introduction of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform."	DH

	"Yeah. Because the simple example is based on the things I've already mentioned. I do know that the guy from Kenya for example is working for consulting firm and I know some that domains in where they are involved... thats why i contacted them so that we can submit a bid together. It was some members yes, not for all the members i know but for some members especially those with whom I know I can work with yes. I know more about their activities."	DH
	"Eh I would say very useful."	GK
	"Laughs. Locating experts is funny. Yes era, very useful, mmh. Like thats how I was located, and thats how I located my friend as well, and so on, so you see these are experts in their areas. mmh."	PS
	"Yes, well like now I know in this area so and so is an expert. Just like you are saying, for me to be able to say okay if I need someone in this area, I should contact so and so. And yah, it has been very useful."	PS
Expert location function needs improvement	"Locating Experts. I think that is Somewhat Useful, because apart from those people I was really in contact with during the discussions on the platform it's not so easy for me to identify real experts on some new topics for example what I am saying is that if I go right now on the platform to identify maybe an expert in Agric Economics it's not easy for me to go and to search which expert I have now on that issue in this country. I don't know if you are getting my argument. Thats why I say that locating experts is somewhat useful."	DH
	"Ya. I will start with for example the expert search. It's this aspect for example needs to be improved, so that we can easily know what expertise do we already have in the platform and not suffer to search for, I mean to go to another website to see if we have some aspect in this domain for example, because AfCoP is more than 3000 members, so I do know we can easily have some people who are knowledgeable in some domain, so if this aspect for example is improved, it will be again very very effective. Ya"	DH
Not very useful for networking	"Networking with others in my field of work. This one let me say is somewhat useful, because indeed apart from those with whom I can get in contact easily, locating new experts is a bit challenging. So, I am Agricultural Economist and for example Expert in Knowledge Management, if I want to get in contact with other Agricultural Economist, maybe from Zimbabwe, or from Kenya, it will not be easy for me to see in the community those who are agriculture economists in Zimbabwe. What I will really do is that I will browse, go on the site, and go on members and try to see each profile, on the profile of each member is really challenging, and it will be very difficult. This aspect for example can be improved, because for other websites, for example when you go on a website, the search engine is well designed, so that you have some sense when you put the field of your interest, maybe agricultural economist, and that will choose, I will select maybe Zimbabwe and quickly I will get the result of some members of the community who are agricultural economists and who are based in Zimbabwe. So, this aspect is not so easy on the platform. So, the C. Networking with others in my field of work, is somewhat useful, because for those with those I'm already in contact with its easy, but if I have to search for another person it will be challenging, so this one is also somewhat useful"	DH

6.3.3.8 *Usefulness of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform for Communication*

Interviewees were invited to share their beliefs on whether the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was useful for communication. Three participants (AG, DH and GK) thought it was useful (Table 32), however, they mentioned that several improvements could be made which would improve its effectiveness.

Table 32: Usefulness of AfCoP for Communication

Subtheme	Example quotations		Participant ID
Useful for Communication	"Ya I think it is a very effective to..., ya to community members who already participating. It's very effective."		AG
	"As a communication tool, I think that AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform is very effective because we communicate more on it. "		DH
	Very useful as well, because it provides a facility for chats one on one, it also provides a facility for group communication, which i think is a good thing to have. The only disadvantage is you only get to it, when you are on it. it's not triggering us... advertising to us sufficiently.		GK
Communication ability needs improvement	Need for marketing and publicity of platform	"there is need to market it widely so that other development practitioners they can also come on board."	AG
	Needs mobile technology compatibility	Up to 40 percent effective because of what I said earlier on. Which is that it doesn't have facilities for mobility and yet mobility is key.	GK
	Needs to incorporate public social media tools	What usually I suggest is that if they add the social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, then they will be more active, I think they will get more people involved on the platform...more people who never knew about AfCoP, they will really involve them, get them on the platform, because you know with social networks really get people internationally. You can target some people , for example if you are targeting new members in some country it's easy for you to target them, to narrow, people, with what background you really want to be involved on the platform, so we usually use it in our organisation I know very well what I am talking about. They are very effective. so as of now the platform is effective, and it will be very very effective if they add social networks. Because the social networks I am talking about are already there the Facebook and the Twitter. But come when they will become very active, I mean other system will be very effective	DH
			PS

		It is somewhat effective. Somewhat effective. Why I am saying that is that ah, the target group for knowledge sharing are people like you and me, and yet in the society there are other groups of people who need certain knowledge systems and some of those people could be, may have disabilities of some sort like for example impairment, and they cannot read that stuff. And yet they need the knowledge. Some people may be illiterate, and yet we normally present information there in English and French.	
	Needs to cater for various literacy levels		
	Needs to cater for people with disabilities or health impairments	It is somewhat effective. Somewhat effective. Why I am saying that is that ah, the target group for knowledge sharing are people like you and me, and yet in the society there are other groups of people who need certain knowledge systems and some of those people could be, may have disabilities of some sort like for example impairment, and they cannot read that stuff. And yet they need the knowledge.	PS
	Needs to increase languages of interaction	So, its Francophone and Anglophone and thats it. When I can speak Shona, or Ndau or Ndebele. So, this is where I am saying somewhat in the sense that the knowledge sharing is not filtering across the society. Er when you get from there. It should be possible to say I download information and then I know that so and so may not understand English so I will take the other version of it and…	PS
		But it's a very complicated er aspect that one about on how to dissect knowledge into various languages that people, local languages. But perhaps the honours will be on that government, let's say we are members of AfCoP here in Zimbabwe, so maybe when they that information, they should be doing something about that information so that it is in vernacular, you know what I mean. But there is no deliberate effort at the moment to do that. We are very happy with English and French. Laughs.	PS

6.3.4   Suggestions for Improving the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform by Interviewees

The five interviewees were asked to suggest improvements that could be made to the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. Seven categories of suggestions were given including adding and improving functions such as expert searching, alerting and prompting service; accessibility to mobile gadgets; maintaining an active presence on mainstream social media; providing incentives for participation including monetary and training; advertising and publicising the platform; improving the administration of the platform; availing content

208

relevant to Africa and personally engaging and inviting members to participate (Figure 57).

These suggestions were similar to those given by respondents to the AfCoP member survey.
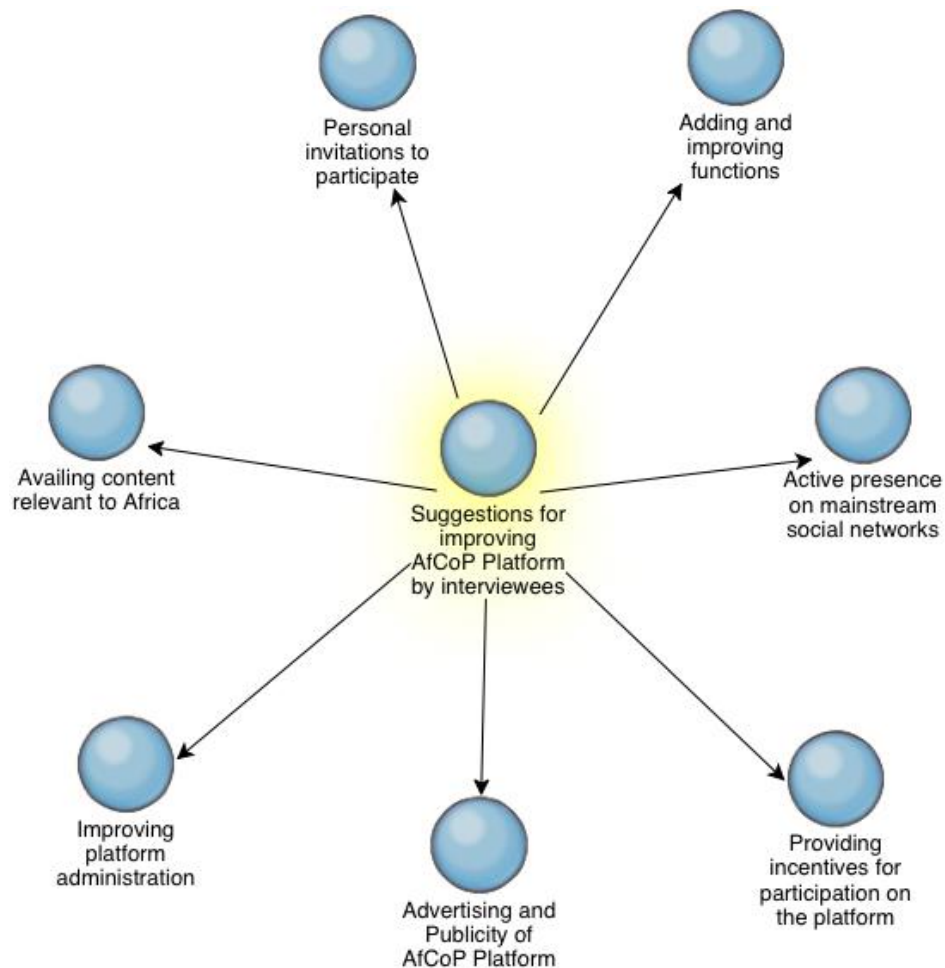
Figure 57: Suggestions for Improving AfCoP Platform by Interviewees

6.4   Analysis of Interviews with the AfCoP Secretariat

The researcher was able to hold face to face interviews with two members of the AfCoP

secretariat, to gain an organisational perspective on the management of the AfCoP knowledge

sharing platform. The findings are reported in this section.

6.4.1   Goals of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

The interviewees were asked to share their views on the goals and aims of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. According to the interviewees, AfCoP knowledge sharing platform exists to facilitate knowledge sharing among members, including being a platform to share lessons learnt; share experiences and improving the implementation of MfDR among African countries. The AfCoP knowledge sharing platform is also useful for collaboration on projects among members; and enables the organisation to reach a wide audience of development practitioners across Africa in a cost and time effective manner (Figure 58).
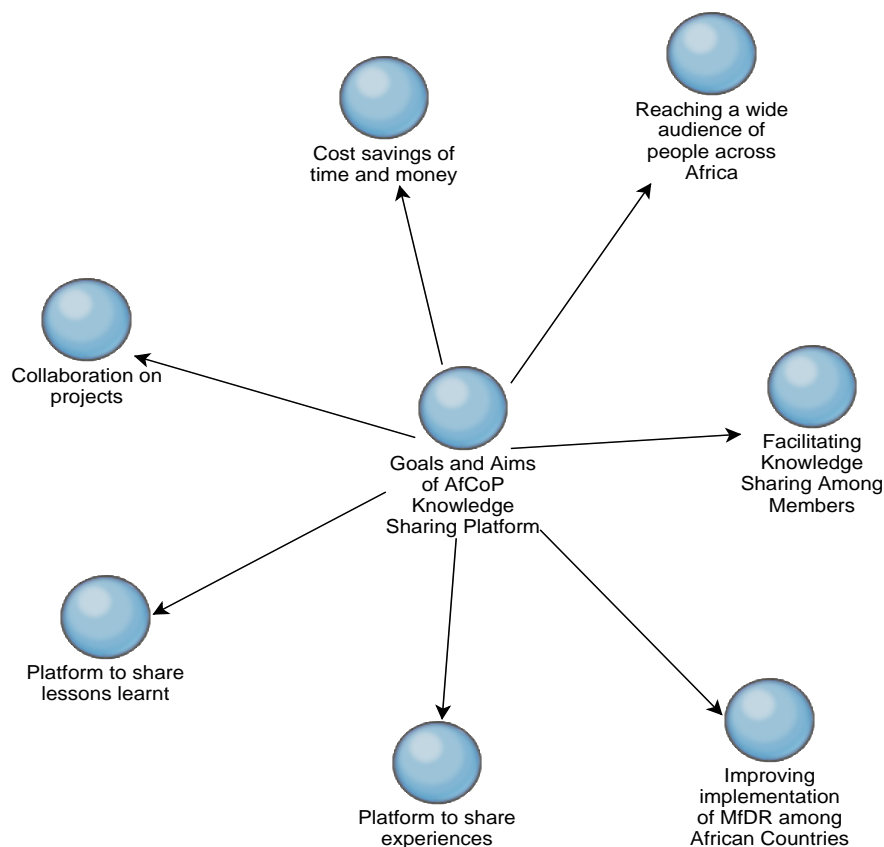
Figure 58: Goals of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

6.4.2 Features of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

The features of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform included: a discussion forum; blog section; email; registration; special interest groups; knowledge products and public social networking accounts including Facebook; LinkedIn and Twitter (Figure 59).
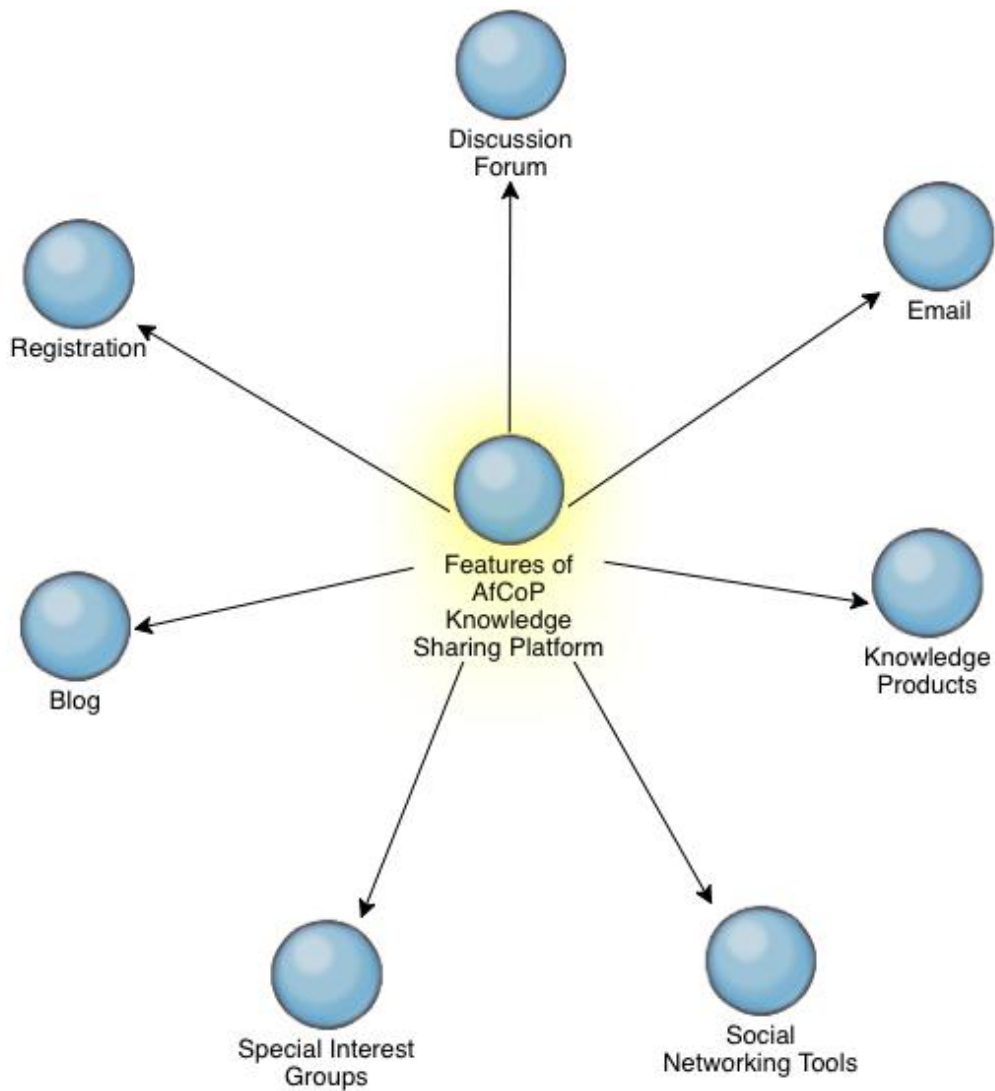
Figure 59: Features of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

6.4.2.1   Discussion Forum

According to the interviewees, this is a section of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, where discussion topics were launched by the AfCoP secretariat and AfCoP members were invited to participate. The AfCoP secretariat launched one or two topics a month. AfCoP members were able to respond in discussion through replies to the topic. They were also able to view other member's responses and reply to them.

A key feature of the discussion forum was that the discussions were initiated and moderated by the AfCoP secretariat. An AfCoP member was not able to initiate a new discussion topic in this section except to respond.

6.4.2.2   Blog Section

The blog section of the knowledge sharing platform enabled any member of AfCoP to write and publish articles on relevant development topics. Other members could read and respond to that article through comments.

6.4.2.3   Special Interest Groups

The AfCoP knowledge sharing platform also had a feature that enabled members of AfCoP to create "specific groups of interest within the platform" (FT). Members could create special interest groups such as for Monitoring and Evaluation with the assistance of AfCoP as revealed by participant FT who said members "with our support, can create a subgroup in the AfCoP community of experts in monitoring and evaluation so that they can… discuss specific issues related to monitoring and evaluation without spreading the word to the whole community".

6.4.2.4   Email

The AfCoP knowledge sharing platform had a feature which allowed members to send emails to each other, as well as to the secretariat. The email facility within the AfCoP knowledge

sharing platform enabled the secretariat to create a mailing list through which they sent email alerts and an "AfCoP Weekly letter" (AM)

6.4.2.5 Online Chat

The platform also has an online shat feature, which enabled members to chat in real-time when they are logged on.

6.4.2.6 Knowledge Products

The AfCoP secretariat repackaged knowledge from the Discussion Forums into codified knowledge products. These included: knowledge briefs; case studies; tools and guidelines and reports.

Case studies were published articles of how something was being done or was happening in a context. AfCoP wrote on it to "explain the context, …the activities implemented; the results…and… the policy recommendations" (FT). Knowledge briefs were repackaged knowledge from the discussions on the discussion forum while tools and guidelines were step by step guides on how specific issues can be implemented by individuals or organisations.

6.4.2.7 Registration

Registration was a key feature of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. To be able to use the platform, an individual was to be registered as a member. The platform allowed for prospective members of AfCoP to self-register. They were then confirmed for membership by the AfCoP secretariat.

6.4.2.8 Public Social Networking Tools

The interviewees representing the AfCoP secretariat also confirmed that the organisation also subscribed to public social networking sites including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. According to participant FT, these public social networking accounts were there to give "more momentum to content we have on the platform. We are not creating new content on

Facebook, on Twitter on LinkedIn…We are just using the social networks to disseminate more, or to reach more people with content we already have on the platform. So, the platform is the base and the social networks are just avenues of disseminating the information".

6.4.3 Organisational Factors Influencing Knowledge Sharing on the AfCoP Platform

The AfCoP secretariat revealed six key roles that the AfCoP management plays in supporting knowledge sharing on the platform. These include: administration and moderation of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform; providing policies and guidelines governing the use of AfCoP knowledge sharing platform; providing financial support to sustain the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform; communicating with members on the platform (Figure 61). The AfCoP management were also responsible for the vision, values and culture of AfCoP, which were influencing knowledge sharing on the AfCoP platform (Figure 60).

6.4.3.1 Administration and Moderation of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

The AfCoP management provided administrative support for the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform including webmasters; knowledge management expertise; discussion moderators and consultants. The AfCoP platform has three main moderators, two of whom were based in Harare and one at the African Development Bank. Some of their functions included approving membership to the platform and editing posts published after receiving permission from the original author.

Moderators for online discussions are engaged by AfCoP to facilitated discussions initiated by AfCoP. These were consultants who were experts in a specific field. The knowledge management expert ensured that knowledge is captured and codified into knowledge products containing lessons, stories and best practices. The knowledge products included case studies, briefs, tools and guidelines.
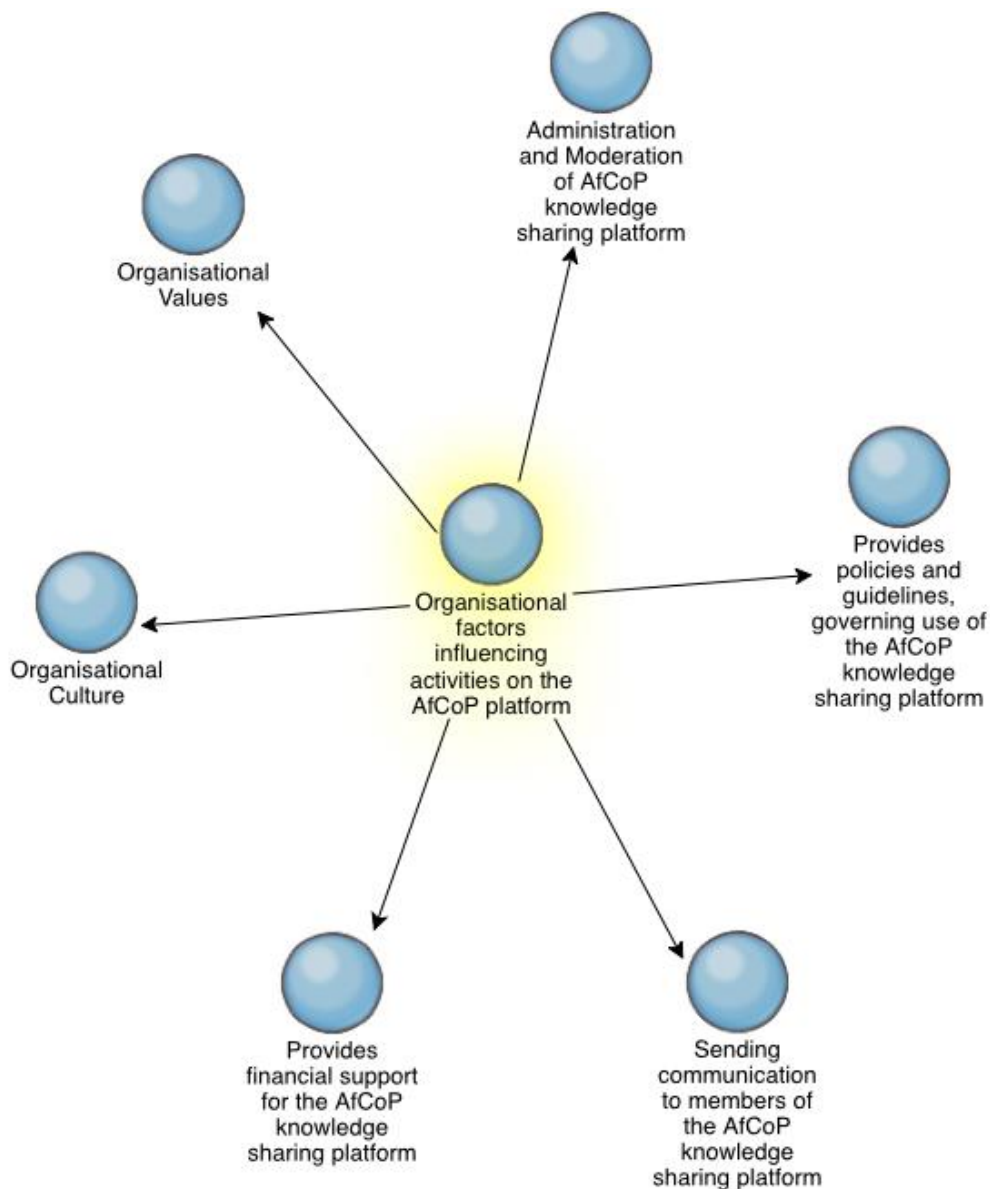
Figure 60: Organisational Factors Influencing Knowledge Sharing on the AfCoP Platform

6.4.3.2   *Policies and Guidelines Governing Use of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing*

Platform

The AfCoP secretariat was responsible for creating policies and guidelines governing the use

of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. Participants FT and AM indicated that they did

not have written down policies, however for the discussion forum, only commissioned

moderators could start a discussion. Other members could only read and reply on the

discussion forum. Another policy related to participation on the platform related to membership. Although individuals could self-register to become members on the platform, membership was subject to approval by the platform administrators.

The platform itself had a generic "Terms and Conditions of Use" designed by Ning, the vendor of the platform that was used by AfCoP. These guided the behaviour of users, including use of appropriate language.

6.4.3.3   Financial Support for the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

The AfCoP management financially supported the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. The costs were mainly for administrative staff and the platform's software. Participant AM confirmed that *"…Ning is hosting the platform…so we pay a fee… per year we don't pay more than ten thousand".*

The administrative staff costs include salaries for the webmaster and knowledge management experts. There are also periodic payments for consultants or moderators of discussions on the platform according to participant AM, they *"…pay them per topic they moderate".* They also hired and paid tokens of appreciation to *"consultants to develop guidelines, tools, case studies…when fully developed …into the standard we want"* AM. Therefore, there were some form of incentives given to AfCoP members, though it was specific to the production of codified knowledge relevant to AfCoP needs.

6.4.3.4   Communication with Members

An important role of the AfCoP secretariat was to communicate with the members to enhance participation on the platform. The AfCoP secretariat created an "AfCoP weekly letter", a weekly newsletter which was distributed on a weekly basis to the members to spread information about the activities or discussions on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform.

6.4.3.5 *Values and Culture of AfCoP*

One interviewee representing the AfCoP secretariat demonstrated that AfCoP has a strong commitment to a culture of knowledge sharing. Participant AM said *"we do value knowledge sharing…AfCoP is particularly for Managing for Development Results"*. She also mentioned that the culture being created through AfCoP is *"to share knowledge among themselves, and also to look for best practices, to look for good lessons from other countries"*. Knowledge sharing is therefore highly valued by the AfCoP management, hence the creation of this platform whose main objective is to share knowledge on Managing for Development Results.

6.4.4 Achievements of the AfCoP Platform in Meeting Organisational Goals

The interviewees representing the AfCoP secretariat were asked to share their views on the achievements of the AfCoP platform in view of the organisational goals and they mentioned that the AfCoP platform:

- Facilitated knowledge sharing

- Facilitated knowledge contributions from members

- Promoted sharing of knowledge in a timely manner

- Promoted learning among members

- Facilitated collaboration among members

- Built professional networks

- Builds relational networks

- Enabled the organisation to reach a wide audience across Africa

- Enabled the growth of membership of the community and

- Reduced costs related to meetings among members (Figure 61)
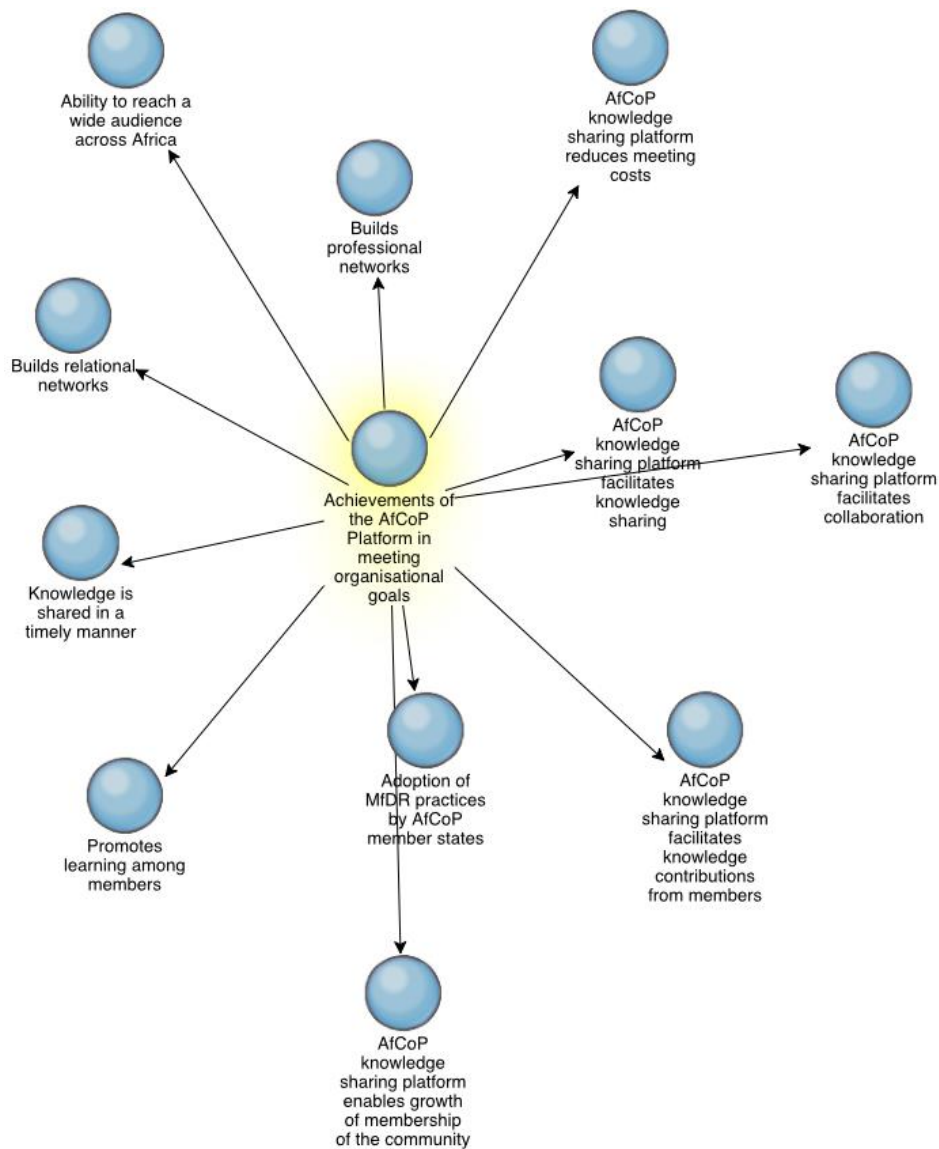
Figure 61: Achievements of the AfCoP Platform in Meeting Organisational Goals

6.4.4.1 Knowledge Sharing Activities Supported by AfCoP

The AfCoP knowledge sharing platform according to FT and AM facilitated knowledge

sharing activities, including building relationships and networks among members. Participant

AM said *"personally… I have so many friends"* on the platform. She was able to also build

her professional network. The platform also promoted learning, capacity building and

collaboration among members as indicated by participant FT who said that

"in terms of facilitating collaboration, capacity strengthening, knowledge sharing on the platform, from the stories we have from some members, I think we are making some impact on the field and also on the work of some practitioners".

6.4.4.2 Reduced Meeting Costs

The platform also enabled the organisation to facilitate meetings among AfCoP members at a reduced cost, when compared to costs associated with hosting physical meetings. Participant AM said

"It's quite useful and cost effective as well, because…we have more than 4700 members, getting them into a meeting room and discuss one issue, it would have been costly and almost undoable. But through social media and the platform, this is quite possible…"

6.4.4.3 Adoption of MfDR Among Member States

A major goal of AfCoP was to achieve the adoption of MfDR by member countries. Through the platform, several countries and regional blocks had adopted MfDR practices in their governance structures. These included Ivory Coast, Malawi; Zimbabwe and WAEMU.

6.4.4.4 Growth of the AfCoP Membership

The AfCoP knowledge sharing platform ability to reach a wide audience had enabled the growth of the AfCoP membership base. According to participant AM, because of the AfCoP platform *"…you are able to reach 4000 plus people; and most of these are professionals, development practitioners, MfDR practitioners, and discuss an issue".* Because of the platform participant AM also said that *"we have more numbers coming…so that mean people are getting interested…we are seeing increased participation of the members in terms of posting country documents and policy".* The AfCoP knowledge sharing platform had

therefore enabled the growth of the AfCoP membership from a distributed geographic context, and increased participation among members.

6.4.4.5 *Challenges of Measuring Real Impact of the AfCoP Platform*

Participant FT mentioned that it was quite challenging for the AfCoP secretariat to measure the real impact of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. Although they could quantify utilisation it was difficult to measure impact. However, periodically they invited members to write case studies or issued call for stories where they asked people to share how useful a knowledge product has been.

6.4.5 Challenges Observed by the AfCoP Secretariat on the AfCoP Platform

The AfCoP secretariat encountered the following challenges in managing the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform:

- Adequacy of resources to manage the platform

- Internet accessibility by some members of AfCoP

- Lack of ICT skills among members of AfCoP

- Low levels of participation by members of AfCoP

- Addressing cultural differences among AfCoP members

- Quality of content shared by members

- Sustainability of the AfCoP Platform (Figure 62)

6.4.5.1 *Adequacy of Resources to Manage the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform*

Although participant AM and FT felt that the staffing resources for managing the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform were adequate, there was still scope for additional resources to create a bigger platform. Closely related to this was the issue of sustainability. Participant AM expressed fears that AfCoP would struggle to survive if its current financial and administrative support were removed. She said "…AfCoP itself as a community of practice is

not a legal entity. And the platform is part of the project… supported by AfDB and ACBF.

So, it's a project and its pilot. So, if the financial support is not there, I don't know what will

happen. And the project is ending in June next year. So already there are discussions ongoing

on issues of sustainability". The AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was therefore heavily

dependent on the financial support of its partners, and therefore was not a self-sustaining

online community.
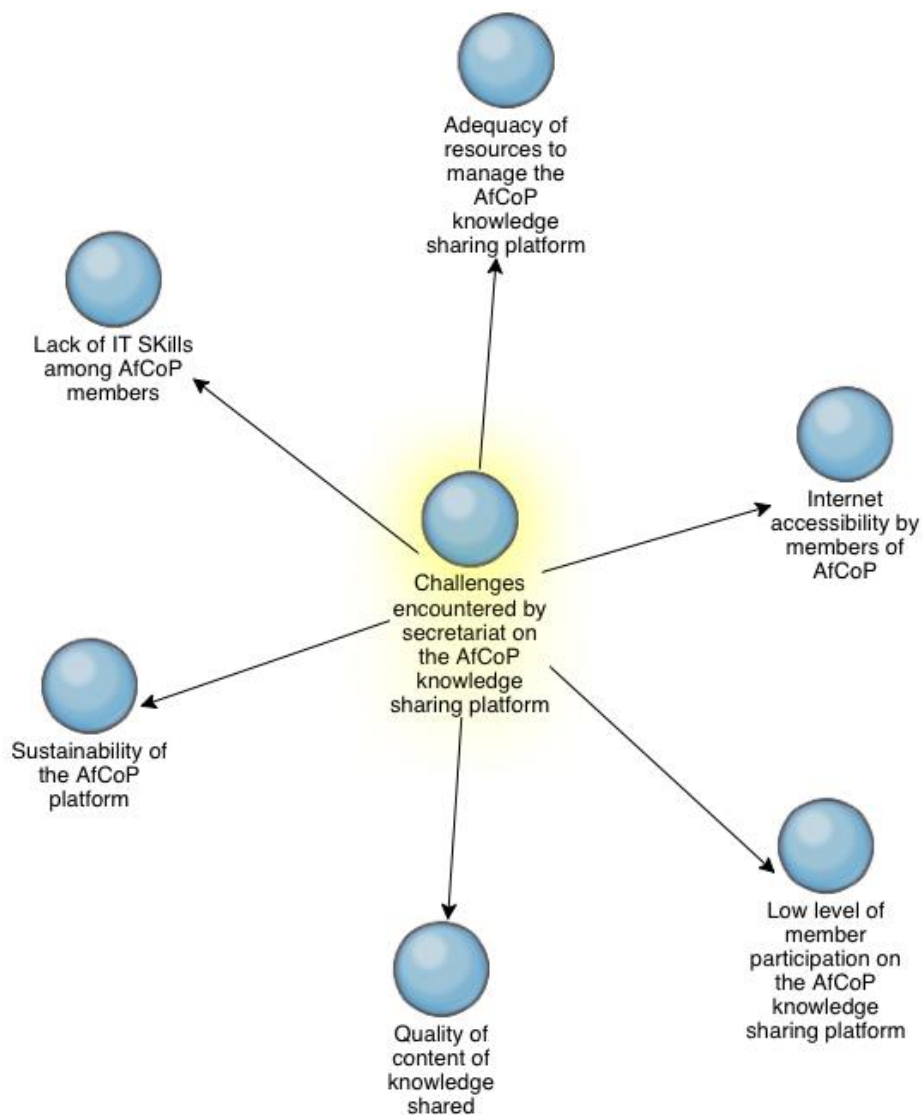
Figure 62: Challenges Encountered by the Secretariat on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

6.4.5.2   Internet Accessibility Among Members of AfCoP

Participant FT also raised the issue of internet accessibility as a challenge for members on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. He admitted that

> *"especially in the context of Africa where electricity is not stable, internet is not for everyone… so I think for now we may not be realising the full potential of the …social networks".*

To fully participate on the platform, members required good access to the internet and yet some struggled with internet access. This was corroborated by several respondents to the AfCoP Member Survey.

6.4.5.3   Lack of ICT Skills Among Members of AfCoP

Referring to the types of people who were members of AfCoP, participant FT indicated that

> *"Many of them are adult, working in ministries, international organisations and… those people are not quite Internet friends…If in a community you have a majority of the people who are adult, who are not conversant with internet, or social media, and you are using social media to advance your work, definitely you may not manage to engage all of them…so ICT skills… internet utilisation is…key constraints that explain why we are not having much activity on the platform"*

Therefore, limited ICT skills and ability to navigate the internet were requisite skills for full participation on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform and yet some members lacked these which negatively affected the level of participation.

6.4.5.4   Lack of Participation Among Members of AfCoP

The AfCoP secretariat indicated that lack of participation among members was a major challenge on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. Participant AM said "…*It has been hard to get the members to contribute on a topic"*. She also mentioned that another challenge

222

they faced was *"to get the government officials to contribute and take it seriously"*.

Participant FT also mentioned that *"...we have close to 5000 members, but can you imagine for one online discussion you can have roughly 20 to 30 comments. It's very low"*

Low levels of participation were also related to age. When comparing participation on the platform by the ages of the AfCoP members, participant AM mentioned *that "... in terms of adults and young people, young people are more active".* Therefore, younger people felt more comfortable and were conversant with social media tools for knowledge sharing on the platform.

Participant AM also attributed low levels of participation on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform to lack of interest in the topics of discussion published. She said:

> *"But I understand not all members…for instance a topic is on agriculture, not everybody will have a background or is interested in agriculture…not everybody will have an interest in every topic".*

This would explain why some would participate in a given topic and others would not.

6.4.5.5   Addressing Cultural Differences Among AfCoP Members

The AfCoP knowledge sharing platform had members from diverse cultural backgrounds spanning wide geographic regions. As such there were cultural differences evident in how different members approach the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. Related to the level of participation on the platform, participant AM observed that "there is a variation… between Anglophone and Francophone… Anglophone are more active compared to Francophone".

6.4.5.6   Quality of Content Shared by AfCoP Members

Another issue the AfCoP secretariat had to contend with on the platform related to the quality of content shared by members on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. Participant AM indicated that *"when you compare the substance of discussion, you see the more the mature*

the person, the more substance is in the contribution they have". Thus, she was admitting that while the younger participants were more active on the platform their contributions may have lacked quality. For participant FT, while he lamented on the low level of participation by members of AfCoP, he admitted that *"it's not a problem of quantity but a problem of quality"*. It was therefore more important for the AfCoP management to have good quality contributions from members on the knowledge sharing platform rather than to amass lots of contributions from members with no real value to the organisation.

6.4.6   Suggestions for Improvement of The AfCoP Platform by The AfCoP Secretariat

The interviewees representing the AfCoP secretariat suggested the following to mitigate the challenges faced by or improve the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform:

- Giving meaningful incentives

- Discussing relevant and interesting topics

- Using relevant languages

- Allowing for flexibility in making contributions

- Identifying country specific champions

- Motivating and engaging AfCoP members

- Advocacy, publicity and marketing of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform

- Training on how to use the AfCoP platform features

- Improving internet access in African countries

- Seeking additional funding for continuity (Figure 63)

6.4.6.1   Giving Incentives for Participation on the AfCoP Platform

For participant FT, it was important for AfCoP to consider giving incentives to encourage participation on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. According to participant FT

"…From my past experience, you even need to pay…you really need to find incentives to get people to participate. And the incentives are specific for each community".
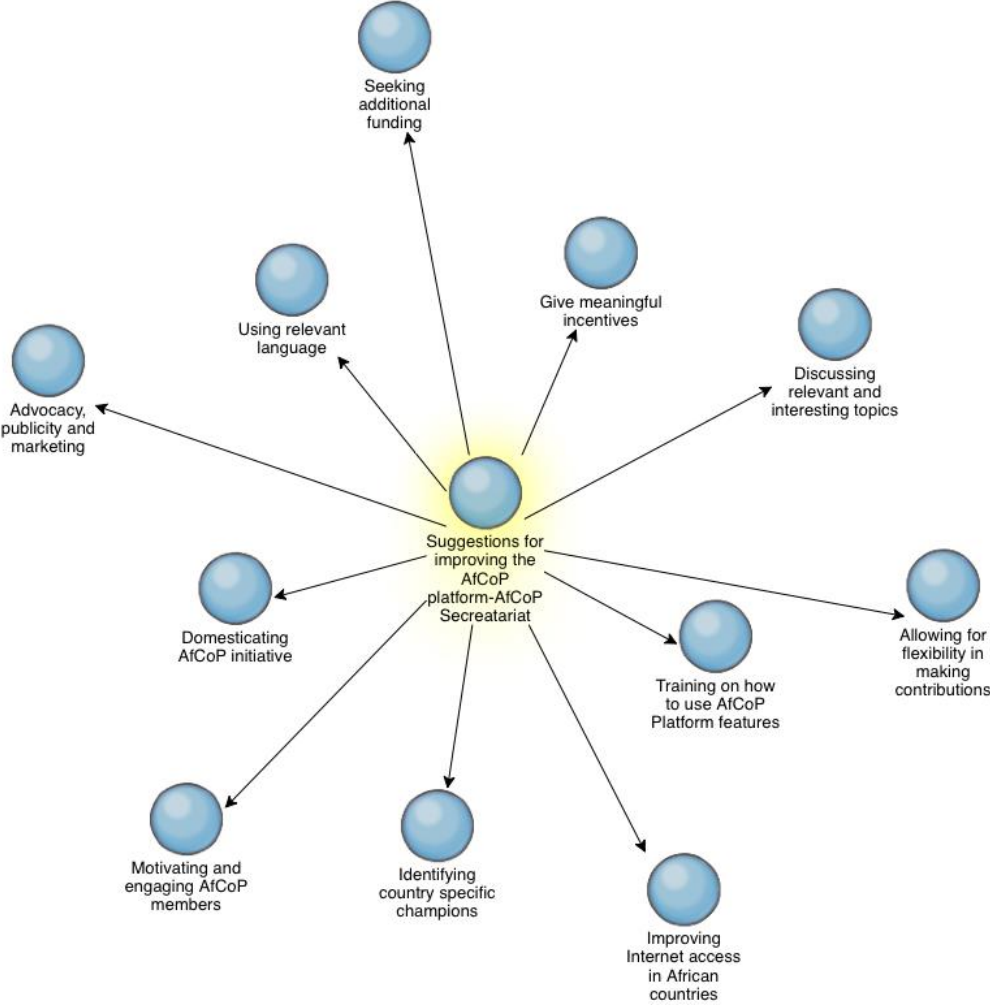
Figure 63: Suggestions for Improving the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

Participant FT also highlighted that they had accumulated almost two hundred knowledge products through commissioned calls, where they paid consultants for contributions. He also acknowledged that *"if we were waiting for participants to contribute, we would not have that big number. So, it's basically creating new ways, new incentives for people to participate".*

Some incentives that participant FT suggested were *"Award of the best contributor"* and monetary payments for *"Best blogs"*.

6.4.6.2   Discussing Relevant and Interesting Topics

Since not all members would be interested in all the topics of discussion initiated on the platform, participant AM indicated that it was necessary for AfCoP to "make sure the topics are of their interest". This would help to increase participation among members.

6.4.6.3   Allowing for Flexibility in Channels for Making Contributions

In view of the challenge that not everyone was comfortable with making posts directly on the platform, participant AM also suggested that it was necessary for AfCoP to be flexible in allowing people to contribute through channels they were most comfortable with. She said, "Before we were only allowing people to contribute online, but now we are flexible, people can send their comments by email and I will post them and will respond".

6.4.6.4   Using Relevant Languages

Participant AM also felt that it was necessary for AfCoP to use language that was easy for everybody to understand. This was a shared sentiment similar to the contribution given by participant PS in the interviews with the AfCoP members.

6.4.6.5   Identifying Country Specific Champions

Participant FT suggested that one way the AfCoP secretariat was seeking to improve participation on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was to identify country specific champions. He said

"...we identify some key people within the community who are ICT savvy, who like using social media and all those internet platforms so that they can take the lead in their own countries to disseminate the information. Its working well in some countries like Mali, like Kenya, Uganda, where we have some young people who volunteer themselves to contribute

on the platform so that they are the voice of what the community of practice is doing at the national level and they disseminate on the platform, instead of waiting for the adults or for elder people to write themselves".

Motivating and Engaging AfCoP Members

Both participants AM and FT were of the opinion that it was necessary to motivate AfCoP members to enhance participation on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. AM said *"...what is required is motivate them...keep them engaged" while participant FT felt that his contribution as a member of the AfCoP secretariat was to "engage them individually to get them more active on the platform."* So, the issue of personal member engagement was of great importance to ensure participation on the platform.

Advocacy, Publicity and Marketing of The AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

It was also important to continue advocating for the AfCoP at their high forum leadership meetings to keep the cause of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform high on their agenda. Along with advocacy, participant FT also felt that publicising events through the AfCoP weekly letter would also help to enhance the participation of members on the AfCoP platform.

Training on How to Use the AfCoP Platform Features

Participant FT also recognised that one way to mitigate the challenge of ICT skills among some of the AfCoP members was to offer training on how to use the AfCoP knowledge sharing struggle. One strategy that participant FT proposed was a plan "to write how to guides, on for example how to publish on the platform, how to moderate a discussion on the platform…and in general how to use the platform".

Improving Internet Access in African Countries

Participant FT expressed hope that internet accessibility and connectivity would improve on the continent of Africa in the coming years. This would enable those AfCoP members who struggled to participate due to lack of internet connectivity to have access to the platform without great challenges.

Seeking Additional Funding for the Sustainability of AfCoP

To address the issue of the sustainability of AfCoP, participant AM indicated the necessity to search for more funding. Since the funding that sustained AfCoP currently was to end in mid 2017, she indicated that *"we have already started the discussions of how we are going to sustain it… hope to ask the bank and ACBF to continue financing it"*. Other initiatives for sustaining AfCoP included developing it into a legal entity as well as domesticating the initiative in member countries.

6.5   Analysis of Content from AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

The following is an analysis of content and users of the various social media tools that make up the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform including: The AfCoP Discussion Forum; the AfCoP Blog; the AfCoP Twitter account and the AfCoP Facebook account.

6.5.1   Content Published on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platforms

The content posted on the various social media tools used by AfCoP for knowledge sharing purposes include, 200 articles posted on the Discussion Forum, 531 articles posted on the Blog, 3192 tweets posted on AfCoP's Twitter account; 154 posts shared via AfCoP's Facebook page and 129 published knowledge products including published reports, briefs, case studies and training materials (Figure 64).
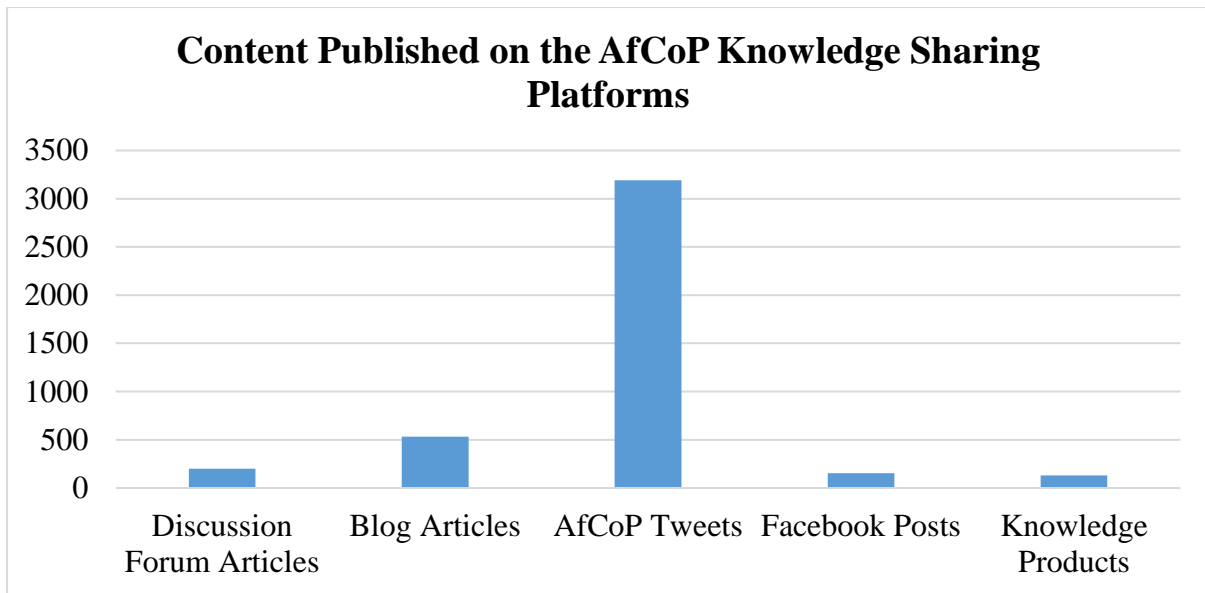
Figure 64: Content Published on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

6.5.2 Contributors of Content on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platforms

There were 107 AfCoP members who contributed articles on the Discussion Forum and 159 AfCoP members who contributed blog articles (Figure 65). The AfCoP secretariat was the only content creator of the original posts on the AfCoP Facebook page and 204 tweeter users created content posted on the AfCoP Twitter account.
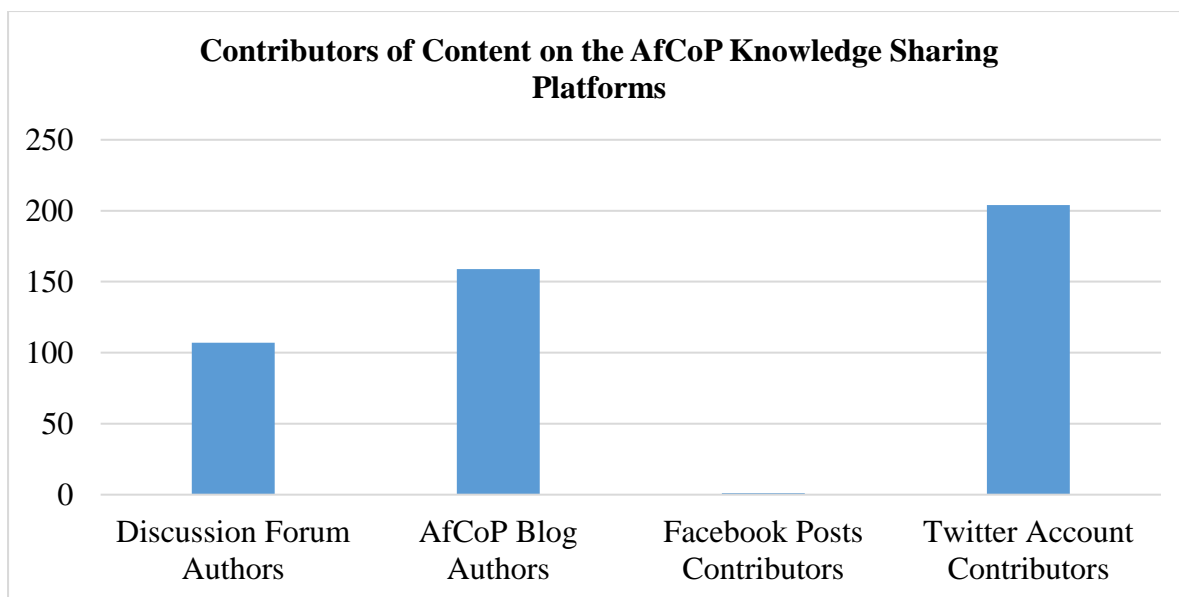
Figure 65: Contributors of Content on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platforms

6.5.3 Responses to AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform Posts

Active member participation to knowledge sharing can be seen by the reactions and responses to content posted on the various knowledge sharing platforms used. Of the various content produced on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platforms, 1362 replies were received for various articles on the Discussion Forum; 217 comments were accumulated from readers of the Blog articles; 91 likes were received on the Tweets posted on the AfCoP Twitter account and 214 likes were accumulated from posts published on AfCoP's Facebook account (Figure 66).
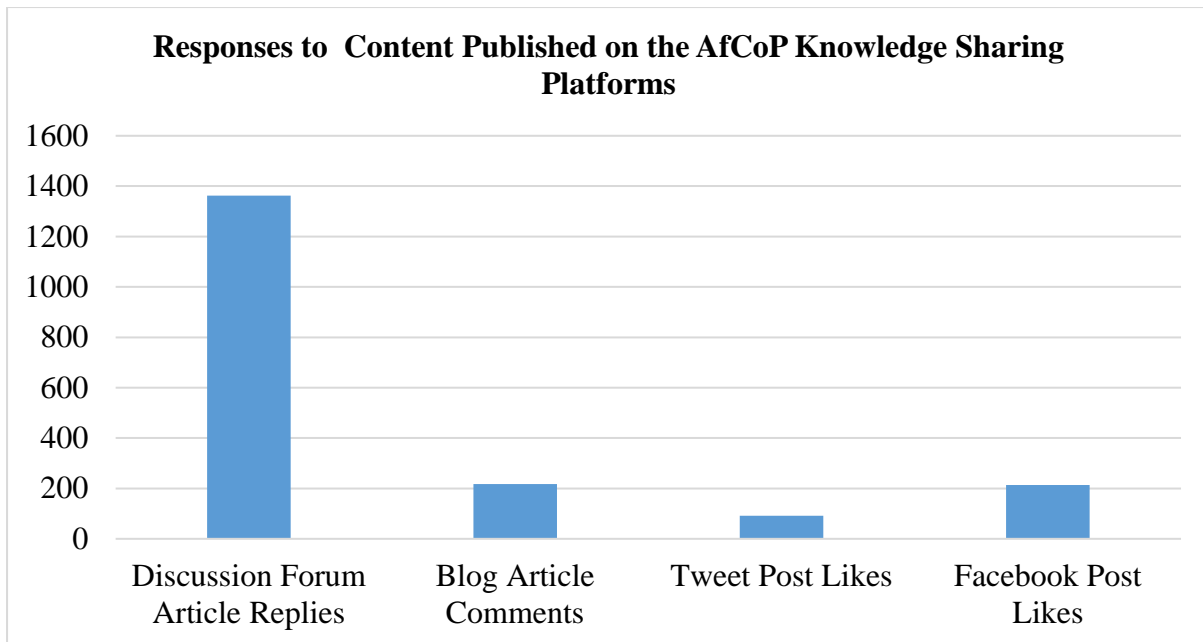
Figure 66: Responses to Content Posted on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platforms

6.5.4   Analysis of the AfCoP Discussion Forum

The discussion forum was a social media tool used by AfCoP to facilitate discussions among AfCoP members on topics relevant to the core business of AfCoP. Topics initiated on the discussion forum were pre-planned by the AfCoP Secretariat and management. Experts on a topic were commissioned to write about a specified topic and to facilitate the discussion, soliciting feedback from other AfCoP members. The feedback received from members would then be synthesised in a larger publication or a full-blown knowledge product.

Although they were significantly fewer, discussion forum articles attracted the highest number of replies by AfCoP members. The discussion forum therefore was the social media tool that attracted a high degree of knowledge sharing activity among AfCoP members. The discussion forum articles published were fewer compared to content from the other social media tools in use such as the blog, possibly because they were longer in size, requiring in-depth analysis and effort in preparation for publishing.

231

6.5.4.1 Subjects of Discussion Posts on the AfCoP Discussion Forum

At least 116 subject areas were tagged in the 200 discussions initiated on the Discussion forum section of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform (Figure 67). The word cloud shown in Figure 67 shows in bold letters, the subject areas that dominated the discussion threads posted on the discussion forum section of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. Popular subjects of discussion on the discussion forum included: Results Based Management/Managing for Development Results, Monitoring and Evaluation, Capacity Building, Development, Gender, Planning Opportunities, Youths, Leadership, Women Empowerment. This is consistent with the focus of AfCoP whose thrust was on developing 3 main development areas: Leadership, Youth and Gender.

Figure 67: Subjects of Discussion Forum Posts on the AfCoP Platform. Field data(2016)

6.5.4.2 Contributors of Topics on the Discussion Forum of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

The 200 discussions on the Discussion Forum of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, were initiated by 107 members of AfCoP. 72 of these members initiated one discussion topic, 16 of the members contributed two discussion threads each, 9 of the AfCoP members contributed three topics, 5 of the members contributed 4 topics, while at least one member contributed 6, 8, 10, 14 and 16 topics each.

It was confirmed through the interviews with the AfCoP secretariat members, that most of the topics initiated on the Discussion Forum were commissioned by AfCoP. As a commissioned facilitator, the AfCoP member would possibly have been motivated to publish as they would receive payment for their efforts. When compared to the blog posts on the AfCoP platform, the discussion forum posts generated more participation from other AfCoP members, as demonstrated by the greater number of replies received to initiated discussions. A possible reason for this could be that members felt more comfortable sharing on the discussion forum, because it was mainly controlled by the AfCoP secretariat, giving a sense of security and also an assurance of how the information they shared would be used.

6.5.4.3 Reactions of AfCoP Members to Topics Posted on the Discussion Forums.

There were 75 topics initiated on the discussion forum to which there were no responses from other AfCoP members. However, there were also 125 topics initiated on the AfCoP discussion forum which generated at least one reply from other AfCoP members. The greatest number of replies that were generated by a topic on the discussion forum was 65. From the interviews with AfCoP members it was revealed that AfCoP members react to only those topics that interest them, which would explain why some topics generated several replies and others did not. It is also possible that some members do read posts on the discussion forums, but they do not share their thoughts on the discussion forum.

The subjects of discussion that generated at least 30 responses from AfCoP members include:

Managing for development results, Results Based Management, Public Sector Management,

Youth, Development, Business Opportunities, Entrepreneurship, Gender, Women,

Agriculture and Environmental issues (Table 33).

Table 33: AfCoP Discussion Forum Topics with 30 or More Replies

Topic ID	Title of Discussion Post	Number of Replies
1	Back to Basics: Everything You Wanted to Know About Managing for Development Results	65
2	Integrated Development Planning (IDP) under the IRBM	44
3	AfCoP Sourcebook LIVE: Managing for development results within the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA):	40
4	Youth and MfDR for Africa's Transformation: Enhancing the Participation of Youth in National Development Processes	38
5	Youth Unemployment in Africa	38
6	Business environment and informal sector in Africa Challenges, opportunities and best practices	36
7	Women Entrepreneurship: Strategies for Building Women-Owned Businesses	35
8	PRSPs: A 10 year Retrospective on Results	35
9	AfCoP Sourcebook LIVE: Managing for Global Environmental Results at UNEP's-Division of Global Environment Facility (DGEF)	35
10	Intellectual property rights and Africa transformation	32
11	Curbing Illicit Financial and Resource Outflows From Africa to Foster Accountable Corporate Governance: The Role of Strong Leadership	32
12	Managing the Impact of Climate Change on Agriculture and Rural Development, and Empowering Women to Respond to Climate Change	31
13	MfDR Software: Culture Change - A Tough Nut to Crack	31
14	We The People: Engaging Citizens in Public Sector Management	30

6.5.5 Analysis of the Content on the Blog Section of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

The development of content on the blog section of AfCoP's knowledge sharing platform, was less structured and controlled by the AfCoP secretariat than was the discussion forum. On this platform, any member of AfCoP, could write and publish on any topic of interest. Other members of AfCoP would then receive the published blog post and sometimes the AfCoP secretariat would highlight the Blog article in a weekly newsletter to AfCoP members, distributed via email.

The blog section of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform accumulated 531 articles from various AfCoP members, which was significantly higher than the 200 articles posted on the discussion forum. The reason for this great number of blog posts, can be attributed to the reduced demand for rigour and depth for blog content compared to the expectations of quality on the discussion forum. Members may therefore have found it easier to initiate posts on the blog section of the AfCoP platform, than on the discussion forum. AfCoP members also had the opportunity to share on a variety of topics on the blog section, beyond ones that would have been prescribed for the discussion forum.

The 531 blog articles were written by 159 members of AfCoP. The requirement to publish on the AfCoP blog section was that an author had to be a member of AfCoP. They were then responsible for steering conversation stimulated from their posts.

The responses of AfCoP members to blog posts was far lower when compared with their responses to posts on the discussion forum. Only 217 replies were received for the 531 blog posts. This possibly meant that AfCoP members took the AfCoP Blog section less seriously and thus were passive recipients of posts on it.

6.5.5.1 Subjects of Discussion on the Blog Section of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

The blog section of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform had accumulated 531 posts from AfCoP members at the time of data collection. From these, 2235 tags or subject areas were assigned. An analysis of the most common subjects dominating the content of the blog posts by AfCoP members included posts on development; monitoring and evaluation; results-based management; managing for development results; accountability (Figure 68). These were relevant to the focus of AfCoP. There were also a significant number of blog articles advertising AfCoP events or opportunities on the blog section of the AfCoP platform. This would explain why some AfCoP members mentioned during interviews and in response to the survey, that they were motivated to participate on the platform because of the opportunities that are available.

Figure 68:Subjects of Discussion on the AfCoP-Blog. Field data (2016)

6.5.5.2 *Contributors of Blog Posts on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform*

There was a total of 159 AfCoP members who contributed the 531 articles on the blog section of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. The highest number of blog articles were posted by the AfCoP secretariat who posted a total of 100 posts. This was followed by CoPAfrica, another AfCoP administrator account who posted 23 posts. What was observable was that most of the AfCoP members who contributed a significant number of the articles were involved in the AfCoP structures, as members of the secretariat, or the core management team or had been engaged as a consultant by the AfCoP administration.

6.5.5.3 *Responses to AfCoP Blog Posts*

There were 92 articles posted on the AfCoP knowledge sharing blog, which received at least one comment from readers. 439 of the articles on the AfCoP knowledge sharing blog did not receive any comments. This further demonstrates that the AfCoP Blog posts did not generate much interest from the rest of the members, as many did not actively participate through commenting on the published blog posts.

An analysis of the AfCoP blog articles which received at least 3 replies, reveals that they were published by AfCoP members who were also actively involved in AfCoP structures; as members of the AfCoP secretariat, core management team or as consultants for AfCoP (Table 34).

Table 34: AfCoP Blog Topics with at Least Three Responses

Topic ID	Topic	Number of Comments
1	Reversing the Irony in Africa's Development and the Role of AfCoP	12
2	Regional Integration in Africa: Perspectives from a recent trip to Zimbabwe	10
3	The M&E Agenda for the African Capacity Building Foundation: Enhancing Capacity for Effective Project Delivery and Achievement of Results	10
4	The Think Tank Initiative, the Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC) and the African Capacity Building Foundation Contribute to Strengthen Research Capacity for Policy Engagement in Africa	9
5	Mobilizing Domestic Financial Resources for Africa's Development	9
6	World of Development and the Role of Statistics	6
7	HowTo:Your Guide to Results Based Monitoring & Evaluation	6
8	Reforming the Public Sector: Can it be Done?	5
9	Are results based approaches the future for development aid in Africa?	5
10	Can we do away with AID? Day 1 Afrik4R forum on DRM	4
11	Lessons from Nigeria's Successful Ebola Response	4
12	Youth for Results Training Insights, Documents, Presentations, Photos	4
13	Towards Building Capable and Effective States for Improved Service Delivery in Africa	4
14	Book Review: Fixing Failed States A Framework for Rebuilding A Fractured World	4
15	The Wonderful Adaptability of Outcome Mapping (OM)	4
16	A New CMT, A New Work Plan	4
17	AfCoP is very active in the International MfDR	4
18	Launch of Malawi Community of Practice	3
19	Should the Fight Against Poverty in Africa Start at the Local Level in Urban Contexts? How Can Data Availability at the Urban Level Help?	3
20	Who are Africa's Top "Transformers"? Find out in the African Transformation Report!	3
21	The Next Fifty Years Africa	3
22	Motivating the Public Service: A Panacea for Desirable Result	3
23	Book review: Making Monitoring and Evaluation System Work	3
24	Outcome Mapping (OM) and Management for Development Results (MfDR)	3
25	Launch of Kenya's National CoP	3

6.5.6   AfCoP Twitter Account Data Analysis

The AfCoP secretariat maintained a Twitter account, with the username Afrik4R, which was established in 2009. Twitter is a public social networking site. At the time of data collection, the AfCoP twitter account had accumulated 3192 tweets, followed 437 other twitter users and had 1331 followers. These 1331 twitter users constituted the dedicated audience for AfCoP tweets published on the Afrik4R tweeter account.

6.5.6.1   Messages Posted on The AfCoP Twitter Account

Messages posted from AfCoP Twitter account totalled 3192 tweets. Of these 1834 were original tweets, while 1358 of the messages were retweets from what other members would have shared (Figure 69).
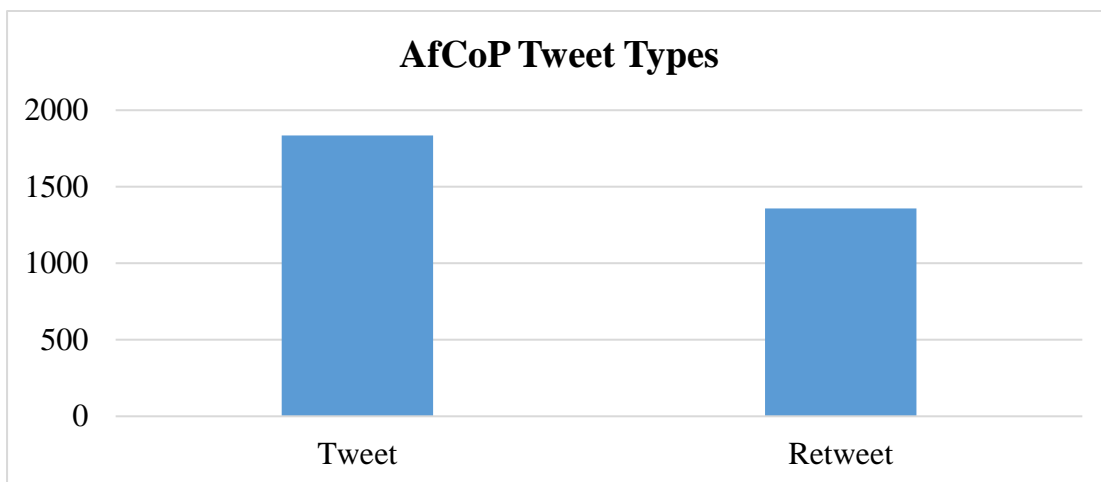
Figure 69: Messages on the AfCoP Twitter Account

6.5.6.2   Type of Content on AfCoP Twitter Account

The tweets published on the AfCoP twitter account included short messages including tweets and retweets about an event or subject relevant to AfCoP. Many of the tweets also referred to links to websites or articles with more detail about the topic posted in the tweet. The AfriK4R account also had 286 photos and videos.

6.5.6.3 Contributors of Tweets on the AfCoP Twitter Account

The 3192 tweets on the AfCoP Twitter account were contributed by 204 twitter users, some of whom were not necessarily AfCoP members. The contributor with the most tweets from the AfCoP Tweeter account was AfriK4R with 1835 tweets, this is followed by AfDB group which posted 139 posts. These two members consist of the AfCoP Secretariat.

6.5.6.4 Subject of Tweets from The AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform-Twitter Account

479 different subject hashtags were identified to have been referenced on the AfCoP knowledge sharing Twitter account. A word cloud analysis of the 100 most quoted hashtags from the tweets on the AfCoP Twitter account, below shows in bold letters that the most quoted subject of tweets on the AfriK4R Twitter account included AfriK4R (1264), CSOForumKigali (289), AFDBAM2014 (197), CSOForumAbidjan (157), G4R (157), MfDR (117) and AfDBAM2015 (114) among others (Figure 70).

Further analysis on the content of the tweets, also reveals that many of the tweets were generated during the course of different meetings of relevance to AfCoP such as Youth for Results (Y4R); Gender for Results (G4R) or Africa for Results forum (Afrik4r). Members would post insights they gathered during these meetings as tweets, as represented by the following quote from a tweet:

"Did you miss the #CSOFOrumKigali chat? Here are some insights into what was discussed -> https://t.co/ibkc5gWfb6 #AfDBAM2014".

Figure 70: One Hundred Most Referenced Tweeter Hashtag from AfCoP Twitter Account
Field data (2016)

6.5.7   Reactions to Tweets on AfCoP Twitter

The AfCoP twitter handle AfrK4R accumulated a total of 91 likes (Figure 71). This is very
low compared to the large number of tweets posted on this account. However, the popularity
of tweets posted by AfCoP could also be judged by the number of retweets by other twitter
users of a particular tweet.

The analysis of AfCoP's Twitter account data indicated that a total of 2128 retweets had been
accumulated for 944 of AfCoP's original tweets. These 944 tweets by AfCoP stimulated
participation by twitter users who decided to share with their own followers on twitter (Figure
71).
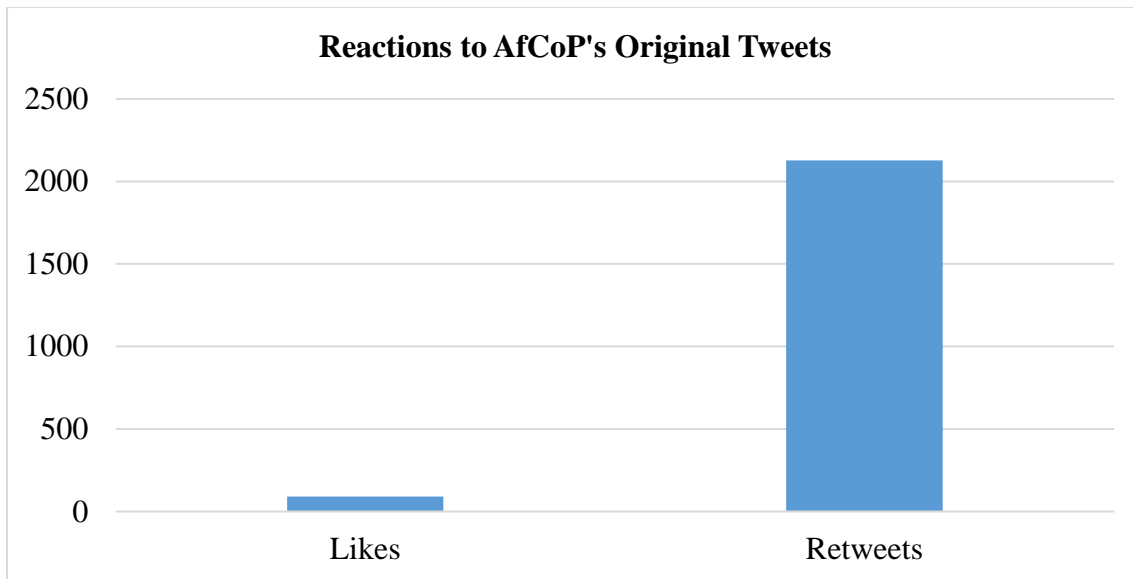
Figure 71: Reactions to AfCoP's Original Tweets

6.5.8 AfCoP Facebook Page Data Analysis

AfCoP also maintained a Facebook page named AfriK4R. Facebook is a public social networking site. The Facebook page of AfCoP is liked by 646 people-who were not necessarily members of AfCoP. Nevertheless these 646 Facebook users represented a dedicated audience for content posted on the AfCoP Facebook page. The AfCoP Facebook page is managed by the AfCoP Secretariat, who also generated most of the posts published on this social networking site.

6.5.8.1 AfCoP Facebook Posts

The total number of posts posted on the AfCoP page since its inception in 2009 was 154. 142 of these posts were originally posted by the AfCoP Secretariat who were responsible for managing this page (Figure 72). The remaining 12 posts were comments to posts published by AfCoP from other users.
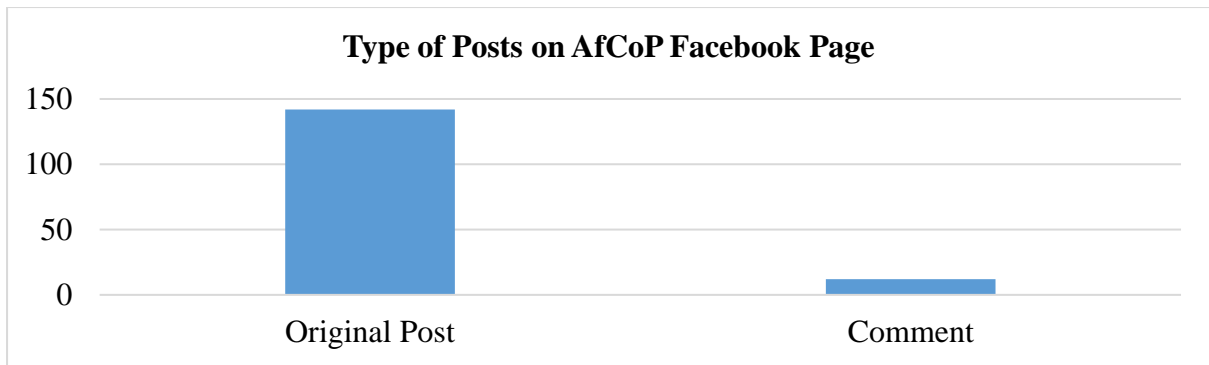
Figure 72: Posts on the AfCoP Facebook page

6.5.8.2   Type of Content Posted on the AfCoP Facebook Account

Four types of social media content were observable on the Facebook page of AfCoP (Figure 73). These included 72 Links, 26 Photos, 39 Status posts and 6 Videos. This breakdown also confirms that the AfCoP Facebook page was more of an advertising platform, than it was a knowledge sharing platform. Most of the posts on the AfCoP Facebook page were links to the main AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, followed by status posts of events held by AfCoP or related to various AfCoP forums. Videos and Photos were also shared from AfCoP related events.
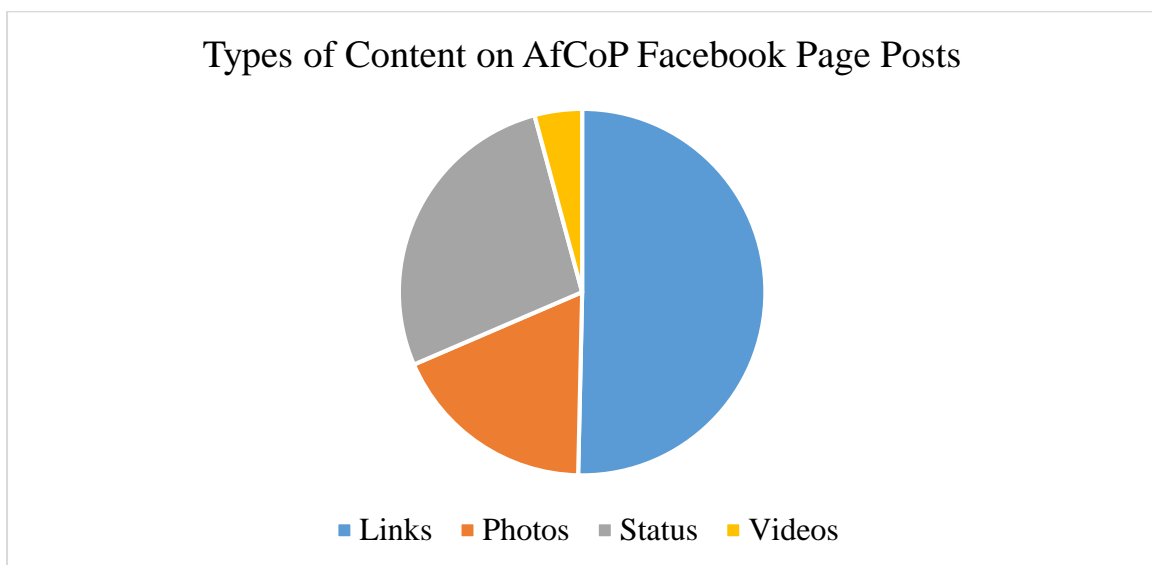
Figure 73: Types of Content on the AfCoP Facebook Account

6.5.8.3 Reactions to Posts on the AfCoP Facebook Page

An indication on how readers were receiving the content in Facebook posts was reflected through the use of the like or unlike button. If a Facebook user liked a post, he or she will indicate this through clicks on the like icon. A total of 214 likes were generated for all the original posts on the AfCoP Facebook page (Figure 74). Photos generated the most likes with 106 likes. This was followed by content posted in the form of Links to websites such as the main AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, which generated 89 likes. The least liked type of content on the AfCoP Facebook page included status posts which generated 12 likes and videos, which generated 7 likes.
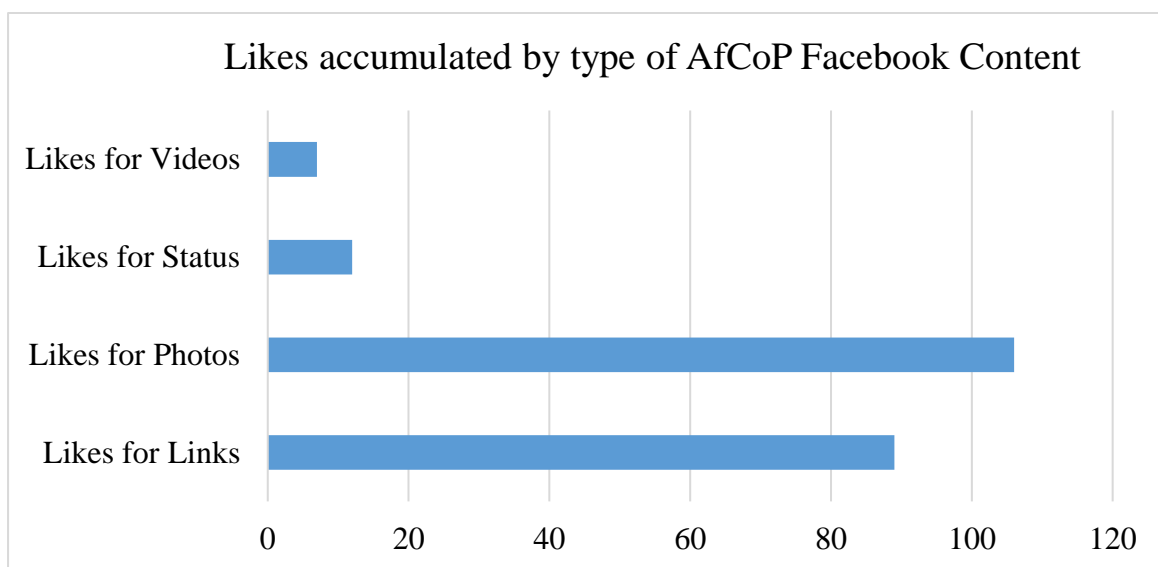
Figure 74: Reactions to the Type of Content on the AfCoP Facebook Page

6.5.8.4 Subjects of Posts on the AfCoP Facebook Page

In total, 103 subjects were assigned to the posts on the AfCoP Facebook page. As on the other social media platforms managed by AfCoP, the dominant themes of discussions centred on issues central to AfCoP's mission. These included posts on Managing for Development

Results or AfCoP events. Figure 75 shows a word cloud demonstrating in bold text, the subjects most referenced in AfCoP's Facebook page posts.

Figure 75: Dominant Themes of AfCoP Facebook Posts. Field data (2016)

6.5.9   Analysis of AfCoP's Knowledge Products

The AfCoP Secretariat synthesised relevant knowledge from various forum, including the discussion forum into knowledge products, which they published on the Resources section of the AfCoP Knowledge sharing platform. At the time of data collection, there were 124 knowledge products included 18 briefs, 83 case studies, 14 tools and guidelines, 1 report and 8 training materials (Figure 76). These knowledge products could also be downloaded from the platform by members and visitors of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform.
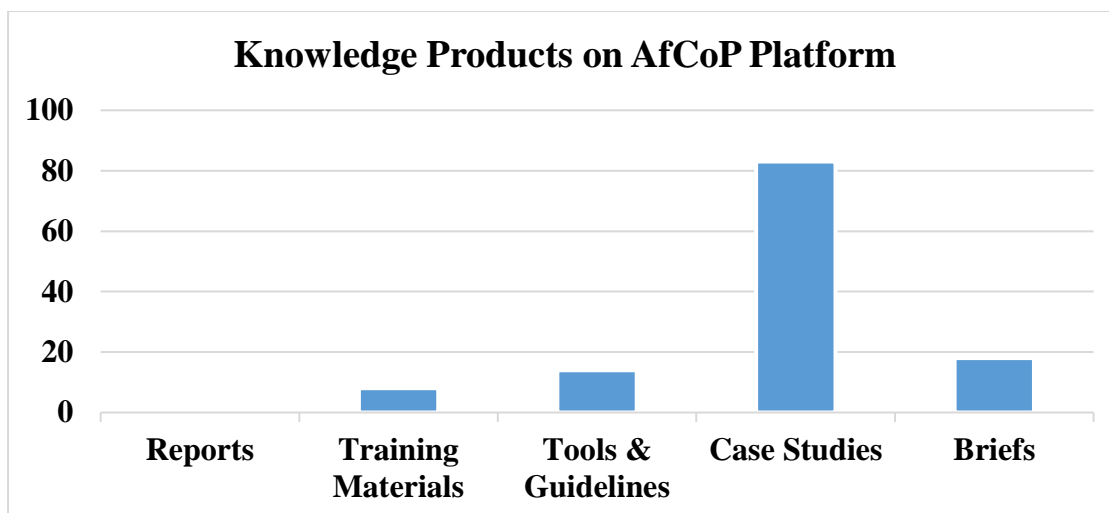
Figure 76: Knowledge Products on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

Case Studies represented the greatest number of AfCoP's published knowledge products with 83 having been published at the time of data collection. These were short stories or reports on a particular case on subjects relevant to AfCoP's focus. For example, there were several cases related to Women and Youth Entrepreneurship from specific African countries.

AfCoP also had knowledge briefs. These were summary reports of contributions from discussion threads on the AfCoP discussion forum. At the time of data collection, 18 knowledge briefs were downloadable.

Another category of knowledge product that AfCoP published, were tools and guidelines. These were step-by-step guides on implementing tools or frameworks relevant to AfCoP. Examples of these included guidelines on how to assess the performance of MfDR projects, or on how to develop a gender responsive budget or a guide on how to use trademarks for entrepreneurs.

AfCoP also published 8 of the materials which they used for training workshops on MfDR issues. Anyone with an interest in learning about MfDR could download these and learn about the subject, which was of central importance to AfCoP.

The knowledge products also included reports of Annual AfCoP meetings. Although one could be found under the knowledge products section. Several others could be downloaded from links within the AfCoP blog section.

6.5.9.1 *Subject Themes of the AfCoP Knowledge Products*

The subjects of the knowledge products published on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform centred on the themes relevant to AfCoP's main objectives. Consistent with the themes discussed on AfCoP's other social media platforms, the subjects of the knowledge products published centred on issues including: MfDR, Africa, Women, Entrepreneurship, Youth, Capacity Building, Agriculture, Leadership and Development, among many others as shown in the Figure 77 below.

Figure 77: Subject Themes of AfCoP's Knowledge Products. Field data (2016)

6.5.9.2 *Interactions of AfCoP Members with the Knowledge Products*

Although the figures of actual downloads could not be ascertained, results from a study of the 10 most visited pages on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform done by the AfCoP secretariat between April 2016 and 2017 indicated that briefs and case studies were the fourth most visited page on the platform, indicating that members were interested in real life experiences as well as obtaining guidelines on a subject as given in case studies (Thoto, Munthali, Francois, & Diawara, 2017).

6.6 Summary

In this chapter, the findings from the data collected qualitatively was presented and analysed. Qualitative data that was presented included: responses to the open-ended section of the AfCoP member survey; data from interview transcripts with 7 key informants, who included 5 key AfCoP members and 2 members of the AfCoP secretariat and data from content analysis of posts on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform including 2 other public social media accounts belonging to AfCoP.

Respondents to the AfCoP member survey were generally positive about the role of social media for knowledge sharing. Social media was considered to be an enabler for access to knowledge; useful for knowledge sharing; an enabler for the creation of social groups and building influence of members. A few of the respondents however did express caution towards the use of social media for knowledge sharing, highlighting the need to monitor and control its use as they believed social media could lead members to lose focus. There was also an expressed fear of the use of social media to expose members to cyber criminals or junk information.

From interviews with the AfCoP secretariat, it was revealed that the features of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform included: a discussion forum section, blog section, special

interest groups section, online chat, email, knowledge products, registration and public social networking accounts: Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. From findings of the content analysis of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, various tacit and codified knowledge was published on the social media platforms belonging to AfCoP including discussion forum posts; blog posts; tweets; Facebook posts and knowledge products which included reports, cases studies, tools and guidelines and briefs.

The AfCoP members participated most on the AfCoP discussion forum section which was regulated by the AfCoP management. The posts on the discussion forum were later synthesised into knowledge briefs. The public social media accounts of AfCoP seemed to have been used mainly as marketing and publicity channels for the main AfCoP knowledge sharing platform as most posts from Facebook and Twitter linked visitors to the main AfCoP platform. The subjects of content on the various AfCoP knowledge sharing platform were mostly those of strategic importance to AfCoP including Managing for Development Results (MfDR); results-based management (RBM), youth, development, gender amongst many others.

The interviewees were of the view that the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was useful for various knowledge sharing activities including learning, collaboration, networking, sharing stories, locating experts and socialising. From the AfCoP management point of view, the AfCoP platform had enabled AfCoP to achieve key strategic goals including: the adoption of Managing for Development Results (MfDR) among member states; it had reduced AfCoP member meeting costs; it had led to the growth of AfCoP membership and facilitated various knowledge sharing activities of AfCoP.

It was also revealed that AfCoP members were motivated to participate on the platform by a desire to share knowledge; the need to acquire new knowledge; a personal interest in the

topics discussed on the platform; the availability of opportunities for career advancement and the need to market work related products.

Various other individual, organisational and technical factors were also revealed to influence knowledge sharing on the platform including: literacy levels of individuals; the ability to understand the language of communication on the platform; demands of time and effort required to meaningfully participate; personal motivation and health and disability challenges of the individual member.

The AfCoP management was revealed to play six key roles in supporting knowledge sharing on the AfCoP platform, including: administration and moderation of activities on the platform; provision of policies and guidelines for participation on the platform; providing financial support for the sustenance of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform; communicating with members of AfCoP on the platform and steering the vision and values for knowledge sharing on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform.

Challenges faced by AfCoP members when sharing knowledge on the AfCoP platform included: the lack of time and unwillingness to exert effort to meaningfully participate; lack of participation by other members; technical challenges including issues with the user interface; financial constraints and issues related to the content of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform. Some participants in the study felt the focus of discussions on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, was more Eurocentric than Afrocentric, thus discouraging participation among members. Some also felt there was need for AfCoP to provide meaningful incentives for participation. Some technical challenges highlighted by participants included the AfCoP platforms incompatibility with mobile technology which in their view was more accessible and cheaper; a dysfunctional expert search tool which slowed

the process of expert location; the lack of a language translation function and the

unavailability prompting and alerting services to increase participation.

7.1   Introduction

This study sought to explore the extent and use of social media for knowledge sharing in a distributed community of practice of Managing for Development Results (MfDR) practitioners called the African Community of Practice (AfCoP). The study was guided by five research questions which were:

1. How are social media used for knowledge sharing among members of AfCoP?

2. What are the factors affecting use of social media in sharing knowledge among AfCoP members?

3. What are the perceptions of AfCoP members towards the use of social media for sharing knowledge?

4. What kinds of knowledge is generated and shared using social media among AfCoP members?

5. What are the challenges of using social media for sharing knowledge among AfCoP members?

In this chapter, the findings of the quantitative and qualitative results of this study are discussed in relation to the research questions.

7.2   How Social Media Are Used for Knowledge Sharing Among Members of AfCoP

The following section is a discussion of how social media was used for knowledge sharing among members of AfCoP in response to the research question: how are social media used for knowledge sharing among members of AfCoP?

7.2.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Members of AfCoP

The demographic characteristics of the members of AfCoP reveal the nature and traits of people who used the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform to share knowledge. The participants in the AfCoP member survey were predominantly male, who constituted at least 60% of the respondents. Most of the participants were in their productive and midlife years, with the largest group aged between 30 and 49 years. AfCoP members who participated in the study were also highly educated, the majority of whom possessed a Master's level degree. All the participants indicated expertise in one or more areas within the domain of Managing for Development for Development results, including leadership, monitoring and evaluation, planning and budgeting, accountability and partnership and statistics. At least 67% of the participants held senior management positions within their organisations. Most of the respondents also had high tenure in the development sector, with 46% of the participants having over 10 years of work experience in their field of work.

These characteristics are typical of the knowledge worker and knowledge intensive organisations, where the majority of employees or members are highly qualified and are sources of innovation, while the skills of the individual are central to the success of the organisation (Swart & Kinnie, 2003). The findings of the study also demonstrate that the participants were committed to the domain of Managing for development results, which is one of three key characteristics of a community of practice (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015).

The participants in the study belonged to various organisations, representing the various economic sectors of society including governments, non-governmental organisations, business and industry, academia and independent consultancies (Figure 10). In addition to this the participants were drawn from at least 25 countries as shown in Figure 13, the majority of whom were from the African continent. Both these findings prove that AfCoP

was an organisation which cut across organisational and geographical boundaries and was not limited by formal organisational structure, which is characteristic of distributed communities of practice (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). The distributed nature of AfCoP also warranted the use of appropriate technology to facilitate knowledge sharing among its members.

7.2.2 Awareness of Social Media Tools Among AfCoP Members

The findings from the AfCoP Member Survey revealed that most of the respondents had an awareness of and often used several social networking tools including Facebook. This category of social media seemed to be the most popular with 76% of the participants indicating that they used these. There was also a preference to private messaging as indicated by 41% of the participants who used this tool for knowledge sharing, while 30% used blogging tools and 26% used microblogging tools. The less popular social media tools among the participants in this study were Live Chat and Wikis. Previous studies have indicated that knowledge workers make use of various social media in the knowledge sharing strategies, while constantly comparing available social tools to make use of the ones perceived most effective (Jarrahi & Sawyer, 2012). To be able to offer the best technology solution within a community it may be necessary to do a survey of the tools preferred by user community, so that those that the community are familiar with and find useful and practical, are adopted(Vuori & Okkonen, 2012; Wenger, White, & Smith, 2009).

7.2.3 Social Media Tools Used for Knowledge Sharing in AfCoP

The social media tools that were incorporated in the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform included: the main AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, which was a privatised and subscription based social networking platform which incorporated a discussion forum, a blog, chat and email facilities and on which only registered members of AfCoP could access and participate (Figure 59). AfCoP also maintained public social media accounts with Facebook,

Twitter and LinkedIn. AfCoP was therefore an organisation willing to incorporate a plethora of social media as technology to support its knowledge sharing activities among its members. This is important as it gives further evidence that knowledge workers make use of a plethora of social media tools in their knowledge sharing activities, as emerging similar studies have revealed (Jarrahi & Sawyer, 2013).

The AfCoP members were found to participate mostly on the AfCoP discussion forum section, which was regulated by the AfCoP management, through steering discussions via a knowledge sharing champion. The discussion forum had 202 posts which attracted 1362 replies from AfCoP members, while the less regulated blog section generated fewer member responses. This demonstrates the importance of having moderators or knowledge sharing champions to promote knowledge sharing through a social media platform, as these would have the authority, the clout and can command resources in a way that encourages participation (van den Brink, 2001). Discussions on the discussion forum were later synthesised into knowledge briefs, which was codified knowledge. The AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was thus able to facilitate both tacit and explicit knowledge sharing.

AfCoP's public social media accounts were used mainly for the marketing and publicity of the main AfCoP knowledge sharing platform and activities of the organisation. Most posts from AfCoP's Facebook and Twitter accounts provided links to visitors pointing them back to the main AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, as well as promoting events and activities hosted by AfCoP. The audience of these platforms were targeted to those users beyond the members of AfCoP.

Related to user's experience with using the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, the study revealed that most of the respondents had between one- and three-years' experience using it, while a further 18% of the respondents had used it for less than a year (Figure 15). This

shows a moderate level of experience with the AfCoP platform among most of the respondents. However, the respondents' familiarity with other social media platforms, would have made it easy for them to use the AfCoP platform.

7.2.4 Knowledge Sharing Activities Supported by the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

Previous studies have revealed that social media tools have the potential to support various knowledge sharing activities including expert location and networking (Baehr & Alex-Brown, 2010; Panahi et al., 2013). In the current study, the results of the AfCoP member survey, revealed that the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was used mostly for "learning" as indicated by 78% of the respondents who responded to the questionnaire. Networking was the second most important activity that took place on the platform, as expressed by 35% of the participants. This was followed by collaborating (35%), socialising (30%) and locating experts (24%) (Figure 17).

Comparable results from the interviews with AfCoP members, also showed that most of the interviewees believed that the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was very useful for learning about MfDR, results-based management and other relevant topics (Table 26, 27). One participant PS indicated that "…This concept of results-based management, I did not have that knowledge, it has really developed from my being a member of AfCoP…", which demonstrated the learning value members of AfCoP achieve with the use of the AfCoP platform. The AfCoP platform also enabled four participants in the interviews to identify experts and collaborate on various projects (Tables 28). The interviewees also found the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform a very useful tool for networking with new colleagues (Table 29), these relationships have been able to create new opportunities for them and for some this was an avenue to build professional networks. The interviewees also found the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform useful for sharing stories with one participant AP

256

indicating that they felt that it was very useful for sharing stories as they had been given the opportunity and encouragement to share a case study, and they were not limited to the number of case studies they could share on the platform. On the AfCoP platform's ability to support location of experts, all the interviewees believed it was useful for locating experts, however, one interviewee expressed that the expert search function could be improved as it was not working optimally (Table 31).

From the AfCoP management's viewpoint, it was revealed that the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform had enabled AfCoP to achieve key strategic goals including the adoption of Managing for Development Results (MfDR) among member states; it had reduced AfCoP member meeting costs; it had facilitated the growth of the AfCoP membership and facilitated various knowledge sharing activities of AfCoP (Figure 61).

The findings of this study also revealed that both tacit and codified knowledge was also published on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. Tacit knowledge included discussion forum posts and replies; blog posts and comments; tweets and Facebook posts while codified knowledge was in the form of synthesised knowledge products which included reports, case studies, briefs, tools and guidelines. Previous studies have indicated the difficulties of traditional information technology in capturing tacit knowledge sharing (Sirous Panahi et al., 2013). However, the findings in this study point to the potential of social media in capturing tacit knowledge, which is important in organisations.

7.2.5 The Frequency of Visits to the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

Knowledge management experts identify different levels of participation in communities of practice. These levels of participation include a core group of members who engage and nature the community; active participants who are recognised as practitioners and define the community; occasional participants- members who participate when the topic is of special

interest, when they have something specific to contribute or when they are involved in a project related to the community (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, n.d.). The findings revealed that the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was frequently visited at least once weekly by 35% of the respondents (Figure 15). This may indicate that the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform may be important to this group of AfCoP members, but participation on the platform may not directly affect their daily work activities. This group of members however, committed to participate on the platform at least once a week, and would be considered active participants of the community, who are recognised practitioners and regularly give contributions, thus defining the community. From interviews with the AfCoP secretariat, it was revealed that the secretariat sent weekly email newsletters publicising activities on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, which was possibly another trigger for the weekly visits to the platform by this group of users. There were also four percent (4%) of the participants who visited the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform daily. These may have been representative of the core group of members within the AfCoP secretariat department, who were involved in the day to day management of the platform, and needed to constantly update content, facilitate discussions or approve or reject requests for membership. There were also 30% of the respondents who visited the platform only when they needed specific information, who were the occasional members participating only when there was a topic of interest. In a community of practice supported by social media, there may also be peripheral members, who have a sustained connection to the community but with less engagement and authority either because they would be new, or they lack a personal commitment to the practice (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, n.d.). The remaining 17% of the respondents seldom visited the AfCoP platform, and may be considered to be transactional participants in the AfCoP community. Transactional participants are outsiders who interact with a community occasionally without being members themselves, and may be there to receive or provide a

service, to gain access to resources produced by the community such as its publications, its website or its tools (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, n.d.). On the other hand this group may also have represented those who struggled to gain access on the Internet or had limitations of time to actively participate as revealed in responses to the question on challenges members faced when accessing the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform (Figure 53).

7.3 Factors Influencing Knowledge Sharing on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

The study sought to investigate the factors influencing knowledge sharing on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. This aspect of the study was guided by the theoretical model on knowledge sharing through social media (Figure 4), developed in chapter 2. It was an adaptation of the Social Capital theory (SC) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Figure 4). The model proposed that the knowledge sharing intention and quality of knowledge sharing on the AfCoP platform was associated with constructs from structural capital, relational capital, cognitive capital of AfCoP members as well as their perceived usefulness and ease of use of the knowledge sharing platform. The study therefore investigated the existence of relationships between social capital factors and the knowledge sharing intention of AfCoP members and quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform. This was deemed appropriate as previous similar studies have used the social capital theory as a basis of investigating the nature of knowledge sharing in communities of practice (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015; Chiu et al., 2006; Shaqrah et al., 2013; Widen, 2011). Since the study involved the adoption of social media for knowledge sharing, it was also necessary to use an information systems theory. The inclusion of the constructs of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) in the Knowledge Sharing Through Social Media model, were therefore considered useful as they have also been used in previous knowledge

management research (Davis et al., 1989; Fari, 2015; Hsu & Lin, 2008; Hung & Cheng, 2013). The study also examined the existence of any other factors as derived from related knowledge sharing literature, that have been found to affect knowledge sharing in communities of practice.

7.3.1 Social Capital and Knowledge Sharing on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

Results of testing the hypotheses proposed in the Knowledge Sharing Through Social Media model (Figure 4), revealed that 15 out of the 16 hypotheses were supported (Table 9). From the Social Capital theory factors, positive correlations were found between social interaction ties, trust, norms of reciprocity, identification, shared language and shared vision with both the knowledge sharing intention of members and quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. These results Overall supported the view that the Social Capital theory is a useful framework for investigating collaborative virtual learning environments and distributed communities of practice (Daniel et al., 2003)

7.3.1.1 Structural Capital and Knowledge Sharing on the AfCoP Platform

Structural capital describes the overall pattern of relationships found in a community, showing whether and how members are connected (Seebach, 2012). The construct that examined structural capital in this study was social interaction ties which considered the presence or absence of network ties among members of AfCoP as represented by the strength of their relationships and the frequency with which the communicated among themselves.

The results of the study revealed a positive correlation between social interaction ties and both the knowledge sharing intentions (r=0.277, n=54, p= 0.043) of respondents and quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform (r=0.276, n=54, p=0.043). This implies that as members of AfCoP build relationships with other members on the AfCoP platform, they are

likely to be willing to share their knowledge and also provide quality information. This result supports previous similar findings where social interaction ties have been found to positively affect knowledge sharing behaviours and outcomes (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015; Chiu et al., 2006; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Shaqrah et al., 2013). However, the social interaction ties among AfCoP members were found to be moderate (mean 3.34). This can be attributed to the fact that AfCoP was a distributed community of practice with members scattered across Africa and some parts of the world. This would make it impossible for most members to have personal knowledge of other members, nor to maintain frequent communications with people they do not know personally, and only interacts with them via an online social network platform. Previous studies have demonstrated that individuals are more likely to be comfortable working in virtual communities which include a substantial number of people already known to them i.e. strong ties (Ardichvili, Page, & Wentling, 2003). Therefore, to improve knowledge sharing behaviour on the AfCoP platform, social interaction ties would need to be improved. An alternative view however suggests that when searching for new knowledge and ideas, individuals benefit more from weak ties-people they do not know well, than from strong ties-people with whom they have intensive, regular interactions through common work or interactions (Granovetter, 1983). This suggests therefore that members of AfCoP, stood to gain new ideas and knowledge from the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, as it was characterised by moderate social interaction ties.

7.3.1.2   *Relational Capital and Knowledge Sharing on the AfCoP Platform*

Relational capital among AfCoP members was examined through the constructs trust, norms of reciprocity and identification which were incorporated in the model for Knowledge Sharing Through Social Media (Figure 4). Trust, norms of reciprocity and identification are the relational capital constructs that have been used in previous similar studies (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015; Chiu et al., 2006; Shaqrah et al., 2013).

261

Trust is believed to have the capacity to maintain exchange relationships, which can lead to sharing knowledge of good quality (Chiu et al., 2006). The study revealed positive relationships between trust and both knowledge sharing intentions and the quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform. Thus, where members consider other members on the platform to be trustworthy, they are likely to be willing to share knowledge of sufficient quality. This supports many previous studies where trust has been found to positively influence knowledge sharing behaviours and outcomes (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015; Li & Li, 2010; Shaqrah et al., 2013). Other researchers have also found that when trust exists between individuals, they are willing to engage in cooperative interaction (Chiu et al., 2006). However, in this study, moderate levels of trust were found among respondents in the survey (mean score 3.49). There was therefore a moderate level of scepticism on the intentions of other members of the AfCoP platform were some respondents believed there was a chance they could be taken advantage of by other AfCoP members on the platform. This can be attributed to the online and distributed nature of AfCoP, which facilitated the creation of moderate social interaction ties in the network, thereby having many members with no real personal knowledge of others. These findings were similar to those of Panahi (2014) were it was revealed that physicians did not easily trust other people on social media when the information was related to knowledge and practice. The findings in this study also support a conclusion reached in previous studies that developing trust on social media does not occur quickly, as trust is built up over time and via regular reciprocal communication that provides better knowing and understanding each other (Panahi, 2014). In their study, Daniel et al., (Daniel et al., 2003) also concluded that individuals in virtual communities are geographically and culturally distributed and often have different levels of knowledge and skills. Members of such communities as AfCoP, therefore have little knowledge of others

beyond assumptions and stereotypes. This lack of sufficient information or knowledge about others hinders the development of trust (Daniel et al., 2003).

Despite having moderate levels of trust, the study revealed a strong sense of the norm of reciprocity among respondents to the AfCoP Member Survey (mean score 3.93). This shows expectations of reciprocal relationships among members on the AfCoP platform. The model hypotheses testing also found a positive and significant relationship between norms of reciprocity and both knowledge sharing intention and quality of knowledge sharing. Thus, where there is a strong norms of reciprocity, individuals may feel an obligation to participate on the platform and share knowledge of good quality (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015; Shaqrah et al., 2013; Wasko & Faraj, 2005).

Previous studies have also supported the role of identification in improving knowledge sharing behaviour (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015; Choi, 2015). If individuals commit to other members in a community or are committed to the vision and goals of the organisation, they are more likely to cooperate in a distributed online community (Choi, 2015). In the current study, a strong sense of identification with AfCoP among respondents was revealed (mean score 3.99). A positive association was also found between identification and both knowledge sharing intention (r=0.470, n=54, p=0.00) of members and the quality of knowledge (r=0.661, n=54, p=0.00) on the AfCoP platform (statistics?).Thus, although social interaction ties and trust were moderate most of the respondents felt a strong sense of belonging and identification with AfCoP (Figure 22), The respondents therefore identified with AfCoP and were willing to participate on it, despite having moderate levels of ties or trust with other members. This supported a proposition by previous researchers that individuals will be willing to participate in wider communities that not only include people with whom they are familiar, but also with those who are complete strangers (Ardichvili et al., 2003). They explained that such behaviour emanated from the individuals trust of the organisation or

social entity, known as institution-based trust(Ardichvili et al., 2003). With institution based trust, individuals trust in the integrity of the organisation as a whole and the competence of its members, believing that necessary structures are in place which will ensure trustworthy behaviour from other members and protection from negative consequences (Ardichvili et al., 2003). AfCoP members' strong sense of identity with AfCoP may also have emanated from their belief in the integrity of AfCoP and an ownership of AfCoP's mission, which was to facilitate knowledge sharing among member on issues related to Managing for Development Results (MfDR). It is therefore possible that respondents in the survey, were more committed to developing the domain and practice of MfDR rather than in building personal relationships with other AfCoP members.

7.3.1.3   *Cognitive Capital and Knowledge Sharing on the AfCoP Platform*

The cognitive dimension of social capital refers to those resources providing shared representations, interpretations and systems of meaning among parties (Darvish & Nikbakhsh, 2010; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). In this study, the constructs used to examine the relationship between cognitive capital and knowledge sharing among AfCoP members were shared language and shared vision. Previous studies have found both shared language and vision to have a significant role in enhancing knowledge sharing outcomes, with both variables contributing to the quality of knowledge shared (Chiu et al., 2006; Shaqrah et al., 2013).   In the present study, significant and positive associations were found between both shared language and shared vision, with both knowledge sharing intention and quality of knowledge sharing (Table 9). This implies that the more AfCoP members share a common language and share the same vision, values and goals of AfCoP, the more they are willing and able to share knowledge of sufficient quality.

In some studies, shared language has been found to be a critical factor in knowledge sharing (Darvish & Nikbakhsh, 2010). Shared language leads to better awareness of other members

in a community, which stimulated positive knowledge sharing attitudes and behaviours (Shaqrah et al., 2013). Shared language facilitates people' ability to gain access to people and their knowledge, thereby enhancing the capability of different members to combine the knowledge they gained through social exchange (Darvish & Nikbakhsh, 2010). In this study, shared language also incorporated shared narratives. Shared narratives refers to the myths, stories and metaphors that a community have in common, which may provide a powerful means for creating, exchanging and preserving rich sense of meanings (Darvish & Nikbakhsh, 2010). Sharing stories for example have been found to facilitate the exchanging of practice and tacit experience between technicians, thereby enabling the discovery and development of improved practice (Orr, 1990).

In this study, there was found to be a strong sense of shared language among most respondents in the study (Figure 23). Thus, AfCoP members generally had access to knowledge, and could share knowledge and stories in a familiar language. Shared language enabled members to create and share knowledge of sufficient quality. Shared language would also have enabled members of AfCoP create and transfer new interpretations of events, doing so in a way that facilitated the combination of different forms of knowledge that is largely tacit (Darvish & Nikbakhsh, 2010).

However, from the interviews with AfCoP members, an interviewee highlighted that the restrictedness of language on the platform to only English and French was preventing other people who could benefit from the knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform from participating. He suggested that language translation should be included on the platform as it would allow non-anglophone and francophone speakers to benefit from the interactions on the platform (Table 24). This implies that a minority group of members on the AfCoP platform may prefer that conversations on the AfCoP platform, be done or translated in other languages other than French or English. To the extent that people share a common language

265

and codes, is the community ability to gain access to other practitioners and their knowledge, while to the extent that their language differs, this keeps members apart and restricts their access (Darvish & Nikbakhsh, 2010). It would therefore be prudent for AfCoP to find ways to include the minority for whom language on the AfCoP platform is a barrier to participate.

Shared vision is also an element of the cognitive dimension of social capital. Shared vision embodies the collective goals and aspirations of the members of an organisation (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Several studies have also showed that shared vision and goals may hold a loosely coupled system and promote the integration of the entire community (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). In this study, there was found to be a strong sense of shared vision among respondents to the AfCoP member survey (Figure 24). This strong sense of shared vision and goals among the respondents to the survey in this study, may have been the 'bond' that kept this distributed and loosely connected AfCoP community together.

7.3.2 Technology Acceptance and Knowledge Sharing on the AfCoP Platform

Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) and Perceive Usefulness (PU) were the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) factors incorporated in the model for Knowledge Sharing Through Social Media (Figure 4). A significant number of previous studies have found both perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use to significantly influence knowledge sharing behaviour (Bahadur & Rajesh, 2014; Razmerita et al., 2016).

7.3.2.1 Perceived Ease of Use and Knowledge Sharing on the AfCoP Platform

From results of the study's hypotheses tests, a positive association was found between PEOU and the quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform (r=0.453, n=54, p=0.001). Hypothesis 7b was therefore supported. This implies that positive perceptions about the ease of use of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform positively influence the quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform. However, no relationship was found between

perceived ease of use and knowledge sharing intention and therefore hypothesis 7a was rejected. This result was similar to another study which found that perceived ease of use was not correlated with positive attitudes about knowledge sharing (Papadopoulos, Stamati, & Nopparuch, 2013). A possible explanation for this may be that a few respondents may have difficulties in using a social media based platform, especially amongst members in the older age groups who may resist new technologies. This result was however also unlike previous findings which have found perceived ease of use to be an important variable in the use of blogs for knowledge sharing (Hsu & Lin, 2008).

From the descriptive results, there were found to be mostly positive perceptions on the ease of use of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform (Figure 27) . The researcher therefore concluded that for most of the respondents in the study, navigating the technological or social media-based knowledge sharing platform was not complicated. This was because most of the members of AfCoP were tech savvy. Further to the survey results, the interviews with AfCoP members and the secretariat also confirmed that most of the participants in the study found the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform easy to use. One interviewee mentioned that the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was "very straightforward … easy to use". Another interviewee expressed confidence in their own technical skills when he mentioned that they found the AfCoP platform easy to use because they were "technically oriented". Membership on the AfCoP platform assumes a basic knowledge of information and communications technology (ICT) skills, as much of the communication is done online.

From the qualitative results, the researcher gathered evidence that some respondents to the survey in the study, admitted to facing challenges uploading documents, viewing latest posts or navigating the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. One respondent mentioned that "for a beginner, it is challenging to identify on the platform where to create posts". This may have been because the respondent lacked the requisite information technology skills to navigate the

267

AfCoP platform effectively. In addition, a member of the AfCoP secretariat during interviews, expressed a belief that the older generation of AfCoP members struggled with a lack of ICT skills, which affected their level of participation on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. This reiterates a need for training some members of the community for them to be able to fully participate on a social media based platform.

Further to this, some respondents to the AfCoP member survey felt they could not easily navigate to chosen social media tools on the platform. For example, one participant mentioned that "for a beginner, it is challenging to identify on the platform where to create or disseminate a blog post" (Table 13). This may indicate limitations on the usability of the AfCoP platform itself. To strengthen this point further, some interviewees in the study also lamented on the limitations of the graphical user interface of the AfCoP platform, where some felt there was need for flexibility between internal links (Table 13). Other participants also mentioned that there was need to improve on the platforms' user friendliness including making it mobile friendly (Table 14). Improvement of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform's user interface was therefore necessary to make the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform easy to use for the few participants, who did not find the platform easy to use.

7.3.2.2 *Perceived Usefulness and Knowledge Sharing on the AfCoP platform*

Perceived usefulness has been identified as one of the key factors affecting individuals' knowledge sharing behaviour. Previous researchers have found that where community members do not perceive the benefits of adopting social media tools, or if the benefits are not well communicated and explained, users are less likely to use them (Razmerita et al., 2016). From results of the study's hypotheses tests, PU correlated positively with both the knowledge sharing intention (r=0.459, n=54, p=0.000) of AfCoP members as well as the quality of knowledge (r=0.733, n=54, p-0.000) shared on the AfCoP platform. Thus, it was concluded that the more members perceived the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform to be

useful, the stronger their intentions increased to share knowledge through it, and the more they were motivated to share quality knowledge. If the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform provided functions that met user's needs, users were more likely to use the platform effectively to share quality knowledge. This was unlike previous studies which have found no association between perceived usefulness and knowledge sharing via blogs (Hsu & Lin, 2008; Papadopoulos et al., 2013).

Perceptions about the usefulness of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform were found to be positive for most of the respondents to the AfCoP Member survey (Figure 28). The results of the interviews with AfCoP members also confirmed that the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was useful for a variety of knowledge sharing activities including for socialising, learning about MfDR, collaboration, networking and locating experts (Tables 25, 26, 27, 28,29, 30, 31). The fact that most of the participants found the platform useful, most likely motivated them to participate or desire to continue membership with AfCoP.

Nevertheless, the results from the qualitative data also showed that a select few of the participants felt that the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was not useful for certain aspects of knowledge sharing such as for socialising (Table 25) or locating experts (Table 31). One interviewee expressed reservations about the platforms ability to facilitate learning about MfDR, which was a key subject within AfCoP. Another example, related to the platform's ability to facilitate expert location, one interviewee said, "it's not so easy for me to identify real experts on some new topics…it's not easy for me to…search which expert I have now on that issue in this country". Therefore, while the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was useful for most users, there were a few members who struggled to derive value from the platform in its ability to facilitate specific knowledge sharing outcomes such as for learning, socialising and locating experts (Tables 25, 26, 31). This may have been because they

believed it was not purposed to do so, as in the case of socialising or there was need to improve its functions such as the capability to facilitate expert location.

7.3.3 Social Capital, Technology Acceptance and Knowledge Sharing via the AfCoP Platform

The following conclusions were drawn on findings from testing the hypotheses proposed in the Knowledge Sharing Through Social Media model developed in Chapter 2.

Social Capital and Technology Acceptance both were found to have a role in knowledge sharing on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. From the Social Capital theory variables, identification, had the strongest relationship with quality of knowledge shared, followed by shared vision and shared language. Trust had a weak positive relationship, followed by norms of reciprocity and social interaction ties. All the Social Capital theory variables also correlated positively with knowledge sharing intentions of respondents. From the descriptive statistics, the level of social interaction ties and trust among the respondents was found to be moderate. This was attributed to the distributed and online nature of the AfCoP community which did not encourage the development of personal relationships, nor allow them to interact on a regular basis. However, as trust and social interaction ties both correlated positively with knowledge sharing behaviour, there would be need to find ways to strengthen the levels of trust and social interactions in the community. The broad implication for these findings includes the need for the AfCoP management to invest in and seek to improve social capital among AfCoP members, as various aspects of the structural, relational and cognitive capita positively correlate with knowledge sharing behaviour on the platform.

From the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) variables, Perceived Usefulness (PU) also correlated positively with both the knowledge sharing intentions of respondents and the quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform. This shows the importance of the

AfCoP platforms functionalities in meeting user needs, resulting in positive perceptions and use of the platform. Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) also correlated positively with the quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform, while there was no relationship found between PEOU and knowledge sharing intention. These findings support the generally accepted belief that PEOU influences information seeking behaviour (Bahadur & Rajesh, 2014). This has implications for the need to improve on the quality and functions of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform as well as on improving its usability.

7.3.4 Other Motivating Factors for Knowledge Sharing on the AfCoP Platform

There were other factors known to influence knowledge sharing from literature that were also considered in this study. These included organisational support, beliefs about the benefits members could enjoy through participation on the AfCoP platform, such as its ability to make member's daily jobs easier; expectations to receive help or receive answers on the platform; the desire to strengthen relations with other members; beliefs about one's obligation to contribute; the platforms ability to enable a member to achieve personal goals; to broaden one's network and to bring promotional opportunities.

7.3.4.1 Organisational Support for Knowledge Sharing on the AfCoP Platform

A key enabler of knowledge sharing among members of a community is the having the right organisational environment (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016; Razmerita et al., 2016; Riege, 2005). Consequently if there is a lack of leadership support towards integrating the knowledge management strategy with the overall organisational goals, providing strategic knowledge management vision, providing support for knowledge sharing activities of providing adequate infrastructure, knowledge sharing among members would suffer (Riege, 2005). From results of interviews with the AfCoP secretariat and management, the AfCoP management was found to play key roles in supporting knowledge sharing on the AfCoP

knowledge sharing platform. These included: administration and moderation of the AfCoP platform; providing policies and guidelines for participating on the platform; providing financial support to sustain the platform; communicating with AfCoP members and steering the vision and values for knowledge sharing on the platform.

The findings from the AfCoP Member Survey revealed a general satisfaction in AfCoP's level of support of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, as 76% of the respondents' believed that the AfCoP secretariat and management supported knowledge sharing on the AfCoP platform. A further 73% of the respondents believed AfCoP provided valid channels for knowledge sharing through the AfCoP platform. This possibly indicated a general satisfaction with the social media tools availed by the AfCoP management among the members. However only 55% of the respondents believed that the AfCoP management provided enough knowledge sharing opportunities. Perhaps this may have been related to the restrictedness of the discussion forum topics, where only the secretariat could initiate and participate in discussion. Another possible reason could have been a preference for other social media tools, as the AfCoP Member Survey results also indicated respondents used other types of social media beyond those incorporated on the AfCoP platform (Figure 16).

7.3.4.2 *Benefits of AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform to Members*

From the results of the study, it was revealed that what may have motivated most of the respondents in this study to participate on the AfCoP platform was a desire to improve their career practice and career related opportunities. At least 63% of the respondents believed sharing knowledge on the AfCoP platform made their job easier (Figure 30); while 79% believed questions they would post on the AfCoP platform would be answered (Figure 31); and 96% of the respondents indicated a strong desire to strengthen their network ties with other members on the platform (Figure 32). Further to these, 59% of the respondents believed that sharing knowledge on the AfCoP platform helped them achieve personal goals (Figure

34); 93% of the respondents believed the platform broadened their scope of association (Figure 35); 67% believed the AfCoP platform could bring them promotional opportunities (Figure 36). There were also 67% of the respondents who believed that sharing knowledge on the AfCoP platform helped them gain acknowledgement and the recognition of their ideas (Figure 37); while 50% felt their participation on the AfCoP platform would win them approval from their superiors and colleagues (Figure 38). The researcher therefore concluded that personal career goals and opportunities may have played a crucial role in most of the respondents' willingness to participate on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform.

However, the study also revealed that only 32% of the participants felt that the AfCoP platform secured their jobs (Figure 39). A further 36% of the participants disagreed with this statement while 39% of the participants were undecided. The researcher therefore arrived at a possible conclusion that while the participants in this study were motivated to participate on the AfCoP platform by a desire to improve their career; obtain opportunities and develop professional networks, they did not see their participation on AfCoP as directly linked to their job security. This may have been because most of the participants were already senior managers in their organisations, whose jobs were already secure.

7.3.5   Barriers to Knowledge Sharing on the AfCoP Platform

The literature also reveals several other barriers to knowledge sharing. Some of these include: lack of time on the part of community members; inadequacy of the knowledge shared to meet particular needs; feelings of insecurity related to how shared information might be used; beliefs about the quality of knowledge that is shared by a community; a lack of adequate rewards; fear of criticism; not wanting to share knowledge with acquaintances; fear of losing ownership of knowledge and members experiencing difficulties through written forms (Riege, 2005; Vuori & Okkonen, 2012; Wang & Noe, 2010).

7.3.5.1 Time and Effort Required to Share Knowledge on AfCoP

From the results of the study, 41% of the participants did not feel that participating on the AfCoP platform took too much time and effort to share knowledge on the AfCoP platform (Figure 43). However, there were 39% of the participants who were undecided on a response, and a further 21% who believed that it took too much time and effort to participate on the AfCoP platform. The qualitative results also supported this view, and from the open ended section of the AfCoP Member Survey, respondent 24 felt that "it sometimes takes a lot of reaching out with extensions and deadlines for contributions", while respondent 9 felt that "some topics are too wide and require more effort for research and yet time may not be enough for such side work" (Table 11). The issue of time and effort was also raised during interviews with AfCoP members, with participant AP mentioning that

> "I also used to post…if you check my page. But then it takes time because you need to research before you post, it's time consuming, you have to read and write something that's relevant even when someone just posts. You can't just respond without researching. So it takes a bit of time"

The results of this study also confirm what other researchers have discovered that the time and effort required to make a meaningful contribution is a deterring factor for members to fully participate in knowledge sharing activities (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016; Ramirez, 2007; Razmerita et al., 2016). Wenger (2001) also affirmed that the knowledge sharing demands of communities of practice usually compete with other priorities in the lives of members, raising the need for knowledge sharing facilitating technology that make participation as easy and efficient as possible. In respect of saving participants time and effort, the researcher therefore concludes that social media does not necessarily bring efficiency.

7.3.5.2 *Feelings of Fear and Insecurity*

Different fears that people have can discourage them from participating in a knowledge

sharing community. Some studies have found that individuals may feel insecure about how

information they share might be used by others; others fear being criticised for sharing; others

fear sharing knowledge with people they do not know and others may fear losing power

through ownership of knowledge (Hubert & Lopez, 2013; Majewsky & Usoro, 2011;

Razmerita et al., 2016; Riege, 2005; Vuori & Okkonen, 2012).

7.3.5.2.1 *Fear of Misrepresentation or Misuse of Knowledge Shared*

In this study, 55% of the respondents to the AfCoP Member survey did not feel insecure

about how information they shared via the AfCoP platform, might be received or used

(Figure 45). This reveals that just over half of the respondents were not affected by the

possible negative reactions from other members on the platform. They did not fear

misrepresentation of their ideas or being misunderstood. However, there were 15% of the

respondents who feared being misrepresented or being misunderstood, while another 30% of

the respondents were undecided on an appropriate response. This minority group may

represent those who may hesitate to share knowledge on social media platforms such as the

AfCoP platform, due to issues of mistrust and not being comfortable to interact with people

they do not know well.

7.3.5.2.2 *Fear of Criticism*

When members share knowledge on a public platform, they risk having their contributions

rejected or criticised (Riege, 2005). In the current study, 68% of the respondents did not fear

criticism or rejection of their person or ideas (Figure 47). This shows a high level of maturity

among respondents to the AfCoP Member Survey; an understanding of the benefits of

knowledge sharing and an ability to embrace criticism as useful for learning. There were

however six percent (6%) of the respondents, who expressed their fears at the possibility of

receiving criticism when sharing knowledge on the AfCoP platform. Another 26% of the respondents were undecided on an appropriate response. This may suggest that a minority of the respondents may struggle to actively participate on the AfCoP platform, for fear of being on the receiving end of criticism.

7.3.5.2.3 Fear of Sharing Knowledge with Strangers or Acquaintances

An investigation to examine the participants' willingness to share knowledge with strangers or acquaintances on the AfCoP platform, revealed that 81% of the respondents were comfortable with sharing knowledge with strangers (Figure 48). This may indicate that this group of respondents, were not so motivated by close relational ties as they were with the desire to learn from anyone on the platform. It may also reflect that most of the respondents believed in the goodwill of other members participating on the AfCoP platform. There were however 19% of the participants who did not want to share knowledge with people they knew little about. For this minority group of respondents, having stronger relational ties may have been a prerequisite for them to feel comfortable with sharing knowledge on the AfCoP platform (Hubert & Lopez, 2013).

7.3.5.2.4 Fear of Losing Power

For some knowledge is power and sharing knowledge with others may be seen to decrease the advantage they have over others. There were 89% of the respondents to the AfCoP Members survey who did not consider hoarding knowledge as a means of having influence or authority over others (Figure 49). This reveals a commitment on the part of most of the respondents to knowledge sharing with other members of the AfCoP platform. Surprisingly, however, there were also two percent (2%) of the participants who feared losing ownership of knowledge through sharing with others, while nine percent (9%) of the participants were undecided on an appropriate response. This minority group may represent the few who may

need education on the benefits of knowledge sharing as well as positive encouragement towards sharing knowledge on the platform.

7.3.5.3 *Incentives and Rewards*

Incentives and rewards have been found to affect knowledge sharing in previous studies (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016; Ramirez, 2007). The results of the AfCoP member survey revealed most of the participants did not feel inadequately rewarded (Figure 46). The AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was found to be largely dependent on the voluntary participation of members. The results of the study suggest that these participants were satisfied by the incentives they were receiving for participation on the AfCoP platform. For example, during interviews with the AfCoP members and secretariat one participant revealed that they were motivated to participate on the platform by the hope to be chosen to attend sponsored AfCoP's physical meetings. The participant had been made to believe through interaction with other AfCoP members, that participants for AfCoP's physical meetings, were invited based on their level of participation on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. The AfCoP member survey was administered during one physical AfCoP meeting and possibly those present, represented the ones who received satisfactory incentives through invites to the physical meetings and having their meeting costs covered. This would explain their satisfaction with incentives given for participation on the platform.

There were however 39% of the respondents who were undecided on an appropriate response, while four percent (4%) felt they were not being adequately rewarded. From the interviews, participant AP also expressed the need to give members who participated on the AfCoP platform meaningful rewards. She mentioned "if they could give incentives for people who are sharing on the platform, it could help… people are really busy…and there are so many platforms…people need incentives to post". The interviewee went on further to suggest that they would appreciate incentives in the form of monetary gifts for posting, or other

incentives in kind such as offering free training (Table 23). Another interviewee also felt strongly the need for AfCoP to consider giving incentives to improve participation on the AfCoP platform. In his view, there was "need to find incentives to get people to participate". Another finding was that most of the knowledge products on the platform were developed through commissioning experts, who in turn received some monetary incentives. For lack of such incentives, many more knowledge products were yet to be developed. Therefore, as in other studies, the motivation of AfCoP members through incentives and rewards was probably crucial to maintain or improve participation on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform (Wang & Noe, 2010).

7.3.5.4 Communication Skills

The study revealed that conversational discussions in written format were not a challenge for 70% of the respondents, who indicated that they did not find it hard to express themselves in written format (Figure 51). This reflected the high level of education of the respondents in the study, the majority of who possessed a master's level degree or higher. However, 22% of the participants were undecided on an appropriate response, while seven percent (7%) believed it was hard to share knowledge in other ways other than conversational. These participants may prefer to learn best through verbal conversations and would probably have felt comfortable to share on the platform if it allowed for videoconferencing or teleconferencing facilities. Learning style preferences are therefore an important consideration when providing technology to facilitate knowledge sharing in communities. The ideal would be to provide multi-modal facilities that cater for verbal and non-verbal means of communication (Davenport & Hall, 2002).

7.4 Perceptions of AfCoP Members Towards the Use of Social Media for Knowledge Sharing

Previous studies have shown that individuals have positive views about the use of social media for knowledge sharing in organisational settings(Adamovic et al., 2012; Mosha et al., 2015). The current study sought to examine the perceptions of AfCoP members towards the use of social media for the purposes of knowledge sharing. From the results of the survey, at least 31 of the 54 respondents held positive attitudes towards the use of social media for knowledge sharing. Table 18 was a presentation of responses to the open-ended questions, where respondents believed that social media enabled flexible access to knowledge. One participant said, *"social networks create platforms to share and exchange ideas"*. With the availability of social network services on mobile technology, other participants believed *"social media provided a cheaper and accessible option of sharing related knowledge and experiences"*.

Other participants believed that social media was useful for knowledge sharing as they are ubiquitous, widely used and able to reach many people, across vast geographic distances at once. One respondent felt that social media was being used to bring change in Africa and had been employed to uses such as *"fighting corruption and fundraising for disaster…people using WhatsApp, Twitter to share social information that is work related"* (Table 18).

Some respondents also felt that social media enabled the creation of social networks with likeminded or interested groups of people. Social media was also believed to be useful in growing the sphere of influence of individuals (Table 19). For most of the participants in the study therefore, the use of social media for knowledge sharing was a welcome idea, which highlighted their willingness to use it as a medium for the exchange of knowledge and ideas.

Nine respondents who completed the optional question about their views on using the AfCoP platform for knowledge sharing held positive attitudes about using it for knowledge sharing (Table 18). The study had also revealed that the majority of the respondents had found the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform useful for various knowledge sharing activities such as for learning (Tables 26,27), collaboration (Table 28), networking (Table 29), sharing stories (Table 30) and locating experts (Table 31). This may reveal that respondents in the study were most comfortable with using social media designed specifically for knowledge sharing purposes, within organisations.

However, there were at least six of the respondents who expressed cautious attitude towards the use of social media for knowledge sharing (Table 20). One felt that social media was more targeted for the younger generation rather than the more mature or older generation. In view of this they felt that an *"online knowledge sharing platform should be supplemental, not the prime source of knowledge sharing especially if the older generation is also the target of such knowledge".* Other participants were of the view that social media was rather casual in nature and hence required monitoring and control as members could lose focus (Table 20). Some also felt that social media use for knowledge sharing could be risky as it could expose members to "cybercriminals". Some also felt that some of the knowledge that is shared via social media could be questionable as one could sometimes encounter "junk" information. They were however quick to add "although not on AfCoP'. It may be inferred that some of the respondents in the study, were comfortable with using social media for knowledge sharing to the extent that necessary precautions were taken, including managing participation, content as well as making considerations related to age.

There was also a third category of participants who held out rightly negative attitudes towards use of social media for knowledge sharing. One respondent feared their information would be misrepresented (Table 21). Another respondent was not favourable to social media as they

were "too open platforms", perhaps betraying their fear of invasion of privacy. Previous studies have also revealed that there are knowledge workers who have negative attitudes towards social media for knowledge sharing and will consequently feel uncomfortable to use it unless the benefits are explained to them (Mosha et al., 2015).

7.5 Challenges of Using Social Media for Knowledge Sharing Among AfCoP Members

The study revealed several challenges faced by AfCoP members as they sought to share knowledge on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform.

The findings of the AfCoP members survey, revealed five categories of challenges AfCoP members faced when using the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. These included: time constraints; lack of participation; content issues; technical challenges and financial constraints (Figure 52).

7.5.1 Time Constraints

Time was considered a challenging factor by participants in this study. From both the survey results and interviews, participants highlighted the requirement of effort and time to participate on the AfCoP platform as a challenge. The time to actively participate was not always available and it was not always feasible to exert the necessary effort *"for such side work"*. Time and effort required for knowledge sharing has consistently been recognised as a challenge in a variety of knowledge sharing contexts (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016; Razmerita et al., 2016; Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). As other knowledge sharing studies have revealed, this study confirmed that knowledge sharing activities in communities of practice often compete with member's priorities (Wenger, 2001). Therefore, It would appear that the unavailability of time and demands of effort for knowledge sharing remain significant challenges in social media contexts. There is therefore need for organisations using social

media for knowledge sharing activities to formulate strategies that protect expertise time and enable them to efficiently participate.

7.5.2 Lack of Participation

Lack of participation on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, was also highlighted as a challenge in the study. Respondents in the study lamented that *"members hardly participate in online discussions"* (Table 11). During interviews with the AfCoP secretariat, it was also revealed that *"it has been hard to get members to contribute on a topic"* and one online discussion would generate an average of 20 to 30 comments and yet there were over 4000 members on the platform. This lack of participation was also confirmed by the documentary analysis where for example 531 blog articles posted by members on the AfCoP platform generated 217 comments or 200 discussions generated 1362 replies. Further analysis of the discussion contributors revealed that the 200 discussions on the discussion forum were initiated by only 107 members, while the blog entries were contributed by 159 members of AfCoP. The researcher therefore confirms that lack of active participation was a great challenge on the platform. It may therefore be concluded that most of the members on the AfCoP platform were consumers rather than creators of content. One participant in the study said, *"I just read the conversations without making any contribution",* which was probably a reflection of the position assumed by most of the members on the AfCoP platform. The study highlights that perhaps the presence of social media does not necessarily remove the problem of participation among members of a knowledge sharing community.

7.5.3 Content of Knowledge Shared on the AfCoP Platform

Another issue that was highlighted as a challenge in the study was that of the content shared on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. Some participants in the study felt that some of the content of discussions on the AfCoP platform was too deep and challenging for members to understand (Table 10). Some also felt that the quality of the knowledge shared was

sometimes questionable, and there was an expressed need for AfCoP to improve on content (Table 10). Another issue raised by participants was the lack of clarity in licencing and ownership of the knowledge shared on the platform (Table 10). From the interviews, one interviewee, felt that *"not everybody will have an interest in every topic"*. The challenges for AfCoP therefore was to stimulate interesting and engaging topics of discussion, that had credible information and were sufficiently challenging, whose authority could be verified. This also has implications for the perceived usefulness of the AfCoP platform by members. The patronisation of the AfCoP platform for knowledge sharing would depend on perceptions of its usefulness as it is an important indicator of knowledge sharing behaviour (Bahadur & Rajesh, 2014).

7.5.4 Technical Challenges on the AfCoP Platform

Previous studies have found that system specific issues such as the functionality and usability of the knowledge sharing platform, its structure, interface design, provision of training for using the platform and its ability to meet user needs, influence its adoption for knowledge sharing purposes (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016; Razmerita et al., 2016; Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). Consequently, individuals have been found to use social media tools that they find useful and practical for knowledge sharing (Vuori & Okkonen, 2012).

There were several technical challenges that participants in the study encountered in their use of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. For some, the graphical user interface was not sufficiently intuitive, as it did not prompt one *"to contribute, or comment on other's posts"* (Table 13). Some participants faced navigating issues, with one indicating that they struggled to identify the blog section of the platform (Table 13). This could have referred to the arrangement of services on the AfCoP platform, perhaps it was not easy for participants to navigate to required features for some participants. Some participants indicated that they struggled with uploading documents or logging in to the platform. This may have been

indicative of the lack of ICT skills or limited internet connectivity on the part of the participants, rather than it being a technical issue with the AfCoP platform.

Several participants in the study also expressed the need for the platform to be sufficiently compatible with mobile devices. These participants highlighted that it was easier and cheaper for them to access content on a mobile phone rather than on a computer. Another technical issue experienced by participants in the study was a malfunctioning expert search tool. It was challenging for one participant to search for experts as there was no well-designed search engine on the platform to easily search for an expert by area of expertise or location (Table 31). They were having to do so manually which was cumbersome.

Internet connectivity was also a challenge for at least four of the respondents to the survey (Table 13). One participant said that they faced *"connection problems as there is no reliable internet connection from where I connect from"*. In Africa, although internet connectivity is growing, it is still a challenge for many, which poses a significant challenge for communities of practice which depend on social media for facilitating knowledge sharing in poorly connected areas. Previous studies have also highlighted technical challenges such as internet connectivity, inadequate technology and unreliable power supply as impediments for social media adoption for knowledge sharing in organisations (Mosha et al., 2015). However, some of these technical issues appear to be more apparent in developing world contexts rather than in the developed world.

Some of the technical challenges faced by participants may have also been related to the lack of information and communications technology (ICT) skills on the part of some AfCoP members. From the interviews with the AfCoP secretariat, one interviewee believed the older AfCoP members lacked the requisite ICT skills to fully take advantage of the AfCoP platform

for knowledge sharing. Without the necessary ICT skills, it would be difficult to propagate the use of a social media platform for knowledge sharing as these skills are prerequisite.

7.5.5   Financial Constraints

Some respondents highlighted lack of adequate financial resources to finance research and paper writing as an impeding factor for participating on the AfCoP platform. From interviews with the AfCoP secretariat, one interviewee, expressed fears that if the financial support that enabled AfCoP to avail the platform were removed, this would threaten the viability of using the AfCoP platform for knowledge sharing. This is the challenge of subscription based social media platforms, as the one used by AfCoP, unless there was a constant flow of funding, it was not possible to sustain the community financially. Previous researchers have highlighted that high costs of a knowledge sharing platform and inadequate financial resources were barriers to knowledge sharing (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016; Mosha et al., 2015; Razmerita et al., 2016; Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). Although literature indicates that social media are cheap and easily accessible (Cao et al., 2015; Widen-Wulff & Totterman, 2009), this study has shown that some social media preferred for private organisational use as the Ning platform used by AfCoP, can be costly which can be a barrier for knowledge sharing unless a steady flow of income were generated. In the case of AfCoP, they depended on uncertain donor funding to provide the AfCoP platform. This therefore threatened the sustainability of knowledge sharing activities of AfCoP.

7.5.6   Health Related Issues

At least one participant in the study indicated that they faced challenges related to their health, which negatively affected their participation on the AfCoP platform. The interviewee revealed that he had a health condition that made it difficult to use a computer for long periods of time or to be viewing the computer screen for extended periods. This raises a need for social media supported communities of practice to cater for people with various

disabilities, such as hearing, visual or speech impairments. Without this support, experts with some disabilities would fail to meaningfully participate.

7.6   The Kinds of Knowledge Generated and Shared on the AfCoP Platform

Documentary analysis of content on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, as well as the official AfCoP Facebook and Twitter accounts was conducted. The knowledge sharing activities on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform included posts on the discussion forum, the blog and knowledge products.

7.6.1   Knowledge on the Discussion Forum

On the discussion forum, tacit knowledge was mostly shared. There were 200 discussion posts, which were authored by 107 members of AfCoP. The original posts attracted 1362 replies or responses from other members on the platform. The asynchronous conversations on the discussion forum covered at least 116 subject areas, with the most dominant topics being Results Based Management, Managing for Development Results, Monitoring and Evaluation, Capacity Building, Development, Gender, Planning, Youth and Leadership. These were areas of strategic focus for AfCoP. The conversations would be in the form of requests for information to solve a problem such as how to curb brain drain in Africa; how to stop illicit financial flows or how to deal with the scourge of Youth Unemployment in Africa. A distinct feature of the discussion forum was that these discussions were initiated and facilitated, by experts, commissioned by the AfCoP secretariat or AfCoP management teams. The discussions were asynchronous, with contributors invited to add to the conversation whenever they were able. With a combined total of at least 1362 responses to initiated topics of discussion, the researcher was persuaded that the discussion forum was the preferred social media tool on the platform which stimulated the most interest and participation and was highly regarded among AfCoP members. This could also be supported with the finding that conversations from the discussion forum, were the ones which were earmarked for

conversion into knowledge products such as knowledge briefs, which according to findings in another study commanded a lot of visitor statistics. Posts on the discussion forum section of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform were largely tacit in nature. This highlights the potential of social media for managing tacit knowledge sharing as previous studies have revealed (Panahi, 2014; Panahi et al., 2013)

7.6.2 Knowledge Shared on the AfCoP Blog

The blog section of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, was the alternative platform where any member of AfCoP could initiate a conversation or post blog articles. There were 531 blog posts initiated by 159 AfCoP members and which had attracted only 217 comments. While the blog posts were more than the discussion forum posts, it seemed they attracted less participation by other members as they only garnered 217 comments. However, the blog section was less restrictive, and at least 2235 subject tags on topics of blog posts were observable. However, as in the case of the Discussion Forum, the blog posts were mostly centred on subject areas of strategic interest to AfCoP, such as MfDR, monitoring and evaluation, accountability, development and results-based management. The blog section of the AfCoP platform took a variety of forms. Some blog posts were also tacit in nature, with members sharing stories or reflections of what they would have learnt at AfCoP events or other related functions they would have participated in. However, because it did not have a dedicated facilitator, the blog section also contained posts that were advertorial in nature, with AfCoP members inviting others to events, or directing them to opportunities for training or research collaboration. These findings highlight the crucial role of a facilitator in stimulating conversations, guiding participation and making participation on the platform easy and efficient as is possible (Wenger, 2001). In a knowledge sharing community where the role of a facilitator exists, the community is nurtured and cultivated and participation by members can be maximised.

7.6.3 Knowledge Products Section of the AfCoP Platform

The main AfCoP knowledge sharing platform also had a knowledge products section. This section had codified documents, synthesised in the form of reports, briefs, case studies, tools and guidelines and training materials. The study revealed that briefs, were the result of a synthesis of conversations from a topic on the discussion forum. Case studies were also contributed by members, as was revealed by one of the interviewees, who indicated that the AfCoP secretariat would give guidelines on how to submit a case study. AfCoP would therefore invite members to submit case studies relevant to AfCoP. In this study, participants found briefs tools, guidelines and case studies to be very useful while in a different study, it was revealed that the Briefs and Cases Studies section were the most visited on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform (Thoto et al., 2017). The researcher was therefore persuaded to make the assertion that members of AfCoP were interested in real life examples of best practices, in their fields of strategic importance to AfCoP. They also were interested in documents that gave brief and practical directions on how to implement or adopt a strategy or policy as recommended through AfCoP. The AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, therefore enabled the community to manage both tacit and explicit knowledge.

7.6.4 Knowledge Shared on AfCoP's Facebook and Twitter Accounts

AfCoP also maintained three other public social media accounts: Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. The researcher was only able to conduct content analysis on AfCoP's Facebook and Twitter accounts.

7.6.4.1 AfCoP's Twitter Account

The study found quite a significant usage of the AfCoP Twitter account, with 3192 tweets and retweets. The content of tweets revealed that most of the tweets were generated during different meetings organised by AfCoP or of relevance to AfCoP, and members would retweet what AfCoP would have posted or mention the AfCoP twitter account in their own

tweets. The main contributor for tweets was the AfCoP secretariat. In terms of responses to posts, the Twitter account had only garnered only 91 likes, however 944 of AfCoP's original tweets had been retweeted 2128 times. This may reflect that members of AfCoP prefer to share information they find with others; hence they retweet content.

7.6.4.2   *AfCoP's Facebook Posts*

The study revealed a low usage of Facebook by the AfCoP secretariat. Since the AfCoP Facebook inception in 2009 only 154 Facebook posts had been posted, with content including website links; photos, status posts and videos and 214 likes had been accumulated. It also appeared that the AfCoP secretariat were using the AfCoP Facebook account more for advertising the main AfCoP knowledge sharing platform as most of the content on AfCoP Facebook account were links which redirected users to the main AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. Although the study revealed that social networking tools like Facebook were the most used by participants in the survey, the AfCoP Facebook did not seem to be well patronised. Perhaps an explanation for this phenomenon was the belief by some participants in the study that public social media sites such as Facebook were not very useful work-related knowledge sharing.

Both tacit and codified knowledge was therefore shared on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. Tacit knowledge was shared mainly via the discussion forum and blog sections of the platform. AfCoP members shared problem solving solutions, lessons learnt in stories and blog articles. The blog section of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was also used for advertising opportunities for collaboration and training or services offered by members of AfCoP. The codified knowledge on the AfCoP platform, was in the form of synthesised reports, briefs, tools, guidelines and case studies. The most useful to participants being briefs and case studies. AfCoP also used it public social media accounts: Twitter and Facebook for advertising and redirecting visitors to the main AfCoP knowledge sharing platform.

7.7 Summary

Chapter seven discussed the findings of the current study in relation to the research questions of the study. The use of social media among AfCoP members was discussed in light of the demographic characteristics of the members of AfCoP. It was also revealed that AfCoP used several social media including a subscription based and private social networking platform that had a discussion forum, blog, chat and email facilities. AfCoP also made use of public social networking sites including Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. However, these were found to be used mainly for marketing and publicity the main AfCoP knowledge sharing platform.

Social media was found to support various knowledge sharing activities of AfCoP including learning, networking, collaboration, socialising and locating experts. By using the AfCoP platform, AfCoP also achieved its key strategic objectives including the adoption of MfDR practices in member countries; reduction of physical meeting costs and growth in AfCoP membership.

Most of the participants in this study visited the AfCoP platform once a week, while others visited when they had specific information needs. Members of AfCoP were also revealed to have been aware of various available social media, with social networking sites such as Facebook being the most popular.

Most of the participants in the study, held positive views about the use of social media for knowledge sharing, which highlighted their willingness to share knowledge on the AfCoP platform. However, a few respondents in the AfCoP member survey, expressed a cautious attitude towards using social media for knowledge sharing. There is therefore a need to take necessary precautions when managing the AfCoP platform, including managing participation, content as well as making considerations for the appropriateness of the platform for all ages.

With regards to factors that influenced knowledge sharing on the AfCoP platform, social capital and technology acceptance were both found to have a key role on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. Social interaction ties, trust, norms of reciprocity, shared language and shared vision correlated positively with the knowledge sharing intentions of members and the quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform. From the descriptive statistics however, social interaction ties and trust among respondents were found to be moderate. From the Technology Acceptance Model variables perceived usefulness also correlated positively with both knowledge sharing intentions of respondents and the quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform. However, perceived ease of use correlated positively with the quality of knowledge shared, while it had no relationship with knowledge sharing intentions of respondents. These findings indicate a need to invest in social capital as its facets are associated with positive knowledge sharing behaviour and outcomes on the AfCoP platform. There is also a need to improve on the quality, functions and usability of the AfCoP platform to maintain or improve its usage among AfCoP members.

Other factors influencing participation on the AfCoP platform included the members' desire to improve their career practice and prospects and to take advantage of perceived opportunities available through the platform. The AfCoP management also played a key role in supporting knowledge sharing on the platform including administering and moderating activities on the platform, providing policies and guidelines for participation, providing financial resources for the platform, communicating with AfCoP members and steering the vision and values for knowledge sharing on the platform.

There were challenges participants in the study experienced in their participation on the AfCoP platform. These included: the lack of time and an unwillingness to exert effort to meaningfully participate; lack of participation as most members on the platform appeared to be consumers rather than creators of content; content issues, where the content was too

difficult to understand for a few, was difficult to track ownership and was not always interesting. Participants also encountered technical challenges including an unintuitive graphical user interface and the perceived incompatibility of the platform with mobile technology. Some participants in the study also felt the expert search tool was dysfunctional. Other technical challenges faced related to poor internet connectivity. A lack of ICT skills was also highlighted as a possible challenge for some of the members of AfCoP.

Another challenge highlighted by participants were financial constraints, as provision for subscription fees for the main AfCoP platform were not guaranteed. This posed a threat to the sustainability of the knowledge sharing community. There was also a participant who faced health and disability challenges which affected their participation on the platform.

The knowledge generated on the AfCoP platform was both tacit and codified. Tacit knowledge was shared on the discussion forum and blog sections of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. The codified knowledge was in the synthesised and published knowledge products which were downloadable from the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter a summary of the study is given, and we draw the main conclusions from the study related to the objectives as well as provide recommendations for the adoption of social media for knowledge sharing in communities of practice.

8.2 Summary of the Study

The study focused on the intersection between knowledge management and information and communication technologies, with a premise that social media are playing an important role in facilitating knowledge sharing among members in distributed communities of practice. Previous studies have revealed the failure of traditional knowledge management systems in catering for the sharing of knowledge embedded in people and their social structures(Al-Taee, 2013; Panahi et al., 2012; Scarso & Bolisani, 2016). Contemporary communities of practice, as was the African Community of Practice (AfCoP), are distributed in nature, linking people across vast geographic distances, organisational boundaries and different cultures (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 116). They require appropriate tools and platforms to facilitate the sharing and exchange of knowledge and ideas among members (Al-Taee, 2013; Jeon et al., 2011). The study therefore argued that social media are emerging as effective platforms for knowledge sharing in distributed communities.

The study sought to examine the extent of social media use for knowledge sharing within the African Community of Practice (AfCoP). This was a distributed community of practice of development experts ceased with developing their domain and practice in Managing for Development Results (MfDR) across the African continent. The study had three main objectives which were to determine the extent and use of social media for knowledge sharing;

to investigate the factors influencing the use of social media among AfCoP members and to provide recommendations for the adoption and use of social media for knowledge sharing in AfCoP.

The study followed a pragmatic research approach, which allowed for the use of mixed methods to collect data through a survey; semi-structured interviews and content analysis of the data shared on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS (25) while qualitative data were analysed using NVivo (12). The findings of the quantitative data were presented in Chapter five, while those of qualitative data were presented in Chapter six, with the discussion of the findings in relation to the research questions of the study given in Chapter seven.

The conclusions of the study are summarised in the following section.

8.3 The Extent and Use of Social Media for Knowledge Sharing in AfCoP

Several findings revealed the extent to which social media was used for knowledge sharing in AfCoP. The characteristics of the features of the social media tools used were described, while the demographic characteristics of users of the AfCoP platform were also given. The study also revealed the frequency of use of the AfCoP platform; the level of AfCoP member awareness of available social media tools as well as the various knowledge sharing activities supported by social media through the AfCoP platform. These key findings are summarised below.

8.3.1 Characteristics and Features of the AfCoP Platform

AfCoP subscribed to a combination of a private knowledge sharing platform and public social media accounts for their knowledge sharing activities. This is consistent with a growing phenomenon around the world, where organisations are adopting social media for knowledge management purposes (Bharati, Zhang, & Chaudhury, 2015). The private AfCoP

knowledge sharing platform, was built on the Ning social networking software, and was subscription based, with AfCoP having to pay an annual fee for AfCoP members to be able to access and share knowledge on it. The AfCoP knowledge sharing platform included a subscription based social networking platform that had features including a discussion forum, blog section, ability for members to chat in private or send email, as well as a section where synthesised knowledge products were collected and downloadable. On the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, members could create their profiles, highlighting their areas of expertise and other members were free to browse through to search for expertise. The AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was found to be the main platform used for knowledge sharing for the distributed community of practice, drawing membership from development experts mostly from across the African continent and a few from other regions. The platform was bilingual, catering only for English and French speaking development experts.

AfCoP also managed public social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. In this study, AfCoP's use of Facebook and Twitter were found to have been mostly targeted at broader audience beyond the AfCoP membership, with the aim of drawing interested individuals to the main AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. Social media was therefore found to be playing an important role as facilitating technology for knowledge sharing among AfCoP members.

8.3.2 Demographic Characteristics of Users of the AfCoP Platform

The users of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform were revealed to be predominantly male; and most were in their productive and midlife years with the largest group aged between 30-49 years. The AfCoP community also consisted of members resident in 25 countries, mostly from across the African continent. The participants in the study also represented various economic sectors and worked for different organisations. The AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, was therefore able to facilitate the bridging of geographical distances,

organisational boundaries and lack of physical co-location of members(Wenger et al., 2002).

Further to this, the study also revealed that the members of AfCoP were highly educated, the

majority of whom possessed at least a master's level degree; with expertise in various areas

within the Managing for Development Results Domain. Thus, the use of social media for

knowledge sharing through AfCoP, brought together a highly distributed, diverse group of

individuals. The AfCoP knowledge sharing platform enabled members to meet and

communicate regularly, virtually, while overcoming barriers of geographic distance,

organisational, personal and cultural boundaries, to develop the domain and practice of

MfDR across the African continent.

8.3.3   Frequency of Use of the AfCoP Platform

The AfCoP platform by was moderately used by most participants in the study, with 35% of

the participants visiting it once a week and 27% of the participants visiting only when they

needed specific information.

8.3.4   Awareness of Social Media Tools by AfCoP Members

Participants in the study were aware of and used a variety of social media. Social networking

software like Facebook was found to be the most used amongst most participants in the study,

followed by a preference for private messaging.

8.3.5   Knowledge Sharing Activities Supported by Social Media

Participants in the study believed that social media supported several knowledge sharing

activities within AfCoP including learning (78%); professional networking (35%);

collaborating (35%); expert location and sharing stories.

8.4   Factors Affecting the Use of Social Media for Knowledge Sharing on the AfCoP Platform

The tests of the hypotheses proposed in the model for Knowledge Sharing Through Social Media (Figure 4), revealed that Social Capital theory and Technology Acceptance Model factors have an important role in knowledge sharing on the AfCoP platform. Support was found for 15 of the 16 hypotheses proposed in the study. The social capital theory factors found to be significantly and positively associated with both the knowledge sharing intentions of respondents and the quality of knowledge shared on the platform included: social interaction ties, trust, norms of reciprocity, identification, shared language and shared vision. An increase of any of these variables correlated in an improvement of knowledge sharing behaviour and outcome such as quality of knowledge. This supports findings of previous studies were social capital variables have been found to influence knowledge sharing practices (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015; Chiu et al., 2006; Ford et al., 2018; Li & Li, 2010; Shaqrah et al., 2013) The broad implications of the findings show a need for AfCoP management to invest in and improve aspects of social capital among members of the community as they correlated positively with knowledge sharing behaviour on the AfCoP platform.

The levels of social interaction ties and trust among the members of AfCoP, were however found to be moderate. This was attributed to the distributed nature of the community of practice and its reliance on a virtual platform which was deemed to make it difficult for members to get to know each other on a personal basis. Previous studies have indicated that individuals are more likely to be comfortable with sharing knowledge in virtual communities, which include a substantial number of peoples already known to them (Ardichvili et al., 2003). In this study however, a sizeable number of participants did not know other AfCoP members personally, nor did they communicate with them frequently and yet they still chose

to participate on the platform. Granovetter (1983) however, suggests that weak ties have benefits for knowledge sharing, by arguing that individuals benefit more from weak ties with people who they do not know well as they have potential to bring new information or ideas, than from people with whom they have intensive regular interactions- strong ties. The existence of weak ties among AfCoP members was therefore not entirely a disadvantage, nor a great impediment to knowledge sharing. Further to this, Ardichvili et al (2003), also contended that people will be willing to participate in wider communities that include complete strangers because of the individual's trust in the social entity or organisation, known as institution-based trust. This is where members would need to trust in the integrity of the organisation as a whole and the competence of its members, believing that necessary structures are in place which would ensure trustworthy behaviour of individuals, while protecting members from negative consequences (Ardichvili et al., 2003). The findings in the study also supported this view as there was also found to be high levels of identification with AfCoP, shared language and shared vision among the respondents. This may have explained their continued participation on the AfCoP platform, in spite of respondents not fully trusting other members, nor having strong interaction ties on the platform.

From the Technology Acceptance Model variables, Perceived Usefulness correlated positively with both the quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform and the knowledge sharing intentions of respondents. This shows the importance of the AfCoP platforms functionalities in meeting user needs, as they contribute to positive perceptions and subsequent use of the platform. Perceived Ease of Use also correlated positively with the quality of knowledge shared, while there was no relationship with knowledge sharing intentions of respondents. These findings support the belief that perceptions of usefulness and ease of use of a system have the potential to influence the information seeking behaviour of individuals (Bahadur & Rajesh, 2014). This therefore has implications on the need to

continually improve on the quality and functions of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, as well as improving its usability.

8.4.1 Other Motivating Factors for Participation on the AfCoP Platform

The study revealed that most of the participants in the study were motivated to participate on the AfCoP platform by a desire to improve their career practice and possibilities of encountering career related opportunities on the platform. The AfCoP platform, made the jobs of most of the participants easier; while the majority of the participants believed professional questions, they would ask on the platform would be answered. Some believed that participation on the AfCoP platform helped them to gain recognition of their person and ideas.

Management support of AfCoP also came in the form of allocation of financial and human resources towards the success of knowledge sharing on the AfCoP platform. The AfCoP management allocated financial resources for yearly subscriptions paid to Ning, the vendors of the software on which the AfCoP platform was built. The AfCoP management dedicated human resources, including a co-ordinator, knowledge management experts, webmasters and facilitators of discussions on the knowledge sharing platform.

The study concluded that most participants in the study were largely satisfied with AfCoP management support for knowledge sharing activities on the platform. This was supported by 76% of the participants in the study who believed the AfCoP management supported knowledge sharing on the platform, with a further 73% who believed the AfCoP management provided valid channels for knowledge sharing.

8.4.2 Perceptions Towards the Use of Social Media for Knowledge Sharing

The study revealed that most participants held positive perceptions on the use of social media for knowledge sharing. Some participants believed social media created platforms to share

and exchange ideas, enabled flexible access to knowledge, provided a cheaper option of sharing or accessing relevant knowledge and was ubiquitous, with the ability to reach many people across vast geographic distances in minimal time.

Although most participants in the study generally welcomed the use of social media as facilitating technology for knowledge sharing, there were a few who approached it with caution. In this category were some who believed that social media was targeted to a youthful audience and therefore not very relevant to adults. Others believed social media was casual in nature and therefore not quite suitable for the serious business of knowledge sharing among development practitioners. For this category of users, using social media for knowledge sharing purposes required some degree of monitoring and control to prevent members from losing focus. Some believed using social media for knowledge sharing potentially exposed members to cybercriminal activities and junk information from potential spammers. It was concluded that some participants in the study were willing to use social media for knowledge sharing purposes, to the extent that necessary precautions were taken to ensure security, quality of content shared as well as providing for the needs of different demographic characteristics of users.

The study also found that a minority of the participants were not favourably disposed to the use of social media for knowledge sharing for fear that the information they shared might be misrepresented. This poses a challenge for AfCoP on how to meet the knowledge sharing needs for AfCoP members who's preferred medium for knowledge sharing was not social media.

8.4.3 Challenges Encountered When Sharing Knowledge on the AfCoP Platform

The study revealed several impeding factors that affected knowledge sharing on the AfCoP platform. These included:

8.4.3.1 Time and Effort Required to Meaningfully Participate

From the results of the study, it was revealed that some participants did not always have the time to log onto the platform and make contributions, while some were unwilling to exert the effort required to submit meaningful responses or initiate a post. The use of social media therefore did not seem to improve the efficiency of time and effort required to make a meaningful contribution on the platform. This therefore remains a formidable challenge when seeking to promote knowledge sharing in social media contexts.

8.4.3.2 Fears and Insecurities About Sharing Knowledge via the AfCoP Platform

While most of the participants in the study did not suffer from different insecurities, the study revealed that a minority of the participants had fears around misrepresentation or misuse of information they shared on the platform. Others feared criticism of the information they would have shared on the platform and still others feared sharing knowledge with strangers or acquaintances. A few others felt insecure about the possible loss of power when they shared their knowledge through the platform. However, the fact that many of the respondents did not have insecurities about sharing knowledge on the platform, may reflect their understanding of the importance of knowledge sharing as well as an inculcated culture of knowledge sharing among members of AfCoP.

8.4.3.3 Expectation of Incentives for Participation on the Platform

The study also revealed that some participants in the study expected incentives for participation on the AfCoP. These study participants suggested that to improve participation by members, monetary and non-monetary gifts for posting articles or responses would improve participation.

8.4.3.4 Difficulties in Written Communication

It was necessary to provide multi-modal facilities for knowledge sharing on the AfCoP platform, as some participants indicated they found it difficult to express themselves in written format, which was the main mode of submitting contributions on the AfCoP platform.

8.4.3.5 Lack of Participation on the AfCoP Platform

Lack of sustained and active participation was also a challenge on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. The study concluded that, the use of a social media for knowledge sharing, does not necessarily enhance participation in a virtual based community of practice. Of a possible 2000+ members, only 159 AfCoP members had initiated blog articles and 107 AfCoP members had initiated discussion forum posts. It was concluded that most AfCoP members did not actively participate and were "freeriders" on the contributions of others on the AfCoP platform. Free riders are members of a knowledge sharing community who choose not to participate actively, but still benefit from the contributions of others (Razmerita et al., 2016). The sustainability of a knowledge sharing community where most members "freeride" on the contributions of others may be threatened. This is because eventually there might be no one to contribute, if everyone absconds from participating.

8.4.3.6 Quality of Content Shared on the AfCoP Platform

The quality of the content shared on the AfCoP platform was also a challenge for some participants. A few of the participants found the content of knowledge shared on the   AfCoP platform to be too deep and challenging to understand. Others found some of the content shared to be questionable, while other participants raised issues surrounding the lack of clarity in licensing and ownership of the content. There were also a few who indicated that they did not find some of the topics interesting. There was therefore a need for AfCoP to stimulate engaging discussions on the AfCoP platform, with credible content, and with topics which were sufficiently challenging and whose authority could be easily verified.

8.4.3.7 Technical Challenges

Several technical challenges were encountered by participants including that:

- The graphical user interface was not sufficiently intuitive for some of the participants.

- Some of the participants felt that the platform was not mobile-friendly, which was preferable and more accessible for the participants.

- Some participants highlighted a malfunctioning expert search tool which made it difficult for them to search for experts when in need.

- Internet connectivity was a challenge for some of the participants, which made it difficult for them to access the AfCoP platform when they pleased.

These technical challenges may affect perceptions of ease of use and usefulness of the AfCoP platform and need to be addressed to encourage increased participation of members.

8.4.3.8 Lack of ICT Skills Among Some Members

There was a need to improve the information and communications technology skills of some of the AfCoP members, who lacked the requisite skills necessary to navigate on the AfCoP platform to share knowledge.

8.4.3.9 Inadequacy of Financial Resources

Adequate financial resources were necessary to sustain a subscription based social media platform but were not guaranteed. AfCoP risked disbanding its community membership if the sponsors of the platform failed to renew AfCoP's funding. Therefore, reliance on a subscription based social media platform for knowledge sharing was very risky.

This finding also highlighted that social media based platforms are not always cheap and easily accessible, as often reported in the literature (Burnage & Persaud, 2012; Cao et al., 2015). Private social media platforms such as Ning, on which the AfCoP platform was built, require a considerable financial investment.

8.4.3.10 Accessibility of Platform to People with Disabilities

This study also concluded that social media supported communities of practice needed to accommodate the needs of members with disabilities such as hearing, visual or speech impairments. One participant in the study revealed that their levels of participation on the AfCoP platform had reduced because of health-related challenges. He was not able to use a computer for too long or to view the computer screen for extended periods for health-related reasons.

8.4.4 Types of Knowledge Shared on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform

- The study concluded that both tacit and codified knowledge was shared on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. AfCoP members shared problem solving solutions, lessons learnt and stories on the discussion forum and blog section of the platform.

- AfCoP also used public social media to advertise and publicise the AfCoP community to a wider audience through Facebook and Twitter

- Codified knowledge was also shared on the AfCoP platform in the form of reports, case studies, briefs, tools, guidelines and case studies.

8.5 Recommendations

To improve knowledge sharing on the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

8.5.1 Improving Social Capital Among Members of AfCoP

It is recommended that AfCoP management seek to strengthen different social capital and technology acceptance variables among the members of AfCoP. In order to improve social interaction ties and trust among AfCoP members, AfCoP management could implement strategies which include convening face to face meetings among AfCoP members in specific member countries. This could reduce meeting costs but enable people to deepen their

relationships. For managing relationship building in distributed communities, Wenger et al (2002, p. 125), advocated for a design of distributed communities that ensures local variations and global connectivity, while avoiding treating the global community as a monolith. As such, AfCoP management could encourage membership to AfCoP at the country level, with a country coordinator who can convene physical meetings, or country specific activities which would enable people to connect at a local level, before they can connect with the wider AfCoP community, online.

The AfCoP management can also invite top contributors on the platform to develop their own sub-communities on the AfCoP platform, where they can share knowledge amongst themselves, and deepen their interactions. These sub-communities can be arranged by thematic areas of strategic importance to AfCoP, such as sub-communities for leadership, monitoring and evaluation, accountability and partnership, planning and budgeting, statistics, youth and gender issues.

Akhavan and Hosseini (2015) also recommend that managers of communities of practice can design and implement socialisation channels such as team performance review sessions, which are useful for helping team members to obtain team values, norms and shared cognitive schemata. In the case of AfCoP, managers can host periodic review sessions allowing members of the three main AfCoP groups: leadership, gender for results and youth for results to meet and review progress. They can also develop separate discussion forums, allowing members with specific interest in those sub-topics to share knowledge in a more intimate environment, albeit on the same platform. These meetings and communication channels would increase interactions among subgroup members, and also deepen shared language, shared vision, trust, shared norms and identification with other members.

To build the level of trust among AfCoP members on the platform, managers can also ensure that profiles of members are easily accessible. This would enable other members to browse through other members' profiles to get acquainted with them. Norms of reciprocity can also be strengthened by providing extrinsic and intrinsic motivations for members who share knowledge on the platform. For example, members who share knowledge regularly could be profiled on the platform on a monthly or weekly basis. They could also be given incentives in the form of money or invited to AfCoP's physical meetings.

8.5.2 Improving Usefulness and Ease of Use of the AfCoP Platform

The study also highlighted the important role of the Technology Acceptance Model variables: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use towards the use of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform. It is therefore recommended that the AfCoP management seek to manage users' perceptions of usefulness and usability of the system. They could do this by ensuring the functionalities of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform meet users' needs and expectations. The study revealed that participants had high expectations of the functionalities of social media due to changes in technology such as mobile technology. It is recommended that AfCoP seek to incorporate the role of a technology steward, responsible for ensuring the evolving organisational and individual technological needs are met.

To ensure that the system is easy to use, it is recommended that training on the use of the platform is offered to AfCoP members. This could be given as e-learning courses on how to use the AfCoP platform for knowledge sharing purposes. Specific training on how to navigate specific areas of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform could be given.

8.5.3 Provision of Policies and Guidelines for Social Media Use

There is need for AfCoP to provide policies guiding the use of social media for knowledge management purposes. Such policies must also incorporate clear guidelines for the use of private and public social media tools for knowledge sharing purposes.

There is also a need for AfCoP to offer training in ethical behaviours in the sharing of knowledge on social media platforms.

8.5.4 Providing Meaningful Incentives for Participants on the AfCoP Platform

To increase the active participation and contributions of members on the AfCoP platform, it is recommended that the AfCoP management and secretariat provide tangible and intangible incentives to motivate AfCoP members to actively participate. Tangible incentives could be in the form of money, gifts, promotion, access to information or training (Andriessen, 2006). As was revealed in the study, AfCoP was able to accumulate knowledge products because contributors were given a monetary token of appreciation, AfCoP community members are therefore motivated through physical incentives. Intangible incentives could also be provided in the form of public recognition for participation or anything that enhances the reputation of the individual on the AfCoP platform.

8.5.5 Improving Quality and Clarify Ownership of Content Shared

It is recommended that the AfCoP management work towards improving the quality and clarify the ownership of content shared on AfCoP to maintain the interest and participation of members through:

- Increasing diverse and relevant topics for discussion on the platform. One way this could be done would be through inviting members to offer suggestions of topics they would want covered in the discussions and to then schedule them according to the gathered interests of the members.

- Editing the content shared on the AfCoP platform, including verifying the credibility and ownership of information shared as well as narrowing topics to increase the focus of discussions

8.5.6 Marketing, Advertising and Publicising the AfCoP Platform

It is recommended that marketing, advocacy and publicity initiatives for the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform need to be improved as well as increased.

- Advocacy activities demonstrating the value of AfCoP to members and the organisation, must be done during physical and high-level meetings. This would help in securing funding or sponsorship to meet the financial needs of the AfCoP community.

- Publicity initiatives could include sending prompting and alerting services such as mobile messaging, and real time updates highlighting activities on the AfCoP platform.

- Improving the appearance of the AfCoP platform to make it attractive to visitors and users of the platform.

8.5.7 Providing Flexible Channels for Participation on AfCoP

It is recommended that AfCoP considers providing a multiplicity of channels for sharing knowledge among AfCoP members. These channels could include:

- Offering a mobile friendly platform, as this was revealed to be cheaper and more accessible for some participants in the study.

- Allowing for members to make knowledge contributions verbally through teleconferencing, videoconferencing, webinars and live chat as some participants struggled with making written contributions. Doing this would also make it easy for people with disabilities to participate on the platform.

- Increasing languages for interaction on the platform through introducing a language translator that would cater for users who understood languages other than French and English.

8.5.8 Training in Basic Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Skills

It is recommended that the AfCoP secretariat and management design, offer or recommend online training in basic ICT literacy skills; how to use the AfCoP platform and how to facilitate a discussion on the platform as this would equip members of the AfCoP platform to actively participate.

8.5.9 Improving Search Facilities on the AfCoP Platform

As locating experts is a key activity in the AfCoP community, it is recommended that the AfCoP management and secretariat include a functional and intuitive expert search tool that would enable members to locate the expertise they require without difficulty.

8.5.10 Improving Overall Administration and Facilitation on the Platform

For the AfCoP community to remain engaged and stimulated, there is need to maintain an active facilitator and administrator on the platform who would serve to keep the momentum and participation of members on the platform.

There is also need for AfCoP to provide policies governing participation on the platform, as well as make sure members are aware and adhere to acceptable conduct on the AfCoP platform.

8.5.11 Considering the Use of Free and Open Source Social Software on Which To Build the AfCoP Platform

As the sustainability of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was questionable because funding was not guaranteed to maintain the annual subscriptions to Ning, the researcher

recommends the use of free and open source social networking software as an alternative to the subscription-based platform.

8.6   Contributions and Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have implications for literature, theory policy and practice on the use of social media for knowledge sharing in organisations.

8.6.1   Implications for Literature

The findings of this study contribute to the literature on information and communications technology (ICT) and knowledge management (KM). Previous research has demonstrated the difficulties of incorporating traditional ICT's in KM, where a number of such traditional ICT based knowledge management systems (KMS) have failed (Sirous Panahi et al., 2012; Scarso & Bolisani, 2016). This study revealed that social media is providing new ways through which both tacit and codified knowledge can be shared among members of a distributed community of practice. Tacit knowledge was shared via the discussion forum and blog section of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform, while explicit or codified knowledge was shared via the knowledge products section of the platform.

Social media in the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform was also found to support several knowledge sharing practices including learning, collaboration, networking, expert location, storytelling and socialising. Unlike the traditional ICT based knowledge management systems which were monolithic, hierarchical, centralised and controlled, this study demonstrated that social media supports conversational and collaborative knowledge management, thereby catering for the embeddedness of knowledge in the social structures of individuals (Al-Taee, 2013; Panahi, 2014; Scarso & Bolisani, 2016).

The current study was also able to provide empirical evidence on the role of the use of a plethora of social media by members of AfCoP. Most previous studies have focused on only

one type of social media such as a blog or a wiki (Jarrahi, 2013; Scarso & Bolisani, 2016). The current study demonstrated that organisations and individuals make use of several social media to fulfil their knowledge sharing goals, as AfCoP used a combination of a private and subscription-based knowledge sharing platform that included a blog, discussion forum and other social media tools, while they also administered public social media accounts including Facebook and Twitter.

This study also investigated the role of social media for knowledge sharing among a community of practitioners in the development sector. Previous similar studies have concentrated on other professions such as physicians, management consultants, military personnel or government practitioners (Jarrahi, 2013; Mastrom, 2013; Panahi, 2014). This study has implications for the development sector where practitioners often find themselves in distributed contexts, with teams rarely physically co-located and yet require the exchange of knowledge for the development of their profession. The current study has demonstrated the role that social media can play in bridging challenges of distance and physical location to facilitate knowledge sharing among development practitioners in over 25 countries.

Literature also highlights that much KM research has been ostensibly carried out in the developed world and rarely from a developing world context(Al-Taee, 2013). This study added to empirical evidence of the role of social media in facilitating knowledge sharing amongst members of a community of practitioners in the development sector, in an African context.

8.6.2 Implications for Theory

This study revealed the importance of both Social Capital Theory and Technology Acceptance Model factors in influencing knowledge sharing behaviour through social media. Previous studies have singled out aspects of the social capital theory such as trust, as the most

important factor in knowledge sharing behaviour(Widen-Wulff, 2004) . This study demonstrated that all the social capital dimensions: structural, relational and cognitive capital, play a significant role in influencing knowledge sharing behaviour and outcomes. Out of the 16 hypotheses proposed in the model on Knowledge Sharing Through Social Media, 15 were supported (Figure 4). Identification had the strongest relationship with quality of knowledge shared, followed by shared vision, and shared language. Trust, norms of reciprocity and social interaction ties had a weak, but positive relationship with quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform. All social capital variables also correlated positively with the knowledge sharing intentions of respondents. These results support previous findings where Social Capital variables have been found to play significant roles underlying knowledge sharing behaviour (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015; Chiu et al., 2006; Choi, 2015; Li & Li, 2010). The findings revealed that moderate levels of trust and social interaction ties among members of the community existed alongside a strong level of identification, norms of reciprocity, shared vision and shared language with the organisation. While previous research has indicated that individuals are likely to be comfortable working in virtual communities , in which a substantial number of people already know each other (Ardichvili et al., 2003), this study has demonstrated that some individuals are willing to participate in a community in which they have moderate relational ties. This was attributed to the AfCoP members' possession of institution-based trust and a commitment to their profession and practice rather than to developing relationships on the platform.

The Technology Acceptance Model variable perceived usefulness correlated significantly and positively with the quality of knowledge shared on the AfCoP platform, while perceived ease of use correlated positively with knowledge sharing intentions of members. Previous studies have also found perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use to play a significant role in the adoption of technology for knowledge sharing purposes (Hsu & Lin, 2008; Papadopoulos

et al., 2013).Therefore to improve knowledge sharing on the AfCoP platform, attention must be given to improving social capital factors among members in AfCoP as well as managing members' perceptions of the usefulness and ease of use of the platform.

The research model for Knowledge Sharing Through Social Media developed and used in this study, can also be used as a theoretical basis to analyse relationships between knowledge sharing enablers, processes and outcomes in contexts where social media based platforms are used, as it is an integrative model.

8.6.3   Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of this study may be useful to organisations and professionals working in increasingly distributed contexts, who require innovative ways to manage knowledge. The findings of the study have implications for policy and practice related to the adoption of social media for knowledge sharing purposes.

To encourage knowledge sharing in distributed communities supported by social media, the cultivation of social relations among members is very important. Managers of such communities should employ strategies that develop social capital among members. These strategies should seek to enhance social interaction among members, trust, norms of reciprocity, identification, shared vision and shared language.

To encourage the use of social media based platforms for knowledge sharing, there is need for managers of distributed communities of practice to manage user perceptions of ease of use and usefulness of the platforms. Managers should seek to deploy platforms that are preferred and accessible to members of a particular community. To improve the usability of these platforms, periodic and systematic training should be offered to users. It would also be necessary to create an awareness of the available tools by through advertising and publicity strategies. There may also be a need to employ a technology steward who would continually

monitor the technology needs of the community, while scanning the environment to keep up to date with emerging tools.

There is also need for managers to develop and avail policies and guidelines that govern participation on social media based knowledge sharing platforms.

8.7   Limitations and Areas for Further Research

This study explored the use of social media for knowledge sharing in the context of a distributed community of practice, of development practitioners in Africa. Due to the limitations of time and resources, the researcher's focus was on investigating this phenomenon on the English community of the African Community of Practice. Generalising the results to the French community of the African Community of Practice may not be feasible. Further studies could investigate the role of social media incorporating the entirety of the bilingual community of AfCoP and consider if cultural and language differences would produce different results. Further to this, the population sample of the study to which the researcher was able to access was purposive and so generalisation of the results of this study to other similar organisations is also limited.

Previous research has also demonstrated how personality traits affect knowledge sharing behaviour, an aspect which was not investigated in this study (Akhavan & Hosseini, 2015). Future research can investigate how demographic data such as age, sex, education and work experience may affect knowledge sharing behaviours.

The study also focused on a community of practice of development practitioners. Further studies can also consider the use of social media for knowledge sharing among other professionals in education, health or government sectors. Comparisons on the role of social media for knowledge sharing in different professional settings can also be made to provide a richer understanding of the current phenomenon.

This study revealed the role of private and public social media in the knowledge management practices of a distributed community of development professionals in an African context. Further research can also be done to further understand how private and public social media tools are being used for knowledge management purposes in other settings.

8.8 Summary

This study sought to explore the extent of the use of social media for knowledge sharing in a distributed community of practice of development professionals-AfCoP. The study also sought to investigate the factors influencing the use of social media for knowledge sharing among members of AfCoP.

The findings of the study revealed that AfCoP used several private and public social media tools in its knowledge sharing strategy. The private social networking platform was subscription based and included a highly active discussion forum, a blog section, private chat and email facilities. AfCoP also made use of public social media accounts: Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. These were however mainly used for marketing and publicising the main AfCoP knowledge sharing platform which was for members only.

Social media on the AfCoP platform supported various knowledge sharing activities including learning, networking, collaboration and expert location. Through use of the platform, both tacit and codified knowledge were shared. AfCoP was also able to achieve key strategic objectives through using social media for knowledge sharing including the successful adoption of MfDR practices by member states, reduction in costs for physical meetings and the growth of AfCoP membership. The members of AfCoP who used the platform were experts in the development field; who were highly educated, experienced and worked in diverse organisations and countries mainly across Africa.

The study took a pragmatist philosophy which allowed the use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches to arrive at a conclusion to the research questions. The study made use of the Knowledge Sharing Through Social Media model, which combined the social capital theory and technology acceptance model to investigate factors influencing the use of social media for knowledge sharing in AfCoP. Interviews were also held with AfCoP members and the AfCoP secretariat, and so was content analysis conducted on content from the various social media platforms used by AfCoP. This triangulation approach was found useful in arriving at a wholistic conclusion on the use of social media for knowledge sharing among AfCoP members.

Social Capital theory and Technology Acceptance Model variables: social interaction ties, norms of reciprocity, trust, identification, shared language, shared vision, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use were found to correlate positively with knowledge sharing behaviour on the AfCoP platform. Because of the distributed nature of the community, social interaction ties and trust were found to be moderate among AfCoP members, with individuals communicating infrequently nor maintaining close relationships with other members on the platform. However, despite this, there was strong identity with the organisation and community among members and this was attributed to their commitment to the development profession and organisation as a whole. Members of AfCoP were found to have high cognitive capital as they had a strong sense of shared language and shared vision of AfCoP.

Other factors that influenced the use of the AfCoP platform included: member's desire to improve career practice and to encounter professional opportunities on the platform. Most of the participants in the study found the platform to be useful for networking, collaborating and locating experts. The AfCoP management was found to be very supportive of knowledge

sharing on the AfCoP platform as they provided financial, administrative and leadership support.

Some key challenges that AfCoP members encountered in pursuit of sharing knowledge through the AfCoP platform included: the lack of time and unwillingness to exert the necessary effort to meaningfully participate on the platform; expectations for incentives for participation; lack of participation as most members were comfortable with consuming content rather than creating it; there were also some technical challenges experienced including an unintuitive graphical user interface; incompatibility of the platform to mobile technology and internet connectivity challenges experienced by some participants. The main platform also relied on yearly subscriptions being done; thus, its sustainability was questionable as funding was not always guaranteed.

The study ended by making recommendations that could be considered for successful adoption of social media for knowledge sharing by individuals and organisations. Areas of possible future research were also highlighted.

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Appendices

Appendix 1:Ethical Clearance Certificate

UNIVERSITY OF ™
KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

15 April 2016

Ms Sarlomie Farisai Mbasera (214584044)
School of Social Sciences
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Ms Mbasera,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0303/016D
Project title: Exploring Knowledge Sharing through Social Media among members of the African Community of Practice (AfCoP)

Full Approval – Expedited Approval

With regards to your application received on 18 March 2016. The documents submitted have been accepted by the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee and **FULL APPROVAL** for the protocol has been granted.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

....
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Professor S Mutula
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor Sabine Marschall
Cc School Administrator: Ms Nancy Mudau / Stella Shulika

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za / snymanm@ukzn.ac.za / mohunp@ukzn.ac.za
Website: www.ukzn.ac.za

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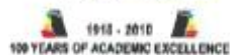
Founding Campuses ▬ Edgewood ▬ Howard College ▬ Medical School ▬ Pietermaritzburg ▬ Westville

Appendix 2: Gatekeepers Letter

Gmail by Google

Sarlomie Mbasera <sarlomie@gmail.com>

Knowledge Sharing through Social Media Study Site

Kobena Hanson <k.hanson@acbf-pact.org>   Tue, Sep 30, 2014 at 7:02 PM
To: Sarlomie Mbasera <sarlomie@gmail.com>

Dear Sarlomie,

Thanks again.

I realized I did not respond to your key question – seeking permission to use AfCoP as your case study.

Yes, you have my permission to use AfCoP as your case study. As a public forum aimed at enhancing peer-learning and knowledge sharing on the continent, I strongly believe your research will hold much promise for AfCoP and possible held the stakeholders better enhance the AfCoP agenda.

Good luck with the research.

Should you need to reach me after I leave ACBF, you can do so on my private email:
kthanson64@yahoo.com

Regards,

Kobena

Kobena T Hanson, PhD.

Manager, Knowledge & Learning Department

The African Capacity Building Foundation

2 Fairbairn Drive, Mt. Pleasant. P.O. Box 1562. HARARE, ZIMBABWE

Tel:+263-4 304622, 304663, Web site: www.acbf-pact.org

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Appendix 3: AfCoP Member Survey

PhD Research Survey: Exploring knowledge sharing through social media among members of the African Community of Practice(AfCoP).
* Required

Informed Consent

Dear AfCOP Member,

My name is Sarlomie Mbasera, a PhD Student in the School of Social Sciences at the University of KwaZuluNatal, Email Address: Sarlomie@gmail.com or 214584044@stu.ukzn.ac.za Mobile: +27825115952/+263772421776. I am under the supervision of Prof. S. Mutula who can be contacted on Email: mutulas@ukzn.ac.za or Telephone: +27(033)2605571.

You are being invited to consider participating in a study titled "Exploring knowledge sharing through social media among members of the African Community of Practice (AfCoP)". The aim and purpose of this research is to provide understanding on the role of social media in facilitating knowledge sharing in distributed communities of practice. The study is expected to enrol participants who are members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal. It will involve completing a questionnaire on the form provided. The duration of your participation if you choose to enroll and remain in the study is expected to be 15-30 minutes.

The study will provide no direct benefits to participants. However, it is hoped that the study will provide empirical understanding on how organisations and individuals can best leverage the availability of social media to enhance knowledge sharing activities. As an online participant in this research, the study may involve the risk of intrusion by outside agents such as hacking, and therefore the possibility of being identified.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Protocol reference number: HSS/0303/016D).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at Information Studies Department, P.Bag X01, Scottville, Email: Sarlomie@gmail.com/214584044@stu.ukzn.ac.za. Mobile: +27825115952 or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION
Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Participation in this research is voluntary. As a participant, your may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any stage and for any reason without any form of disadvantage.

There will be no monetary gain or cost for participating in this study.

342

Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the Department of Information Studies, at the University of KwaZuluNatal. Data will be stored within the department of Information Studies for a period of 5 years, after which it will be destroyed.

1. **I am voluntarily participating in the survey (Required Question)** *
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Yes

   ◯ No

Section A
Demographic Details

2. **Gender (Please select 1 Option)**
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Male

   ◯ Female

3. **Age category (Please select 1 option)**
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ 20-29 years

   ◯ 30-39 years

   ◯ 40-49 years

   ◯ 50-59 years

   ◯ 60 + years

4. **Country of residence (Please type in name of Country)**

   ....

5. **Area of Expertise (Select all that apply)**
   Check all that apply.

   ☐ Accountability and Partnership

   ☐ Planning and Budgeting

   ☐ Monitoring and Evaluation

   ☐ Statistics

   ☐ Leadership

   ☐ Other: ....

343

6. **Sector of Affiliation (Please select 1 option)**
   Mark only one oval.

   ⬭ Independent Consultant

   ⬭ Government

   ⬭ Non-governmental Organisation

   ⬭ Academic

   ⬭ Business and Industry

   ⬭ Other: ....

7. **What is your highest academic qualification (Please select 1 option)**
   Mark only one oval.

   ⬭ Certificate

   ⬭ Diploma

   ⬭ Bachelor's degree

   ⬭ Master's Degree

   ⬭ PhD

   ⬭ Other: ....

8. **What is your position title in your organisation?**

   ....

9. **What is the name of your organisation?**

   ....

10. **For how long have you worked as a development professional**
    Mark only one oval.

    ⬭ Less than 1 year

    ⬭ Between 1 and 3 years

    ⬭ Between 4 and 6 years

    ⬭ Between 7 and 9 years

    ⬭ 10 years and above

SECTION B: Use Of AfCoP's Knowledge Sharing Portal

344

11. **How often do you visit the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal**
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Daily
- ◯ Weekly
- ◯ Monthly
- ◯ Only when I need information on Managing for Development Results (MfDR)
- ◯ Hardly
- ◯ Other: ....

12. **For how long have you been a member of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal?**
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Less than 1 year
- ◯ Between 1 and 3 years
- ◯ Between 4 and 6 years
- ◯ Above 7 years

13. **For what purpose do you use the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal? (Select all that apply)**
Check all that apply.

- ☐ Locating experts in my field of study
- ☐ Sharing stories of my own work experiences
- ☐ Networking with others in my field
- ☐ Collaborating with others in my field
- ☐ Learning about Managing for Development Results (MfDR)
- ☐ Socialising with others on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal Community
- ☐ Other: ....

14. **Which social media platforms do you prefer to use for work related knowledge sharing (Select all that apply)**
Check all that apply.

- ☐ Blog (e.g. Blogger.com or Wordpress)
- ☐ Live Chat
- ☐ Private Message
- ☐ Microblogging (e.g. Twitter)
- ☐ Social Networking (e.g. Facebook or LinkedIn)
- ☐ Wiki's
- ☐ Other: ....

345

15. **What kind of knowledge do you share on or receive through the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal? (Select all that apply)**

Check all that apply.

☐ Work documents

☐ Reports

☐ Policy related documents

☐ Videos

☐ Audio

☐ Pictures

☐ Best practices from the experiences of other AfCoP members

☐ Other: ....

Knowledge Sharing Portal Use Motivation: Social Capital & Technology Acceptance

This section is in the form of a likert scale where you are required to enter your response to a question depending on whether you agree or disagree to the statement. 1 is strongly agree while 5 is strongly disagree. 3 is neither agree nor disagree.

346

16. **What would impede you from sharing knowledge on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal** *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It takes too much time and effort to share knowledge via the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
I'm not getting enough from the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
I feel insecure about how my information might be received or used via the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
I do not think I can get good quality information from the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
I am not being adequately rewarded or acknowledged when I share my knowledge via the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
I am afraid of criticism by other members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
I do not want to share my knowledge with people I do not know well on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
I am afraid of losing ownership of the knowledge I have	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
I am afraid that if I reveal what I know, members of the AfCop Knowledge Sharing Portal will think I am not as proficient as they had expected	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭

347

17. **I maintain close relationships with some members of AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

18. **I spend a lot of time interacting with some members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform?**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

19. **I know some members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal on a personal level?**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

20. **I have frequent communication with some members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal?**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

21. **I believe members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal will not take advantage of others even when the opportunity arises?**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

22. **Members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal always keep the promises they make to one another**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

23. **Members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal would not knowingly do anything to disrupt conversations with others**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

24. **Members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal behave in a consistent manner**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

25. **Members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal are truthful in dealing with another**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

26. **I know that other members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal will help me, so it's only fair to help other members**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

27. **I believe that members of AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal would help me if I need it**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

28. **I feel a sense of belonging to the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal community**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

349

29. **I have the feeling of togetherness or closeness with other members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

30. **I have strong positive feelings toward the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal community**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

31. **I am proud to be a member of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal community**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

32. **The members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal use common terms and jargon when communicating**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

33. **The members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Community use understandable communication pattern during online discussions**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

34. **The members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal use understandable narrative forms to post online messages, discussions or blog articles**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

350

35. **The members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal share the vision of helping others solve their professional problems**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

36. **The members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal share the same goals of learning from each other**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

37. **The members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal share the same value that helping others is pleasant**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

38. **The knowledge shared by members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal is accurate**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

39. **The knowledge shared by members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal is complete**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

40. **The knowledge shared by members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal is reliable**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

351

41. **The knowledge shared by members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal is timely**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

42. **The knowledge shared by members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal is relevant to the topics raised for discussion**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

43. **The knowledge shared by members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal is easy to understand**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

44. **I consider myself an expert in the subjects discussed on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

45. **I find the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal easy to use**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

46. **I find the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal useful for my needs**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

352

47. **I would highly recommend the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal to others in my field of work**
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Agree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Disagree

Additional Information

48. **What benefits do you derive from the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal?**

49. **What challenges have you encountered when using the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Portal to share knowledge?**

50. **Do you think public social networks such as Facebook, Blogging etc, are useful in relation to work related knowledge sharing? Please explain your answer.**

51. **Can you describe a time when you decided NOT to share your experiential knowledge through social media?(Why?)**

353

52. **Is there anything else you would like to say about the AfCOP Knowledge Sharing Portal or using social media for knowledge sharing in general?**

....

....

....

....

....

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354

Appendix 4: Interview Schedule: AfCoP Secretariat

Exploring Knowledge Sharing through Social Media among members of the African Community of Practice

Interview Schedule

The goal of this study is to understand the role of social media in the knowledge sharing activities of AfCoP. With specific reference to the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform, which contains such social media tools as Blogs, Chatrooms, email, social networking, as well as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook, I would like to know how members of AfCoP are interacting with these from an organisational perspective.

- There is no right or wrong response.

- There is no requirement for you to respond or even participate. And, we can stop at any time you choose.

- This is an informal interaction and voluntary. I think it will take about 40-50 minutes (or less if you don't want to talk much or more if you do).

- I am also happy to share with you a summary of what I learn, with all identifying details removed.

<Informed consent form>

1. To start, could you please tell about your professional and educational background, and your current position

2. How did you get into your current position?

3. How long have you been working with AfCoP?

4. What are the goals and aims of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform?

5. Which social media facilities are available for use by members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform?

6. In what ways does the AfCoP secretariat support the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform?

7. What percentage of AfCoP's budget is channelled towards maintaining the Knowledge Sharing Platform

8. Are there dedicated staff that maintain the platform and give support to users of the platform?

9. Are the various resources required for maintaining the knowledge sharing platform adequate?

10. What guides the choice of social media tools to include for knowledge sharing in AfCoP?

11. How has social media affected knowledge sharing among members of AfCoP?

12. How is AfCoP achieving its overall aims through the use of social media to share knowledge among its membership?

13. What kind of advantages do you feel your organisation derives from the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform?

14. What kind of advantages have you personally derived from using the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform?

15. How would you describe the level of participation on the AfCoP Knowledge sharing platforms by members of the community?

16. How would you describe AfCoP's organisational culture related to knowledge sharing among its members?

17. What kinds of values are upheld on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platforms?

18. What are the general rules and policies governing participation on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform?

19. How well are these rules followed by members of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform?

20. What are some of the challenges encountered by AfCoP in its effort to promote knowledge sharing through social media?

21. How have these challenges been resolved, or are being resolved?

22. To improve knowledge sharing through social media among members of AfCoP what do you think is required?

Appendix 5: Interview Schedule: AfCoP Members

The goal of this study is to understand the role of social media in the knowledge sharing activities of AfCoP. With specific reference to the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform, which contains such social media tools as Blogs, Chatrooms, email, social networking, as well as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook, I would like to know how members of AfCoP are interacting with these from a user perspective.

- There is no right or wrong response.
- There is no requirement for you to respond or even participate. And, we can stop at any time you choose.
- This is an informal interaction and voluntary. I think it will take about 40-50 minutes (or less if you don't want to talk much or more if you do).
- I am also happy to share with you a summary of what I learn, with all identifying details removed

1. Do you visit the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform Regularly?	
2. Are you aware of the existence of AfCoP's social networking sites-Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter and do you visit them regularly?	
3. What usually prompts you to access the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform?	
4. Have you posted on the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform?	
a. What motivated you?	
b. What keeps you from posting any/more posts?	
5. Have you commented on a blog/discussion post from the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform?	
a. What motivated you?	
6. Have you shared or promoted a blog/discussion post or knowledge product from the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Product?	
a. What motivated you?	
b. What keeps you from sharing?	

The AfCoP knowledge sharing platform has content that includes: Discussion posts, blog articles, knowledge products (Case Studies, Briefs, Tools and Guidelines, Reports, Training Materials and other MfDR Resources), photos and videos. How would you rank the content in terms its usefulness to you? (1. Very Useful 2. Somewhat Useful 3. Neither useful nor useless 4. Not useful)	
a. Case Studies	Very Useful • Somewhat Useful • Neither useful nor useless • Not useful•
b. Briefs	Very Useful • Somewhat Useful • Neither useful nor useless • Not useful•
c. Tools and Guidelines	Very Useful • Somewhat Useful • Neither useful nor useless • Not useful•
d. Reports	Very Useful • Somewhat Useful • Neither useful nor useless • Not useful•
e. Training Materials	Very Useful • Somewhat Useful • Neither useful nor useless • Not useful•
f. Discussion & Blog Posts	Very Useful • Somewhat Useful • Neither useful nor useless • Not useful•
g. Photos	Very Useful • Somewhat Useful • Neither useful nor useless • Not useful•
h. Videos	Very Useful • Somewhat Useful • Neither useful nor useless • Not useful•
8. How would you rate the relevance of the knowledge sharing portal to you personally?	
9. Do you think the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform helps you to know other members of AfCoP better?	
10. Do you think the blog improves knowledge sharing?	
11. How would you rate the usefulness of the AfCoP Knowledge Sharing Platform for performing the following knowledge sharing activities for you personally? (1. Very useful 2. Somewhat useful 3. Neither useful nor useless. 3. Useless). Explain your response.	
a. Locating experts	Very Useful • Somewhat Useful • Neither useful nor useless • Not useful•
b. Sharing Stories	Very Useful • Somewhat Useful • Neither useful nor useless • Not useful•

c. Networking with others in my field of work	Very Useful • Somewhat Useful • Neither useful nor useless • Not useful•
d. Collaborating with others	Very Useful • Somewhat Useful • Neither useful nor useless • Not useful•
e. Learning about MfDR	Very Useful • Somewhat Useful • Neither useful nor useless • Not useful•
f. Socialising with others	Very Useful • Somewhat Useful • Neither useful nor useless • Not useful•
12. Has your knowledge about other AfCoP members' expertise improved since the introduction of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform?	
a. If so, what value does this knowledge have for you?	
13. Have you gained knowledge you did not have before by reading from or interacting on the AfCoP knowledge sharing Platform	
14. Do you have more knowledge about AfCoP member activities because of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform?	
15. Do you have more knowledge about the activities and goals of AfCoP because of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform?	
16. Do you feel more connected to other AfCoP members since the introduction of the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform?	
17. How effective do you think the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform is as a communication tool?	
18. Do you find the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform easy to use?	
19. Are the functionalities and communication tools offered by the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform sufficient for your needs?	
20. In what ways can the AfCoP knowledge sharing platform improve, to increase its effectiveness as a communication tool among members?	
Gender: (Please select one option)	Male •

	Female •
Age Category (Please select one option)	20-29 years • 30-39 years • 40-49 years• 50-59 years• 60+ years•
What is your highest academic qualification? (Please select one option)	Certificate • Diploma • Bachelor's Degree • Master's Degree • PhD• Other •
What is your Area of Expertise (Please select one option)	Accountability & Partnership • Planning & Budgeting• Monitoring & Evaluation • Statistics • Leadership • Other (Please Explain) •
What is your Sector of Affiliation (Please select one option)	Independent Consultant • Government • Non-Governmental Organisation • Academic • Business & Industry • Other (Please Explain) •
For how long have you worked in your current field of work?	Less than 1 year • Between 1 and 3 Years • Between 4 and 6 years • Between 7 and 9 years • 10 years and above •
What is the title of your position in your organisation?	
What is your Country of Residence?	

Thank you for your time.