



The Role of a Facebook Group in Facilitating Public Participation, Civic Engagement and Social Capital: A Case Study of Willowfontain Community in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu - Natal.

BY

Amanda Lady – Fair Buthelezi

(213547022)

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the academic requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCE (POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES)

in the

International and Public Affairs Cluster, School of Social Sciences,
College of Humanities
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Pietermaritzburg Campus

SUPERVISOR: Mr Mark Rieker

PIETERMARITZBURG, SOUTH AFRICA
2021

DECLARATION

I Amanda Buthelezi declare that:

1. The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs, or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
4. This dissertation does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:
 - 4.1 Their words have been re-written, but the general information attributed to them has been referenced.
 - 4.2 Where their exact words have been used, then their writing has been placed in italics and inside quotation marks and referenced.
 - 4.3 This dissertation does not contain text or tables copied and pasted from the internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the thesis and in the reference's sections.

Signed

Date.....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All glory to the Almighty God for the graces and blessings he has bestowed upon me. Lord, I thank you for projection, wisdom, and the opportunity to accomplish this goal.

My supervisor, Mark Rieker, thank you for your patience, professional coaching, and continuous help and support. Thank you for dedicating your time to this project.

I would like to thank my family for their unconditional love and support for me. Especially my mother, Bonisile, one could never ask for a mother better than you.

To my partner (Stanley Shelembe), Mzamela! Khabahle! Mdinwa! Bholokodlela! I am out of words for the support you gave me throughout my studies. Thank you for always being there for me emotionally, financially, and physically. I would have not made it this far without your support.

My classmates and friends, Zethu Gumede and Sanele Ngcongo, this journey has not been plain sailing throughout, but I appreciated having both of you next to me.

A special thanks to all my participants, the Ward Councilor (Mr Thabiso Molefe), Willowfontein Facebook group Administrator (Mr Njabulo Mjwara) and the Willowfontein Facebook group members, thank you all for taking your time to participate in this study.

ACRONYMS

SPSS	- Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
LA	- Los Angeles
UMD	- UMsunduzi Municipality Demographics
WFCGA	- Willowfontein Facebook Community Group Administrator
WWC	- Willowfontein Ward Councilor
WFCGM	- Willowfontein Facebook Community Group Members
SALS	- South African Legislative Sector
DPLG	- Department of Provincial and Local Government

ABSTRACT

Prior to democratization in 1994, South Africa was governed by laws and policies that limited public participation in policy processes and structures. However, the shift from apartheid to democracy in 1994 remained one of the most significant turning points in South African history. The introduction of participatory governance and democracy sought to establish and strengthen public participation amongst all races but especially disadvantaged communities, to participate in governance processes and structures to democratically empower all citizens to voice their opinions on issues affecting their livelihoods. However, post 1994 formal spaces for community participation have not produced the intended results amongst marginalized communities where service delivery remains significantly low. The introduction of social media networks such as Facebook in 2004 created a platform whereby people can engage with one another and post their views and matters that affect them with the hope that their matters can be resolved.

The study examines the role of Facebook, specifically one Facebook community group in facilitating public participation, civic engagement, and social capital in the Willowfontein community located in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu - Natal. The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the role of the Facebook community group in the Willowfontein community?
2. Does the Willowfontein community Facebook group facilitate or constrain public participation, civic engagement and social capital?
3. What are the challenges faced by the Willowfontein Facebook group administrator?
4. How does the Willowfontein ward representative (councillor) engage with Willowfontein Facebook group members?

This study adopted a mixed method approach which involves both qualitative and quantitative methods. The study also used the case study approach. The semi-structured interviews were employed with the key informants comprising one ward councilor from the Willowfontein community and one Facebook administrator from the Willowfontein community. The study also used an online survey questionnaire for the 32 online participants from the Willowfontein Facebook community group. The study analyzed the qualitative data gathered from the semi – structured interviews according to themes. The themes were derived from the literature review and the conceptual framework. The study also analyzed the quantitative data gathered from the survey questionnaires using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 6) and descriptive statistics. This study further analyzed the content of the posts that were shared in the Willowfontein Facebook Community Group between the years of 2017 and 2019. The posts were analysed according to themes of similar ideas that the researcher identified from the posts that were shared in the group.

The study found that the Willowfontein Facebook group facilitates public participation, civic engagement, and social capital. However, this is to a limited extent as there are community members that don't have smart phones to participate online. The study revealed that the older generation struggles with the new online platform and that hinders their online participation. Further, the study revealed that the Ward councilor is not part of the online group, and this could be limiting public participation. Moreover, the study revealed the challenges that the group administrator encounters such as members that spread fabricated news about others, group members who are insulting other group members and cause chaos and members who run scams on the group to scam other group members their money.

Table of Contents

Declaration	2
Acknowledgements	3
Acronyms	4
Abstract	5-6
Table of Contents	7-11
Table of Figures and Tables	12
CHAPTER ONE : INTRODCUTIONS	13-20
1.1 Background to the Study	
1.2 Research questions and Objectives	
1.3 Research Design:	
1.3.1 Research Methodology	
1.3.2 Data Collection Methods	
1.4 Case Study Approach	
1.5 Sampling	
1.6 Data Analysis Methods	
1.6.1 Qualitative data analysis	
1.6.2 Quantitative Data Analysis	
1.6.3 Content Analysis of the Willowfontein Facebook Group Posts	
1.7 Ethical Clearance	
1.8 Limitation of the Study	
1.9 Structure of the Dissertation	
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	21-27
2.1 Introduction	
2.2 Facebook and Public Participation Studies	
2.2.1 Key Findings of Facebook and Public Participation Studies	
2.3 Facebook and Civic Engagement Studies	
2.3.1 Key Findings of Facebook and Civic Engagement Studies	

2.4	<u>Facebook and Social Capital Studies</u>	
2.4.1	<u>Key Findings of Facebook and Social Capital Studies</u>	
2.5	<u>The Distinctiveness of the Study</u>	
2.6	<u>Conclusion</u>	
<u>CHAPTER THREE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK</u>		28-41
3.1	<u>Introduction</u>	
3.2	<u>Democracy</u>	
3.2.1	<u>Good Governance</u>	
3.3	<u>Public Participation</u>	
3.4	<u>Civic engagement</u>	
3.5	<u>Social Capital</u>	
3.5.1	<u>Types of Social Capital Definitions</u>	
3.6	<u>Social Media</u>	
3.6.1	<u>Facebook</u>	
3.7	<u>Conclusion</u>	
<u>CHAPTER FOUR: CASE STUDY - WILLOWFONTAIN COMMUNITY</u>		42-51
4.1	<u>Introduction</u>	
4.2	<u>Location: Willowfontein Community</u>	
4.3	<u>Willowfontein Community Demographics</u>	
4.3.1	<u>Gender</u>	
4.3.2	<u>Age Breakdown</u>	
4.3.3	<u>Population Group</u>	
4.3.4	<u>Languages</u>	
4.4	<u>Willowfontein living conditions</u>	
4.4.1	<u>Sources of Water</u>	
4.4.2	<u>Toilet Facility</u>	
4.4.3	<u>Household Goods</u>	

4.4.4	<u>Access to Internet</u>	
4.5	<u>Willowfontein Economic Status</u>	
4.5.1	<u>Willowfontein educational background</u>	
4.5.2	<u>Average household income</u>	
4.5.3	<u>Willowfontein Unemployment Rate</u>	
4.6	<u>Description of the Willowfontein Community Facebook Group</u>	
4.7	<u>Challenges faced by the Willowfontein Community</u>	
4.8	<u>Conclusion</u>	
CHAPTER FIVE:	<u>FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS</u>	42-80
5.1	<u>Introduction</u>	
5.2	<u>Data from the Online Survey - Willowfontein Online Participants</u>	
5.2.1	<u>Gender of Respondents</u>	
5.2.2	<u>Age of Respondents</u>	
5.2.3	<u>Population Group of Respondents</u>	
5.2.4	<u>Respondents' Years of Membership in the Community Group</u>	
5.2.5	<u>Primary Device Used by Respondents to Access the Community Group</u>	
5.2.6	<u>Respondents' Frequency of Access to Community Group</u>	
5.2.7	<u>Number of Online Community Groups that the Participants Belong to</u>	
5.2.8	<u>Social Media or Messaging Platforms that the Respondents Use</u>	
5.2.9	<u>Respondents' Frequency of Engaging in the Group</u>	
5.2.10	<u>Participants' Responses on whether the Group allows the Community to Engage with the Ward Councillor</u>	
5.2.11	<u>Participants' Responses on whether the Group allows the Community to Engage with the Police Services</u>	
5.2.12	<u>Respondents' Reasons for Using the Community Group</u>	
5.2.13	<u>Respondents' Main Benefits of Belonging to this Community Group.</u>	
5.3	<u>Data from the Semi - Structured Interview – Willowfontein Ward Councillor</u>	

- 5.3.1 Do you think the existence of this group enhance public participation in this community? How?
- 5.3.2 Do you think this group facilitates civic engagement? How?
- 5.3.3 Do you think this group encourages the community members to participate in community issues? Elaborate.
- 5.3.4 What kind of issues that are being raised in this group?
- 5.3.5 Does the existence of this group help in solving community issues?
- 5.3.6 Do you think the existence of this group makes your work easy as a Councilor? How?

5.4 Data from the Semi - Structured Interview – Willowfontein Facebook Community Group Administrator

- 5.4.1 What inspired you to create this Facebook group?
- 5.4.2 What are the challenges that you encounter in administering the group?
- 5.4.3 Does this group help in raising and solving community issues?
- 5.4.4 What kind of matters that are being raised in this group?

5.5 Content Analysis - Willowfontein Facebook Community Group Posts

- 5.5.1 Service Delivery Issues
- 5.5.2 Crime Matters
- 5.5.3 Information Sharing
- 5.5.4 Political Matters
- 5.5.5 Marketing

5.6 Conclusion

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUNCIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 81-85

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Conclusions
 - 6.2.1 Study Objectives
- 6.3 Recommendations

6.4 Conclusion

References

Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey Questions for Online Participates

Appendix 2: Questions for the Ward Councillor

Appendix 3: Questions for the Facebook Group Administrator

Appendix 4: Ethical Clearance Report

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 4.1 Willowfontain Location within Pietermaritzburg.....

Figure 5.1 Gender of Respondents.....

Figure 5.2 Age of Respondents.....

Figure 5.3 Population Group of Respondents.....

Figure 5.4 Respondents’ Years of Membership in the Community Group

Figure 5.5 Primary Device Used by Respondents to Access the Community Group ...

Figure 5.6 Respondents’ Frequency of Access to Community Group.....

Figure 5.7 Number of Online Community Groups that the Participants Belong to.....

Figure 5.8 Respondents’ Frequency of Engaging in the Group.....

Figure 5.9 Participants’ Responses on whether the Group allows the Community
to Engage with the Ward Councillor.....

Figure 5.10 Participants’ Responses on whether the Group allows the Community
to Engage with the Police Services.....

Table 4.1 Gender.....

Table 4.2 Age Distribution in Willowfontein.....

Table 4.3 Population Racial Composition.....

Table 4.4 Language.....

Table 4.5 Sources of Water.....

Table 4.6 Toilet Facility.....

Table 4.7 Household goods.....

Table 4.8 Access to Internet.....

Table 4.9 Average Household Income.....

Table 5.1 social media or Messaging Platforms that the Respondents Use.....

Table 5.2 Respondents’ Reasons for Using the Community Group.....

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Prior to democratization in 1994, South Africa was governed by laws and policies that limited public participation and civic engagement in policy processes and structures. These laws and policies did not only force the different racial groups (Black, Coloured, Indian and White) to live separately and develop separately but also democratically disempowered and discriminated against Black, Coloured and Indian races which created gross inequities between the different races (Beinart & Dubow, 1995:22). Apartheid laws hindered people from engaging with each other in public spaces such as hosting community meetings. However, the shift from apartheid to democracy in 1994 remained one of the most significant turning points in South Africa's history (Beinart & Dubow, 1995:33). Introducing participatory governance and democracy sought to establish and strengthen public participation and civic engagements amongst all races but especially disadvantaged communities and participate in governance processes and structures to democratically empower all citizens to voice their opinions on issues affecting their livelihoods (Cameron, 2012:102).

However, 24 years after the new democratic dispensation the country is still a theatre for violent protests like xenophobic attacks, student protests, violent union marches, and other demonstrations. The nation exhibits a low level of public satisfaction with public service delivery as well as a decrease in confidence in the government (Marais, Everatt and Dube, 2007:23). Piper and Von Lieres (2008:34) argue that instances of public participation such as community meetings, public hearings, consultations, or forums, sometimes give the impression of being a terrain for confrontation and affirmation of dominance by powerful leaders or political parties, which invalidates the whole intention of the process of public participation.

As a result, it seems that although significant resources have been invested in empowering citizens (both material and immaterial), people do not understand what is going on, do not feel that they are listened to, do not feel empowered, and do not feel they have any influence or control over any of the decisions which concern them, their communities and their lives; rather they see their investment of social, human and financial capital simply wasted (Piper, & Von Lieres, 2008:40).

Post 1994 formal spaces for community participation have not produced the intended results amongst marginalized communities especially in rural and semi-rural communities where service delivery remains significantly low (Piper, & Von Lieres, 2008:22). The introduction of social media network such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, etc in 2004 created a platform whereby citizens can engage or air their views concerning matters that affect them, such as community safety, service delivery and political matters (Warren et al, 2014:12). This study seeks to examine the role of Facebook in facilitating public participation, civic engagement and social capital using the case study of the Willowfontain community. The research will focus more on the Facebook community group.

1.2 Research questions and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of the Facebook community group in facilitating public participation, civic engagement and social capital in the Willowfontain community. The key questions that are asked about the investigation of the role of the Willowfontain Facebook community group in facilitating public participation, civic engagement and social capital are as follows:

- What is the role of the Facebook community group in the Willowfontain community?
- Does the Willowfontain community Facebook group facilitate or constrain public participation, civic engagement and social capital?
- What are the challenges faced by the Willowfontain Facebook group administrator?
- How does the Willowfontain ward representative (councillor) engage with Willowfontain Facebook group members?

The broader objectives that guided the study are:

- To investigate the role of the Facebook community group in the Willowfontain community
- To explore whether the Willowfontain community Facebook group facilitates or limit public participation, civic engagement and social capital or not.
- To identify some of the challenges faced by the Willowfontain Facebook group administrator
- To examine how the Willowfontain ward representative (councillor) engages with the Willowfontain community members.

1.3 Research Design

1.3.1 Research Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-method approach, which involves both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The rationale behind the mixed method approach is based on the fact that instruments that are going to be used in this study to collect data are going to produce both statistical data and narrative data which are both important in order to arrive at certain conclusions. The qualitative approach is useful to collect and present experiences, feelings, perceptions and opinions of respondents (the Willowfontain Ward Councillor and the Willowfontain Community Facebook Group Administrator), about the Willowfontain Facebook community group. On the other hand, the quantitative approach is useful to collect and present data related to numbers and statistics from the online participants (Willowfontain Facebook community group members) regarding the Willowfontain Facebook community group.

1.3.2 Data Collection Methods

Primary data was gathered in three ways. The first was through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews involve a process in which a researcher sits down with a participant and asks them questions, with the intention of obtaining the participant's opinion and experience on the question asked (Bezuidenhout, 2014:6). Semi-structured interviews are open, allowing new ideas to be brought up during the interview as a result of what the interviewee says (Ibid). In this study the semi – structured interviews are used to gather information on the opinions and experiences of the Willowfontain Ward Councillor and the Willowfontain Facebook community group Administrator, about the Willowfontain Facebook community group. The interviews were conducted in either isiZulu or English depending on the participant's preference.

All discussions were tape-recorded. The data was transcribed verbatim, meaning that the data was rewritten word for word. The data in isiZulu, was translated into English, after being written down verbatim from the tape recordings to avoid having the researcher risk subjectively interpreting the data, rather than simply translating it into English in the words of the participants.

Secondly, the study also used an online survey to gather data. The online survey is defined as a questionnaire that the audience or participants can complete over the internet (Bezuidenhout, 2014:10). Online surveys are usually created as Web forms with a database to store the answers and statistical software to provide analytics (Ibid). In the study the online survey was used to gather data from the online participants (Willowfontain Facebook Community group members) about their views, opinions and experiences regarding the Willowfontain Facebook community group. The online questionnaires were written in English. Thirdly, the study analysed the content of particular posts from the Willowfontain Facebook community Group.

1.4 Case Study Approach

A case study approach was used in this study to gain a greater understanding of the relationship between Facebook group, public participation, civic engagement, and social capital. Creswell (2014:13); defines a case study as an in- depth inquiry of a specific program, place, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. For this study, the case study is the Willowfontain community which is located in Pietermaritzburg that falls under uMsunduzi Municipality within the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

1.5 Sampling

A sample refers to a selection of units taken from a population of interest. Therefore, sampling refers to the activity of choosing units from a group of interest to make fair generalizations inferred from the sample studied (Bezuidenhout et al, 2014:7). This study used a non-probability sampling method. It employed the purposive, as well as the convenience sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique allows the “researcher to gain important information into a particular matter, participants are chosen based on specific shared characteristics and occupation which the researcher is interested in studying” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 166).

For this study, purposive sampling was appropriate as the study needed to purposefully select participants based on them being Willowfontain community members and Facebook community group members, as the researcher wanted to gather more information about the Willowfontain Facebook community group. The study also purposefully selected posts in the group with relevant content to what the researcher was investigating, which were posts that were about public participation, civic engagement, and social capital. Convenience sampling was adopted in this study as well. Convenience sampling was adopted by a researcher when they choose a sample, because it is most convenient to access (Bezuidenhout, 2014). For this study the convenience sampling was appropriate because the researcher accessed the Willowfontain councillor and the Facebook community administrator in the Willowfontain community which is located in the Pietermaritzburg area.

The Willowfontain online participants were also selected using convenience method because it was most convenient for the researcher to access the online participants as joining the Facebook community group was easy and smooth. A total number of 32 Facebook Community members were participants in the study, along with the Facebook Group Administrator and the ward councillor.

1.6 Data Analysis Methods

According to Dornye (2007:18), data analysis is a process of inspecting, cleansing, transforming, and modelling data to discover useful information and inform conclusions. This study will analyse both the qualitative and quantitative data collected.

1.6.1 Qualitative data analysis

This study analyzed the qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews through thematic analysis using manual coding according to themes. Thematic analysis identified patterns and themes within the data to draw conclusions from the data. The themes identified from the data were concepts that are important to the study and associated with the research questions. These concepts were extracted from the study's conceptual framework and used to identify themes in the data collected using the semi-structured interviews and the online survey.

1.6.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

This study also analysed the quantitative data collected. The quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 26) and descriptive statistics. SPSS Statistics is a software package used for interactive or statistical analysis (Nie et al, 1970:24). Descriptive statistics are brief descriptive coefficients that summarize a given data set, which can be either a representation of the entire or a sample of a population (Holcomb, 2016:23). The study used SPSS and descriptive statistics to analyse the quantitative data gathered from the online survey. The data that was obtained from the online questionnaires that comprised close ended questions are presented in graphs and tables.

The data obtained from the online questionnaires that were in the form of open-ended questions are presented according to themes of similar ideas.

1.6.3 Content Analysis of the Willowfontain Facebook Group Posts

This study further analysed the content of the posts shared in the Willowfontain Facebook community group between the years of 2017, 2018 and 2019. The posts were analysed according to themes of similar ideas that the researcher identified from the posts that were shared in the group.

1.7 Ethical Clearance

The researcher's institution required an official ethical clearance certificate to be applied for which was done as well as permission from the participants. The participants were informed about the nature of the study and assured of their anonymity, and that they could withdraw at any stage from the study. Participants signed a consent form before participating.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the Willowfontain Facebook Community Group and for the years 2017 – 2019 because of the time period for collecting data, the time-consuming nature of the study and the level of the degree.

1.9 Structure of Dissertation

19.1 Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the study, key aspects covered include background of the study, problem definition, research questions and objectives of the study, research methodology, ethical clearance and limitations of the study.

19.2 Chapter Two: Literature review

This chapter provides the existing body of work that is relevant to Facebook, public participation, civic engagement and social capital. It further provides the overview of the key findings on the discussed studies and provides a rationale for why such a study is necessary and unique.

19.3 Chapter Three: Conceptual Framework

The chapter defines democracy and highlight some of the types of democracy. The chapter also presents frameworks for public participation, civic engagement, and social capital. Moreover, the chapter presents a discussion on social media.

19.4 Chapter Four: A case study

This chapter describes the Willowfontain community. It then presents the Willowfontain community demographics, the Willowfontain living conditions and the area's economic status. It further gives a description of the Willowfontain Community Facebook Group titled "Ezase Willowfontain" and provides a discussion on the challenges faced by the Willowfontain community.

19.5 Chapter Five: Findings and analysis

This chapter provides the findings of the research study and analysis.

19.6 Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter reveals that the Willowfontain Facebook group facilitates public participation, civic engagement, and social capital. However, this is to a limited extent. The study also makes recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the existing body of work that is relevant to public participation, civic engagement, social capital, and Facebook. The chapter presents a snapshot of some of the key existing literature and studies according to the previously mentioned themes. The chapter then summarizes key findings on the examined studies. It then discusses the distinctiveness of the current study in the context of the existing literature.

2.2 Facebook and Public Participation Studies

In the study conducted by Enserink and Naber (2012) from the Delft University of Technology, titled; *“social media (Facebook) to Facilitate Public Participation in Netherlands”*, Enserink and Naber aimed to investigate if Facebook facilitates public participation in Netherlands. In their findings, they discovered that Facebook facilitates public participation in the Netherlands, as many people use Facebook as a platform where they share different views; complaints and solutions on matters that affect them. The researchers further discovered that in Netherlands Facebook also allows people to engage in policy processes for effective policies.

Eunyi Kim (2015), from Incheon National University, conducted a study titled; *“Social Media Use and Public Participation in Korea and the United States Youth: Does Social Media Matter?”*. The aim of this study was to examine if the use of different types of social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, facilitate public participation amongst the youth of the United States and Korea (Eunyi Kim, 2015). This researcher found that the use of Facebook and Twitter by the youth in the United States and Korea facilitated public participation amongst the youth (Eunyi Kim, 2015). The findings of the study also reveal that the use of Facebook for public participation among the youth of the United States is more dominant than the use of Twitter for public participation, whereas the opposite pattern is observed in Korea.

In the study conducted by Aykroyd (2012), from The University of Guelph, titled; “*Exploring social media (Facebook) as a Public Participation Tool for Design and Planning at a Municipal scale*”; the goal of this research was to explore and evaluate the role of Facebook as a participatory tool in the planning and design process at the municipal scale (Aykroyd, 2012). The results of the research indicated that there are municipalities who are already using Facebook as a public participation tool for design and planning of projects and as a tool for corporate communications and social marketing efforts (Ibid). The researcher discovered that Facebook is being used primarily as a tool to inform, communicate notices and announcements, sometimes as a consultation tool by Municipalities (Ibid). Further, the researcher also found that some municipalities use Facebook as a tool to involve the public by soliciting input from the beginning of the design and planning process of projects (Aykroyd, 2012). The municipalities that were reviewed in the case study revealed that some municipalities are early adopters, or at least recognize the potential of Facebook as a tool for public participation (Ibid).

Aykroyd (2012) did reveal that there is an apprehension that Facebook will force the municipality to relinquish control of the message or process somehow. This is because when compared to the traditional structure of municipal communications, Facebook has a very different style. Instead of only broadcasting communications, Facebook provides the platform for many conversations with many people and allows the public to direct the conversation (Ibid).

Increasing public involvement can be daunting to those used to traditional municipal communications and who fear their expertise will be ‘crowd sourced’ (Aykroyd, 2012). Without a Facebook strategy in place at the municipal-wide level, or without an online public participation strategy to help guide the process, it is ‘not knowing what to expect’ that can prevent municipalities from using social media (Ibid).

In the research conducted by Sefora (2017), from Stellenbosch University, titled; “*Public Participation in Parliament: Perspectives on Social Media Facebook per se*”; the purpose was to assess if the use of Facebook in parliament can enhance public participation (Sefora, 2017). This study found that Parliament has established a good foothold in the Facebook landscape. However, there are challenges that hinder the institution in fully leveraging on this foothold to enhance public participation (Ibid). The researcher also found that public participation is still ineffective in Parliament; however, this can change once Parliament overcomes challenges in the use of Facebook and uses Facebook as a tool to enhance public participation (Ibid).

2.2.1 Key Findings of Facebook and Public Participation Studies

The Facebook and public participation studies discussed above reveal that Facebook facilitates public participation. The studies also reveal that Facebook has a very different style, and the older generation cannot generally effectively participate using such a structure. Therefore, for Facebook to fully facilitate/ promote effective public participation, there should be Facebook strategies in place to assist those who are struggling to adjust to this new public participation structure.

2.3 Facebook and Civic Engagement Studies

In the study conducted by Gismondi (2015) from Boston University, titled; “*Civic Engagement: An Exploratory Study of Facebook Use and Civic Engagement among Boston University Undergraduates*”, Gismondi aimed to investigate the connection between Facebook use and civic engagement amongst Boston University undergraduates while in college. The study found that students derived a great deal of civic value from their use of Facebook (Ibid). The researcher also found that Facebook provided students with a constant stream of information that promotes understanding (Gismondi, 2015). Furthermore, the researcher discovered that there are several challenges associated with the use of social media for civic learning and engagement, including the need to continuously filter an overwhelming amount of information and the intimidating nature of public civic debate online (Ibid).

In the study conducted by Warren (2014), from the University of Malaya, titled; “*Facebook Usage for Civic Engagement*”; the purpose of this research was to examine if Facebook usage facilitated civic engagement. The researcher examined the online civic engagement concerning the way activists speak, think, and act on Facebook in promoting public engagement as a solution to social issues (Ibid). The study focused on understanding the modes of online civic engagement behaviour in addressing the prevalent social problems; the key impetuses of online civic engagement behaviour and their impact on satisfaction in life and virtual social skills at work (Warren, 2014).

Moreover, certain types of trust (trust propensity, trust in social media, and trust in institutions) and benefit factors (group incentives and reputation) were found to have a significant impact on the different civic modes (Warren, 2014). Furthermore, civic actions significantly impacted life satisfaction and virtual social skills, producing happy and socially competent working citizens (Ibid). Interestingly, only users who engaged in civic actions for addressing social issues were satisfied in life (Warren, 2014).

In the study conducted by Hopf (2016) from the Naval Postgraduate School, titled; “*Facebook’s Impact on Civic Engagement in Mexico*”, the researcher investigated if the increase in Facebook activity fostered civic engagement in Mexico. Hopf found that Facebook has increased civic awareness, broadened collective action, and strengthened Mexico's political activism. Through an understanding of how Facebook operates, the researcher also discovered that engaged e-citizens could continue to make informed political decisions, increase the social capital of the nation, and bring Mexico closer to being a liberal democratic nation (Hopf, 2016).

2.3.1 Key Findings of Facebook and Civic Engagement Studies

The above studies discussed about Facebook and civic engagement indicate that Facebook does facilitate or promote civic engagement in different countries and that Facebook. The studies also indicate that Facebook can be a tool for civic engagement. It is worthwhile mentioning that there is a lack of literature on Facebook and civic engagement.

2.4 Facebook and Social Capital Studies

In the study conducted by Naseri (2017), from the University of Bielefeld, titled; “*Online Social Network Sites and Social Capital: A Case of Facebook*”; the researcher aimed to investigate the online social network site Facebook per se and its impact on social capital. Naseri (2017), in his findings, found that Facebook has an impact on social capital more especially informal or bonding social capital.

In the study conducted by Raza, et al (2016), from the University of Karachi, titled; “*Facebook as a Source of Social capital Building among University Students in Karachi*”; the aim was to investigate whether Facebook is a source of social capital building among University students. The findings showed that Facebook intensity, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, perceived playfulness, and social self-efficacy have a positive and significant impact on intentions to continue its use. Intentions to continue using it has a positive and significant impact on both dependent variables bridging social capital and bonding social capital. They conclude that Facebook helps build and maintain social capital by creating the intention to continue using it.

In the study conducted by Schlachte (2014), from Boston University, titled; “*Social Capital and Social media: The Effect of Facebook Use on Social Capital and Perceived Community Involvement*”; the purpose was to investigate the effect of Facebook use on social capital and perceived community involvement. Schlachte (2014), in his findings, he found that people who frequently use Facebook are more likely to feel more involved in their community while a similar sample showed that more Facebook use does not actually correlate to greater involvement that would justify this feeling of greater involvement. He further stated that there is a relationship between increased Facebook use and the sense of community involvement (Ibid). The researcher reported that this is very interesting because it implies that people are joining groups on Facebook ‘liking’ a page on Facebook or tweeting about a cause and feeling like they are involved with their community (Schlachte, 2014). The researcher further stated that people are more and more likely to feel like they are doing more when they really are not (Ibid). Furthermore, this low-cost form of participation does not translate into much engagement in the real world (Ibid).

Schlachte (2014); also reported that the findings show that there is a lack of relationship between Facebook, social capital, and community involvement. The researcher stated that while Facebook has not led to greater involvement, it may certainly have some influence in making people feel as if they are more involved (Ibid). Lastly, the researcher reported that while the real involvement shows no positive or negative correlation with Facebook use, he further stated that he did not think there is cause to worry that social media use is further contributing to the deterioration of social capital.

In the research conducted by Adnan and Mavi (2014), from the University of Malaya, titled; “Bridging Social Capital on Facebook as a Platform: A Case Study of Malaysian College Students”; the aim was to explore the significant relationship between the intensity of Facebook use and social capital among Malaysian undergraduate students. This study investigated whether the intensity of Facebook use, including the time spent daily on Facebook, the number of Facebook friends, and emotional involvement, are related to the configuration and preservation of bridging the social capital level (Adnan and Mavi, 2014).

The researchers hypothesized that the findings would be similar to previous research and that there would be a positive relationship between these variables previous findings (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Liu, Shi, Liu, & Sheng, 2013) However, contrary to this prediction, the study's findings did not show a strong association between the intensity of Facebook use and online social capital (Adnan and Mavi, 2014).

While previous studies reported that ethnicity was a significant variable related to Facebook online bridging (Ellison et al., 2007), the undergraduates survey results were not significant to predict associations between different ethnic groups and bridging social capital over Facebook (Adnan and Mavi, 2014). This research does establish that limited online contact between different ethnic groups does not automatically boost online bridging. The intensive use of Facebook is not as powerful as a mediating factor to dwarf differential cultures, religious and language barriers bridging different ethnic groups (Ibid). Instead, gender interactions throughout Facebook seem to play a decisive role in increasing bridging social capital among Malaysian undergraduates (Adnan and Mavi, 2014).

2.4.1 Key Findings of Facebook and Social Capital Studies

The studies on Facebook and social capital above indicate that Facebook facilitates or promotes social capital. Naseri (2017); reported in his study that Facebook has an impact on social capital, especially when it concerns informal or bonding social capital. Raza et al. (2016) reported in their study that Facebook helps build and maintain social capital. However, there are also studies above indicating that Facebook does not facilitate/promote social capital. Research conducted by Adnan and Mavi (2014) did not demonstrate a positive relationship between Facebook and social capital. The researchers hypothesized that there would be positive relationships between them. But, contrary to their prediction, the study's findings did not show a link between the intensity of Facebook use and online social capital.

2.5 The Distinctiveness of the Study

The literature discussed in the preceding sections only covered Facebook as a facilitator or an enabler of public participation, civic engagement, and social capital. None of these studies examined Facebook community groups where they acted as a facilitator of public participation, civic engagement, and social capital simultaneously. The existing literature demonstrates a 'research gap' on studies investigating its capacity to act as a facilitator or enabler of all these functions. This study is therefore both; unique and relevant because its focus does go beyond the existing international and national research and investigates the role of the Facebook community group in facilitating all three of these concepts using the Willowfontain community as a case study. The results will therefore address the limitations present in international and national research on the role of Facebook community groups as a mechanism that enhances public participation, civic engagement, and social capital.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the existing body of work that is relevant to Facebook, public participation, civic engagement and social capital. The chapter further overviewed the key findings on the above discussed studies. The chapter provided a rationale for why such a study is necessary and the current study is unique.

Chapter Three: Conceptual Framework

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conceptual framework of Democracy, Public Participation, Civic Engagement, Social Capital and social media (Facebook). It starts with a discussion of theories concerned with democracy because this type of political system should enable public participation, civic engagement, and social capital, which are essential for good governance. Further, the chapter discusses public participation and assumptions underlying public participation. The chapter also provides the civic engagement framework. It presents social capital and types of social capital. The chapter then offers a discussion on social media and the particular form of social media, which is Facebook.

3.2 Democracy

Diamond (1999:3) defines democracy as the rule of the people by a system of choosing the government through free and fair electoral competition at regular intervals. Diamond (1993:3) states that there are various types of democracies, however he focuses on two types of democracy namely, direct democracy and liberal or representative democracy. He defines direct democracy as a form of democracy where people decide on policy initiatives directly, meaning citizens participate in decision making (Ibid: 4). He argues that this kind of democracy differs from the majority of currently established democracies (Ibid: 5).

On the other hand, Diamond (1999:8) defines liberal or representative democracy as a democratic system of government in which individual rights and freedom are officially recognised and protected, and the rule of law limits the exercise of political power. In this form of democracy, citizens elect representatives who create laws and policies (Diamond, 1999:9).

Edigheji (2005: 5) states that the basic principles of liberal democracy are public participation, equality, political tolerance, accountability, and transparency. He further states that liberal democracy advances social and political rights (Ibid: 6). Furthermore, he argues that direct democracy does not necessarily mean that the concerns of the most vulnerable groups in societies are taken into consideration in decision-making (Edigheji, 2005:7). Moreover, he states that this type of democracy is insufficient and that there is a need for liberal democracy which in principle yields to good governance (Edigheji, 2005: 8).

Wolterstorff (2012:12) argues that liberal democracy holds significant benefits for humanity. Democracies tend not to fight each other as they are fearful of the electoral consequences (Ibid: 13). A dictatorial regime can largely ignore the wishes of their people, whereas the ruling party in a liberal democracy could face a potential electoral backlash (Wolterstorff, 2012: 23). The spread of liberal democracy enables the individual to play their full part in the political process and therefore, liberal democracy is the best system available for ensuring maximum happiness for the greatest number and it promotes good governance and participation, (Ibid: 24).

According to Rothstein (2012: 20), good governance means effective and efficient structures which provide optimal support to citizens in leading a safe and productive life in line with their desires and opportunities (Ibid: 23). Essentially, this involves a combination of democracy, the social welfare state and the rule of law (Ibid).

The promotion of good governance goes beyond the government sector and includes all relevant actors from the private sector and society (Rothstein (2012: 26). The aims are to balance interests and focus on common goals, particularly by reducing poverty and providing access to state services for all and to make administrative structures participative, efficient and solution oriented (Ibid: 27)

3.3 Public Participation

The World Bank (1996: 3) defines public participation as a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them. The rationale for public participation is to help people build capacity and contribute to their empowerment (Ibid: 4). Moreover, it assists people to increase control over their lives and livelihoods and it makes a direct link between the public and the decision-makers (government) (Ibid: 5).

According to the South African Legislative Sector (SALS) (2013: 7), Public participation refers to an open, accountable process through which individuals and groups within selected communities can exchange views and influence decision-making.

According to the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) (2007: 15), public participation is encouraged for four reasons; firstly, for the legal requirement to consult; secondly, to make development plans and services relevant to local needs and situations; thirdly, to hand over responsibility for services and promote community action; and lastly, to empower local communities to have control over their own lives and livelihoods.

SALS (2013:1) stipulates that citizens' involvement in governance processes ensures that their experiential and grounded perspectives inform government on their needs and how these needs can be best addressed. According to Brinkerhoff (2006: 476), the local sphere of government is ideal for the pursuit of the principles of democracy, thus ensuring that local citizens are given the opportunity to participate directly or indirectly in the policy making that concerns them. Public participation increases the citizen's influence on the decisions that affect their lives (Taylor, 2003: 108). From the view of government officials, public participation provides a means through which critical issues can be resolved, it ensures interaction and reassures the public that all viewpoints are being considered (Creighton, 2005: 17).

According to DPLG (2007: 15), the assumptions underlying public participation which:

- Public participation is designed to promote the values of good governance and human rights.
- Public participation acknowledges a fundamental right of all people to participate in the governance system.
- Public participation is designed to narrow the social distance between the electorate and elected institutions.
- Public participation requires recognizing the intrinsic value of all people, investing in their ability to contribute to governance processes.
- People can participate as individuals, interest groups or communities more generally,

3.4 Civic engagement

Bennett, et al (2011: 34), argue that civic engagement is about rediscovering politics, the life of the polis, the city where men and women speak and act together, as citizens.

The word civic, when connected to engagement, implies work that is done publicly and benefits the public, and is done in concert with others (Ibid: 40). According to Ehrlich (2000: 12), civic engagement means working together to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes (Ibid: 18).

Gil de Zúñiga & Valenzuela (2012: 90), stipulate that civic engagement refers to activities aimed at the betterment of society that are initiated and directed by community members rather than governments, institutions or large organizations. McCue and Stuart (2016:1) argue that in order to promote equitable civic engagement, communities must look at ways to ensure that all residents have the skills, confidence and opportunity to participate in civic life, at the level they desire. According to Prentice (2007: 135), civic engagement refers to, how citizens participate in the life

of a community to improve conditions for others or help shape the community's future. Prentice (2007: 140) argues that the term civic engagement has been used primarily as it refers to the situation of younger people. However, the past few years, a new movement has emerged to promote greater civic engagement by older adults. (Richard P. Adler Judy Goggin, 2005:1)

According to Richard & Goggin (2005: 1), some definitions of civic engagement emphasize participation in voluntary service to one's local community, either by an individual acting independently or as a participant in a group. Bringle & Hatcher (2009: 19) argue that other definitions of civic engagement restrict the term to apply just to action taken collectively to improve society. For example, Kaskie et al. (2008: 29) define civic engagement as any activity where people come together in their role as citizens.

Bringle & Hatcher (2009: 23), state that other definitions of civic engagement limit the meaning of the term to activities that are not only collective but that are specifically political (i.e., that involve government action). Bringle & Hatcher (2009: 30) state that civic engagement differs from an individual ethic of service in that it directs individual efforts towards collective action in solving problems through our political process.

Crowley (1998: 40) argues that civic engagement describes how an active citizen participates in the life of the community in order to help shape its future. Ultimately, civic engagement has to include the dimensions of social change (Ibid: 45).

According to Portney (2005: 23), civic engagement is individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern. Martinson & Minkler (2006: 40), define civic engagement as the interactions of citizens with their society and their government. Civic engagement describes how an active citizen participates in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community's future (Ibid: 49). Bringle & Hatcher (2009: 51) state that civic engagement can take many forms, from individual voluntarism to organizational involvement to electoral participation. It can include efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem, or interact with the institutions of representative democracy (Ibid: 59). Civic engagement encompasses a range of specific activities such as working in a soup kitchen, serving on a neighbourhood association, writing a letter to an elected official or voting, etc (Ibid: 65).

3.5 Social Capital

Social capital is a complex multidimensional concept encompassing a repertoire of cultural and social value systems. Recently, it has become a very popular and appealing concept among social scientists (Kawachi et al, 1997: 108). A growing number of sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and economists have employed the concept to explain various economic and social outcomes (Ibid: 123). According to Paldam (2000: 139), the fundamental notion of social capital is to incorporate socio-cultural factors to explain development outcomes. It has emerged as a prominent topic of discussion among academics, development specialists, and policymakers (Ibid: 141).

According to Guiso et al. (2006: 40), the concept of social capital is a topical issue; however, it came into the spotlight in the late 1980s and attracted growing research interest thereafter. Despite a voluminous literature, there is no single, universal definition of social capital, it is often defined and measured in a pragmatic and unsystematic fashion (Ibid:45). In recent years, growing interest and numerous studies have fine-tuned the concept and measurement approach (Ibid: 46). Now, at least, there seems to be some agreement on the conceptualisation and major ingredients of social capital (Ibid: 48).

According to Coleman (1990: 205), social capital is an abstract idea rather than a firmly tangible phenomenon. The theory of social capital is particularly rooted in the notion of trusts, norms, and informal networks and it believes that ‘social relations are valuable resources (Ibid: 209). Social capital is broadly defined to be a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing a variety of social norms, values, beliefs, trusts, obligations, relationships, networks, friends, memberships, civic engagement, information flows, and institutions that foster cooperation and collective actions for mutual benefits and contributes to economic and social development (Bourdieu: 1996:200).

Social capital has been described as the “glue” that develops between people in groups and societies by sharing experiences, ideas, ideals, beliefs and practices (Quibria, 2003:19). According to Coleman (1990:302), social capital is dependent on the social structures that exist between people, which make it possible for those involved to take certain actions. This then allows these individuals to accomplish tasks that they would not have been able to do on their own. Thus, the

distinguishing aspect of social capital is that it relies on relationships between people who form the social structures (Ibid: 304). It is worthwhile noting that the idea of “giving and receiving” is assumed and forms part of such relationships (Ibid: 309). Coleman (2000:16) implies that social capital is established for a purpose, and it will continue for as long as people experience results and benefits from it.

Bourdieu (1996:246) defines social capital as the sum of the actual or potential resources that are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Ibid: 249). Bourdieu (1986: 249) considers social capital as a collectively owned asset endowing members with credits.

Coleman (1990:302) argues that social capital is not a single entity, but a combination of different entities having two characteristics in common: it is an aspect of a social structure, and it facilitates certain actions of individuals who are within that structure (Ibid: 303). The entities include obligations, expectations, trust, and information flows (Ibid: 304). According to Ghoshal (1998:30), social capital inheres in the structure of relations between and among actors, it facilitates the actions of individual actors and forms the basis of social capital (Ibid: 34).

Putnam (1993:167) defines social capital as features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions. Putnam (2000:18-19) stipulates that social capital refers to connections among individuals, social networks, and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.

According to Uphoff and Wijavaratna (2005: 40), the literature has classified social capital into different groups; the most common forms of social capital in literature include (i) structural and cognitive social capital; (ii) bonding, bridging, and linking social capital; (iii) strong and weak social capital; and (iv) horizontal and vertical social capital.

3.5.1 Types of Social Capital Definitions

- (1) Structural and cognitive social capital: structural social capital is related to the pattern of social networks and other structures such as associations, clubs, cultural groups, and

institutions supplemented by the rules, procedures, and precedents that govern them (Uphoff and Wijayaratna, 2000: 60). The Cognitive social capital consists primarily of a set of shared norms, values, attitudes, and beliefs of individuals relating to trust, reciprocity, and cooperation (Ibid: 65). Structural social capital provides certain benefits to actors, like finding a job, obtaining information, or accessing resources (Ghoshal, 1998:45). The subjective and intangible cognitive social capital influences people towards mutually beneficial collective action through shared values and attitudes (Uphoff, 2000:19).

Putnam (1993:29) argues that participation in social networks and voluntary organizations forms habits of cooperation, solidarity, and civic mindedness. It fosters development and spread of trust.

Social capital is, thus, understood as having both a structural and a cognitive dimension (Van Oorschot et al., 2006: 40). These structural and cognitive forms are often interconnected and reinforcing (Uphoff and Wijayaratna, 2000:70).

- (2) Bonding, bridging, and linking social capital: bonding social capital denotes ties among people who are very close and known to one another, such as immediate family, close friends, and neighbours (Van Oorschot et al., 2006:20). Often people in bonding networks are alike in key personal characteristics (e.g., class, race, ethnicity, education, age, religion, gender, and political affiliation) (Ibid: 22). It is more inward-looking, protective, and exercises close membership, and therefore good for under-girding specific reciprocity and mobilizing informal solidarity (Van Oorschot et al., 2006:35). Bonding promotes communication and relationships necessary to pursue common goals. Moreover, it influences creation and nurturing of community organisations, like self-help groups and local association (Putnam (1993:170).

According to Anheier and Kendall (2002: 40), bridging social capital refers to more distant ties of like persons, such as loose friendships and workmates. Often people in bridging

networks differ on key personal characteristics (Ibid: 45). Bridging is more outward-looking, civically engaged, narrows the gap between different communities and exercising open membership, and is, therefore, crucial to organizing solidarity and pursuing common goals (Van Oorschot et al., 2006:50). Bridging is crucial for solving community problems through helping people get to know each other, building relationships, sharing information, and mobilizing community resources (Woolcock, 2001:23).

Anheier and Kendall, (2002:56) stipulate that linking social capital refers to ties and networks among individuals and groups who occupy very different social positions and power.

It reaches out to unlike people in dissimilar situations, such as those who are entirely outside of the community (Ibid: 57). Linking social capital may involve networks and ties of a particular community with states or other agencies (Woolcock, 2001:30).

According to Van Oorschot et al., (2006: 40), these different forms of social capital can serve different functions. Bonding with closely-knit people can act as a social support safety net; bridging ties with people across diverse social divides can provide links to institutions and systems. This enables people and communities to leverage a wide range of resources that are available in the community (Ibid). It also generates ingrown and thick trust that is useful for 'getting by' in life, as opposed to the bridging of expansive and thin trust that may be useful for 'getting ahead' (Anheier and Kendall, 2002: 70). In practice, social ties may constitute 'bonding' in one respect and 'bridging' in another (Field, 2003: 22). This distinction is helpful to think about different types of social relationships among people in the community and their likely differential outcomes (Ibid: 28).

- (3) Strong and weak ties: strong ties refer to close, persistent, and binding relationships, such as those that exist with families and close friend group; weak ties, on the other hand, refers to more causal, temporary, and contingent relationships, such as those that exist with people from different backgrounds and friends from different social niches (Granovetter, 1995: 89).

A strong tie comes from affection, willingness to help, and in depth knowledge of each other (Erickson, 2004: 45). Strong ties create great solidarity and offer personal support, whereas weak ties are used more for informational support (Ibid: 46). Weak ties link people to the broader communities and to a wider range of potential resources (Erickson, 2004: 50). It can serve as channel in mobilising resources, ideas, and information to promote collective actions in the community (Ibid: 52).

- (4) Horizontal and vertical networks: social capital is also distinguished between horizontal and vertical networks (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000: 90).

Horizontal social capital refers to lateral ties between people of similar status and power in a community; vertical social capital on the other hand refers to ties between people of different hierarchy and unequal power among people (Ibid: 92). While horizontal social capital operates through shared norms and values, vertical social capital operates through formal hierarchical structures (Erckson: 2004: 67). Similar to bonding and bridging, horizontal social capital encompasses diverse group of people, and it serves to establish connection and a common goal among community members through civic engagement (Ibid: 68). Similar to linking, vertical social capital establishes links between citizens and community leaders and decision makers and creates an environment for social change through laws and policies (Pichler and Wallace, 2007: 30).

3.6 Social Media

According to Kaplan & Haenlein (2010: 50), social media refers to forms of media that involve interactive participation. The development of media is divided into two different ages, the broadcast age and the interactive age (Ibid: 55). In the broadcast age, media were almost exclusively centralized where one entity such as a radio or television station, Newspaper Company, or a movie production studio distributed messages to many people (Hanna et al 2011:23). Feedback to media outlets was often indirect, delayed, and impersonal (Ibid: 30). Mediated communication between individuals typically happened on a much smaller level, usually via personal letters,

telephone calls, or sometimes on a slightly larger scale through means such as photocopied family newsletters (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010: 65).

With the rise of digital and mobile technologies, interaction on a large scale became easier for individuals than ever before; and as such, a new media age was born where interactivity was placed at the centre of new media functions (Ibid: 69). One individual could now speak to with many, and instant feedback was a possibility. Where citizens and consumers used to have limited and somewhat muted voices, now they could share their opinions with many (Ibid: 80).

The low cost and accessibility of new technology also allowed more options for media consumption than ever before and so instead of only a few news outlets, individuals now have the ability to seek information from several sources and to dialogue with others via message forums about the information posted (Kim, 2012: 32). At the core of this ongoing revolution is social media (Ibid: 34).

According to Kim & Ko (2012: 23), social media are platforms that enable the interactive web by engaging users to participate in, comment on and create content as means of communicating with their social graph, other users and the public. Social media has the following characteristics:

- Encompasses wide variety of content formats including text, video, photographs, audio, PDF and PowerPoint.
- Allows interactions to cross one or more platforms through social sharing, email and feeds.
- Facilitates enhanced speed and breadth of information dissemination.
- Provides for one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many communications.
- Enables communication to take place in real time or asynchronously over time.
- Is device in different, it can take place via a computer (including laptops and netbooks), tablets (including iPads, iTouch and others) and mobile phones(particularly smartphones).
- Extends engagement by creating real-time online events, extending online interactions offline, or augmenting live events online. (Kim & Ko, 2012: 23).

O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson (2011: 61), stipulate that social media consists of various user-driven channels such as: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, blogs, YouTube, and etc. The following section conceptualises Facebook as a form of social media.

3.6.1 Facebook

Boyd & Ellison (2007: 40) define Facebook as a social networking website that was originally designed for college students by a college student Mr Mark Elliot Zuckerberg, on February 4 of 2004. Mark Zuckerberg created Facebook in order to connect Harvard students with one another (Ibid: 41). However, over a thousand people had registered and that was only the beginning. The site quickly ballooned into one of the most significant social media companies in history. Today in 2020, Facebook is one of the most valuable companies in the world, with over 22.89 million active users in South Africa alone (Statista, 2020: 1). Facebook is open to anyone 13 years of age or older. Users can create and customize their own profiles with photos, videos, and information about themselves (Jordán-Conde et al., 2014: 80). Friends can browse other friends' profiles and write messages on their pages (Ibid: 85). Each Facebook profile has a "wall," where friends can post comments (Back et al., 2010: 49). Since the wall is viewable by all the user's friends, wall postings are basically a public conversation (Ibid: 51).

According to Kim & Ko, (2012: 23), Facebook allows each user to set privacy settings, which by default are strict. For example, if you have not added a certain person as a friend, that person will not be able to view your profile (Ibid: 27). However, one can adjust the privacy settings to allow users within their network (such as your college or the area you live) to view part or all of one's profile (Williams & Gulati, 2008:201). One can also create a "limited profile," which allows you to hide certain parts of your profile from a list of users that you select. If a Facebook user does not want certain friends to be able to view their full profile, one can simply add them to the "limited profile" list (Ibid). Facebook applications are small programs developed specifically for Facebook profiles (Ibid: 207). Facebook provides an easy way for friends to keep in touch and for individuals to have a presence on the Web without needing to build a website (Marche, 2012: 91). Since Facebook makes it easy to upload pictures and videos, nearly anyone can publish a multimedia profile (Ibid: 100).

According to Madge et al., (2009: 290), Facebook offers instant messaging, photo sharing, and e-mail. Williams & Gulati (2008: 220), state that Facebook consists of timeline/wall, news feed and ticker. The timeline (new format) or Wall (old format) is the area on Facebook where members post comments and their current status and location as well as upload photos and videos (Ibid: 230). On the other hand, news feed shows the people and organizations members' activity, while very active members see updates in real-time on their ticker.

According to Johnson (2008: 90), there are three types of representation on Facebook: (1) profiles, (2) pages, and (3) groups. Individuals create a Facebook "Profile," which is normally a two-way interaction with friends (Ibid: 101). Businesses create a Facebook "Page" to promote products and brands, also called a "Fan Page," where all members are accepted as fans. Although comments can be posted by them, a Page is primarily a one-way broadcast from the business (Boyd & Ellison, 2007: 60).

The third presence is a Facebook "Group," a Facebook group is a place for group communication and for people to share their common interests and express their opinions (Ibid: 65). They let people come together around a common cause, issue or activity to organize, express objectives, discuss issues, post photos, and share related content (Boyd & Ellison, 2007: 68). Anybody can **set up and manage** a Facebook Group (Ibid). According to O'Bannon & Britt (2013: 230), Facebook Groups are spaces on the social media network for friends, associates, or people with similar interests to discuss or share about broad or narrow topics. Groups provide an arena for organic discussion about your business products or services and present the opportunity to cultivate brand awareness (Ibid: 231).

3.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the chapter has presented the conceptual framework of the study. The chapter has defined and discussed democracy; highlighted some of the types of democracy such as direct democracy and liberal democracy; and defined good governance. Further, the chapter presented the framework for public participation as well as basic assumptions underlying public participation. Furthermore, it has provided the civic engagement framework, the framework for social capital and types of social capital, such as structural and cognitive social capital; bonding,

bridging, and linking social capital; strong and weak ties; as well as horizontal and vertical networks. The chapter also presented a discussion on social media; social media characteristics; and defined and explored the nature of one of the particular social media forms known as Facebook.

Chapter Four: Case Study - Willowfontain Community

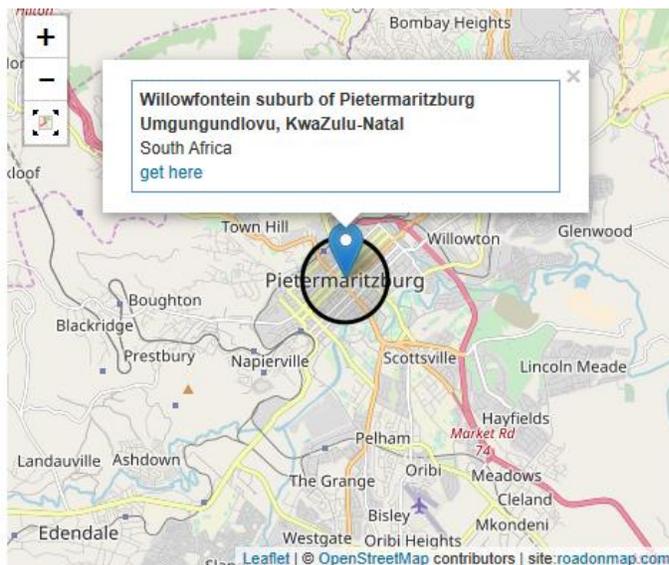
4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a case study of an area called Willowfontain community. The chapter describes the Willowfontain community location. It then presents the Willowfontain community demographics, the Willowfontain living conditions and the area's economic status. It gives a description of the Willowfontain Community Facebook Group titled "Ezase Willowfontain". A discussion on the challenges faced by the Willowfontain community is also provided.

4.2 Location: Willowfontain Community

Willowfontain community is a semi-rural area located in Pietermaritzburg within the UMsunduzi Municipality ward 14, within KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa (Roadonmap, 2004). UMsunduzi Municipality is a local municipality in Umgungundlovu district, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa (Roadonmap, 2004). Pietermaritzburg is the capital city of the KwaZulu-Natal province and the main economic hub of Umgungundlovu District Municipality (Wikipedia, 2018). UMsunduzi Municipality is situated on the N3 highway at a junction of an industrial corridor (from Durban to Pietermaritzburg) and an agro-industrial corridor (stretching from Pietermaritzburg to Estcourt) (Ibid). Below is the Pietermaritzburg Map displaying Willowfontain's location.

Figure 4.1 Willowfontain Location within Pietermaritzburg.



Source: Roadonmap, (2016).

4.2 Willowfontain Community Demographics

According to uMsunduzi Municipality Demographics (UMD) (2019:1), there are 850 homesteads in the Willowfontain community with 2,165 households of which 56 % are female-headed households, while 44 % are male-headed households. The Willowfontain total population is 11,232. There are more female-headed households than male and more females than males in Willowfontain. These figures are indicated in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Gender.

	Population	Percentage
Female	5, 887	52,41%
Male	5, 345	47,59%

Source: (UMD, 2019).

Table 4.2 Age Breakdown

Age	Percentage
Young (0-14)	30,2%
Working age (15-64)	65,8%
Elderly (65+)	4%

Source: UMD, (2019).

Table 4.2 above indicates that in the Willowfontain community, 30, 2% of the population comprises young people who are between the ages of 0 – 14 years. A majority, 65, 8% of people are categorized as of working age, and are between the ages of 15 – 65 years; 4% of the community are elderly people, who are 65+ years of age and above. Below, Table 4.3 presents a breakdown of the racial composition of Willowfontain.

Table 4.3 Population Group

Race	People	Percentage
Black African	11, 218	99,86%
Coloured	10	0,10%
Other	4	0,04

Source: UMD, (2019).

Table 4.3 above indicates that the majority of people residing in the Willowfontain area are Black Africans as the statistics indicate that 99, 86% of residents are black Africans.

Table 4.4 below indicates the most common languages spoken by residents. The majority of people in Willowfontain speak isiZulu as indicated by the statistics that show 96, 22% of people in the area speak isiZulu. IsiZulu is the main language of Africans in KwaZulu – Natal.

Table 4.4 Languages

	People	Percentage
IsiZulu	10,809	96,22%
English	133	1,18%
IsiNdebele	129	1,15%
IsiXhosa	48	0,43%
Other	113	1.09%

Source: UMD, (2019).

4.3 Willowfontain living conditions

The following table, Table 4.5 provides statistics that reflect the living conditions in Willowfontain by access or sources of water; toilet facilities; household goods and access to the internet.

Table 4.5 Sources of Water

Sources of Water	Percentage
Regional/Local water scheme	68,4%
Borehole	1,6%
Spring	0,1%
Rain water tank	1,3%
Dam/Pool/Stagnant water	0,3%
River/Stream	0,3%
Water vendor	3%
Water tanker	18,5%
Other	6,5%

Source: UMD, (2019).

The table above shows that most of the Willowfontain community members are dependent on the regional/ local water scheme (68, 4%) for their water supply, followed by water tankers (18, 5%). Other sources of water include from water vendors (3%), boreholes (1, 6%) and rainwater tanks (1, 3%). However, when the regional or local water scheme fails to supply water and water tankers get empty, people turn to the nearby rivers for water which is not good for their health and it has been reported in the media, for example a report on News24 on the 3rd of May 2018 (News24, 2018).

The next table, Table 4.6 indicates the type of toilet facilities used by the Willowfontain community.

Table 4.6 Toilet Facility

Toilet Facility	Percentage
None	2%
Flush toilet (Connected to sewerage system)	51,6%
Flush toilet (with septic tank)	5,2%
Chemical toilet	3,3%
Pit toilet with Ventilation	17,3%
Pit toilet without ventilation	16,8%
Bucket toilet	1%
Other	2,7%

Source: UMD, (2019).

The above statistics in Table 4.6 indicates that the Willowfontain community is still an area that is under-developed. The statistics indicate that only 51, 6% of people have flushing toilets connected to the sewerage system and 5, 2% have flush toilets connected to a septic tank. The rest 48, 4% of people do not have formal toilets. There are people who still have pit toilets, as indicated by the statistics that show that 17, 3% of people have pit toilets with ventilation, and 16, 8% of people who have pit toilets without ventilation, a total of 34, 1%. 2% of households in Willowfontain and 1% of people still use bucket toilets.

Table 4.7 Household Goods

Item	Yes	No
Cell phone	89,3%	10,7%
Computer	23,2%	76,8%

Television	80,6%	19,4%
Satellite Television	29,1%	70,9%
Radio	73%	27%
Landline/ Telephone	21,8%	78,2%
Motor Car	32,9%	67,1%
Refrigerator	76,6%	23,4%
Electric/ Gas- stove	84,7%	15,3%

Source: UMD, (2019).

The data in Table 4.7 above indicates what families in the Willowfontain possess in terms of household goods. Most families own electric/gas-stoves (84, 7%), televisions (80, 6%), Refrigerators (76, 6%), and radios (73%). The data also shows that there is only 10, 7% of people who don't have cell phones, while 89, 3% of people own cell phones. The statistics reveal that not many people have cars in this area. Only 32, 9% of people own cars and the rest, 67, 1% of the community do not have cars.

Some 29, 1% of people have satellite television and 80, 6% of people have non – satellite televisions. Some 78, 2% of people do not have landline/telephones and 21, 8% of people do have landlines. In this area few people own computers, there are only 23, 2% those that own computers, while 76, 8% of people do not have computers. The data gives a clear perspective concerning the socio-economic status of the Willowfontain community. The vast majority of this community have cell phones, television and radios, fridges and stoves – either electric or gas. The majority also do not have computers, satellite television, cars or landlines.

Table 4.8 Access to Internet

Access	Percentage
From Home	9,5%
From Cell phone	17,1%

From Work	5%
From Elsewhere	6,6%
No Access	61,8%

Source: UMD, (2019).

The statistics in Table 4.8 above indicates that in the Willowfontain community a majority of people have no internet access at all: 61, 8%. Only 38, 2% of people have access to the internet. Table 4.7 indicated that 89, 3% of people have cell phones in the Willowfontain community, only 17, 1% of people (see Table 4.8) access the internet using cell phones. This means that a large number of people either do not have access to the internet, cannot afford it or choose not to have access. Those that do have internet access use a variety of means to access it, such as cell phones, from home, from work and from elsewhere.

Below is more information about the Willowfontain community contributes to an understanding of the overall economic status of this community.

4.4 Willowfontain Economic Status

4.4.1 Willowfontain Community’s Educational Status

The Willowfontain community is one of the many Black African communities that is comprised of a majority of people with low-income jobs (News24, 2018: 1). In this area 5, 5% of people aged 20+ years have no schooling while 94, 5% of people who are aged 20+ years who have gone for formal schooling. Of the people who are aged 20+ years, 33, 7% matriculated, meaning that the majority of the community did not complete the main exit level secondary school qualification, matric, although the vast majority at least have some formal schooling.

A small percentage of the community, 13, 1% who are aged between 20+ years have higher education qualification, while 86, 9% of people do not have higher education qualification (UMD, 2019). The statistics indicate that Willowfontain has a number of uneducated people without skills which results in them not being able to find good-paying jobs or not having jobs at all.

Table 4.9 below indicates Willowfontain community’s average household income

Table 4.9 Average household income

Table 4.9 below indicates the income levels of the community. There are 12 categories of income, expressed in rands.

Income	Percentage of Community
No Income	16,1%
R0 – R4,800	4,6%
R4,810 – R9, 600	6,8%
R9,601 – R19, 600	16,1%
R19,601 – R38, 200	16,5%
R38,201 – R76, 4000	12,6%
R76, 401 – R153, 800	10,3%
R153, 801 – R307, 600	8,8%
R307, 601 – R614, 400	5,7%
R614, 601 – R1, 228, 800	1,8%
R1, 228, 801 – R2, 457, 600	0,5%
R2, 457, 601+	0,3%

Source: UMD, (2019)

Table 4.9 above shows that some 16, 1% of the community have no income source. Of the 12 income categories listed, the most common earnings are in categories 4, 5 and 6, in ranges between R 9 601 - R 76 200. Some 16, 1% of earners earn R 9 601-R 19 600 while 16, 5% earn in the next range of R 19 601 –R 38 200. The next highest earning group is those who earn more than the former: R 38 201 – R 76 400 by 12, 6% of the community. This 45, 2% of the community earn between R 9 601 and R 76 400. A total of 11, 4% earned below this with an additional 16, 1% having no income at all, so a total of 27, 5%. Those who earn above R 76 400 comprise 26, 4% of the community.

4.4.3 Willowfontain Unemployment Rate

Willowfontain is currently faced with 33% of unemployment rate (News24: 2020). It is not surprising that the Willowfontain community has a high unemployment rate given their educational background. Most of the community members are unskilled and therefore they are unemployable or can be employed in low paying jobs only.

4.5 Description of the Willowfontain Community Facebook Group

The Willowfontain Community Facebook group is titled “ezase Willowfontain”. The group is a platform for like-minded community members to engage on community matters such as raising service delivery issues, political matters, crime, etc (ezase Willowfontain, 2012). The group has 4 072 members, some 36% of the total population. Most of the members who post in the group are young. Within the group a minority of members is active while the majority of members are passive (Ibid).

According to ezase Willowfontain Facebook group history (2012), the group was created on February 04, 2012, by Mr Enzokuhle Shezi and it has 3 group administrators. The group was originally created with the aim of being used as a tool for advertising community DJs and their music, as well as to share topics that are related to local music.

4.6 Challenges faced by the Willowfontain Community

The Willowfontain community is still experiencing water shortages, lack of electricity supply, and poorly constructed roads (News24, 2018: 1). On the 2nd of August 2018, it was reported by News24 that Willowfontain community has been without water for three years, and its residents have had to rely on water tankers and sometimes the tankers get empty and the community members have to fetch the water from the river at Kwabhakabha area and walk up a steep hill with 20 - litres buckets on their heads (Ibid). According to News24 (2018: 1), Willowfontain community face a number of social issues such as alcohol and drug abuse, involvement in violent crime, teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS transmission. There are also high levels of despondency and hopelessness amongst the youth because of low matric pass rates, high unemployment rate and economic crisis (Ibid).

4.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, Willowfontain is an area that is dominated by Black Africans who speaks Isizulu. The area is situated in Pietermaritzburg within the uMsunduzi Municipality. The community is faced by many challenges, including service delivery issues such as lack of water, lack of electricity supply, and poorly constructed roads. The community is also facing high unemployment; low matric pass rates; economic crises; and social issues of alcohol and drug abuse; teenage pregnancy; and HIV/ AIDS transmission. However, the Willowfontain community members are able to raise such challenges/ issues in the Willowfontain Community Facebook group titled “*ezase Willowfontain*”. The community members present the challenges in the group to address them together as a community.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of the online survey data and two semi-structured interviews. The online survey was conducted with the Willowfontain Facebook community group members. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Willowfontain Ward Councillor, and the Willowfontain Facebook Community Group Administrator. Responses are based on the participants' subjective experiences, views, and perceptions regarding the role of the Willowfontain Facebook community group in their lives and community. The respondents' responses are coded as WWC – Willowfontain Ward Councillor, WFCGA – Willowfontain Facebook Community Group Administrator, and WFCGM – Willowfontain Facebook Community Group Members. Responses are provided verbatim and in italics. The chapter further presents the content analysis of the posts shared in the Willowfontain Facebook community group between the years of 2017, 2018 and 2019. The chapter is broken down into the following sections:

- Data from the Online Survey – Willowfontain Online Participants.
- Data from the Semi-Structured Interview - Willowfontain Facebook Community Group Administrator.
- Data from the Semi-Structured Interview – Willowfontain Ward Councillor.
- Content Analysis - Willowfontain Facebook Community Group Posts.

5.2 Data from the Online Survey - Willowfontain Online Participants

This section presents and analyses the quantitative data obtained from the Willowfontain Facebook community group members by using the online survey.

The sample consisted of 32 respondents or participants see appendix (1) for all the questions that the online participants were responding to. The data obtained from questionnaires that were in a form of close ended questions are presented in graphs and tables. The data obtained from questionnaires that were in a form of open-ended questions are presented according to themes of similar ideas.

5.2.1 Gender of Respondents

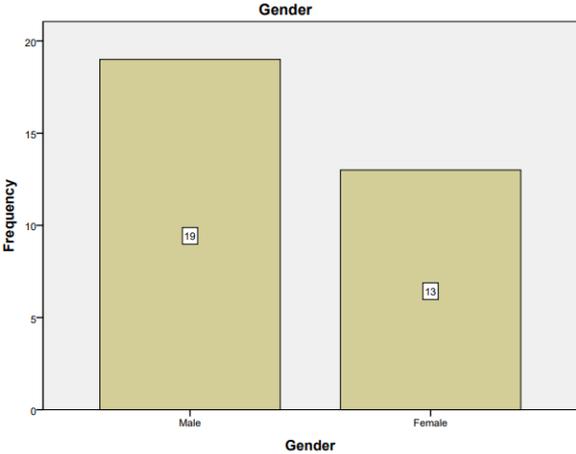


Figure 5.1

The graph above, displays the gender of respondents. The graph indicates that out of 32 participants, 19 of them are males and 13 of them are females indicating that the majority of respondents are males.

5.2.2 Age of Respondents

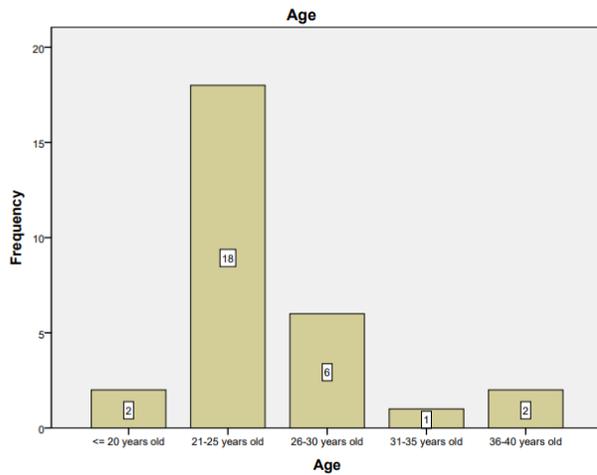


Figure 5.2

The graph above, presents the age of the respondents. The diagram shows that 2 of the respondents are 20 years old, 18 of them are between the ages of 21 – 25 years old, 6 of them are between the ages of 26 – 30 years old, 1 of them is between the ages of 31 – 35 years old and 2 of them are between the ages of 36 – 40 years old. The data thus indicates that most of the respondents (18) are youths and are between the ages of 21 – 25 years old, followed by those between 26 and 30 years of age. According to Theron (2012: 35), in South Africa, the youth is defined as the population between the ages of 15 to 35 years old.

5.2.3 Population Group of Respondents

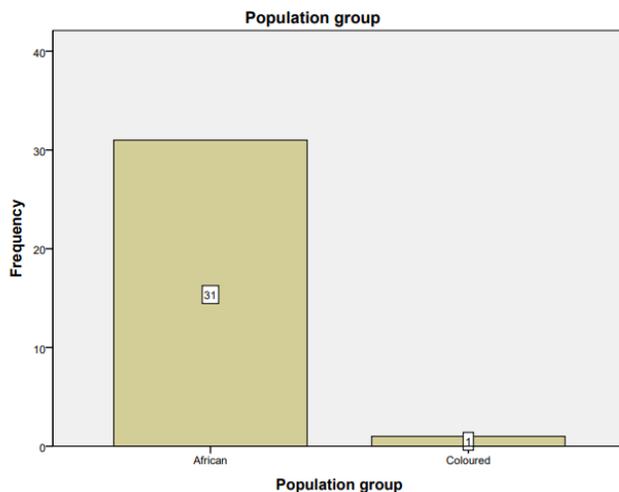


Figure 5.3

Figure 5.3 above displays the population group of the participants. The graph illustrates that out of 32 of the respondents, 31 of them are African and 1 of them is coloured. The data demonstrates that the majority of the respondents are Black African.

5.2.4 Respondents' Years of Membership in the Community Group

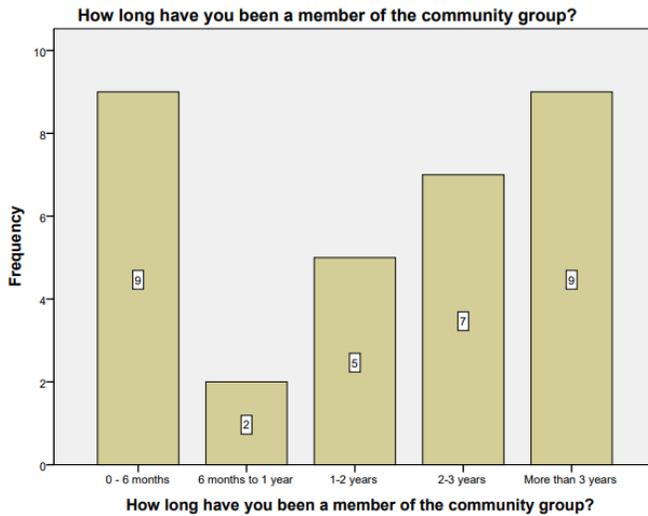


Figure 5.4

The graph above presents the participants' years of membership in the community group. The diagram displays that 9 of the respondents have been members of the community group for less than 7 months; 2 of them have been members of the community group for 6 months to a year; 5 of them have been involved in the group for 1 to 2 years; 7 of them have been in the community group for 2 to 3 years and 9 of them have been on the group for more than 3 years. The graph demonstrates that a large portion of respondents 9 are new in the group because they have less than 7 months as members of the group, while an equal number of respondents, 9, have been on the group for more than 3 years.

5.2.5 Primary Device Used by Respondents to Access the Community Group

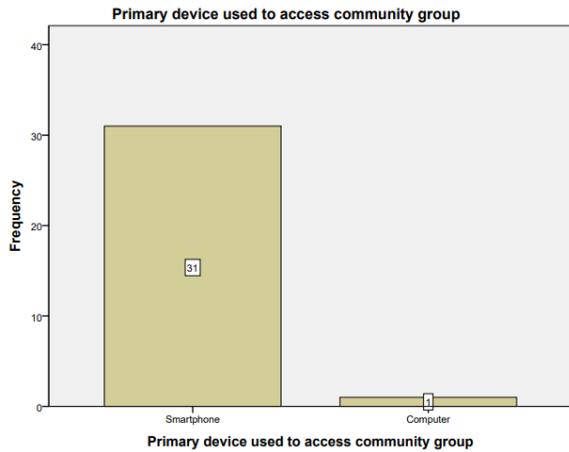


Figure 5.5

The graph above, Figure 5.5 presents the respondents primary device to access the Willowfontain community group. The diagram indicates that out of the 32 respondents, 31 of them are using smartphones to access the community group, while 1 of them uses a computer to access the community group. The data above indicates that the majority of the respondents use smartphones to access the group.

5.2.6 Respondents' Frequency of Access to Community Group

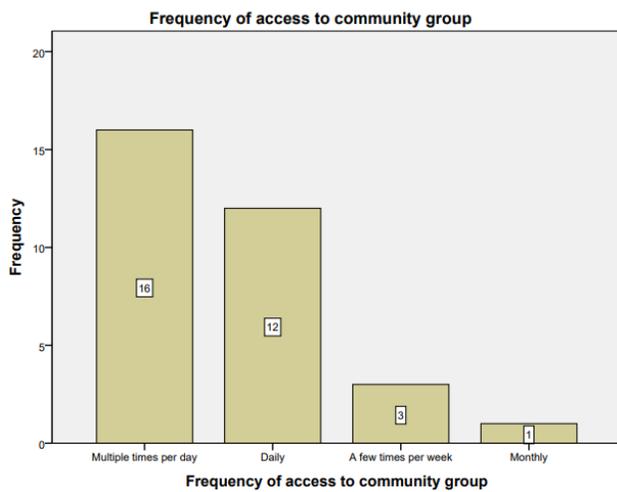


Figure 5.6

The diagram above, figure 5.6 presents the respondents' frequency of access to the Facebook community group. The graph illustrates that 16 of participants access the community group multiple times a day, 12 of them access the group once a day, 3 of them access the community group a few times a week and 1 of them accesses the group once a month. The data above demonstrate that the majority of participants 16 access the community group multiple times a day.

5.2.7 Number of Online Community Groups that the Participants Belong to

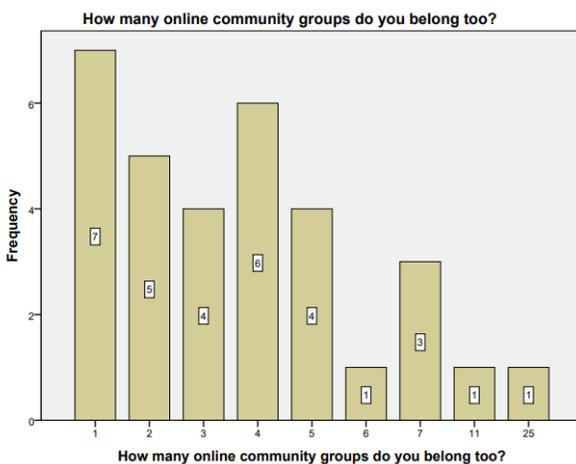


Figure 5.7

Figure 5.7 above presents the number of the online community groups that the participants belong to. The graph displays that 7 of the respondents belong to 1 online community group; 5 of them belong to 2 online community groups; 4 belong to 3 online community groups; 6 belong to 4 groups; 4 belong to 5 groups; 1 of them belongs to 6 online community groups; 3 belong to 7 online community groups; 1 belongs to 11 online community groups and 1 belongs to 25 online community groups. The data illustrates that the majority of participants 25 are involved in multiple online community groups.

5.2.8 Social Media or Messaging Platforms that the Respondents Use

\$platform_use Frequencies

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Messaging/social media platforms used ^a	Facebook	32	34.8%	100.0%
	Whatsapp	29	31.5%	90.6%
	Twitter	15	16.3%	46.9%
	Instagram	16	17.4%	50.0%
Total		92	100.0%	287.5%

Table 5.1

The table above, Figure 5.1 presents the type of social media or messaging platforms that the respondents use or participate in. The table indicates that all 32 participants use Facebook, 29 of the participants use WhatsApp, 15 use Twitter and 16 use Instagram. The data demonstrates that the most used social media platform amongst the participants is Facebook, used by all participants. Many users used multiple platforms.

5.2.9 Respondents' Frequency of Engaging in the Group

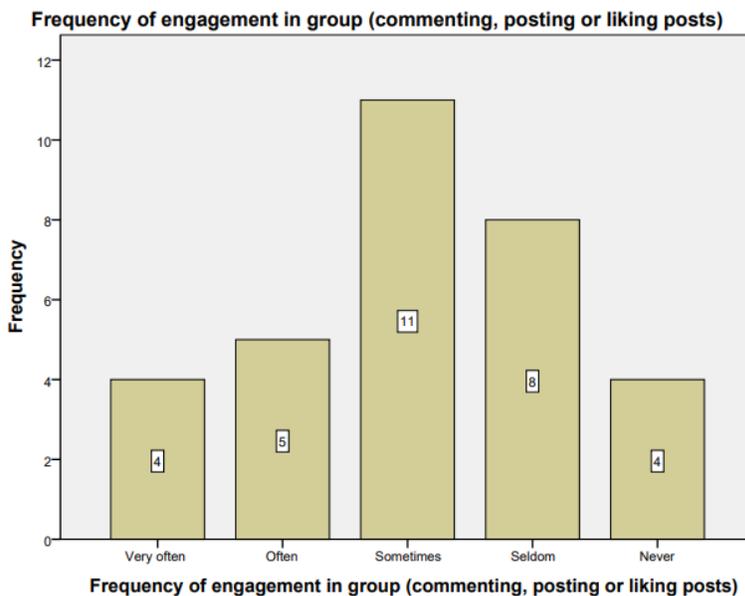


Figure 5.8

Figure 5.8 presents the respondents' frequency of engaging in the group, which could comprise of commenting, posting or liking posts in the group. The graph above shows that 4 participants engage in the group very often; 5 of the respondents engage in the group often; 11 of the participants engage in the group sometimes; 8 of them engage in the group seldom and 4 of them never engage in the group. The data above indicates that the majority of the participants 11 engage in the group sometimes, while a small portion of the participants 4 engage in the group very often. However, the data in Figure 5.6 showed that the majority of participants access the community group multiple times a day. This implies that participants access the community group multiple times a day but they don't engage in the group by commenting, posting or liking post. This further implies that majority of participants are passive more than active members. White (2020:2567) defines active Facebook users as participants that engage on Facebook by commenting, sharing or creating content and responding frequently to other users. Conversely, passive users tend to observe, read discussions, read comments and watch videos or view pictures.

5.2.10 Participants' Responses on whether the Group allows the Community to Engage with the Ward Councillor

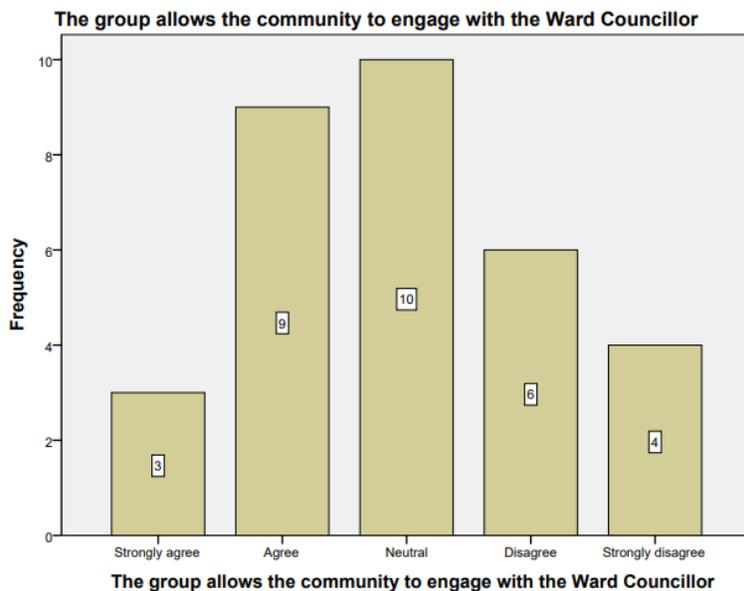


Figure 5.9

The above graph presents the participants' responses on whether the group allows the community to engage with the Ward Councillor. The diagram above illustrates that 3 respondents strongly agreed that the group allows the community to engage with the Ward Councillor, 9 participants agreed that the group allows the community to engage with the Ward Councillor and 10 of the participants reported neutral. Some 6 respondents disagreed that the group allows the community to engage with the Ward Councillor and 4 of the participants strongly disagree. The data demonstrates that majority of participants 10 reported neutral which indicates that the participants did not want to comment on whether the group allows or does not allow the community to engage with the Ward Councillor. Slightly less 9 participants agreed that the group allows the community to engage with the Ward Councillor.

5.2.11 Participants' Responses on whether the Group allows the Community to Engage with the Police Services

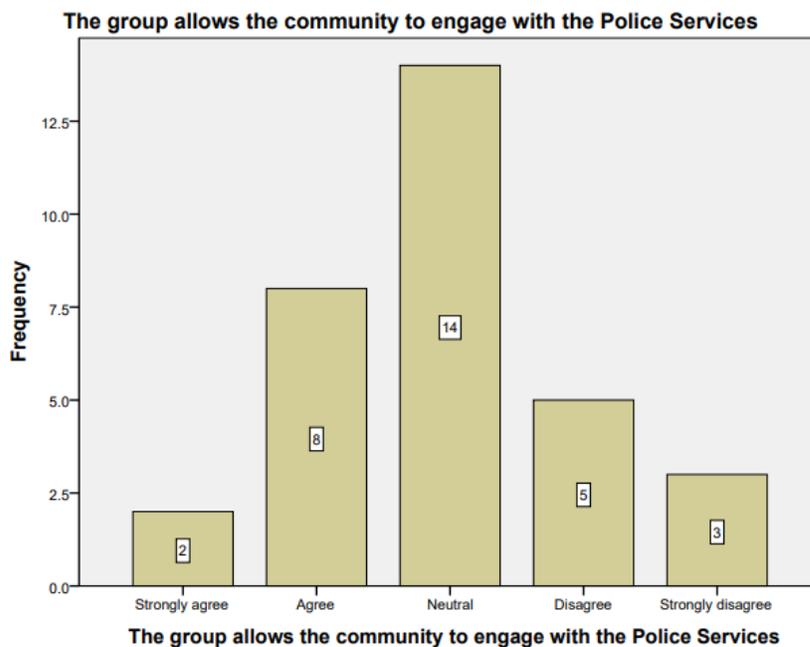


Figure 5.10

The above graph, Figure 5.10 presents participants' responses on whether the group allows the community to engage with the police services. The diagram above displays those 2 participants strongly agreed that the group allows the community to engage with the police services, 8 agreed that the group allows the community to engage with the police services, 14 indicated neutral,

while 5 disagreed and 3 strongly disagreed that the group allows the community to engage with the police services. The data demonstrate that the majority of participants, 14 did not want to comment on whether the group allows the community to engage with the police services. A minority of 8 believes that the group does allow the community to engage with the police services.

5.2.12 Respondents’ Reasons for Using the Community Group

\$usegroup Frequencies

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Reasons for using group ^a	Security related information	12	16.4%	37.5%
	Service delivery related information	18	24.7%	56.3%
	Political information	12	16.4%	37.5%
	Community engagement	20	27.4%	62.5%
	Advertisements	11	15.1%	34.4%
Total		73	100.0%	228.1%

Table 5.2

The Table above, Table 5.2 presents the respondents’ reasons for using the community group. The table illustrates that 12 of the participants use the group for security related information, 18 use the group for service delivery related information, 12 use the group for political information, 20 use the group for community engagement and 11 of the participants use the group for advertisements. The data above indicates that a majority indicated that they use the group for community engagement. According to Head, (2007:23), community engagement is the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well – being of those people.

5.2.13 Respondents’ Main Benefits of Belonging to this Community Group.

When the online respondents were asked an open-ended question about the main benefits of belonging to this community group, 27 out of 32 participants responded to this question and 5 did not answer this question. The researcher examined the data and identified the following themes amongst the respondents’ responses:

(i) Civic Engagement

Civic engagement was the most common identified theme of belonging to this Facebook community group amongst the participants. According to Adler & Goggin (2005: 240), civic engagement is any individual or group activity addressing issues of public concern. Civic Engagement is a process in which people take collective action to address issues of public concern and is absolutely instrumental to democracy (Uslaner & Goggin, 2005:880). In this study, 12 participants reported that the main benefit of belonging to this community group is civic engagement. The 12 respondents' responses are coded as (WFCGM 1 - 12: Willowfontain Facebook Community Group Member) and provided verbatim and in italics as follows.

“The main benefit is that the community group helps the community to report and solve community problems collectively” (WFCGM 1).

“It helps the community with solving problems we have together” (WFCGM 2).

“The main benefit is that the group helps the community to solve public issues that we face as a community together, such as lack of proper built roads” (WFCGM 3).

“It helps us to raise and solve public issues together as a community, such as shortage of water” (WFCGM 4).

“Helps with raising and solving community issues collectively” (WFCGM 5).

“Community members are able to share their views and ideas and come up with collective solutions for the public concerns raised and faced by the community” (WFCGM 6).

“This community group helps with facilitating civic engagement” (WFCGM 7).

“This group helps by connecting us as a community & enabling us to share public concerns and solve them together as a community” (WFCGM 8).

“The group gives everyone a platform to voice out their concerns and engage with other community members at any time of the day, and that for me is what really matters” (WFCGM 9).

*“The main benefit of belonging to this community group is that we are able to help each other as a community when faced with challenges such as, recently there were floods in the area and the online Willowfontain members formed a group of people that were mandated to visit families that were affected by floods to offer them help with draining out the water in their houses.
(WFCGM 10).*

“The community group helps the community to solve issues collectively, issues that one person would have not been able to solve alone, like service delivery issues such as lack of water and shortage of electricity supply” (WFCGM 11).

“The main benefit of belonging to this community group is that as a community we are able to solve public concerns that we face collectively” (WFCGM 12).

The above-mentioned findings indicate that the Willowfontain online members use the group to engage with one another regarding issues that affect them as a community and address the issues collectively. This kind of engagement Ehrlich (2000: 12) refers to as civic engagement which is useful for communities that want a better life, growth and are willing to work together to make a difference in the civic life of their communities and develop the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference.

(ii) Information Sharing

Information sharing was also identified as a main theme of belonging to Willowfontain group amongst the respondents. Information sharing describes the exchange of data between various organizations, people and technologies (Osatuyi, 2013:2629). There are several types of information sharing such as information shared by individuals, or a video shared on Facebook or YouTube, information shared by organizations such as the RSS feed of an online weather report and information shared between firmware/software, such as the IP addresses of available network nodes or the availability of disk space (Chen & Sakamoto, 2013:2039). In this, study 9 of the respondents reported information sharing as the main benefit of belonging to this group. The 9 respondents' responses are coded as (WFCGM 1- 9: Willowfontain Facebook Community Group Member) and provided verbatim and in italics as follows.

“The main benefit of belonging to this community group is that we get to update each other as a community on what is happening in the area because nowadays we do not have enough community meetings. We also get to share different information that assists the community, such as sharing job opportunities and scholarship or bursary opportunities” (WFCGM 1).

“The group helps with information sharing” (WFCGM 2).

“The community group benefits the community by facilitating information sharing and connect community members from different location within the community” (WFCGM 3).

“The group benefits the community by allowing for the community members to share job opportunities and other opportunities that benefit the community” (WFCGM 4).

“It benefits the community by allowing the community to share information such as load shedding schedule” (WFCGM 5).

“Being able to share important information concerning our community” (WFCGM 6).

“Being able to share and receive important information in the group such as government officials’ informative speeches and community meeting schedules” (WFCGM 7).

“Keeps us informed and we are able to share one’s achievement to motivate the community to improve and achieve more” (WFCGM 8).

“The community group benefits the community by allowing the community to connect and share different information that will benefit the members of the community group” (WFCGM 9).

(iii) Marketing

Marketing was also identified as a main theme of belonging to this community group amongst the participants. Marketing refers to activities a company or individual undertakes to promote the buying or selling of a product or service (Armstrong et al, 1990:391). Marketing includes advertising, selling, and delivering products to consumers or other businesses (Ibid). In this study, 6 of the respondents reported advertising businesses and events as one of the benefits of belonging to this community group. The 6 respondents’ responses are coded as (WFCGM 1 - 6: Willowfontain Facebook Community Group Member) and provided verbatim and in italics as follows:

“The community group benefits the community by allowing networking and business marketing” (WFCGM 1).

“The main benefit of belonging to this group is that it allows the community to advertise or promote their businesses such as driving shools, clothing boutiques and food catering companies” (WFCGM 2).

“The group helps the businesspeople within the community to sell their products to the community members such as those who sell vegetables and fruits” (WFCGM 3).

“It helps struggling local DJs to advertise their talents so that the community can book them for events such as graduation parties and weddings” (WFCGM 4).

“The main benefit of belonging to this group is that it allows for local business marketing and advertising” (WFCGM 5).

“The community group benefits the community by allowing struggling Women in business to advertise their businesses for community support” (WFCGM 6).

The above-mentioned findings indicate that the Willowfontain online members use the group to market or advertise their businesses or products. According to Jha (2019: 568), marketing is linked to social capital. Social capital refers to the value of relationships that enable an organization or an institution to work effectively (Ibid: 568). Recently, social capital has been used to explain the performances within diverse key economic areas such as entrepreneurship, organizational management and supply chain resilience (Ibid: 570). From the macro perspective, social capital has received critical attention with regard to its important roles in economic growth and socioeconomic development (Jha, 2019: 575). Social capital serves as complementary mediator which supports marketing capability and consequently enhances an organization’s performance (Neumeyer et al, 2019: 479). In this case, the Willowfontain Facebook group allows for online social capital to flourish and as a result the community entrepreneurs are able to work effectively by marketing their businesses in the group.

5.3 Data from the Semi - Structured Interview – Willowfontain Facebook Community Group Administrator

This section presents, describes and analyses the qualitative data gained from the semi – structured interview with the Willowfontain Facebook Community Group Administrator. The section presents the responses as the questions were structured, (see Appendix 3 for all the questions that the Facebook community group Administrator was responding to). The data is provided verbatim and in italics. The respondent’s responses were coded as WFCGA – Willowfontain Facebook Community Group Administrator. The questions were structured as follows:

5.3.1 What inspired you to create this Facebook group?

The Willowfontain Facebook Community Group Administrator’s response was as follows:

“I created the group for young people who were interested in becoming DJs in the community. I wanted them to use the group as a platform to advertise their local music, promote local DJs and share their performances. However, as years went by, the number of group members grew, and the group started becoming a platform for community engagements where members were raising and solving public matters collectively. Until this day the group is still used for community engagements, where community members are engaging on community matters that are affecting them. I’m really happy about how this group turned out to be, I’m glad that the group is helping my community to raise and address public concerns affecting them”.

5.3.2 What are the challenges that you encounter in administering the group?

The Willowfontain Facebook Community Group Administrator’s response was as follows:

“The challenges that I encounter in the group are that there are people in the group who use ghost accounts to insult other people or should I say their enemies and such conducts cause chaos in the group. Some of the ghost accounts are used to spread fabricated news about a particular political party”.

“There are also people who use the group to advertise their dodgy businesses trying to scam the community members. Lastly, there are people who spread fake news and mislead the community”.

According to Cohen & Tyler (2016: 345), a ghost account is an account that a person creates on a website that is entirely different from their real identity.

When the Facebook community group administrator was asked about how he deals with the above-mentioned challenges, he responded as follows:

“The only way I deal with the challenges I encounter in the group as a group administrator is by blocking and reporting those people that are causing problems in the group and in that way they are unable to participate in the group and cause chaos”.

The above data indicates that the Willowfontain group is not used only for public participation, civic engagement, and social capital. The community members also use it to spread fabricated news, insult other members and scam the community. However, there are ways to deal with such disturbing behaviors, such as reporting and blocking individuals who conduct such behavior. The data also shows that in order to run smoothly the Facebook group needs someone who will manage it and make sure it is only used for the benefit of the community.

5.3.3 Does this group help in raising and solving community issues?

The Willowfontain Facebook Community Group Administrator’s response was as follows:

“Yes, the group does help in raising and solving community issues because many community members in the group are always raising public concerns that they face on the daily basis as a community and the problems are solved by the community collectively. The issue that is raised frequently in the group and solved by the municipality is the issue of water shortage. When the issue of water shortage is raised in the group the Municipality provides the community with water trucks that provide water in every area of the community”.

The Willowfontain Facebook Administrator's response implies that the Willowfontain group helps raise and solve community issues such as service delivery issues.

5.3.4 What kind of matters that are being raised in this group?

The Willowfontain Facebook Community Group Administrator’s response was as follows:

- (i) Service Delivery Issues:

“Service delivery issues are being raised in the group such as lack of water. Community members are always complaining about the shortage of water because in Willowfontain community we have a problem of not having water for a long period of time, the longest time without water was 3 years. We also have poor constructed roads and lack of power supply”.

(ii) Crime related Issues:

“The other issue that is frequently raised in the group is the issues of crime. People are always reporting that they have been mugged, raped and some get killed”.

(iii) Political Matters:

“Besides service delivery and crime issues, there are also political matters that are discussed in the group some of the local political leaders use the group to campaign for their parties and to advertise their party meetings. As well as to update the community members about voting schedules when elections are approaching”.

The -mentioned information indicates that the group members use this group to raise important issues affecting them and have been affecting them for years without getting the required help from the government officials. The above findings also indicate that the political leaders or government officials are also using this group to share important information with the community. From the above findings it is clear that both government officials and community members are using this group to communicate with one another, this may perhaps be because the traditional avenues of participation are not functional hence the government officials and citizens are using the new online platform to engage with one another.

5.4 Data from the Semi - Structured Interview – Willowfontain Ward Councillor

This section presents, describes and analyses the qualitative data derived from the semi – structured interview with the Willowfontain Ward Councillor. The section presents the data according to the structured questions on the interview schedule, (see Appendix 2 for all the questions that the Ward Councillor was responding to). The data is provided verbatim and in italics. The respondent’s responses were coded as WWC – Willowfontain Ward Councillor. The questions were structured as follows:

5.4.1 Do you think the existence of this group enhances public participation in this community? How?

According to Thomas (1995: 240), public participation is the general term for diverse formal processes by which public concerns, needs, and values are incorporated in governmental decisions. Public participation involves the use of techniques such as public meetings and hearings, advisory committees, interactive workshops, interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, and other methods to identify public concerns and preferences and address them during decision making (Ibid).

The Willowfontain Ward Councillor’s response was as follows:

“One cannot grantee the level or the degree at which the group enhance public participation. However, the majority of Willowfontain people are on social media, thus for them the group serves as a platform to engage with each other as a community and get to be involved in the processes of reporting and solving community problems together as a community and government servants. So yeah, I would say the group enhances public participation. The limitation is that not everyone uses Facebook amongst Willowfontain community members”

The above response implies that the Willowfontain Facebook community group enhances or facilitates public participation because the community members are able to report public concerns to government servants and the government officials are able to solve the public concerns that are raised in the group. However, the only limitation to online public participation is that not everyone in the Willowfontain community has or uses Facebook and not everyone has smart phones or computers or internet access to participate in the group.

The majority of members that use Facebook in the Willowfontain community are youth which implies that the older generation does not have access to Willowfontain Facebook community group or are not interested or use other form of civic engagement and they do not engage or participate in the group.

5.4.2 Do you think this group facilitates civic engagement? How?

Skocpol & Fiorina (2004) define civic engagement as the ways in which citizens participate in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community's future collectively.

The Willowfontain Ward Councillor's response was as follows:

“The group does facilitate civil engagement but to a limited extent, as mentioned that not everyone uses Facebook amongst Willowfontain community. The group facilitates civic engagement by allowing the community to engage together on public matters and work toward the same goal of solving the problems collectively to improve the conditions of the community”.

This response indicates that the Willowfontain Facebook group facilitates civic engagement. However, the limit to this is that not everyone in the Willowfontain community has a Facebook App, smart phone or computer to engage online. Again, this limitation is faced mostly by the older generation that cannot use Facebook or smart phones, as Figure 5.2 indicated that the majority of participants for this study are youth.

5.4.3 Do you think this group encourages the community members to participate in community issues? Elaborate.

The Willowfontain Ward Councillor's response was as follows:

“While the larger part of the community still believes on the traditional way (physical public meetings) of participating on issues. The Facebook community group does serve the purpose of sharing thoughts on issues but to a very limited extent since some of other public stakeholders do not even form part of the group”

The response indicates that the Willowfontain community group does encourage the community members to participate in community issues. However, this is to a limited extent because a larger part of the community still believes in physical public meetings. The data also shows that some of the public stakeholders do not form part of the group, limiting public participation.

5.4.4 What kind of issues that are being raised in this group?

The Willowfontain Ward Councillor's response was as follows:

"I never participated on the group. However, those I serve with in local leadership structures usually indicate that issues raised on the group include political (party politics), social as well as some specific service delivery matters such as water shortage in the area".

The data implies that Willowfontain community members use the group to raise political related matters and social issues such as service delivery issues with the hope that s local government officials will resolve the issues. However, the issues of the ward Councillor not being part of the group or not participating on the group could limit public participation in the Willowfontain community.

5.4.5 Does the existence of this group help in solving community issues?

The Willowfontain Ward Councillor's response was as follows:

"It does help in a sense that some issues can be raised on the group and that brings about an awareness of urgent issues that one might not have been aware of if it wasn't raised in the community meetings".

This response indicates that the Willowfontain Facebook groups' existence that the Willowfontain Facebook group's existences that the Willowfontain Facebook group's existence assists with raising awareness on public issues that are urgent and need urgent solution from the local government servants.

5.4.6 Do you think the existence of this group makes your work easy as a Councillor? How?

The Willowfontain Ward Councillor's response was as follows:

“I don't think the group has that much impact to my work or life since we don't have even more reliable mechanism to communicate issues than a group. Remember not everything raised on the group can be reliable and be factual since other people can use the group to communicate things that are of no significance to the interest of the community in general, however, I have deployed people from my office to be part of the group so that they can be my eyes and ears”.

This response implies that the existence of the Willowfontain group does not make the ward Councillor's work easy because he cannot rely on the Facebook group because not every post shared in the group is reliable and factual. Basically, the ward Councillor is implying that the Facebook community group is not a reliable mechanism because the Willowfontain community members sometimes use the group to communicate things that are of no significance to the interest of the community.

5.5 Content Analysis - Willowfontain Facebook Community Group Posts

This section analyses the content of the Willowfontain Facebook community group posts that were shared between the years of 2017 and 2019. The discussion is presented according to themes that were identified from the posts that were shared in the group. The researcher examined the content and identified the following themes as the most discussed in the group:

5.5.1 Service Delivery Issues

According to West (2004: 12), service delivery is the act to provide service to the public. Subashini & Kavitha, (2011: 4), define service delivery as a common phrase that is used to describe the distribution of basic resources citizens depend on like water, electricity, sanitation infrastructure, land, and housing. The researcher identified service delivery as the most raised issue in the group between the years of 2017 and 2019. Under service delivery there are a number of topics that occurred such as shortage of water, poorly constructed roads and lack of power supply.

(i) Shortage of Water:

The Willowfontain community members have been using the group to raise the issue of water shortages since 2017, requesting the municipality to intervene with solutions. However, when the researcher observed the comments section, she discovered that the water issue concern does reach

the eyes and ears of the people working for the Ward Councillor or Municipality Office office. The researcher further discovered that the Ward Councillor or Municipality Office's office responds with a short-term solution to the problem such as sending water trucks to distribute water to the community. Hence the issue of shortage of water is still the most discussed issue even in 2019.

(ii) Poorly Constructed Roads:

The researcher also identified the issue of poorly constructed roads as the most discussed topic under service delivery issues. The Willowfontain community members have been using the group to raise the issue of poorly constructed roads since 2017, requesting the municipality to intervene. Community members have been complaining that the poorly constructed roads are threats to their lives and community as they are causing car accidents and they are damaging their cars. When the researcher examined the comments section, she discovered that the community members commented negatively about the government criticizing the Councillor or Municipality office and accusing them of being ineffective and failing to deliver. The researcher further discovered that complaints do reach the Municipality's Office via the community group because people from the Office of the Municipality respond in the comments section.

(iii) Lack of Power Supplies:

Lack of power supplies was also the commonly identified topic under the service delivery issues since the year 2017. The Willowfontain community members have been complaining about not having electricity in some of their areas, some of them are using candles and gas stoves. They also complain that some of the community areas have power to their streetlights and some do not have power. When the researcher examined the comments section, she discovered that the group members commented negatively about the Municipality's Office, accusing the government of responding only partially to the problem.

From the above discoveries the researcher learned that the group is very useful to the community and the Municipality because the community is able to raise problems that require Municipality's attention, and it reaches the Municipality timeously and the Municipality is able to respond with solutions. One can say the group is useful for public participation.

According to Rowe & Frewer (2000:7), public participation involves the use of techniques such as public meetings, hearings, advisory committees, interactive workshops, interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, and other methods to identify public concerns and preferences and address them during decision making.

5.5.2 Crime Matters

According to Farrington & Petrosino (2001:40), crime matters involve an act that contravenes the laws of a country or region, like killing another person, injuring another person, raping or stealing from another person. Also, it can be the act of selling illegal imports such as guns or illegal drugs (Ibid). The researcher identified crime matters as one of the most commonly raised issues in the group between the years of 2017 and 2018. Under crime matters the following topics were raised: rape, mugging and homicide.

(i) Rape Issues:

Rape was the most frequently raised problem in the group between the years of 2017 to 2018. The Willowfontain community members were complaining about the increase of rape cases in the community in 2017 and 2018. They stated that the people who are victims of rape are women that are both young and old.

The researcher examined the comments section and discovered that the group members commented negatively about the police system, accusing them of failing to do their job. The researcher further discovered that the community members in December 2018 formed a forum to deal with crime related matters, now they rely on one another instead of relying to the police. After they formed the community forum the rape rate in the area started to decline.

(ii) Mugging Issues:

The mugging issue was also commonly identified topic under crime matters in 2017 and 2018. The community members were complaining about being attacked and being robbed in the area. However, since the beginning of 2019 the mugging rate has decreased and the sharing of mugging issues in the group is declining because of the community forum that was formed by the community in December 2018. Now the group members are sharing posts warning each other about corners that are still not safe at night and early hours of the morning so that they can avoid walking in those areas.

(iii) Homicide Issues:

Homicide issues was also a frequently raised problem in the group between the years of 2017 to 2018. The Willowfontain community members were always complaining about the increasing rate of killing people in the community, especially at night and the early hours of the morning. When the researcher examined the comments section she discovered that the group members commented negatively about the response from the police, stating that they have failed the community and the community no longer trusts the police system. However, in the beginning of 2019 the homicide rate decreased due to the forum formed by the community members after they had been complaining about crime in the group.

The above discoveries reveal that the group is useful for the community to raise and solve crime related issues together as a community. One can say the group is useful for civic engagement. Adler & Goggin (2005:240), define civic engagement as a process in which people or community take collective action to address issues of public concern. According to Uslander & Brown (2005: 874), civic engagement includes communities working together in political and non-political actions to address public concerns and promote the community's quality.

5.5.3 Information Sharing

Churchil et al (2003: 100), describe information sharing as the exchange of data between various organizations, people and technologies. According to Boyle et al (2013:1023), information sharing

is the act of certain entities (e.g., people) passing information from one to another, this could be done electronically or through certain systems.

The researcher examined the content of the posts shared in the group between the years of 2017 to 2019 and identified information sharing as identified commonly recurring theme. Under information sharing, there are many topics that occurred, such as the sharing of information about jobs, bursaries and scholarships, load shedding schedules, and community meeting schedules.

(i) The Sharing of Job Opportunities:

The Willowfontain community members have been using the group for information sharing, various available job opportunities for those who are unemployed and looking for employment. When the researcher examined the comments section, she discovered that the group members responded positively, requesting more information regarding the job opportunities that were shared. The interactions were positive as they were working together as a community to respond to the unemployment problem.

(ii) The Sharing of Bursaries and Scholarships Opportunities:

The Willowfontain community members are using the group for information sharing, they are sharing bursaries and scholarships opportunities for those who would like to further their studies but do not have the funding. The researcher examined the comments section and discovered that people commented positively, they showed interest in the opportunities, especially the youth.

(iii) The Sharing of Load Shedding and Community Meeting Schedules:

The community members are using the Willowfontain group for information sharing, for sharing load shedding and community meeting schedules to inform and update the community since the year of 2017. When the researcher examined the comments section, she discovered that the group members responded positively to the content.

The above discoveries reveal that the community group facilitates information sharing. The discoveries also reveal a sense of a shared value. According to Henderson & McEwen (2005: 180), a shared value is an approach designed to solve social issues. The Willowfontain group members are sharing job opportunities as a way of trying to solve the problem of unemployment in the

community. They are also sharing bursaries and scholarship opportunities to mobilise resources for the community to empower them and bring solutions to their problems.

According to Gillespie & Mann (2004:40), information sharing, and shared values promote bonding, bridging, and linking social capital. Bonding capital describes ties among people who are very close and known to one another, such as immediate family, neighbors and communities (Van Oorschot et al., 2006:20).

According to Woolcock (2001:23), bridging social capital is the act of solving community problems, building relationships, sharing information, and mobilizing community resources. Linking social capital involves networks and ties of a particular community with states or other agencies (Woolcock, 2001:30). The Willowfontain community group allows for social capital to flourish through information sharing and shared values.

5.5.4 Political Matters

According to West (2004:20), political matters refer to matters relating to the state, government, the body politic, etc. The researcher examined the content of the posts shared in the group between the years 2017 to 2019 and identified political matters as a commonly occurring theme. Under political matters, there are many topics that arose, such as political parties' campaigns, sharing of political parties' meetings, and sharing political leaders' speeches.

(i) Political Parties Campaigns:

The Willowfontain Facebook community members have been using the group for political parties' campaigns for parties such as ANC, EFF, IFP and DA. When the researcher examined the comments section, she discovered that the majority of the group members are ANC members and are defending the ANC in the comments section when the other community members are complaining about the quality of service that the ANC is delivering. The researcher further discovered that there is a minority of EFF and DA members. The researcher also discovered that the Facebook community group is a powerful platform for political campaigns.

(ii) The Sharing of Political Parties' Meetings:

The group members are using the group to share and announce the scheduling of the political parties' meetings such as the ANC Youth League meetings.

The posts that they share normally indicate time, venue and the purpose of the meeting. When the researcher examined the comments section, she discovered that the ANC members responded positively and confirmed their attendance.

(iii) The sharing of political leaders' speeches:

The sharing of political leaders' speeches was identified as the commonly shared content. The community group members are sharing informative political speeches such as those by Ministers and local leaders' speeches. When the researcher examined the comments section, she discovered that the people who show interest in such dialogues are youth.

5.5.4 Marketing

According to Burns & Bush (2000:80), marketing refers to activities a company or a person undertakes to promote the buying or selling of a product or service. Marketing includes advertising, selling, and delivering products to consumers or other businesses (Ibid: 81). The researcher identified marketing as a theme that appears in most of the posts that were shared in the years of 2017 to 2019. The topic that occurred frequently under this these was business advertisements and promotion.

(i) Business Advertisement and Promotion:

The researcher identified business advertising posts as the most commonly appearing posts in the Willowfontain Facebook community group between 2017 and 2019. Online Willowfontain community members are using the group to advertise or promote their businesses such as driving schools, hair and nail salons, clothing boutiques, food catering companies and DJs etc. When the researcher examined the comments section, she discovered that the group members responded positively to the business content, supporting the posts by tagging other Facebook users on the posts. Some group members even shared the posts in their Facebook walls to further support and promote the advertised businesses. Oeldorf-Hirsch & Sundar (2015:34), define Facebook tagging as the act of creating a link between two or more Facebook users. According to Malik et al,

(2015:12) tagging is the act of trying to get Facebook users' attention and to create a link to their profile. The post you tag to a person may also be added to that person's timeline (Ibid, 12).

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented and discussed the findings and analysis of the data that was gained from the Willowfontain Facebook community group members through the use of the online survey, as well as the data that was gained from the Willowfontain Ward Councillor, and the Willowfontain Facebook Community Group Administrator through the semi-structured interviews. The chapter further presented and discussed analysis of the content of the posts that were shared in the Willowfontain Facebook community group between the years of 2017 and 2019. The findings were presented according to themes and responses on questionnaires from closed ended questions were presented in graphs and tables.

The study results revealed that the majority of Willowfontain online participants are black African youth and access the group using smartphones. The study further revealed that the Willowfontain Facebook community group is used to raise and solve public concerns such as service delivery issues and crime related issues. It is also used for information sharing, marketing, and civic engagement. Furthermore, the results of the study revealed that there are limitations to public participation, civic engagement and social capital. One of the limitations is that not everyone in the Willowfontain community has access to the online group especially the older generation that cannot use technology or do not have smart phones. Another limitation is that the Willowfontain ward Councillor is not part of the online group. Moreover, the study also revealed that the Willowfontain group is not only used for public participation, civic engagement, and social capital. The community members also use it to spread fabricated news, insult other members and scam the community. However, there are ways to deal with such disturbing behaviors, such as reporting and blocking individuals who exhibit such behavior.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of the Facebook community group in facilitating public participation, civic engagement and social capital in the Willowfontain community. The study also examined the attitudes and perceptions of the community in order to understand the role of the Facebook group in the Willowfontain community and to identify limitations or challenges that threaten the facilitation of public participation, civic engagement and social capital in the Willowfontain Facebook community group. This chapter presents the main conclusions and recommendations drawn from the study.

6.2 Conclusions

This study was guided by the following research questions.

- What is the role of the Facebook community group in the Willowfontain community?
- Does the Willowfontain community Facebook group facilitate or constrain public participation, civic engagement and social capital?
- What are the challenges faced by the Willowfontain Facebook group administrator?
- How does the Willowfontain ward representative (councillor) engage with Willowfontain Facebook group members?

To answer these questions, the researcher designed objectives as indicated below.

6.2.1 The Study Objectives

Objective one: To reveal the role of the Facebook community group in the Willowfontain community.

The first objective of the study was achieved by focusing on the results of the study and the conceptual framework of public participation, civic engagement and social capital.

The researcher aimed at revealing the role of Facebook community group in the Willowfontain community via data collected from two semi structured interviews and an online survey of a sample of the Facebook community. In pursuing the first objective of the study, the study revealed the role of Facebook group in the Willowfontain community as follows:

- The role of the Willowfontain Facebook Community group is to facilitate public participation. The community uses this platform to raises public concerns such as service delivery issues, in order for the local government officials to incorporate their issues into governmental decisions. Thomas (1995: 240) defines this process as public participation.
- The group is used to facilitate civic engagement, where the community engages in the group by raising and solving community issues collectively. Community issues such as crime related issues and unemployment are dealt with. Skocpol & Fiorina (2004:32) define this process as civic engagement.
- The study also revealed that the role of the Facebook community group is to facilitate social capital through information sharing. Here the community members share information to empower the community, such as the sharing of job opportunities, bursaries and scholarships availability, load shedding and community meeting schedules. As Woolcock (2001:23) would argue, social capital is the act of solving community problems, building relationships, sharing information, and mobilizing community resources.
- The study further revealed that the role of the community group is to also facilitate marketing, where the community members advertise or promote their businesses. As Burns & Bush (2000:80) would argue, marketing includes advertising, selling, and delivering products to consumers or other businesses.

Objective Two: To demonstrate if the Willowfontain community Facebook group facilitates or limits public participation, civic engagement and social capital.

The second objective of the study was achieved by focusing on the results of the study, the literature review and case study. The researcher aimed at demonstrating if the Willowfontain community group facilitate or constraint public participation, civic engagement and social capital. In pursuing the second objective of the study, the study revealed that the community group does facilitate public participation, civic engagement and social capital as is indicated in the above objective one. However, this is to a limited extent.

- One of the limitations is that not everyone in the Willowfontain community has smart phones to access the Facebook App. The above-mentioned result of the study matches the challenges exposed in this study, as the case study revealed that the Willowfontain community is located in a semi – rural area and there is not much development in that area and there is a high rate of unemployment. Hence there are people who do not have smart phones because they cannot afford them.
- Another limitation that the study revealed is that the older generation is not part of the community group because they are old and not familiar with the new technology and cannot use smart phone and therefore, they cannot participate in the group, and this limits their engaging in the group. The older generation members that are on the group cannot effectively participate using such a structure. The above-mentioned result of the study matches the challenges expressed by the literature review. Therefore, this suggests the need for Facebook strategies to be put in place to assist those who are struggling to adjust in this new public participation, civic engagement and social capital structure.
- Another issue is that the Willowfontain ward Councillor is not part of the community Facebook group, and this could be restricting people from engaging with him and could be limiting public participation.

Objective Three: To establish some of the challenges faced by the Willowfontain Facebook group Administrator.

The third objective of the study was achieved by focusing on the results of the study and literature review. The researcher aimed at establishing some of the challenges faced by the Willowfontain Facebook group Administrator. In pursuing the third objective of the study, the study revealed the following challenges.

- One of the challenges that the group administrator encounters is the issue of group members who spread fabricated news about others, political parties and other people's businesses.
- Another challenge that the group administrator encounters is the issue of group members who are insulting other group members and cause chaos.
- Lastly, is the challenge of group members who run scams on the group to scam other group members of their money.

The study also revealed that the above-mentioned challenges can be resolved by reporting and blocking the individuals that pose such challenges. The literature review suggests that the Facebook community group needs someone who will manage it and make sure it only used for the benefit of the community in order for it to run smoothly.

Objective Four: To demonstrate how the Willowfontain ward representative (Councillor) engage with the Willowfontain Community members.

The fourth objective of the study was achieved by focusing on the results of the study. The researcher aimed to demonstrate how the Willowfontain ward representative engages with the Willowfontain community members. In pursuing the fourth objective of the study, the study revealed that the ward Councillor is not part of the Willowfontain community group and this could be hindering community members from engaging with him online. The study also revealed that the ward Councillor uses the old traditional structures (physical community meetings) to engage with the community members.

6.3 Recommendations

The recommendations are based on the literature review of the study and empirical findings which suggest that:

- In the Willowfontain community there is a need for Facebook strategies to be put in place to assist those who are struggling to adjust in this new structure for enabling public participation, civic engagement and social capital.
- There should always be a Facebook administrator that will oversee and manage the group in order to run smoothly and ensure that it is only used for the benefit of the community.
- There is a need to empower the Willowfontain community to fight poverty and the high rate of unemployment in order for them to be able to afford smart phones and be able to participate in this online structure.

6.4 Conclusion

The overall conclusion of the study revealed that the Willowfontain Facebook group facilitates public participation, civic engagement and social capital. However, this is to a limited extent as there are community members that do not have smart phones to participate online. The study also revealed that the older generation struggles with the new online platform. Further, the study revealed that the Ward Councillor is not part of the online group, and this could be limiting public participation. The study revealed the challenges that the group administrator encounters such as members that spread fabricated news about others, group members who are insulting other group members and cause chaos and members who run scams on the group to scam other group members of their money. Therefore, the recommendations are aimed at improving the overall above-mentioned challenges that hinder the effective facilitation of public participation, civic engagement and social capital in the Willowfontain community group.

References

- Adler, R. P., & Goggin, J. (2005). What do we mean by “civic engagement”? *Journal of transformative education*, 3(3), 236-253.
- Adnan, B. & Mavi, A. (2014). *Bridging Social Capital on Facebook as a Platform: A Case Study of Malaysian College Students*. Master’s degree. University of Malaya.
- Armstrong, G., Harker, M., & Brennan, R. (1990). *Marketing: an introduction* (Vol. 1). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. 2013 46th Hawaii International Conference on System S
- Kotler, P.,
- Aykroyd, V. (2012). *Exploring social media (Facebook and Twitter) as a Public Participation Tool for Design and Planning*. Master’s degree. The University of Guelph.
- Bagui, I. (2013). *Public Participation in Government: The Place of E-Participation in the City of Cape Town*”. Master’s degree. Cape Peninsula University of Technology.
- Beinart, W., & Dubow, S. (1995). *Segregation and apartheid in twentieth-century South Africa*. London, Routledge
- Bennett, W. L., Wells, C., & Freelon, D. (2011). Communicating civic engagement: Contrasting models of citizenship in the youth web sphere. *Journal of Communication*, 61(5), 835-856.
- Bitner, M. J., Faranda, W. T., Hubbert, A. R., & Zeithaml, V. A. (1997). Customer contributions and roles in service delivery.
- Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of computer-mediated Communication*, 13(1), 210-230.

- Boyle, A. A., Snelling, K., White, L., Ariel, B., & Ashelford, L. (2013). External validation of the Cardiff model of information sharing to reduce community violence: natural experiment. *Emergency medicine journal*, 30(12), 1020-1023.
- Bringle, R. G., & Hatcher, J. A. (2009). Innovative practices in service-learning and curricular engagement. *New directions for higher education*, (147), 37-46.
- Burns, A. C., & Bush, R. F. (2000). Marketing research. *Globalization*, 1(7), 76-93.
- Cameron, F. (2012). *Is Liberal Democracy the best form of government to produce public goods?*. Singapore: National University of Singapore
- Churchill, E. F., Nelson, L., & Denoue, L. (2003). Multimedia fliers: Information sharing with digital community bulletin boards. In *Communities and technologies* (pp. 97-117). Springer, Dordrecht.
- Cohen, E. L., & Tyler, W. J. (2016). Examining perceived distance and personal authenticity as mediators of the effects of ghost-tweeting on parasocial interaction. *Cyber-psychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 19(5), 342-346.
- Creighton & Creighton, Inc. (2008). What is Public Participation? [On-line], Available: <http://www.creightonandcreighton.com>.
- Dörnyei, Z., 2007. *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies*. Oxford: University Press.
- Effing, R. Hillegersberg, J. Huiber, J. (2010). *Social Media and Political participation: Are facebook, Twitter and YouTube Democratizing our political system*. Netherlands: University of Twente.

- Ezase Willowfontain. (2012). *Willowfontain community Facebook group: ezase Willowfontain*. Available from <https://web.facebook.com/groups/346052898772779/>: [Accessed 16 Apr. 2019].
- Farrington, D. P., & Petrosino, A. (2001). The Campbell collaboration crime and justice group. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 578(1), 35-49.
- Gil de Zúñiga, H., Jung, N., & Valenzuela, S. (2012). Social media use for news and individuals' social capital, civic engagement and political participation. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 17(3), 319-336.
- Gillespie, N. A., & Mann, L. (2004). Transformational leadership and shared values: The building blocks of trust.
- Gismondi, B. (2015). *Civic Engagement: An Exploratory Study of social media (Facebook) Use and Civic Engagement among Undergraduates*. Boston: University.
- Hanna, R., Rohm, A., & Crittenden, V. L. (2011). We're all connected: The power of the social media ecosystem. *Business horizons*, 54(3), 265-273.
- Head, B. W. (2007). Community engagement: participation on whose terms? *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 42(3), 441-454.
- Henderson, A., & McEwen, N. (2005). Do shared values underpin national identity? Examining the role of values in national identity in Canada and the United Kingdom. *National Identities*, 7(2), 173-191.
- Hopf, P. (2016). *Facebook's Impact on Civic Engagement in Mexico*. Master's degree. Naval Postgraduate School.
- Jha, A. (2019). Financial reports and social capital. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 155(2), 567-596.

- Joinson, A. N. (2008). Looking at, looking up or keeping up with people? motives and use of facebook. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 1027-1036). ACM.
- Jordán-Conde, Z., Mennecke, B., & Townsend, A. (2014). Late adolescent identity definition and intimate disclosure on Facebook. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *33*, 356-366.
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business horizons*, *53*(1), 59-68.
- Kaskie, B., Imhof, S., Cavanaugh, J., & Culp, K. (2008). Civic engagement as a retirement role for aging Americans. *The Gerontologist*, *48*(3), 368-377.
- Kawachi, I., Kennedy, B. P., Lochner, K., & Prothrow-Stith, D. (1997). Social capital, income inequality, and mortality. *American journal of public health*, *87*(9), 1491-1498.
- Kim, A. J., & Ko, E. (2012). Do social media marketing activities enhance customer equity? An empirical study of luxury fashion brand. *Journal of Business Research*, *65*(10), 1480-1486.
- Kim, E. (2015). *A Comparative Study on Social Media Use and Public Participation in Korea and the United States: Does Social Media Matter?* Master's degree. Incheon National University.
- Kotze, D. (2004). *The Nature of democracy in South Africa*, *Politeia*, *23* (3), 22-38.
- Madge, C., Meek, J., Wellens, J., & Hooley, T. (2009). Facebook, social integration and informal learning at university: 'It is more for socialising and talking to friends about work than for actually doing work'. *Learning, media and technology*, *34*(2), 141-155.
- Malik, A., Amandeep, D., & Nieminen, M. (2015). Facebook photo tagging culture and practices

among digital natives. In *CCGIDIS 2015-Fifth International Symposium on Communicability, Computer Graphics and Innovative Design for Interactive Systems*. Blue Herons Editions.

Marai, H., Everatt, D. & Dube, N., (2007). *The depth and quality of public participation in the integrated development planning process in Gauteng*. Pretoria: Department of Local Government, Gauteng Province.

Marche, S. (2012). Is Facebook making us lonely. *The Atlantic*, 309(4), 60-69.

Martinson, M., & Minkler, M. (2006). Civic engagement and older adults: A critical perspective. *The Gerontologist*, 46(3), 318-324.

MEAD, S. E. (1954). Abraham Lincoln's "Last, Best Hope of Earth": The American Dream of Destiny and Democracy. *Church History*. 23, 33.

Naber A. & Enserink B. (2012). *Social Media to facilitate Public Participation in Netherlands*. Master's degree. Delft University of Technology.

Naseri, S. (2017). *Online Social Network Sites and Social Capital: A Case of Facebook*. Master's degree. University of Bielefeld.

Neumeyer, X., Santos, S. C., Caetano, A., & Kalbfleisch, P. (2019). Entrepreneurship ecosystems and women entrepreneurs: a social capital and network approach. *Small Business Economics*, 53(2), 475-489.

News24 (8 February 2018). Willowfontain water woes go on and on. *News24*, Available from <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/willowfontain-water-woes-go-on-and-on-20180207>: [Accessed 16 Apr. 2019].

News24 (2 August 2018). Challenges faced by the Willowfontain. *News24*, Retrieved from <https://www.news24.com/DouthAfrica/News/challenges-faced-by-the-Willowfontain-community-20180503>: [Accessed 16 Apr.2019].

O'Bannon, B. W., Beard, J. L., & Britt, V. G. (2013). Using a Facebook group as an educational tool: Effects on student achievement. *Computers in the Schools*, 30(3), 229-247.

Oeldorf-Hirsch, A., & Sundar, S. S. (2015). Posting, commenting, and tagging: Effects of sharing news stories on Facebook. *Computers in human behavior*, 44, 240-249.

O'Keeffe, G. S., & Clarke-Pearson, K. (2011). Clinical report—the impact of social media on children, adolescents, and families.

Osatuyi, B. (2013). Information sharing on social media sites. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(6), 2622-2631.

Paldam, M. (2000). Social capital: one or many? Definition and measurement. *Journal of economic surveys*, 14(5), 629-653.

Piper, L. & Von Lieres, B., 2008. Inviting Failure: Citizen Participation and Local Governance in South Africa. *Citizenship DRC Special Issue*, 1(1). Available at: http://fcis.oise.utoronto.ca/~daniel_sc/pipervonlieres.pdf [Accessed: 4 June 2018].

Portney, K. (2005). Civic engagement and sustainable cities in the United States. *Public Administration Review*, 65(5), 579-591.

Raza, S.A. & Umer A., & Qazi W. (2016). *Facebook as a Source of social capital Building among University Students in Karachi*. Master's degree. University of Karachi.

Roadmap. (2004). *Where is Willowfontain*. Retrieved from https://www.roadonmap.com/za/where-is/Willowfontain-Pietermaritzburg,kwazulu_natal: [Accessed 17 Apr. 2019].

Roadonmap. (2016). *Willowfontain Location*. Retrieved from https://www.roadonmap.com/za/Willowfontain_location: [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].

- Rodny-Gumede, Y. (2017). Questioning the media and democracy relationship: the case of South Africa. *Communicatio*, 43(2), 10-22.
- Rothstein, B. (2012). Good governance. In *The Oxford handbook of governance*. Oxford University.
- Rowe, G., & Frewer, L. J. (2000). Public participation methods: A framework for evaluation. *Science, technology, & human values*, 25(1), 3-29.
- Schlachte, B. (2014). *Social Capital and social media: The Effect of Facebook Use on Social Capital and Perceived Community Involvement* (Master's degree). Boston University.
- Sefora, E. (2017). *Public Participation in Parliament: Perspectives on social media Facebook per se*. Master's degree. Stellenbosch University.
- Skocpol, T., & Fiorina, M. P. (Eds.). (2004). *Civic engagement in American democracy*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Subashini, S., & Kavitha, V. (2011). A survey on security issues in service delivery models of cloud computing. *Journal of network and computer applications*, 34(1), 1-11.
- Theron, L. C. (2012). Resilience research with South African youth: Caveats and ethical complexities. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 42(3), 333-345.
- Thomas, J. C. (1995). *Public participation in public decisions: new skills and strategies for public managers* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- UMsunduzi Local Municipality Demographics. (2019). Willowfontain Community.
- Uslaner, E. M., & Brown, M. (2005). Inequality, trust, and civic engagement. *American politics research*, 33(6), 868-894.
- Warren, A. (2014). *Facebook Usage for Civic Engagement*. Masters. University of Malaya.
- Warren, A., Sulaiman, A. and Jaafar, N. (2014). Social media effects on fostering online civic engagement and building citizen trust and trust in institutions. *Government Information Quarterly*, 31(2), 291-301.

Web.stanford.edu. (2018). *What is Democracy?* [online] Available at: <https://web.stanford.edu/~ldiamond/iraq/WhaIsDemocracy012004.htm> [Accessed 7 Jun. 2018].

West, D. M. (2004). E-government and the transformation of service delivery and citizen attitudes. *Public administration review*, 64(1), 15-27.

White, Y. L. (2020). Active and Passive Facebook Use and Associated Costly Off-line Helping Behavior. *Psychological reports*, 123(6), 2562-2581.

Wikeipedia. (2018). *uMsunduzi Local Municipality*. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Msunduzi_Local_Municipality: [Accessed 17 Apri. 2019].

Wolterstorff, N. (2012). *Understanding liberal democracy: Essays in political philosophy*. Oxford University Press.

Appendix 1: Survey Questions for Online Participates

1. How old are you?
2. Are you male or female?
3. Population group you belong to?
4. Which of the following social media/messaging platforms do you use? Tick all that apply.
 - 4.1 Facebook,
 - 4.2 Whatsapp,
 - 4.3 Twitter,
 - 4.4 Instagram.
5. Aside from the community Facebook group that directed you to this survey, how many community social media groups do you belong to? (These would include social, security and marketplace groups).
6. How do you usually access the Facebook group?
 - 6.1 Smartphone,
 - 6.2 Computer,
 - 6.3 Other:
7. Which of the following best describes how often you typically use Facebook?
 - 7.1 Multiple times per day,
 - 7.2 Daily,
 - 7.3 A few times per week,
 - 7.4 Weekly, Monthly,
 - 7.5 Less often than monthly.
8. How long have you been a member of this community Facebook group?
 - 8.1 0 - 6 months,
 - 8.2 6 months to 1 year,
 - 8.3 1-2 years,
 - 8.4 2-3 years,
 - 8.5 More than 3 years.

9. How often do you engage in the group? (This includes posting, commenting or "liking" posts.)
 - 9.1 Very often,
 - 9.2 Often,
 - 9.3 Sometimes,
 - 9.4 Seldom,
 - 9.5 Never.
10. Which of the following do you mainly use the group for? Tick all that apply.
 - 10.1 Security related information,
 - 10.2 Service delivery related information (lights, water etc),
 - 10.3 Political information,
 - 10.4 Community engagement (local news, chat etc),
 - 10.5 Advertisements (for local businesses, events etc)
11. What do you see as the main benefits to you of belonging to this group? Please give examples if you can.
12. What do you see as the drawbacks to belonging to this group?
13. The group allows the community to engage with your Ward Councillor.
 - 13.1 Strongly Agree,
 - 13.2 Agree, Neutral,
 - 13.3 Disagree,
 - 13.4 Strongly Disagree.
14. The group allows the community to engage with the police services.
 - 14.1 Strongly Agree,
 - 14.2 Agree,
 - 14.3 Neutral,
 - 14.4 Disagree,
 - 14.5 Strongly Disagree.
15. What do you see as the main benefits of this group to the community as a whole?

Appendix 2: Questions for the Ward Councillor

1. Do you think the existence of this group promote democracy? How?
2. Do you think the existence of this group enhances public participation in the Willowfontain community? How?
3. Do you think this group facilitates civic engagement? How?
4. Do you think this group encourages community members to participate in raising community issues? How?
5. What kind of issues that are being raised in the group?
6. Does the existence of this group help in solving community issues?
7. Do you think the existence of this group makes life or your work easy as a Councillor? How?

Appendix 3: Questions for the Facebook Group Administrator

1. What inspired you to create this Facebook Community group?
2. What are the challenges that you encounter in administering the group?
 - 2.1. How do you deal with such challenges?
3. Do think this group helps in raising community issues? How?
4. What kind of issues that are being raised in this group?
5. Do you think the group helps in solving community issues? How?
6. Do you think this group is useful? How?

Appendix 4: Ethical Clearance Report (Refer to annexure 1 attached herein).