Research on The Effectiveness of Social Media as a Tool for Opening Up Spaces for Women Leaders' Participation in Zambia

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August 2020

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Acknowledgement

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CBO	Community Based Organisation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSO	Central Statistical Office
FB	Facebook
GBV	Gender Based Violence
IBA	Independent Broadcasting Authority
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IYF	International Youth Federation
MMD	Movement for Multiparty Democracy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NGOCC	Non-Governmental Organizing and Coordination Council
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SM	Social Media
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
WE4L	Women Empowered For Leadership Programme
ZICTA	Zambia Information and Communications Authority
ZNBC	Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation

Executive Summary

Social media is an umbrella term encompassing Internet-based applications used for different purposes. The specific apps include, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Snapchat and microblogs (Treem and Leonardi, 2013; Greenwood, Perrin and Duggan, 2016}. The use and popularity of social media technologies have grown exponentially over the last few years and at an incredible pace (Treem and Leonardi, 2013), particularly since the United Nations declared access to and use of the Internet a human right in 2011 (Greenwood, Perrin and Duggan, 2016). Their growth has fueled interest in how social media affect citizens' participation in civic and political life and specific areas of activism, such as gender and child rights. Current scholarship cites the Arab Spring in 2011 and the campaigns for political office in 2008 and 2012 by Barack Obama as some of the factors that helped to escalate the interest of social media in these areas (Boulianne, S., 2015).

The use of social media suits the description of a double-edged sword; they present both challenges and opportunities to every facet of human life. On one hand they present the novelty of interactivity, flexibility and customisation, which are associated with Internet-based technologies. On the other hand, they pose risks of abuse which is associated with all digital and interactive media. Leadership, which is the most important and influential of human institutions, is more challenging than ever before in the face of the intricate nature of social media (Erçetin, and Bisaso, 2016). The challenge is more intriguing when it involves women, given the gender debacle and the established public biases towards women leaders (Erçetin, and Bisaso, 2016).

The present study investigates the opportunities and challenges posed by social media and social network systems to women in leadership and how women have risen to these challenges and opportunities wrought by these technologies. Using the Network Society (Castells, 2009) and (Technological Determinism) theoretical frameworks, the study examines the extent to which social media influences societal dynamics in Zambia, specifically on whether it is an enabler or inhibitor to women's leadership careers and gender activism. It also investigates and characterizes women's participation on social media and their experiences (positive and negative) with using the social media technologies. It asks the following key questions:

- **What is the extent of access to and use of social media among women leaders and leadership aspirants?**

- **To what extent are social media effective as tools for activism among Zambian women leaders?**

- **What influence does social media have in positively promoting women leaders?**

These questions were answered largely through a survey covering 108 interviews with women in or aspiring for leadership positions in public, private, NGO and other sectors, an ethnographic review of social media spaces to ascertain presence and use of these media by Zambian women leaders and through case studies/in-depth interviews with four leading women social media users. Data analysis for quantitative data was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Testing of hypothesis and relationships was done using Chi-square analysis at 95% significance.

Major Finding and Conclusions

Access to and use of the Internet and social media

- The results of the study are conclusive that there is high (one in five women) access to and use of the Internet and social media among the Zambian women in leadership or those aspiring for leadership. However, the extent of access to and use of these media is hampered by inadequate Internet access and smartphones and poor Internet speed and connectivity.

- It is also fair to conclude that use of social media among the Zambian women would be higher with increased access to the Internet, especially among rural-based women and if the structural bottlenecks of slow Internet speed, connectivity problems, cost of Internet bundles and smartphones and other challenges reported by the respondents were to be addressed.

- The results are also conclusive that an overwhelming majority of Zambian women leaders access the Internet and social media using data bundles on their phones. This is in line with the global trend and makes smartphone ownership an imperative for any interventions around social media use among women leaders.

- WhatsApp and Facebook are the preferred and most used social media platforms among Zambian women leaders, followed by Instagram and LinkedIn. However, FB commends a comparative advantage in terms of the sizes of 'followers' and linkages that the women are connected to individually and collectively. This makes it an ideal choice for creating a critical mass for activism and social mobilization generally, as articulated under Theory 2 of the study.

- Long experience with the Internet and training are essential imperatives for improving social media skills. Likewise, improving income is a critical intervention for improving access to and frequent use of social media access among women in leadership. Financial capacity is particularly critical for use of Facebook, whose primary purpose is achieved through strong linkages and networks and, consequently, costlier.

- Although most of the respondents claimed to be well skilled in both use of the Internet and in managing the social media accounts, the results from both the ethnographic and survey studies reveal inadequate use of relevant social media platforms for specific and sophisticated purposes, e.g. activism and social mobilization, through such methods as hashtags.

- The study found and documents some classical and creative use of social media among some prominent women for both personal career progression and on national matters. The case studies presented in the report have documented some of the 'best' practices. The report also highlights the use of social media by two prominent politicians – Princess Kasune and Dora Siliya - to inform the nation that they had tested positive for the dreaded Covid 19 virus and to warn the citizens to take the disease seriously. Hon Siliya holds the powerful position of Minister of Information and Broadcasting Services. Hon Kasune is an opposition Member of Parliament for Keembe constituency.

Respondents' experiences with online gender-based violence

- Some women, albeit being in the minority, have experienced abuse of one form or another on social media. It appears that high profile individuals involved in activism and governance issues at national level and those with very active accounts, including all the four profiled in the study, are the most affected.

- The results of the study are inclusive that Facebook is considered the most disruptive online platform. It is also the platform that has the largest audience or followership, which makes it a double-edged sword. Most of the abuses come in the form of negative and demeaning statements, insults, verbal abuse, cyberbullying and hacking of accounts run by women leaders. Saboi Imboela, a renowned Zambian female artiste, human rights activist and spokesperson for one of the major political parties has been a victim of abuse on social media,

> *I have been a victim of social media abuse countless times. I have had experiences where I post something on constitutional matters on social media as an activist and politician, and some people who know me as a divorced person will come with personal attacks and say you are just saying that because you don't have a husband.*

- Messaging platforms, notably Twitter and LinkedIn are considered elitist by most of the women leaders. However, they are also regarded as niche platforms by some women in the corporate civil society space which they use to showcase their profiles, advance a specific agenda. These channels are perceived as more respectable and less prone to verbal abuse.

- Most of the women leaders do not seem to have a clear strategy for dealing with social media abuse. The majority 'just ignore' the abuses. Although the study did not probe the reasons for 'just ignoring' such abuses, one plausible assumption is that they have no skills for dealing with the situations.

- Majority of the respondents perceive digital spaces to be uneven in favour of men. There is also a strong feeling among most respondents that social media deliberately focus on the women's personality to divert attention from the truly important societal issues that they raise and to humiliate them. Therefore, although the number of affected women in the study appears to be moderate, the impact on women's participation cannot be under-estimated, especially on a national scale.

- In terms of actual impact of digital abuse on their careers, to the extent that only a few of the women who had experienced abuse considered withdrawing from the position they were vying for and the majority indicated that they 'just ignored' the abuses, the actual impact on their careers can be inferred as minimal.

- There is need for measures to protect women from cyberbullying and social media abuses and to improve the online environment generally. The measures include enactment of favourable regulatory and legal frameworks, training and supporting women solidarity through women-led social media platforms and networks.

Effectiveness and influence of social media

- At a personal level, the findings suggest that majority of the women in the study appreciate the positive functionalist role social media particularly towards their enhanced business/entrepreneurial activities, networking and easy of communication and positive self-image. A few believe that they would not be where they are in their careers without social media. The below statements by Saboi sum up the views on benefits from social media at a personal level,
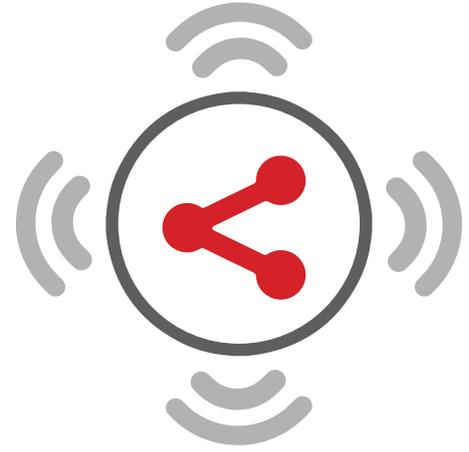
> *For me, the positives outweigh the negatives of being on social media. I have benefited and achieved quite a lot. Through social media, my music career thrived. I have been able to market my music through social media. You can only underestimate the power of social media at your own cost. I got a job at UNDP because of my social media activism which was acknowledged by the UN agency in Zambia. Of course, I qualified for the job, but social media exposed me to the opportunity.*

- At a broad national level, social media are generally perceived to be influential and helpful in improving the situations and lives of women and for advocacy on a broad range of national issues. However, the actual use of these media for activism and for driving real change and livelihood transformation has been marginal and their full potential not fully exploited.

- Majority of the respondents perceive social media to be more accessible, effective and influential than traditional media for their career progression. This underscores the need for more interventions around this resource vis-à-vis career progression for women in leadership.

Recommendations

- There is need for targeted and advanced training in use of social media, particularly for activism, advocacy and lobbying, crowd sourcing and protection from cyberbullies, e.g. on how to report to 'safety centres'. Formation of women social media support groups should be considered.

- The package for future interventions around use of social media should include access to the Internet and ownership of a smartphone. Speaking during the survey interview, Minister of Gender Honourable Elizabeth Phiri offered the following advice,

> *Social media is a good platform for sharing important information. Women need to be taught how to use it correctly. You need to have a thick skin and not give up because people on social media said something.*

- For purposes of reaching the most numbers of audiences with gender related messages, a combined use of social networking and messaging sites is recommended, in particular Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and WhatsApp.

- There is need to lobby Government to enact laws to protect women and other vulnerable social and online media users. Brenda Zulu, an award-winning Zambian female blogger, sums our recommendation on legal protection,

> *So, going forward, we need the ICT Data Protection Bill, Cyber Security Bill, Cyber Crime Bill, E-Commerce and E-Transaction Bill and even the E-Government Bill to be enacted into laws. If we can have these bills enacted into laws, then social media will provide a favourable environment for all women aspiring as well as those already in leadership positions.*

- The study team faced a general challenge of locating many individuals sampled for the study using the availed contact details. Some of the names provided by the stakeholders did not have any contact details. In this era of Covid 19 and social media, we expected that most of the women leaders would be using a variety of latest communication tools, such as skype, Zoom, WhatsApp, etc, even for their own endeavours of mobilisation and networking generally. This was not the case for majority of them, which made it hard to conduct interviews even after numerous attempts. Future Hivos communication interventions should also include improving the women's communication tools.

- We also recommend that Hivos should support more documentation, appropriate packaging and wide dissemination of outstanding case studies of use of social media for various purposes and with proven impact. This should be regarded as one of the capacity building interventions.

1.0 Introduction to The Study

Social media enjoys a few definitions. Among the various definitions, the one offered by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:61) is adopted in this paper: 'a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content'. Social media is an umbrella term encompassing applications used for different purposes, among them being collaborative projects (for example Wikipedia), blogs and microblogs (such as Twitter), content communities (for instance YouTube), social networking sites (such as Facebook), and business networking sites like LinkedIn (Murugesan, 2007; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). The terminology also includes recently developed general-purpose messaging apps such as WhatsApp and Snapchat (Greenwood, Perrin and Duggan, 2016). Technological developments over the last decade have led to the convergence of online media, such as online newspapers, and social networking platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram hence blurring the distinctions between them.

Online or digital media, on the other hand, is a broad term constitutive of media that are computational and rely on computers for redistribution. These include the following: computer animations, computer games, human-computer interfaces, interactive computer installations, websites, and virtual world (Odun and Utulu, 2016). Social and online media fall under the 'new media' group, described as all forms of media that are 'native' to and depend on computers for computational and redistribution. "It implies the use of desktop and portable computers as well as, wireless handheld devices" (Odun and Utulu, 2016:57). Lievrouw and Livingstone (2002:1) posit that the Internet is at the top of the list of new media. They are a form of independent or self-publishing platforms, which includes blogging, micro-blogging, social media networking, among others (Odun and Utulu, 2016:60). New media are an embodiment of convergence between old and new technologies (Lievrouw and Livingstone, 2002).

New and social media contrast with traditional or mainstream mass media. 'Traditional media' are described as 'the non-electronic mediums which work as part of our culture and as vehicles of transmitting tradition from one generation to another'.1 They are also described as 'those methods indicative of print-based newspaper and television. They include the electronic, the print and the narrowcast media'.2 In its common usage it refers specifically to television, radio and print newspapers. One part of the present study compares use of social media to traditional media for gender activism and career progression among the women leaders in Zambia.

According to the 2020 Global Digital Year-Book, there are 4.5 billion internet users globally with a penetration rate of %59. The active social media users stand at 3.8 billion with a penetration rate of %49. The four top-most used social platforms globally are Facebook (2.4billion), You Tube (2 billion), WhatsApp (1.6 billion) and Facebook messenger (1.3 billion).

As access to and use of social media has surged over the years, so has been scholarly interest in their effects in various facets of life, such as in citizens' participation in civic and political life and specific areas of activism. Research in social media effects has focused on the four affordances or benefits that new technologies offers: socialization, knowledge sharing, and power processes (Boulianne, 2015). Within the prisms of the Network society (Castells, 2009) and Technological Determinism theoretical frameworks, this study has been informed by four theories that researchers have used to contextualise social media effects on women and leadership issues and gender activism in general in Zambia.

The first theory focuses on social media as a forum for gathering information or news from family, friends, or traditional news media organizations (Dimitrova, et al, 2014). This theory builds on research findings that consistently confirm that social media, especially Facebook, are the main sources of news and information (Pew 2018; Mbozi, 2019) and from numerous traditional media research that show that "those who use media to learn about current events are more likely to be political knowledgeable and engaged" (McLeod et al., 1996). Furthermore, news from social networks may be more influential on users, because it has
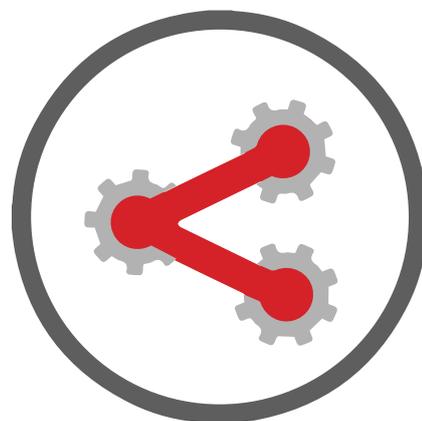
been filtered through trusted others, e.g., family and friends (Bode, 2012). Social media use is expected to develop citizens' knowledge of political issues, which then facilitates participation in civic and political life (Boulianne, 2015).

The second theory focuses on the role of social media in creating social network ties that can be mobilized. Of interest is the network size, social ties to groups, organizations, and activists, and in diffusion through peer groups (Boulianne, 2015). The theory assumes that social media enlarge social networks and increase exposure to mobilising information by members of the networks (Gil de Zúñiga, Jung & Valenzuela, 2012; Tang & Lee, 2013). Larger networks may increase exposure to information about how and why a citizen should become active. They are also assumed to facilitate information flow, which in turn increases the chance of being asked to participate in civic and political life (Boulianne, 2015). For example, having a large social network may increase the likelihood of seeing an invitation to sign a petition or participate in a boycott or may increase the chance of seeing messages about why one should vote for one candidate over another (Boulianne, 2015).

The third theory focuses on the role of social networks in creating ties to political or activist organizations (Tang & Lee, 2013) or the use of social media to form or sustain online groups (Conroy, Feezell & Guerrero, 2012;) and the fourth theory on the extent to which civic and political participation is contagious among members of a social network (Vitak, Zube, Smock, Carr, Ellison & Lampe, 2011). The two theories revolve around the influence of peers or social media 'friends' on individual's participation in civic and political life (Klofstad, 2011). "Being tied to organizations facilitates bloc recruitment, which can be a very effective way to mobilize large numbers of people" (Musick and ilson, 2008 in Boulianne, 2015).

2.0 Background to The Study

Hivos and its partners have been implementing the Women Empowered for Leadership (WE4L) programme in Southern Africa (Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe) and Middle East (Jordan and Lebanon). Through this programme the organization has sought to propel women to leadership positions in politics, public administration and civic spheres. The focus is at the sub-national level where decisions are made and policies are implemented that directly affect people's day-to-day life. It moreover allows for women's leadership skills to grow and mature. The main catalysing forces in this Programme are women's organizations and (aspiring) women leaders. WE4L has inspired women leaders in Southern Africa and the Middle East to become media experts on issues and fields that have traditionally been dominated by men. This way, female media experts have used their knowledge and experience to encourage other women to seek and take up leadership roles in key sectors of the society that they have traditionally been underrepresented.

The activities include use of modern communications tools and platforms in profiling women leaders as well as researching about women who step up to participate in public leadership platforms. Social media have grown exponentially in the last decade rendering traditional information and data gathering methods close to obsolete. It has however become evident that social media have become key tools in making or breaking leadership careers. Hivos and its partners have recognized a need to unpack for discussion the direct and indirect effects of use of social media on women's participation in leadership.

Purpose of study

Through the present study Hivos and partners sought to gather information on the trends, possible case studies and projected future trends of social/online media and its use by women who are aspiring for leadership or currently in leadership as well as how it's used to support or derail them. The study also compares social and online media with traditional media to determine the added value of investing in social and online media to further the objectives of the programme. The overall Objective or aim of the research is to determine the effectiveness of social media as tools for opening up spaces for women leaders' participation in leadership in public administration, politics, and quasi government in Zambia.

The study covers the following themes: access, use, experiences, influence and impact of social media with particular reference to the following:

1. The role of social media uses in making or breaking women leaders' careers.

2. The direct and indirect effects of social media use on women leaders' career progression.

3. The impact of social media in promoting the 50/50 gender representation agenda.

4. The effectiveness of using social media as a tool for activism by women leaders.

5. The impact of online gender-based violence (harassment, intimidation & abuse) on women leaders.

To gain a deeper understanding and knowledge of the issues under study, two research questions were employed:

● What influence does social media have in positively promoting women leaders?
● To what extent is social media effective as a tool for activism among women leaders?

Research Design – Samples and Data Collection Methods

The study adopted a mixed methods approach (quantitative and qualitative) at both data collection and analysis levels. The mixed methods approach was chosen to triangulate, compliment and explore further some of the insights from the respondents. Through this approach it has been possible to approximate both the scale and depth of the issues under study and subsequently strengthen both the internal and external validity and reliability of the results. The quantitative aspect also statistically enabled us to characterise the problem (i.e. extent, who is most affected, etc with some modelling) while the qualitative aspects highlighted the context of the problem. It also enabled us to test for relationships between selected independent variables, such as age and Internet skills, with some dependent variables, for instance use of social media. Quantification would also made it possible for HIVOS to make a comparative analysis of the problems and issues under study across the countries it is undertaking the study and from regional (SADC) and international perspectives.

The data were collected from three sources: survey, case studies/ In-depth Interviews and ethnographic study. All the components of the study – preparations/training, fieldwork and data analysis and report writing – were conducted over a seven-week period (8 June – 11 July 2020).

▪ *Survey :*

The data for the survey was collected through a questionnaire that was primarily structured with closed-format (or 'forced-choice') questions. A few sections of the questionnaires contained open-ended follow-up questions in which the respondents explained their answers. The rationale was to benefit from the qualitative narrations or justifications for the answers given. The whole questionnaire was uploaded on android tablets, which, among other benefits, enhanced intercoder reliability and accuracy of the results. The questionnaires were completed through the following means:

● **Face-to-face interviews :**

in appropriate settings that were mutually approved by both the interviewer and the interviewee. This mode was considered for respondents in Lusaka and surrounding towns of Chongwe and Kafue (35Km and 50km from Lusaka city respectively). The government guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID 19 were taken into account whenever this method of data collection was adopted.

● **Telephone/Skype:**

most of the questionnaires were administered via by phone calls and a by Skype calls. This manly applied to provinces outside of Lusaka where face-to-face interviews were not feasible.

The study population consisted of women aged 18 years and above who are holding, once held or aspiring to hold a leadership position in any sector - politics, NGOs, CSOs, CBOs, sports, private sector, church, traditional establishments and other sectors. The respondents were randomly sampled from the lists availed to the research team by NGOs working with HIVOS and by other network organisations from the various sectors. Some of the women figures were known by the research team. Most of those on the lists of NGOs working with HIVOS had attended one type of some training or another. A systematic random method was used to pick the original total sample of 120) 168 plus 48 replacements) from the list (sampling frame) of 270. Recruitment of the respondents was done by calling the sampled individuals on their mobile phones, emails and other means. Their contact details were provided by the local NGOs working with HIVOS.

■ *Ethnographic study :*

This exercise consisted of undertaking online ethnographic searches of women leaders and personalities of influence within the Zambian digital space. There was a particular focus on women-centric Twitter hashtags of Zambian origin or those featuring issues affecting Zambian women. Searches of feminine presence on social media were done using social media search tools such as social bakers.com and statscounter.com. The purpose was also to establish how active Zambian women were in cyber gender activism generally and about who was the most active online and using which social media platforms. Data collected from online ethnographic research were also used in identification and selection of case studies for analysis and documentation of experiences from the use of social media among four women leaders.

■ *Case studies/In-depth Interviews :*

a case study is defined as a "research method involving an up-close, in-depth, and detailed examination of a particular case". Part of data collection involved documenting case studies on experiences with and effects of social media on career progression or regression of four sampled leading Zambian women. The four women were picked based on snapshot scoping and ethnographic studies conducted by the research team on their use of one social media platform or another. The four women are involved in mixed careers –politics, governance activism and information communication and technology (ICT). They use three different social media platforms – Facebook, Twitter and Linked-In.

Quality Assurance and Ethical Considerations

Inter-coder reliability and quality assurance generally were enhanced through a combination of use of experienced enumerators, data manager and a statistician and adequate (re)training of the former in data collection (using tablets). Role plays and pre-testing (piloting) of both the tools and protocols for seeking consent also helped to perfect the skills of the enumerators prior to commencement of data collection. The Principal Investigator and Data Manager maintained close contact with all the enumerators in the field and conducted spot checks and observations to ensure that the survey instruments and protocols were strictly administered. Data entries were monitored daily in the following ways: a master tracker document recorded the number of assessments conducted by each enumerator and regular monitoring of database created for the purpose.

The study upheld all research ethics in compliance with the research ethics law of Zambia. This included ensuring that all potential respondents were made aware that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they could refuse to answer any question that they may consider to be sensitive. In addition, the identities of the respondents were protected. Information collected was stored away from any identity of the persons from which it was collected. Respondents were read – and signed – an informed consent statement confirming their voluntary participation in the study.

Data Analysis

For quantitative analysis the data were first transferred from the tablets to the server, converted from MS Excel and then transferred again to a computer for all statistical analyses in SPSS. At the basic level, descriptive statistical tests were used for cleaning the data and first-level analysis. Descriptive statistics describe the collected sample data visually and in numerical terms (Merrigan and Huston, 2004:156). At this stage of the analysis, in line with this description, the variables were presented in form of frequency tables and bar and pie charts. Then inferential statistics were used for tests of relationships between and among selected variables and for hypotheses testing. A few Chi-square tests were conducted to test selected variables for possible relationships.

Challenges

The study team faced a general challenge of locating a number of the sampled respondents using the availed contact details. Some of the names provided by the stakeholders did not have any contact details. In this era of Covid and social media it was expected many women leaders would be using a variety of latest communication tools, such as skype, Zoom, WhatsApp, etc, even for their endeavours of mobilisation and networking generally. This was not the case for majority of them, which made it hard to conduct interviews even after numerous attempts. This is another area future Hivos communication intervention should focus on. Many of the respondents were also too busy for interviews.

4.0 Country Context and Analysis : Zambia

History, geography and demographics

Zambia is a land-locked country covering surrounding by eight countries and covering an area of 752,610 km2 (CSO, 2015). It became independent of Britain on 24 October 1964 24 and changed its name from Northern Rhodesia. The population of Zambia was recorded as 13,092,666 in the 2010 census and projected by the Central Statistical Office (CSO) to be 883 15,933 in 2016, of which 50.7 % are females and %60.5 live in rural areas (CSO, 2015). The International Youth Federation classified Zambia among the three youngest countries in the world (IYF, 2014) with a median age of 16.6 years compared to a global average of 29.2. According to the latest Central Statistical Office report, youth unemployment rages from 45.5 % to 51.1 % in 2017 (CSO 2018). The overall literacy rate among Zambians between the ages of 15 and 24 years is 65.76 % (CSO, 2015). Literacy affects social and traditional media access and use. Lack of disposable income reduces media access and use (Mbozi, 2019). A survey found in 2015 that 54.4 % of Zambians lived below the poverty line and monthly household income was the equivalent of $18 (CSO, 2015).

Zambia is described as politically stable country, having changed political systems and governments peacefully in the last 54 years. Soon after independence in 1964, Zambia adopted a multiparty system of government. It became a one-party state in 1972 and reverted to a multiparty system in 1991, ushering in a period of economic growth and decentralisation (Demographic and Health Survey, 2013). Since 1991, two pro-democracy parties have been in power, the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) until August 2011 and the Patriotic Front, a breakaway of the MMD, since 2011.

Media landscape

The introduction of multiparty politics in 1991 brought many positive changes to the media landscape, notably organic growth, plurality and freedoms. The changes were largely due to the media reforms introduced by the MMD government with the adoption of amendments to the Second Republic (1991-1972) Constitution in 1996 that enshrined protection for freedom of expression (Chishala, 2015). Other landmark developments were the enactment of the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) Act of 1991, the Telecommunications Act of 1994 and the Radio Communications Act of 1994.

Zambia launched its first official media policy in 1996. The aim initially was to liberalise the airwaves by allowing private ownership of media. The launch of the Media and Information Policy in 1996 gave rise to private and community media. Before the reforms, there had been only a handful of media outlets in broadcasting and print. The state-owned national broadcaster, ZNBC, owned the only television station and the only three radio channels (Chishala, 2015; Hamusokwe, 2016). By December 2016, there were 103 commercial and community radio stations, according to records obtained from the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) in January 2017. Privately owned tabloid and online newspapers continue to emerge. Scholars regard this development as grounds for a media industry boom in Zambia (Ndawana, 2016; African Media Barometer, 2017).

Until the constitutional amendments came into force on 5 February 2016, the media in Zambia had operated without laws that specifically promoted media freedom (Simutanyi et al, 2015). Previous constitutions merely guaranteed freedom of expression, 'in which relevant language could be interpreted to allow legal restrictions on various grounds' (Simutanyi et al, 2015:5). Article 1) 20) of the amended Constitution provides for the right to freedom of expression and the right to privacy. In spite of the explicit provisions for freedom of the press and expression, however, Zambian media houses and journalists face various restrictions under criminal, civil defamation, sedition and obscenity laws and provisions of the penal code, including the State Security Act (Freedom House, 2016). A Freedom of Information Bill of 2002 remains just that: a bill.

The Independent Broadcasting Authority Act of 2002 and the Information and Communications Technology Act (2009) provide a legal framework for broadcasting in Zambia. The former was amended in 2010 to transfer powers of appointing the board of the IBA from independent stakeholders (NGOs, media associations, interest groups etc.) – as provided in the original Act – to the Minister of Information and Broadcasting Services. The minister is also directly responsible for issuing and revoking broadcasting licences. Such developments give credence to assertions that the Zambian media, whether state or privately owned, are not free from political interference, direct or indirect. Media houses and individual journalists who are regarded as critics of the government of the day have complained of official harassment (Freedom House, 2015).

Information and Communication Technologies

Access to and use of information and communication technologies (ICT) and their impact on online sources of news and information are crucial topics of this study. While access to mobile phones and the Internet has improved in recent years, ownership in Zambia is less than in such countries as Kenya, South Africa and Nigeria (Simutanyi et al, 2015). According to the 2018 ZICTA survey, only 8.1 % of households nationally had access to a computer. Individual ownership of mobile phones was 83.4% (88 % urban, 77 % rural) but active use was only 53.5 % nationally (71 % urban, 42.1 % rural), with 56.9 % among males and less among females. Active use was defined as having used a mobile phone in the previous three months. According to DataReportal (2020), as at January 2020 there were 16 million mobile network connections across three mobile service providers in Zambia.

Only 29.6 % (42.1 % urban, 14.3 % rural) of the individuals who owned a mobile phone had a smartphone. Active Internet users were only 14.3 % (77.8 % urban, 22.2 % rural). The percentage of Internet users is reported to have grown to 4.43 million (24 % of total population) by January 2020 (www.datereportal.com/reports/digital-2020-Zambia).
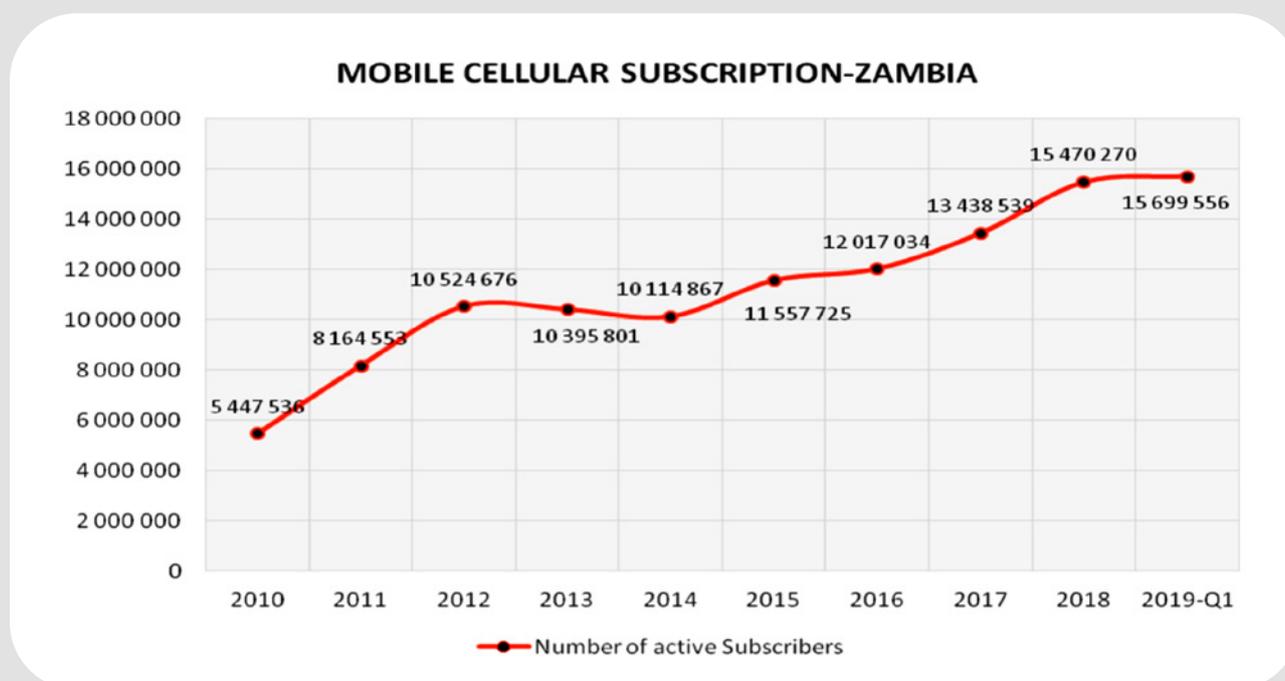
Figure 1 : Number of Active Mobile Phone Subscribers in Zambia -December 2018
Source : ZICTA, 2018

The disaggregated data of the ZICTA study reveal some positive trends and opportunities for digital communication. For instance, 82 % of the households with Internet accessed broadband using a mobile phone. Of the Internet users, 78.4 % had at least one social media account; of these, 91.4 % had a Facebook account; 74.5 % WhatsApp and 16.7 % Instagram. Six in every 10 Internet subscribers were active surfers, accessing the Net once daily, and 33.1 % once a week (ZICTA, 2018). Another noteworthy topic is why the respondents used the Internet. The ZICTA survey found that 68.5 % of subscribers used the Net to surf social media, followed by 'downloading things' (47.6 %), 'research' (37.3 %) and 'emails' (29.5 %). 'Reading publications' (presumably including online newspapers) was ranked fifth and cited by 23.5 % subscribers.

Young people (35 years and below – the majority of the Zambian population) constituted 72.3 % of the Internet users. The survey found that use of Internet services had 'increased from the findings established in 2015' (ZICTA, 2018:54) and that network coverage is relatively high at 86.9 % (97.8 % urban areas and 79.7 % in rural areas) . Reasons cited for reluctance to use the Internet were: 'do not need it' (33.8 %); 'lack of skills to use the services' (33 %); 'high cost of the required equipment' (26.1 %); 'cost of the Internet (20.1 %); and 'no service in the area' (9.1 %). It is noteworthy that 75.9 % of households nationally (77.1 % urban and 71.3 % rural) viewed Internet services as affordable. Although lack of access to smartphones was cited as an obstacle to Internet use in the 2015 survey, it was not among the stand-out issues in 2018.

The number of social media users was much lower at 2.3 million with a social media penetration rate of 13 % in the same period. The 2020 Digital Year-Book reveals that 99 % of Zambia's social media users access social media via mobile phones.

Table 1 : Reach of Selected Media Platforms in Zambia

Linked in	Twitter	Instagram	Facebook	Metric
410,000	107,400	280,000	2,100,000	Number of people reported by respective social media anchor that's reached by adverts
31.8 %	28.5 %	42.9 %	43.7 %	Percentage of advertising audience that respective social media anchor reports as female
68.2 %	71.5 %	57.1 %	56.3 %	Percentage of advertising audience that respective social media anchor reports as male

Source : Adapted from the 2020 Global Digital Year-Book Report for Zambia

In summary, the ICT sector has also seen substantial growth in the last 20 years, in mobile phone ownership and active use, social media use and available mobile phone signal ('network'). Internet penetration and use remain moderate overall, with a clear digital divide between rural and urban and other socio-economic demographics. Most Internet subscribers use the Net for social media.

Gender Disparities in Leadership

As reported earlier women constitute the majority (50.7 %) of Zambia's total population. While Efforts have been made at various level to improve the lives of women, they are still a minority in elected political offices such as Cabinet, National Assembly and local government. Currently, out of the 158 parliamentary seats, only 24 seats (15 %), and a further 86 seats (6 %) out of 1422 at Local Government level, have gone to women. Zambia falls far short of the African Union (AU) and SADC threshold of 30 percent and 50 percent respectively on women's participation and representation in decision making positions. According to the World Bank (2017), Zambia had the lowest proportion of seats held by women in national parliament in Sub Saharan Africa. The report projected the regional average at just below 25 per cent. This is so despite the country signing and ratifying international and regional protocols and conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), SADC and AU protocols.

Gender disparity is also reflected in traditional leadership. For instance, out of 288 Chiefs in across the country's 10 provinces, only 30 (10 %) of the 288 Chiefs are women and the four current paramount chiefs are men (Gender Status report, 2012-2014). The low levels of female political representation in Zambia are considered by most stakeholders to undermine the quality of the country's democracy. Some of the identified key barriers to women's political participation include the structure of the current legal framework, a political culture embedded with patriarchal values and norms that are unsupportive to female candidates, and women's lack of personal wealth or access to resources to fund campaigns. Others include: negative attitudes and practices in political parties and among the general electorate, which largely discourage women from participating, lack of clear policies and programmes for women progression into leadership positions in all sectors and negative portrayal of women's abilities to take up leadership and about women in leadership or aspiring for leadership generally (NGOCC, 2012).

Use of and Presence in Key Social Media platforms among Zambian Women Leaders

The digital age has brought with it tools that can help women to achieve greater political parity and leadership positions across other facets of life. Social media platforms such as Facebook, microblogs like Twitter, LinkedIn and video sharing platforms like YouTube have been found to provide women with powerful tools for their advancement1. According to the 2020 Global Digital Year-Book Report for Zambia, the most used social media platform in Zambia is Facebook with a reach of over 2million users, followed by LinkedIn at 410,000 while twitter has a presence of 107,000 users.

The online ethnographic study focused on a review of social media traffic as at June 2020. The review found that of the top users across all platforms, women leaders' participation and presence on the spaces was very limited. For example, according to the statistics provided by Social Bakers for June 2020, there was not a single woman leader featured among the top 20 most popular Facebook pages. Instead this space was dominated by online news sites such as Mwebantu, Zambia Reports and Zambian Watchdog and male political figures such as President Edgar Lungu, main opposition leader UPND Leader Hakainde Hichilema and corporates such as Trade Kings, MTN Zambia and Airtel. Mwebantu had the highest audience at over 1.2 million likes.

On a positive note the search revealed a few women leaders who had used Facebook for targeted activism. For example, in June 2020 the Minister of Community Development and Social Services, Mulenga Kampamba Chewe (MP) took to her Facebook page, in a short video clip, to challenge women to take up leadership positions on the Copperbelt province. She indicated that uptake of such positions by women was low in the Province. Out of the 21 MPs, she was the only female MP.

Honourable Dora Siliya, the Minister of Information and Broadcasting Services, and Keembe Member of Parliament Honourable Princess Kasume used Twitter and Facebook respectively to announce that they had tested positive for the Coronavirus. They both used these social media platforms to warn the public about the dangers associated with the disease and instill some sense of hope for those afflicted with the disease. In a video released on her Twitter account, Hon Siliya said, "I urge you to remain calm and please work with the health officials so that we keep you and your families safe." She added, "Together we will defeat the coronavirus." Honourable Kasume said this to her social media 'followers', "I told my family that I was going public about my status so that I could sensitise others."
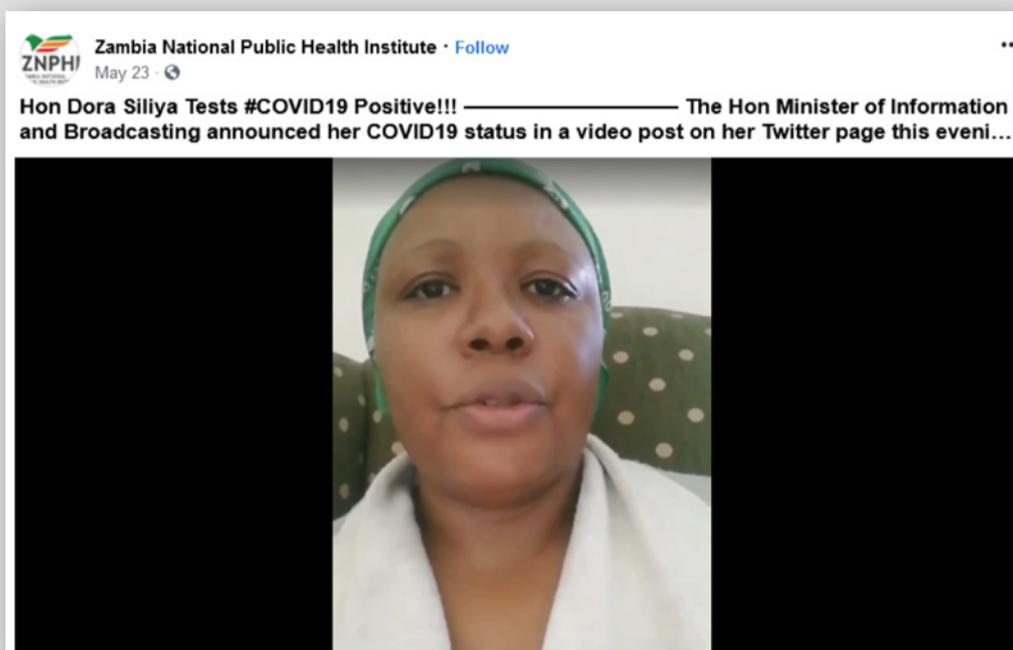
Figure 2: Screenshot of the video featuring Hon Siliya announcing her Covid positive test on 23 May 2020.

The presence of women leaders on LinkedIn is mainly dominated by individuals in the business and corporate world. Some women entrepreneurs and corporate figures, such as Monica Musonda, Mizinga Melu, Chiinga Musonda and Chita Mumba Zulu are present on the Linkedin platform and use it to market their products and consolidate their client base. Interestingly, there are also a few female political and civil society activists who have taken up the platform to advance specific campaigns and issues. Dr Buumba Malambo, CEO of Buumbalambo and a councillor in Kafue, took to Linkedin in 2020 when campaigning for the position of vice-chairperson of the Kafue Constituency Committee of her party. She was later voted in as the first female to hold the position.

Figure 3: Campaign poster generated on Buumba's Linkedin page

You tube has also been used by female leaders as a platform for activism and leadership advocacy. In a theme dubbed Power Women targeted at promoting and advocating female leadership, a video insertion is available for Absa Managing Director Mizinga Melu which depicts her achievement to be appointed to the apex position of the regional bank. The UPND Secretary General, Honourable Gertrude Imenda is also featured on a separate video clip on You Tube where she is shown launching the party card renewal exercise in Mumbwa district in January 2020. A young female activist, Natasha Chibesa Mwansa is also captured at the opening plenary of an international women's summit in Canada (2019) attended by various dignitaries including the Canadian Prime Minister who gave her a standing ovation after her speech highlighting the challenges of a girl child and the inequalities in opportunities for youths aspiring for leadership.

Blogs also provide a platform for some women leaders to participate in various advocacy and decision-making processes. For example, the blog, Lioness of Africa (lionessofafrica.com) is a social enterprise platform that show cases African women entrepreneurs. Some Zambian entrepreneurs have been featured in the blog to celebrate their achievements in their various business leadership efforts. These women include Chiinga Musonda, Monica Musonda, Rose Sibisi, Cathy Phiri, Dawn Close and Chita Mumba Zulu. It appears that the blogs mostly champion the interests of upcoming entrepreneurs, rather than those of women leaders in politics.

Hash Tags have been used by specific women of high standing in business and civil society depicting specific campaigns and activism. There appears to be very little participation by women political leaders in the application of Hash Tags to drive activism and engagement in key decision-making processes. The Twitter social media platform hosts the majority of hash tags and the online ethnography focused on searching for compelling Hash Tags between the last quarter of 2019 to 2020. The following table presents some of the most compelling hash tags pulled out of Twitter posts and what they sought to address.

Table 2 : Selected Compelling Hash Tags

Purpose	Buy-in Name of Hash Tag	Initiator/Promoter of Hash Tag
Used as a motivational pitch to encourage upcoming entrepreneurs especially in fashion and style.	#budblossomflourish	1.Rose Sibisi
Advocating for women leadership.	#Voteforawoman	NGOCC and alliance of CSOs
Advocacy for the improved welfare and rights of youths, especially the girl child for leadership uptake.	#Lettheyouthspeak	Laura Miti and others
Advocacy for a people driven constitution that does not disadvantage women.	#Handsoffourconstitution	Beatrice Phiri et al
Championing good governance, accountability and anti-corruption in leadership.	#ZambiaAsks	Laura Miti, Beatrice Phiri
Campaign drive against the enactment of the Bill 10(2019)of the Constitution of Zambia.	#SayNoToBill10 #YellowCard	6.Laura Miti,Nalucha Ziba, Pamela Chisanga Seya Fundafunda, Susan Wright and Sally Chawama,
Promotion of the Zambian produced chocolate business managed by women.	#Zambianchocolate	7.Chiinga Musonda

Several political factors can be argued to be associated with social media use. It appears that leaders or members of an opposition party are more active on social media, perhaps an indication that social media use, due to its relatively low cost and the role that personal initiative plays in its use, can serve as an equalizer for female leaders who are otherwise politically disadvantaged.

5.0 Social and Online Media and Status of Women: A Review of Literature

Digital harassment of women leaders can encompass acts of gender-based violence that are committed, abetted or aggravated, in part or fully, by the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as mobile phones, the internet, social media platforms, and email (Faith & Fraser, 2018). These acts – whether directed at women as civil society leaders, voters, political party members, candidates, elected representatives or appointed officials – can restrict the political participation of women as a group (O'Connell & Ramshaw, 2018). Available literature confirms real time harassment of women leaders and aspiring leaders in various public and private life.

Social media platforms generate unique forms of abuse and are a critical medium for gender-based online harassment (Citron, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2014). A study by Inter-Parliamentary Union (2016) targeting five regions (Africa, Europe Asia-Pacific, America and Arab countries) found that sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians were very real and widespread. Another study by Amnesty International (2018) on twitter noted that women who speak out about certain (often feminist) issues and/or are public figures were at high risk of online abuse and harassment. These included including journalists, politicians and women's rights activists. In addition, for women entering political life or holding public positions, new ICTs are frequently used as tools of gender-specific electoral and political violence. There is evidence of ICTs being used to perpetrate a broad range of violent acts against women during elections, especially acts inflicting fear and psychological harm (Bardall, 2013).

Studies also confirm that sexist abuse in social media content actually affects women's decision to withdraw from aspiring for high office. A study in the United Kingdom (Krook, 2017) established that nearly all the women political aspirants in the UK stated that they had witnessed sexist abuse online, and over 75 % said that it weighed on their decision about whether to seek a role in public life (Krook, 2017). Research from Australia found that 60 % of women aged 18 – 21 and 80 % of women over 31 said they were less likely to run for political office after seeing how negatively former Prime Minister Julia Gillard was treated by the media. Women with additional vulnerabilities, like disability, poverty or geographical distance, are likely to be especially discouraged from entering politics (National Democratic Institute, 2018). As social media is increasingly used to promote work in fields that rely on marketing an individual's unique skills and reputation, women in such fields can neither avoid using social media nor abandon their specific (gendered) identity online. The effects of online harassment on women can be devastating to their personal lives and professional careers (Citron, 2014; Hess, 2014).

In journalism, female BAME (Black, Asia, and Minority Ethnic) journalists in particular complained that they were subject to more abuse than their male, white counterparts. It was found that articles written by women did attract a higher percentage and disproportionate levels of blocked comments than those written by men, regardless of the subject of the article (Gardiner, 2018). In another study, nearly two out of three respondents said they had been threatened or harassed online at least once — slightly more than reported physical threats or harassment. Of those, approximately 40 percent said they avoided reporting certain stories as a result of online harassment. Younger journalists with fewer years in the profession were also targeted; some considered leaving the profession entirely (Ferrier, 2018).

Although social media have potential to fortify the chances of women ascending to top position in all spheres of life, digital abuse and cyberbullying makes them withdraw their online presence and profiles. A study by the National Centre for Cyberstalking Research, (2011) found that women are almost twice as likely as men to list "fear of personal injury" as their primary fear related to online harassment, with "damage to reputation" as their second-greatest concern. Many women admitted to self-censoring or even erasing their online personas because of a high level of online abuse and the multiple concerns (including physical safety) involved (Citron, 2014; Hess, 2014).

From 2000 to 2005, Internet users who participated in online chats and discussion groups dropped from 28 % to 17 %, "entirely because of women's fall off in participation" (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2005, p. 14). Furthermore, women are half as likely as men to speak out online, and a third less likely to use the Internet to look for work (World Wide Web Foundation global report, 2015). A 2015 study conducted by Google, titled Women and Technology, concluded that around 40 % of Internet users in India were women, putting the male to female ratio at roughly 60:40 (Ferrier, 2018). In the light of the inequalities in accessing to online media, World Wide Web Foundation global report found that Women are about 50 % less likely to be connected than men in the same age group with similar levels of education and household income. Cities with the highest gender gaps in education level such as Nairobi (Kenya), Kampala (Uganda), Maputo (Mozambique), and Jakarta (Indonesia) were also the ones where the highest gender gaps in Internet access were reported.

Nevertheless, the explosion of social media and unprecedented use by women of new technologies represents important opportunities to bring gender equality and women's rights issues to the forefront of both policy making and media attention. Journalists are using social media and other digital tools for social sourcing, creating and distributing content, engaging with users, broadcasting live and other journalistic uses (Ferrier. M, 2018). OECD Development Centre Issues paper on Social Media notes that social media has enabled women's political activism through use of Hashtag, which helps to bring women's issues to the forefront of political agendas, tackling violence against women and public accountability towards gender equality. To counter digital harassment, insights could be used for empowering victims, for discouraging perpetrators, and for increasing awareness among the designers and managers of social media platforms. Knowledge about online gender-based harassment could likewise fit into three general application areas: education, policy, and technology (Simons, 2015).

In education, data about gender-based harassment on various platforms could be made available in order to help potential victims make informed usage decisions. From a policy perspective, platform-based policy and legal reforms could be used to prevent harassment and for handling abuse and ultimately to empower potential victims. In terms of technology, potential victims could be aided through the development of auto-collection methods for reviewing and archiving harassing messages, in addition to advanced filtering mechanisms or even predictive blocking tools for potentially abusive (Simons, 2015).

Social media and gender activism:

Social media has transformed the landscape of how information is shared globally and the relationship between citizens and governments (Shirky, 2011). Platforms such as YouTube, Facebook or Twitter have allowed activists around the world to retransmit events live to a broad online audience, such as during the Arab Spring movement (Pew Research Center, 2012). Local issues become global concerns; local activists become connected with global citizens. Women's rights movements have also been quick to capitalise on social media's unprecedented political and awareness-raising potential. During the Wikigender online discussion, participants stressed the importance of social media in allowing gender activists to connect within and across borders, at a low cost. The surge of female bloggers has particularly helped attract a younger generation of activists, who represent a key target audience to break established stereotypes and help advance gender equality (OECD Development Centre, 2015).

The following are some ways social media has been used for gender activism or women in leadership.

Hashtag activism for Public Attention of Gender Issues:

Hashtag activism has helped to mobilise public attention on women's rights, increasing the visibility of issues that are under-reported in mainstream media. For example, in 2013, the #BringBackOurGirls campaign reached over 1 million tweets, helping to raise awareness of both national and international actors of the need to help rescue the abducted Nigerian schoolgirls (Tomchak, 2014). Before the hashtag campaign's success, the case received little media attention (Dewey, 2014). UN Women's successful and high-profile #HeForShe campaign further highlights the potential of social media to attract new and larger audiences: the campaign engaged with more than 1.2 billion people, putting the global spotlight on the need to engage men and boys to achieve gender equality. In Uganda, a campaign dubbed #Pads4GirlsUg campaign was initiated by a Ugandan citizen as an expression of her dissatisfaction towards the Ugandan government for failing to uphold a 2016 presidential election promise of providing a girl child with sanitary requirements (Namagembe,2017; Wesonga & Oketch,2015). The campaign mobilized collective effort that enabled digitally connected Ugandans to respond to the plight of the girl child whose school dropout rates were on the rise. The campaign investigated the use of SMNs, in particular Facebook, to create community awareness, mobilize support, and engage an online community to support and contribute towards sanitary requirements for girl children dropping out of school.

Tackling violence against women through social media tools:

Social media tools have helped female victims to share their experiences of violence with other victims, creating a space to exchange knowledge and information on their rights, legal processes and welfare services. In 2010, HarassMap was launched in Egypt as an online mapping tool to allow victims to anonymously report cases of sexual harassment directly from their mobile phone. This crowd-sourcing initiative maps all the reports and is coupled with campaigns to raise awareness on the scale of the problem in Egypt (Young, 2014).

Public accountability towards gender equality:

Social media has been increasingly used by women's grassroots organisations to call for greater public accountability towards gender equality. Following the 2012 gang rape of a young woman in Delhi, the #DelhiGangRape hashtag campaign brought the scale of gender-based violence in India into the spotlight. The hashtag campaign supported public street mobilisation which saw the government introduce specific anti-rape provisions in the Criminal code (Sharma, 2014). Similarly, in Turkey, the rape and murder of a young woman led to a mass Twitter protest through the hashtags #sendeanlat (tell your story) and #ozceganaslan. Large street protests provoked a discussion among political and civil society leaders about violence against women in the country (OECD Development Centre, 2015).

Despite the high visibility and success of many of these campaigns, the extent to which women's online activism has been able to shape and influence policy making remains patchy and unpredictable. Although important increases in women's political participation have been achieved since Beijing with %22 of women in parliaments today compared to %11 in 1995, women remain a minority at all levels of governance (OECD Development Centre, 2015). Recent results of the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), a measure of discriminatory social institutions across 160 countries, demonstrate that 86 countries have no quotas to promote women's political participation either at national or subnational level.3 Limited female representation within formal decision-making and leadership fora is compounded by the marginalisation of women's civil society organisations within national institutional mechanisms (OECD Development Centre, 2015).

It has been noted that fully taking advantage of social media for political advocacy is restricted for many women by illiteracy, language barriers, the digital divide in infrastructure between rural and urban areas and online harassment.

Purpose of present study

The purpose of this report is to analyse women's leadership dimensions in Zimbabwe, examining the extent to which social media influences societal dynamics. To gain a deeper understanding and knowledge of the issues under study, two research questions were employed:

- **What influence does social media have in positively promoting women leaders?**
- **To what extent is social media effective as a tool for activism among women leaders?**

6.0 Findings of The Study

6.1 Demographics of the sample

As reported earlier a list of 260 women leaders or leadership aspirants was created from which 120 and 48 replacements were randomly sampled. Of the sampled, 108 were successfully interviewed, giving a 90 % response rate. Their ages ranged from 22 years for the youngest and 70 years for the oldest. The median age is 46. When placed in categories, majority 34 (32 %) fell in the 36-45 age range, followed by 45 – 55 and the '56 and above' categories with 25 (23 %) individuals each. The 22 – 35 (described as youths in Zambia) were the minority with 24 (22 %) individuals. The majority (72 %) are based in rural and 28 % in rural areas.

As for education, 33 (31%) had completed senior secondary school, 23 (21%) had at least a first degree, 19 (18%) had diplomas or certificates, 16 (%15) a post-graduate qualification and nine (3 %) and eight (%) had primary and junior secondary level education respectively. In terms of income, the majority were in what the government regards as the highest monthly net income bracket, earning above ZMW 6,200 (US$ 342), followed by the least income earners or tax exempted category (below ZMK3,300 or US$ 182) at 29 %. Seventeen per cent earned between ZK101 ,4(US$ 226) and ZK200 ,6 and 6 % were in the ZMW3 ,301 - 4101 bracket. Seventeen (16 %) were unwilling to disclose their income. With respect to the sector in which were leaders or aspiring leaders, a huge majority 61(57%) were in politics, 17 (16%) in NGO sector, 16 (15%) in Private sector leader and 11 (10%) in Public sector. Only one (1) and two (2) were in church and parastatal leadership respectively.

6.2 Respondents' experiences with the Internet

Access to and use of the Internet is an important factor to use of social media, hence the focus of this aspect in the study. The study found that of the 108 women leaders, 86 (80%) had access to the Internet. Twenty-two (20 %) said they had no access or connected to the Internet at all. Among the 86 with Internet access, majority (58 %) have been long on the Net (more than five years); 22 % for less than two years} and 20 % for three to five years. As shown in Table xxx, majority (93 %) of the women access the Internet via mobile phones, followed by via Wifi (56 %); then via Router (28 %) and dongles (24 %). As for devices they use to access the Internet, a huge majority (97 %) access it on their mobile phone, followed by desktop computer (45 %) and on Tablet (18 %).

In terms of frequency of surfing the Internet in a week, majority 77 (67 %) ,7 (7 %) accessed it less than twice a week. On a typical day, another majority 64(59%) said they surfed the Internet more than three times. Thirty-three percent (33 %) regarded their Internet skills as 'very good', another 33 % as just 'good' and another 33 % as 'moderate'. Only two regarded their skills as 'poor'.

Table 3: Respondents experiences with Internet

	N	%
How often do you access internet in a week?		
5 - 7 days	72	84
3 - 4 days	6	7
1 - 2 days	8	9
How many times do you surf the Internet per day?		
Once	9	11
Twice	7	8
Three times	6	7
More than three times	64	74
Self-rated Internet skills		
Very good	28	33
Good	28	33
Moderate	28	33
Poor	2	2
Years on the Internet		
0 - 2 years	19	22
3 - 5 years	17	20
More than 5 years	50	58

Asked which factors they considered a 'big challenge' or 'problem' in accessing the Internet, majority (72%) cited Internet connectivity challenges, followed by Internet speed (52%) and cost of bundles (45%). Fewer respondents 8 (9%) cited inadequate supply of electricity, frequent Internet interruptions due to power cuts 7 (8%), cost of devices including smartphones 5 (6%), poor quality of phones 4 (5%) and poor telecoms infrastructure 3 (4%).

Challenges Faced When Using Internet

Challenge	%
Internet connectivity	72.1%
Internet speed	51.2%
Cost of bundles	45.3%
Lack of electricity to charge phone	9.3%
Interruptions due to power cuts	8.1%
Quality my mobile phone	8.1%
Cost of Internet devices	5.8%
Poor technological infrastructure	3.5%
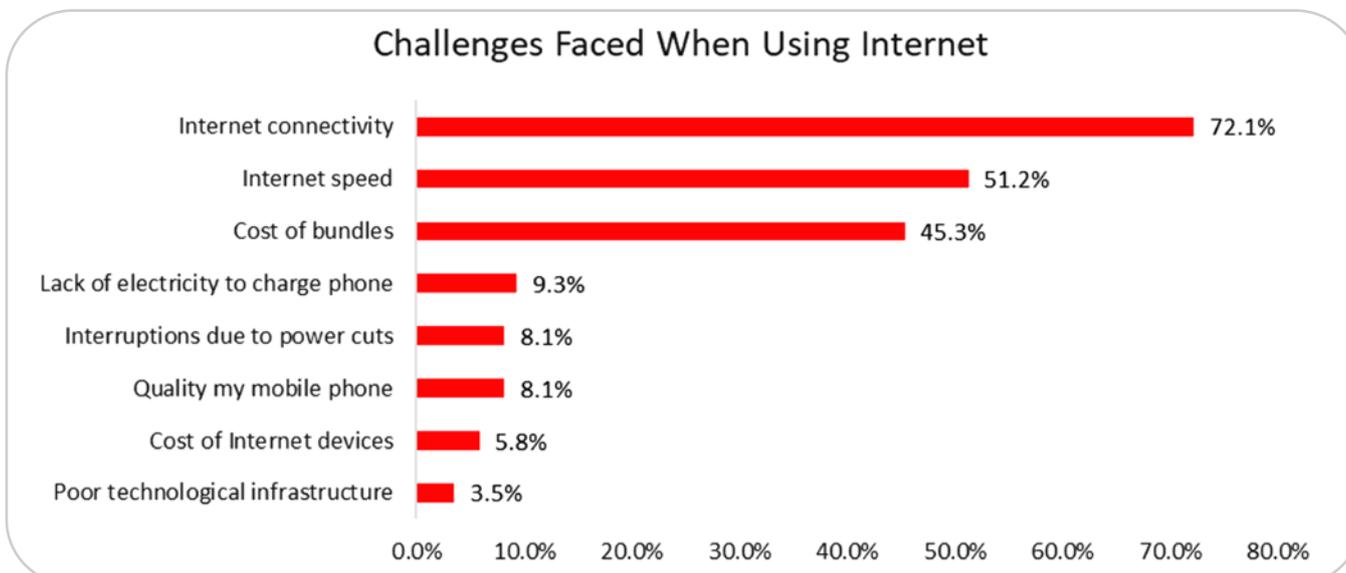
Figure 2:Internet Challenges

6.3 Extent of Access to social Media

Another critical aspect of the study was establishing the extent of access to and use of social media among the women in leadership in Zambia. The results of the study reveal that majority 83 (97%) of the 86 women with Internet are accessing and using one social media platform or another. Two of the three who do not use social media cited lack of smartphone as the reason why do not. One person said she could not be on social media due to poor Internet connectivity. To the question on which social media platform they were most active or had an account with, majority 77 (93%) were active on WhatsApp, followed by Facebook 68 (82%), Instagram (29%) and LinkedIn users (22%). Seventeen percent (19%) and 17% were active YouTube and Twitter users, respectively. Figure 3.0 (below) presents a summary of the social media platforms that the women were active on.

Media Platforms Respondents were on

Platform	Percentage
WhatsApp	92.8%
Facebook	81.9%
Instagram	28.9%
LinkedIn	21.7%
YouTube	19.3%
Twitter	16.9%
Weblog	4.8%
Personal Website	3.6%
Snapshot	2.4%
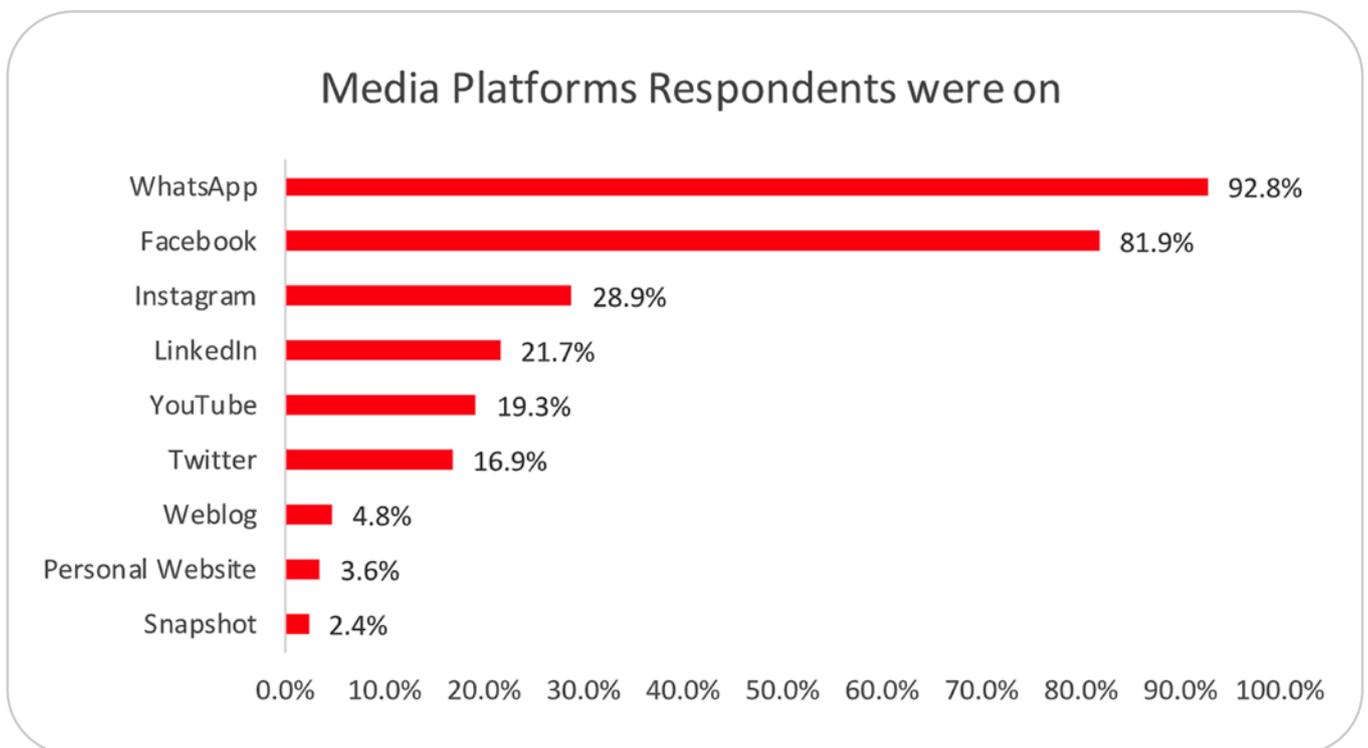
Figure 3:Social Media Platforms used

The Chi-square tests (Table 4) aimed to test what factors influence choice of Facebook as the favourite platform. It shows relationships between income and age and choice of Facebook as favourite social media platform. Specifically, younger individuals (below 35) and those in the highest income bracket are the majority users of Facebook. In terms of WhatsApp, the most popular social media platform among the respondents in the study, only regular surfing of the Internet on daily basis influences choice of the platform (P=0.013). The tests show no relationship between age, income and Internet experience and belief in mobilizing force of social media

Table 4: Relationship between age, income and choice of Facebook

| | Active on Facebook | | | | p |
	Yes		No		
Age	n	%	n	%	0.036
22 - 35	20	29 %	0	0 %	
36 - 45	20	29 %	5	33 %	
46 - 55	16	24 %	4	27 %	
>55	12	18 %	6	40 %	
Monthly Income					0.034
Below ZMW3,300	9	13 %	6	40 %	
Below ZMW3,301 - 4101	5	7 %	0	0 %	
ZMW4,101 - 6,200	14	21 %	1	7 %	
Above ZMW6,200	29	43 %	3	20 %	
Not willing to say	11	16 %	5	33 %	
Years Accessing Internet					0.305
0 - 2 years	17	25 %	2	%13	
3 - 5 years	11	16 %	5	%33	
More than 5 years	40	59 %	8	%53	
Times Accesses Internet in a Day					0.798
Once	7	10 %	1	7 %	
Twice	5	7 %	2	13 %	
Three times	4	6 %	1	7 %	
More than three times	52	76 %	11	73 %	

6.4 Sizes of following

The study also asked the respondents to indicate the sizes of following for the social media platforms among the respondents who use each respective platform. The results reveal the following ranges and medians: 1. Facebook: 5 – 34,000 with a median of 589 ;2. Twitter: 41 – 7,200 with a median of 1,400 ;3. Instagram: 50 – 5000 with a median of 484 ;4. WhatsApp: 6 – 500 with a median of 150; and, YouTube: 200 (for the one person who answered the question). This confirms that FB commends the highest following among the users' individually, and more importantly, collectively.

6.5 Frequency of Use and Skills

On the question of how often they used their favourite social media platform in a week, majority 71(87%) did so for between five and seven days, regarded as frequent weekly users. On a typical day, again majority 59 (72%) said they used social media more than four times, 15% once to twice daily and 13% three - four times. On the question of who manages their social media account, majority (84%) said "Do all or nearly all of it myself" and 12% said, "Do some of it myself and also rely a lot on my staff".

Majority (36%) rate the knowledge of use of social media as 'Very good', 41% a 'good' and 22% as 'moderate'. Only 13 (16%) had attended some form of training in social media use.

Table 5: Use of and experiences with social media

	N	%
How often do you use your favorite social media platform per day		
Once to twice	12	15
Three - four times	11	13
More than four times	59	72
How often do you use your favorite social media platform per week		
1 - 3 days	5	6
4 - 5 days	6	7
6 - 7 days	71	87
How do you manage your social media		
My staff does all or almost all of it	3	4
Do some of it myself and also rely a lot on my staff	10	12
Do all or nearly all of it myself	70	84
Self-rated social media skills		
Very good	29	36
Good	33	41
Fair	18	22
Poor	1	1
Have you ever attended any training on social media use		
Yes	13	16
No	68	83
Not sure	1	1.2

The Chi-square tests (Table 6) shows strong relationships between and Internet experience with daily frequency of use of favourite social media. Specifically, individuals who have been accessing the Internet for a longer period and those who frequency use the Internet on a daily are the frequent users their favourite social media platform on daily basis.

Table 6: Relationship between age, income and Internet experience and daily frequency of use of social media

	How Often Used Favorite Social Media Platform Per day						
	Once - Twice		Three – Four Times		More than Four Times		p
Age	n	%	n	%	n	%	0.519
22 - 35	1	8 %	3	27 %	16	27 %	
36 - 45	4	33 %	2	18 %	19	32 %	
46 - 55	5	42 %	2	18 %	12	20 %	
>55	2	17 %	4	36 %	12	20 %	
Monthly Income							0.220
Below ZMW3,300	4	33 %	2	18 %	9	15 %	
Below ZMW3,301 - 4101	0	0 %	1	9 %	4	7 %	
ZMW4,101 - 6,200	2	17 %	2	18 %	11	19 %	
Above ZMW6,200	1	8 %	5	45 %	25	42 %	
Not willing to say	5	42 %	1	9 %	10	17 %	
Years Accessing Internet							0.002
0 - 2 years	6	50 %	3	27 %	10	17 %	
3 - 5 years	5	42 %	2	18 %	9	15 %	
More than 5 years	1	8 %	6	55 %	40	68 %	
Times Accesses Internet in a Day							<0.001
Once	6	50 %	0	0 %	2	3 %	
Twice	4	33 %	2	18 %	1	2 %	
Three times	1	8 %	2	18 %	2	3 %	
More than three times	1	8 %	7	64 %	54	92 %	

The Chi-square tests (Table7) shows strong relationships between income and Internet experience with perceived knowledge of use of social media. Specifically, individuals in the higher income bracket, those who have been accessing the Internet for a longer period and highest frequent users of the Internet on a daily basis are in the majority of those who perceive their knowledge of use of social media as 'good'.

Table 7: Relationship between age, Income and Internet experience and knowledge and use of social media

	Self-Rate on Knowledge to Use Social Media						
	Good		Fair		Poor		p
Age	n	%	n	%	n	%	0.383
22 - 35	14	23 %	5	28 %	0	0 %	
36 - 45	22	35 %	3	17 %	0	0 %	
46 - 55	15	24 %	5	28 %	0	0 %	
>55	11	18 %	5	28 %	1	100 %	
Monthly Income							0.002
Below ZMW3,300	8	13 %	6	33 %	1	100 %	
Below ZMW3,301 - 4101	1	2 %	4	22 %	0	0 %	
ZMW4,101 - 6,200	12	19 %	3	17 %	0	0 %	
Above ZMW6,200	28	45 %	2	11 %	0	0 %	
Not willing to say	13	21 %	3	17 %	0	0 %	
Years Accessing Internet							0.011
0 - 2 years	13	21 %	5	28 %	0	0 %	
3 - 5 years	8	13 %	7	39 %	1	100 %	
More than 5 years	41	66 %	6	33 %	0	0 %	
Times Accesses Internet in a Day							0.005
Twice	4	6 %	3	17 %	0	0 %	
Three times	2	3 %	3	17 %	0	0 %	
More than three times	52	84 %	9	50 %	0	0 %	

6.6 Motivations for Use of Social Media

What do the women specifically use their favourite social media platform for? Figure 4 below reveals that the most prominent uses are: just over half (55 %) of the women in the sample use social media for chats; communication, information sharing and chats; followed by opinion and reviews (25 %); for marketing themselves or their products and services (21 %), utility, education and research (18 %) and collaboration and networking (17 %). Other major uses are; social interaction (15%), news and information seeking (12%) and lobbying and advocacy (12%). Worth of note is the low use of social media for politics (6 %) and lobbying and advocacy despite majority of the respondents being in politics.

What Respondents Used Social Media Platforms For

Category	Percentage
Chats	55.5%
Opinion and review	25.3%
Business/Advertising	20.5%
Collaboration	16.9%
Social interaction	14.5%
News and information seeking	12.0%
Lobbying	12.0%
Utility	10.8%
Education	8.4%
Media sharing	7.2%
Entertainment	6.0%
Politics	6.0%
Social Comment	3.6%
Social Marketing	3.6%
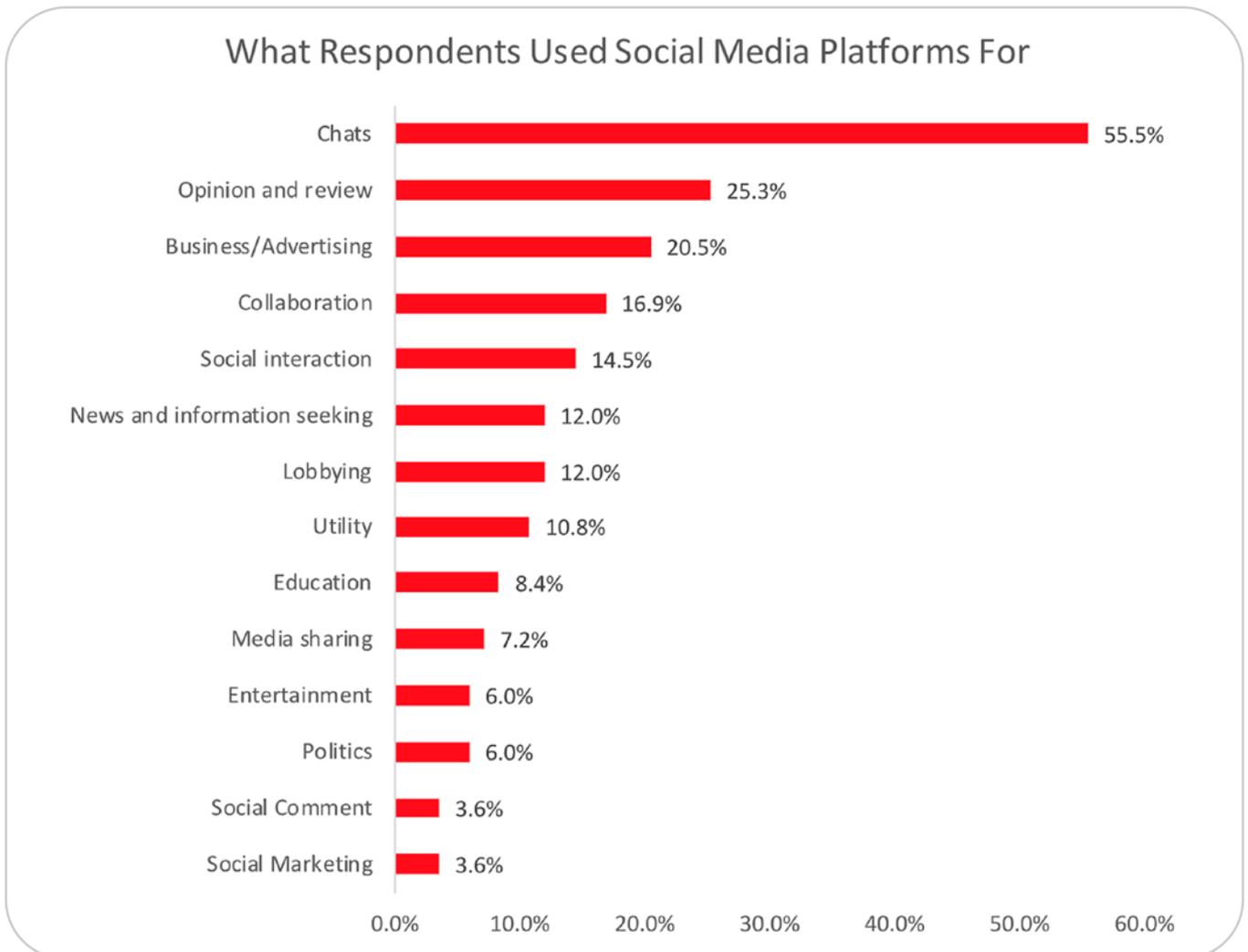
Figure 4:What respondents use Social Media platforms for

6.7 Experiences with Social Media

Abuse on social media and cyberbullying

While various sources argue that there are immense benefits that have been generated by the apparent upswing in social media access, the platforms have unfortunately also brought with them persistent growth of abuse and other negative experiences. Twenty (20) or 24% of the 83 social media users said they had experienced one form of abuse or another on their favourite platform, while the rest 63 (76 %) said they have never experienced it. In terms of the most common abuse experienced on social media, majority (12) of the 20(63%) had been subjected to demeaning/negative comments, followed by insults (47 % or nine), verbal abuse (42 % or eight),

cyberbullying (six or 32 %) and hacking (26 % or five). Fortunately, 'threats to life or career' was not a big problem as only one respondent had ever experienced this form of disruptive behaviour of social media. Four of women had also experienced sexual abuse and three had experienced false accusations. The following figure highlights the status of abuses experienced by women leaders.

Abuses Experienced by Respondents on Social Media

Abuse	Percentage
Demeaning/Negative comments	63.2%
Insults	47.4%
Verbal abuse	42.1%
Cyber bullying	31.6%
Hackings	26.3%
Sexual threats	21.1%
False accusations	15.8%
Threats to life or career	5.3%
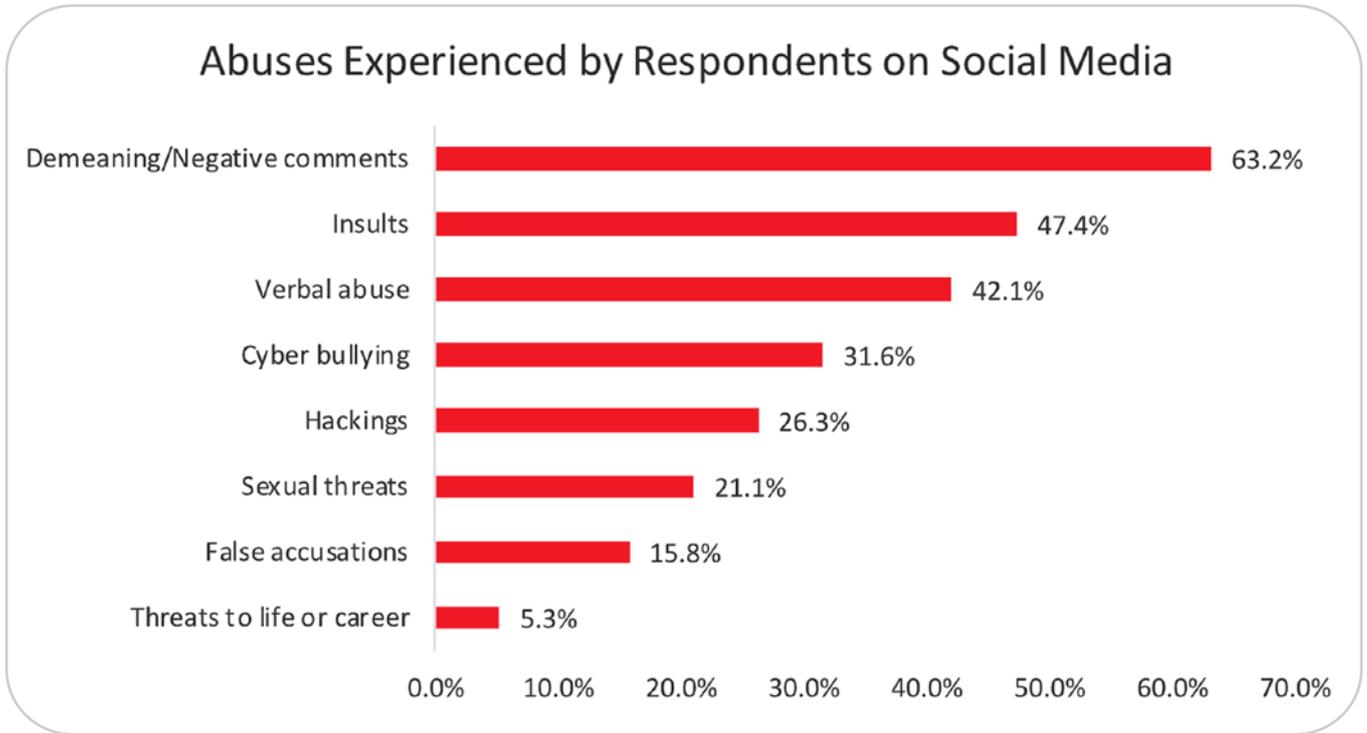
Figure 5:Abuses experienced on social media

Majority of the respondents (80 %) find Facebook to be disruptive and eight (10 %) of them find Facebook pages of online news outlets to be disruptive. The chart below depicts the most disruptive media platforms to women leaders' career progression.

Most Distruptive Media Platform to Women Leadership Career Progression

Platform	Percentage
YouTube	1.2%
Instagram	2.4%
WhatsApp	2.4%
Twitter	7.2%
Facebook	9.6%
Facebook	79.5%
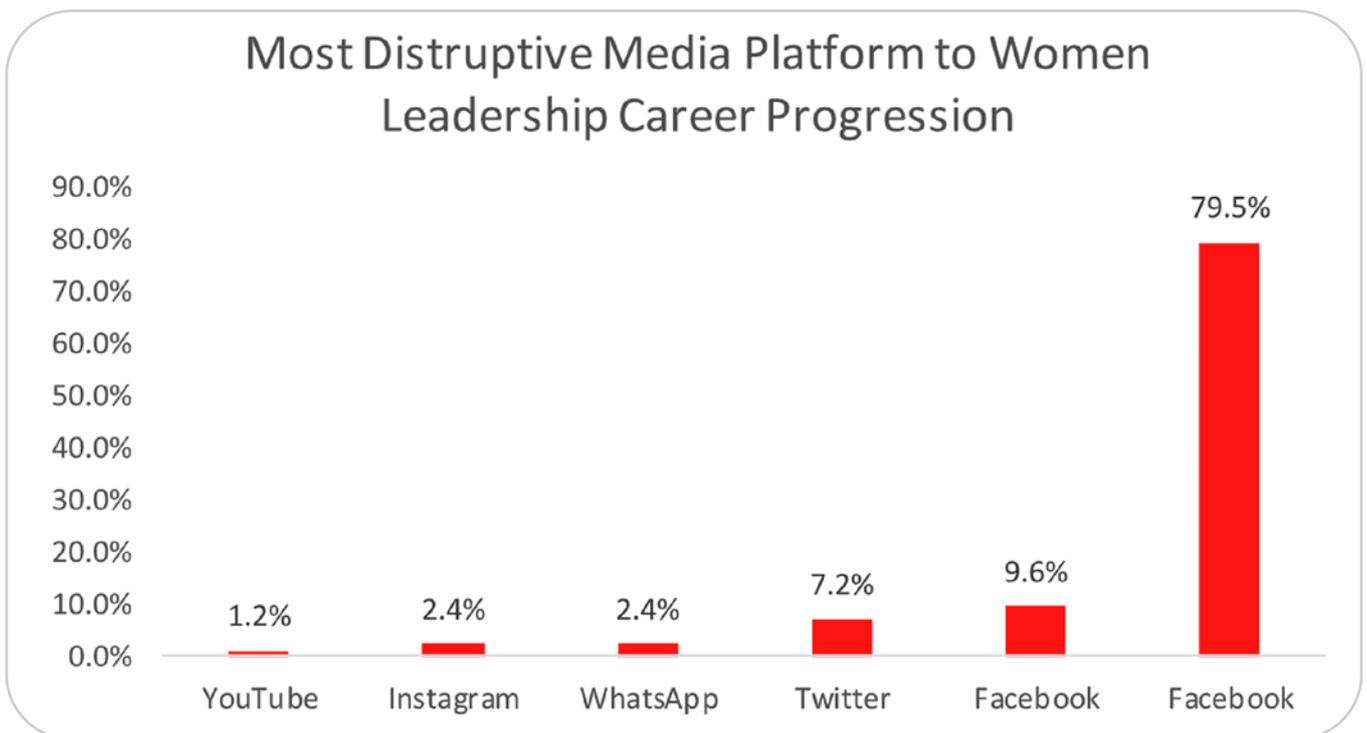
Figure 6:Most disruptive media platform

Six (7%) find Twitter to be disruptive and two people (2.4%) said the same about WhatsApp and Instagram. Interestingly, none of the respondents felt that LinkedIn, snapchat and weblog were disruptive. In addition, the majority respondents (59%) of felt that social media is so focused on personality and hard to get people to pay attention to what is truly important in society. This survey finding is consistent with what was said by all the five ladies that participated in the in-depth interviews.

The list of Zambian female activists can't be complete without the charismatic **Laura Miti**. She is the Executive Director of Alliance for Community Action (ACA) a non-profit organization which seeks to protect and promote good governance in Zambia. She is a human rights activist who has earned her respect in the civil society movement for over 15 years. She commands a huge following on social media through Facebook and Twitter where she has been engaging with the Zambian community. Laura says Facebook is the most disruptive social media platform to women and describes Twitter as an elitist social media platform with less insults. She said the following about Facebook,

> *I know there is a risk of personal attacks on social media. Like on Facebook, you are talking to people who are braver than they are in reality because of the aspect of anonymity. They can come after you in ways that they cannot do physically. So, the risk to personal attacks is very high on social media.*

Saboi Imboela, 43, is a renowned Zambian female artiste, human rights activist and an academician. Saboi is now one of the female politicians aspiring for leadership positions in government. In 2019, she contested the mayoral bye-election for the city of Lusaka but came out fourth. She is now the spokesperson for the National Democratic Congress, one of the opposition parties with seats in Parliament. She is also one of Zambia's most active female politicians on social media. Saboi is also one of Zambia's most active female politicians on social media. She recalls being on social media for the first time in 2010. Since then, Saboi has been running four Facebook accounts all with 5,000 followers before she created one flagship Facebook page with 21,000 followers at the time of this interview on June 2020 ,23. She disclosed that she has been a victim of abuse on social media,

> *I have been a victim of social media abuse countless times. I have had experiences where I post something on constitutional matters on social media as an activist and politician, and some people who know me as a divorced person will come with personal attacks and say you are just saying that because you don't have a husband.*

Majority unshaken by abuse on social media

The study was also interested to understand how women leaders manage their experiences with social media abuses. The majority (42 % or eight) said that they just ignored such threats, attacks or insults. Five of the respondents said they that they personally replied to the offender, three said they reported the offender to the social media company and two said they had to block the offenders. Fortunately, only 10 % of the respondents felt that they had been disadvantaged from a top position because of personal abuse on social media. Laura has advice on how to deal with social media abuse of women,

> **And so, to survive on social media and always be as I am, you must have a plan; you must have a strategy and a protection plan. And in terms of negative feedback, I have the same response to positive feedback. It means nothing; It doesn't just matter to me.**

Like Laura, Saboi says Facebook is the most disruptive platform and advises other women how to deal with abuse on social media:

> **So, for me if there is that negative propaganda about me, I will go on social media and bring out that narrative. I will bring out my narrative and sell that narrative and put records straight. And that has really worked out well for me. Us women especially some of us in politics who belong to opposition political parties for that matter suffer the most abuses on social media. Whenever you question government on some policy issues, you will be attacked on social media by cadres from the ruling party. And we hear such political party cadres are paid and given bundles to attack whoever criticises government. But we just have to be strong as women.**

Gender Minister Honourable Elizabeth Phiri, who very keenly participated in the survey, has the following advice to women facing cyberbullying,

> **- Social media is a good platform for sharing important information. Women need to be taught how to use it correctly.**
>
> **- You need to have a thick skin and not give up because people on social media said something.**

Comparison of social media treatment of women compared to men

A number of studies have alluded to gender imbalances on social media, which prompted the study to seek views of the respondents on this issue. The findings reveal that majority (53 %) of the respondents argued that women are not as free as men on social media. Asked whether they have ever withdrawn or considered withdrawing from a race for a position due to online bullying of one form or another, 84 % said they have not.

6.8 Influence and impact of social media

Social media more accessible and effective than traditional media

The impact of social media in terms of accessibility, effectiveness and influence is an important facet to understanding the role it plays in driving activism. The findings reveal that majority (72 %) of the respondents felt that social media are more accessible to them than traditional media - radio, television and newspapers. Another majority (59 %) felt that social media are more effective for their work than all three traditional media - radio, television and newspapers. In as far as influence is concerned, in relation to mainstream media for gender activism, again majority (57 %) of the respondents said that social media are more influential. Figure 7 below illustrates the above findings.
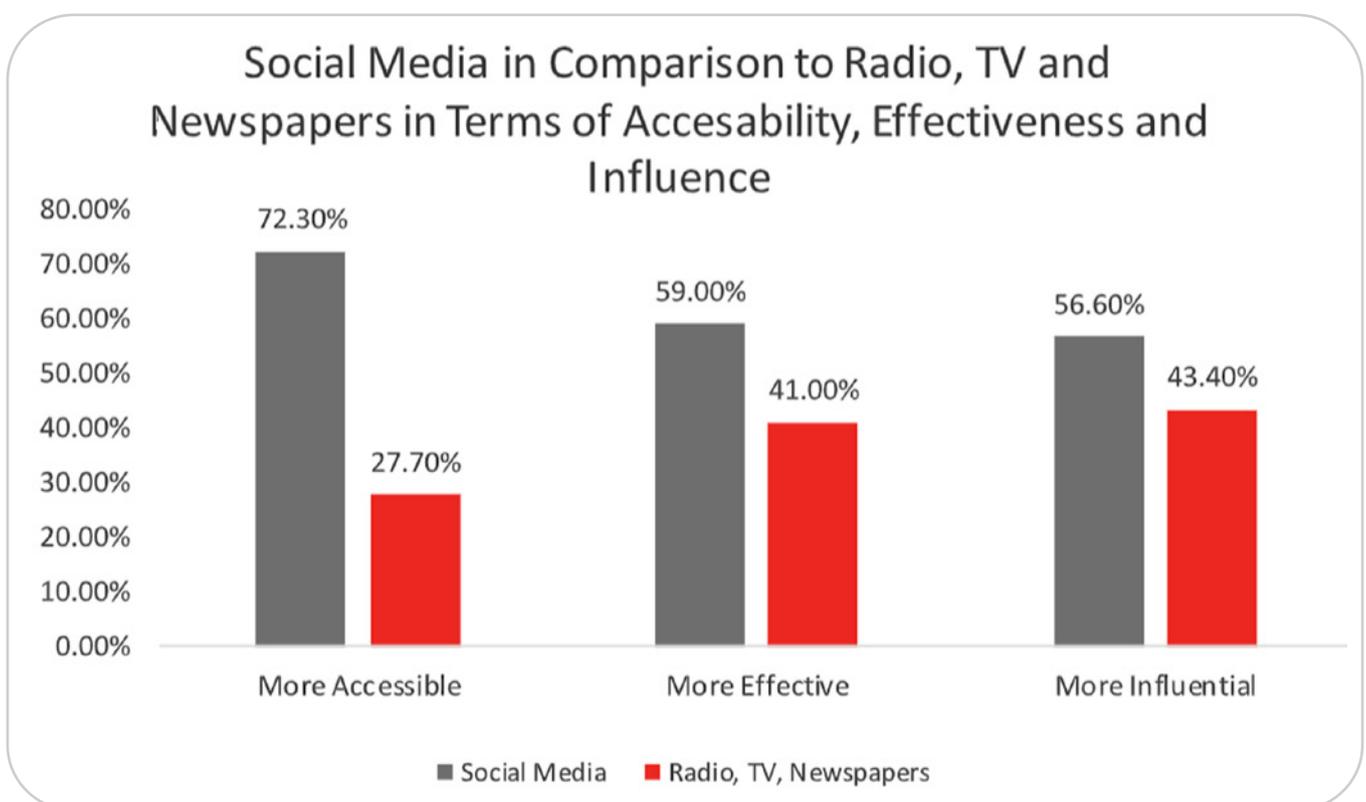

Figure 7:Comparison between Social and Traditional Media in accessibility, effectiveness and influence

Social media and women career progression

There are various views held on the specific ways social media have been particularly useful in advancing the careers of women. In the present study 24 % of respondents felt that social media had helped them in accessing news, updates and information in their career progression while 22 % said that they had accrued assorted personal benefits resulting from use of social media. Eighteen percent said social media had helped to market and profile themselves. As highlighted in Figure 8 below, the other ways the respondents felt social media had supported their careers include: social mobilisation and sensitisation; linkages and networking; as a general enabler or facilitator and for social interaction. On the other hand, it is evident, at 2 %, that the contribution of social media to career progression of women leaders around gender activism is low.

The following chart depicts how social media have assisted women leaders in career progression.


How Social Media has been Helpful in Career Progression

Category	Percentage
News and Information Seeking	24.1%
Personal benefit	21.7%
Marketing	18.1%
Social Mobilisation and Sensitisation	10.8%
Linkages/Networking	8.4%
Enabler (as a tool)	4.8%
Social interaction	4.8%
Gender Activism	2.4%
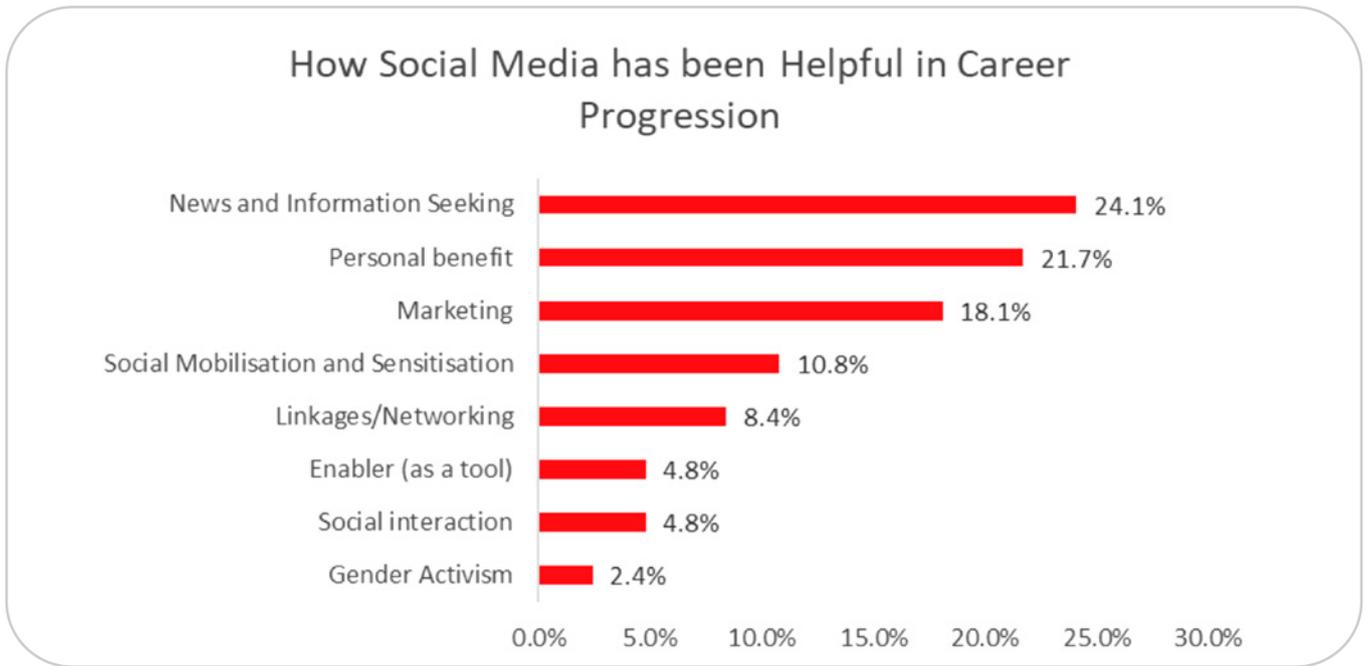
Figure 8:How Social media has been helpful to women's career progression

It is evident that respondents attach much importance to the value of social media to their work as leaders with 89 % agreeing to this (28 % strongly).This is corroborated by the affirmation where 48 % of respondents agreed (12 % strongly) that they would not be where they are without social media. In addition to this, 93 % of respondents agreed (21 % strongly) that social media were a helpful tool for both upcoming and established women leaders. There was also a strong opinion on whether social media were useful to respondents in their work as women leaders, with 89 % agreeing (28 % strongly). The testimonies in the case studies support the above statements.

Linda Kasonde, 42, is a prominent legal practitioner, civil society activist and Award winner based in Lusaka. She holds the record of being the first ever female President of the Law Association of Zambia a position she held from April 2016 until April 2018. She is now the Executive Director of a Zambian NGO she founded called Chapter One Foundation. LinkedIn helped Linda to network with thousands of people globally to help fund Chapter One Foundation, which one of the ardent campaigners for good governance and gender issue in Zambia. She also used social media to disseminate information on governance during her LAZ Presidency. Apart from FB and LinkedIn, Linda has a Twitter account with over 16,000 organic 'followers'. She sums up by saying,

" *Overall, the mobilising force of social media for my civil rights activism is very good and effective.* "

Linda also considers professionalism, integrity, independence and accountability as the main factors which contributed to her success in the use of social media in her activism as well as her career as a lawyer. About cyberbullying Linda adds that,

" *Cyber bullying is real on social media and I am a victim of that. I have experienced that on several occasion through negative comments and insults from people who react to my social media postings on both Twitter and Facebook.* "

Social media wields influence on broad national and gender issues

Overall, the majority (58 %) of the respondents felt that social media were a very good or good mobilising force in gender related campaigns. On the advocacy and activism front, 83 % of respondents agreed (20 % strongly) that social media provided a good platform for them to promote public issues and policy decisions. On the communication/feedback front, 78 % of respondents agreed (13 % strongly) that social media provides a good platform for them to discover what the public is thinking about. This finding augments the response on whether social media is a good way for women leaders to engage the public on political and civic issues where 74 % of respondents were in agreement (15 % strongly).Asked whether social media provides a good platform for women leaders to engage leaders on national issues, 71 % of respondents agreed (13 % strongly).Similarly, the same proportion agreed (12 % strongly)when asked if social media was effective in supporting gender equality in the Zambian political landscape.

Likert Scale on How Women Feel about Social Media

|	
Enhances entrepreneur/business activities.	4.25
Helpful for upcoming (aspirant) and established women	4.04
A good way to create a positive career self-image	3.84
Discover what the public is thinking about them	3.72
A good way engage the public on political and civic...	3.71
A good way engage leaders on national issues	3.62
Promots public issue and policy positions	3.35
Effective for gender equality in political landscape	3.21

Figure 9:How respondents perceive influence of social media on broad gender and national issues

Measures to improve digital environment for women

Various studies, including the present one, have consistently reported high cases of cyber-abuse of women and a generally hostile cyberspace to women, which has had negative consequences on their participation on digital spaces. Therefore, to the question on what should be done to improve the digital environment for female media users, majority (19 %) of the respondents proposed that there should be more women-centric social media platforms; 17 % proposed putting measures to control cyberbullying and social media abuse; nine percent proposed support for women social media platforms and another 9 % proposed cheaper Internet. Figure 10 below presents a summary of the measures proposed by the respondents, most of which also emerged from the case studies.

Ways Social Media Should be Improved to Support Women Aspiring for Or Holding Leadership Positions

|	
More Women Platforms	24%
Control Cyber Bullying and Abuse	22%
Support Women Platforms	12%
Cheaper Internet	11%
Improve Rural Internet Access	6%
Fair Ground for Men and Women	4%
Cyber Training	4%
More Languages on the Internet	1%
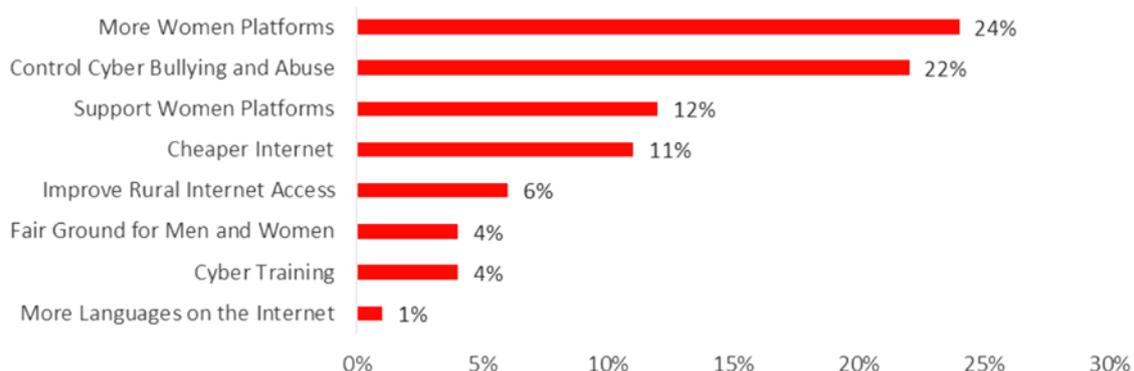
Figure 10: Measures to improve social media as facilitator of women's leadership careers

In the blog sphere, Zambia has very few bloggers and it is this gap that **Brenda Zulu, 50**, has taken advantage of to become an Award-winning blogger whose blogs provide reflections on Information Communication and Technology (ICT) issues in Africa.

Brenda who has 17 years of blogging experience has tutored over 100 bloggers who are currently active bloggers in Zambia. Besides tutoring people on how to blog, she also creates and provides her clients with content on ICT issues.

The prolific blogger has travelled to over 50 countries across the world so far; a huge milestone she says has come as a result of her using social media. However, hustling in the blogsphere hasn't been an easy journey for her as she has suffered the negative repercussions of being on social media. Brenda is now among Zambian bloggers pushing the government to enact laws that can improve the usage of social media in the country. Regarding cyberbullying Brenda, also a victim of digital abuse, says,

> *I firmly believe having cyber laws in place can help support women aspiring for or holding leadership positions. At the moment we women are the most vulnerable when it comes to cyber bullying and other abuses that come with one being on social media.*

Brenda added that,

> *So, going forward, we need the ICT Data Protection Bill, Cyber Security Bill, Cyber Crime Bill, E-Commerce and E-Transaction Bill and even the E-Government Bill to be enacted into laws. If we can have these bills enacted into laws, then social media will provide a favourable environment for all women aspiring as well as those already in leadership positions.*

7.0 Analysis of the Study Findings

7.1 Access to and use of the Internet

The first two research questions asked about the extent of access to and use of the Internet among the women in leadership in Zambia who participated in the survey. The ethnographic study also sought to investigate and characterize the presence of women in top leadership position in the social media spaces and gender-related activism, especially hashtags.

The study highlights some positive cues about the 108 respondents in the study :

■ Relatively high access to and use of the Internet among the sampled women leaders. The study found that of the 108 women leaders, 86(80%) had access to the Internet. It has also established that majority are frequent surfers of the Internet on both daily and weekly basis.

- Internet access among the women in the sample is higher than the national average of 14.3% (77.8 % urban and 22.2 % rural) according to the ZICTA (2018) national survey.

- Majority (58 %) have been long on the Net (more than five years). Previous studies have repeatedly established a positive correction between long experience with the Internet and ability to effectively digital media.

- The study has also established that an overwhelming majority of the respondents access the Internet using data bundles on their phones, which is consistent with many other studies in Africa and globally. It underscores the need to incorporate access to mobile phone, especially smartphone as in interventions focused on improving of social and other digital media among women.

- Another positive factor is that majority of the women regarded their Internet skills as either 'good' or 'very good': Internet savvy is also critical for successful use of social media networking as some studies have repeatedly established.

However, the study also highlights some structural challenges which the women face around accessing and/or using the Internet access that need to be taken account of in any future interventions:

- the fact that one in every five women (20 %) has no access to the Internet is itself a worrying result, given that the Internet is a gateway to social media and other digital media. Although the figure looks small at scale (sample) of the present study, they point to a big problem for majority of the estimated 9,403,696 women at national scale (CSO, 2018).

- It is also worrisome that even those with Internet access, their regular use of it (the Internet) and (ostensibly) social and other digital media is impeded by such challenges as bad Internet connectivity, Internet speed, cost of bundles and others highlighted in the report.

7.2 Access to and use of social media

The second research question asks about access to, experiences with and use social media among the 108 women leaders in the sample.

- The results aver that almost all (83 or 90 %) of the 86 ladies with Internet said that they access and actively use one social media platform or another. Majority also indicated that they frequently use these platforms on a daily and weekly basis. Majority also regard their social media skills as either 'Very good' or 'Good', which it can be said to be demonstrated by the fact almost all of them (84 %) manage their account themselves and only a few (12 %) also have to rely on their staff.

- This entails some remarkable success rate of the interventions focused on promoting this new and rapidly expanding communication resources. In his Network Society theory Manual Castell argues that this new information society is survival of the networked. The functionality of networks is described as follows:

dominant functions and processes in the information age are increasingly organised around networks. Networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies, and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power, and culture (Castells, 1996 in Barney, 2014:2).

- The results assert that whatsApp is the most popular social networking platform used by the women ahead of Facebook (in second place) and Instagram and LinkedIn, in that order. This is a very new finding for Zambia but consistent with global trends. Most recent studies on social media usage in Zambia have placed FB ahead of the other social media platforms (see also previous sections). The 2028 ZICTA national survey, for instance, reported that although Facebook still commanded the most use although WhatsApp had narrowed the gap between 2015 and 2018, with Instagram in third position.

  In 2019 Analytics, a firm that tracks social media usage globally, for instance, reported that,

  In recent years, Facebook has arguably been the most popular app in a lot of major markets across the globe. However, WhatsApp, one of the apps it acquired, has surpassed it in terms of monthly active users https://thenextweb.com/in/17/01/2019/report-whatsapp-surpasses-facebook-as-the-social-networks-most.

- On the question of size of following, the study has established wide range for the four main social media platforms – FB, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp. It has further confirmed that individual accounts on FB have the largest following, followed by Twitter and Instagram. Although WhatsApp has the largest number of users, it has the lowest size of following for its users.

- Notwithstanding the cap on number of followers one can have on WhatsApp, unlike the other platforms, it appears that the respondents are not yet well vested in how to increase 'followers' on WhatsApp. Currently whatsApp allows only 256 participants per group though there are plans to increase the number of participants in future. Experts also advise that "you can use broadcast messaging feature only for contacts and not for groups" https://usergrowth.io/blog/whatsapp-marketing/.

- This findings on social media preferences and size of 'following' among the Zambian women leaders have profound implication on choice of social media platform to use for gender mobilization and activism, given that it appears to be consistent with the national trend in social media preferences and use. The second theory adopted in the study focuses on the role of social media in creating social network ties that can be mobilised, with a particular interest in the "network size, social ties to groups, organizations, and activists, and in diffusion through peer groups" (Boulianne, 2015). On account of this theory, FB and Instagram have a comparative advantage and most attractive to use to reach larger numbers of Zambian women.

- Through the Chi-square tests, this study has also established strong relationships between relationship between income and Internet experience with perceived knowledge of use of social media. It is therefore plausible to infer that individuals who earn more are likely to spend more time on the Net, which in turn improves their social media skills. Likewise, those who have been on the Net for many years are likely to be more Internet savvy and, consequently, enhance their social media skills, as established by other studies world-wide. The negative relationship between knowledge of use of social media and training is not surprising given the very of the respondents indicated having been trained in use of social media. This leaves experience on the Net as the main factor responsible to social media savviness.

- Regarding the motivations for using social media, the findings reveal that more than half of the women use social media for communication and chats with their 'followers'. This finding conforms to the first theory adopted in the study, which focuses on social media "as a forum for gathering information or news from family, friends, or traditional news media organizations" (Dimitrova, et al, 2014).

- A quarter of the women seems to be attracted to use social media for airing their opinions and reviews of what is being said about national issues. There is also a sizeable number that use social media for marketing themselves or their products and services. The use of social media for self-profiling or image building is consistent with the fact that majority of the women in the sample are in politics, which requires selling oneself and wooing voters.

- However, only a very small number of women said they used social media for lobbying activism. This survey finding is consistent with the results of the ethnographic search, which reported very negligible presence of Zambian prominent women on high level digital spaces and low use of social mobilization platforms such as hashtag. For instance, social media sites of women activists and gender-based NGOs do not features among the top sites in the country. Neither have hashtags run by leading women activists have any trace of remarkable achievement (in terms of either number of followers or impact). This is a strong clue of gaps in skills for such advanced social media uses. This is a signpost of skills gap, which is corroborated by the fact that only 13 of the 83 respondents indicated had attended some training in social media use.

- The evidence from the study is that most women are attracted to use social media for chats, airing their opinions on national issues, business/marketing and collaboration and socialisation generally. Very few use social media for gender activism and lobbying. This 'admission' is consistent with absence of women-led advocacy platforms such as hashtags.

7.3 Respondents' experiences with online gender-based violence

One of the objectives of the study was to investigate extent of cyberbullying and abuse of women in leadership in Zambia. The extent of online GBV on social media is denoted by occurrences such as insults, threats to life or career, cyber bullying, verbal abuse and sexual threats perpetrated by other users. The study reveals that a number of the respondents that use social media had experienced one form of abuse or another on their favourite platform. The three most common abuses experienced on social media were by order of ranking demeaning/negative comments, insults and verbal abuse.

Majority of respondents reported Facebook as the most disruptive platform to women leadership career progression, followed by Facebook pages of online newspapers and Twitter. As also hinted by Laura and Saboi in the cited case studies, the perpetrators of abuse normally assume pseudo identities and masquerade under the guise of such identities, knowing very well that they will not be easily recognised on a virtual platform. As noted by Laura, there is a perception that other platforms such as LinkedIn are on the other hand more elitist and therefore only attract a particular category of audience who have no motivation to indulge in social media abuse.

In terms of actual impact of digital abuse on their careers, to the extent that only a few of the women who had experienced abuse considered withdrawing from the position they were vying for and the majority indicated that they 'just ignored' the abuses, the actual impact on their careers can be inferred as minimal. Worth of note, however, is the fact that majority feel that social media are 'so focused on personality that it is hard to get people to pay attention to what is truly important in society.' There is also a strong feeling that the social media 'playing field' is uneven and women are not as free as men on these platforms. The deliberate abuse through personal attacks to divert attentions (as stated above) can be summed up in the following statement by Saboi Imboela,

> *I have been a victim of social media abuse countless times. I have had experiences where I post something on constitutional matters on social media as an activist and politician, and some people who know me as a divorced person will come with personal attacks and say you are just saying that because you don't have a husband.*

The above findings are consistent with other studies in Africa and the world-over. It would appear from the findings that only a few respondents have devised strategies for dealing with online gender-based abuse. This suggests a need for skills in this area too. Lessons can also be learnt from prominent and experienced female social media users such as the ones profiled in this study.

7.4 Influence and impact of social media

The study investigated influence and effectiveness of social media in terms of personal (individual) careers and on broad gender and governance issues. At a personal level the findings suggest that majority of the women in the study appreciate the positive functionalist role social media particularly towards their enhanced business/entrepreneurial activities, networking and easy of communication and positive self-image. A few believe that they would not be where they are in their careers without social media. The below statement by Saboi sums up the views on benefit from social media at a personal level,

> *For me, the positives outweigh the negatives of being on social media. I have benefited and achieved quite a lot. Through social media, my music career thrived. I have been able to market my music through social media.*

> *You can only underestimate the power of social media at your own cost. I got a job at UNDP because of my social media activism which was acknowledged by the UN agency in Zambia. Of course, I qualified for the job but social media exposed me to the opportunity.*

Saboi is the first Zambian to be nominated for a Kora Music Award in South Africa, which she also partly to attributes her use of social media. On the whole, the women are appreciative of the added value of social media to their careers.

At a broad level majority of the women leaders in the sample perceive social media as very influential and helpful in improving the situations and lives of women and for advocacy on a broad range of national issues. On the other hand, the use of social media for activism has been unexpectedly very low. Activism on topical issues has been met with resistance or social media GBV abuse and this does not sit well with most women, as they cannot directly confront the perpetrators of such abuse on social media.

In terms comparative of accessibility, effectiveness and influence between social media and traditional media, the results affirm that majority of respondents perceive social media more favourably than traditional media. This finding is consistent with others in Africa and Zambia, which highlight the growing use of social media for news and information (for instance, Mbozi, 2019). Figure xx below is taken from PhD research by Mbozi (2019).
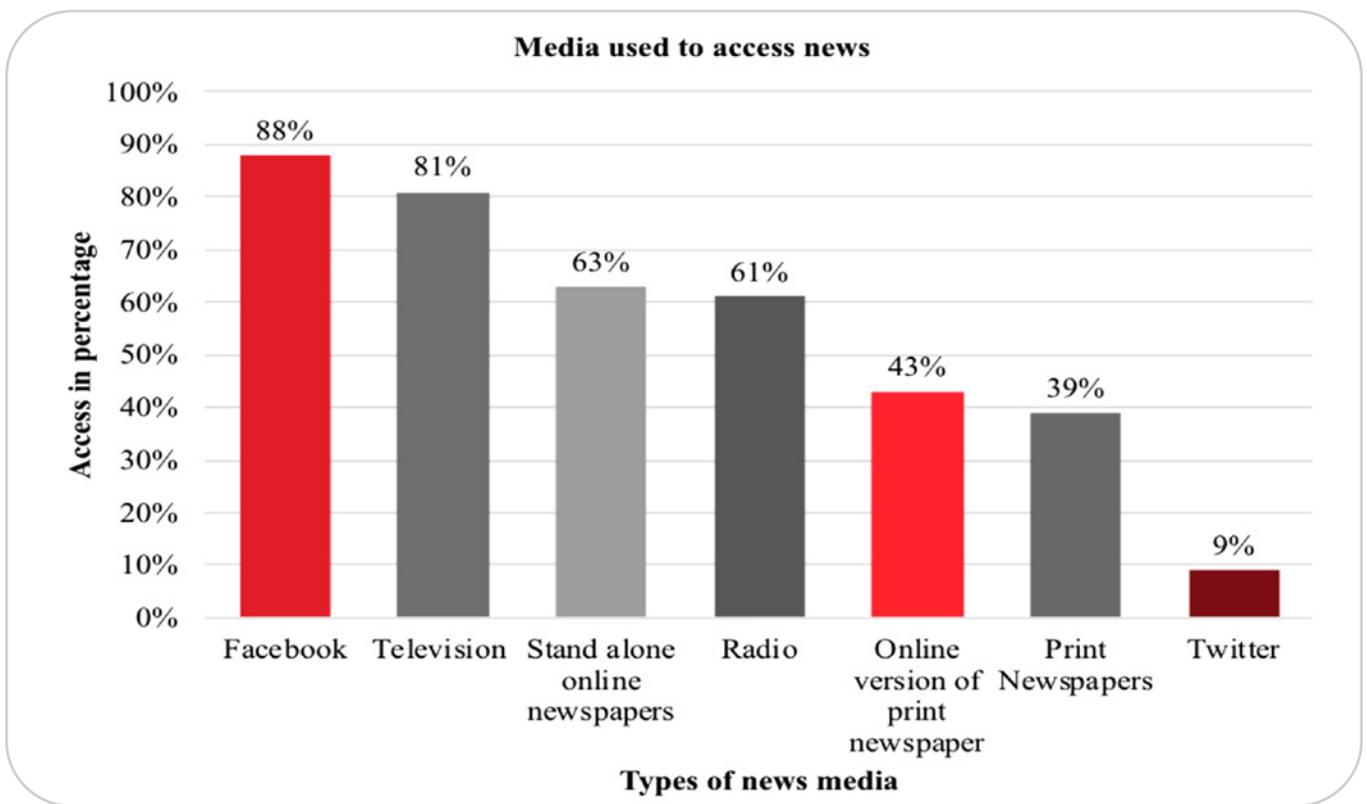

Figure 11:Comparison of access between online newspapers and other mass media
Source: (Mbozi, 2019).

7.5 Measures to improve digital environment for women

In terms of what should be done to protect women from cyberbullying and social media abuses and improve the online environment generally, for starters all the women involved in the study strongly agree that something should be about it. This perhaps explains why they all volunteered their suggestions of what ought to be done. Their proposals range from enactment of favourable policies, regulatory and legal frameworks to capacity building and solidarity through women-led social media platforms.

8.0 Conclusion

Access to and use of the Internet and social media

1. The results of the study are conclusive that there is high (one in five women) access to and use of the Internet and social media among the Zambian women in leadership or aspiring for leadership. However, the extent of access to and use of social media is hampered by lack of Internet access, smartphone and poor Internet speed and connectivity.

2. It is also fair to conclude that use of social media among the Zambian women would be higher with increased Internet access, especially in rural areas, and without the structural bottlenecks of slow Internet speed, connectivity problems, cost of Internet bundles and smartphones and other challenges reported by the respondents.

3. The results are also conclusive that an overwhelming majority of Zambian women leaders access the Internet and social media using data bundles on their phones. This is in line with the global trend and makes smartphone ownership an imperative for any interventions around social media use among women leaders.

4. The results are also conclusive that WhatsApp and Facebook are the preferred and most used by Zambian women leaders, with Instagram and LinkedIn in distant third and fourth places respectively. WhatsApp has overtaken FB as the social networking platform of choice among majority of women leaders. However, FB commends a comparative advantage in terms of the sizes of 'followers' and linkages that the women are connected to individually and collectively.

5. It is also plausible to conclude that longer experience with the Internet and training in turn improve social media skills. Likewise, improving income is a critical intervention for social media access and use among women in leadership. This mainly applies to Facebook, whose primary purpose is achieved through strong linkages and networks (Theory 1 in this study), and, consequently, more costly.

6. Although most of the respondents claimed to be well skilled in both use of the Internet and in managing the social media accounts, the results from both the ethnographic and survey studies reveal inadequate use of relevant social media platforms for specific and sophisticated purposes, e.g. activism and social mobilization, through such methods as hashtags.

7. The study found and documents some classical and creative use of social media among some prominent women for both personal career progression and on national matters. The case studies presented in the report have documented some of the 'best' practices. The report also highlights the use of social media by two prominent politicians – Princess Kasune and Dora Siliya - to inform the nation that they had tested positive for the dreaded Covid 19 virus and to warn the citizens to take the disease seriously. Hon Siliya holds the powerful position of Minister of Information and Broadcasting Services. Hon Kasune is an opposition Member of Parliament for Keembe constituency.

Respondents' experiences with online gender-based violence

1. Some women, albeit being in the minority, have experienced abuse of one form or another on social media. It appears that high profile individuals involved in activism and governance issues at national level and those with very active accounts, including all the four profiled in the study, are the most affected.

2. The results of the study are conclusive that Facebook is considered the most disruptive online platform. It is also the platform that has the largest audience or followership, which makes it a double-edged sword. Most of the abuses come in the form of negative and demeaning statements, insults, verbal abuse, cyberbullying and hacking of accounts run by women leaders.

3. Messaging platforms, notably Twitter and LinkedIn are considered elitist by most of the women leaders. However, they are also regarded as niche platforms by some women in the corporate and civil society space which they use to showcase their profiles and advance a specific agenda. These channels are perceived as more respectable and less prone to verbal abuse.

4. Most of the women leaders do not seem to have a clear strategy for dealing with social media abuse. The majority 'just ignore' the abuses. Although the study did not probe the reasons for 'just ignoring' such abuses, one plausible assumption is that they have no skills for dealing with the situations.

5. Majority of the respondents perceive digital spaces to be uneven in favour of men. There is also a strong feeling among most respondents that social media deliberately focus on the women's personality to divert attention from the truly important societal issues that they raise and to humiliate them. Therefore, although the number of affected women in the study appears to be moderate, the impact on women's participation cannot be under-estimated, especially on a national scale.

6. In terms of actual impact of digital abuse on their careers, to the extent that only a few of the women who had experienced abuse considered withdrawing from the position they were vying for and the majority indicated that they 'just ignored' the abuses, the actual impact on their careers can be inferred as minimal.

7. There is need for measures to protect women from cyberbullying and social media abuses and to improve the online environment generally. The measures include enactment of favourable regulatory and legal frameworks, training and supporting women solidarity through women-led, women friendly social media platforms and networks.

Effectiveness and influence of social media

1. At a personal level, the findings suggest that majority of the women in the study appreciate the positive functionalist role social media particularly towards their enhanced business/entrepreneurial activities, networking and ease of communication and positive self-image. A few believe that they would not be where they are in their careers without social media.

2. At a broad national level, social media are generally perceived to be influential and helpful in improving the situations and lives of women and for advocacy on a broad range of national issues. However, the actual use of these media for activism and for driving real change and livelihood transformation has been marginal and their full potential not fully exploited.

3. Majority of the respondents perceive social media to be more accessible, effective and influential than traditional media for their career progression. This underscores the need for more interventions around this resource vis-à-vis career progression for women in leadership.

9.0 Recommendations

1. There is need for targeted and advanced training in use of social media, particularly for activism, advocacy and lobbying, crowd sourcing and protection from cyberbullies, e.g. on how to report to 'safety centres'. There is also need to train and equip women in or aspiring for leadership with latest communication and social networking and mobilization skills, gadgets and Apps such as zoom, skype, etc.

2. The package for future interventions around use of social media should include access to the Internet and ownership of a smartphone.

3. For purposes of reaching the most numbers of audiences with gender related messages, a combined use of social networking and messaging sites is recommended, in particular FB, Instagram, LinkedIn and WhatsApp.

4. There is need for Government enact laws to protect women and other vulnerable social and online media users. Some of these include: the ICT Data Protection Bill, Cyber Security Bill, Cyber Crime Bill Government. However, stakeholders should be watchful to make sure these laws do not produce boomerang results, such as shrinking further the digital spaces.

5. We also recommend that Hivos should support more documentation, appropriate packaging and wide dissemination of outstanding case studies of use of social media for various purposes and with proven impact. This should be regarded as one of the capacity building interventions.

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