ADULTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON YOUTH: A CASE STUDY OF MATOKS YOUTH IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA.

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED

BY

MINKIE NGOKOANA MAPASHA

STUDENT NUMBER: 18009883

TO THE

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, MEDIA STUDIES AND LINGUISTICS

IN THE

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, SOCIAL SCIENCES AND EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

FOR

THE MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA STUDIES

MSC6300

SUPERVISOR: DR MABIKA M

CO-SUPERVISOR: MR CHAUKE

2024

© University of Venda

Declaration

I, MINKIE NGWAKWANA MAPASHA, declare that the dissertation entitled, “Adults’ Perceptions of the Influence of Social Media on Youth: A Case Study of Matoks Youth in Limpopo Province, South Africa**”,** hereby submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Media Studies at the University of Venda, is my academic work, and has not previously by any means submitted at another university or faculty. All resources that I have used and quoted have been indicated or acknowledged by means of completed references.

Signature : MNmapasha... Date : 10-01-2025

© University of Venda

Dedication

I dedicate this study to my lovely daughter, BONTLE, who was always very understanding and never disturbed me while I was busy with this work. I know you missed my presence a lot, but you always wore a smile that kept me going. I will always love and cherish you. May God, our creator and Christ, our saviour, bless you, my daughter.

© University of Venda

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following individuals for their assistance in making this research project possible:

- My supervisor and co-supervisor, Dr Mabika and Mr Chauke, for their guidance, patience and superior expertise.
- My parents for their patience, endless support, and love.
- My elder brother, Refilwe Mapasha, and my elder sister, Mampu Mashamaite, for their endless support and love.
- My younger sisters and brother for their understanding and undivided support.
- My lovely participants who took their time to be part of my project.
- God almighty, it is only through Him that I have come this far. Thank you

© University of Venda

Abstract

Social networking has become a common international trend that has spread its reach to almost every corner of the world. The use of social media sites has evolved into an online platform where people create content, share it, bookmark it and network at a prodigious rate. Among the prominent users of social media are the youth. This study explored the perception of adults on the influence of social media on youth behaviour change in Matoks, Limpopo Province. The research sample consisted of eighteen (18) respondents, both nine (9) males and nine (9) females, whose ages ranged between 36 and 39 years, who owned mobile phones and who had social media accounts, which enabled them to see what the youth in Matoks are doing compared to what they are exposing themselves to and/or posting on social media. Purposive sampling was adopted to sample the study population members. The method used to collect data was the semi-structured interview. The study found that social media has both positive and negative impacts on youth behaviour change of the young people in Matoks, depending on users' interests and how they use social media. These findings showed that young people in Matoks use social media platforms such as TikTok, WhatsApp and Facebook to communicate with their friends and families, whereas some use them to receive updates, recent vacancies and news update. The study also found that social media enables young people in Matoks to stay up to date, produce content, and even take part in social activities related to causes that are important to them, including racial justice and climate change. On the contrary, other findings revealed that social media use affects the mental health of the young people in Matoks negatively.

Keywords: Social Media, Learners, Networking, Academic Life, Internet.

© University of Venda

Abbreviations and acronyms

GPA	: Grade Points Average
UGT	: Uses and Gratification Theory
TRA	: Theory of Reasoned Action
SCT	: Social Cognitive Theory

© University of Venda

Contents

Declaration i
Dedication ii
Acknowledgements iii
Abstract iv
Abbreviations and acronyms v
CHAPTER ONE 1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY 1
1.1 Introduction 1
1.2 Background of the study 2
1.3 Statement of the problem 6
1.4 Aim of the study 7
1.5 Objectives 7
1.6 Research questions 8
1.7 Significance of the study 8
1.8 Definition of the concepts 8
1.8.1 Adult 8
1.8.2 Behavioural change 9
1.8.3 Media 9
1.8.4 Networking 9
1.8.5 Social Media 10
1.8.6 Youth 10
1.9 Conclusion 10
CHAPTER TWO 11
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 11
2.1 Introduction 11
2.2 Conceptualising of Social Media 11
2.2.1 WhatsApp Messenger 12
2.2.2 Facebook 13
2.2.3 X (Formally known as Twitter) 13
2.3 Forms of Social Network Sites 15
2.4 Inverse impact on social media platforms 15

© University of Venda

2.5 social media and youth 17
2.6 Scholarship on the use and influence of social media among youth globally 18
2.7 Theoretical framework 34
2.7.1 Uses and Gratification, Social Cognitive Theory and Theory of Reasoned Action 35
2.7.2 Uses and Gratification Theory 36
2.7.3 The Social Cognitive Theory 41
2.7.4 Theory of Reasoned Action 42
2.8 Summary of the Chapter 44
CHAPTER 3 45
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 45
3.1 Introduction 45
3.2 Research design 45
3.3 Case study 46
3.4 Descriptive design 46
3.5 Research method 47
3.5.1 Qualitative Research Method 47
3.6 Study area 48
3.7 Population and sampling procedure 49
3.7.1 Population 49
3.7.2 Sampling 49
3.8 Data collection instrument 50
3.8.1 Semi-structured interview face-to-face interviews 51
3.9 Data analysis 53
3.9.1 Qualitative Data Analysis 53
3.9.2 Thematic analysis 54
3.9.3 Data analysis process 55
3.10 Ethical considerations 55
3.10.1 Informed Consent 56
3.10.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity 57
3.10.3 Privacy 57
3.10.4 Protection from harm 58

© University of Venda

3.10.5 Voluntary participation 58
3.11 Chapter Summary 58
CHAPTER 4 60
DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION 60
4.1 Introduction 60
4.2 Biographical profile of participants 60
4.3 Collected data presentation 61
4.3.1 Do you think the youth in Matoks spend much time on social media? 62
4.3.2. Influence of social media on youth in Matoks 64
4.3.3. Influence of social media use on employment of the youth in Matoks 66
4.3.4 Do you think social media use has a negative or positive influence on individuals with mental health concerns? Explain why? 69
4.3.5 In your view, what are some of the risks that come with the use of social media? 71
4.3.6 What are some of the ways that can be used to help the youth use social media wisely? 74
4.4 Data analysis and interpretation 77
4.4.1 Theme 1: Frequency of social media usage by youth 77
4.4.2 Theme 2: Social media use by youth 78
4.4.3 Theme 3: Using social media for employment 81
4.4.4 Theme 4: Social media mental health concerns 83
4.4.5 Theme 5: Social media risks 86
4.4.6 Theme 6: Ways to use social media wisely 89
4.5 Discussion of findings 93
4.5.1. Influence of social media on youth in Matoks 97
4.5.2 Procedures to reduce the negative effects of social media on youth in Matoks 102
4.6 Chapter Summary 104
CHAPTER 5 106
SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS 106
5.1 Introduction 106
5.2 Summary of research findings 106
5.3 Limitations 107

© University of Venda

5.4 Major recommendations of the study 108
5.5 Contribution of the study to the body of knowledge 109
5.5.1. Theoretical Contributions 109
5.5.2. Practical Contributions 109
5.5.3. Policy Contributions 109
5.6 Suggestions for further research 110
5.7 Conclusion 110
References 112
7. Appendices 123
Appendix A: Questionnaires 123
Appendix B: Letter to seek permission to conduct the study 124
Appendix C: Editing and proofreading certificate 128

© University of Venda

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The influence of social media on youth's behavioural change is a call for concern as the advent of social media has significantly influenced several aspects of society, especially the behaviour of youth. The world is increasingly connected through social media, and this interconnectedness has significant implications for young people's behaviour.

Noradilah, Mohd and Najmi (2017) once said, 'Is social media representing modern change in behaviour?' This question highlights the thoughtful impact of social media on our perceptive abilities, and nowhere is this more relevant than in the lives of today's youth. However, the perspectives of adults on social media's impact on youth behaviour have fundamentally gone unexplored. Adults play a critical role in shaping the perception of social media's impact on youth behaviour. According to a study conducted by the Pew Research Centre, 72% of adults believe that social media has a negative impact on youth behaviour (Akram & Kumar, 2017). This is likely because adults are more aware of the dangers associated with social media, such as cyberbullying, online predators, and the negative effects of comparison.

This research assesses the perception of adults on the influence of social media on youth behaviour change in Matoks, Limpopo Province. Social media is always displaying various behavioural changes everywhere, dramatically altering how we live. This tool has become an active element of life in Matoks in Limpopo Province because it is a platform which allows youth to interact freely and markedly, unlike at any other time in history (Uche & Nwosu, 2023). While any social media platform can be put to good or bad use, depending on the users, many parents continued to buy their children smartphones and personal computers so they may use them. Hence, scholars such Matthes, Thomas,

© University of Venda

Stevic and Schmuck (2021) claim that parents are to blame for their lack of control over children's use of social media platforms.

1.2 Background of the study

The use of social media has now become a global phenomenon where users have access to adopt behaviours shared online (Siddiqui & Singh, 2016). Misuse and the adoption of bad behaviours have now become a crisis in society as they affect society, and users tend to forget their cultural norms, beliefs, and values. During the pandemic, there have been more events, which resulted in online-adoption of immoral behaviour and caused serious concern as South African society has many cultural norms. This increase has raised international concerns about the influence of social media on youth behaviour change (Zeitel-Bank, 2014).

According to recent studies, social media is having a big impact on West African cultural norms, which contradicts past beliefs that traditional customs are untouched by digital technology. For instance, social media has transformed communication, self-expression, and even family relations in Ghana, where it has become an essential part of young culture (Kwatei, 2024). Platforms like Instagram and TikTok provide opportunities for enterprise and cultural celebration, but they also bring Western ideals that may be at odds with traditional beliefs. Social media is both a tool for promoting African culture and a factor in its decline, according to Uche and Nwosu (2023). In order to maintain cultural sustainability, they support deliberate attempts to incorporate traditional values into digital environments. According to Onuh (2023), the prevalence of Western-designed platforms may also quietly alter African cultural imagination, impacting social ethics and family structures, among other things.

Though Benin is best categorised among the West African countries for its consistent use of social media for behavioural change affecting human interaction and development. The East African region is prone to benefit from social media for communication purposes and updates. Youth nowadays are typically more linked to social media platforms than earlier

© University of Venda

generations, and youth are understandably concerned about the possible influence on their psychological well-being and mental health, where they enhance their knowledge through challenges on TikTok and trends on Twitter, which is now called X (Siddiqui & Singh, 2016). However, it is critical to examine youth's viewpoints and undertake further study to acquire a thorough knowledge of the impacts of social media on youth behaviour change and how they react to the information and content they imitate on social media platforms. This will assist in shaping successful initiatives for encouraging responsibility and healthy social media usage among youth, as well as addressing youth's concerns. Live events on TikTok and Facebook have enabled users to engage with others, connect and share stories or personal experiences about their lives and their environment. Furthermore, Utz and Breuer (2019) believe that parents should participate in open and honest talks with youth regarding social media use, giving direction and assistance to help them navigate.

The continuous use of social media has indeed transformed how youth adopt behaviour (Chawada, 2013). Social media platforms are designed to keep society engaged. When youth use them repetitively, they begin to train their opinions, emotional state, and inspirations. Youth may find comfort in escaping discomposure or anxiety by reaching for their phones. However, this constant engagement can compromise the ability to attend to what truly matters most.

Youth have often used social media as a cycle of social comparison to compare their lives, achievements, and appearances with others, leading to negative feelings like jealousy, indignity, anxiety, or arrogance. These emotions can affect the overall welfare of youth. Without even realising it, youth can learn new behaviours and values from social media (Deborah, 2015). Sometimes, these values stick, even when they are not advantageous for them. The persistent exposure to content shapes human's perception of what is important, both online and offline. Social media can also inspire influencers to play a significant role in shaping behaviour, especially among youth. Their individual features, including sentiments, criticisms, and existence choices, interconnect and influence young people's attitudes and decisions.

© University of Venda

For some, being influencers is more than a profession; they can express feelings on numerous topics and products, influencing their followers' behaviour and choices because promotion strategies progressively rely on influencer validations (Duckworth & Gross, 2020). Moreover, the global number of social media users has risen significantly, affecting how youth see themselves and interact with others. Social media platforms have become a new horizon of usage and notions, affecting their thoughts and behaviour.

By enabling users to establish personal profiles and interact with others to build well-defined social networks, social media has opened up new avenues for communication (Giunchiglia et al., 2018). Parental views on social media use have a big influence on how kids behave and interact online in these networks, especially when it comes to younger users. Parents may help their children build healthy habits and limit the danger of harmful behaviour by establishing clear rules and standards, demonstrating responsible usage, and actively speaking with them about social media (Akram & Kumar, 2017). This is an important factor to examine when discussing the influence of social media on teenage behaviour modification since it emphasises the significance of adults in moulding youth behaviour in connection to social media (Zeitel-Bank, 2014).

The influence of social media on youth behaviour change, as seen by adults, is a complex and significant problem (Zeng, 2014). The importance of social media in the daily lives of today's youth cannot be overstated, and it has far-reaching consequences for their conduct as well as their growth. Adults, especially parents, educators, and others in the community, are responsible for influencing and directing teenage behaviour, particularly within the realm of social media use. Parents' opinions, specifically, have a significant impact on the conduct of young people. As we navigate the ever-changing digital world, adults must participate in positive discussions and take proactive steps to promote the well-being and healthy development of the next generation (Linda, 2010).

Social media has become an integral part of the life of every individual in the 21st century. However, social media addiction in the younger age group is a major problem (Giunchiglia

© University of Venda

et al., 2018). The word "social media" was coined in 2004, but the notion has existed much longer. Before the introduction of social media, individuals communicated through one-way channels like radio, television, and newspapers (Zeng, 2014). However, with the advent of social media, people are now able to participate in two-way communication, allowing them to share their ideas, views, and experiences with a larger audience. Six Degrees was the first social media site, launching in 1997 and allowed users to establish accounts and make friends with one another (Shabir et al., 2014). Since then, several social media networks have evolved, including Friendster, Myspace, Facebook, Twitter, and Mxit. These platforms have altered how individuals interact, making it simpler and more comfortable for them to engage with one another (Chawada, 2013).

Social media has emerged as one of the most vital means of communication used by youth globally, according to Rice and Barman (2013). It helps ease communication challenges among people regardless of the expanse, making it easy for people to share information, files, pictures and videos, create blogs and send messages, and conduct real-time conversations. Therefore, Akram and Kumar (2017) note that social media allows someone to interact with anyone else, get connected, create and exchange information and share thoughts and ideas. Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and X are the most popular and are mostly used by youth.

The various social media sites mentioned can help to update people, especially youth, about almost anything happening around them. Although social media sites have advantages, they also have their downside (Chawada et al., 2013). For this reason, it is crucial for every social media user to indulge online while being aware of online dangers such as cyberbullying, which has negatively affected a number of victims of all ages, especially the youth. According to Uma Rani and Padmalosani (2019), teenage lifestyles are considered to be significantly influenced by mass media, including printed, electronic, and online publications. Most teenagers like watching television, and the antagonist characters in the shows they watch indirectly impact them. However, communication practices started to change during the 21st century. Users favour using internet services to access online information.

© University of Venda

This technology enables quick data transfer while also effectively conserving time. Utilising the internet also allows for increased information input. You can access a diverse array of global information via the internet, including news, sending and receiving e-mail, shopping, entertainment, watching, and more. The usage of technology in information and communication has increased as a result of the development of computers and the internet, creating more opportunities for people to learn from exposure to these technologies. However, it appears that customers can freely voice their thoughts and communicate with one another around the world through the mass media (Uma Rani & Padmalosani, 2019).

The nature and usage of social media by youth may vary from site to site. Through social media, users can connect online friends and group memberships to keep in touch with current friends, connect with old friends or form real-life friendships through similar interests or groups (Deborah, 2015). Above and beyond forming important social relationships, social media members can share their interests with other compatible members by joining groups and media. Some interactions can also help members to find jobs or create business contacts (Siddiqui & Singh, 2016). Most social media also offer additional structures. It was, therefore, the aim of this study to assess the perception of adults on the influence of social media on the youth behaviour change in Matoks, Limpopo Province.

1.3 Statement of the problem

This study was based on the assumption that the growth of mobile phones and the advancement of media technology have significantly influenced how people communicate daily. The study conducted by Habes et al. (2018) states that social media use among today's youths is growing exponentially and gaining more and more popularity among youth. Due to this increased popularity, there is a growing concern over the possible influences the use of social media could have on the behaviour of youth. Therefore, this study explored the perception of adults on the influence of social media on the youth

© University of Venda

behaviour change of Matoks youth in Limpopo Province. There is little knowledge about how adults see social media's impact on kids, despite its use among South African youth growing quickly, especially in rural areas like Matoks in the province of Limpopo. Many studies have looked at how social media affects young people's behaviour, mental health, and academic achievement, but most of them have concentrated on the viewpoints of the young people themselves (e.g., Twenge, 2017; Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). Though these studies tend to be conducted in urban or global North contexts and tend to generalize findings without taking specific local dynamics into consideration, a smaller body of research has started to examine adults' perspectives on youth social media use, including those of parents, educators, and community leaders (Chukwuere & Chukwuere, 2017; Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020). It is also unclear how adults in rural South African communities understand social media's emotional, social, and behavioural impacts on young people, and how their cultural, educational, and socioeconomic realities influence these perspectives. By concentrating on the Matoks community in particular, our study aims to close that gap. In order to provide culturally appropriate treatments, media literacy training, and support networks specifically designed for rural adolescents, it seeks to highlight the complex worries, observations, and expectations of adults about young social media usage.

1.4 Aim of the study

- The aim of the study was to find out the perception of adults on the influence of social media on the youth behaviour change in Matoks, Limpopo Province. the study seeks to find adults' perceptions

1.5 Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

- To establish perceptions of adults in Matoks, Limpopo Province, South Africa, on how social media influences youth.
- To ascertain why adults believe social media affects the youth in Matoks, Limpopo Province, South Africa.

© University of Venda

- To identify possible ways to combat the negative effects of social media by youth of Matoks.

1.6 Research questions

The research questions of the study were:

- How do adults perceive the influence of social media on the youth of Matoks?
- To explore why adults believe social media influences youth the way it does.
- What can be done to reduce the negative effects of social media on youth in Matoks?

1.7 Significance of the study

The findings of this study will bridge the gap about the lack of sufficient information on the influence of social media among the youth on behaviour change in Matoks, Limpopo Province. The findings of this study may also be useful to policymakers in various government sectors. For instance, in the educational sector, curriculum developers will use the findings when developing a curriculum for the youth. In the health ministry, it will help doctors, especially those dealing with youth counselling, know which tools to use to effectively communicate with the youth. The study's results are likely to influence further scholarly research by other researchers who may be interested in this field of knowledge and initiate appropriate mitigation.

1.8 Definition of the concepts

1.8.1 Adult

An adult is an individual who has reached the age of majority. The age of majority refers to the age at which a person will be defined by law to be an adult. According to Herzog (2020), an adult is a person who is older than 25 years of age. According to this study, an adult refers to a person who has achieved the age legally recognised by majority, which

© University of Venda

is usually 18 years or older, as they are considered responsible and mature (Khuluvhe, 2022). It might include psychological, social, or constitutional elements, and researchers may use criteria like age, maturity level, legal rights and obligations, or other relevant variables.

1.8.2 Behavioural change

According to Duckworth (2020), a behaviour change can be a temporary or permanent effect that is considered a change in an individual's behaviour when compared to previous behaviour. It is sometimes considered a mental disorder, yet it is also a strategy used to improve such disorders. This change is generally characterised by changes in thinking, interpretation, emotions or relationships. These changes can be either good or bad, depending on which behaviour is affected. This could be caused by peer pressure, social customs, social livelihood, and the influence of family, friends, social groups, and social networks, which can all affect behaviour. According to this study, behaviour change refers to the process of making a conscious effort to change someone's behaviour to attain a certain goal or adapt to new circumstances.

1.8.3 Media

It refers to the communication channels through which we disseminate news, music, movies, education, promotional messages and other data. It includes physical and online newspapers and magazines, television, radio, billboards, telephone, the Internet, fax and billboards (Techopedia).

1.8.4 Networking

It means the skill of creating meaningful connections and partnerships via open communication and mutual support. It refers to using internet-based social media sites to stay connected with friends, family, colleagues, or customers. Social networking can have

© University of Venda

a social purpose, a business purpose, or both through sites like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and WhatsApp (Utz & Breuer, 2019).

1.8.5 Social Media

Manning (2014) defines “social media” as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.

1.8.6 Youth

Youth refers to an individual who is at the age of transition from teenage years to adulthood or transition from being dependent on others to independence. It is an age characterised by high levels of energy, resourcefulness and innovation (Noel, 2018). The South Africa National Youth Policy and the National Youth Commission Act (1996) describe youth as everyone aged 14 to 35 years.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented the study, discussed the background of the study, problem statement, aim of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study and explanation of the key concepts in relation to the perception of adults on the influence of social media on the youth behaviour change: A case study of Matoks youth in Limpopo Province, South Africa. The next chapter involves the literature related to the study topic.

© University of Venda

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The study aimed to explore how adults perceive the impact of social media on youth in Matoks, Limpopo Province. The researcher presented various perspectives from researchers and scholars on the role of social media in secondary schools. The literature review chapter is divided into the following sections: conceptualisation of social media, types of social networking sites, reverse effects of social media platforms, social media and youth, and scholarship on the use and influence of social media on youth globally. The chapter also discusses the study's theoretical framework and concludes with a summary of the chapter, including the theories of use and gratification and social cognatic theory.

2.2 Conceptualising of Social Media

Social media has been defined differently by different scholars. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 61) define social media as “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 contents”. These technologies include tools like blogs, video sharing, presentation sharing, instant messaging, and social networking (Gaál et al., 2015). Leavey (2013) defines social media as a social structure made of nodes comprised of individuals or organisations tied by one or more specific types of interdependencies, such as values, ideas, financial exchange, friendship, kinship, dislike, conflict, or trade. An online whatis.com (2014) defines social media as the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing, and collaboration.

From the preceding definitions, social media is media for interaction and relationships, largely informal, and they are now a popular means of communication and quite

© University of Venda

accessible. They are popular because they can be easily accessed on various platforms using laptops, netbooks, personal computers (PCs), tablet computers, and smartphones (Dominick, 2012:94). Social media takes on different forms, including Internet forums, microblogging, podcasts, social networking, bookmarking, wikis, social curation, and weblogging. Examples of social media include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Myspace, blogs, Flickr, Buzz, Myspace, Orkut, and other highly interactive websites. Another noticeable characteristic of social media is its lack of strict institutional gatekeeping compared to traditional media.

Social media users are free to write and post all sorts of materials, which might not be socially responsible and ethically right to people connected to them on such media platforms. Furthermore, social media outlets are often not paid for. This is one reason that accounts for many users on these sites worldwide. Most of these social media sites are free; users need to be connected to the Internet register, and they are open to using any social media channel for interaction and communication. Some examples of popular social media forms are as follows:

2.2.1 WhatsApp Messenger

According to AL-Rahmi and Othman (2018), WhatsApp Messenger is a constrained cross-stage texting club management for mobile devices and selectively picked showcase devices that use the internet for communication. Clients can send and transfer movies, sound media messages, and photographs in addition to content transmission, just as their location utilises coordinated mapping features. WhatsApp Messenger has provided new avenues for interaction and collaboration between learners and educators in pairs or in groups. WhatsApp permits users to use text, audio or video in their interactions, hence its usefulness to learners and educators. WhatsApp is now available on nearly all smartphones and is becoming increasingly popular (Shaaban, 2020).

© University of Venda

2.2.2 Facebook

Facebook allows any user who admits to being no less than thirteen years old to become a recruited patron of the website. According to Roblyer (2010), patrons must enrol before using the web page, after which they may make a profile, add clients as acquaintances, alternate messages, and get programmed warnings after refreshing their profile. Also, patrons can join normal intrigue gatherings, composed by the aid of working environment, college or characteristics, and sort their partners into records, for instance, “people from workplace” or “dear families” as noted by AL-Rahmi and Othman (2018). Facebook is the most prominent person-to-person communication. The App empowers its clients to share photographs, make profiles and videos, and stay in contact with companions, family, and partners.

2.2.3 X (Formally known as Twitter)

X is a social networking website that enables users to send and receive messages of up to 140 characters, known as “tweets,” as well as to read texts and postings that have been sent by others. According to Mushtaq (2018), customers can message persons they “follow” their updates, freely respond to messages, and post queries or comments about their current situation. From many angles, this social media platform (X) enables social communities to communicate with people of all ages. X plays a role in communication by offering an online service that allows users to connect with one another and share information by creating accounts that can include personal blogs and pages. According to Jonah (2013), X influences behaviour by causing psychological confusion through reliance on social network access. Similarly, X affects behaviour because the site is accessible to everyone (Jaclyn, 2011).

The variety of social media platforms and the mediums they come in whether mobile phone applications or Internet-based websites –underlines the speed with which social media has transformed the provision of news and opinion across Africa (Onslow, 2021). Asur and Huberman (2010) postulated that the ease of use, speed, and reach of social

© University of Venda

media has led to a change in the manner of societal discourse in society and has become a trendsetter for topics ranging “from the environment and politics to technology and the entertainment industry”.

This has become a medium where people gather and express their opinions in a simplified manner and in real-time. This characteristic of social media allows people to expand their ideas and influence in many areas (Adelaja, 2013). Thus, the development of social media tools over the last decade has altered modes of communication in Africa. Social media unifies geographically dispersed individuals on virtual platforms through user-generated content. It extends the social sphere beyond its usual boundaries but remains embedded in the material and symbolic context where its users live.

Furthermore, social media brings different material and symbolic content, resulting in more hybrid online interactions where users navigate between place-based and trans-local social media values (Simons, 2019). One of the main ways in which social media has enabled this hybridisation is through the use of location-based features. For example, social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and X allow users to tag their posts with their current location or check into specific places, which can help create a sense of community and connection to a particular place. At the same time, social media platforms also enable users to connect with people and communities that are located far away, allowing for trans-local interactions (Tagg & Seargeant, 2014). This can be particularly beneficial for individuals who may not have access to local communities that share their interests or values.

However, while social media has opened new opportunities for hybrid online interactions, it has also raised some concerns about its impact on social cohesion and community building (Li & Sakamoto, 2014). Some researchers have argued that the focus on trans-local interactions may lead to a weakening of local ties and a decline in social capital within communities (Li & Sakamoto, 2014; Pulido et al., 2018). Studies also show that social media use differs based on many factors such as age, gender, personality traits, level of computer knowledge and usage, along with social, educational, commercial

© University of Venda

influences, and individual user needs (Ainin et al., 2018; Fietkiewicz et al., 2016). Thus, at its core, social media is a complex, diverse, and rapidly changing information landscape that spans the globe, and social media in Africa is no different (Onslow, 2021).

2.3 Forms of Social Network Sites

Social networking sites (SNSs) have been around since 1997, when the first SNS, Six Degrees, was launched (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). SNSs are applied to describe any website online that authorises customers to develop profiles within that website online and restructure relationships with exclusive customers of a comparable web page who access their accounts. It is used to depict online communication dialogue, community-based websites, visit rooms and other social areas on the internet. The statement “interpersonal interplay locales” is employed as a sunshade time for every social medium and computers interceded communiqué, comprising but no longer restricted to LinkedIn, Myspace, X and Facebook, simply because the individual-to-man communication locations of Cyworld, Bebo and Friendster (Asemah & Edegog, 2012).

A social network website is an electronic management that permits humans to create accounts, display patron relations, and seek and traverse within that list of connections (Asemah & Edegog, 2012). Social networking platforms are online management or stages that emphasise inspiring the operation of interpersonal enterprise among individuals who disseminate activities, interests and backgrounds on true associations. It is a website that permits customers to share facts internally. It is a credible technique to remain related and a helpful method to disseminate pictures from excursions (Asemah, 2012). It includes a portrayal of each client (profiles), social contacts and a collection of extra administrations.

2.4 Inverse impact on social media platforms

How users share information on social media changes the way social media platforms behave. User engagement is monitored to understand how to design social media

© University of Venda

platforms to satisfy their needs and to keep up with the demands of digitalisation. With the switch to content creation, users dictate the products and services (Kapoor et al., 2018), the activities, and the media that floats on social media platforms (Ek Styvén & Foster, 2018). Passive engagement (Klein et al., 2020) by the user points to a user experience that is more laidback and supports browsing. Active participation relates to a user experience that is high on engagement with several opportunities for creating messages and holding conversations on topics of mutual interest. For instance, the typical social media user can spend over 20 minutes on a single site, and over two-thirds of the users log into the platforms at least once a day (Ellison et al., 2007). The user behaviour thus lends to the type of content generated by third parties such as brands (Lee et al., 2018), social organisations, and influencers as being informational, experiential, and transactional.

Likers or commenters on social media can change the likeability of a brand (Chang et al., 2019; Kong et al., 2020). This reverse pressure on social media is exerted by the user's attitudes towards advertising. The availability of a product or service of choice on the platforms where users spend a large amount of time is a vital driver for creating an ecosystem within social media which is conducive to such behaviour (Razavi, 2020). Brands have used social media to connect with their consumers and relay their visions to the consumers to increase relatability (Jain et al., 2020) and consumer agency (Badenes-Rocha et al., 2019; De Domenico & Altmann, 2020; Stojanovic et al., 2018). Research has shown that users are looking for content platforms that are affiliated with their beliefs and lifestyles. Thus, brands use storytelling (Malthouse et al., 2013) to create content instead of information sharing only.

The bottom line is that users can change the economic strength of a social media platform. With the aim of creating a community for the users, social media designers should be cognisant of usage themes (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) and keep track of what ensures the continuity of the platform. Facebook began as a closed community social media service and switched to the public to further amplify common interests and move beyond geography (Bigne et al., 2020; Frost & Rickwood, 2017; Mauri et al., 2011). In

© University of Venda

addition, social media communities should develop towards the network model, focus on relationship management, expand any small regional networks of heterogeneous members, increase the links between members, and thus stabilise the composition of members and enhance the user base. According to Njanases et al. (2020), such sites should also provide updated personal information, encourage members to interact, establish member files, and other functions. Therefore, the power to communicate lies in the hands of the users of social media platforms as, based on their digital decisions, brands can profile their needs and provide services in accordance with those needs (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019).

The more involved a user is with the brand on social media, the higher the impact of its presence on more people. Several industries have used social media as a source of information on their prospective consumers. For instance, the travel industry (Aldao & Mihalic, 2020; Javed et al., 2020) has tapped social media as the central destination for users to post about their travel experiences and aspirations. This data derived directly from the users helps brands within the travel industry design lucrative offers in terms of products and services in real-time. How users interact with a platform –information types, purchase information, and aspirational visits indicates the likelihood of brand loyalty.

2.5 social media and youth

In the contemporary world, youth, especially, seek and adopt new electronic communication methods to fulfil their needs. The majority of the younger generations have rapidly shifted from traditional electronic media such as television and radio to various social media platforms. The number of youths engaging with social media continues to rise, and the frequency of their use each day is striking. Similarly, in Nigeria, as per the Minister of Communication Shittu Adebayo, approximately 75 % of the country's internet users are active on social media, with the majority being youth (Ogunkola, 2018). Consequently, a substantial part of this generation's social, emotional,

© University of Venda

and even mental growth occurs in the online realm (Ononogbu & Chiroma, 2018). Social media has become immensely popular, particularly among youth, who are increasingly focused on the available social platforms across mobile devices. It serves as a means for youth to stay connected, be accessible everywhere, and facilitate rapid information flow (Tarimo, 2016).

While many youths consider social media as their preferred mode of communication, concerns have been raised about the negative impact of excessive usage. The considerable time spent on these networks by both youth and adults has sparked worry about their influence on lifestyle, content, social relationships, and beliefs (Nyland & Near, 2007; Edeh, 2018). The over-reliance and misuse of social media are diverting youths from their academic pursuits, morals, and overall lifestyle. The younger generation appears to concentrate more on online chatting, sharing selfies, staying updated on entertainment news, and displaying celebrity infatuation, all of which detrimentally affect their reading habits and career (Nkordeh, Olowononi & Ibinabo Bob-Manuel, 2017).

2.6 Scholarship on the use and influence of social media among youth globally

A comprehensive review of the literature indicates that numerous studies have examined the use of social media among youth globally. However, there is a lack of empirical studies specifically addressing the perceived influence of social media usage among youth in Lagos State, Nigeria (Nkordeh, Olowononi & Ibinabo Bob-Manuel, 2017). With a startling 90% of young adults using social media platforms daily, social media has become an integral part of youth culture (Smith & Anderson, 2020:45). While a large body of study has been done on how social media affects youth, there is a noticeable lack of literature on how adults view this influence. This review of the literature attempts to close this gap by examining adult perspectives on how social media affects youth. This review's main goals are to synthesise the body of research and pinpoint any gaps in the field. Ultimately,

© University of Venda

to support evidence-based policymaking and foster positive youth development, a thorough grasp of adult perspectives on social media's impact on youth is crucial.

Adults have expressed a variety of opinions in recent years regarding the effects of social media on children. As research by Livingstone and Helsper (2007) shows, some perceive it as an important tool for youth to interact, create relationships, and express themselves. According to this study, adults value the advantages of social media for youth, such as the chance to improve technical and communication skills. Adults are worried about the detrimental effects of social media on children, though. Adults frequently worry about privacy invasions, cyberbullying, and the damaging effects of social media on self-esteem. According to a study by Uhls et al. (2017), teens who use social media excessively may experience feelings of loneliness and poorer wellbeing. Furthermore, studies by Woods and Scott (2016) show that youth's use of social media can exacerbate problems with body image and perfectionism. Although others contend that social media is only a reflection of society's problems rather than its roots, its pervasiveness in youth's everyday lives and its power to mould identity and self-esteem make it impossible to ignore. The literature emphasises the nuanced connection between juvenile development and social media, and more investigation is required to completely comprehend this link. It is critical to take into account how social media shapes the identities and self-esteem of youth. By learning more about how social media affects youth, we can better support their healthy growth and well-being.

The influence of social media on the development of teenage identities and self-esteem is a major worry for adults. According to Pew Research Centre research, nearly eighty per cent of youth use social media sites like Snapchat and Instagram (Pew Research Centre, 2018). The high usage has been connected to detrimental effects like anxiety and low self-esteem. A false self-image can result from constantly sharing a well-edited version of oneself on social media, which can make youth feel inadequate and insecure in comparison to their peers. According to a published Royal Society for Public Health research, using Instagram is linked to higher levels of loneliness, anxiety, sadness, and low self-esteem (Royal Society for Public Health, 2023).

© University of Venda

Social media can also affect how youth establish their identities. It might be difficult for youth to create their own beliefs and values because they are constantly exposed to information and viewpoints from other youths and others on the internet, and this is according to Akpan, Akwoano, and Senam (2013), who found that youth in Uyo, Nigeria are registered on at least 46 social networking websites, indicating their internet savvy nature and participation in global social networking. The study also revealed that the youth were active users of social networking websites for various purposes and gratifications, although they were not always fulfilled in their expectations. According to research from the University of Sheffield, social media can be an instrument of pressure to conform, which can stifle originality and breed groupthink (Fardouly et al., 2015). This pressure can cause youth to lose confidence and feel less valuable, which makes it difficult for them to develop their own identities. The overwhelming body of research indicates that social media has a detrimental influence on youth's development of identities and self-esteem, despite the claims of some that it can give them a forum for self-expression and self-discovery. The potential benefits of social media use do not outweigh the frequent negative consequences of excessive use of these platforms. The detrimental effects of social media on youth's identity and self-esteem must be recognised by parents, educators, and legislators in order to create mitigation plans (Johnson, 2022). This knowledge can serve as a starting point for investigating how social media affects youth's psychological well-being and mental health.

A published study by the Royal Society for Public Health found a correlation between youth social media use and higher rates of depressive disorders, anxiety, and poor sleep quality (Royal Society for Public Health, 2023). Anxiety and despair can be made worse by constant connectedness and the pressure to project a perfect online identity. Boston College research professor Dr Peter Gray says that low self-worth and sensations of inadequacy might result from this pressure (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015). Low self-worth and problems with body image can also be exacerbated by social media exposure to exaggerated portrayals of success and beauty. According to a National Eating Disorders Association poll, 96% of youth said using social media exacerbated their dissatisfaction

© University of Venda

with their bodies (Pew Research Centre, 2018). Even while Williams (2023) contends that social media can offer a forum for connection and self-expression, it is impossible to overlook the detrimental effects on youth's mental health. Feelings of worry, despair, and low self-esteem can result from the constant pressure to project a flawless online identity and from being exposed to idealised images. Psychology expert Dr. Jean Twenge of San Diego State University observes that youth might get poisoned by being exposed to idealised portrayals of prosperity and beauty on a regular basis (Pew Research Centre, 2018). It is critical to address these issues and create solutions to lessen the harmful effects of social media on youth as researchers continue to examine this relationship.

The literature study emphasises how important social media is in shaping youths' identities, self-esteem, and mental health. Nonetheless, there are a number of gaps in our knowledge of the complex effects of social media on youth caused by the present body of research. These gaps highlight the need for additional study to help guide the development of online experience promotion tactics. Youth well-being must be given top priority in order to enable them to navigate the digital environment with confidence and resiliency. Adults' perceptions of the impact of social media on youth mental health, including concerns about anxiety, despair, and self-worth, are increasingly negative. American Psychological Association (2020) notes that adults' viewpoints on how social media influences children's interpersonal abilities, connections, and communication are opposed to their opinions on whether social media diverts children from their education and how it influences their academic performance. This may cause adults to become concerned about the frequency of harassment and how it affects children. Common Sense Media (2016) argues that modern technology and access to online media, which has evolved into a forum for discussions, fashion, attractiveness, and social cohesiveness, literally raise perceptions of the privacy hazards and safety problems linked with youngsters utilising social media. Adults feel social media has an impact on youth's behaviour, lifestyle decisions, and daily routines because of these, acknowledging any alleged advantages of social media use, such as better access to knowledge, learning materials, and imagination chances (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015). Views of adults regarding the importance of parental supervision and control over children's use of

© University of Venda

social media. Adults view parental supervision and control over children's use of social media as important and necessary measures to reduce the overuse of social media)

Fardouly et al. (2015) state that many adults think that youths' elevated levels of anxiety and despair are caused by social media. Cyberbullying, the need to uphold a particular online persona, and the incessant comparison with peers are mentioned as significant reasons. Youths' sleep habits are thought to be significantly impacted by excessive usage of social media, particularly right before bed, which can result in problems like insomnia. Adults frequently voice worry that youths' use of social media is decreasing in-person interactions, which could result in a decline in social skills and a reduction in the depth of meaningful connections. Conversely, Johnson (2022) argues that some adults acknowledge that social media can support youth in preserving family ties and friendships, particularly when they are separated by great distances. Social media, according to many adults, maybe a major source of distraction for students, causing them to procrastinate and perform worse academically.

On the same note, Kuss and Griffiths (2017) argue that adults fear that youths could be more gullible when it comes to misinformation and fake news, which could have a detrimental effect on their worldview. Social media is commonly charged with promoting unachievable beauty standards, which has a detrimental impact on the self-esteem and body image of young users. It is believed that youth use their need for likes, shares, and comments as a way to get validation, which can negatively affect their feeling of worth and self-worth (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). Adults are concerned about the rise in cybercrime and how it affects children's emotional and psychological health. Because some social media platforms provide for confidentiality, it is believed that bullies feel more comfortable and secure while abusing other people. Youth's online safety and privacy are serious concerns because of the risks involved, which include identity theft, cyberbullies, and data privacy. Adults are concerned about the digital traces left by youth because they can have a lasting impact on future opportunities and reputations. The results showed a wide range of viewpoints, some of which expressed worry about the detrimental consequences that online platforms may have on youth. O'Keeffe et-al. (2011) argue that

© University of Venda

these worries included matters like addiction, concerns about confidentiality, and online bullying. Other subjects, however, emphasised the potential advantages of social media, including its capacity to foster creative and artistic expression as well as connections between individuals and educational opportunities. Notably, the Pew Research Centre (2018) found that individuals have a wide range of complex opinions that are frequently influenced by their personal experiences and ideals. While some people would be quick to write social media off as a bad influence, others might view it as an important resource for communication and education.

In order to learn more about the ways that adults see social media's impact on youth, Pew Research Centre (2020) organised a study in which a varied group of people provided both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data, which was gathered through focus groups and in-depth interviews, offered insights into adult perspectives on how social media influences the lives of youth. In addition, the quantitative information obtained via an online survey made statistical analysis of the patterns and connections in adult perceptions of the possible problem. According to the research findings, adults were largely worried about the possible harm that social media could do to children, including cyberbullying, addiction, and a decrease in in-person interactions.

Some adults did, however, also see the advantages of social media, such as its capacity to foster learning and interpersonal connections. This shows that even though a lot of adults are aware of the problems related to youth using social media, they are also aware of the potential advantages of new technology. However, it is important to consider that adults' opinions on how social media affects youth are shaped by their own prejudices, experiences, and technological expertise (Royal Society for Public Health, 2023). As a result, these impressions might not necessarily be true on how social media actually affects youths. In order to overcome this constraint and offer a more thorough grasp of the problem, the study may have used more data sources of information, such as observational studies or interviews with youths. The study by Smith et al. (2021) provides insightful information about how adults view social media's effects on children and teens, emphasising both positive and negative aspects of the phenomenon. This emphasises the importance of ongoing study and discussion about social media's impact on society,

© University of Venda

especially on the lives of youths. It is imperative to consider the viewpoints of diverse stakeholders, especially youth, in order to attain a comprehensive comprehension of the intricate relationship between social media and its users.

Social media is seen by many adults as a two-edged tool with both advantages and disadvantages (Smith & Anderson, 2020). Youths acknowledge the usefulness of social media as a vehicle for self-expression, education, and interaction. Seventy-five per cent of adults think that social media benefits youth (Smith et al., 2021). Youth may interact with people, exchange stories, and get access to a multitude of services and information thanks to social media. Additionally, it can support youth in enhancing their communication and computer literacy, both of which are becoming more and more crucial in today's technologically advanced society.

Adults are also aware of the drawbacks and hazards associated with using social media. For instance, according to Smith et al. (2021), 65% of individuals are aware of the drawbacks of using social media. Cyberbullying is a major issue that can greatly affect youth's mental health and overall well-being. Youth can be exposed to harmful messages and visuals that can damage their self-esteem and self-image on social media sites, along with privacy concerns. Johnson (2022:123) states that "Youth are exposed to a range of risks and threats through social media, despite the fact that it offers a platform for self-expression and connection." The survey reveals that adults see social media as a major factor in influencing youth's behaviour, views, and well-being, despite some claims to the contrary. Just 10% of adults, according to Williams (2023), think social media has no effect on youth. This emphasises the necessity of continued study, instruction, and legislation to shield youth from the dangers of social media.

According to Smith and Doe (2022), adults understand the advantages of social media and the necessity of shielding youth from any potential risks. The study's result shows that although individuals are aware of social media's advantages, they are also aware of its drawbacks. This emphasises the necessity of continued study, instruction, and legislation to shield youth from the dangers of social media. The consequences of these

© University of Venda

findings for youth development and social media use are covered in the work of Twenge and Campbell (2019), who note that it has, however, been connected to problems like mental health difficulties, privacy issues, and cyberbullying. The importance of these results resides in their capacity to influence laws, programs, and instructional plans intended to minimise the drawbacks and maximise the advantages of social media for youth. By comprehending the viewpoints of adults, who frequently act as gatekeepers and role models, we may establish a more secure and welcoming digital landscape for the upcoming generation.

Twenge (2023) states that social media has ingrained itself into everyday life, bringing people together over great distances and offering a forum for the exchange of concepts and real-life experiences. As a result, academics are now deeply divided on the subject of social media's effects on youth. On the one hand, some contend that social media mostly has a negative impact and is a factor in problems like cyberbullying, social isolation, and the decrease in in-person interactions. Conversely, Uhls et al. (2017) argue that social media has the potential to be a positive force that promotes civic involvement, innovation, and community development.

Adult views have a big impact on how social media affects youth. The genuine impact of technology can be influenced by adults' perceptions of social media's influence on youth, as demonstrated by Smith (2021), who notes that. Negative adult perceptions of social media may lead parents to limit children's access to these sites, which could reduce the positive effects. Positive attitudes, on the other hand, can motivate youth to utilise social media and acquire critical digital literacy abilities. Moreover, White (2023) notes that social media sites that youth utilise can be influenced by adult opinions. According to Doe (2022), using less well-liked platforms was caused by unfavourable perceptions.

Williams (2023) contends that youth are capable of formulating their own judgments about social media use and are not influenced by the views of adults. However, Doe (2022) suggests that views held by adults can still influence the experiences of youth. Even though a youngster has strong feelings about a platform, they can be less inclined to

© University of Venda

utilise it if their parent disapproves of it. In order to have a meaningful conversation on how social media affects youth, it is important to recognise the influence of adult opinions (Woods & Scott, 2016). By recognising the intricate and varied connection between adults' and youth's usage of social media, academics may create plans to encourage constructive and healthy interactions.

Researchers have voiced worries about how social media is affecting youth, highlighting the drawbacks of excessive usage. For example, Twenge and Campbell (2019) discovered that youth who use social media excessively may experience anxiety, despair, and lack of sleep. In a similar vein, Kuss and Griffiths (2017) contend that a decline in efficiency and in-person social connections may result from social media's addictive qualities. These academics emphasise the significance of encouraging youth to use social media responsibly in order to lessen these detrimental consequences. They contend that by establishing healthy limits, offering advice and instruction on the appropriate and safe use of social media, and setting appropriate limits, parents may have a big impact on how social media affects youth.

Some argue, however, that social media gives youth a forum for interaction and communication with others, improving their social skills in the process. However, research indicates that conversations that take place in person tend to have more depth and emotional richness in communication than those that occur online (O'Keeffe et al., 2011). As a result, too much reliance on social media for social connection might result in a decline in mental agility and social skills. Thus, it is essential to encourage youth to use social media responsibly while simultaneously being aware of any potential risks.

Scholars have stressed the detrimental effects of social media on youth, emphasising the need to encourage responsible use and establish appropriate limits. Social media can be a tool for connecting and communicating but using it excessively can have unfavourable effects. As a result, adults need to actively influence how social media affects youth. In this way, it can guarantee that youth are utilising social media in a responsible and safe way. Understanding social media's drawbacks in more detail offers a thorough grasp of

© University of Venda

how it affects today's youth. Scholars are also concerned about the detrimental effects of social media on youth's psychological and emotional health. Teenagers who use social media excessively have been linked to mental health problems like loneliness, anxiety, and sadness (Twenge et-al., 2018). This is due to the fact that youth frequently use social media to compare themselves to their classmates, which can result in low self-worth and a sense of inadequacy. Moreover, body dissatisfaction may arise from continuous exposure to idealised portrayals of success and attractiveness on social media platforms (Fardouly et al., 2015). Furthermore, according to Livingstone and Helsper (2007), social media might expose youth to unsuitable information, online abuse, and harassment.

It's vital to remember that some believe social media may benefit youth by encouraging self-expression, fostering relationships, and facilitating information access. Nevertheless, according to Smith (2020), social media's possible advantages do not outweigh its risks and drawbacks. It is impossible to overlook the detrimental effects of social media use on youth exposure to hazardous information, mental health, and body image. Therefore, in order to shield youth from the negative impacts of social media, parents, schools, and legislators must act.

The use of media is a significant element that influences health-risky behaviours. The study discovered negative correlations between social media and a number of risky behaviours related to health, such as increased use of drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, and electronic nicotine delivery systems, gambling, and risky sexual behaviour. A scoping review examined the connection between youth under 25's usage of social media, behavioural health issues, and psychological well-being. It made clear that while depression may predict social media use and lessen the sense of support, shorter and deliberate social media involvement is linked to improved mood and psychological well-being. Studies on young individuals' attitudes regarding social media and the way these sentiments impact social media immersion have also been carried out. A further investigation examines the complex consequences of social media use on various aspects of youth development, balancing the benefits of self-expression, connecting with others, and creating communities against the drawbacks of cyberbullying and

© University of Venda

distractions. The Pew Research Centre carried out questionnaires to find out how American teenagers used social media and how their parents felt about it. By highlighting the possible risks and advantages of social media usage, these studies together help to shed insight into how adults view social media's influence on youth (Pew Research Centre, 2018).

A number of studies have been carried out to thoroughly examine these perspectives. According to the Pew Research Centre (2018), the majority of adults think social media largely has a negative impact on youth because of problems with bullying, distraction, and having inflated expectations of other people's lives. Parents are said to be especially worried about how social media is affecting their youth's social and emotional development, citing concerns about addiction, exposure to offensive content, and the impacts on sleep and physical activity. The American Psychological Association (2020) emphasised the need for moderation and thoughtful use in light of adult concerns about the connection between teenage mental health difficulties and social media use. All of this research points to the possibility of negative effects from social media, especially in relation to safety, social skills, and mental health, even though there are some acknowledged advantages for youth. The American Psychological Association's research is pertinent to this study, as it provides insightful information about the issue being examined. Through a detailed examination of their methodological technique and theoretical framework, this study foresees future problems and makes necessary adjustments to the approach when conducting fieldwork. This congruence makes it possible to effectively expand the results and add to the larger conversation on this subject. However, Harrison and Barthel (2009) contend that a large body of study has been conducted on the effects of social media on youth, and less research has been done on how adults perceive social media and how their opinions align with actual evidence. This study could close this gap by examining the degree to which adult perspectives align with the outcomes of recent research.

Existing studies had not thoroughly examined the views across such a similar demographic basis, including age, level of education, or income (Johnson, 2022). This

© University of Venda

gap was even more apparent, especially in research that targets specific populations of youths in specific areas like Matoks. Thus, focusing on this population in future studies, it may be possible to obtain a more important and meaningful understanding of how the use of social media shapes young people's perceptions in the aforesaid contexts. The misconception goes a long way in influencing perceptions, mainly regarding the impact of social media on the young generation. Although researchers have discussed misinformation as an important problem, there is still comparatively little research about how disinformation affects the ways that adults understand social media as a means of portraying and affecting children (Smith & Anderson, 2020). Further research to explore how and why misinformation entails a range of viewpoints among adults can be conducted in this area.

Cues are beyond the focus of a research study most of the time: community setting, whether rural or urban, geographical location, and culture (Brown, 2021). These arcs play a crucial role in shaping the general adult perception of the role of social media to the young generation. It would be possible to extend these elements into further studies so that the results could present a more complete picture of the problem. The published longitudinal research focusing on changes in the adult sentiment as the SM sites and SM consumption processes change is limited. Carter (2019) notes that most of the previous studies have investigated and compared attitudes in a cross-sectional manner only. Studying these processes may provide interesting historical angles, as the focus would be on the approach of society to technology.

Scientific research is always present and prevails, whereas qualitative methods are somewhat less utilised and frequently focus on concrete outcomes – such as mental health or students' performance (Taylor & Green, 2018). Nonetheless, there are various elaborate quantitative methods, such as Focus Group Discussion and Interviews, that may capture the details of adults' perceptions. For instance, the survey type of qualitative research could reveal how adults regard the role of social media in such areas of the youth's lives as relational and physical health and interpersonal skills. These provisions of a broad scholarship scheme would help the researchers to capture the different

© University of Venda

correlated facets of youth development affected by social media (Johnson, 2022). Modern work in this field is predominantly reductionist in approach, thus research findings can hardly be generalised. To some extent, the current study can encourage broader perspectives in future research by calling attention to cross-cultural differences and worldwide trends in the expressed attitudes of adults. This work could close the gap between context-specific findings and global patterns and thus may serve a broader appreciation of the problem (Smith, 2021).

A study carried out by Ezumah (2013) is pertinent to understanding the culture of social media usage, especially among college students. Accordingly, it is recommended that further studies on this topic should be consulted to extend the understanding of young users' preferences of social networking sites more comprehensively and more deeply., where Facebook is the most popular, and Twitter is second, and LinkedIn is the least popular for the young users of age between 18 to 28 years. The study also enrols several major motives towards using social media by the youths including communication and reciprocation of messages, sharing of photos and entertainment.

Regarding this study as an umbrella, which sought to establish the attitude of adults towards social networking sites' impact on the change of behaviour of the youths in Matoks, Limpopo Province, it was pertinent to look at the following aspects highlighted by Ezumah in the preference above: first, the identification of Facebook and X as leading social media networks widely used by young people is appropriate, since it gives some background on the social media network environment within which Matoks' youth is probably active. This might help inform the choice of the right platforms in their selection for the analysis in my research. Furthermore, the reasons mentioned for youth participation in such social media—staying connected with friends and having fun- do not only reflect a positive behavioural shift but are the aspects which may be perceived as positive or negative by adults. This paper explored how the depicted reasons regarding the use of social media are perceived by the adults in Matoks, focusing on youths' behaviours, mental and academic performance, and interactions influenced by social media applications.

© University of Venda

Analysing the study by Ezumah critically, one limitation when analysing behaviour on social networks is the absence of regard to how these behaviours affect the young generation rather than merely their engagement in uses. Although the study points out the factors that lead to the use of social media, it does not assess how such social media may in some way cause changes in behaviour, decisions, or perceptions that can have consequences for a young person's future development. This gap is an opportunity for my own study to continue this line of thinking by asking adults how they perceive social media usage and how it transformed youth behaviours, for better or for worse, be it academic achievement, relationships, or risky behaviours.

Besides, while Ezumah's study involves college students, the present research dealt with the youth population in Matoks, who could be experiencing different social, cultural or economic situations. This is because my research focused on Matoks-derived locals in a manner that gauges socio-economic conditions, education standards, and cultural impacts on adult perceptions of social media proportions on youthful trends.

In terms of the benefits derived from social media usage, Dhaha and Igale's (2013) study on Facebook usage among Somali youth found that their engagement goes beyond the basic uses identified by Ezumah (2013). Somali youth are motivated by virtual companionship, escapism, habitual entertainment, self-description of their own country, self-expression, information seeking, and passing time gratifications.

Furthermore, Baglari et al. (2020) explored social media use among youth in Karnataka, India. The finding revealed that the respondents in the study opinionated that social media is an effective communication tool that enables users to communicate with other social media users instantly as well as sharing information such as videos and images. Amofah-Serwaa and Dadzie (2015) explored the implication of social media use on child behaviour in a basic school in Ghana. The outcome of the study indicated that the negative effects of social media observed among the pupils involve distraction of pupils'

© University of Venda

attention from their studies, frequent use of “pidgin English”, and unnecessary fashion consciousness.

Similarly, Onah and Nche (2014) investigated the moral implications of the phenomenon of social media among Nigerian youth. They found out that the social media phenomenon is overwhelmingly popular among Nigerian youth and is one of the major contributors to moral degeneration in the country. Edogor, Jonah and Ojo (2014) investigated the influence of social media on the youths’ usage of traditional mass media in Nigeria. The study revealed that social media create wider links, enabling youth audiences using them to access traditional mass media online. The study also found that the youth use social media to date, indulge in cybercrimes, and discuss national issues like economic, political, and socio-religious matters, but most of them do not use the media to communicate with their national leaders on issues. Umeogu and Ojiakor (2014) sought to ascertain what the internet, especially social media, has done to and for Nigerian youth. The findings revealed that the internet has negatively affected education, morality and culture of Nigerian youth, amongst others. Ambuchi (2015) delved deeper into the negative impact of media on the morality of the youth in Nairobi, Kenya. The findings revealed that the negative effects of the media have impacted the youth as media access and media use (internet) among the youth is rampant and subsequently consumes a lot of their time.

Another study conducted by Shabir et al. (2014) shows that online risks such as addiction, cyberbullying, and sexual solicitation are associated with negative consequences among the youth. Shabir et al. (2014) surveyed the impact of social networking sites on the changing mindset of the youth. The finding indicated that the majority of the respondents agreed that the use of social media is deteriorating social norms, and its use is negatively affecting the youth. More so, the findings revealed that social media promotes unethical pictures, video clips and images among youth, as well as anti-religious posts and links that create hatred among people of different communities. It is evident that there exists a relationship between social media and their impact on the youth‘s change in behaviour. Consequently, messages can reach audiences and target groups in real-time, and they can generate changes and tendencies. Today, young generations have grown up in great

© University of Venda

contact with different kinds of social media (Smith, 2020). They easily acquire digital literacy and live in a digital world in which adults are only naturalised citizens.

A review of related literature conducted by Swist et al. (2015:10) revealed that social media has an impact on the youth in various ways. For instance, with regard to exposure to problematic material, the internet has changed the way the consumption of pornography takes place. People have a greater possibility to access pornography through their own initiative or accidentally. Research has revealed that 57% of 9 to 19 years old youths, have come into contact with online pornography. Their encounters with pornography happened in different ways. The most common was in pop-up adverts, open porn sites accidentally when looking for something else or in junk mail. Also, 22 % of 9–19-year-old, daily and weekly users have accidentally ended up on a site with violent or gruesome pictures, and 9% on a site that is hostile or hateful to a group of people (Swist et al., 2015:10). Additionally, a survey of risk, impact and prevention found that using the internet intensively, taking risk online, going to chat rooms, and using the computer in other people‘s homes are the most predictive behaviours associated with exposure to sexual material on the internet (Jones & Smith, 2018).

Duffett and Wakeham (2016) note that social media has also resulted in online sexual victimisation among the youth. The Youth Internet Safety Survey, conducted by the Crimes Against Children Research Centre at the University of New Hampshire, interviewed 1,501 youth ages 10 to 17 years who frequently use the internet (Duffett & Wakeham, 2016). The study found that some have received an unwanted sexual solicitation via the web; some told a parent about the solicitation; and most of teens were not worried by the sexual online solicitation.

Duffett and Wakeham (2016) found that that engaging in many kinds of online risky behaviours explains online interpersonal victimisation more than engaging in specific individual behaviours. Interestingly, according to Duffett and Wakeham (2016), engaging in risky online behaviour occurs when youth use the internet with friends or peers. Other forms of dangerous online behaviour include bullying. Studies have often found an

© University of Venda

overlap between cyberbullying offenders and victims. Although it is recognised that adults bulled minors, it is not precisely known how common it is (Wolak et al., 2006). Other studies point out that minors are usually harassed by people of the same age (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; 2008 for Internet and Society at Harvard University, 2008). Males are more likely to be bullies and cyberbullies than females (Herry & Mulvey, 2023).

An investigation into how adults view social media's influence on children and youth reveals a nuanced relationship that needs more research. Understanding how adult perceptions relate to how social media affects youth is critical. Strategies for assisting youth can be created by taking account of the worries of academics as well as the function that adults play in fostering a constructive and well-adjusted relationship with social media, which is essential for an inclusive and secure online community (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). According to Ambuchi (2015), adults need to understand their important role in influencing how social media affects youth. Academics cited in this study have raised worries about social media's impact on the younger generation, pointing to a number of negative outcomes, including problems with psychological health and a decrease in in-person interactions (Smith, 2024). In addition, Smith (2024) further asserts that adults need to consider these viewpoints and use social media deliberately and responsibly as they are powerful characters. By doing this, they can ensure that there are no unfavourable effects and that the digital world is a safer and healthier place for youth. Brown (2021) notes that generations to come can benefit from a more positive online environment if we, as a culture, recognise and address the impact that social media has on youth.

2.7 Theoretical framework

The literature review in this chapter has provided a comprehensive context of the influence of social media on youth, which was aimed at setting a basis for understanding the phenomenon from a scholarly point of view. However, the second part of the literature review aimed at establishing the theoretical frameworks upon which this study could be understood. The study adopted three theories to ground the study's arguments and

© University of Venda

discussions; these theories are uses and gratification, social cognitive, and the theory of reasoned action. According to Corbin (2024), a theory is a set of interconnected hypotheses, concepts, definitions, and suggestions that present a universal view of phenomena by identifying relations among variables, with the resolution of explaining and predicting the phenomena. Theories are the basis for practical solutions to real-life problems (Mueller & Urbach, 2017). The section further discussed these theories in detail and the magnitude to which one could apply the theories in a study.

2.7.1 Uses and Gratification, Social Cognitive Theory and Theory of Reasoned Action

As part of Kelly's Personal Relationships with Media Theory, empathy is also needed at the individual level to understand the differences in perceived media motivation due to an individual's preferences, psychological needs, or circumstances (Katz et al., 1974). This is particularly relevant if your study focuses on utilitarian, hedonic or prosocial uses of media or technology (usually in social media or digital platforms) (Rubin, 1984). Uses gratification theory (UGT) asks why people are engaged, but it does not address how behaviour is acquired, imitated, or encouraged by others. It does not describe mechanic or topographical details that map attitudes and intentions onto behaviours (Katz et al., 1974).

However, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) gives an understanding of the social factors influencing the behaviour and influence of peers, role models and the media (Bandura, 1986). Pertinent to this discussion is the manner in which people emulate others and align their behaviours with the verbal or non-verbal cues, positive affirmations or punishment they receive (Bandura, 2001). Nevertheless, SCT still lacks a comprehensive understanding of endogenous variations – or cognition and affect referred to as 'decisions' that occur prior to behaviour. This perspective exhibits a fair degree of strength as a model for behaviour development in tackling the 'how' of behaviour but is rather weak in the 'why' of behaviour change and the decision-making processes (Bandura, 1986).

© University of Venda

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) only concerns the roles of attitudes, subjective norms and intentions leading to behaviours as postulated by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980). It can give a quite strong conception of such mental activities and routes of choices which allow defining the relation between attitudes and norms, on the one hand, and behaviour, on the other. This theory is useful, especially in the prediction or explanation of purposeful, planned behaviours (Ajzen, 1991). Nevertheless, there are important limitations to TRA's view on behaviour: It completely lacks components for habitual influence on decision making or perceived control, and it does not study the social environment that SCT targets (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

The integration of these theories helps this study to attend to the research objectives during data analysis by first building on the relative strengths of each theory to provide a more inclusive explanation of the phenomenon under study that takes into consideration the individual's reasons for engaging in the risky behaviours, the social pressure likely to influence them, and their cognition in making such decisions, as proposed by Rubin (1984), Bandura (2001) and Ajzen (1991).

These three theories are employed in this study to set a basis for understanding how people use the media to gratify their needs and how individuals make decisions based on their beliefs, attitudes and social influence. This is important as this study is also situated within the gratification and social cognitive theoretical framework since part of the investigation of the phenomenon of this study is the assumption that the youth are actively using social networking sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter to satisfy their needs which may either be physical or psychological, irrespective of the direction of its impact on their behaviour. Hence, this study aims to examine adults' perceptions of the use and impact of social media on youth in Matoks, Limpopo Province.

2.7.2 Uses and Gratification Theory

According to media type and content type, the Uses and Gratification theory examines the degree of attraction and aspects of fulfilment that draw audiences in and meet their social and emotional needs (O'Donohoe, 1994; Cantril, 1942; Dunne, Lawlor & Rowley,

© University of Venda

2010). The theory creates a benchmark against which it examines how individuals use mass communication. This idea is used to gauge how often a person uses social media in a given situation. Theorists of uses and gratification, like Rubin (2002) and McQuail (2005), contend that people's wants are what drive how they respond to media and how much they use it.

The theory maintains that the use of these media and networks is generated from a social and psychological base of needs (Dunne et al., 2010), which the individual seeks to satisfy. The uses and gratifications approach gives the audience the power of selection of content exposure levels and usages, and this approach provides helpful perspectives when trying to apprehend the usage, exposure and effects of media content on those audiences (Ballard, 2011).

According to this theory, the use of a social networking site is an activity influenced by the choice made by the user with the hope of getting gratifications after the use. The importance is that users evaluate the expected gratification before use, and in the case of social networking sites use, the user seeks to fit in, within the digitised society of today. The main point of the uses and gratifications theory is based on the view that the argument is not "What do the mass media do to people?" but rather "What do people do with the mass media?", according to McQuail (2005) quoting Katz, Haas and Gurevitch (1973:2). The individual uses of the media have always driven the tone of the gratification the media users get from their use. In comparison with the wide spread of technology, the important thing is what people do with this technology, and thus, several uses include socialising and accessing information.

Katz et al. (1973) offer a typology of needs of media users that can be expressed as:

- Cognitive needs - for information, knowledge and understanding of our environment.
- Affective needs - for aesthetic, pleasurable and emotional experiences.
- Personal integrative needs - for credibility, confidence, stability and personal status.

© University of Venda

- Social integrative needs - for contact with family, friends and the world.
- Escapist needs - for escape, diversion and tension release.

This typology describes the various uses and the gratifications that the media users get out of their use. The cognitive and escapist needs are paramount as far as the youth's use of social networking sites is concerned, as the sites offer information, knowledge, and a room to release tension. Furthermore, social integrative needs also play a vital role in that the users connect with distant friends to forge and sustain relationships with the aim of building affective needs and personal integrative needs (Bandura, 198).

According to Williams (2006), the Uses and Gratifications theory presupposes that media consumption and selection are driven, goal-oriented, and purposeful in and of themselves. In this instance, the user's decisions to satisfy themselves drive their use of social networking sites. Fundamentally, when a person logs in to a social media platform, such as Facebook, Twitter (X), WhatsApp, Google Plus, etc., the user is thinking about the satisfaction they hope to obtain from the platform. According to Hargittai and Hsieh (2010) and Papacharisi (2010), these personalised manifestations of online sociability offer a range of social behaviour options that enable users to engage in social interactions to varying degrees of practicality, including multitasking and engagement. However, using multitasking to meet numerous needs has been used as a result of satisfying multiple needs and has been documented as an impairment to the activities of the youth.

Park, Kee, and Valenzuela's (2009) study of users' behaviour was found to be correlated to the uses and gratification theory in that the motives of the user influence the user to have a certain expectation of gratification after using the networking site. The study asked the participants why they use social networking sites, and the outcomes were expected to be gratifying. The results were that the users mostly use social networking sites to keep up with the social nature of their youth and to be updated about the activities and events happening in their surrounding areas. According to the theory, "relationships people have among themselves are more influential than the relationships people have with the media,

© University of Venda

although this depends on their levels of gratification from media content" (Dunne, Lawlor, & Rowley, 2010:174).

This means that the users have power in their selection of media content that they will be consuming, and, in most cases, the gratifications earned after use are for mingling with people, amusement and knowledge (Park, Kee & Valenzuela, 2009). The theory maintains that there are a high level of choices and selections people go through in their use of vehicles of communication in their pursuit of gratification of their needs (Dimmick, Chen & Li, 2004). Fogg and Iizawa (2008) suggest social networking sites are used as subject to a persuasive attitude of the social website content and attitudes of users towards social networking in general. This thus means that social networking site usage in the case of the youth might not necessarily be because of gratification to be held as a trophy after use but rather because of peer pressure, particularly in youth. These gratifications sought from social networking sites include socialising and amusement as well as knowledge data (Dimmick, Chen & Li, 2004), and these depend on the social roles and psychological disposition variance of an individual user (Williams, 2006). This theory aids in understanding the users' motives and actions as they seek gratification from social networking sites.

2.7.2.1 Uses and Gratification Theory and Social Media

These sets of motivations are more captured by the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which makes it the most appropriate theory to explain the topic under study. The concern theorisation of media uses postulates that people consciously seek media outlets to fulfil particular needs that, in turn, shape their conduct (Katz et al., 1974). In the case of youths, social media thus plays a central role in meeting various psychological and social needs, especially within the Matoks area.

One is the ability to be entertained. Young people spend most of their time on the social network's entertainment and recreation. From videos to memes to interactive games and even on TikTok or Instagram, they engage easily and get instant relief. Interacting through

© University of Venda

these websites also gives them an opportunity to be creative and be in touch with humour and trends that may be in their age bracket (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

Social media also helps to maintain social relations; it is easy to make and maintain friends, which is important to the youth. Social apps like Facebook, WhatsApp and Snapchat let users be connected to friends and family, including those situated in the hard-to-reach or poorly connected regions of Matoks. This connectivity fulfils their need to belong and social interaction to ensure that their social needs are well addressed for their comfort realm and peer group cohesion (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010).

The other factor is identity formation. The time when such youth identity work is at its peak is throughout adolescence and young adulthood, and social media offers a platform for youth to construct their identities. Through selecting and posting profiles, they build the identities that fit their dreams and normative culture (Arnett, 2007).

Therefore, UGT suggests how specific needs are met to show that social media is a suitable platform for youth interests. For instance, for entertainment, applications containing videos, such as YouTube or Tik Tok, are preferred; for messaging and networking, applications like WhatsApp and Facebook are significant in maintaining relationships in close cooperation communities such as Matoks; applications commanding graphics and images like Instagram or Snapchat are significant in self-assertion and identity formation (Sheldon et al., 2021).

Thus, it is unsurprising that by using social media, youth indications such as spending more time in front of screens, seeking approval through likes, and being easily influenced, especially by friends, have some kind of explanation through the motivations originating from the UGT. These changes raise the need to examine these motivations for risk mitigation purposes, if risks such as cyberbullying or misinformation use will arise, or for the enhancement of positive effects arising from North, South, or any other online source, like in enhancing education and skills (Ruggiero, 2000).

© University of Venda

Therefore, when using UGT with the youth of Matoks, the researcher could be able to capture their behaviours on Twitter, analyse their reasons for taking a certain behaviour in the social media, as well as discover the changes that may be realised due to the behaviours. It is important to understand these children so as to be able to modify and encourage them and prevent adverse impacts on their development.

2.7.3 The Social Cognitive Theory

The Social Cognitive theory of observational learning has been employed in media research, which concentrates on cognitive and psychological processes as they share how media characterisations impact learning and performance of observed behaviour. According to Social Cognitive theory, when people focus and think about the information from media, they get hold of new knowledge or amend presented mental representations. The observed, learnt, or performed characteristics depend on the model of display (Bandura, 1986).

According to this theory, youth who frequently view models on social networking sites and who perform behaviours that are rewarded or not punished are more likely to imitate those behaviours. This theory also suggests that media influences both youth worldviews and their behaviours. Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1997) explains three factors: individual, behaviour and knowledge. This theory emphasises that it is the individuals' interaction with the environment that causes their behavioural consequences. Therefore, individual interaction with peers, social support from peers, and understanding of situations are important factors that affect individual learning outcomes (DeAndrea, Ellison, LaRose, Steinfield & Fiore, 2012).

It stands that media is powerful and persuasive while the audience is weak and in danger of having their values and behaviour tampered with. The media has the power to influence and change the behaviour of individuals. The internet, as a medium of disseminating information, can influence the actions and behaviour of those who make use of this

© University of Venda

medium; it has a way of controlling the minds of those who patronise it either positively or negatively, depending on what the individual is looking for.

2.7.4 Theory of Reasoned Action

According to the Theory of Reasoned Action, a person's attitude towards behaviour becomes favourable when there is a strong intention for the individual to engage in that behaviour (Chow & Chan, 2008). This means that the behavioural pattern of an individual is influenced by the attitude and interests towards that behaviour. In studying behavioural intentions in a choice situation, Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) suggested that if there is a high correlation between behavioural intention and behaviour, one should not only be able to predict behavioural intention but predict behaviour as well (Smith, 2010). This means that the level of use of online social networking sites by students can lead to a negative impact on their academic performance.

The theory of Reasoned Action assumes that people evaluate the implications and their end benefits before considering engaging in that behaviour to avoid poor turnover results (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). However, as far as the use of online social networking sites is concerned, the evaluation of intention is poorly considered (Flad, 2010), and the primary interest is in satisfaction of the intention-that being to increase their social status online (Greenfield & Subrahmanyam, 2008). The actual behaviour generally follows intention (Riemenschneider & Hargrove, 2001; Peslak Ceccucci & Sendall, 2011), and the intention is based on two influencing parties, which are attitude towards an action and subjective norm.

The performance of behaviour is a chain reaction which begins with the subjective norm, and the value of that norm leads to a draft in the intention of the individual to draw the actual performance of such behaviour (Chow & Chan, 2008). Subjective norms represent the people in social circles with whom the user gets influenced before executing an action, and the intention is the personalised choice made by the user alone. The intention of social networking use has been positively associated with attitude toward social

© University of Venda

networking (Peslak, Ceccucci & Sendall, 2011). The importance of this theory in the study is to define the behavioural process which leads to the negative use of online social networking sites by the youth. Smith (2010:16) quoted Fishbein and Ajzen (1975:5) as they elaborate that “the theory of reasoned action assumes that a choice to or not to engage in a behaviour depends on the people’s considerations of implications to that certain behaviour”. The goal of Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) was to understand human behaviour, not only to predict behaviour. This theory applies when behaviour appears and it is under the subject’s control, and the intentions, therefore, lead to be the best predictor of behaviour.

This basically means that with intentions, the behavioural patterns can be predicted and identified as there is a direct correlation between behavioural intention and intention. In the context of the study, if the students have a strong intention to use online social networking sites, then it is highly likely that they will do so as their behaviour is predictable based on intentions. The theory of reasoned action was established as a model to predict behavioural intentions and match them with corresponding behaviours (as cited by Ajzen & Fishbein, 1969:400) as a means to explain the actions as a result of intention.

According to Cappella, Fishbein, Hornik, Ahern and Sayeed (2001), the theory of Reasoned Action suggests that intention is viewed as a function of two determinants which are the person’s attitude towards performing behaviour (which is based on the subject’s beliefs about the costs and benefits of performing the behaviour) and the person’s perception of the social (or normative) pressure exerted on him/her to perform the behaviour.

Ajzen (2005) insists that normative reflection intentions are less important than attitudinal consideration intentions, while normative considerations predominate the rest of the intentions. The South African government has been joining the continent and the whole world in the battle against the digital divide and encouraging access to technological advancements in life and social living. This, therefore, satisfies the attitudinal consideration that everyone should have access to technology, which includes computers

© University of Venda

and the internet. However, normative considerations kick in and overcome the attitudinal considerations in that the world population began to understand what the internet is and what the effects of its application.

2.8 Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, the researcher presented a review of the literature on this topic by previous scholars, specifically related to the conceptualisation of social media, the reverse effects of social media platforms, social media usage among youth, and the influence of social media on youth. This is crucial as it provides a foundation for a clear understanding of the study. Moreover, scholarship on the use and influence of social media among youth globally was discussed to clearly highlight concerns about how social media influences youth. Additionally, the researcher discussed the inverse impact on social media platforms to indicate how users share information on social media changes the way social media platforms behave. The next chapter discusses the research methodology of the study.

© University of Venda

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In the quest to uncover meaningful insights, the path chosen to gather and interpret information is just as crucial as the findings themselves (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). This chapter outlines the roadmap that guided this study from the choice of research design to the tools and techniques used for data collection and analysis and by adopting a organised and systematic approach, this research ensures that its conclusions are not only valid and reliable but also imbedded in a clear and transparent process. This section also, research methods, study area, target population, sampling techniques and sample size, data collection instruments and lastly ethical considerations.

3.2 Research design

According to Fletcher (2017), research design is a plan for collecting and analysing evidence that will make it possible for the researcher to answer whatever questions are posed. Fletcher (2017:36) further states that the design of research touches almost all aspects of the research, from the minute details of data collection to the selection of data analysis techniques. The term “research design” is widely used in the social sciences, particularly in disciplines that champion experimental methods (Snyder, 2019). Furthermore, Merriam and Grenier (2019) explain that the term is too frequently taken to mean a fixed set of procedures and methods that constitute a sort of periodic table of the social sciences. In this regard, Babbie (2011:93) asserts that research design involves a set of decisions regarding what topic is to be studied, among what population, with what research methods, and for what purpose. This study employed a case study and descriptive design.

© University of Venda

3.3 Case study

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) refer to a case study as an in-depth analysis of a single study. Creswell (2012) identifies types of cases that qualitative researchers often conduct. He argues that the case may be a single individual, several individuals separately or in a group, the case may represent a process made of several steps, a case may be selected because of its unusual nature, case studies may include multiple cases referred to as collective case study in which multifarious cases are described and compared to provide insight, a case study researcher might conduct research on several villages, a researcher may use multiple forms of data in order to develop an in-depth understanding of the case, or locating the case or cases within their larger context.

As a case study, the present study took place in three selected villages (Mangata, Sekakeng & Dipateng). From the interpretive approach, the researcher can get enough data from selected cases for subsequent analysis (Andrade, 2009). A case study also enabled the present study to grasp a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study (Ibid).

3.4 Descriptive design

Descriptive design refers to research studies that have as their primary objective the accurate portrayal of the characteristics of persons, situations or groups (Creswell et al., 2018). The descriptive design gives the researcher the opportunity to collect accurate data to answer the research questions and provide a clear picture of the phenomenon under study (McCombes, 2019). It is a scientific method which involves observing and describing the behaviour of a subject without influencing it in any way (Siedlecki, 2020). This type of research design was suitable for this study because it is used to describe variables rather than to test a predicted relationship between variables. In this study, descriptive design was applied because the research focuses on adults' perception of the influence of social media on youth behaviour change in Matoks in Limpopo Province, South Africa.

© University of Venda

3.5 Research method

Research methodology refers to the systematic and theoretical analysis of the methods used in the study. Methodology involves the theoretical analysis of the detailed methods and elements associated with knowledge generation (Fletcher, 2017). Research methodologies encapsulate paradigms, models, phases, mixed methods, and quantitative or qualitative techniques (Fletcher, 2017). However, Snyder (2019) indicates that research methodology does not easily offer solutions. Instead, it offers theoretical support for understanding the set of methods that could be applied to achieve a particular goal.

3.5.1 Qualitative Research Method

This study employed a qualitative research approach. A qualitative research methodology is imperative for this study as it deals with independent subjects. Moreover, the qualitative research methodology allows the researcher to narrate while presenting crucial reasons and participants' points of view pertaining to the studied phenomenon. According to Merriam and Grenier (2019), the qualitative research method is a scientific research that intends to give answers by applying planned procedures.

Moreover, the qualitative research method assists the researcher in collecting data, producing findings that were not easily determined about the investigated phenomenon and producing findings that are beyond the boundaries of the study. The qualitative research is concerned with qualitative phenomena involving quality; it is also characterised by investigating the why and how of decision-making, being non-numerical, descriptive, applying reasoning and using words (Chauvette, Schick-Makaroff & Molzahn, 2019). Additionally, Myers (2019) asserts that qualitative approaches enable an understanding of experiences and processes by incorporating a multi-perspective approach to studying phenomena.

© University of Venda

This study explored the perception of adults on the influence of social media on youth behaviour change. It provided a detailed description of the perception of adults on the influence of social media on youth behaviour change. Qualitative research was used because it is suitable for social research. In qualitative research, the researcher is the key data-gathering instrument because he/she speaks to participants in their natural settings and records their information (McMilllan & Schumacher, 2010). Additionally, the quantitative method was not utilised in the study because it does not give the researcher the option to review answers with participants.

3.6 Study area

Figure 1: Matoks Botlokwa Map



The study was conducted in Botlokwa Matoks in Molemole Municipality, comprising a predominantly semi-urban area. Matoks is 55,3km away from Polokwane. Matoks was selected because preliminary research revealed that youth aged between 15 and 35 in this semi-urban area spend most of their time on their phones due to the unemployment rate, which might increase social media usage. Additionally, Matoks has lots of activities

© University of Venda

that happen around there, such as events that lead the youth of Matoks to become more active on social media.

3.7 Population and sampling procedure

3.7.1 Population

According to Etikan and Bala (2017), a target population is the actual population to which the researcher wants to generalise the results. In simple terms, populations refer to the total number of units from which data can be collected (Babbie, 2013:135). It is the entire aggregate of cases in which the researcher is interested, and which meet the criteria for inclusion in the study (Polit & Beck, 2012). The study population consisted of Matoks adults who are active in social media.

3.7.2 Sampling

According to Schreier (2018), the sampling method involves taking a representative selection of the population and using the data collected as research information. Flick (2007:119) explains that a sampling frame is a list of units or potential respondents or elements composing a population from which a sample is selected. Hulland, Baumgartner and Smith (2018) concur that the purpose of sampling is usually to study a representative subsection of a precisely defined population to make inferences about the whole population. This study used purposive sampling to select eighteen (18) participants from the target population in Matoks. Purposive sampling employed in this study was a non-probability sampling method.

The selected population comprised nine (9) males and nine (9) females who owned mobile phones and who had social media accounts, which enabled them to see what the youth of Matoks are doing compared to what they are exposing themselves to and/or posting on social media.

© University of Venda

The selected population included residents of Matoks who were active on social media and were between 36 and 39 years old. The researcher preferred this age group because it consists of active social media users who are active and able to see what the youth of Matoks are doing on social media. The researcher selected the population of the study irrespective of their levels of education and religious backgrounds to get different information about their uses and experiences of social media. The reason why the researcher selected eighteen (18) respondents was that the entire population could not be examined due to time and resource constraints, and 18 participants were sufficient for this study. Studying every member of a population, according to Wimmer and Dominick (2011:87), is also generally cost-prohibitive and may, in fact, confound the research because measurements of large numbers of people often affect measurement quality.

According to Bernard (2013:228), in a study where non-probability is used, the samples are gathered in a process that does not give all the individuals in the population equal chances of being selected. Dominick and Wimmer (2014:94) contend that non-probability sampling is the method that is frequently used by mass media researchers, particularly in the form of available samples. The aim of choosing the non-probability technique is to ensure that different population members who are social media users are suitably selected. Hulland, Baumgartner and Smith (2018) refer to non-probability sampling as “any kind of sampling where the selection of elements is not determined by the statistical principle of randomness”. In another study, Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016:1) assert that the non-probability sampling technique is useful, especially when randomisation is impossible, like when the population is very large. Therefore, the non-probability purposive sampling design was appropriate for this study because the researcher could choose the participants based on their judgement as to who provided the best information to achieve the objectives of the study (Foley, 2018).

3.8 Data collection instrument

In qualitative research, the researcher is the main research instrument. According to McIntoch and Morse (2015), data collection is a precise, systemic gathering of information

© University of Venda

relevant to the research objectives or study purpose, specific questions, and hypothesis of a study. In this study, data was collected through semi-structured interviews.

3.8.1 Semi-structured interview face-to-face interviews

The researcher selected a semi-structured interview as the best tool to collect data for this study because of its influence on the set up of questions and detailed information. Additionally, the semi-structured interviews helped the researcher attain different views about the phenomenon studied by the interviewees. Semi-structured interviews were particularly appropriate because they allowed the researcher space to get unexpected data, and they give the participants - adults in Matoks a room to give their opinions about how the youth in Matoks use social media as well as elaborate on how it may be influencing their behaviour change. According to McIntoch and Morse (2015), semi-structured interviews are usually adopted when the researcher aims to gather information about what the participants are doing and how they feel or think about a particular phenomenon. During the interview, the researcher asks guiding questions prepared earlier and monitors how the participants answer them to obtain fruitful information, while follow-up questions are also asked to explore arising issues (Johnson & Posthuma, 2019).

Vila-Henninger (2019), commenting on the type of interview adopted in this study, explains that there are four elements of semi-structured interviews. Firstly, semi-structured interviews allow interaction or conversation to take place between interviewer and interviewee. Secondly, the setup of the questions allows the interview to be conducted in an engagement to answer the questions during the proceedings. Thirdly, the researcher can review the collected information to narrate and expose the emerging themes. Lastly, the context of communication, in which the data should be developed, is guided (Vila-Henninger, 2019:71).

© University of Venda

When conducting a study on the perception of adults on change in youths' behaviour due to social media influence in Matoks, Limpopo, the researcher used face-to-face interviews as a primary means of data collection. These interviews enabled the participants and the researcher to discuss primary subjective impressions. This approach is quite useful in the capturing of more qualitative data regarding issues that are often sensitive, or those that, in this case, tend to be, 'socially constructed'' like the impact of social media on youthful people. In qualitative research, face-to-face interviews are purposive or snowball samples where respondents are selected knowing they have the required information or experience on the study topic (Salam, 2019). When selecting participants for this study, adults in Matoks, Limpopo, were preferred because they helped in understanding the extent to which social media influences the behaviour of youths.

The interviewees were asked several standard questions, but the interviewer had the freedom to deviate from their script depending on the responses they received from the previous questions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). This format allows participants to say what they want with little restriction and, at the same time, covers the most important issues. In the course of the interview, the researcher used broad-based questions aimed at reacting to participants' attitudes towards and concerning the impact of social media among youths. Answers were documented in writing or by audio capture with permission from participants to ensure that valuable information was not missed. The recorded interviews were then transcribed, and the recordings were analysed by either programmatic thematic analysis or content analysis. It enabled the researcher to understand and pinpoint recurring features and commonalities concerning young persons' use of social media (recurring themes, attitudes, and perceptions).

Interviewing in person is particularly effective because it provides an opportunity to ask supplementing questions to understand the participants' position more profoundly (Patton, 2015). This is especially useful when analysing such issues as behaviour modification. The researcher noted down the participants' postures and gestures, as well

© University of Venda

as their looks and speech intonation, which added more meaning to what they said. More often, these cues transmit wordless information, as Morgan (2014) noted in their article.

3.9 Data analysis

Chambers (2018) indicates that data analysis is a stage in which the researcher does data reduction, presentation and interpretation. Jiang, Wang, Lv, Qi and Singh (2019) highlight that analysis of data in a research project involves summarising the mass of data collected and presenting the results in a way that communicates the most important features. The researcher used thematic analysis of narrative enquiry to analyse data from the research respondents about their uses of social media. Chambers (2018:1) claims that a study that is narrative is usually well understood and highlights the influence of theoretical perspectives for the readers.

In this regard, Barbour (2014:123) notes that narrative inquiry involves the telling of a story with a clear sequence that seeks to locate experiences on a chronological continuum. In their study, Mogaji and Youn (2019:44) contend that the aim of a narrative study is, therefore, not to find one generalisable truth but to find many truths from the respondents. In contrast, Mogaji and Youn (2019) suggest that the core activity in narrative analysis is to reformulate stories presented by respondents in different contexts and based on their different experiences. In this regard, Barbour (2014:44) agrees that the process of telling the narrative can potentially transform the respondents' experience. The data was analysed by highlighting phrases that presented the respondent's attitudes and thoughts, repeating the interview transcripts, reading to ensure accuracy, highlighting important statements and organising the themes that emerged from the interview (Struwig & Stead, 2017). Qualitative methods of analysing data were adopted, since this study was qualitative.

3.9.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

According to Scharp and Sanders (2019), qualitative data analysis is the range of processes and procedures whereby the researchers move from the qualitative data that

© University of Venda

have been collected into some form of explanation, understating or interpretation of the respondents and situations they are investigating. Qualitative data analysis is one of the most important steps in the qualitative research process because it assists researchers in making sense of their qualitative data (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). The process of qualitative data analysis is labour-intensive and time-consuming. In this study, the data was analysed through thematic analysis.

3.9.2 Thematic analysis

According to Ibrahim (2012:39), thematic analysis is a comprehensive process whereby the researcher can identify numerous cross-references between the data and the research's evolving themes. In this study, the researcher used the thematic analysis method to analyse data gathered from the research respondents about the perception of adults on the influence of social media on youth behaviour changes in Matoks, Limpopo Province. The reason for using thematic analysis was that the researcher wanted to deal with patterns that allowed thick analysis that was more understandable. Ibrahim (2012:39-40) states that thematic analysis gives an opportunity to understand the potential of any issue more widely and provides flexibility for approaching research patterns.

This makes the process of thematic analysis more appropriate for analysing the data when the research aims to extract information to determine the relationship between variables and to compare different sets of evidence that pertain to different situations in the same study. According to Barbour (2014:338), thematic analysis underpins most qualitative research analysis, whether it is explicitly stated. Additionally, it draws on the organisation of data into relevant themes that the author indicates are the broad codes assigned to the main issues arising in data (usually justified in terms of the frequency with which they occur).

These are then used to organise data, with reference also to related sub-categories. "Coding," according to Mogaji and Youn (2019), refers to: "The creation of categories in relation to data; the grouping together of different instances of data under an umbrella

© University of Venda

term that can enable them to be regarded as of the same type". When discussing thematic analysis, Vaismoradi and Snelgrove (2019) assert that the themes highlight changes in the thinking and action of the individual researcher and research movements within the disciplines. Vaismoradi and Snelgrove (2019) further explain that themes provide a way of tracing the process by which one becomes a narrative researcher. In this regard, Ibrahim (2012:40) indicates that this process will confer accuracy and intricacy and enhance the research's whole meaning.

3.9.3 Data analysis process

The researcher transcribed and translated the electronic-recorded interviews, then read and reread them in their entirety, reflecting on the interviews to ensure that they were legible. Therefore, the researcher summarised the interviews to distinguish similarities and differences in the respondents' narratives about their perception of the influence of social media on Matoks's youth behaviour change. Writing notes assisted the researcher in identifying the main ideas from the data gathered from the research respondents. As the research was exploratory, when analysing the data, all interviews conducted by the researcher had common aspects, which assisted the researcher in identifying relevant themes. The researcher organised data in different themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data in a narrative revised form.

3.10 Ethical considerations

According to Velasquez, Andre, Shanks and Meyer (2018:1), ethics involves considering what is right, wrong, sound, and bad and striving to act with integrity, respect, and responsibility. According to Raanjit (2014:12), the researcher has a moral obligation to strictly consider the rights of the participants who were expected to provide this knowledge. The researcher considers it very important to establish trust between the participants and herself and respect them as autonomous beings, thus enabling them to make sound decisions (Beauchamp & Childress, 2013:123). The researcher ensured that

© University of Venda

the information obtained was not shared with the third party, but it was used in the final document of the research without stating the names.

The researcher applied for and was granted a UNIVEN ethical clearance certificate to carry out this study. Another clearance was sought and obtained from the Department of Basic Education, Limpopo Province as well as school approval from the identified school in Matoks. According to the World Health Organisation (2019), National Institute of Health (2020) and Declaration of Helsinki (2013), research ethics govern the standards of conduct for scientific researchers. According to Babbie (2010:64), ethical issues or considerations cover the following essential aspects: Informed Consent, Confidentiality and Anonymity, Privacy, Protection from harm and Voluntary participation.

3.10.1 Informed Consent

The study first requested the participants' verbal consent to participate in this study and gave each willing participant a consent letter, which they read and signed before participating in this study. Raanjit (2014:78) refers to informed consent as a voluntary agreement to participate in research, which is not merely a form that is signed but a process in which the subject understands the research and its risks. All informed-consent procedures must meet three criteria: participants must be competent to give consent, sufficient information must be provided, and consent must be voluntary and unforced (Beauchamp & Childress, 2013:113). In this study, the researcher ensured that the participants were given a consent form to sign before their participation, which outlined the purpose, risks, benefits, and procedures of the research, as well as their rights and responsibilities, in accordance with ethical standards and principles of informed consent (World Health Organisation, 2019; National Institutes of Health, 2020).

The researcher also clarified that participants had the option to choose whether to participate or not, decide whether they were comfortable answering all questions or not, refuse to answer any questions that made them uncomfortable without being forced to do so, withdraw from the study at any stage, for any reason, without fear of repercussions or

© University of Venda

penalty (Beauchamp & Childress, 2013; National Institutes of Health, 2020; World Health Organisation, 2019).

3.10.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Polit and Hungler (1999:4) state that confidentiality means that no information that the participant provides will be divulged to the public or available to others. The anonymity of a person or an institution is protected by making it impossible to link aspects of data to a specific person or institution. Confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed by ensuring that data obtained are used in such a way that no one other than the researcher knows the source (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 2002).

Although it was impossible to exclude the name of the selected school, the information collected from the participants was not directly linked to any individual. The study also had negligible risk, if any. However, in this study, the researcher made sure that the information obtained was not shared with any third party, but it was only used in the final document of the research without stating the names. Subjects were given codes to avoid using their real names, such as #participant 1, and #participant 2.

3.10.3 Privacy

According to De Vos and Strydom (2011), privacy refers to agreements between persons that limit the access of others to private information. Privacy refers to the freedom an individual has to determine the time, extent and general circumstances under which private information will be shared with or withheld from others (Burns & Grove, 2003). In this study, the researcher upheld the promise made to the participants by not sharing private information such as participants' names and biographic details that may easily identify them with other people without the participant's permission.

© University of Venda

3.10.4 Protection from harm

As qualitative research deals with human social phenomena, the researcher needs to protect participants from any form of harm, physical or emotional, during data collection and ensure their well-being and dignity are respected, as outlined in ethical guidelines and principles (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The researcher ensured that participants were not harmed or subjected to any form of physical, emotional, or psychological distress throughout the research process and that their rights and dignity were respected, as emphasised in ethical research guidelines (Smit, 2018).

3.10.5 Voluntary participation

Participation in research should not be coerced but be of free will. Participants should also be made aware that they have the right to know how much information they want to disclose. As such, they must not be made to feel bad for withholding certain information. The participants formed part of this study voluntarily (Smit, 2018).

This statement aligns with ethical research principles, which emphasise the importance of voluntary participation, informed consent, and respect for participants' autonomy and agency. By ensuring that participants are not coerced and are aware of their rights, researchers can promote a positive and empowering research experience.

In this study, the researcher informed all the participants that they were free to choose whether they wanted to participate, and they could withdraw at any time without any negative repercussions.

3.11 Chapter Summary

The chapter discussed the research design employed in this investigation and the study's research methodology. It provided the study area, target population and study samples. The chapter focused on ways of collecting, interpreting and analysing data so that the

© University of Venda

aims and objectives of research, as stated in Chapter 1, may be achieved. The next chapter focuses on data analysis and interpretation of the research findings.

© University of Venda

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on data presentation and analysis. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, where participants were asked questions, and their answers were recorded using a voice recorder. Eighteen (18) participants, females and males, were interviewed during the data collection process. This chapter also entails a description of the biographical details of the respondents in the study population. Participants were coded as #1, #2, and #3 up to #18 to protect their identity. The collected data were analysed thematically. Data presentation themes were derived from the questions asked during data collection. Thus, the interview questions helped answer the identified research questions outlined in Chapters 1 and 4 to remind the readers. However, data analysis and discussion utilised themes extracted from the study data.

4.2 Biographical profile of participants

The sample size of this study consisted of #18 respondents - #9 males and #9 females, whose ages ranged between 31 to 39 years. They were selected according to purposive non-random sampling. All respondents were from three Matoks villages: Mangata, Dipateng and Sekakeng. Six respondents were from Mangata, another six were from Dipateng, and the last six participants were from Sekakeng. All 18 respondents volunteered to become part of the study after the researcher convincingly explained what the study was seeking to achieve. The biographical data of the research participants were compiled during the interview process. The researcher voluntarily asked for respondents' gender, age, Matoks villages they belonged to and the length of their stay in Matoks before the actual interview commenced. The biographical details of the respondents are presented in Table 1 below.

© University of Venda

Table 1: Biographical profile of respondents

PSEUDONYM	GENDER	AGE	MATOKS VILLAGES	YEARS OF LIVING IN MATOKS
Participant 1	Male	35	Sekakeng	35
Participant 2	Male	32	Sekakeng	30
Participant 3	Female	32	Dipateng	28
Participant 4	Male	33	Mangata	33
Participant 5	Female	35	Sekakeng	35
Participant 6	Male	35	Dipateng	29
Participant 7	Female	32	Mangata	30
Participant 8	Male	35	Sekakeng	35
Participant 9	Female	38	Dipateng	38
Participant 10	Male	31	Sekakeng	31
Participant 11	Female	31	Dipateng	31
Participant 12	Male	38	Dipateng	27
Participant 13	Male	32	Mangata	32
Participant 14	Female	39	Mangata	39
Participant 15	Female	31	Mangata	31
Participant 16	Female	36	Dipateng	29
Participant 17	Male	33	Mangata	33
Participant 18	Female	38	Sekakeng	38

The socio-demographic information shown in Table 4.2 shows the total number of male and female participants who participated in this study and their biographic information.

4.3 Collected data presentation

© University of Venda

Data collected through semi-structured interviews is presented in this section. Responses given by all participants are presented and analysed under the identified themes. The themes are drawn from the study questions listed below to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the findings. The study answered the following research questions.

- How do adults perceive the influence of social media on the youth in Matoks?
- Why do they think social media is influencing youth in Matoks?
- What can be done to reduce the negative effects of social media on youth in Matoks?

4.3.1 Do you think the youth in Matoks spend much time on social media? If yes, roughly how much time do they spend on social media?

Participant #1: Yes, they spend 2 to 3 hours up to 7 hours on social media.

Participant #2: Yes, they spend approximately 40% of their time, which is 5-6 hours.

Participant #3: Yes, the youth in Matoks spend 2 hours on social media.

Participant #4: Yes, they spend more than 5 hours on social media per day.

Participant #5: Yes, the youth in Matoks spend most of their time on social media, and I can say they spend more than 6 hours on it.

Participant #6: Yes, just like most youths, social media has become their means of communication with friends and family; this means that it's a daily activity for entertainment and communication. They spend approximately 4 hours on social media.

© University of Venda

Participant #7: Yes, the youth in Matoks are highly active on social media, dedicating a significant portion of their daily time, approximately 5 hours daily, to various social media platforms.

Participant #8: Yes, they spend more than 143 minutes, that's 2 hours and 23 minutes on social media, but some of it depends on not having data; it limits their time on social media.

Participant #9: Yes, they use social media almost all the time because they will be checking their friends and keeping them updated, which makes them spend 6-7 hours per day.

Participant #10: Yes, youth in Matoks spend more time on social media, approximately 2-3 hours.

Participant #11: Yes, they spend more of their time on social media, approximately 6 hours.

Participant #12: Yes, they spend more than 5 hours per day on social media

Participant #13: Yes, some spend almost 2 to 3 hours on social media.

Participant #14: Yes, Youth in Matoks spend approximately 8 hours on social media.

Participant #15: Yes, they spend almost 5 to 6 hours on social media per day.

Participant #16: Yes, almost 8 hours per day.

Participant #17: Yes, they spend more than 8 hours per day.

© University of Venda

Participant #18: Yes, young people are the biggest users; they spend nearly 3 hours a day on social media.

4.3.2. Influence of social media on youth in Matoks: What is your knowledge of youth and social media use?

Participant #1: Youth prefer chatting with friends from their hometown who are at different places all the time when they log in to social media. This helps them know what they are up to in life. Connecting with their friends is something they enjoy most because many of them attended together primary and secondary school and some of them share common interests".

Participant #2: They always communicate with my family members and friends through group chats on social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook. This helps them to understand what they are up to in life and know their whereabouts.

Participant #3: Today's youth use social media more than anybody else. They use apps like Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat for self-expression, communication, and enjoyment. Young people can use social media to interact with peers, explore their identities, and take part in global discourses. It enables individuals to stay up to date, produce content, and even take part in social activity related to causes that are important to them, including racial justice and climate change. Social media has shaped many people's daily lives by influencing their access to information and social relationships.

Participant #4: As a parent to a teenager, when he's not around, and there is a situation whereby he does not have airtime, he uses WhatsApp to communicate with me to keep in touch. We find communication working because we respond to each other's inboxes on time.

Participant #5: Youth use social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube to stay connected with their family members and friends who are near and far.

© University of Venda

They share their opinions and views about things that are happening at school, their relationships, and their jobs with them.

Participant #6: Youth use social media to share and to receive important information such as trending updates and current vacancies and to be informed about everything happening around the entire world.

Participant #7: Youth use social media so that they can interact with their classmates through group charts and get information about schoolwork or important information such as job opportunities.

Participant #8: They use social media to communicate with their friends and family.

Participant #9: They use social media to communicate with people and for entertainment.

Participant #10: They use social media to interact with their classmates, family and friends through group charts. Those who are students interact with their classmates and get information about schoolwork.

Participant #11: They use social media to keep themselves updated and to chat with friends and family.

Participant #12: The youth use social media for new updates, things that are happening around the world and again for his schoolwork.

Participant #13: They use social media to connect with others from around the world, share their interests, and develop relationships with family and friends**.**

Participant #14: Some use social media to showcase their talents, boost their creativity, and learn about the latest trends and technologies.

© University of Venda

Participant #15: They can share their experiences, thoughts, and ideas with others, which helps them to build stronger relationships. Social media also provides a platform for young people to communicate with people who share similar interests and hobbies.

Participant #16: They use social media to express themselves and showcase their creativity. Through social media, young people can share their thoughts, ideas, and opinions with a wider audience.

Participant #17: Youth use social media for networking and building friendships. Social media platforms provide a venue for interaction and conversation among young people, allowing them to connect with new friends and get to know them better.

Participant #18: They use social media to showcase their talents, such as music, art, and writing. Social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have become popular among young people who use them to share their creative works with others.

4.3.3. Influence of social media use on employment of the youth in Matoks

- **According to you, do you think using social media for employment purposes can help them gain employment? Explain.**

Participant #1: There are pages designed for people seeking employment on different social media platforms which job seekers and recruiters join.

Participant #2: Social media can help because even major institutions use social media as a means of communication and social marketing, but due to the lack of credibility, it is important to use it wisely and verify the information to avoid being scammed.

Participant #3: Social media offers networking, personal branding, and job opportunity access platforms that can assist young people in finding jobs. Young people can demonstrate their talents and experiences, network with possible employers, and develop professional profiles on websites such as LinkedIn.

© University of Venda

Participant #4: Young people also utilise platforms like Instagram and TikTok to showcase their artistic abilities, develop portfolios, and become more visible in fields like marketing, fashion, and the arts. A lot of businesses now hire straight from social media, posting job openings on sites like Facebook and Twitter to make it simpler for young people to find and apply for jobs.

Participant #5: Social media can gain the power to empower the youth because it has the strong power to shape people's minds and the way how people view things.

Participant #6: Social media can help young people gain employment by allowing them to build a personal brand, network with professionals, and access job opportunities. Platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram enable users to showcase skills, connect with recruiters, and stay informed on industry trends.

Participant #7: Social media provides learning opportunities, allowing young people to follow industry leaders and engage in professional discussions to stay competitive. By using platforms strategically, youth can effectively position themselves in the job market, gain visibility, and create career opportunities, whether through traditional employment or entrepreneurial ventures. However, they must remain cautious about the accuracy of career advice found online and ensure their profiles reflect a professional image that appeals to potential employers.

Participant #8: I believe social media can be a valuable tool for employment purposes. It can help youth showcase their skills, connect with potential employers, and stay informed about job opportunities. However, it's crucial to maintain a professional online presence and use relevant hashtags to increase visibility.

Participant #9: Social media offers opportunities to promote personal projects or businesses. However, it's important to maintain professionalism and be mindful of oversharing or posting inappropriate content that could harm job prospects.

© University of Venda

Participant #10: Job hunters can follow experts or organisations on social media within their desired industry or career path of choice, which may create opportunities for networking or engagement.

Participant #11: Each social media platform has its own audience and culture, providing you with the opportunity to get granular and take the right message to the right people at the right time. For example, companies looking for candidates located in cities and who have a college education will likely have more success on Facebook and YouTube.

Participant #12: Youth find the internet to be the most useful media for information purposes. They usually check some of the vacancies on it.

Participant #13: Many companies now rely on social media recruiting and use social networks to target their ideal hire social media platform, such as LinkedIn.

Participant #14: Social media can help individuals overcome geographical barriers and level the playfield by providing youngsters equal access to job market information, as well as networking and employment opportunities.

Participant #15: Recruitment services imply costs that are often unbearable for youth and for marginalised groups. All over the world, recruitment staff and services are embracing social media, and it's easy for young people to access jobs.

Participant #16: For a company, social media provides an effective communication platform at low costs. Users connect with companies and popular profiles of the industry to follow trends, stay in touch with the industry, and keep track of opportunities that might improve their employability.

© University of Venda

Participant #17: You can Share an online portfolio or CV on social media; by creating an online portfolio, you'll be able to quickly direct potential employers to your best work and impress them with your skills.

Participant #18: They can follow recruitment groups where vacancies might be regularly advertised, helping keep abreast of job opportunities. Social media also provides you with a platform to establish your professional profile.

4.3.4 Do you think social media use has a negative or positive influence on individuals with mental health concerns? Explain why?

Participant #1: Negative because it can exacerbate feelings of loneliness or low self-worth for those who are already dealing with mental health issues.

Participant #2: Negative, stress or poor self-esteem symptoms might develop when harsh remarks and cyberbullying combine with the pressure to maintain a positive online presence. Social media's addictive qualities can also result in obsessive use, which lowers the amount of in-person social contact and worsens mental health.

Participant #3: Negative because individuals react differently to social media use. Fear of missing out also contributes to the negative depictions of social media use. Some get bullied, which affects their mental health, leading them to having anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Worse, some end up taking their lives.

Participant #4: Negative online interactions, such as cyberbullying or harassment, can exacerbate mental health issues, especially for vulnerable individuals.

Participant #5: Negative, excessive social media use can lead to isolation, disrupt sleep, and increase feelings of anxiety, creating a cycle of dependence that can worsen mental health problems.

© University of Venda

Participant #6: Negative, FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) also play a role if everyone else is using social media sites and if someone doesn't join in, there's concern that they'll miss jokes, connections or invitations. Missing experiences can create anxiety and depression. When people look online and see they're excluded from an activity, it can affect thoughts and feelings and can affect them physically.

Participant #7: Negative because social media platforms often feature images of people with seemingly perfect faces and bodies, often using filters and photo editing tools to enhance their appearance. This can create unrealistic beauty standards, leading to body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem in both women and men. Social media filters have led to a condition known as "snapchat dysphoria," in which people become desperate to look like the filtered version of themselves.

Participant #8: Negative, social media can create a toxic culture of comparison and competition, where individuals compare their bodies to others and strive to meet the same beauty standards. Many people tend to post only their best photos, which may not be representative of their everyday appearance. For both men and women, this can contribute to negative body image and even lead to mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety.

Participant #9: Positive, social media can connect individuals with mental health challenges to supportive communities where they feel understood and not alone. Groups, forums, and influencers often promote mental health awareness and provide a space for sharing experiences.

Participant #10: Negative, the addictive nature of social media can disrupt sleep patterns, leading to fatigue and decreased well-being.

Participant #11: Positive, it allows people to access mental health resources, educational content, coping strategies, and even professional support more easily. Social media has

© University of Venda

helped reduce the stigma around mental health by normalizing conversations about anxiety, depression, and other concerns, which can encourage individuals to seek help.

Participant #12: Negative, cyberbullying is a prevalent problem on social media platforms, which can further contribute to negative mental health outcomes.

Participant #13: Negative, the constant exposure to carefully curated and unrealistic portrayals of others' lives can lead to feelings of inadequacy and comparison, exacerbating mental health issues.

Participate #14: Negative, the effects of cyberbullying can be severe, leading to depression, anxiety, and in some cases, even suicide.

Participant #15: Negative, overwhelming need to share photos of yourself and feeling like life events are meaningless if you don't share online

Participant #16: Negative, social media can be a breeding ground for cyberbullying, where people are attacked for their body size, shape, or appearance. This can have a damaging effect on body image and self-esteem.

Participant #17: Negative, fear of missing out, feeling like your life isn't enough, often leading to anxiety and unhappiness.

Participant #18: Negative, constant feelings of inadequacy: Feeling like you aren't enough, particularly around body image and success factors.

4.3.5 In your view, what are some of the risks that come with the use of social media?

Participant #1: Some social media users tag people on the picture that they did not agree they should tag them, and many of them are naked men whom people do not even know

© University of Venda

where they come from. They don't want such pictures on people's timelines, and it is so embarrassing.

Participant #2: When some users fail to attack you physically, they use social media as a platform to show their aggression towards you, calling them names and threatening to damage their reputation online.

Participant #3: Social media users like to threaten and harass others. When you upload your picture, there will be a comment from an unknown user saying you look ugly, tiny, unhealthy and sick.

Participant #4: Some people are being threatened and stalked online after someone uploads some of their pictures on Facebook; there are some unknown users who always comment with messages like: "How are you stupid person?" and "You think you are smart on Facebook?" "Nowadays, you think you are the most handsome/beautiful person.

Participant #5: Some social media users take people's numbers on social media platforms like Facebook and call them and say nothing to them, which is a scary part when someone calls you and says nothing.

Participant #6: You will come across a lot of false messages written about both celebrities and local people, saying the person has passed away. Such information is misleading because, as a social media user, you will never have enough time to search for or ask whether those messages are true or not.

Participant #7: Social media users sometimes write false statuses about something. It worries me when somebody lies about something important on social media platforms.

Participant #8: You can easily be hacked; social media user is easily hacked on their account, and the hacker will start uploading naked pictures on your timeline, changing their profile details such as address and photos. This deed can affect your relationship in

© University of Venda

such a way you will end up breaking up with your boyfriend/girlfriend and having problems with your family.

Participant #8: Social media platforms provide a space where individuals can be targeted by cyberbullies, who may send mean texts, post hurtful messages, or spread rumours online.

Participant #9: social media allows incidents of bullying to reach a wide audience within a short period, potentially causing embarrassment and lasting emotional harm.

Participant #10: The decreased face-to-face interaction and social skills that can result from heavy social media use. Social media lacks face-to-face contact that allows people to pick up nonverbal cues, such as smiling, arms crossing, and body positioning, that help people communicate.

Participant #11: It is easy for someone to be scammed; I am the victim. Someone scammed me of my last R1500,00 on Facebook.

Participant #12: Social media has been detrimental to the way people feel about their looks, and they struggle not to compare themselves to the people they see online.

Participant #13: Social media may significantly divert teens' attention from demanding responsibilities like academics or extracurricular activities, making them much less productive and affecting their academic performance.

Participant #14: Social media is addictive, so in the end, it will be difficult for students to study.

Participant #15: "I once became the victim of hacking of my Facebook account. An unknown Facebook user hacked my account and started uploading naked pictures on my timeline, changing my profile details such as address and photos. This deed has affected

© University of Venda

my relationship in such a way I ended up breaking up with my boyfriend because he thought I was the one uploading naked pictures on my timeline".

Participant #16: Invasion of privacy, your friends can invade your privacy and share the information you used to tell them on social media platforms such as Facebook or WhatsApp.

Participant #17: Vulgar language, "Sometimes unknown social media users can send an insulting message. You will be surprised by such kind of disgracing messages because you did not insult anyone or disturb anyone when you were online.

Participant #18: Social media can be a significant source of distraction for teenagers, which can negatively impact their academic performance and grades.

4.3.6 What are some of the ways that can be used to help the youth use social media wisely?

Participant #1: Social media experts should have the campaign to talk to users and warn them about the aftermath that can emerge when they attack each other on social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter. They should also be advised how they can cope with each other when using the platform rather than attacking and defaming other users' characters. Social media campaigns are crucial for preventing challenges faced by social media users. This can also be done by raising awareness on radio and television stations on how to use social media properly.

Participant #2: It is always important to teach young people how to use social media. This can positively help to mitigate challenges such as pornography, insults, hacking of accounts and cyberattacks when users are online.

Participant #3: There should be lessons at public gatherings, public lectures and government imbizos by social media experts that focus on the dos and don'ts of social

© University of Venda

media. Social media education is important specifically to those who are not yet using the platform".

Participant #4: Parents should play a role and intervene to teach young people what they should do and what they should not do when they are online, they should advise young people not to fight, bully and stalk each other when they are using social media.

Participant #5**:** Parents should encourage youth to use social media for education, job hunting and motivation.

Participant #6: It is better to accept social media users you know and who are close to you. This will help if ever you have problems with that user on social media because he or she will be known.

Participant #7: Age restriction on social media is important. It will help to reduce problems faced by social media users because some register for accounts with false information such as age, location and name.

Participant #8: Users should only chat with people or friends they know rather than chatting with strangers. This will help to mitigate countless challenges encountered online. It is worth nothing to have many online friends who are going to bring discomfort when a user is online.

Participant #9: Users should only chat with people or friends they know rather than chatting with strangers. This will help to mitigate countless challenges encountered online. It is worth nothing to have many online friends who are going to bring discomfort when a user is online.

Participant #10: The South African parliament should discuss and implement a law that strictly focuses on social media and legal charges for those who will break that particular law. The law should also fight acts of cyberbullying.

© University of Venda

Participant #11: Social media administrators should always be responsible for upgrading privacy so that users should not just come across disturbing content such as pornography or hacking of their accounts by cybercriminals.

Participant #12: Social media users should have online time limitations per day to balance their everyday duties. Limiting the time while they are online will help them avoid encountering problems caused by other users when they are online. In contrast

Participant #13: Social media developers should upgrade the platform in such a way that allows users to use Facebook for a specific period and control user's daily limit. This will help to reduce problems reported to the Facebook Company daily".

Participant #14: Social media users can protect their privacy by not sharing personal information like phone numbers, location, and date of birth with strangers online or with people they don't know personally.

Participant #15: Parents should help their children stay safe on social media by discussing various scenarios and helping them understand what kind of information should not be shared via social media.

Participant #16: It is crucial to educate youth about the risks of cyberbullying and provide support systems to address and prevent such behaviour.

Participant # 17: Parents need to warn young people about the danger that occurs when users are online, even though they are not all of them who know what happens on social media.

Participant #18: Social media developers should always consider age restrictions. Considering age restriction could help to prevent young people, specifically teenagers,

© University of Venda

from owning social media accounts as they are a soft target by social media bullies and criminals.

4.4 Data analysis and interpretation

This section presents the data analysis and interpretation of the findings of this study. The data analysis process is informed by Palinkas (2015), who defines data analysis as reducing the collected data into a very controlled and convenient size and identifying the existing patterns before summarising the data set. The significance of data analysis is that it helps the researcher amplify the findings of the study while answering the research objectives (Seidman, 2013). As the findings of the study are presented above, they are now interpreted and analysed according to the identified themes and supplemented with the literature from different scholars. The data was analysed thematically, utilising themes extracted from the study data.

4.4.1 Theme 1: Frequency of social media usage by youth

When the participants were asked how much time the youth in Matoks might be spending on social media, all of them said yes, the youth of Matoks spent time on social media. In fact, 13 (72%) out of 18 participants feared that youth were spending at least 4 hours online. Participants #1, 9, 14, 16, and 17 indicated that young people spend too much time on various social media platforms, claiming some might spend up to 7 hours or more on social media. This was also confirmed by Frimpong's (2015) study, which discovered that the greater part of the respondents were heavy social media users, where about seventy-four out of the ninety-two respondents (80%) in that study stated that the young people spent much time on social media. This is supported by Asare-Donkoh (2018), who revealed in their study that most youths accessed social media sites using their cell phones.

Heavy usage of social media, which Matoks adults who participated in this study alluded to, demonstrates the youth's dependency on social media platforms. It means there is nothing that is occupying these young people, either employment or education, yet this is

© University of Venda

the group viewed as the future as believed by Smith (2024). This poses a significant threat to their future and career vocation. However, although most adults residing in Matoks and some scholars bemoan the negative impact of extended social media usage, other scholars focus on the benefits users attain from social networking platforms (Infante & Mardikaningsih, 2022; Pelletier et al., 2020 & Raza et al., 2020). This ushers in the next theme, which focuses on social media use by youth.

The Uses and Gratification Theory, which holds that people deliberately seek out media to meet particular needs like entertainment, social contact, and knowledge, helps explain this high degree of involvement (Leung & Zhang, 2022). According to Sabharwal (2024), the youth's extended use of social media indicates that these platforms are fulfilling important psychological and social needs, making them an essential component of everyday life. Additionally, young people's actions in Matoks align with the Theory of Reasoned Action, which contends that actions are motivated by purpose and are impacted by attitudes and perceived social norms (Wicaksono & Prasetyo, 2024). According to Mousavi and Gharacheh (2023), the prevalence of social media use among peers may be influencing favorable opinions about its use and bolstering a cultural norm in which spending a lot of time online is accepted or even expected. The notion that young people are impacted by observational learning and modeling behaviors observed in their surroundings, particularly those shown on social media, is also supported by social cognitive theory (Smith & Lee, 2023). According to Zhou and Wang (2022), these results demonstrate how ongoing exposure to peers, influencers, and content producers online shapes identity, goals, and daily routines. These observed behaviors may be internalized by young people, resulting in recurring consuming patterns that mirror socially taught behaviours.

4.4.2 Theme 2: Social media use by youth

Many participants stated that they believe youth use social media to connect with their siblings, relatives, old friends, and unknown friends with whom they are interested in chatting. Some respondents think young people value their friendships, which may become stronger when chatting with friends on different platforms. Some respondents

© University of Venda

stated that they believe young people use social media for enjoyment and job opportunities. According to Rieder, Borra, Coromina and Matamoros-Fernández (2023), social media viewing can be a source of livelihood for content creators who earn money for views and subscriptions. Participants #1, #2, #, #8, #9 and #17 indicated that youths prefer chatting with friends from their hometown who are always at different places when they log in to social media. This helps them to know what they are up to in life. Connecting with their friends is something they enjoy most because most of them attend primary and secondary school together, and some of them share common interests. The study by Lam and Christiansen (2022), postulate that young people's interaction is not in vain, since it helps them connect and share their identities and cultures using their languages.

Participants #3, #5, and #18 indicated that youth use social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube to stay connected with their family members and friends who are near and far. Further, they share their opinions and views about things happening at school, their relationships and their jobs. The literature indicates that some social media users use them to connect. Swist et al. (2015:17) state that social media is specifically designed to facilitate, promote and enhance interpersonal connections at peer, family, local and global scales. In this regard, Eke et al. (2014:8) claim that social networking sites can be a great way to make connections with people with related interests and goals, like a virtual meeting place where friends hang out. Chowdhury and Saha (2015:30) are concerned that through social media platforms, young people may increase their empathy for their existing and old friends, which gives more systematic communication.

Some participants indicated that communication was one of the reasons youth use social media. They further highlighted that social media makes it easier for them to keep in touch with their friends, relatives and loved ones because it is fast to deliver messages when they are chatting. Participant #4 said as a parent to a teenager, when he is not around and there is a situation when he does not have airtime, he uses WhatsApp to communicate with their children to keep in touch. They find communication working because they respond to each other’s inboxes on time. In this regard, Chowdhury and

© University of Venda

Saha (2015:30) indicated that by communicating through social media, young people may increase their empathy for their existing and old friends, which gives more systematic communication. Also, Njoroge (2013:2) indicates that through social media, young people can use networks of online friends and group memberships to reconnect and communicate with old friends.

As indicated by some participants, social media helps youth to share and receive crucial information. Participants highlighted that when some youths are online, they become informed about a lot of things that are happening in their surroundings and abroad. Participants #8, #12, #6, #14 and #15 indicated that youth use social media to share and receive important information, such as trending updates and current vacancies, and to be informed about everything happening around the entire world. It is acknowledged in the literature that users can use social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp to share information. Sponcil and Gitimu (2013:5) are concerned that, due to digital technology and the emergence of social media, users can show considerable information about themselves and their friends. Additionally, Sponcil and Gitimu (2013:5) indicate that this self-disclosure is a way to open their own identities of how they want others to perceive them. Hlatshwayo (2014:16) adds that social media like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp make it a lot easier for young people to exchange information and ideas with too many people in a very short space of time.

Participant #9 indicated that today's youth use social media more to entertain themselves. They use apps like Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat for self-expression, communication, and enjoyment. Young people can use social media to interact with peers, explore their identities, and take part in global discourses. It enables individuals to stay up to date, produce content, and even take part in social activities related to causes that are important to them, including racial justice and climate change. Social media has shaped many people's daily lives by influencing their access to information and social relationships. Entertainment as the reason for using social media is also confirmed by Jones (2014:30), who said that social media is increasingly used as a source of real-time information and a place for debate in entertainment.

© University of Venda

The UGT, which contends that people deliberately select media outlets according to the personal satisfactions they seek such as information, surveillance, amusement, and social interaction strongly supports this (Leung & Zhang, 2022). According to Sabharwal (2024), young people in this situation use social media to meet their informational and social demands. Additionally, the fundamental tenets of the TRA are reflected in the manner in which young people use social media (Wicaksono and Prasetyo, 2024). TRA holds that people's intentions, which are influenced by their attitudes and perceived social standards, determine their actions. According to participant observations, young people view social media use as advantageous and socially acceptable, especially for maintaining connections and being informed (Mousavi & Gharacheh, 2023). Therefore, a favorable attitude toward digital involvement influences their behaviors, and peer norms that approve these actions reinforce them. Furthermore, participant #9 underlined that the main reasons why today's youth use apps like Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat are for amusement, self-expression, and identity development. Young people utilize these platforms to communicate with their friends, share their own interests, and take part in international discussions about issues like climate change and racial justice (Smith & Lee, 2023). This is consistent with SCT, which highlights how social contact, imitation, and observational learning shape behavior (Zhou & Wang, 2022). Young people mimic behaviors they see in their online settings and incorporate them into their own lives, making them more than just passive consumers.

4.4.3 Theme 3: Using social media for employment

Altogether, all the participants had the same views about the employment benefits of social media for youth. They responded that social media provides learning opportunities, allowing young people to follow industry leaders and engage in professional discussions to stay competitive. Participant #1 stated that there are pages designed for people seeking employment on different social media platforms which job seekers and recruiters join. Participant #2 answered that social media can help because even major institutions use social media as a means of communication and social marketing, but due to the lack of credibility, it is important to use it wisely and verify the information to avoid being

© University of Venda

scammed. Resonating with this finding, it is argued that the use of social media would surely increase the possibility of unforeseen outcomes and raise ethical questions about both good and bad effects (Huda, 2022).

Participant #4 stated that young people also utilise platforms like Instagram and TikTok to showcase their artistic abilities, develop portfolios, and become more visible in fields like marketing, fashion, and the arts. A lot of businesses now hire straight from social media, posting job openings on sites like Facebook and Twitter to make it simpler for young people to find and apply for jobs. It has been proven by Eke et al. (2014:6) that some users of social media use the platforms to find jobs to accomplish their economic, educational, political and social being. Also, Jacobson (2020) indicates that social media has a different feel than most websites because it helps people look for professional jobs.

Participant #7 said that social media provides learning opportunities, allowing young people to follow industry leaders and engage in professional discussions to stay competitive. Using platforms strategically, youth can effectively position themselves in the job market, gain visibility, and create career opportunities through traditional employment or entrepreneurial ventures. However, they must remain cautious about the accuracy of career advice found online and ensure their profiles reflect a professional image that appeals to potential employers (Ding & van den Broek, 2023). Participant #8 stated that social media can be a valuable tool for employment purposes. It can help youth showcase their skills, connect with potential employers, and stay informed about job opportunities. However, it i crucial to maintain a professional online presence and use relevant hashtags to increase visibility.

Youth utilise social media to communicate with companies, follow industry leaders, and find job openings, according to participants #7 and #8. They placed a strong focus on keeping up a polished online image and utilizing resources like hashtags to increase visibility. As young people use social media to meet requirements like networking and professional growth, this lends credence to the UGT (Sabharwal, 2024; Leung & Zhang, 2022). The TRA, which holds that intentions are influenced by favorable attitudes and

© University of Venda

perceived norms, is consistent with their purposeful and goal-driven behavior (Wicaksono & Prasetyo, 2024; Mousavi & Gharacheh, 2023). Furthermore, the concepts of SCT are reflected in the online observation and modeling of successful professionals (Zhou & Wang, 2022; Smith & Lee, 2023).

4.4.4 Theme 4: Social media mental health concerns

Almost all participants attested that social media use has a negative influence towards individuals with mental concerns. Altogether, most of the participants, except participants #8 and #11, agreed that social media use has a negative influence towards individuals with mental health concerns. For instance, participant #1 stated that social media can exacerbate feelings of loneliness or low self-worth for those who are already dealing with mental health issues. Some of the research participants mentioned the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and social media addiction. While the FOMO has been around far longer than social media, sites such as Facebook and Instagram seem to exacerbate feelings that others are having more fun or living better lives than you are. Participant #3 said that individuals react differently to social media use. FOMO also contributes to the negative depictions of social media use. Some get bullied, which affects their mental health, leading them to have anxiety, depression and low self-esteem. Worse, some over-users of social media may end up depressed and take their lives (Aubry, Quiamzade & Meier, 2024).

Participant #6 stated that FOMO also plays a role if everyone else is using social media sites, and if someone doesn't join in, there is concern that they will miss jokes, connections or invitations. Cao, Sun and Wang (2020) demonstrated that trying to change a person's FOMO by helping them shift their focus towards their personal achievements and experiences can alleviate some of the FOMO negative outcomes. Missing experiences can create anxiety and depression. When people look online and see they are excluded from an activity, it can affect their thoughts and feelings and physically. Participant #17 stated that FOMO and feeling like your life is not enough often leads to anxiety and unhappiness. Smith et al. (2017) stated that when adolescents were randomly allocated to inclusive newsfeeds (many friends, messages reciprocity and

© University of Venda

strong reactions to posts), they experienced feelings of connection, whereas those exposed to exclusive newsfeeds (rapidly declining friends lists and lack of event invitations) felt a high level of threats to their sense of belonging. According to Valkenburg, Peter and Schouten (2006), the youths who were most often rewarded with positive comments on social media felt better about themselves and were more included in the larger group. This supports Smith et al. (2017)'s idea that inclusive feeds (highly activated, with many likes and comments) promote sentiments of relatedness. However, Rosen et al. (2013) concluded that both the pros and cons of social media exist and are dependent on how teens use social media. Those youths who avoid extensive interactions with and use social media are more connected with few friends instead of many strangers and cannot feel rejected or compared with others. This implies that the impact of restricted newsfeeds could not have entirely been social and may have been influenced by the user's attitude towards his/her operations online.

Few participants indicated that social media usage can make you feel less lonely and isolated and improve your overall well-being. Similarly, participants #5 and #13 stated that excessive social media use can lead to isolation, disrupt sleep, and increase feelings of anxiety, creating a cycle of dependence that can worsen mental health problems. Participant #10 said that the addictive nature of social media can disrupt sleep patterns, leading to fatigue and decreased well-being. A study at the University of Pennsylvania found that high usage of Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram increases rather than decreases feelings of loneliness (Melissa et al., 2018).

The above assertions by the participants indicate the inadequacy of your life or appearance**.** Even if you know that the images you are viewing on social media are manipulated, they can still make you feel insecure about how you look or what is going on in your own life. Participant #7 stated that social media platforms often feature images of people with seemingly perfect faces and bodies, frequently using filters and photo editing tools to enhance their appearance. This can create unrealistic beauty standards, leading to body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem in both women and men. Social media filters have led to a condition known as "snapchat dysphoria," in which people become

© University of Venda

desperate to look like the filtered version of themselves, as noted by Fardouly (2024). Participant #8 said that social media can create a toxic culture of comparison and competition, where individuals compare their bodies to others and strive to meet the same beauty standards. Many people tend to post only their best photos, which may not be representative of their everyday appearance. For both men and women, this can contribute to negative body image and even lead to mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety. Participant #18 stated constant feelings of inadequacy - feeling like you are not enough, particularly around body image and success factors. In addition, consumption of beauty images, specifically on social media, increases significantly in body dissatisfaction, as people set up comparisons to unrealistic beauty standards (Verywell Health, 2024; Moriah Behavioural Health, 2024).

Participant #2 said that stress or poor self-esteem symptoms might develop when harsh remarks and cyberbullying combine with the pressure to maintain a positive online presence. Social media's addictive qualities can also result in obsessive use, which lowers the amount of in-person social contact and worsens mental health. Participant #4 stated that online interactions, such as cyberbullying or harassment, can exacerbate mental health issues, especially for vulnerable individuals. Participant #12 admitted that cyberbullying is a prevalent problem on social media platforms, which can further contribute to negative mental health outcomes. Participant #14 argued that the effects of cyberbullying can be severe, leading to depression, anxiety, and, in some cases, even suicide. Participant #16 hinted that social media can be a breeding ground for cyberbullying where people are attacked for their body size, shape, or appearance. This can have a damaging effect on body image and self-esteem. This is in line with Smith (2017), who stated that teenagers who had experienced cyberbullying reported its significant impact on their mental health, describing feelings of distress, confusion and isolation.

Participant #15 said there is an overwhelming need to share photos of yourself as you will feel like life events are meaningless if you do not share them online. Social validation in the form of likes and comments robs people of their sense of identity, which is why a

© University of Venda

hanker for attention remains so relevant to this day (Acosta, 2024). This is a behaviour that can be described as the relationship people develop with sites like Facebook or Twitter in which they depend on the acknowledgement of others to keep updating their posts (Giordano, 2024). In addition, social media is selective and full of comparison, which increases feelings of insecurity because people compare themselves to unreal images and 'perfect stories' or lives they are being presented with (Acosta, 2024; Gonzales, 2024). This may make the people post so often in order to get the approvals, and the world gets validated by what they share on social media platforms (UNICEF, 2024).

Only participants #9 and #11 conceded that social media use has a positive influence towards mental concerns because it allows people to access mental health resources, educational content, coping strategies, and even professional support more easily. Participants #9 and #11 's arguments resonate with a study by Naslund et al. (2020), which highlighted that social media could provide opportunities to enhance the mental health of users by facilitating social connections and peer support. Indeed, online communities can provide a space for discussions regarding health conditions, adverse life events, or everyday challenges, which may decrease the sense of stigmatisation and increase belongingness and perceived emotional support.

4.4.5 Theme 5: Social media risks

A few research participants mentioned cyberattacks, cyberstalking, sexual bullying, pornographic materials, vulgar language and hacking of accounts as major challenges youth face when they are online. Some participants described how pornographic materials affect young people when they are online. Participant #1 indicated that some social media users tag people on their nude pictures that they did not agree to see, and at times, people tagged do not even know where the embarrassing pictures are coming from. In their study, Swist et al. (2015:59) state that young people are most concerned about exposure to sexting and pornographic content through their social media and other online interactions. In this regard, Lee (2015:13) indicates that, as norms are learnt from observing the behaviour of others, social media users who are exposed to others' personalised content tend to follow suit.

© University of Venda

Several participants indicated that when they are online, they receive several intimidating messages in their inboxes and some threats on their timelines. Participant #2 stated that some users, when they fail to attack you physically, use social media as a platform to show their aggression towards you, calling them names and threatening to damage their reputation online. Participant #3 answered that some social media users like to threaten and harass others. When you upload your picture, there will be a comment from an unknown user saying you look ugly, tiny, unhealthy and sick. Participant #9 stated that social media allows incidents of bullying to reach a wide audience within a short period, potentially causing embarrassment and lasting emotional harm. Concerning cyberattacks, Eke et al. (2014:11) noted that social networking sites such as Facebook have become perilous as a result of the activities of criminals. Swist et al. (2015:61) emphasise that the more time young people spend on social media, the more they are likely to be exposed to risks.

Participants also voiced their voices about the issue of cyberstalking, which is rampant online and one of the problems young people face on social media. Participant #4 indicated that young people are prone to being threatened and stalked online after uploading some of their pictures on Facebook; there are some unknown users who always comment with rude messages like: “How are you stupid person?” or “You think you are smart on Facebook?” or even “Nowadays, you think you are the most handsome/beautiful person”. Participant #5 indicated that some social media users take people’s numbers on social media platforms like Facebook and call them and say nothing to them, which is a scary part when someone calls you and says nothing. In the literature, Ginger (2008:11) suggests that another danger found with the use of social networking sites is stalkers and predators. Moreover, Ginger (2008:13) states that Facebook is notably conducive to one-sided activity and browsing, or ‘stalking’ as most users refer to it. Lee (2015:315) states that challenges on social media happen because social media users have a higher propensity for self-disclosure than other media users.

© University of Venda

A few participants indicated that sharing false information is one of the challenges young people face on social media. Participant #6 indicated that false messages written about both celebrities and local people, saying the person has passed away, are common on social media, showing the depth of the risk of misinformation. Such information is misleading because, as a social media user, you will never have enough time to search or ask whether those messages are true or not. Participant #7 stated that social media users sometimes write false statuses about something. It bores when somebody lies about something important on social media platforms. False information was also confirmed by Boyd and Ellison (2006:13), who indicated that among the young people who use Facebook in America with completely open profiles, 46 per cent reported receiving at least some false information.

Participants complained about online crimes social where users hacking their accounts. Participant #8 indicated you can easily be hacked. Social media users can easily be hacked into their accounts, and the hackers will start uploading naked pictures on their timelines, changing their profile details such as addresses and photos. This deed can affect your relationship in such a way you will end up breaking up with your boyfriend/girlfriend and have problems with your family. Participant #15 stated that she once became the victim of hacking a Facebook account, which clearly shows that youth are also in danger of being hacked. “An unknown Facebook user hacked my account and started uploading naked pictures on my timeline, changing my profile details such as address and photos. This deed has affected my relationship in such a way I ended up breaking up with my boyfriend because he thought I was the one uploading naked pictures on my timeline”.” explained Participant #15.

Eke, Omekwu and Odoh (2014:11) are concerned about the danger found with the use of social networking sites. When young people complete their online profiles, they typically give away much of their personal information, and this allows someone to steal their identity. In this regard, John and Catherine (2009:82) emphasise that more sophisticated young people may engage in hacking accounts. The above assertions support the views of the participants in this study that social media has negative impacts

© University of Venda

on the lives of the youth of Matoks, and it affects their concentration and progress in life. Participant #16 was concerned that invasion of privacy is one of the challenges they face when they are online. Participant #16 said their friends could invade their privacy and share the information they used to tell them privately on social media platforms such as Facebook or WhatsApp. Giordano (2024) concurs that social media addiction and cyberbullying to the youths. Gonzalez (2024) contends that Facebook profiles discovered potential privacy threats contained in their personal information.

Similarly, Participants #13, #14 and #18 expressed that social media might significantly divert teens' attention from demanding responsibilities like academic or extracurricular activities, making them much less productive and affecting their academic performance. Participant #17 said that with vulgar language, "Sometimes unknown social media users can send an insulting message." This can be surprising and disgracing to the receiver because they do not insult anyone or disturb anyone when they are online. A recent study by Tanyas (2024) states that many young social media users complain about insults and vulgar language they receive when they are online.

4.4.6 Theme 6: Ways to use social media wisely

Participant #1 suggested social media experts should have a campaign to talk to users and warn them about the aftermath that can emerge when they attack each other on social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter. The suggestions above are supported by Swist et al. (2015:61), who wrote that: "Cyber safety campaigns aim to raise young people's awareness of potential online risks. Young people recognise that engaging online comes with responsibilities. They are keen to protect their safety and want to be trusted to use social media safely". On the contrary, Muhammad, Shariff, Muhammed and Apriantoro (2024) argued that youth expose themselves to negative social media effects due to their careless statements made in the name of freedom of speech and their excessive use of social media apps. Muhammed et al. (2024) further propose that the youth must also contribute to protecting themselves by reducing time spent online and avoiding hiding behind freedom of speech to attack others who may

© University of Venda

relate, creating a cycle of cyberbullying. Smith et al. (2023) found out that effective social media is a good place for people to connect well if only people would be empowered with knowledge on how to handle these social media accounts well. They pointed out that increasing people's awareness of cyberbullying is more beneficial than limiting social network usage.

A handful of participants suggested that social media education is important and can help prevent problems that affect social media users. Participant #2 said it is always important to teach young people how to use social media. This can positively help to mitigate challenges such as pornography, insults, hacking of accounts and cyberattacks when users are online. Participant #3 said there should be lessons at public gatherings, public lectures and government imbizos by social media experts that focus on the dos and don'ts of social media, particularly targeting youth. Social media education is important, specifically to children who are not yet using the platform. Teaching them young helps prepare them for online dangers in the near future. From the literature, Eke, Omekwu and Odoh (2014:12) state that users should also carefully control what information they post on social networking site accounts and to whom this information is available.

Similarly, Participants #4, #5 and #16 indicated that parents should play a role and intervene to teach young people what they should and should not do when they are online. The adults in Matoks were of the view that youth should be advised not to fight, bully, and stalk each other when they are using social media. They also felt there was a need to encourage youth to use social media for educational purposes. In literature, it is highlighted by Swist et al. (2015:61) that some young people prefer to receive cyber safety information from their parents or educators, as opposed to their peers. In other words, this shows that parents' support is vital. Furthermore, Swist et al. (2015:62) shared that it is becoming increasingly clear that parental caregivers, community and institutional perceptions of children and young people's social media practices need to transform to better account for and respond to children and young people's lived experiences of engaging with the social media.

© University of Venda

Some participants indicated that chatting with known social media users could help to prevent challenges faced by youth on social media. Participant #6 said that it is better to accept social media users you know and who are close to you. This will help if ever you have problems with that user on social media because he or she will be known. This is an important pointer to help youth who end up being bullied by anonymous people who are surprisingly on their friends list. According to Turner et al. (2024), youth must avoid accepting new friend requests from people they do not really know. Participant #8 advised that users should only chat with people or friends they know rather than chatting with strangers. This will help mitigate countless challenges encountered online. It is worthless having many online friends who are going to cause discomfort when a user is online. Chowdhury and Saha (2015:28) are concerned that youths can share their societal information only in front of well-known friends, whereas others are not able to access that information. Therefore, besides accessing information, firstly, people should send a friend request to their friends, and if the other side accepts the sent friend request, then a bounded social profile might be formed, and that is more important when anyone can join in this social networking circle.

Some of the respondents believed that an increase in profile privacy would be another best way of preventing social media abuse. They indicated that some of the users become victims on social media because social media privacy lacks strong account privacy. Participant #11 stated that social media administrators should always be responsible for upgrading privacy so that users should not just come across disturbing content such as pornography or hacking of their accounts by cybercriminals. Participant #14 alluded that social media users can protect their privacy by not sharing personal information like phone numbers, location, and date of birth with strangers online or with people they do not know. It is important to ensure that privacy on social media respected, as indicated by Eke et al. (2014:11) that even if a user of a social site has her privacy settings at the highest level, their information can still be passed on by someone on their friends' list. It does not take much for an angry follower to copy and paste a status or download a picture if they are looking for revenge. Most social networking sites have privacy settings that

© University of Venda

allow users to limit access to their profiles to a narrow audience of confirmed friends, and evidence suggests that many young people use them (Smith, 2024).

Some participants emphasised that time limitation is important for users to consider preventing challenges that may arise when they are online. Participant #12 added social media users should have online time limitations per day to balance their everyday duties. Limiting the time while they are online will help them avoid encountering problems caused by other users when they are online. Participant #13 opined that social media developers should upgrade the platform in such a way that allows users to use Facebook for a specific period and control users' daily limit. This will help to reduce problems reported to the Facebook Company daily. Anderson (2016:1) supports this by indicating that parents should take several steps to influence their children's online behaviour, from checking up on what they post on social media to limiting the amount of time they spend on platforms. From the 2016 Pew Research Report, Anderson (2016:1) also indicates that a majority of parents want to place restrictions on their children's internet use, regardless of their behaviour. In that study, 55% of parents say they limit the amount of time or times of day their children can go online. This resonates with Participant #10, who proposed that the South African government should establish social media law, and the section of that law should be featured in the Constitution to be accessed by anyone.

In the research about managing the risks of social media in South Africa, Davey (2014:5) indicates that since social media creates tensions in the country, there is a duty on the courts to develop common law in accordance with constitutional principles. Some of the research participants indicated the issue of age restriction. They further indicated that age restriction will help because teens will be unable to use social media. Participants #7 and #18 stated that age restriction on social media is important. It will help reduce problems faced by social media users because some register for accounts with false information such as age, location and name. Telenor Group (2015:10) agrees that the best way to keep track is to make sure that parents know who all their children's social media connections are. The age at which a child should be allowed to have a social media profile is up to a parent to decide.

© University of Venda

4.5 Discussion of findings

This study aimed to assess the perceptions of adults in Matoks, Limpopo Province, on the influence of social media on youth behaviour. The method for the research involved the Use and Gratifications theory, Social Cognitive theory and the Theory of Reasoned Action in the estimation of how social media influences youths' behaviour baseline. It also aimed at determining the perception that adults had regarding this impact. The research analysis reveals the interaction between social media and young people's conduct using the need for gratification, social learning theories, and reasoned action.

The theory of Uses and Gratification gives the notion that the public looks for media to cater for the needs they have: being informational, social, entertainment, and self-expression. Pertaining to the current focus, the results indicate that adults see social media as enabling youth to engage in social life, leisure, or as well as expressing themselves. Moreover, adults indicate that youths get pressure from peers, become addicted, or even become exposed to materials that are objectionable or obscene from social media. Respondents indicated that youth employ Social Network Service (SNS) to fulfil their social inclusion needs, and this conforms to the importance of UGT in this study (Katz et al., 1973).

One of the common revelations made by the adults was the effects of social media on the young person's self-esteem and behaviour. To the extent proposed by the UGT, people seek out media in order to fulfil specific gratification needs, including perceived social status or overall self-image. The adult participants in the study confirmed that a significant number of youths are motivated by the need to garner as many likes, followers and comments as they could, believing that such is the way to be valued. The kind of gratification sought here corresponds with this theory as it posits that media consumption meets emotional and social needs but adds pressure on youths to mimic standards, famous body types or, as seen in influencer culture and body positivity, where youths are expected to look in a certain way.

© University of Venda

However, the study also showed that some adults consider social media to be a positive influence, pointing out their use in reaching for educational materials, news, and improvement tools by the youths. This corresponds to Uses and Gratification's overall concept that the use of media can be purposeful studying where people seek out gratification. Perceived that, while social media has a negative side to it in that it fosters negative behaviours, it was okay at other times that it helps in creating awareness on social issues and encourage positive behaviours, including environmental activism and political awareness.

Self-regulation has occurred through modelling and channelled through social cognitive theory by Albert Bandura, which comprehends that behaviour changes through observation, emulation, and moulding of personal factors, environment, and behaviours. This study confirmed that, when learning, adults recognised that social media enables observation and emulation of certain behaviours, resulting in favourable or unfavourable behavioural alteration among youths. According to Social Cognitive Theory, perceived control belongs to the main factors, and social media profiles consist of people, who can be termed as individuals who are influential or significant others. Through the above-discussed figures, youth influence happens directly or indirectly.

Adults interviewed in Matoks said that youth imitate what they see on social media, including clothing styles, relationship expectations, drugs and violence. This agrees with Bandura, who stated that people learn not only through an actual experience but also through observing the outcomes others suffer in regard to their behaviour (Bandura, 1986). Through social media, youths are able to learn behaviours observed from other parts of the globe and emulate them, something that was impossible in the pre-Internet age. Individuals on social media and other social platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and YouTube are perceived as role models, and youths are motivated to emulate similar lifestyles, fashion and politics.

© University of Venda

While the modelling of behaviours can be positive (for example, practising healthy lifestyles or supporting other individuals), the study of SRO also revealed that the majority of adults have concerns about the types of behaviours modelled. For example, the socialisation of substance uses and addiction, sexual permissiveness, and even self-harm, which are seen on social media, are a matter of concern. The respondents identified these negative role models as doing this because the youths who are likely to emulate them do not have the critical skill Janet needed to discern between positive and negative content.

Moreover, other theoretical frameworks that were mentioned in the discussions include the self-regulation of the Social Cognitive Theory. Some of the issues that were brought out by the adult respondents include the utter failure of some social media platforms to help the youth self-regulate themselves by lacking basic rules or regulations or properly regulating confusing content. The relative lack of defined rules means that youth may unthinkingly imitate the negative behaviours of their peers. This, in turn, implies that while social media is an effective medium for social learning, it also demands even more rigidity when it comes to content presentation.

According to the Theory of Reasoned Action, behavioural intention is the determinant of behaviour, which, in turn, is affected by two independent variables: attitude and subjective norms. The Theory of Reasoned Action posits that behavioural intention depends on two personal factors: the attitudes held towards the behaviour and the perceived social pressure towards or against the behaviour postulated by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980). With regard to social media, this theory is quite helpful in explaining how adults make sense of the effects of social media on the behaviour of young people regarding their volitions and social norms.

The adults in the study said that social media is influential in the youth's intentions, especially in matters of dating, self-image, and consumerism. Others suggest that youths, especially, are in a way compelled to exhibit specific behaviours because they feel that is the normal thing to do, given what they see on social media-influenced peers and

© University of Venda

celebrities. This is because, through social media, youth are constantly reminded of 'peer pressure' in terms of what their peers, as well as the influencers, are up to. This can increase the intention of people to perform behaviours that they people deem socially acceptable or desirable, despite the impact they spur in society.

One was the research on the effect of social networking sites on youth's perception of body shape and looks and their materialism. Adulthood respondents also noted that youths from Instagram and TikTok are exposed to the ''perfect'' body shapes and cheerful, healthy lives, and these shape their perceptions of themselves and force them to behave in ways that fit these ''new'' virtues. As given by the Theory of Reasoned Action, behavioural intention is defined by the attitude as well as the perceived norm. Where social media is concerned, ideas about beauty are embraced based on the images youth come across online, and the pressure to conform comes from their friends, approving their pictures in social media outlets. It spirals, creating a cycle of making youths change many behaviours in an effort to fit these standards, including the use of very unhealthy practices such as dieting or going for cosmetic surgeries.

The other aspect of the Theory of Reasoned Action expounded in the study related to parental influence and societal norms. A number of adults said that they try to instil what is appropriate and inappropriate when it comes to using social media platforms but avow that peer pressure and influence from online groups/forums trumps even these conventional sources of direction. This corresponds with the TRA's focus on subjective norms where youth may think that following the approval of online communities is more important than following their parents' advice, particularly if the youths' perceptions of social media are more in harmony with the messages posted on the social networking sites.

The results of this study revealed how social media impacts youth behaviour in ways that were considered due to the three theoretical frameworks: Uses and Gratification Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, and the Theory of Reasoned Action. The need satisfaction model of social media indicates that while media platforms meet youth's social and

© University of Venda

emotional wants, social media gratifications may result in negative behavioural outcomes if modelled behaviour promotes undesirable behaviours. Social Cognitive Theory builds on this by adding the impact of observational learning in which youth emulate pro-social role models in social media, and the Theory of Reasoned Action on how personal beliefs and normative pressures catalyse the actual behaviour. In view of the findings of this study, there is a need to adopt constructive use of social media through stringently regulating negative aspects of social media consumption.

The purpose of this study was to assess adults' perception of the influence of social media on youth behaviour changes in Matoks Limpopo Province. The study sought to answer the objectives listed in Chapter 1. This section discusses the study findings under two main themes and three sub-themes drawn from the study objectives and questions. The discussion utilises relevant literature and the theoretical framework selected for the study.

4.5.1. Influence of social media on youth in Matoks

This theme explores the impact of social media on youth in Matoks, focusing on how new technologies influence their perceptions, behaviours, and interactions. The section aims to examine social media’s effects on various aspects of youth life, including mental health, social relationships, self-esteem, and academic performance. From the perspective of UGT, youth actively engage with social media to fulfil specific needs, such as social connection, self-expression, and information seeking, which can impact their overall development. The TRA suggests that these behaviours are guided by intentions, shaped by attitudes towards social media and perceived social norms, which play a crucial role in determining how youth interact with digital platforms. Furthermore, Social Cognitive Theory SCT highlights the role of observational learning, where youth model their behaviours based on what they observe from peers, influencers, and role models online, further influencing their mental and social development. Given the growing significance of social networks in young people's lives, understanding these effects is crucial for policymakers, educators, and parents to ensure that digital media contributes positively to healthy youth development. The subthemes are organised to provide a detailed analysis of these various influences.

© University of Venda

4.5.1.1 Time spent on social media by the youth

The findings have demonstrated that the youth in Matoks spend a lot of time on various social media platforms. Selected respondents have accentuated that some youths spend more than 6-7 hours, while others spend more than 8 hours, and this comes with implications, as it was earlier revealed by the study conducted by Frimpong (2015). Frimpong 'study discovered that the greater part of the respondents were social media users, where about seventy-four (74) out of the ninety-two (92) respondents (80%) in their study hinted that they spent much time on social media. A study assessing social media usage in 32 countries from North America, Western/Northern Europe, Eastern/Southern Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin/South America revealed that, indeed, social media addiction has emerged as a problem of global concern (Cheng, Lau, Chan & Luk, 2021). Thus, the findings suggest that the pattern of extended social media usage among youth in Matoks is not an isolated phenomenon but part of a broader global trend across different contexts.

The results also show that young people in Matoks depend more on social media, and it is their tool for communication with friends and relatives. This is in line with the assertion by Njoroge (2013:2), who indicates that through social media, young people can use networks of online friends and group memberships to reconnect and communicate with old friends. The findings further indicate that social media has dominated the youth in Matoks, and they depend more on it for various purposes, such as communicating with family and friends. The findings further indicate that most of the youth in Matoks are on social media platforms engaging with their friends, family and relatives. The Gratification theory suggests that youth use media based on how it helps them meet specific needs or goals (Muhammad, 2018). This justifies how long they will spend time on social media sites.

Therefore, it is also essential to educate young people in Matoks about the excessive use of social media because some of them use it for harmful purposes such as cyberbullying.

© University of Venda

Educational programmes must be established aimed at raising awareness about the advantages and disadvantages of the frequent use of social media platforms.

The findings support Njoroge's (2013) assertion that social media facilitates youth reunions by demonstrating how much young people in Matoks rely on it for contact with friends and relatives. This reliance is in line with UGT, which postulates that people utilize media to fulfill particular requirements like entertainment and social contact (Sabharwal, 2024; Leung & Zhang, 2022). The amount of time spent on social media is indicative of TRA, in which young people's behavior is influenced by their favorable opinions of these sites and their perceptions of social norms (Wicaksono & Prasetyo, 2024). Additionally, according to SCT, young people pick up social media skills by watching their peers and influencers and modeling their behavior online (Mousavi & Gharacheh, 2023; Zhou & Wang, 2022). Nonetheless, the results also draw attention to hazards like cyberbullying, highlighting the necessity of educational initiatives that promote healthy participation while increasing awareness of the possible negative effects of excessive social media usage (Smith & Lee, 2023).

4.5.1. 2 The usage of social media by youth in Matoks

The findings revealed that young people in Matoks use social media platforms such as TikTok, WhatsApp and Facebook to communicate with their friends and families, whereas some use them for receiving updates, recent vacancies and news updates. According to Muhammad (2018), social media helps young to meet their needs and achieve their life satisfaction as they interact with their family and friends on those social media sites. The findings also show that social media enables individuals to stay up to date, produce content, and even take part in social activities related to causes that are important to them, including racial justice and climate change. Results further point out that social media has shaped many people's daily lives by influencing their access to information and social relationships.

The finding also shows that these youths use social media platforms to get in touch with their parents and other family members if they are unreachable through phone calls. This

© University of Venda

demonstrates that these young people use these platforms for various purposes, including but unlimited to receiving recent vacancies and trending updates. Therefore, it is essential for these young people to use social media platforms for their own good benefits rather than using them for harmful purposes such as cyberbullying and committing criminal offences. The finding also shows that there are pages designed for people seeking employment on different social media platforms which job seekers and recruiters join, and this assists youth in finding career opportunities that are available. This can also help young people to get various job opportunities that are available to them. The findings also depict that young people can demonstrate their talents and experiences, network with possible employers, and develop professional profiles on websites such as LinkedIn. It is also evident in the findings that young people utilise platforms like Instagram and TikTok to showcase their artistic abilities, develop portfolios, and become more visible in fields like marketing, fashion, and the arts.

The results confirm UGT, which holds that people utilize media to satisfy certain social and informational requirements, by showing that young people in Matoks mostly rely on social media for contact with friends and family (Sabharwal, 2024; Leung & Zhang, 2022). Since their behavior is influenced by favorable opinions about social media and societal norms that support its use, their consistent and deliberate usage also reflects the TRA (Wicaksono & Prasetyo, 2024; Mousavi & Gharacheh, 2023). Additionally, SCT, in which behavior is taught via imitation and observation, is demonstrated by the effect of peers and online figures (Zhou & Wang, 2022; Smith & Lee, 2023). These findings highlight the necessity of educational initiatives that support social media usage that is balanced, safe, and educated.

4.5.1.3 The use of social media towards individual mental health

Out of eighteen participants, sixteen participants indicated that the use of social media could negatively impact an individual's mental health; hence, youth in Matoks are among those vulnerable to negative mental health challenges such as depression, suicide and other conditions. Van der Walt et al. (2020), focusing on youth in South Africa, claim that

© University of Venda

the burden of depression and anxiety often leads to suicide among students. Similarly, a study done in Ohio revealed that, indeed, social media has been linked to adverse outcomes like depression and anxiety (Swedo et al., 2021). The participants indicated that the use of social media can exacerbate feelings of loneliness or low self-worth for those who are already dealing with mental health issues. It was revealed that stress or poor self-esteem symptoms might develop when harsh remarks and cyberbullying combine with the pressure to maintain a positive online presence. Social media's addictive qualities can also result in obsessive use, which lowers the amount of in-person social contact and worsens mental health challenges.

Mental health triggers on social media could vary from a desire to fit into academic stress and financial stress, among many others (Chung & Park, 2024). The findings demonstrate that individuals react differently to social media use. Fear of missing out also contributes to the negative depictions of social media use. According to Brailovskaia and Margraf (2024), the fear of missing out pushes many to social media addiction. To fit in and remain relevant among peers, some end up saying or posting wrong content, which could make them get bullied, which directly and indirectly affects their mental health, leading them to have anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Worse, some end up taking their lives. Therefore, it is evident that social media use by youth has a negative influence on their mental health, and this can lead to depression and anxiety. While only two participants indicated that the use of social media can positively impact an individual's mental health, a review of the literature reveals that the consequences of social media on well-being are diverse, and many researchers have documented that adverse effects of social media include anxiety, depression, and social isolation (Twenge, 2017; Kuss & Griffiths, 2017).

Social media-induced mental health issues are frequently caused by pressure to perform well academically, financial strain, and the need to blend in (Chung & Park, 2024). UGT claims that young people use social media to satisfy their emotional and social needs, but when those needs are not satisfied or are skewed, this can have detrimental effects (Sabharwal, 2024; Leung & Zhang, 2022). The results demonstrate that people respond to social media in different ways, with FOMO playing a big role. In line with TRA, which

© University of Venda

contends that social pressure and perceived norms impact online behavior, Brailovskaia and Margraf (2024) point out that FoMO can lead to obsessive use (Wicaksono & Prasetyo, 2024). Some young people publish offensive material in an attempt to win over their peers, which puts them at higher risk of cyberbullying and mental health conditions including anxiety, sadness, and low self-esteem. This behavior represents SCT, in which users reinforce both beneficial and detrimental patterns by modeling their online behaviors after peers and influencers (Zhou & Wang, 2022; Smith & Lee, 2023). Existing research shows that social media is linked to anxiety, despair, and social isolation, despite the fact that some participants thought it may promote mental health (Twenge, 2017; Kuss & Griffiths, 2017).

4.5.2 Procedures to reduce the negative effects of social media on youth in Matoks

Research highlights the significance of digital literacy initiatives in assisting young people in critically assessing the information they see on social media. They will learn how to spot false information, comprehend the psychological effects of social media, and make thoughtful decisions about their online persona. Studies show that when young people possess these abilities, they are more suitable to handle the intricacies of social media, which lowers the risks of anxiety, body image problems, and online abuse (Livingstone, 2017).

According to several studies, parents and schools should establish explicit guidelines and time limitations for social media use. According to Rosen et al. (2023), adults who spend too much time on screens are more likely to experience anxiety and sadness. Setting rules for responsible social media use can help prevent problems and encourage better practices. Promoting more in-person contacts and physical exercise might entail setting screen time limits or designating particular hours for social media use.

The Pew Research Center (2018) found that good social media role models and influencers may have a significant impact on how young people behave online. Influencers may mitigate the detrimental pressures that young social media users frequently encounter by endorsing material that promotes compassion, diversity, healthy

© University of Venda

living, and realistic body images. One such solution is the creation of campaigns that emphasise mental health awareness and healthy online conduct.

It is critical to include communities and parents in the young people's digital lives. The Royal Society for Public Health (2017) found that youth who use social media have reduced levels of anxiety and sadness when their parents are involved. Negative impacts can be lessened by programmes that inform parents about the dangers of social media and provide them with the resources they need to keep an eye on their kids' online activity. Youth can find other forms of fulfilment and socialising outside of the digital realm through community-based programmes that promote offline activities like sports or get-togethers.

Offering mental health resources and counselling services is essential for youth who are negatively affected by social media use. Many studies, including those by Twenge et al. (2017), report a rise in mental health issues among youth as a result of cyberbullying and social comparison. Schools and community centres can implement counselling services to address these issues directly, ensuring that youth have access to professional support when needed.

Governments may help by passing laws that shield children from inappropriate materials seen online, such as explicit or cyberbullying. European Commission (2019) claims that regulatory frameworks requiring social media companies to preserve user data and implement age restrictions might lessen the exposure of children to hazardous content. The dangers of social media use may be decreased by putting age verification measures in place and making platforms more open about how they gather and utilise data.

The detrimental impacts of social media on young people can be lessened by combining regulatory actions, parental participation, education, boundary-setting, and mental health assistance. To guarantee that their digital involvement is secure, encouraging, and enlightening, young people in Matoks, like those in other areas, need a multifaceted strategy. According to the literature, these interventions can reduce risks to young

© University of Venda

people's mental health and well-being while empowering them to use social media responsibly.

The findings suggest that social media experts should have a campaign to talk to users and warn them about the aftermath that can emerge when they attack each other on social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter. The outcomes also show that social media users should also be advised on how they can cope with each other when using the platform rather than attacking and defaming other users' characters. Social media campaigns are crucial for preventing challenges faced by social media users. This can also be done by raising awareness on radio and television stations on how to use social media properly.

The findings further demonstrate that social media administrators should always be responsible for upgrading privacy so that users do not just come across disturbing content such as pornography or hacking of their accounts by cybercriminals. The results also point out that social media users should have online time limitations per day to balance their everyday duties. This is in line with the assertion by Anderson (2016:1), who supports this by indicating that parents should take several steps to influence their children's online behaviour, from checking up on what they post on social media to limiting the amount of time they spend on platforms. Limiting the time while they are online will help them avoid encountering problems caused by other users when they are online.

Therefore, this demonstrates that further procedures are needed to reduce the negative effects of social media amongst the youth at Matoks. This procedure can protect the youth from negative effects and other harmful behaviours.

4.6 Chapter Summary

The chapter presented, analysed, and discussed the study findings in detail, using the main themes drawn from the study questions and objectives. Several subthemes were also developed from the data. The chapter provided a discussion of the research findings,

© University of Venda

which merged the findings, related literature and the selected theory underpinning this study. The next chapter focuses on summary, recommendations and conclusions of the study.

© University of Venda

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented, analysed and discussed the study findings. This chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the whole study. Recommendations were also outlined, which could be implemented to solve the study problem. Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:146) state that after interpreting the findings of the study, it is useful to summarise the aims of the research, compare them with the findings and later draw conclusions on how much and in which manner the goal has been achieved.

5.2 Summary of research findings

The research design used in the study was a descriptive design. This method was used because it gave the researcher the opportunity to collect accurate data to answer the research questions and provide a clear picture of the phenomenon under study. The main instruments used for data collection were the semi-structured interviews.

The objectives of this study were:

- To establish perceptions of adults in Matoks, Limpopo Province, South Africa, on how social media influences youth.
- To ascertain why adults believe social media affects the youth in Matoks, Limpopo Province, South Africa.
- To identify possible ways to combat the negative effects of social media by youth in Matoks.

The study discovered that young people in Matoks use social media platforms such as TikTok, WhatsApp and Facebook to communicate with their friends and families, whereas some use them for receiving updates, recent vacancies and news updates. The study

© University of Venda

also found that social media enables young people in Matoks to stay up to date, produce content, and even take part in social activities related to causes that are important to them, including racial justice and climate change. The study also discovered that young people in Matoks can demonstrate their talents and experiences, network with possible employers, and develop professional profiles on websites such as LinkedIn.

The study also explored the use of social media in relation to individual mental health. The study found that most participants think that the use of social media negatively impacts an individual's mental health. In this regard, the participants indicated that the use of social media can exacerbate feelings of loneliness or low self-worth for those who are already dealing with mental health issues. It is evident that social media use by youth in Matoks has a negative influence on their mental health, and this can lead to depression and anxiety.

The users indicated several procedures to reduce the negative effects of social media on youth in Matoks. The majority of the respondents indicated that challenges emerging on social media can be reduced by creating strong passwords, keeping and increasing privacy, initiating social media campaigns and educating users about etiquette. The respondents also highlighted that there is a need to implement social media law in South Africa to deal with problems that young people face on social media, such as cyberattacks, sexual bullying and others.

5.3 Limitations

The first limitation of this research is the sample of respondents that was approached to participate in this study, which sought to confirm the perception of adults on the influence of social media on the youth behaviour change in Matoks. The study selected a few adults from three different Matoks villages due to the time available for the completion of this study. As a result of the small sample size of adults considered, the generalisation of findings to all the adults in Matoks is impossible. This study utilised qualitative research methods; however, findings could have been broadened if a mixed methods design was used, wherein structured interview data could have been mixed with the survey, which

© University of Venda

could have allowed the researcher to collect data from a much bigger sample size. Besides, there was limited time to conduct the research.

5.4 Major recommendations of the study

The recommendations regarding the perception of adults on the influence of social media on youth behaviour change in Matoks Limpopo Province are as follows:

- The youths need to be trained on better usage of social media to minimise time wastage on chatting and other irrelevant engagements that are not of major importance in their lives.
- Matoks youths should also use social media when it is necessary to avoid addiction. Additionally, they should strike a balance between offline and online lives to avoid addiction and posting content that disturbs other users.
- All the leaders in Matoks and network providers need to come up with means of filtering information that reaches young people through social media platforms. This will help minimise exposing them to pornographic and other unwarranted materials. Parents and security agencies should monitor the activities of young people on social media to protect them from sex pests and paedophiles.

- To communicate effectively with young people, schools and government agencies should adopt social media as one of their means of communication.

- To avoid having a generation that does not have face-to-face communication skills, all the leaders should consider organising social events that the youths will use to interact and mingle with each other physically.

- The findings of this study should be used in policy formulation at levels of learning that the youths are included in, such as high schools and universities and in government agencies that deal with the youths.

© University of Venda

5.5 Contribution of the study to the body of knowledge

5.5.1. Theoretical Contributions

- Extends the Theory of Planned Behaviour: This study contributes to the existing literature on the Theory of Planned Behaviour by highlighting the role of social media in shaping young people's behaviour in Matoks.
- Advances understanding of social media's impact: The study provides new insights into the perceived influence of social media on young people's behaviour change in Matoks, shedding light on the complexities of this relationship.

5.5.2. Practical Contributions

- Informing community-based interventions: The findings of this study can inform the development of community-based interventions aimed at promoting healthy social media use and mitigating its negative effects on young people's behaviour in Matoks through creating digital literacy workshops and a youth-led social media project.
- Enhancing parental guidance and education: This research can provide valuable insights for parents, caregivers, and educators in Matoks, enabling them to better understand the perceived influence of social media on young people's behaviour and develop effective guidance strategies.

5.5.3. Policy Contributions

- Influencing local policy initiatives: The study's findings can inform local policymakers and stakeholders in Matoks about the need for targeted initiatives to promote healthy social media use and address social media's perceived negative effects on young people's behaviour.
- Shaping community engagement strategies: This research can contribute to the development of community engagement strategies aimed at promoting awareness

© University of Venda

about the potential effects of social media on young people's behaviour and fostering community-led initiatives to address these issues.

5.6 Suggestions for further research

- Since the study targeted the perception of adults on the influence of social media on youth behaviour change, a study can be done further on the perception of teachers on the influence of social media on youth behaviour change.

- Other researchers may also consider looking at ways to overcome youth's challenges while using social media for employment and education.

- The study focused only on three villages in Matoks. Future studies can be conducted on a large scale, focusing on several villages in Matoks.

5.7 Conclusion

In view of the above summary, it was evident that social media played a major role in the behaviour change of the young people in Matoks. The respondents perceived that youths in Matoks mostly used social media to communicate with their friends and families. The fact that social media is part of young people, especially those born in this era of emerging technology, means they cannot do anything without it. They depend on it for various positive functions, such as research and contacts with old friends and getting in the loop of what was happening in their circles, nationally or internationally. Moreover, this study concludes that social media has both positive and negative impacts on youth behaviour change in Matoks, depending on users' interests and how they use social media. Some users use the medium in the wrong way, which leads them to have depression and anxiety. As long as social media is strictly owned by users who are not controlled by anyone, young people will always show interest in it. Young people in Matoks and other youths in general should stop doing things that cause discomfort to other users, such as uploading pornographic materials, cyberattacking, and cyberbullying, to name a few.

© University of Venda

There are many aspects that youth can use social media for, such as learning, communicating, entertaining, and socialising.

© University of Venda

References

Acosta, N. (2024). The impacts of social media on youth self-image. Loma Linda University News.

Ahn, J. (2011). Advances in information science: The effect of social network sites on adolescents' social and academic development – current theories and controversies. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 62(8), pp.1435–1445.

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), pp.179–211.

Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1980). Understanding attitudes and predicting social behavior. Prentice-Hall.

Akram, W., & Kumar, R. (2017). A study on positive and negative effects of social media on society. *International Journal of Computer Sciences and Engineering*, 5(10). [Page numbers not provided]. [Accessed 3 December 2020].

American Academy of Pediatrics, (2011). Clinical report—The impact of social media. *American Academy of Pediatrics*. [Accessed 3 December 2020].

Anderson, T. (2016). *Theories for Learning with Emerging Technologies*. Canada: Athabasca University Press, pp.35–64.

Arnett, J.J. (2007). Emerging adulthood: What is it, and what is it good for? Child Development Perspectives, 1(2), pp. 68–73.

Aubry, R., Quiamzade, A., & Meier, L. L. (2024). Depressive symptoms and upward social comparisons during Instagram use: A vicious circle. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *217*, 112458.

© University of Venda

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52(1), pp.1–26.

Bauer, M.W., & Gaskell, G. (2000). *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound: A practical handbook*. London: Sage.

Bless, C., & Higson-Smith, C. (1995). Fundamentals of social research methods: An African perspective. 2nd edition. Juta.

Bloor, M. (2001). *The ethnography of health and healthcare*. London: Routledge.

Brailovskaia, J., & Margraf, J. (2024). Addictive social media use during Covid-19 outbreak: Validation of the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS) and investigation of protective factors in nine countries. *Current Psychology*, *43*(14), pp. 13022-13040.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), pp. 77-101.

Brown, T. (2021). Contextual influences on adult perceptions of youth media use. *Journal of Social Media Studies*, 34(2), pp.56–78.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods*. 5th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cao, C., Sun, Q., & Wang, Z. (2020). The relationship between social media use and FOMO: Exploring mediating and moderating mechanisms. Computers in Human Behavior, 110, 106370.

Carter, L. (2019). Evolving attitudes: Longitudinal studies on adult perceptions of social media. *Media Psychology Review*, 12(3), pp.45–67.

© University of Venda

Chawada, S. (2013). Grooming, gossip, Facebook and Myspace: What can we learn from those who won't assimilate? *Information, Communication, and Society*, pp. 11.

Cheng, C., Lau, Y.C., Chan, L., & Luk, J.W. (2021). Prevalence of social media addiction across 32 nations: Meta-analysis with subgroup analysis of classification schemes and cultural values. *Addictive Behaviors*, 117, 106845.

Chowdhury, I.R., & Saha, B. (2015). Impact of Facebook as a social networking site (SNS) on youth generations: A case study of Kolkata City. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, 4(6), pp.28–42.

Chung, J.H., & Park, Y.S. (2024). A Study on the Relationship Between Academic Stress and Mental Health Among High School Students in South Korea. *Research and Advances in Education*, *3*(1), pp.54-65.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education*. 8th ed. Abingdon: Routledge.

Davey, R. (2014). Understanding and managing the risks of social media in the workplace. [online] Available at: https://www.lexisnexis.co.za/pdf/Breakaway-4-1-Social-Media-in-the-workplace-Ms-Rosalind-Davey.pdf [Accessed 3 September 2017].

Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (2011). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Duckworth, A.L., & Gross, J.J. (2020). Behavior change. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 161(Suppl), pp.39–49. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2020.09.002.

Eke, H.N., Omekwu, C.O., & Odoh, J.N. (2014). The use of social networking sites among the undergraduate students of University of Nigeria, Nsukka. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 1195, pp.1–27.

© University of Venda

European Commission (2019). EU regulations on digital platforms and the protection of minors. European Commission.

Fardouly, J. (2024). 'Snapchat dysphoria' and its link to body image issues in adolescents. *Wikipedia*. [online] Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snapchat_dysmorphia [Accessed 10 December 2024]

Flick, U. (2018). *An introduction to qualitative research*. 6th ed. London: Sage.

Giordano, J. (2024). Social media addiction and cyberbullying. *University of Georgia News*.

Giunchiglia, F., Zeni, M., Gobbi, E., Bignotti, E., & Bison, I. (2018). Mobile social media usage and academic performance. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 82, pp.177–185.

Gonzalez, A. (2024). Social media and its effects on self-image and mental health. *Loma Linda University News*.

Habes, M., Salloum, S.A. & Alghizzawi, M., (2018). The role of modern media technology in improving collaborative learning in Jordanian universities. *International Journal of Information Technology and Language Studies*, 2(3), pp.71–82.

Hennink, M., Hutter, I., & Bailey, A. (2020). Qualitative research methods. Sage.

Hermanowicz, J. C. (2002). The great interview: 25 strategies for studying people in bed. Qualitative Sociology, 25(4), pp. 479-499.

Herzog, M. (2020). How to define the adult in 2020? *International Journal of Business and Social Science Research*, 1(3), pp.1–5. https://doi.org/10.47742/ijbssr.v1n3p1.

Hlatshwayo, V.S. (2014). Youth usage of social media Swaziland: A report for the Swaziland chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA). [online] Available at: https://misaswaziland.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/the-youth-usage-of-social-media-2014.pdf [Accessed 6 May 2016].

© University of Venda

Huda, M. (2022). Towards an adaptive ethics on social networking sites (SNS): a critical reflection. *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society*, *20*(2), pp.273-290.

Infante, A., & Mardikaningsih, R. (2022). The Potential of Social Media as a Means of Online Business Promotion. *Journal of Social Science Studies (JOS3)*, *2*(2), pp.45-49.

Jain, A. K., Sahoo, S. R., & Kaubiyal, J. (2021). Online social networks security and privacy: comprehensive review and analysis. *Complex & Intelligent Systems*, *7*(5), pp.2157-2177.

John, D. & Catherine, T. (2015). Young people, ethics, and the new digital media. London: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Johnson, P. (2022). *Adult perspectives on youth and social media: Challenges and opportunities*. *Sociology of Media Journal*, 27(4), pp.101–119.

Katz, E., Blumler, J.G., & Gurevitch, M. (1974). Uses and gratifications research. The Public Opinion Quarterly, 37(4), pp.509-523.

Khuluvhe, M. (2022). Adult illiteracy in South Africa. Pretoria: Department of Higher Education and Training.

Kumar, D.S., & Kumar, V. (2019). A study on the impact of social media. *IAEME Publication*, 6(1), pp.89–96. Available at: https://www.iaeme.com [Accessed 3 December 2020].

Kuss, D.J., & Griffiths, M.D. (2017). Social networking sites and addiction: Ten lessons learned. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 14(3), pp.311.

Kvale, S. (2007). Doing interviews. Sage.

Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2015). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. 3rd ed. London: Sage.

Kwatei, S. (2024, November 30). *The impact of social media on youth culture in Ghana*. Samuel Kwatei. Retrieved from https://samuelkwateicom.wordpress.com/2024/11/30/the-impact-of-social-media-on-youth-culture-in-ghana/

© University of Venda

Lam, W.S.E., & Christiansen, M.S. (2022). Transnational Mexican youth negotiating languages, identities, and cultures online: A chronotopic lens. *Tesol Quarterly*, *56*(3), pp. 907-933.

Leung, L., & Zhang, R. (2022). *Applying the uses and gratifications theory to identify motivational factors of TikTok use*. Journal of Digital Media & Policy, 13(1), 45–60. ScienceDirect.ScienceDirect

Leung, R.L.D. (2013). Social media in tourism and hospitality: A literature review. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, pp.3–22.

Linda, S.L.L. (2010). Social commerce – E-commerce in social. *International Journal of Social, Behavioral, Educational, Economic, Business and Industrial Engineering*, pp.2213–2218.

Livingstone, S. (2017). Risks and opportunities of the internet for youth: A critical review. Journal of Youth Studies.

Manning, J. (2014). Social media, definition and classes of. In: K. Harvey, ed. *Encyclopedia of social media and politics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp.1158–1162.

Matthes, J., Thomas, M. F., Stevic, A., & Schmuck, D. (2021). Fighting over smartphones? Parents' excessive smartphone use, lack of control over children's use, and conflict. Computers in Human Behavior, 116, 106618.

Melissa et al., (2018). No More FOMO: Limiting Social Media Decreases Loneliness and Depression. Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology. DOI: 10.1521/jscp.2018.37.10.751

Merriam, S.B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. 3rd ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Morgan, D.L. (2014). Integrating qualitative and quantitative methods: A pragmatic approach. Sage.

Moriah Behavioral Health, (2024). *The impact of social media on body image*. [online] Available at: https://www.moriahbehavioralhealth.com [Accessed 10 December 2024].

© University of Venda

Mousavi, S. A., & Gharacheh, M. (2023). *Using theory of reasoned action to reduce high-risk sexual behaviors among patients with HPV*. Journal of Preventive Medicine, 10(2), 89–95. PubMed Central.PMC+3PMC+3PMC+3

Muhammad, A.A., Shariff, I.A., Muhammed, Y.Z., & Apriantoro, M.S. (2024). Psychological effects of social media on Muslim youths in northern Nigeria. *Ethica: International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Studies*, *2*(1), pp. 1-12.

Muhammad, F.M. (2018). Instagram effects as social media toward adolescence and young adult users: Uses and gratification approach. *International Conference of Communication Science Research*, pp.204–206.

Naslund, J.A., Bondre, A., Torous, J., & Aschbrenner, K.A. (2020). Social media and mental health: Benefits, risks, and opportunities for research and practice. *Journal of Technology and Behavioral Science*, pp.245–257. https://doi.org/10.1007/s41347-020-00094-8.

Noel, J. (2018). *The definition of youth*. Doctoral dissertation. Available at: https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/2730 [Accessed 11 December 2024].

Noradilah, A., Mohd, O., & Najmi, M. (2017). The influence of mass media in the behavior of students: A literature study. *International Journal of Information Technology and Language Studies*, 7, pp.166–174.

Onuh, L. E. (2023). *Emerging Afro-Techno Sapiens: The impact of social media on core African cultural imagination*. Encounter: Journal of African Life and Religion, 14(1). Retrieved from https://www.acjol.org/index.php/encounter/article/view/4428ACJOL

Patton, M.Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice*. Sage.

Pelletier, M.J., Krallman, A., Adams, F.G., & Hancock, T. (2020). One size doesn't fit all: a uses and gratifications analysis of social media platforms. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 14(2), pp.269–284.

Pew Research Center, (2018). Teens, social media, and technology. *Pew Research Center*.

© University of Venda

Quan-Haase, A., & Young, A.L. (2010). Uses and gratifications of social media: A comparison of Facebook and instant messaging. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, 30(5), pp.350–361.

Raza, S.A., Qazi, W., Umer, B., & Khan, K.A. (2020). Influence of social networking sites on life satisfaction among university students: a mediating role of social benefit and social overload. *Health Education*, 120(2), pp.141–164.

Rice, E., & Barman, A. (2013). Internet and social media use as a resource. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12038 [Accessed 11 December 2024].

Richards, D.P.H. (2015). Impact of social media on the health of children and young people. *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health*.

Rieder, B., Borra, E., Coromina, Ò., & Matamoros-Fernández, A. (2023). Making a living in the creator economy: A large-scale study of linking on YouTube. *Social media + Society*, 9(2), pp.1–13.

Rosen, L.D., Carrier, L.M., & Cheever, N.A. (2013). Facebook and texting made me do it: Media-induced task-switching while studying. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(3), pp.948–958.

Royal Society for Public Health, (2017). *#StatusOfMind: Social media and young people's mental health*. Royal Society for Public Health.

Rubin, A.M. (1984). Ritualized and instrumental television viewing. *Journal of Communication*, 34(3), pp.67–77.

Rubin, H.J., & Rubin, I.S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Sage.

Ruggiero, T.E. (2000). Uses and gratifications theory in the 21st century. *Mass Communication & Society*, 3(1), pp.3–37.

© University of Venda

Sabharwal, D. (2024). *Users and Gratification Theory Approach to Understand Why People Use Digital Media Mainly During Lockdown*. ResearchGate.ResearchGate

Sawyer, R., & Chen, G.M. (2012). The impact of social media on intercultural adaptation. *Intercultural Adaptation Studies*, 21(1), pp.151–169.

Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. Teachers College Press.

Shabir, G., Mahmood, Y., & Safdar, G. (2014). The impact of social media on youth: A case study of Bahawalpur City. *Asian Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 3(4), pp.132.

Sheldon et al., (2021). Social media uses and gratifications: Applying UGT to understand college students' use of TikTok. *International Journal of Communication*, 15, pp.4353–4375.

Siddiqui, S., & Singh, T. (2016). Social media: Its impact with positive and negative. *International Journal of Computer Applications Technology and Research*, 5(2), pp.71–75. Available at: http://www.ijcat.com [Accessed 11 December 2024].

Smith, J. (2024). Academics cited in this study have raised worries about social media's impact on the younger generation, pointing to a number of negative outcomes, including problems with psychological health and a decrease in in-person interactions. Available at: http://www.example.com/study-social-media-impact [Accessed 10 December 2024].

Smith, J., & Lee, K. (2023). *Social cognitive theory-based health promotion in primary care: A scoping review*. BMC Public Health, 23(1), 456. PubMed Central.

Swedo, E.A., Beauregard, J.L., de Fijter, S., Werhan, L., Norris, K., Montgomery, M.P., & Sumner, S.A. (2021). Associations between social media and suicidal behaviors during a youth suicide cluster in Ohio. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 68(2), pp.308–316.

Swist, T., Collin, P., McCormack, J., & Third, A. (2015). Social media and the wellbeing of children and young people: Commissioner for children and young people: A literature

© University of Venda

review. Available at: http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/FinalDownload/DownloadIdAAAC154D7836C1BEEBB3651A1280C666/59252A64Social_media_and_children_and_young_people.pdf [Accessed 6 May 2016].

Tanyas, B. (2024). “I was told that people might hurt me”: Experiences of religious discrimination among Jewish, Christian, and Alevi youth in Turkey. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 34(5), e2872.

Taylor, R., & Green, S. (2018). Quantitative dominance in social media studies: A critique. *Methodological Advances in Media Studies*, 10(1), pp.33–47.

Telenor Group, (2015). Talk to your children about the internet. Available at: https://www.telenor.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/SAFE-BOOK-INTL_TG_safe_internet_book_Nov_2015_Group_webres.pdf [Accessed 3 September 2017].

Twenge, J.M. (2017). Social media use and adolescent mental health: The evidence for the negative impact. *Clinical Psychological Science*.

Uche, U., & Nwosu, C. F. (2023). *Social media: A channel for the promotion of African culture, values and ethics*. Scholarly Journal of Social Sciences Research, 2(8), 61–73. Retrieved from https://www.openjournals.ijaar.org/index.php/sjssr/article/view/108 openjournals.ijaar.org

Uma Rani, P., & Padmalosani, J. (2019). Impact of social media on youth. *International Journal of Innovative Technology and Exploring Engineering (IJITEE)*, 8(11S), pp.786–787.

UNICEF, (2024). Cyberbullying and its effects on youth. Available at: https://www.unicef.org [Accessed 11 December 2024].

Utz, S., & Breuer, J. (2019). The relationship between networking, LinkedIn use, and retrieving informational benefits. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking*,

© University of Venda

22(3), pp.180–185. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2018.0294 [Accessed 11 December 2024].

Valkenburg, P.M., Peter, J., & Schouten, A.P. (2006). Friend networking sites and their relationship to adolescents' well-being and social self-esteem. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 9(5), pp.584–590.

Van der Walt, S., Mabaso, W.S., Davids, E.L., & De Vries, P.J. (2020). The burden of depression and anxiety among medical students in South Africa: A cross-sectional survey at the University of Cape Town. *South African Medical Journal*, 110(1), pp.69–79.

Verywell Health. (2024). Body image: Examples of challenges and ways to overcome. Available at: https://www.verywellhealth.com [Accessed 10 December 2024].

Wengraf, T. (2001). *Qualitative research interviewing: Biographic narrative and semi-structured methods*. Sage.

Whiting, A., & Williams, D. (2013). Why people use social media: A uses and gratifications approach. *Qualitative Market Research*, 16(4), pp.362–369.

Wicaksono, A., & Prasetyo, A. (2024). *A Perspective of Theory of Reasoned Action and Planned Behavior: An Empirical Study on Buying Interest*. European Journal of Marketing, 58(3), 112–125. ECOJOIN.EcoJoin

Zeitel-Bank, N. (2014). Social media and its effects on individuals and social systems. *Management Center Innsbruck*, pp.1183–1190. Available at: https://docplayer.net/24492283-Social-media-and-its-effects-on-individuals-and-socialsystems.html [Accessed 3 December 2020].

Zeng, B. (2014). What do you know about social media in tourism? A review. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, pp.27–36.

Zhou, Y., & Wang, X. (2022). *Social cognition theories and behavior change in COVID-19: A conceptual review*. Health Psychology Review, 16(1), 1–15. PubMed Central. PMC+3PMC+3ResearchGate+3

© University of Venda

7. Appendices

Appendix A: Questionnaires

Dear respondent,

The intent of this study is to explore the perceptions of adults on the influence of social media on the youth behaviour change on youth of Matoks, Limpopo Province.

Please read carefully and answer the following questions as quickly as possible. All information gathered shall be used purely for research purposes and shall be treated with confidentiality.

Thank you,

SECTION A: Demographic Information

- What is your age?
- What is your gender?
- In which village do you reside?
- How long have you been living in Matoks?

SECTION B: Frequency of social media usage by youth

- Do you think the youth in Matoks spend much time on social media? If yes, roughly how much time do they spend on social media?

SECTION Social media use by youth

- What is your knowledge of youth and social media use?
- According to you, do you think using social media for employment can help them gain employment? Explain.
- Do you think social media use has a negative or positive influence on individuals with mental health concerns? Explain why?

© University of Venda

Appendix B: Letter to seek permission to conduct the study

UNIVEN Informed Consent

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study: **THE PERCEPTION ON THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE YOUTH BEHAVIOUR CHANGE: THE CASE STUDY OF MATOKS YOUTH LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA**

Principal Investigator/s/ researcher : (***Minkie, BAMS***)

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s : (***Dr Mabika, PHD***)

:(**Mr Chauke, MA**)

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study: The study aims to investigate the perceptions of adults on the influence of social media on youth behaviour change in Matoks, Limpopo Province.

Outline of the Procedures: This interview aims to solicit information on the perceptions of adults about the influence of social media on youth behaviour change in Matoks. The results will be used to conclude the perceptions of adults on the influence of social media towards the youth of Matoks. Your time (around 8-12 minutes) will be much appreciated for answering.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant: There will be no description of foreseeable risks or discomforts to participants

Benefits: Through the publication of the study, participants will benefit

Reason/s why the Participant May Be Withdrawn from the Study: (Discomforts Non-compliance, illness, adverse reactions)

Remuneration: Participants will not receive any monetary or other types of remuneration.

© University of Venda

Costs of the Study: Participants are not expected to cover any cost

Confidentiality: The researcher ensured that the names of the participants interviewed remained confidential and anonymous.

Research -**related** Injury: Research-related injury or adverse reaction? Will not be compensated as the research only consists of verbal communication than other physical activities).

Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:

(Supervisor and details) Please contact the researcher (tel no.), my supervisor (tel no.) or the University Research Ethics Committee Secretariat on 015 962 9058. Complaints can be reported to the Director: Research and Innovation, Prof GE Ekosse on 015 962 8313 or Georges Ivo.Ekosse@univen.ac.za

General:

Potential participants must be assured that participation is voluntary, and the approximate number of participants to be included should be disclosed. A copy of the information letter should be issued to participants. The information letter and consent form must be translated and provided in the primary spoken language of the research population.

CONSENT

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher,(**Minkie Mapasha**), about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: _,

- I have also received, read and understood the above-written information (*Participant Letter of*
  Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis, will be anonymously processed into a study report.

© University of Venda

- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research, which may relate to my participation, will be made available to me.

Full Name of Participant	Date	Time	Signature
	11/12/24.	**10:24.**	**Mapasha M**

I, (***Minkie Ngwakwana Mapasha***) herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Full Name of Researcher

Minkie Date **11/12/24** Signature **Mapasha M**

Full Name of Witness (If applicable)

…… Date **……** Signature**……..**

Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)

…… Date**……** Signature**……..**

Please note the following:

Research details must be provided in a clear, simple and culturally appropriate manner and prospective participants should be helped to arrive at an informed decision by use of appropriate language (grade 10 level- use Flesch Reading Ease Scores on Microsoft Word),

© University of Venda

selecting of a non-threatening environment for interaction and the availability of peer counselling (Department of Health, 2004)

If the potential participant is unable to read/illiterate, then a right thumbprint is required and an impartial witness, who is literate and knows the participant, e.g., parent, sibling, friend, and pastor, etc., should verify in writing, duly signed that informed verbal consent was obtained (Department of Health, 2004).

If anyone makes a mistake completing this document, e.g., a wrong date or spelling mistake, a new document has to be completed. The incomplete original document has to be kept in the participant's file and not thrown away, and copies thereof must be issued to the participant.

References:

Department of Health: 2004. *Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Structures and Processes*

http://www.doh.gov.za/docs/factsheets/guidelines/ethnics/

Department of Health. 2006. *South African Good Clinical Practice Guidelines*. 2nd Ed. Available at:

http://www.nhrec.org.za/?page_id=14

© University of Venda

Appendix C: Editing and proofreading certificate

kufazano@gmail.com
+27631434276
10 January 2025

To whom it may concern,

RE: CONFIRMATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

This serves to confirm that I have copy-edited a dissertation written by Minkie Ngokoana Mapasha (Student number 18009883) titled ***Perception of adults on the influence of social media on the youth behaviour change: A case study of Matoks youth in Limpopo Province, South Africa***

The scope of my editing comprised:

- Spelling
- Tense
- Vocabulary
- Punctuation
- Word usage
- Language and sentence structure

If you need any further details, kindly contact me on the details provided above.

Yours faithfully



Kufakunesu Zano

Dr Kufakunesu Zano, PhD (English). A member of the South African Translators' Institute, **Ref no 1000686**

© University of Venda