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Social media as a sphere of violent discourse in times of civil unrest: A case study of the 2021 looting in South Africa



By

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Media Studies

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Declaration

I, **Chaboke Prince Malaka**, whose student number is **2606090** declare that "**Social media as a sphere of violent discourse in times of civil unrest: A case study of the 2021 looting in South Africa"** is my own work and that all references used in this thesis have been acknowledged by means of citation and complete references and this dissertation has never been published.

Signiture



Chaboke Prince Malaka Date: 15 March 2024

Dedication

I dedicate this study to my late mother Malaka Motemedi Salmina, my late grandmother Malaka Selabosego Grace, my siblings, and peers who look up to me. I also thank God for providing me with good health, wisdom, and strength thus far.

Thank you!

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I wish to thank my brothers, Malaka Khomotso, Malaka Mothusane, Malaka Joel, and my sister Malaka Mothelo for endless support and encouragement.

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Last but not least, I thank God and my ancestors for giving me healthy life and opportunities in this life.

Abbreviations

ABC: American Broadcasting Company

ANC: African National Congress

BBM: BlackBerry Messenger

BCE: Before Common Era

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

CSOS: Community Schemes Ombud Service

eNCA: eNews Channel Africa

IOL: Independent Online

KZN: KwaZulu-Natal

M12M: March 12th Movement

PMS: Premium Motor Spirits

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

UAE: United Arab Emirates

UK: United Kingdom

US: United States

USA: United States of America

UGT: Uses and Gratifications Theory

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Abstract

Social media has been used by activists in contemporary civil upheavals.The content created by these activists is believed to predict offline protest behaviour. There was previously no corelation drawn between social media usage and real-world behaviour, however, recently protesters'worldwide use of social media platforms provide an unparalleled opportunity to witness how social media usage can have real-world behavioural ties (Mina, 2019). This study's main objective was to investigate the extent to which social media, specifically X (formerly Twitter), was used as a forum for violent discourse during times of civil unrest. In particular, it examines the looting that occurred in South Africa in 2021 July under the hashtags,#LootingSA and #FreeZuma, that started in KwaZulu-Natal province on 8 July 2021 and spread to the Gauteng province. It is well recognised that social media sites enable users to communicate, share knowledge, and produce digital content. Social media has also served as an activist platorm during times of civil disturbance (Lim, 2012). This study adds to the current literature by elucidating howpeople's engagement in X (formerly Twitter) as a social media platform was used to createa discourses of violence during the 2021 looting. Protest Participation Theory (PPT) and Galtung's Theory of Violence (GTV) media theories have been used to drive this study and has further supported the findings from a theorectical standpoint. . The study used a qualitative approach and employed a thematic analysis technique to analyse data. The units of analysis, violent tweets, revealed a substantial presence of aggressive language, calls for violence, threats, and incitements to harm during the civil unrest period. Interestingly, a significant portion of these tweets did not explicitly endorse violence but circulated content related to violent acts e.g Tweets containing voilent content. In contrast, non-violent tweets predominantly centered around the arrest of former President Jacob Zuma with sentiments expressing disapproval, critique, or support for the arrest of the former president. The study acknowledged instances where X (formerly Twitter) was used for personal agendas and entertainment indicating a diverse range of discussions on social media related to violence. The non-violent tweets highlighted both opposition and support for Jacob Zuma's arrest with a smaller percentage categorised as "not related" and not taking a clear stance on the overarching topic. The research primarily focused on measuring the prevalence of looting activities rather than delving into the detailed aspects of the "how" question.

Keywords: Social media, X (formerly Twitter), Looting, Civil unrest, #LootingSA and #FreeZuma

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Chapter 1

Background and Introduction

Introduction

Activists used social media during contemporary civil uprisings, and researchers discovered that the generated material predicts offline protest behaviour (Wu and Gerber, 2017, p. 82). This chapter outlines the background of this research by exploring the landscape of social media, particularly X (formerly Twitter), in perpetuating violence during times of civil unrest. It also builds on the current literature in this field of social media and civil unrest, drawing from global movements such as the Arab Spring and "black life matters" and the Occupy movements, as well as national level movements such as fees must fall. It also highlights current gaps and the necessity for this study, which is backed by the research objectives and aims.

1.1 Background of the study

Schroeder et al. (2014, p. 125) state that civil unrest events affect a diverse set of countries which range from developed countries such as England, United States of America, or France, to developing countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, or Libya. According to the most recent Global Peace Index (2020), the number of riots, general strikes, and anti-government demonstrations has surged by 244 percent globally over the last decade. Schroeder et al. (2014, p. 125) make the following explaination on the origins source of civil unrest:

> Dissatisfied individuals must hold actions, like organizing protests and rallies, when just complaining or holding demonstrations leads to no improvement; so it can increase the chance of more protest or resistance. Additionally, it should be noted that social mobilization entails more than just expressing discontent. It includes all efforts that may require an organizational approach to amass resources, formulate & execute a plan to capture the public's interest and apply appropriate pressure on key change agents. The role of actions will increase, particularly if these expressions of dissatisfaction are ignored and they become more intense (e.g. spontaneous strikes or blockades). Subsiquently a tranquil interruption of the peaceful period is represented by a more terrible phase which may lead into a turbulent and ultimately destructive revolution.

Hadzi-Vaskov, Loor and Ricci (2021) observed that the Covid-19 pandemic coupled with lockdown have increased the incidence of social disturbances such as looting. According to Furceri et al. (2020, p. 96) these effects exacerbate already existing poverty and inequality. Importantly, Covid-19 related unrest events have impacted the lives of people, such as loss of jobs and lives, which gained traction on social media platforms like X (formerly Twitter) (Lim, 2012, p. 234). In 2019, cities such as Durban and Johannesburg came to a standstill because of civil unrest that resulted in looting and consequently many lost their jobs and lives (Visser, Rangongo and Esterhuizen, 2021, p. 38). Social media has grown to play an important activist function during the times of increasing social unrest. As Lim (2012, p. 234) explains, "*social media is not simply a neutral tool to be used or adopted by social movements, but rather influence how activists form and shape social movements*". As such, digital and social media serve as complementary tools, rather than being the primary means of communication and mobilisation for South African activists.

Barrett and Chen (2021) support this by arguing that the Covid-19 pandemic has amplified civil unrest content trends on social media platforms. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic social media has been found to play a powerful role during the time of protests and civil unrest (Barrett and Chen, 2021). As such, the ability of social media to mobilise people into action is undeniable (Barrett and Chen, 2021). Kelsey (2015) highlights that the shooting of Mark Duggan, a 29-year-old black British man, by the London police on 4 August 2011 in Tottenham is a well-known international story that gained attention on social media. Kelsey (2015) suggests that the case caused riots in different of London including Tottenham and Enfield Town and extended to other UK areas like Liverpool and Central Manchester. The media and politicians' narrative was that the riots were incited by the social media and mobile internet of (Fuchs, 2011). Moreover, the circulation of misinformation in a feedback system of perceived wrongs against former president Donald Trump had been fueling the US Capitol riot (Initiative, 89, 2021).

Dave et al. (2020) portray social media networks as undermining local communities development built on respect. Even though these international networks provide support and momentum, they do not feature trust naturally existing in domestic movements, which makes them vulnerable (Dave et al., 2020). Dave et al. (2020) argue that online polarisation can turn violent when it takes to the streets. No political movement refutes the power of social media to both galvanize and polarize

users of social media (89 Initiative, 2021). It is argued that social media users must recognize their role in using these platforms to educate and mobilize, especially in an age where rapid information flow is coupled with the significant spread of misinformation (Margetts, 2018). These platforms play a crucial political role across the spectrum, yet it falls upon users and developers to find a balance between freedom of expression, access to information, and the duty to maintain truthfulness (Kidd and McIntosh, 2016). Social media's accessibility reduces the knowledge gap between the powerful and activists, offering both sides data to bolster and enlighten their campaigns (Dave et al., 2020). Such data reaches a global audience, garnering support and discourse in far-flung communities. Due to social media's visual nature, evidence of wrongdoings can be swiftly and extensively shared, ensuring accountability (Highfield, 2017). This is exemplified by the widespread sharing of George Floyd's murder video, which ignited worldwide Black Lives Matter demonstrations (Dave et al., 2020).

Dave et al. (2020) note that social media was pivotal in spreading impactful images and narratives. Ali (2011) observes that this ignition point enabled rapid protest organization via social media. Beyond mobilization, these platforms are instrumental in educating and informing, crucial when physical protesting is not feasible. This was seen in the “Reclaim the Nights/Reclaim the Streets” movements following Sarah Everard's murder, promoting gender equality education (Ali, 2011). Similarly, the adaptation of #Notallmen by activists highlighted women's stories, steering the dialogue away from divisive gender binaries and potentially quelling counter-protests (Ali, 2011). These instances are among the many that have harnessed social media's amplifying power.

Social media's rapid dissemination of information serves as a potent tool but also presents risks (Sultan, 2023). Bailard (2014) highlights that misinformation can spread just as swiftly, exacerbating societal divides. Egyptian activist Ghonim (2012) observed that the platforms which facilitated unity against tyranny soon became arenas of disinformation, ultimately causing discord among allies. This instant access to information, a feat unattainable by traditional media, often demands sensational, attention-grabbing content, sacrificing impartiality (Bennett, 2003). Regardless of the protest's validity, the allure of 'click-bait' activism fosters a divisive us-vs-them mentality, where extreme fringe groups might end up symbolizing entire movements in the eyes of their adversaries (Jervis, 2013). While not exclusive to digital protests, the online environment

exacerbates these divisions through the vast availability of information and misinformation (Ferrara, 2012).

In India, the 2008 Mumbai attacks were initially reported on X (previously Twitter) and Flickr, predating traditional news coverage (Deborah, 2011). The Telegraph (2022) reported an influx of around seventy eyewitness tweets every five seconds during the crisis. Kumar and Thapa (2015) note that Indian citizens frequently turn to social media for updates on Civil Society Movements (CSMs), closely monitoring these channels for news. The India Against Corruption (IAC) movement (2011) utilized social media extensively to shed light on prevalent corruption issues (Litton, 2015). In April 2011, social activist Anna Hazare initiated the IAC campaign, drawing inspiration from Gandhi's principles, aiming to compel the government to adopt anti-corruption measures and protect whistleblowers (Madhavan, 2016).

Similarily to the 2011 Arab Spring, which was dubbed the "Facebook Revolution" and the "X (formerly Twitter) Uprising", academics and journalists first discussed the use of social media as a tool for activism (Jervis, 2013). Since then, activists, protestors, and revolutionaries have used social media to rally global support for fights against a variety of injustices (Gilbert, 2021). In the same way this platform spreads information at an unprecedented rate it can also spread misinformation and division (Gilbert, 2021). Another case in point is the #OccupyNigeria which lasted from 9 to 13 January 2012 which also gained public attention through social media platforms (Hari, 2014). In India, initial reports of the 2008 Mumbai terrorist incidents appeared on X (formerly known as Twitter) and Flickr, outpacing conventional media outlets (Deborah, 2011). During the event, The Telegraph (2022) observed a surge of about seventy eyewitness accounts on X every five seconds. Indian residents often rely on social media to stay informed about Civil Society Movements (CSMs), keeping a vigilant eye on these platforms for updates, as noted by Kumar and Thapa (2015). The 2011 India Against Corruption (IAC) movement leveraged social media to highlight widespread corruption (Litton, 2015). Social activist Anna Hazare launched the IAC initiative in April 2011, inspired by Gandhi's non-violent approach, with the goal of urging the government to implement anti-corruption laws and safeguard whistleblowers (Madhavan, 2016). Odenyi (2012) states:

> What we are witnessing with 'Occupy Nigeria' is a generational transfer, as young, social media enabled activists gradually take over the baton from unionist stalwarts. Nigeria's

> young population is increasingly letting go of the deferential attitude of their parent's generation. In the south at least, young Nigerians are beginning to ask questions... At long last, there is accountability pressure building up in the system. (Jeremy Weate cited in Iwilade 2013:9). Subsidy on petrol is an emotive as well as a political issue in Nigeria. Perhaps, in a moment of candid honesty, Nigeria's former military President, General Ibrahim Babangida remarked: the issue of subsidy should be seen more as politics and not economics.... It is better to seek political solution to the subsidy discourse than invoking the sentiments of economics.

As referenced earlier, in late 2011, President Goodluck Jonathan's administration opted to eliminate the petrol subsidy, fully aware that this move could incite societal upheaval. History showed that labor unions and civic organizations have consistently resisted such actions, irrespective of the government's nature (Odenyi, 2012). The proliferation of mobile technology facilitated easier communication among Nigerian youths, enabling them to organize widespread protest participation (Akor, 2017). The nation's severe economic woes fueled discussions on social media platforms like X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and BBM from as early as October, contemplating an 'Occupy' movement in Nigeria (Akor, 2017). These conversations intensified following the government's announcement to cut the fuel subsidy, with many youths perceiving this as an attempt to offload the burdens of governance failures onto the populace (Akor, 2017). Egbunike (2015) noted that Occupy Nigeria was a united stand against the sharp rise in Premium Motor Spirits prices from N65 to N140.

This outburst in Nigeria coincided with the Global Occupy Protests and the Arab Spring, drawing international media focus to Nigeria through social media, similar to those movements (Egbunike and Olorunnisola, 2015). Thus, social media provided a platform to bypass traditional media gatekeepers. In this context, the Nigerian Youth Council's leader commenced a hunger strike on November 11, 2011, to protest the subsidy removal (Akor, 2017). Persistent protest efforts by the Youth Council prompted state security to intervene, forcing activists to covertly continue their mobilization efforts via social media (Courson, 2009). By December, the government was seen courting pseudo-youth groups at the Presidential villa to endorse the subsidy cut (Courson, 2009). The April deadline for subsidy removal emerged as a deceitful strategy by the government, leading to a drastic rise in transport costs, confining many to their hometowns due to unaffordable fares

post-announcement (Akor, 2017). This provoked outrage among labor groups, Community Schemes Ombud Service (CSOS), and youth organizations, reinforcing the narrative that the government's reliability was questionable and underscoring the imperative for the government to respect its citizens (Ferrara, 2012).

Eltantawy and Wiest (2011) mentions that on 1 January 2012, immediately following the government's announcement, the youth began discussions on social media about the next steps to take. The Blackberry phone, manufactured by Research in Motion (a Canadian company), was one of the most popular phones in Nigeria, especially among young people who appreciated its instant messaging BBM feature (Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011). With the government forcing the youth to go underground and security agencies actively monitoring their Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) accounts, BBM became the only secure means by which they could communicate seamlessly without the security agencies breathing down their necks (Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011). Protests were intermittent. The youth shut down major streets, chanted anti-government songs, and demanded that the fuel price be reduced to N65 (Hari, 2014). They also carried placards criticising the government's economic policies and urging the president to fire the finance minister, whom they saw as a World Bank agent (Akor, 2017). The turnout was unprecedented with even the middle class protesting the government in large numbers (Akor, 2017).

These social media platforms played a significant role in organizing, disseminating news, and expanding awareness amongst the public and perhaps even stimulating and facilitating discussions on issues that go beyond fuel hikes (Okereafor, 2021). It's important to acknowledge that social media played a pivotal role in broadcasting information to the populace (Uwalaka and Watkins, 2018). For instance, Mare (2013) notes that in Mozambique's capital, Maputo, conventional media trailed behind social media in delivering breaking news. The city's inhabitants, mobilized for protests, received text messages urging them to partake in the 'great strike day' and voice their dissent against rising costs of utilities, transport, and basic goods (Okereafor, 2021). During these text message-coordinated demonstrations, both journalists and laypeople utilized X (formerly Twitter) to convey real-time updates to an international audience (Mare, 2013). They disseminated their narratives, images, videos, and blog entries. Both international news outlets and local reporters predominantly relied on X (formerly Twitter) to gather news and engage with worldwide

viewers (Mare, 2013). This underscores the symbiotic relationship between new and traditional media in catering to the informational needs of the public. Mare (2013, p. 83) thus exaplins that:

> Social media thus facilitate a type of journalism in which the audience is much more involved in the news-creation process. It allows ordinary citizens to participate in the news-gathering processes by actively soliciting user-generated content and publishing it in mainstream media. The social and the mainstream media co-exist in a symbiotic relationship, feeding off and amplifying each other.

The potential of emerging media technologies like mobile phones to enhance political engagement and catalyze societal transformation is a topic of ongoing discourse (Wasserman, Chuma, and Bosch, 2018). The recent developments in countries like Mozambique, Iran, Tunisia, and Egypt have ignited fresh debates regarding the impact of these technologies in forging new public realms and instigating collective action (Ferrara, 2012). Particularly in Africa, where the distribution of new media technologies is uneven, the rapid proliferation of mobile phones sparks hope regarding their capability to invigorate political involvement and expand the scope of democratic discussions (Wasserman, 2011).

Consequently, activists leveraging social media perceive it as an effective medium for mobilizing support, generating ideas, and addressing issues, as it enables the exchange of insights and strategies with peers from different locales (Bosch, 2018). They also regard these platforms as instrumental in orchestrating focused campaigns (Bosch, 2018). Thus, social media is increasingly recognized as a pivotal resource for awareness-raising and forging connections with activist networks at both the national and international levels. X (formerly Twitter) has played a prominent role in mobilisation, coordinating, and public engagement for activism. Previous research shows that when breaking news on X (formerly Twitter), “major events such as natural disasters and countries lockdown could lead to mass mobilization in the streets” (Tafesse, and Wood 2022, p. 976). Moreover, X (formerly Twitter) is used to coordinate offline activities as a "choreography of assembly" (Gerbaudo, 2012). Furthermore, Gerbaudo (2014, p. 264-268) defines "choreography of assembly" as “the mediated 'scene-setting' and 'scripting' of people's physical assembling in public space” as a key-ingredient of 21st century social movements. With the conceptualization of this concept, Gerbaudo (2014, p. 264-268) stresses that even in the digital age “collective action is never completely spontaneous given that pure spontaneity does not exist”.

At the height of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa and major lockdown restrictions in place, a major civil unrest of looting began on 8 of July 2021. Looting is regarded as a form of civil unrest, an act of stealing, or the taking of goods by force, typically amid a military, political, or other social crisis, such as war, natural disasters, or rioting (Quarantelli and Dynes, 1970, p.168). There could be several issues that can cause mass civil unrest movements as seen around the world but looking at the South African context the July 2021 civil unrest was triggered by a few main factors. According to the eNews Channel Africa (eNCA) (2021), the civil unrest was in response to the National lockdown restrictions in South Africa and former president Jacob Zuma being sentenced to fifteen months in prison for defying the order to appear before the Zondo Commission of Inquiry into allegations of state capture, corruption, and fraud in the public sector, including organs of state, and for undermining the Court's authority through his casual and scandalous attacks. The looting commenced in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province where JacobZuma is from as a public response against the court ruling.They set up roadblocks on major roads such as N3 tollroute in KZN and N2 in Gauteng and tires were set on fire. However, Vhumbunu (2021) adds that on 7 July 2021 when former president JacobZuma handed himself in, at the Estcourt Correctional Service Centre in KZN, there were widespread violent protests, rioting, and looting of businesses and destruction of public facilities and private property in parts of KZN.

Furthermore, from the 9 to 17 of July 2021 this had affected parts of Gauteng province particularly Johannesburg as multiple malls, such as Dobsonville mall, Protea Glen mall, and Daveyton shopping mall, were affected. Ngwane (2021) notes that the commotion began with inflammatory social media posts that threatened thunder and brimstone if former president Jacob Zuma was not released from prison. As such this study will examine the violence discourses of tweets shared on X (formerly Twitter) during the #LootingSA and #FreeZuma to broadly explore the uses of social media during times of civil unrest. Social media became flooded with posts about the looting particularly on X (formerly Twitter) and that’s where #LootingSA and #FreeZuma originated and gained the attention of social media users and mainstream media platforms (Ngwane, 2021). Independent Online (IOL) News (2022, p.2) states that according to Jean le Roux, a researcher associates at the Digital Forensic Lab, the former president's daughter was photographing and videotaping the looting and arson while captioning them "Amandla" and "We see you" with fist emojis. Subsequently, this created the impression that there is support for violence which fosters an urging to continue and celebrate violence(Mathe and Motsaathebe, 2022). Additionally, Majoko

and Dudu, (2023) recently state that when the looting began most social media accounts celebrated. Planning and coordination were done behind closed doors but through social media posts on X (formerly Twitter), WhatsApp, and Telegram. Figures 1 to 5 below are some of the tweets shared during the time of civil unrest #LootingSA and #FreeZuma. These tweets contain visuals and captions which were shared and captured during the time of looting and may have potential influence towards the use of social media users during the looting.

Figure 1: <u>Tweet informing social media users about the #FreeZuma protest.</u>



Figure 2: <u>Tweet about the KwaZulu-Natal looming civil unrest.</u>



Figure 3: <u>Tweet about mass mobilisation to #FreeZuma protest.</u>



Figure 4: <u>Tweet encouraging mass mobilisation.</u>



Figure 5: Tweet about looting in the name of former president Jacob Zuma.



Social media platforms provide unprecedented opportunities to track the evolution of civil unrest. X (formerly Twitter) provides a real-time platform for disseminating news and opinions as it is both a social network and an information-sharing medium (Hua et al., 2013). Therefore, examining tweets about #LootingSA protests can reveal the root causes and why many people participate in this protest. Fuchs (2012) states that the concept of the X (formerly Twitter) revolution expresses a belief in cyber-utopianism and the power of X (formerly Twitter) to strengthen the political public sphere. The concept of the X (formerly Twitter) mob expresses techno-pessimism which is the belief that the internet in all contexts has necessarily negative consequences for society and that the internet or specific platforms are the cause of negative phenomena (Fuchs, 2012). In support of Fuchs' (2012) statement and as mentioned above social media contributes both negatively and positively to society. Maslow's quote below emphasizes the need to socialise as a human being however due to the Covid-19 pandemic regulations social mass gatherings were prohibited or limited to a certain extent. This implies that the masses had to fully rely on social media platforms to meet their socialisation needs:

People have biological, psychological, and social needs which can vary from person to person. According to Maslow (1954) this follows a hierarchical order that progresses from basic needs towards social and psychological needs at the higher level. People need to fulfil their needs of belonging (Maslow, 1954, p. 162). The increased use of social media exposes the public to social media content with the potential to perpetuate violence, such as videos of people looting, people fighting with the law enforcement unit. In Maslow's (1954) conceptualisation of the hierarchy of needs, he posits that people desire to fulfill a sense of belonging through interacting with others. In the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, everything was done online which increased the use of social media among users as they sought to fulfil their social needs. Social media allows people to post content irrespective of whether it can cause harm to other people or not (Gilbert, 2021).

Gilbert (2021) acknowledges that the Covid-19 pandemic, coupled with the rise of social media as a means of staying connected in a world of social distancing, has enhanced the influence of these platforms, though their role in mitigating polarization is not always fulfilled. The employment of social media during the pandemic to rally individuals across various political divides in reaction to perceived wrongs offers a valuable perspective on the medium's function and obligations, as well as the upcoming challenges for socio-political communication (Gilbert, 2021).

This scenario underscores that the absence of prompt and reliable information from governmental entities has created a perilous void in information, particularly evident during public protests in South Africa (Mare, 2013). The capacity of traditional media to cover areas of unrest is hampered, placing journalists at risk (IOL News, 2022). Social media platforms, as discussed, step in to fill this gap, albeit often with unverified and sometimes inaccurate content, a trend intensified by the pandemic. The outcome is an exaggerated reality disseminated through chosen social media circles to an anxious public craving information. Chenoweth (2021) points out that visuals of destruction and civil unrest gain their own momentum on social media, potentially spurring further violence and racially or politically charged retaliation.

In crisis times, the quest for information is innate, and social media provides a sense of community and connection for those impacted (IOL News, 2022). Yet, the blend of actuality, personal experiences, and fabrications on these platforms can provoke societal anxiety, incite panic, and fuel racial or xenophobic sentiments (Geldenhuys, 2021), threatening South Africa's fragile

societal fabric (Chenoweth, 2021). The public's engagement in sharing provocative or false content on social media can provoke unrest. Such actions carry consequences and are deemed criminal when social media is used as a tool for aggression (Wills and Reeves, 2009). Under South Africa's Cyberize Act 19, incitement to harm people or property via social media is a punishable offense (FPB, 2022), and sharing manipulated images could be classified as cyber forgery (Ventre and Loiseau, 2023), making sharers inadvertent participants in a crime (Okereafor, 2021). With over 22 million South Africans on social media, a figure that's growing with smartphone accessibility (Lekhanya, 2021), the potential for rapid information dissemination is immense, yet so is the danger of harm if mismanaged (Bhuda, Motswaledi, and Marumo, 2023). The surge in social media use, especially amid recent crises like the KZN floods, the July 2021 riots, and the Covid-19 pandemic, underscores the vital role of authentic information dissemination in safeguarding lives (Majoko, and Dudu, 2023).

1.2 Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to explore the extent that social media i.e., X (formerly Twitter) is used as a sphere of violence discourses in times of civil unrest specifically the 2021 looting that took place in South Africa.

1.3 Research objectives

1) To explore the extent of social media i.e., X (formerly Twitter), as a sphere of violence discourse in times of civil unrest.

2) To decipher the main uses of social media i.e., X (formerly Twitter), by active social media users as well as activists during times of social unrest.

3) To determine the role that X (formerly Twitter) played during the 2021 civil unrest looting in South Africa.

1.4 Research questions

1) To what extent do the tweets that pertain to the looting i.e., #LootingSA #FreeZumaZuma, display violence discourses?

2) What are the main uses of X (formerly Twitter) during times of civil unrest by active social media users and the looters?

3) What roles did X (formerly Twitter) play during South Africa's 2021 looting civil unrest?

1.5 Definition of key terms

1.5.1 X (formerly Twitter)

X (formerly Twitter) is a no-cost social networking platform where users post brief messages called tweets (Murthy, 2018). Tweets may include text, videos, photos, or hyperlinks. To utilize X (formerly Twitter), one needs internet access or a smartphone to engage with the app or navigate X.com.

1.5.2 Hashtag (#)

Highfield and Leaver (2015) describe a hashtag as a term or phrase preceded by a hash symbol (#), utilized on social media sites and apps, notably X (formerly Twitter), to categorize digital content related to a particular theme, such as #LootingSA and #FreeZuma.

1.5.3 Social Media

Defined by Greenwood, Perrin, and Duggan (2016) as internet-centric communication platforms, social media enables user interactions, information sharing, and web content creation. It has become an essential part of daily life, used for socializing, information access, and decision-making processes. Duggan et al., (2015) view it as a crucial tool for global communication and information dissemination, including platforms like X (formerly Twitter), WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Telegram.

1.5.4 Violence

Zizek (2008) views violence as the exercise of physical force intended to inflict harm, be it physical or psychological. It's distinct from aggression, a broader category of hostile behavior that could be physical, verbal, or passive.

1.5.5 Looting

Defined as the forcible theft of goods, typically in tumultuous scenarios like wars, natural disasters, or riots (Quarantelli and Dynes, 1970). In South Africa, looting, often driven by poverty, inequality, and unemployment, has been a recurrent issue, persisting from the apartheid era to the post-1994 democratic period (M, 2006).

1.5.6 Weblog

A weblog, or blog, is a web diary where the author (blogger) links to interesting online content, with posts arranged in reverse chronological order (Mishne and Glance, 2006). Platforms like Blogger, Manila, and WordPress are popular for creating blogs.

1.5.7 Tweets

A tweet is a message on X (formerly Twitter), limited to 140 characters, and may include photos, videos, links, and text, visible on the user's profile and to their followers (Parikh and Karlapalem, 2013). Individuals publish tweets on X (formerly Twitter), which might encompass text, images, videos, and hyperlinks. These messages get uploaded to your profile, dispatched to your followers, and are discoverable via X's search feature.

1.5.8 New media

New media, synonymous with digital media, involves using digital technologies for communication, contrasting with traditional media like print or TV (Flew, 2007). It encompasses various formats, from blogs and videos to digital art. Whenever you access web-based platforms and applications on your devices like computers, tablets, or smartphones, you engage with digital media. This media spans various formats including videos, articles, ads, music, podcasts, audiobooks, virtual reality, and digital art (Ranker, 2015, p.568)

1.5.9 Micro-bloggings

This is a blend of blogging and instant messaging, allowing users to post brief messages to engage audiences (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011). Platforms like X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook are

notable for microblogging, with X being a prime example where users can post concise tweetsX stands out as the premier microblogging platform. Bolander and Locher (2014) note that it permits posting brief updates or 'tweets,' limited to 140 characters. This platform is popular among not just the general public but also celebrities and political figures, allowing for the sharing of images, videos, and text, complemented by popular hashtags

1.5.10 .Web. 2.0

Web 2.0 signifies the evolution of internet applications post-dotcom bubble, marking a shift in digital communication (O'reilly, 2009). It encapsulates the evolution in Web technology and design, fostering creativity, information exchange, collaborative efforts, and web functionality beyond the original Web 1.0. Web 2.0 includes features like social networks (e.g., Facebook), blogs, wikis, folksonomies (e.g., keyword "tagging" on sites and links), and video sharing platforms (e.g., YouTube).

1.6 Structural overview of the thesis

Chapter 1: This chapter explains the research study and provides a solid foundation for the public discourse on social media and violence. The chapter draws on global studies and local (South African). The chapter highlighted the importance of conducting contemporary, empirical, and in-depth research of social media to contribute to existing debates and close scholarship gaps in this field.

Chapter 2: The literature review helps the researcher to avoid repetition of content and identifies gaps in knowledge and unresolved problems that the study can address. This section examined the body of research on social media use during civil disturbance and highlights the knowledge gap in the field of media studies for this topic. Additionally, this study adds to the expanding body of research on social media's impact during civil upheaval.

Chapter 3: The theories that are pertinent to this research and make a substantial contribution to it are outlined in this chapter. Galtung's Theory of Violence and Protest Participation Theory serves as the foundation for this study's theoretical framework. The assumptions of these theories, their explanation, their brief histories, and how they help this study in the context of violence and social media are all covered in detail.

Chapter 4: This chapter provided an overview of the method and procedures that were employed in the data collectition, data analysis, and data processing about the #LootingSA and #FreeZuma civil disturbances in South Africa.

Chapter 5: This chapter uses a thorough analysis of tweets to explore the nuances of social media discourse during times of civil upheaval. The understanding gained from this analysis offers a deep appreciation of the various aspects that define internet discussions in the context of South African civil unrest. A carefully selected dataset of 231 tweets that were only sent between July 11 and July 13, 2021, during the period of civil upheaval, was put together for this study.

Chapter 6: This section encompasses the examination, display, and elucidation of the research findings derived from this study, including a thorough analysis of the gathered data.

Chapter 7: This section provides a recap of the study's conclusions and suggestions, initiating with a review of the initial goals and objectives, the literature review, and the study's findings. It offers a concise discussion arranged by each primary research question, culminating in the study's outcomes.

Conclusion

In the era of globalization, where information stands as a crucial resource, social media is pivotal in keeping us apprised of international and local events and topics. The media landscape has undergone multiple transformations and expansions over the centuries. The advent and proliferation of social networking sites have made internet access increasingly prevalent, establishing it as a key medium for social engagement and gathering.

This chapter provided a broad background of the use of social media and how it is interlinked with traditional media in South Africa. The chapter outlined from global activities to local activities the role that social media particularly X (formerly Twitter) played during various cases

and scenes. The upcoming chapter will concisely focus and provide the existing literature about social media and civil unrest.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review helps the researcher to avoid repetition of content and identifies gaps in knowledge and unresolved problems that the study can address (Wolverhampton, 2018). This section reviewed the existing literature on the use of social media in times of civil unrest and demonstrates the existing gap in the Media Studies field on the use of social media during civil unrest. Moreover, this study contributes to the growing literature on the role of social media in times of civil unrest. The section consists of twomajor themes: Violence,Old media, and the advent of social media.It focuses on the existing literature about evolution of the media and the role of the new media in violence activities. The second theme is social media and civil unrest, which investigates the history of civil unrest and how social media influences civil unrest events. Numerous research has been done in this area of new media but there is still a gap of knowledge explaining to what extent social media can be used in times of civil unrest, how social media perpetuates violent discourse, and how social media can be utilized not to only incite but also prevent aggressiveness and violence. Despite the focus on social media's role in recent civil turmoil, there are still benefits to using them.

2.1 Background of the use of social media

While the term "social media" may be interpreted broadly, it is often used by scholars and practitioners to denote a particular array of internet-based services that have risen to prominence in the last thirty years, including blogs, social networks, and microblogging platforms (Treem et al., 2016). These platforms' rise is commonly viewed as the advent of Web 2.0, a term indicating a suite of online applications that empower users to create and share content, accessible across various devices (Beer and Burrows, 2007). Some academics prefer the broader concept of Web 2.0 over social media, seeing it as a more inclusive label covering a wider range of interactive and expressive online tools (Beer, 2008). There's a push for more precise delineation between the overarching category of social media and more specific subsets like social networks or networking sites. For instance, Murthy (2012) classifies X (formerly Twitter) as social media due to its support

for public, user-generated content by amateurs, setting it apart from networking sites like Facebook or LinkedIn, where interactions tend to be with known contacts and reciprocal. Beer (2008) also sees merit in differentiating between platforms geared towards active networking and those that simply map out online social connections, advocating for a more detailed classification to enhance academic analysis of these platforms' functions and usage.

Treem et al. (2016) identified seven core elements of social media to elucidate its functions: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups. While each component captures a facet of the social media realm, this framework doesn't fully capture its practical application. Kane et al. (2014) delve into social media networks, defining them through user-created digital profiles, the capability to search and control access to content, the display of social connections, and the visibility of others' networks. These broad definitions accommodate existing social media environments and offer a basis for examining evolving technologies. Social media has played a pivotal role in disseminating information rapidly during pandemics, enabling communication speeds unprecedented in human history. Nevertheless, the advantages and challenges of social media use must be weighed carefully. With mindful utilization, these platforms can overcome traditional geographic limitations, swiftly disseminating vital information worldwide for the first time (Stanberry, 2000).

Mengu and Mengu (2015) state today's new media, like social media, have been reported to have a greater impact on public perception. There is a wide spectrum of study that has examined societal issues and how they relate to new media (Mengu and Mengu, 2015). Individuals engage in dialogue, share ideas and images online, and find that their participation in various groups fulfills their need for community belonging. Social media serves as a space of liberty, enabling users to communicate both publicly and privately. However, it is also an environment where various kinds of violence can manifest or be perpetrated through these very means of interaction (Kiunga, 2023). Social media has developed into a complex and troublesome issue since it is an interactive medium and caters to a sizable number of users (Barefoot and Szabo, 2009). Social sites that display strikes, mass mobilisation efforts, violence, and various forms of theft in social media provide coverage of the news stories where social media and violence coexist. Considering this, it is important to evaluate whether or not social media is used as a platform for violence. This study covered these

issues in further detail, and as it is based on current looting incidents in South Africa, it provided informative data on social media usage. X (formerly Twitter) has become a platform for public violence similar to the recent cyberbullying phenomenon. The American Broadcasting Company (ABC) news covered a story in which they interviewed a Chicago resident who showed the correspondent how social sites were used to promote violence by social media user. It demonstrated how gangs used social media sites to threaten and "call out" rival gangs, and encourage violence and membership. This activity resulted in actual "stomp-outs", actual shootings, and actual deaths (ABC News, 2021, p. 7).

2.2 Violence, old media, and the advent of social media

Social media's qualities render it vulnerable to discourses that could lead to or even incite violence (Kiunga, 2023). According to Tanwar (2016), most content shared on social media websites are unverified and may therefore convey violent ideas to users. Meaning that there are fewer controls on social media platforms like X (formerly Twitter) which may make it simpler for users of these platforms to distribute and access violent information. Social media has been known to play a significant role during periods of civic unrest and violence, according to prior a study. Roberts and Marchais (2018, p. 198) have argued that:

> People's use of social media was crucial in the Egyptian revolution, Kenyan post-election violence. Humanitarian agencies, policymakers, and researchers can use social media to get data that isn't available anywhere else to better analyse and respond to violent events. Following a time of naive optimism about social media and digital technologies' potential, there is now a rising understanding that they come with new practical, ethical, and methodological limits

Social media's extensive reach enables individuals to instantly connect with thousands of people (Kwak and Lee Park, 2010). In contrast to traditional media, which necessitates several complex and lengthy steps before releasing information, social media allows for the immediate public dissemination of content. Conventional news outlets are often perceived as entirely accurate, limiting their reporting to events that have transpired. However, Mare (2013) notes that social media enhances and supports traditional media through instant updates, widespread video sharing,

and interactive news creation. For example, in Mozambique, social media led the charge in breaking news, with print and broadcast media turning to social networks for timely updates on unfolding events (Kiunga, 2023). Similarly, in Zimbabwe, social media and mobile communications played a crucial role in disseminating breaking news (Mare, 2013).

Since the early 1960s, scientific data has accumulated showing that exposure to violent content on cell phones and the internet increases the viewers' or users' chance of engaging in violent action similarily to growing up in a violent environment (Cantor, 2000). As a result of social media and digital technology, the way information about violence is shared, collated, and reported to the public has fundamentally changed according to DeAndrea et al. (2011, p. 342):

> Newer forms of social media differ from older, traditional broadcast media in that they enable peer-to-peer messages, as opposed to unidirectional transmission of one-to-many media content. In doing so, these tools may have the potential to reshape communication patterns among their users by enabling online communication and lowering the barriers to face-to-face interaction.

Social media has become the quickest mode of disseminating information to the mass hence almost everyone has an account on social media platforms that allows them to share any content that could have negative impacts on the public. According to Anderson et al. (2015) due to a significant increase in multimedia portable devices, such as phones and tablets, media use among youth has increased sharply in recent years. Anderson et al. (2015) findings also show that children aged 8 to 25 in the United States (US) spend more than 7 hours per day engaging with media content which could be either be positive or negative. Scholars have discovered that when youth are constantly exposed to violence in the media they can resort to violence to solve their problems (Bandura, 1986). This can be attributed in part to what they see and who they interact with as youth learn their social skills from their surroundings. It can be taken or looked at from the tomb-builder in early 1159 Before Common Era (BCE) Egypt to the recent Black Lives Matter protests, fees must fall, and Rhodes must fall in 20th century just to present a few.

Additionally, they note growing concerns among governments, professional bodies, and individuals about the impact of violent content on social media (Anderson et al., 2015). Huesmann (2007) attributes this concern to numerous devastating incidents of mass violence and vandalism, where exposure to media violence seems to have been a contributing factor. Anderson et al. (2015)

have conducted research on youth interaction with social media and its influence on specific age groups, which is foundational to this study as it builds on their findings by offering detailed insights into social media usage, especially on X (formerly Twitter), during the 2021 civil disturbances. Recent research has explored how social media impacts individuals across various domains but has not thoroughly examined the specifics of social media usage or its role in societal events, particularly the extent of X (formerly Twitter) usage. This study aims to bridge that gap by analyzing how social media users engage with these platforms and the effect of social media on the 2021 civil unrest, focusing specifically on the use of X (formerly Twitter) related to #LootingSA and #FreeZuma hashtags.

2.3 Civil unrest as a systematic risk and the miss use of social media by the elite

The concept of 'systematic' pertains to how risks affecting human health, environmental integrity, economic stability, or personal well-being are interwoven with broader societal factors that influence our perception of risk (De Bandt and Hartmann, 2000). According to Susen (2011), from a systematic or functionalist perspective, civil unrest is seen as a societal risk but also as a mechanism that can catalyze societal transformation, potentially leveraging social unrest as a tool for change. While civil unrest might catalyze beneficial societal transformations, it carries the potential for detrimental impacts on human lives and property, as evidenced by the fatalities during #LootingSA. It represents a complex interplay of triggers, immediate dangers, and potential long-term advantages or threats, exemplifying the nature of systematic risks (Lee, 2018).

House (2016) notes that since 2016, countries like China, Iran, North Korea, and Syria have restricted access to Facebook. In 2019, Facebook eliminated numerous pages, groups, and accounts across Nigeria, Egypt, Indonesia, and the United Arab Emirates for engaging in "coordinated inauthentic behavior" intended to deceive users. Furthermore, in 2021, Nigeria suspended X (formerly Twitter) (Radcliffe and Abuhmaid, 2020).

The United States, hosting major social media platforms like X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook, faced a turning point post-Trump insurrection, prompting a reevaluation of social media's societal impact. Numerous participants in the insurrection were apprehended due to their activities on social media (Kriesberg and Acker, 2022). Donald Trump and several of his supporters were barred

from these platforms (Kriesberg and Acker, 2022). This misuse of social media led to the CEOs of X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and Google testifying before Congress about their platforms' roles in the insurrection. Cambridge Analytica, a British firm involved in Trump's campaign to sway social media narratives, shut down in 2015 amidst election-related controversies (Berghel, 2018). In South Africa, freedom of expression is a cherished democratic right, outlined in the bill of rights, a privilege many worldwide yearn for (Gumede, 2009). Recent developments, especially the #FreeZuma protests, highlight instances where individuals overlook the responsibilities accompanying these rights (Xaba and Akinola, 2022). Migrants, particularly from other African nations, marvel at South Africans' liberty to openly criticize the government on platforms like X (formerly Twitter), without the obligation to substantiate their claims (Xaba and Akinola, 2022). This freedom was apparent during the #LootingSA and #FreeZuma events, where accusations against officials required no proof, leading to rights misuse (Gumede, 2009).

A well-known quote often attributed to the former Ugandan leader Idi Amin declares, "freedom of speech exists, but there's no assurance of freedom following your speech" (Bwambale, 2016). In a similar vein, numerous Zimbabweans perished during the regime of Robert Mugabe for emulating South Africa's free speech standards, criticizing him on social media, which led to their imprisonment in the notorious Chikurubi prison (Felkins, 2021). In this context, numerous research projects have been conducted, one of which is Bosch's (2017) investigation into Twitter activism among South African youth, specifically during the #RhodesMustFall movement. This study focused on student protests against Rhodes Must Fall, or #RMF, analyzing how youth activism and counter-memory were facilitated through X (formerly Twitter). Despite the digital divide and limited internet access in South Africa, X (formerly Twitter) played a pivotal role in engaging youth in the RMF movement, influencing counter-memory in politics and shaping both the mainstream media's narrative and public discourse (Bosch, 2017).

Moreover, the study noted that X (formerly Twitter) enabled young people, particularly students, to participate in politics and shape mainstream news agendas (Bosch, 2017). It must also be noted that social media platforms are not only transforming communication in times of civil unrest, but they also go as far transforming community radio in interesting ways as they enhance and making communication flexible (Chiumbu and Ligaga, 2013). However, there is still a gap in understanding the extent to which X (formerly Twitter) can be used to perpetuate violence in times

of civil unrest. As such this research is highly needed as it will explore some of the fundamental roles in violent discourses. Mdlalose's (2023) recent study about civil unrest found that such violent activities/protest goes as far as affecting the economic stability and the leadership of the country South Africa. Additionally, the study by Mahaye, Dlomo and Ajani's (2023) study aimed to explore the impact of this unrest on schools and to establish how teaching and learning had been affected in these South African institutions. The research suggested that widespread looting in Kwazulu-Natal and Gauteng Province resulted from civil disturbances that intensified daily throughout that time (Mdlalose, 2023). The demonstrators burned and plundered numerous shops and warehouses during the unrest. Some private and public schools were plundered and vandalised as a result of the unrest (Mahaye, Dlomo and Ajani, 2023). Even with the present research in this area it is highly evident that further investigation is required to determine how much social media users utilise X (formerly Twitter) for public conversation with a special emphasis on the hashtags #LootingSA and #FreeZuma.

2.4 Use of social media and hashtags (#)

The introduction of the internet and the subsequent rise of social media have had a significant impact on many disciplines and activities. "The world is in the midst of a digital revolution" write (Sivitanides and Shah, 2011). According to the Pew Research Centre's Internet and American Life Project (2016, p. 1-18)social activism has been reinvented by new social media tools. is is. Moreover "the use of social media is becoming a feature of political and civic engagement for many Americans" in 2012 (Rainie et al. 2012). Sixty percent of American adults utilize social media platforms such as Facebook or X (formerly Twitter) for civic activism (Rainie et al., 2012). The introduction of X (formerly Twitter) in 2006 stands as a notable milestone in the evolution of social media (Junco and Chickering, 2010). Recognized as both a microblogging and social networking site, X (formerly Twitter) centers around the tweet, an ever-present element in our digital existence. Junco and Chickering (2010) mention that these brief 140-character messages have become prevalent in our culture over the past two years, seeing a remarkable surge in popularity from 2007 to 2009, with their growth continuing robustly thereafter (Junco and Chickering, 2010). Compete.com's 2009 data reveals that while Facebook's unique monthly visitor count rose by 202 percent by September 2009's end, X (formerly Twitter) experienced an impressive 660 percent uptick.

Researchers have found that specific technological applications, particularly in education, correlate with beneficial academic and psychosocial effects (Rashid et al., 2016, p. 604-612). Considering the mixed potential of communication technologies, it's crucial for educators in higher education to understand these technologies' impact on students, promoting uses that yield positive results and addressing uses that lead to adverse effects (Junco and Chickering, 2010). In South Africa, platforms like Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) have been utilized as forums for dialogue during notable political debates and incidents (van der Vyver, 2017), exemplified by the controversy over Nkandla's security enhancements, the #RhodesMustFall movement, and Oscar Pistorius's legal case. Beyond just spreading information and recording events, social media also plays a crucial role in orchestrating concrete actions (Bhuda, et al., 2023). In that respect Alkhouja (2014) emphasised that:

> "Dissidents need to mobilise protestors and push more people to streets in order to challenge the state's authority and alter the status. Social media served as an effective strategic tool for activists in achieving this goal".

Giglio (2011) cites Egyptian activist Wael Ghonim as an example of an activist who used a page as a management and motivational tool while imploring:

> "His Facebook fans to spread word of the protest to people on the ground, and he and other activists constantly coordinated efforts, combining online savvy with the street activism long practiced by the country's democracy movements. Ghonim seemed to view the page both as a kind of central command and a rallying point getting people past 'the psychological barrier..

On 12 March 2011, the "Geraço à Rasca" protests in Portugal became a major case study in activism. It was followed by the 12 March Movement which is a social movement briefly known as M12M. Rosas (2014)explained the two initiatives as follows:

> The first was that the massive protests that erupted in the country's major cities and enrolled over 500,000 people of all ages, backgrounds, and status were mobilised by four young university graduates, not unions, political parties, or traditional social movements.

He went on to explain (Rosas, 2014, p. 98).:

> These protests were not organized and coordinated through traditional offline organizations or grassroots movements, but through the Internet and some of its Web 2.0 technologies, in particular social media tools like Facebook and YouTube. How this could happen in a country where nonconventional politics were almost reserved to unions and to corporative interests was, indeed, puzzling, as it was puzzling why it happened in 2011 and not before".

Despite the positive use of X (formerly Twitter) by students, it has been discovered that X's (formerly Twitter) sphere is a major battleground where citizen journalists compete with professional journalists for scoops (Van der Vyver, 2017). This can be attributed to X (formerly Twitter) allowing people to open fake accounts and one individual can own multiple accounts. Professional journalists can tweet under their own names although, citizen journalists are not restricted by the same ethical codes as professional journalists. However, the process to verify the story takes a bit longer on the side of professional journalists than on the side of citizen journalists. Therefore, this difference create space for fabricated news to be posted on X (formerly Twitter) instantly.

2.5 Use of X in the time of protest.

Citizens utilise public demonstrations, protests, and in extreme cases riots to express dissatisfaction over the current political or social state in their country (Twala, 2014, p. 159). Some of these movements successfully achieve government reforms such as the #350 continuous payments of SRD R350 post Covid-19 harsh regulations (Bhuda, et al., 2023). However, many do not achieve such governmental reforms e.g #FeesMustfall. It is still quite unclear how sites particularly X (formerly Twitter) capture such activities around civil unrest. Previous work has considered the task of predicting protest or civil unrest using social media often with the aid of news sources (Islam et al. 2020; Littman, 2018; Osborne and Dredze, 2015;). When compared to traditional media, X (formerly Twitter) has several distinguishing features. Due to their brevity and widespread use of mobile devices, tweets are frequently posted much faster than traditional media which can take hours or even days to compile, proofread, typeset, and publish (Pathak et al., 2021, p. 1). Themes are covered in depth and tweets touch on almost every aspect of our lives from daily emotions to breaking news (Pathak et al., 2021, p. 2). Dissemination of information via various channels X (formerly Twitter) supports "retweeting" for breaking news, "replying" for instant conversations, and "hashtag" #LootingSA #FreeZuma for theme, tagging, and friendship

for instant sharing. X (formerly Twitter) characteristics make it a highly valuable social sensor for tracking various interesting and critical events especially when traditional news outlets' response times are too slow for emergencies (Veenstra, 2015).

Agrawal and Rao (2013) argues that despite the advantages of timeliness X (formerly Twitter) suffers from the fact that it is hardly a trustworthy news source., As individual users rather than news organizations typically post tweets. Subsequently, determining the trustworthiness of tweets or users is difficult. Secondly, rather than traditional news broadcasting tweets are spread through social networks on X (formerly Twitter) (Pathak et al., 2021, p. 2). As a result, the trustworthiness of tweets/users on X (formerly Twitter) may only be estimated through indirect means such as the number of followers of a user or a tweet, verification of the user, and the number of retweets of a tweet (Pathak et al., 2021, p. 2). According to Zhao et al. (2016), this is potentially problematic and can even foster the spread of rumours because a malicious user can easily forge followers or tweets. Furthermore, the noisy nature of tweets, due primarily to unstructured languages and abbreviation, increases the accuracy of trustworthiness assessment. Tweets are frequently written in a casual style with no regard for standard grammatical rules. For example, the #LootingSA contains no verb which is standard English practice.

A thread of works focused on the evaluation of credibility of tweets by inspecting the contextual content of tweets discovered that X (formerly Twitter) can serve as a source of tredny information but it is unreliable (Zubiaga and Ji, 2014). In addition, according to study by Yan et al. (2013) focused on investigating the trustworthiness of the users by considering the underlying social network structure of X (formerly Twitter) through the number of followers, retweets, and other social relationship between users has found most of current work focused on evaluating the credibility of general tweets, than exploring the extent of tweets to promote violence.

The use of social media in times of civil unrest in South Africa under the #LootingSA and #FreeZuma is of significant practical use yet has not been well studied. In contrast to the other studies mentioned above, Taprial and Kanwar (2012) conducted research that sheds light on the positive use of X (formerly Twitter). They found that information updates. The primary advantage of the web-based social network is that you can keep up with the most recent happenings on the planet. Nowadays, television and print media are frequently one-sided and do not convey a true message (Masmoudi, 1979, p. 172-179). Many videos and photographs were captured of people

looting property and shutting down the government activities which consequently flooded social media in South Africa. Dynes and Quarantelli (1968) adds that such looting incidents confirmed to the pattern and people may be found looting when a community is having certain kinds of crises. Visser, Rangongo and Esterhuizen (2021) highlights that one of these crises is caused by natural disaster or governmental instability to run the economy or even political disturbances however in South African context it was Covid-19 heavy regulations and hunger.. Civil disturbance gives people a chance to help themselves to other peoples' goods yet there is an important fascinating point about what happens when looting is discussed – looting is more common in civil disturbances than in disasters (Dynes and Quarantelli 1968).

2.6 History of looting as a mass protest

Mass protests are not novel in historical terms. Rude's analysis in "The Crowd in History" explores how 18th and 19th-century protest crowds in England and France were predominantly made up of the local, respectable working class, not the impoverished or slum-dwelling "rabble" (Juris, 2016, p. 1-18). The elite often viewed these mass mobilizations as inherently criminal and illegitimate. Yet, Rude (1959) points out that these demonstrations effectively conveyed the lower and middle-class urbanites' demands to the upper echelons of society. These groups didn't riot merely for the sake of protest; they had specific objectives and expected their actions to prompt a response from the authorities, a mutual understanding acknowledged by both sides. Today's civil unrest might reflect a similar dynamic, suggesting that property damage during protests isn't inherently senseless or criminal if it forms part of a dialogue of demands and concessions, making the protestors' needs and the government's responsibilities clear to all involved (Dynes and Quarantelli, 2019). Such actions imply that disruptive tactics could be justified if they compel governmental attention to grievances. The widespread nature of contemporary protests, often featuring participants from various backgrounds, underscores the diverse makeup of modern urban America (Juris, 2016, pp385-414).

2.7 Social media and civil unrest

Many studies such as (Reflections on #Occupy Everywhere: Social media, public space, and emerging logics of aggregation by Juris, 2016) have found that social media has played a seminal role during civil unrests. One even says social media gave the public a space to present their issues

(Juris, 2016, pp. 385-414). According to Congyu and Matthew (2017), this is seen in national political upheavals like Thailand, Spain, Turkey, and Brazil's protests can develop into revolutionary waves like the Arab Spring and the Occupy movements. The early 2010s witnessed numerous global movements challenging authoritarian regimes and advocating for societal reforms (Matthew, 2017). These periods were marked by widespread protests, riots, and in some instances, civil wars, disrupting both civilian and military activities. Among these movements, #LootingSA emerged as an example of protests potentially fueled by social media networks (Breuer et al., 2015, pp. 764-792).

In Arab nations like Tunisia, dissatisfaction with online political dialogue nearly led to a widespread revolt (Arab Spring) at the end of 2010. The Jasmine Revolution started in December 2010, reaching international attention in January 2011 following the departure of President Ben Ali from Tunisia (Breuer et al., 2015, p. 764). Protesters leveraged the internet and social media to champion their cause and broadcast protest footage (Breuer et al., 2015, pp. 764-792). Additionally, it was observed that people utilized social media to voice opinions on new policies or events and disseminate details about impending movements like #LootingSA and #FreeZuma (Muthiah et al., 2015). Khondker's (2011) analysis found that organizing protests via social media significantly influenced the development of the EMBER's civil unrest prediction model, a notion applicable to recent disturbances in South Africa tagged #FreeZuma and #LootingSA. The research also delved into how Tunisians engaged with X (formerly Twitter) to discuss civil unrest, aiming to pinpoint the specific reasons for their reliance on the platform, often ahead of traditional news outlets that might censor information (Osborne and Dredze, 2014). Mobile technology was instrumental in organizing these demonstrations (Bay, 2011; Kirkpatrick, 2011).

Howard (2011) supports Muthiah et al. (2015) and Khondker (2011) that the above-mentioned global and local civil unrests have one thing in common – they were mediated by social media i.e.,X (formerly Twitter). Evidence suggests that during civil unrest, activists and other participants used social media to express political opinions, converse with fellow citizens, and plan future events (Arafa, and Armstrong, 2016, p. 6). Steinert-Threlkeld (2015) supports this by explaining that "according to research, primarily from computer science, there is a predictive relationship between social media use and offline activities". This indicates the possibility of #LootingSA

sharing a commonality with the above-mentioned unrests, which could indicate social media as a mobilisation tool.

Protests and other types of demonstrations have been used by the public to express their dissatisfaction with the government or society (Arafa, and Armstrong, 2016, p. 6). While some fundamental elements of protest have remained unchanged for thousands of years, social media has transformed the ability to organise and carry out civil unrest activities (Arafa, and Armstrong, 2016, p. 6). Undoubtedly, X (formerly Twitter) has been pivotal in numerous civil unrest events, particularly during the Arab Spring, which saw a wave of pro-democratic movements, protests, and conflicts across Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, Libya, and Egypt between 2010 and 2012 (Arafa, and Armstrong, 2016, p. 6). In the United Kingdom, the civil disturbances of August 2011 prompted several mainstream media figures and politicians, including London Mayor, Technology adviser Mike Butcher, and Prime Minister David Cameron, to highlight the significant role of social media in fueling the riots (Casilli and Tubaro, 2012). Social media platforms serve as venues for public dissent, influencing political dialogues and coordinating large-scale protests (Arafa, and Armstrong, 2016, p. 6). Congyu and Matthew (2017) emphasize social media's crucial contribution to the Arab Spring uprisings, partly due to its capability to spread information widely. Compton (2014) notes that the extensive reach of social media enables individuals to quickly engage with vast audiences, while also offering a space for real-time information sharing, networking, and global communication across different platforms, including X (formerly Twitter).

Unlike traditional media, which requires numerous complex steps before release and is subject to potential owner censorship, social media content is instantly public, often eluding content control (Compton, 2014). Internationally, social media has ignited large-scale protests leading to the fall of long-standing governments, with the Arab Spring being a notable instance (Arafa, and Armstrong, 2016, p. 6). Social media, especially X (formerly Twitter), has been instrumental in disseminating revolutionary and democratic sentiments beyond geographical and political frontiers (Howard et al., 2011). Hove and Chenzi (2020, p. 126) note that in Zimbabwe, amid economic and political decline, young activists used social media to organize nationwide protests against the government. This demonstrates social media's global potential to rally people around common grievances. Civic groups in Zimbabwe utilized social media to encourage unity against ZANU-PF, with #Tajamuka and #ThisFlag being prominent movements (Hove and Chenzi, 2020,

p. 124). Without platforms like X (formerly Twitter), orchestrating such widespread mobilization would have posed significant challenges (Hove, and Chenzi, 2020, p. 121). The rapid spread of the 2016 protests across Zimbabwe, from Beitbridge to Harare and beyond, showcases the internet's power to overcome physical and political barriers (Tarisayi, 2016b). The above stated studies presented and discovered how the public use social media during civil unrest. However, this study will expound onto what extent is X (formerly Twitter) used during civil unrest.

Conclusion

This chapter captured the existing literature about the use of social media in times of civil unrest covering from the global community to the African and South African context which were supported by relevant examples and scenarios. This chapter also outlined how social media and violence are interrelated and indicated the way social media can play a critical role in disseminating and serving as a platform for public discussions. Based on the covered literature, it has been found that social media are tools that the public uses to raise their issues such as poverty, unemployment, and political discurse. Moreover, it has been found that social media plays a fundamental role in perpetuating violence during civil unrest globally and locally. The chapter highlited some of the local studies conducted in this field and most of them aimed at exploring the the use X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook for public discurse purposes. Others explored the use of social media by students movements and political agendas by politicians on social media. Although, the chapter presented the existing literature about use of social media, it also highlited gaps available in this field of research, such as the need to examine the extent of which X (formerly Twitter) is used to perpertuate violence behaviour in times of lotting protests. The succeeding chapter focuses on the theoretical framework for this study.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This chapter outlines the theories that support this study. The theoretical framework of this study is based on two media theories, namely Protest Participation Theory and Galtung's Theory of Violence. These theories are discussed in detail, firstly by outlining the brief history, the assumptions of the theories, the explanation of both theories, and how they support this study in the context of violence and social media. The chapter further discusses the position of the theories in the field of social media and civil unrest which includes exploring the criticisms and limitations of the theory. Protest Participation Theory and Galtung's Theory of violence was used as the theoretical explanation of this study based on their assumptions and contributions to the media discipline.

3.1 Protest Participation Theory

Protest Participation Theory elucidates why individuals choose to engage in protests (Wu and Gerber, 2017, p.94). This theory categorizes the influencing factors into three main groups: (1) biographical availability, (2) political engagement, and (3) structural availability (Wu and Gerber, 2017, p.84). Biographical availability refers to the lack of personal responsibilities like caregiving, jobs, or spousal commitments that could hinder protest involvement (Wu and Gerber, 2017, p.86). Political engagement encompasses an individual's political interest, awareness, and the belief in their capability to effect political change (Wu and Gerber, 2017). Meyer (2004) defines structural availability as the extent to which one is integrated into networks that can facilitate engagement in activism, often evidenced by invitations or awareness of how to partake in protests. This theory posits that willingness, ability, and network-induced recruitment or awareness converge to influence one's likelihood of protest participation (Meyer, 2004). These three factors collectively shape the likelihood and extent of individuals' involvement in collective actions (Opp and Kittel, 2010). The theory assists the study to explore the roots of civil protests in South Africa. In addition, the theory focuses on the use of social media to create or mobilise the mass to protest as the theory states that there are several factors contributing to civil protest. This will help to distinguish the

different levels of looting activities within the two provinces and explore the possibles trigures to participate in protest and actully start the #LootingSA and #FreeZuma.

3.2 Galtung's Theory of Violence

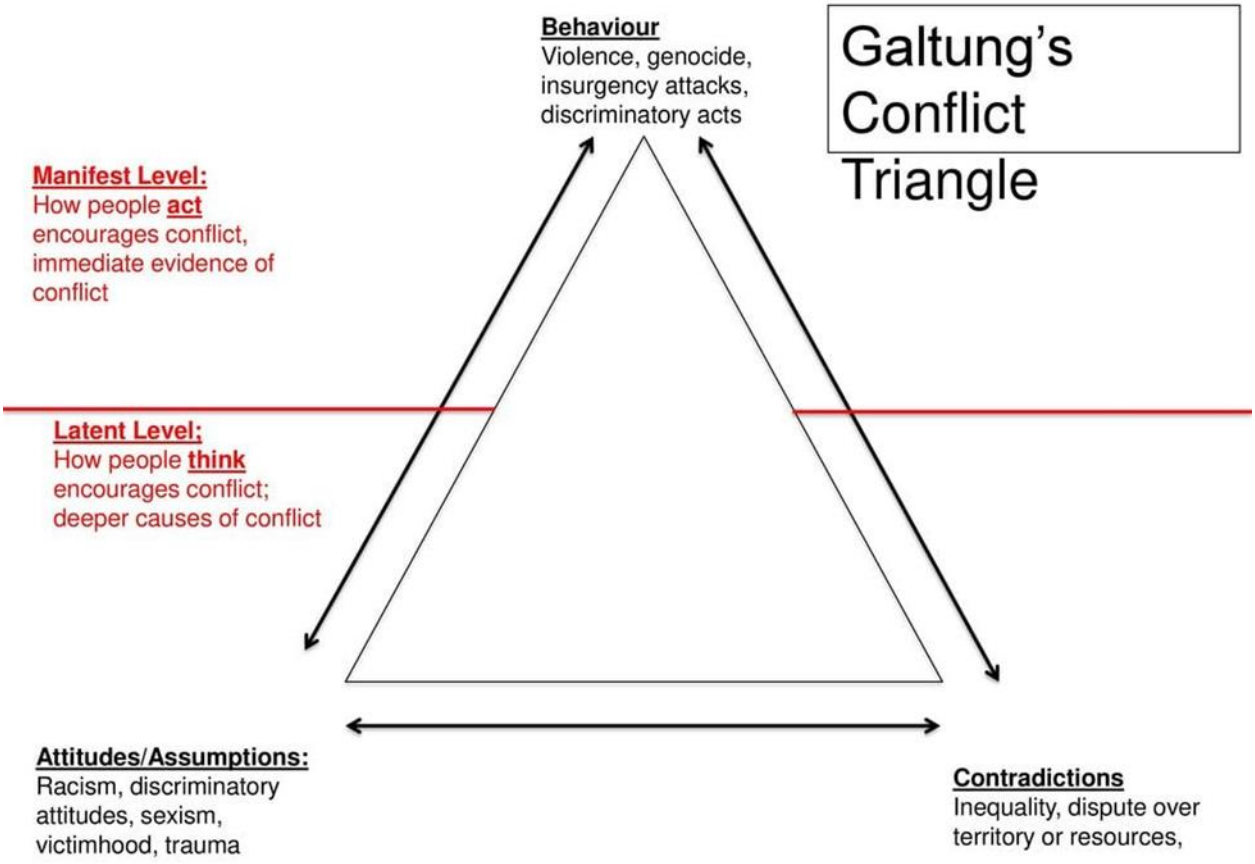
"Violence has permeated human society ever since the beginning of time and has been instrumental in the subversion of countless individuals, resulting in deaths, damages of properties and suffering" (Galtung, 1978, p. 56). Norwegian scholar Johann Galtung proposed a tripartite model to dissect the complexities of violence, illustrating how various elements converge at certain historical junctures to foster an environment conducive to violence (Galtung, 1990, p. 54). Galtung's framework (1978, p. 29) integrates cultural violence, structural violence, and direct violence, offering a comprehensive lens through which to examine violence's roots globally. He conceptualizes the interplay of these forms of violence in a triangular schema, foundational to his theoretical approach (Galtung, 1990). While exploring violence's nature, Galtung juxtaposes it with peace (Galtung, 1969, p. 168), whereas Hannah Arendt contrasts violence with power, suggesting they are mutually exclusive—where one dominates, the other is absent (Arendt, 1970, p. 56). Galtung posits that violence manifests when individuals fail to achieve their potential, be it physical or mental (Galtung, 1969, p. 168). This framework aids in examining how violence intertwines with political structures during protests. Arendt (1970, p. 79) views violence as inherently utilitarian, exploring its role in totalitarian regimes and how overarching ideologies like nationalism can embody violent traits, a perspective relevant to understanding the dynamics of recent upheavals in South Africa.

The widespread disturbances and collective actions against the government provide a pivotal opportunity for scrutinizing their association with violence. The selected case study of the recent looting incidents in South Africa serves as an illustrative example, embodying the theories proposed about the interplay between violence and political dynamics. Galtung's perspective (1969) on violence, viewing it as impediments to realizing human potential, offers an expansive lens to comprehend the multifaceted nature of violence. He categorizes violence into three principal types, which are particularly relevant in the context of protests. Galtung (1978) describes these types as direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence, likening their interrelation to the sides of a triangle. This research employs Galtung's conflict triangle (1978) within conflict theory to delve into the origins of both direct and cultural violence observed during the

#LootingSA and #FreeZuma events in South Africa. The triangle aids in discerning whether the violence stems from individual conflicts, crimes of a personal nature, or is rooted in societal structures and cultural norms. When violence is tied to structural factors, it's indicative of potential human rights infringements (Ziyadov, 2006, p. 31-41).

Figure 6: Galtung's Conflict Triangle (Ziyadov, 2006, p. 31)

Galtung (1969) introduces the concept of direct violence, or personal violence, characterized by the presence of a discernible perpetrator committing violent acts (Galtung, 1969, p. 170). In such scenarios, the masses may find themselves as either the instigators or the targets of this violence. This form of violence can manifest as a direct assault against the state, potentially in response to Covid-19 measures affecting the poor and middle class (Coady, 1985, p. 1-19). Direct violence represents behaviours that serve to threaten life itself and or to diminish one's capacity to meet



basic human needs, such as killing, maiming, bullying, and emotional manipulation. In this case the physical aspect of the civil unrest led to many lives being threatened and some were taken as

the results of strikes and looting against the restrictions imposed by the government (Coady, 1985, p. 1-19).

Galtung (1990, p. 291) delineates cultural violence as elements within a culture that justify or legitimize direct or structural violence. Expanding on Galtung's framework, Cocks (2012) argues that structural violence doesn't fully capture all societal violence forms, introducing the concept of foundational violence. This type of violence, both covert and overt, occurs during the establishment of a new societal order. Galtung's typology, incorporating these forms of violence, elucidates the intricate relationship between violence and political dynamics, essential for understanding the perpetuation of civil unrest in South Africa. Cultural violence entails the entrenched norms that normalize direct and structural violence, such as the prejudiced notion that Africans are inferior, which historically rationalized the African slave trade (Dilts et al., 2012, p. 191-227).

Galtung (1969, p. 171) contrasts structural violence with direct violence by highlighting its systemic nature. He describes it as a form of social injustice characterized by disparities in power and life chances, where potential remedies exist but are not employed. Structural violence is the institutionalized denial of equal opportunities, rights, and resources, leading to unmet fundamental human needs. It can manifest in official capacities, like legal frameworks enforcing discrimination, exemplified by apartheid, or through informal practices that restrict access to essential services for disadvantaged groups (Dilts et al., 2012, p. 191-227). Looking at the recent civil unrest, it does not come as a surprise that the marginalised groups were mostly dominant in protest as their rights to basic needs were infringed which resulted in the protest. Therefore, this pilar of the theory precisely focus on how certain groups were involved in the protests.

The concept of structural violence is valuable as it broadens the traditional understanding of violence beyond physical threats, highlighting the significance of intangible factors in uncovering the root causes of violence (Vorobej, 2008). Yet, structural violence alone has its limitations, as it doesn't account for immediate, visible threats. To address this, Galtung (1978, p. 208) proposes a triangular framework for analyzing violence, with each corner representing a different aspect of violence. This triangular perspective distinguishes Galtung's (1978) theory from others by emphasizing the complex, multifaceted nature of violence. Furthermore, the direct and structural angles of the theory will be the focus area of this study as they focus on the understanding of

violence and how it could emerge while the direct angle of the theory will help the study to explore how the direct conflict during civil unrest could have sparked.

Galtung's (1990) perspective on structural violence sheds light on how deep-seated beliefs can become so ingrained within cultures that they are seen as unchangeable truths, passed down unquestioningly through generations. These three types of violence, direct, structural, and cultural, are interconnected and reinforce one another, a crucial concept for attaining a comprehensive understanding of violence and peace, particularly relevant to this study (Dilts et al., 2012)

This research posits that Galtung's (1978) structural violence theory is particularly effective in exploring the intricacies of violence's origins within the framework of civil unrest and mass mobilization in South Africa, as observed in #LootingSA and #FreeZuma. While definitions of violence vary, Teasdale, Silver, and Monahan (2006, p. 652) describe it as the exertion of physical force to harm, mistreat, damage, or annihilate. Arendt (1969) distinguishes between power and violence, identifying power as fundamental to governance, whereas violence is merely a tool (Arendt, 1969, p. 51). Thus, violence serves a distinct purpose within the political sphere. Arendt (1966, p. 461) characterizes violence as the application of divine or transcendental ideologies from natural or historical laws to accomplish objectives. When such elevated justifications are employed in politics and society, the regime is considered violent because it continually seeks to suppress dissent (Arendt, 1966, p. 464), using violence as a means to enforce overarching ideological aims.

Galtung (1990) identifies ideology and religion as forms of cultural violence, aligning his ideas with Arendt's notions of violence, which incorporate supra-human ideologies. Both perspectives are relevant to the analysis of the #LootingSA and #FreeZuma events. While Weber (1948, p. 78) suggests that the state's foundation is legitimate violence, Arendt (1966) argues that violence is not inherently legitimate but can be justifiable (Arendt, 1970, p. 52), prompting a debate on a nation's right to self-defense. The notion that a state may legitimately defend itself against aggression is complex, especially when the pretext of self-defense is used to legitimize military actions. Arendt (1966) differentiates violence from power, positing that when an act fits her definition of violence, it intersects with all three of Galtung's (1990) violence types, as cultural violence legitimizes both direct and structural violence through entrenched ideologies. Anderson (1991, p. 6) describes nations as "imagined political communities" where members, despite never meeting, share a collective identity and solidarity.

The multifaceted nature of violence is deeply entwined with the political structure of a state or government, as demonstrated by the civil unrest in South Africa with #LootingSA and #FreeZuma, where violence was a means to command government attention. Arendt's (1966) interpretation of violence, through the lens of supra-human ideologies, aligns with Galtung's (1990) concept of cultural violence. Both theories suggest that violence serves to rationalize and perpetuate itself within the framework of political order and mass mobilization.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the theoretical framework of the study and these theories have informed the response to the research question about the extent to which people can use X (formerly Twitter) in times of civil unrest. This chapter indicated how the Protest Participation Theory aims to explain individuals' decisions to participate in protest events. Moreover, Protest Participation Theory's three categories of variables: (1) the ability to participate, (2) the desire to engage, and(3) the knowledge or request to participate can be summed up as follows. Protest frequency and size are determined by people's inclination to join in group activities (Van Laer, 2011). The well-established Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) offers insights into new media and has managed to restructure the theory to explain its social benefits including information and entertainment, as well as what draws people to social media and the satisfaction they derive from using it continuously. According to Rugiero (2000), the UGT's ongoing involvement indicates that it is still significant in the field of media and communication studies. Protest Participation Theory and Galtung's Theory of violence have been succinctly explored in this chapter. The next chapter aims at outlining the research methodology.

Chapter 4

Research Methodology

Introduction

Research methodology refers to the distinct methods or approaches employed to gather, select, process, and analyze data regarding a subject (Flick, 2015, p. 109). In academic papers, the methodology section provides readers with the tools to assess the study's validity and reliability thoroughly (Kumari et al., 2023). Therefore, the choice and implementation of a research methodology are fundamental to any scholarly work. Without a fitting methodology, a study compromises its ability to yield trustworthy results (Creswell, 2014). This section presents the appropriate research methodology and design deployed in this study. Additionally, this chapter also provides an overview of the method and procedures that were employed in the data collectition, data analysis, and data processing about the #LootingSA and #FreeZuma civil disturbances in South Africa. The chapter also helped the researcher to delve deeper into critiquing the fundamental role played by X (formerly Twitter) during the civil unrest. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) identify the research methodologies as qualitative and quantitative and for the purposes of this study the researcher chose to use a mixed methods approach.

This study deploys a mixed method methodology as there is theory and numerics invloved in this research. Qualitative methodology will serve as a primary methodology of the research and will be the process of handling theoretical data which includes creating codes and themes and interpreting them (Kumar (2018). Quantitative aspect of this study includes time frame of the sampled tweets and the time frame of the civil unrest #LootingSA and #FreeZuma. Selecting creating themes and codes will require numerical process, therefore quantitative methodological approach will be significant in yielding credibility of data in this study. The application of mixed method approach is well outlined in detail below.

4.1 Mixed methods approach

The mixed methods approached is best described as the usage of quantitative and qualitative research methods towards investigating a phenomenon (Hussein, 2009). For this study both the qualitative and quantitative approaches were deployed, as such, mixed method approach assisted

the study to yield credible findings. The qualitative method is best in explaining exploratory and interpretive research questions (Koma, 2016). The qualitative method enabled the study to explore, interpret, and understand the extent X (formerly Twitter) is a sphere of violent discourse (this is broadly shown in the next chapter). Johnson and Christensen (2000, p. 132) state that quantitative research approach targets the "how much" and "how many" questions. This focused on quantifying tweets, time frame of looting period, number of the selected day of the civil unrest, and the time frame of the tweets for each day. This rigorous methodology not only provided a structured approach to understanding the nature of discourse during civil unrest but also offered valuable insights into the interplay between variables that shape the tone and content of tweets in both violent and non-violent categories.

4.2 Research method

Koma (2016) defines a research method as a systematic approach to collecting observations or measurements, essential for acquiring direct knowledge and unique perspectives on a research issue (Kothari, 2004). Majid (2018) elaborates that research data collection methods involve evidence-based practices and guidelines essential for structuring a research project. Selecting these methods is a critical step taken by researchers prior to the ethical review process and the commencement of data collection. The chosen data collection techniques reflect the study's underlying philosophical stance since these philosophical beliefs inform methodological choices (Majid, 2018). The data gathering process is influenced by various factors including the research question, objectives, the phenomenon under scrutiny, target population, and sampling tactics. These elements are interwoven, often hinting at the type of research to be undertaken.

The alignment of these components emerges from a coherent exploration of the topic, starting with existing literature and moving through to the study's justification, methodologies, anticipated outcomes, and the potential impact of these results on theories and practices (Kothari, 2004; Majid, 2018).

Research methods involve pre-planned strategies for collecting pertinent data and techniques for their analysis, considering the research's goals and the constraints of resources, time, and personnel (Kumar, 2018). This method helped the researcher to organize his ideas in a form whereby he was

able to look for possible flaws and inadequacies. This approach is adaptable and reduces prejudice while increasing the dependability of the evidence collected and analysed (Kumar, 2018). The method was adaptable enough to allow for the consideration of numerous facets of a phenomena, such as data collection via content analysis and the use of tweets with captions, tweets without captions, and tweets with simply photos. Content analysis was the sole data collection method in this research.

4.2.1 Content analysis

Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data such as text (Gheyle, 2017). Content analysis allows for quantificaion and analysis of the presence, meanings, and relationships of certain words, themes, or concepts (Drisko and Maschi, 2016). Content analysis is a research method used to identify patterns in recorded communication (Charmaz, 2006). However, recent publications state that content analysis entails a systematic reading of a body of texts or images symbolic matter which is not necessarily from the researcher's persepctive(Krippendorff, 2018). To conduct content analysis, one must systematically collect data from a set of texts which will be in written format or visual (Green et al., 2003). In this study the researcher used content analysis to analyse selected tweets pertaining to violent captions and visuals. Tweets were collected within the period of civil unrest in South Africa and that had the potential to have contributed or influenced the protests actions. In this study, quantitative content analysis was used to create codes and themes to categories tweets according to the time frame that they were tweeted. As such, these method was deployed because it allowed the researcher to analyse communication and social interaction of X X (formerly Twitter) without the direct engagement with the participants therefore, data was collected with no personal contradictions. Charmaz (2006) state that the method is so flexible that researchers can conduct content analysis at any time, in any location, and at low cost, thus there were monetary costs involved in the data collection process and all the data collection took place online by capturing the screenshots of each tweet.

The foundation of content analysis is the idea that texts are rich sources of data that have the power to reveal important details about certain events (Kleinheksel et al., 2020). As a result content analysis can help reveal the motive behind civil unrest events.. To find similarities and differences, patterns, and relationships among groups of related categories of text both explicitly and implicitly

was necessary to consider the context of tweets. Thus, this study recognises the researcher as a coder and has therefore, coded the relevant tweets about both #LootingSA and #FreeZuma accordingly. Codes are known to be the currency of content analysis because researchers use codes to organise, group, and understand their data (Erlingsson and Brysiewicz, 2017). Codes themselves are short descriptive labels that symbolically assign a summative or salient attribute to more than one unit of meaning identified in the text (Erlingsson and Brysiewicz, 2017). Essentially, coding is the process of defining what the data that was analysed is about. Coding entailed identifying and recording one or more passages of text or other data items, such as parts of images that illustrated the same theoretical or descriptive idea. Creating codes requires the researcher to become immersed in the data. This study's data was revised three times to have more understanding and knowledge of the tweets and discover the meaning behind the visual tweets. The codes in this study was made from the selected tweets through a content analysis coding process.

4.2.1.1 Manifest content and latent content

After coding the data into categories, both manifest and latent content were further used to interrogate, interpreted, and discover the meaning distinct meaning behind the tweets. Based on previous studies that have used content analysis it has been noted that there is more disagreement on terminology in methodological approaches to content analysis, although the most common distinction is between manifest and latent content (Kleinheksel et al., 2020). As such, content analysis can be divided into two types namely – manifest content and latent content. Manifest content analysis is defined in much of the literature as describing what is happening on the surface, and asstaying close to what is present in the literality of the text." (Kleinheksel et al., 2020).

Manifest content analysis focuses on information that is readily observable by researchers and their coding assistants, eliminating the need to infer intentions or delve into underlying meanings (Rezaii et al., 2019). This approach is a straightforward analysis, presuming that the data represent an objective reality that can be uncovered with little interpretation (Kleinheksel et al., 2020). The frequency of a specific code's appearance in the text is analyzed to gauge its significance, aligning with quantitative content analysis methods (Berdida et al., 2023). In contrast, latent content analysis aims to interpret the underlying messages within the text (Kleinheksel et al., 2020), where researchers strive to uncover the deeper meanings embedded in participants' experiences (Erlingsson and Brysiewicz, 2017). Both manifest content analysis and latent content analysis have

been used in this study to discover the meaning behind the tweets without captions (tweets that contains images only) because tweets without captions were considered as part of the data in this study. Thus, having deployed both these tools of content analysis acknowledges that the researcher made use of both tweets with visible captions and tweets with no captions and further delved beyond the pictures depicted in the tweets.

Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999) distinguish two distinct types of latent content analysis: latent pattern and latent projective. Latent pattern analysis aims to identify patterns of characteristics in the text, while latent projective analysis relies on the researcher's interpretations of the text's meaning (Potter and Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). Although both approaches rely on codes derived from the content based on the coder's perspectives, they differ in their foci (Peel et al., 2022). Utilizing both latent and manifest content analysis provided an opportunity to critically analyze the texts and images beyond their superficial representations, facilitating the discovery of new insights from the tweets.

4.2.2 Units of analysis

In examining each tweet, words and sentences conveying similar meanings were identified and labeled with codes (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004). According to Wimmer and Dominick (2000), a unit of analysis is the smallest element of content analysis and significantly influences its validity and reliability. This unit might be a single word, symbol, theme, or an entire article or story. The identification of emergent codes begins with identifying meaning units, which can vary depending on the type of analysis being conducted (Wimmer and Dominick, 2000). In this study, units such as tweets on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter), group violent captions, violent images in tweets, tweets promoting violence, tweets against looting violence, and tweets related to political involvement were identified. These units served as focal points for the study, guiding the researcher to relevant data. The coding process enabled the interpretation of large segments of text and information, facilitating the identification of themes.

Tweets analysis involved three steps. The first is to extract the most pertinent tweets associated with an incident from available X (formerly Twitter) data. The next step involved identifying the key contributing factors which were trigger events and relevant political entrepreneurs and organisations. The final step involved was understanding how the incident evolved over time in reference to the tweets (Hua et al., 2013). This study deploys the above-mentioned steps in the

process of selecting the relevant tweets that may have violently contributed to #LootingSA and #FreeZuma. The tweets were extracted through X (formerly Twitter) searching function by conducting a search on #FreeZuma and #LootingSA. These tweets were screenshoted and were used to create the database for analysis. However, this process is broadly outlined in sampling data process along with criteria of sampling relevant data (tweets) for this study. The tweets that have been collected in this study are used to create codes and themes. These tweets and codes are presented in the next chapter. The above-mentioned coding process was conducted only on tweets from the 12 July 2021 to the 15 July 2021. This was due to the high number of tweets selected.

4.2.3 Step 1: Initial coding classification

In this stage the researcher identified the essence of the texts and visuals and once familiarised with the data set the researcher then developed initial codes sets. As a result of using hybrid approach in coding the data set as shown below:

Number	Codes name	Codes description
1	Insults	Data set that persuades the use of vulgarity, or insulative words or phrases. This could be any language or text which is offensive or obscene.
2	Violent captions	This set of data is about tweets that have violent terms or phrases in the captions.
3	Visual violence	These sets of data consist of tweets that promote violence through visuals and do not have captions.
4	Political	Data set that pertains to the role of both political parties and political officials. These data links protests, social media and the looting, and the South African political spectrum.
5	Looting	These sets of data are about looting by the public and can either promote or obstruct looting activities or behaviour.
6	Fake-news	These set of data pertain to fake news in tweets, involving both captioned and visual tweets that were posted during looting.
7	Unemployment	These sets of data consist of tweets that associate poverty, unemployment, and corruption with looting activities.

8	Corruption	These sets of data are tweets that have been tweeted during looting period in the name of corruption. They associate government with corruption.
9	Social media	These sets of data consist of data that talks about the platforms that the public use during civil unrest in South Africa Platforms in which the public discourse takes place.
10	Disruptions	These sets of data condone disruption of properties through tweets and visuals without captions. This could include tweets that have concepts pertaining to disruption.
11	Other	These sets of data consist of tweets that were tweeted under the #LootingSA and #FreeZuma but they don't fit within any of the mentioned codes.
12	Protest	These sets of data are made up of all tweets that promote or obstruct protests during civil unrest. This could be riots, marching, or picketing by the public.

4.2.4 Step 2: Line by line coding

In this stage, the initial codes were refined from the previous stage and assigned additional codes. Both initial codes and data sets were reviewd to converge initial codes with the new codes. As such, the final coding sheet consisted of five codes as seen below:

Codes Number	Codes name	Codes description
1	Violent captions	This set of data is about tweets that have violent terms or phrases in the captions.
2	Visual violence	This set of data consists of tweets with no captions that promote violence through images.
3	Public disruptions	These data sets include all tweets that support or oppose protests during times of civil upheaval such as riots, public marches, or picketing. These sets of data is about looting by

		the public and it can either promote or obstruct looting activities or behaviour.
4	Political and corruption	This data set relates to the roles of both political parties and political authorities. It connects protests, social media, and looting to the South African political spectrum. These tweets were sent during the looting era in the name of corruption, and they associate the administration with corruption. This set of data comprises of tweets that link poverty, unemployment, and corruption to looting.
5	Other	This set of data consist of tweets that were tweeted under the #LootingSA and #FreeZuma but they do not fit within any of the mentioned codes.

4.3 Population and sampling

A population refers to a collective of individuals who share specific characteristics, while a sample constitutes a smaller subset of this population (Lundberg et al., 2020, p. 23). Samples are more manageable representations of larger groups (Majid, 2018). Sampling involves the methodical selection of a statistically representative sample from the population of interest and is a crucial aspect of research. Given the often extensive size of the population of interest, sampling serves as a practical tool for research studies, allowing researchers to include a manageable number of participants. A well-selected sample is not only a statistical reflection of the population of interest but also sufficiently large to address the research inquiry (Majid, 2018).

Many frequently believe that only people make up the population especially in humanities studies. However, according to Etikan et al. (2016, p. 1), population does not always relate to individual people. It can also refer to the overall quantity of objects or situations that the research is focusing on (Etikan et al., 2016, p. 1). The judgment sampling method, also known as purposive sampling, involves selecting participants based on personal characteristics (Etikan et al., 2016). This non-random sampling technique does not require underlying theories or a predetermined number of participants (Lundberg et al., 2020, p. 23). The researcher chooses the necessary information to have and then searches for sources willing and able to supply it based on their knowledge or experience (Majid, 2018). Therefore, this study sample consisted of tweets that were tweeted,

retweeted, liked, or commented on and tweets relevant to #LootingSA or #FreeZuma. The researcher sampled all the tweets through a non-random criteria that is outlined below.

4.3.1 Population and sampling of tweets section

The researcher collected two-hundred and thirty one (231) tweets from X (formerly Twitter) that were tweeted during civil unrest protests. However, from 231, twenty-four (24) were repeatative. As such, the remaining tweets two-hundred and seven (207) were selected for the sample. Thus, this study's sample was made up of 207 tweets that contained relevant captions to form the dataset of this study. These 207 tweets were sampled through a specific criterion. The elements of the criteria included the date and the nature of the tweet. This criterion focused on the dates in which the tweets were tweeted, thus the sample of this study were tweets that were tweeted between the 11 July 2021 and 18 July 2021. This study concentrated on tweets posted during the initial day and up to the fourth day of the protest. Specifically focusing on 11 July 2021 (Day 1), 12 July 2021 (Day 2), and 15 July 2021. The date played a crucial role in the sampling process because it enabled the researcher to sample data that fit within the scope of the study. The second element of the criteria were captions of the tweets that related to the hashtags #LootingSA and #FreeZuma. The tweets were sampled because their captions have words or phrases that could potentially incite violence.

4.4 Data analysis

Upon completion of coding the tweets, the next step in this approach was to the analyse the data. A method to analyse the overall content of the data was thus needed. As such, content analysis was used to analyse the contents of the tweets and assign them to relevant themes. Content Analysis was thought to be the best choice for this study as it sought to discover meaning through interpretations (Alhojailan and Ibrahim, 2012). To compile and generate a thorough discussion of the results, the collected data was captured using a codebook and analysed using a thematic textual analysis technique. This was carried out with the intention of giving the reader a clear response to the questtions that this study wanted to explore (Birt et al., 2016). Thus, data analysis was guided by thematic topics connected to the research questions. The tweets were also analysed using textual analysis for the inclusion and exclusion criteria. In this instance, tweets were used to generate the data. As a result, tweets were subjected to thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis (TA) is a method for analysing qualitative data that involves reading through a set of data and looking for patterns in the meaning of the data to find themes (Smith, 2017, p.81). In this study tweets were considered the set of data. It was used to analyse classifications and present themes or patterns that relate to the data. It illustrated the data in detail and deals with diverse subjects via interpretations (Alhojailan and Ibrahim, 2012). Smith (2017, p.98) further adds that thematic analysis can be defined as an approach for assessing qualitative data. In order to compile and generate a thorough discussion of the results, the collected data was analysed using a thematic textual analysis technique. This was carried out with the intention of giving the reader a clear response to the queries that this study wants to explore (Birt et al., 2016). It thus added a systematic component to data analysis which enabled the researcher to associate a frequency analysis of a theme with one of the entire contents (Alhojailan and Ibrahim, 2012). This increased the research's accuracy and complexity as well as its overall meaning. The study used thematic analysis because it allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of any potential issues (Marks and Yardley, 2004). Namey et al. (2008, p. 138) also adds that:

> Thematic Moves beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focuses on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas. Codes developed for ideas or themes are then applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis, which may include comparing the relative frequencies of themes or topics within a data set, looking for code co-occurrence, or graphically displaying code relationships.

As such, data analysis was guided by thematic topics connected to the research's questions. The researcher carefully inspected the information to find recurring themes, subjects, concepts, and meaning patterns from all the tweets with the #FreeZuma and #LootingSA hashags. The tweets were also analysed using textual analysis to create a variety of themes. This research technique involved examining communications as they emerge through a range of media (Smith, 2017). Data for text analysis can be produced from documents, movies, newspapers, paintings, websites, and other sources (Smith, 2017). In this instance, tweets will be used to generate the data. As a result, tweets were subjected to thematic analysis (Alhojailan and Ibrahim, 2012). Each tweet were analysed separately in its coding form (the coding form is attached in the appendix). However, upon collecting the data, the researcher analysed the data through content analysis simultaneously together with thematic analysis in order to determine which codes were used for each category.

The content analysis table was essentially a codebook template but it was only used to analyse aggregate data at this point. The codebook was used to create a dataset and the data was analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 28 (Abu-Bader, 2021). The data was coded with labels that were related to the research questions, thereafter the patterns that emerged led to the identification of categories. As a result, patterns were examined that had been placed together for the emergence of overarching themes (Percy, Kostere and Kostere, 2015). In a case where an additional second level of a pattern emerged, it was categorized as a secondary theme. For example, one of the primary themes was violent tweets captions, but there were also tweets without captions that contains element of violence,. Therefore a secondary theme "tweets promoting violence through images" was created. Essentially, the purpose of the secondary theme was to make use of all sampled data and to interrogate tweets beyond mere texts captions. These themes were derived from main themes. Handling and sorting the data in this way greatly facilitated the identification of emerging primary and secondary themes as illustrated in the next chapter.

4.5 Ethical considerations

Ethics refers to the study of philosophical ideals of right and wrong behaviour (Bowen, 2017). Ethics is the study of good conduct, character, and motives. It is concerned with determining what is good or valuable for all people (Terry, 2016). One of the most fundamental components of research is ethical considerations, and there are a few aspects that are crucial ethical consideration principles (Bryman and Bell, 2007). By keeping participants' names, surnames, and identities confidential, the researcher respects their right to privacy. The researcher opted to omit all personally identifiable information from the study and offered to pseudonymise the information where needed (Smith, 2017). The study referenced all the work of others and used credible data. Furthermore, by being impartial and without tampering with the secondary data, the study guaranteed honesty. The research used publicly available data in order to answer the research questions. Analyzing social media data from tweets involved people which may offered important insights into the etiology of social media and violence./ Therefore, it was important to consider the ethical implications of interpreting someone's social media posts. These ethical considerations included considering how the study population may be impacted by the research, protecting

privacy, and being transparent about the methodology and obligations to ensure that this research does not further harm or marginalises the study population (the study made use of screenshots).

4.5.1 Honesty

The reasearcher was honest in the reporting of the findings andfurther ensured honesty in this paper by not temperingin researcher's bias. The researcher ensured that the secondary data used in this paper was solely sourced from X (formerly Twitter) and acknowledged all the sources through the Harvard referencing style. The researcher made every possible effort to avoid bias in data analysis, data interpretation, peer review, personnel decisions, and other areas of research where objectivity is expected (Gajjar, 2013). Throughout this study, the researcher avoided bias and self-deception by being objective (the reseacher did not use his personal opinions and experiences to manupulate data and findings). The inclusion criteria deployedduring the content analysis was thoroughly used to the best of the researcher's ability and knowledge to maintain objectivity.

4.5.2 Respects for Intellectual Property

The researcher cited and acknowledgedthe contribution of external studies. The researcher further disclosed all work of others used in this study by correctly referencing to avoid plagiarism.

4.5.3 Confidentiality

The study ensured to keep confidential details of the X (formerly Twitter)) accounts holders, including as their demographics, names, surnames, their locations, bios, email addresses, and contact numbers. The researcherr ensured that the focus was solely on the tweets and not who tweeted.

4.6 Limitations of the study

The major limitation of this study is the fact that not all looters had social media accounts. Despite this limitation, their actions were captured by the public and posted on social media. X (formerly Twitter) removes old data and blocks users from retrieving old information on X (formerly Twitter). One is required to pay money to access the information on X (formerly Twitter). Therefore,the researcher screenshoted relevant tweets and capture data manually. The researcher also had to use secondary data because looters were not accessible to participate in focus-group,

therefore the researcher was unable to have direct access to looters (people who were looting the malls and other infrastrctuer) and X (formerly Twitter) users.

Conclusion

This chapter described the methodology by which the research was conducted. This study's methodology including research approach, data collection methods, procedures and processes, data analysis, and the study limitations were discussed. Conserning this study's data analysis, coding forms were used to capture the data and create a database for analysis. Moreover, the content analysis method was articulated based on its significance and relevancy to this research. This chapter also presented the steps in ensuring ethical adherence throughout the research by explaining in detail the basic steps that have were considered such as honestly, and objectivity. This methodological approach allowed the researcher to explore the extent that the tweets pertained to the looting in exploring how the hashtags #LootingSA and #FreeZuma displayed violent discourses. In this chapter the research methodology and method played a crucial role in the process of collecting tweets that pertained to elements of violence during the civil unrest. Thus the relevant tweets with captions and without captions were examined. The next chapter covers the data analysis of the research.

Chapter 5

Findings

Introduction

This chapter delves into the intricacies of social media as a violent discourse during periods of civil unrest by employing a comprehensive evaluation of tweets. The insights gleaned from this examination provided a profound understanding of the diverse dimensions characterising online conversations within the context of civil unrest in South Africa. For this study, a curated dataset of 231 tweets, posted exclusively between 11 July 2021 and 15 July 2021, during the period of civil unrest was assembled. Any tweets falling outside this timeframe were meticulously excluded from the study. After the careful data cleaning process, it was determined that 24 tweets were duplicates, thereby leaving 207 distinct tweets for meticulous analysis. Each of these individual tweets were subjected to a rigorous examination led by predetermined criteria that classified them according to "violent" or "non-violent" categories based on their content. A detailed crosstabulation was then performed to illuminate the patterns and tendencies observed in both the "violent" and "non-violent" categories across the numerous study variables. Specifically a dedicated crosstabulation was performed on the "violent" tweets, cross-referencing factors related to violent discourse with those that showed support for or against violent action particularly in the context of looting. Similarly, the study was expanded to include "non-violent" tweets with the crosstabulation focusing on the numerous non-violent variables at play.

5.1 Identified themes

After gathering data, the researcher drew on the content analysis as outlined in chapter 4. The method of producing themes entailed carefully reviewing the information to identify reoccurring themes, subjects, concepts, and meaning patterns in all tweets with the hashtags #FreeZuma and #LootingSA. The tweets were examined using textual analysis to generate a range of themes. Upon building the dataset from available tweets the data was examined using thematic analysis. This was done to determine which codes were utilised for each category, thus the researcher constructed a thematic analysis table that is linked to the study's content analysis framework by establishing themes. The thematic analysis was carried out using the Table 1 shown below.

Table 1: Thematic analysis table

Theme 1: High number of violent tweets and tweets exhibiting violent behaviour and tweets encouraging non-violent behaviour during the 2021 #LootingSA and #FreeZuma.
Overall nature of tweets: Number of violent and non-violent tweets.
Subtheme A: Non-violent tweets accounting for more than a fifth of the total.
Theme 2: The violent discourses in tweets on #LootingSA and #FreeZuma.
Violent tweet that encourages violence.
Tweets containing violent visuals and captions.
Tweets encouraging violence through visuals or images.
Theme 3: Tweets in support of violent actions during the 2021 civil unrest with the hashtag: #LootingSA and #FreeZuma.
Tweets that support violent behavior and actions of looting or civil unrest.
Subtheme A: Tweets condemning violent behaviour during 2021 using the hashtag: #LootingSA and #FreeZuma.
Tweets that condemn violent behavior and actions of looting or civil unrest.
Theme 4: Tweets used #LootingSA and #FreeZuma but did not condone or condemn violence.
Tweets about Jacob Zuma
Tweets about politics in relation to civil unrest.
Tweets pertaining to socio-economic issues.
Tweets linking government and corruption with the 2021 civil unrest.
Other.

5.1.1 Theme 1: High number of violent tweets and tweets exhibiting violent behaviour and tweets encouraging non-violent behaviour during the 2021 #LootingSA and #FreeZuma.

Figure 7: **Graph showing the nature of tweet – violent and non-violent.**

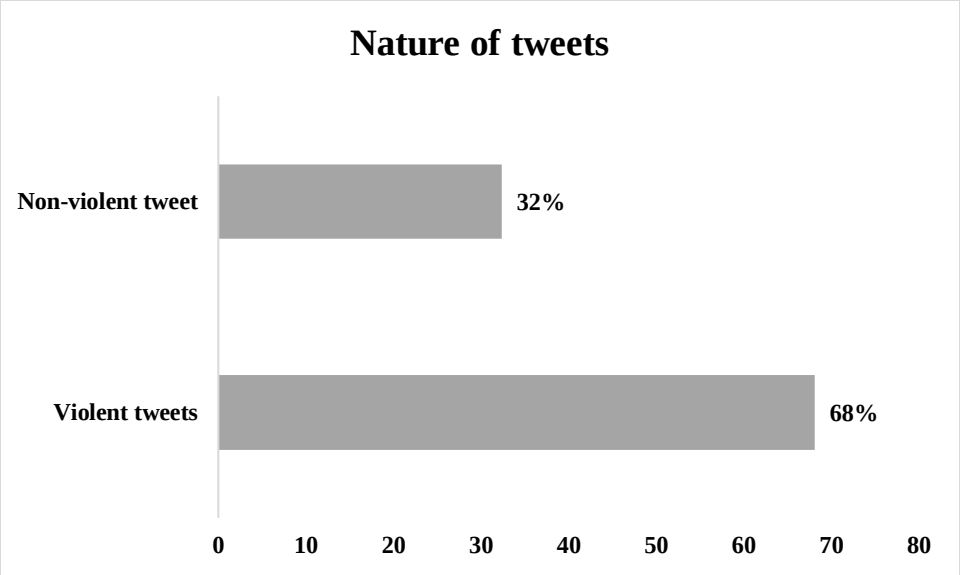


Figure 7 shows that out of the total number (n = 207) of tweets related to the civil unrest, 68% of them were classified as "violent tweets". These tweets contained aggressive language, calls for violence, threats, incitements to harm, or explicit content related to the civil unrest. However, this theme covers all tweets that were violent whether they encouraged violence acts or not. It must also be noted that in this theme there were violent tweets that did not encourage violence instead they were informing tweeter users about the state of violence. This high percentage (68%) of violent tweets suggests a significant level of aggression or potentially harmful rhetoric shared on X (formerly Twitter) during this period of civil unrest. The remaining 32% of tweets were classified as "non-violent tweets". These tweets encompassed a variety of content such as discussions, updates, opinions, news sharing, personal experiences, and general conversation related to the civil unrest. Non-violent tweets included expressions of concern, calls for peaceful solutions, information sharing, and attempts to raise awareness about the situation without advocating violence.

In this context, it appears that a significant share of the activity on X (formerly Twitter) during the civil upheaval comprised aggressive and potentially harmful content, given the higher percentage of violent tweets (68%). This can be a sign of increased hostility, division, or even danger related to current affairs. It is important to highlight that as the images and text accompanying the tweets made clear that the majority of the messages supported violent conduct during the period of civil disturbance. The foregoing data indicates that numerous tweets seemed to encourage violence even if the tweeters may not have been directly involved in the looting. This theme's tweets could

possibly have the power to incite further violence and change people's attitudes towards civil disturbance. As a result, these tweets convey to the public the idea that using violence to further public discourse is a wise decision. Due to the widespread dissemination of tweets and other content that glorifies violence as a means of resolving socioeconomic problems, there might be a chance that people will always choose violent actions like looting, fighting, and destruction.

Figure 8 below is one of the tweets that displayed content that encouraged violent acts on the platform. This can be seen as X (formerly Twitter) serving as a space for the public to promote violent acts during the period of civil unrest. In addition, some of the tweets praised the violent behaviour shared on X (formerly Twitter) in the name of #FreeZuma. Figure 8 further depicts violent behaviour by the citizens during the civil unrest period. In this image people are burning down buildings in the city of Johannesburg which could be in response to Jacob Zuma's arrest or lockdown restrictions. However, one thing about this tweet is that it encourages people to vandalise property which is a violent act. As such, this type of tweet below might have significantly portrayed X (formerly Twitter) as a sphere of violence.

Figure 8: Tweet praising violent acts #FreeZuma.



5.1.1.2 Sub theme A: Non-violent tweets accounted for more than a fifth of the total tweets.

Although, majority of the tweets were consireded to contain violent content, the remaining 32% of tweets were classified as "non-violent tweets." These tweets encompassed a variety of content such as discussions, updates, opinions, news sharing, personal experiences, and general conversation related to the civil unrest. Non-violent tweets included expressions of concern, calls for peaceful solutions, information sharing, and attempts to raise awareness about the situation without advocating violence.

Figure 9: Non-violent tweet.



It seems that the tweets that fell under this theme were expressions of entertainment. The above tweet (Figure 9), which is portrayed as a joke concerning stolen electronics, may have several meanings, but for the sake of this research it seems to be intended only for amusement purposes. Furthermore, this theme extends beyond amusement to encompass the creation of memes pertaining to South Africa's political system. It should be mentioned that a number of tweets focused more on providing updates on the civil unrest, telling people about what was going on at a given moment, and soliciting their thoughts on the situation. One of the peaceful yet informative tweets is presented below (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Tweet update on civil unrest.



5.1.2 Theme 2: The violent discourses in tweets on #LootingSA and #FreeZuma.

Figure 11: <u>Violent tweets that encourages violence.</u>

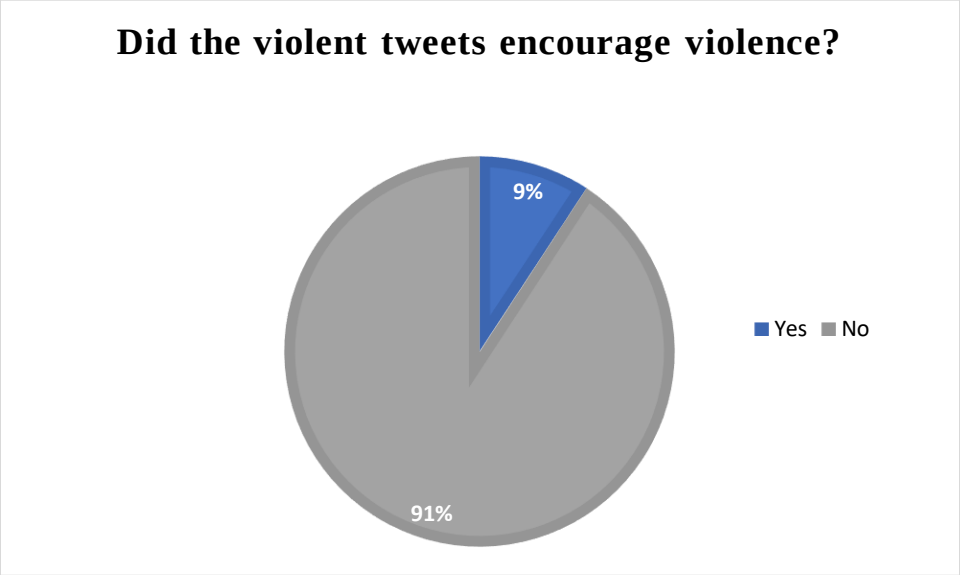
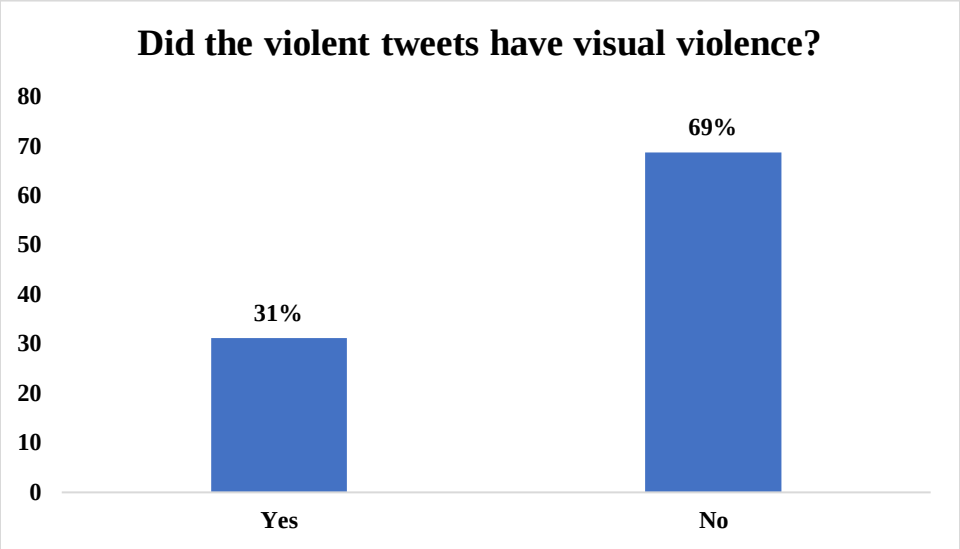


Figure 11 represents the findings regarding whether certain "violent tweets" during the civil unrest in South Africa were perceived as encouraging violence. Among the violent tweets, at least 9% of them encouraged violence during the civil unrest in South Africa. This was noted by the content depicted in the tweets, and the replies from the tweets, comments were supporting the tweets about violent acts such as vandalism and insults. However, most of the violent tweets (91%) did not encourage violence during the civil unrest. These findings reflected the attitudes and opinions of individuals (tweeters) regarding their intent of the "violent tweets". It is important to recognize that these tweets were based on individual perceptions and understandings, and they may be influenced by various factors, including personal beliefs, the specific content of the tweets, and the broader social and cultural context. Although, the figure below indicates high percentage of violent tweets, only 9% were discovered to have potential to encourage violence.

Figure 12: **Tweets containing violence visuals and captions.**



This section dealt with all "violent tweets" that have images. These "violent tweets" are not necessarily encouraging violence. As such, the results provided relate to the question of whether a specific "violent tweet" during the civil unrest in South Africa contained a violent graphic image. Among the analysed violent tweets 31% were found to have included a violent graphic image. Most of the violent tweets (69%) did not contain a violent graphic image, however, their captions did. The significance of these findings lies in understanding how individuals engage with visual content on social media platforms, particularly during periods of heightened tension such as civil unrest. Figure 13 forms part of the 31% mentioned above and it further articulates that the mobilisation of the people to loot in Johannesburg is a signal from the late Winnie Mandela and as such people must loot and vandalise properties in the city. This is also supported by the visuals presented in the tweet, as it depicts a large magnitude of people chanting and holding bords and making their way into Johannesburg. Therefore, these visuals are observed to be encouraging violence actions at the time of civil unrest.

Figure 13: Tweets encouraging violence.

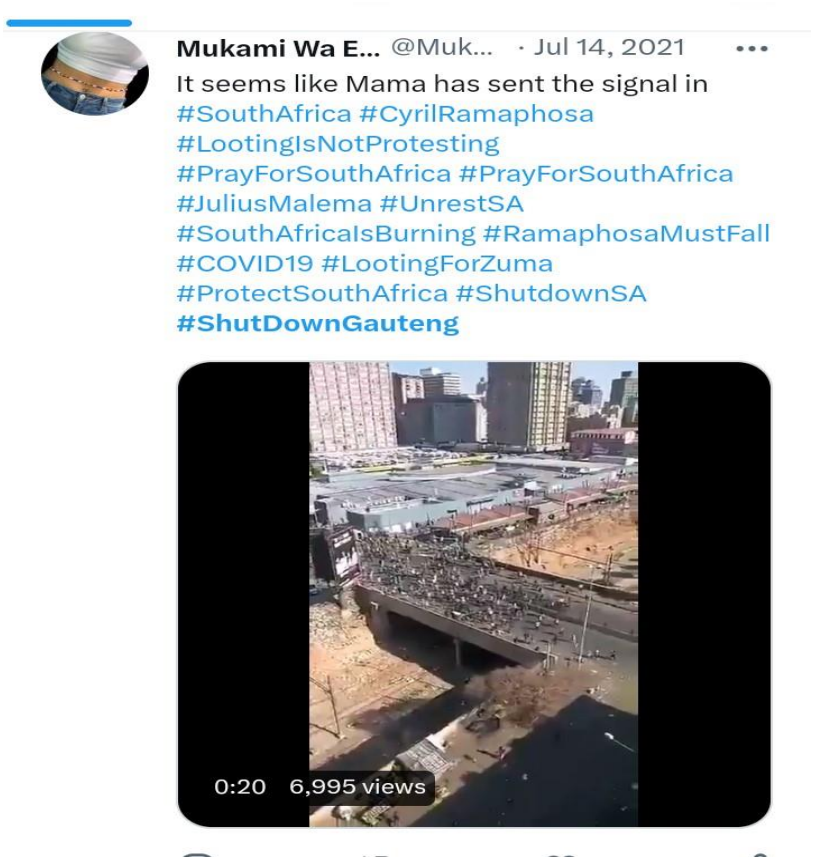
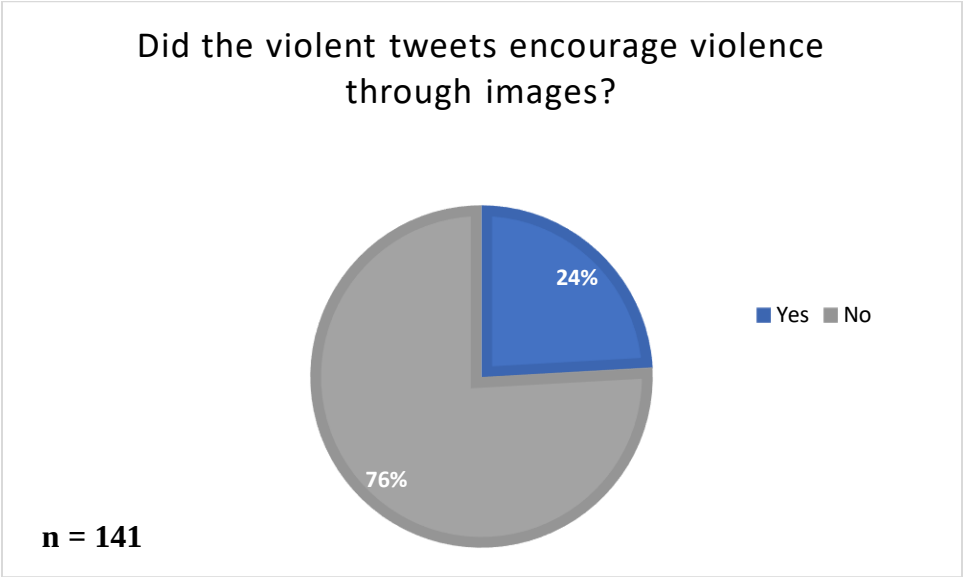


Figure 14 is a portion of tweets that need no graphics to incite and encourage violent activity, however, through its caption one can decipher the connotation to mean that all the businesses owned by white people in South Africa must be looted and vandalised. This behaviour of violence was practised at the time of civil unrest. Moreover, such the above tweet display actions of physical force intended to inflict harm.

Figure 14: Tweets encouraging violence.



Figure 15: **Tweets encouraging violence through visuals or images.**



Among the violent tweets analysed, 24% included a violent image that promoted violence during the civil unrest in South Africa. This indicates that a notable portion of the violent tweets contained an image that depicted violence and actively encouraged or supported violent actions within the context of the ongoing civil unrest. Most of the violent tweets, constituting 76%, did not contain a violent image that promoted violence. The significance of these results lies in understanding the visual content shared on social media platforms, especially when it comes to potentially provocative or harmful images during times of social unrest. Analysing perceptions of the presence

of violent imagery and its promotion of violence can provide insights into discussions about content moderation, the ethical use of visuals in online discourse, and considerations for managing and mitigating harmful content during sensitive events. As such, this could indicate that X (formerly Twitter) is less regulated, or one can also argue that this platform grants the public an opportunity to voice their opinions and views on topics such as looting and violence. Figure 16 and 19 depict violent visuals to promote looting and applaud violence actions during looting period. These two tweets below reflect the kind of visual content shared to support looting. As such, they form part of the 24% of the above pie chart.

Figure 16: Tweet saluting violence.

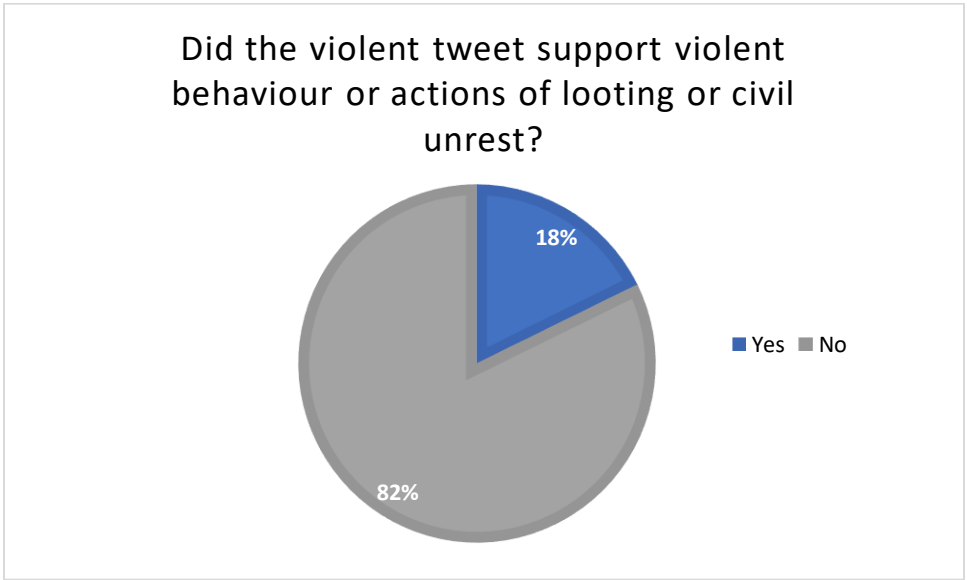


Figure 17: Tweet saluting violence.



5.1.3 Theme 3: Tweets in support of violent actions during the 2021 civil unrest using the hashtags: #LootingSA and #FreeZuma.

Figure 18: **Tweets that support violent behaviour or actions of looting or civil unrest.**

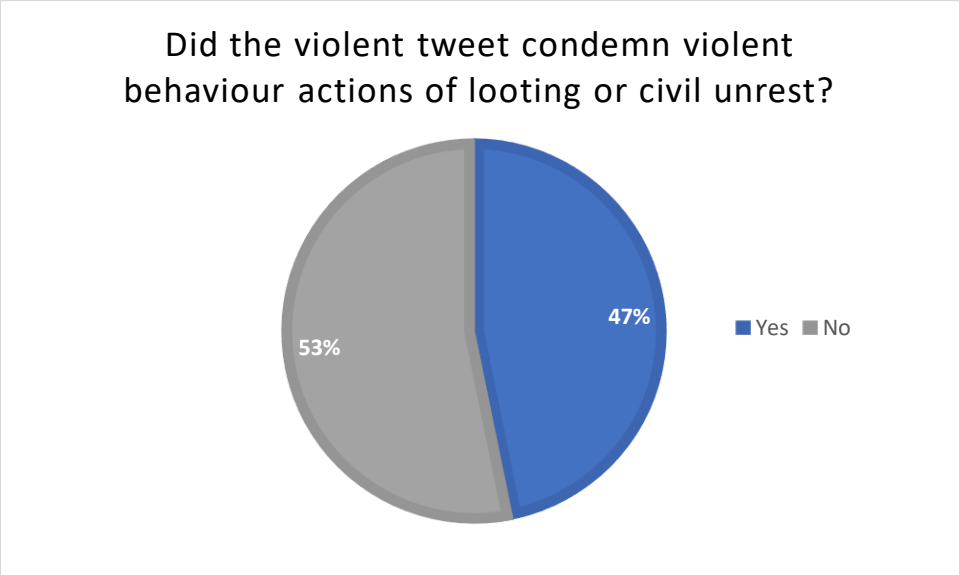


n = 141

Among the violent tweets examined, 18% were found to have advocated violent looting operations or behaviour during periods of looting or civil unrest. However, the majority of the violent tweets (82%) were believed to have opposed aggressive looting acts or behaviour during periods of civil unrest. These findings are important because they help us understand how individuals perceive and interpret online content about sensitive situations like looting and civil unrest. This is due to a strong support for looting activities. The study also emphasises that while those tweeting about looting were not the ones who looted they did contribute to stealing by advocating it on X (formerly Twitter).

5.1.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Tweets condemning violent behaviour during 2021 using the hashtags: #LootingSA and #FreeZuma.

Figure 19: <u>Tweets that condemn violent behaviour actions of looting or civil unrest.</u>



n = 141

Figure 19 provides results pertaining to whether certain "violent tweets" during times of looting or civil upheaval condemned violence. Among the analysed violent tweets, 47% tweets condemned violence during times of looting or civil upheaval. This indicates that a substantial portion of the individuals who tweeted expressed their disapproval or criticism of violent behaviour in the context of the ongoing events. The remaining violent tweets, constituting 53%, did not condemn violence during times of civil unrest. Analysing public perceptions of violent tweets that condemn

violence can provide insights into discussions about attitudes toward violence, the spread of information and opinions online, and considerations for fostering constructive discourse and messages during times of societal challenges. Therefore, it is noted that not all tweets with violence content encouraged violence during the 2021 lotting. Some tweets condemned violent behaviour although they were about violent actions. For example, Figure 20 and Figure 21 presented below form part of the tweets that did not encourage violence. Although, they were about violent actions, they were condemning looting.

Figure 20: Tweet about violence but not promoting violence.

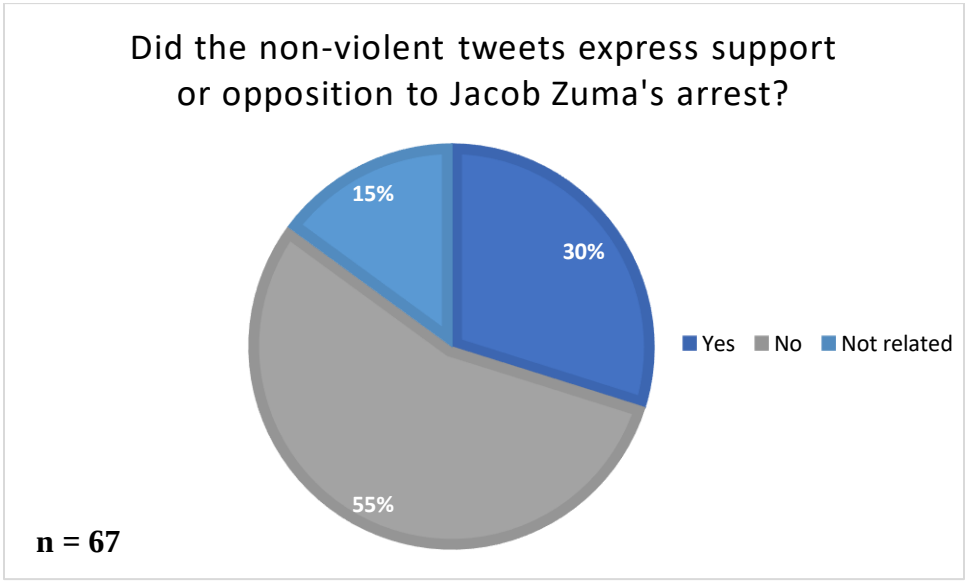


Figure 21: Tweet about violence but not promoting violence.



5.1.4 Theme 4: Tweets that used #LootingSA and #FreeZuma but did not condone or condemn violence (other).

Figure 22: Tweets expressing support or opposition for #FreeZumaZuma.



The results provided pertain to non-violent tweets expressing opinions on Jacob Zuma's arrest during the civil unrest. Among the non-violent tweets (30%) expressed opposition to Jacob Zuma's arrest during the civil unrest. This suggests that a significant proportion of the tweets conveyed disagreement or criticism of the arrest, potentially indicating concerns about its timing, implications, or the effect it had on the unrest. The majority of the tweets, constituting 55%, expressed support for Jacob Zuma's arrest during the civil unrest. A smaller percentage of the tweets (15%) were classified as "not related". These tweets did not express support or opposition to Jacob Zuma's arrest within the context of the civil unrest and were unrelated to the topic altogether. However, Figure 23 and Figure 24 presented below form part of the tweets that supported Jacob Zuma during his arrest by opposing his arrest and calling the court to release him in order to neutralise the state of looting. Essentially, the tweets give the impression that if Jacob Zuma is arrested then the country will collapse as looting will continue in the name of #FreeZuma.

Figure 23: <u>Tweet against Jacob Zuma's arrest</u>.



Figure 24: <u>Tweet against Jacob Zuma's arrest.</u>



However, the study notes that there were a quite number of tweets (30%) that supported Jacob Zuma's arrest as they even called him a "sellout" implying that he is responsible for the poor state of South Africa's economy. Interestedly, some of the tweets highlighted that Jacob Zuma's family, his children in particular, are the ones who incited violence in the streets through social media. This implies that they used social media to gain supporters to stand against their father's arrest. As such, the tweets supported the decision by the court for his arrest and these tweets include the ones attached below.

Figure 25: Tweet supporting Jacob Zuma's arrest.

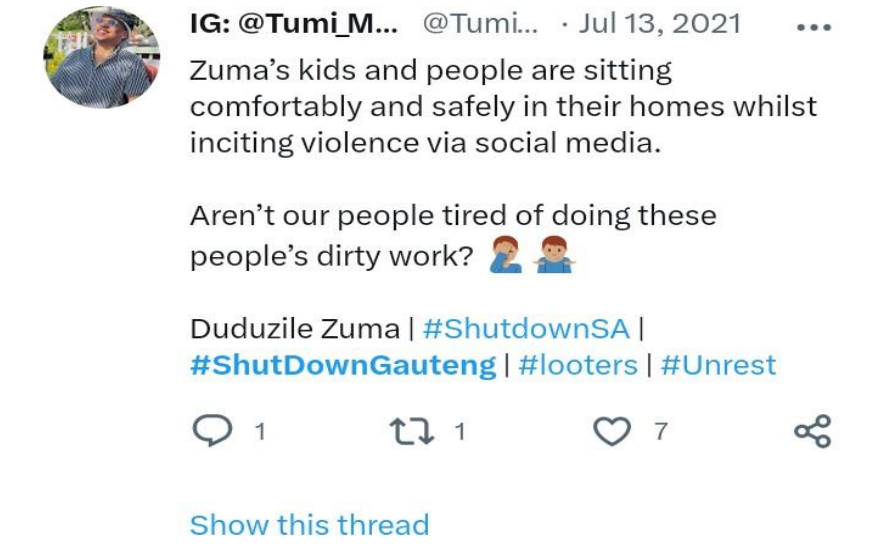


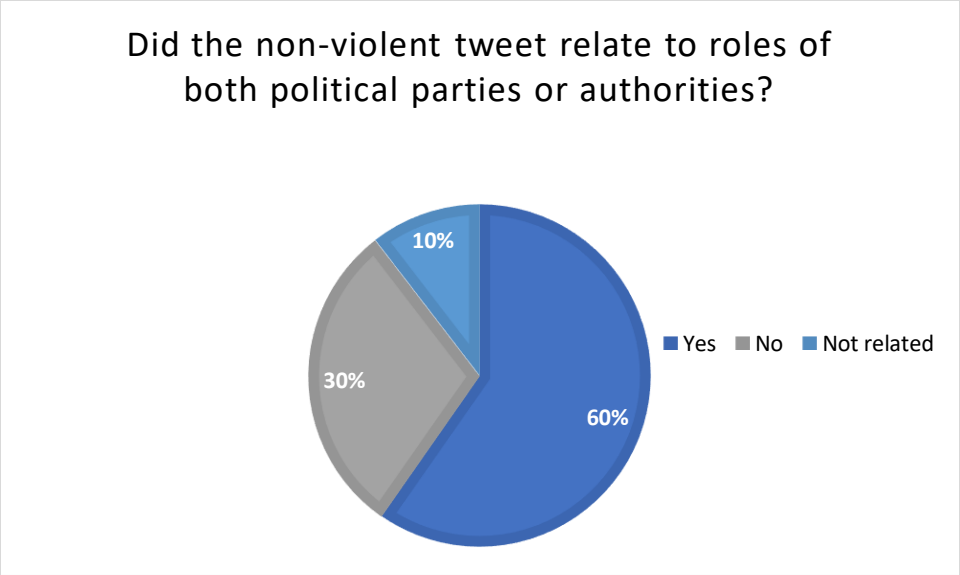
Figure 26: Tweet supporting Jacob Zuma's arrest.



These findings shed light on the many perspectives and sentiments aired on social media following Jacob Zuma's arrest amid a moment of civil upheaval. It is critical to recognise that elements such as categorisation criteria, tweet content and tone, and the larger political and social backdrop of

the arrest and disturbance can all influence how these thoughts are interpreted. The significance of these findings rests in understanding how public opinion and feeling manifest on social media platforms at times of heightened tension and complex occurrences.

Figure 27: <u>Roles of both political parties and political authorities.</u>



n = 67

Figure 27 displays ratios strictly pertaining to "non-violent tweets" in this section. The results provided pertain to non-violent tweets discussing the roles of political parties or authorities during the civil unrest in South Africa. Among the analysed non-violent tweets, 60% of them addressed or discussed the roles of political parties or authorities during the civil unrest in South Africa. This indicates that a significant portion of the tweets focused on examining or commenting on the actions, decisions, or responses of political parties and authorities in relation to the ongoing civil unrest. A smaller proportion, constituting 30% of the non-violent tweets, did not specifically address the roles of political parties or authorities during the civil unrest. Figure 28 below is one of the tweets that formed part of the 30% which were about entertainment through both captions and visuals. However, these tweets where under the #LootingSA and #FreeZuma.

Figure 28: Tweet about entertainment.



A further 10% of the non-violent tweets were classified as "not related." These tweets did not directly relate to the roles of political parties or authorities during the civil unrest and discussed unrelated topics altogether. They covered areas such as entertainment, memes, and making fun of the looting activities. These results provide insights into the distribution of non-violent discussions on social media regarding the roles of political parties and authorities during a period of civil unrest. Quite a number of tweets (15%) linked the civil unrest with politics thus, the tweet below forms portion of the tweets that were about political parties. Moreover, the other tweet depicts an animal called a hyena(s) wearing ANC regalia and blood stains on their faces/mouth which associated ANC members, Jacob Zuma and President Cyril Ramaphosa, with hyena behaviour. Implying that they always eat behind closed doors and pretend like they have not eaten even though there is blood on their mouths.

Figure 29: Tweet pertaining to political parties.



Figure 30: Tweet linking ANC with corruption.

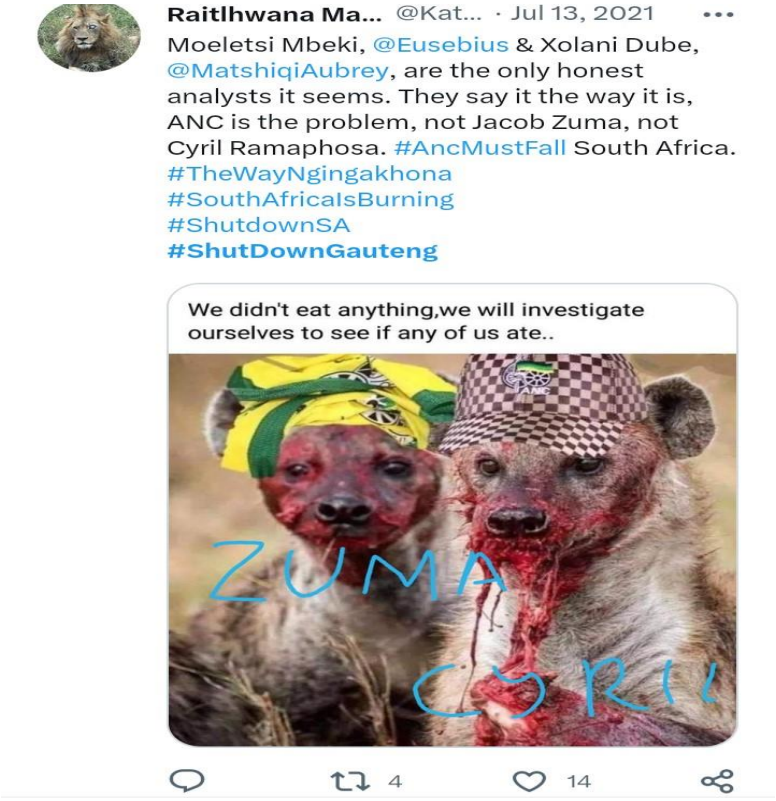
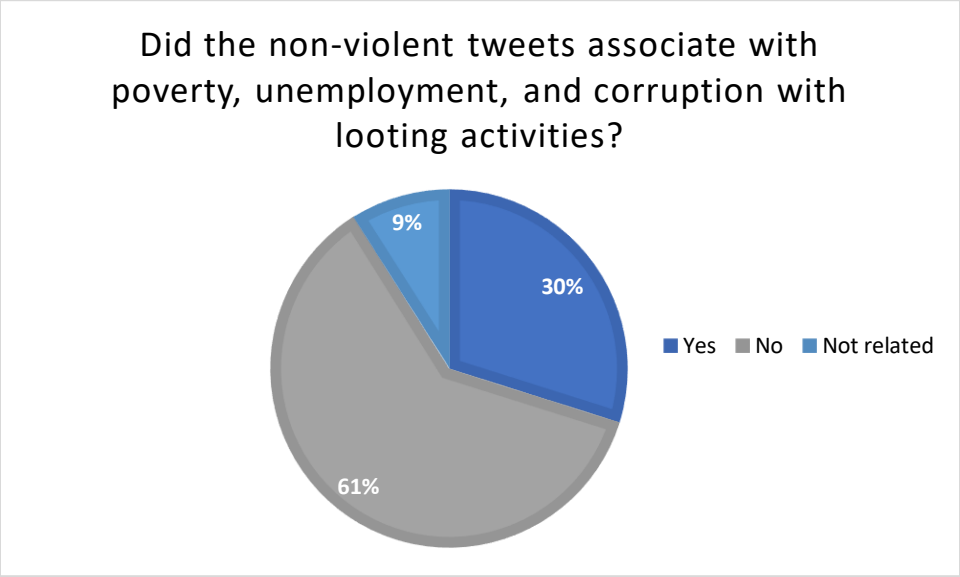


Figure 31: <u>Socio-economic issues.</u>

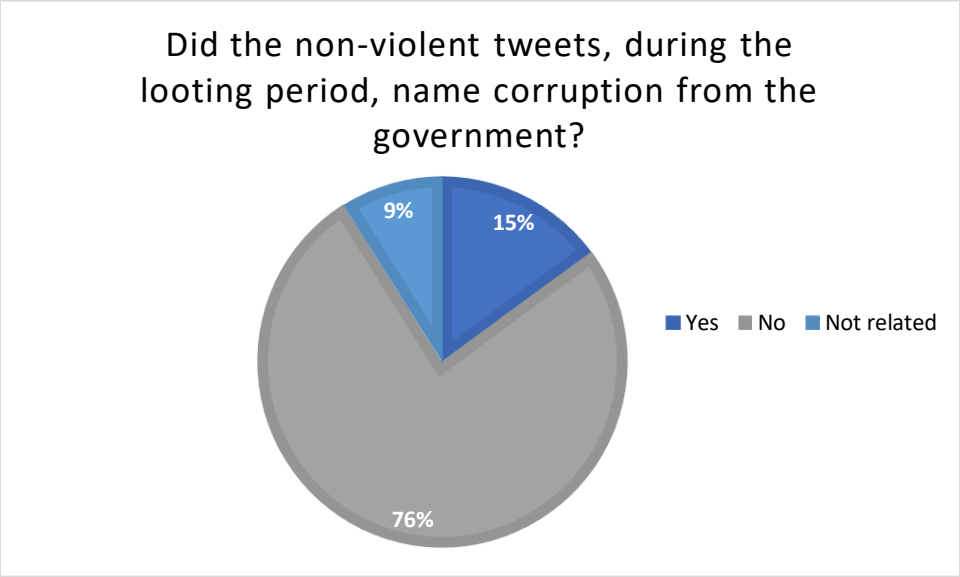


n = 67

These results are related to non-violent tweets that discuss the association of poverty, unemployment, and corruption with looting activities during the civil unrest in South Africa. Among the analysed non-violent tweets, 30% of them discussed or associated poverty, unemployment, and corruption with looting activities during the civil unrest. This suggests that a portion of the tweets examined emphasised the potential links between socio-economic issues such as poverty, unemployment, and corruption, and the occurrence of looting during the civil unrest.

Most non-violent tweets, accounting for 61%, did not discuss or associate poverty, unemployment, and corruption with looting activities during the civil unrest. A smaller portion of non-violent tweets, comprising 9%, were categorised as “not related.” These tweets did not associate with this particular code but associated with the code below. Most of the tweets were about poverty, unemployment, and corruption with looting activities during the civil unrest and they were related to the topic. The significance of these results lies in understanding how social media discussions can explore the underlying issues and motivations behind looting activities during civil unrest.

Figure 32: **Government and corruption.**



n = 67

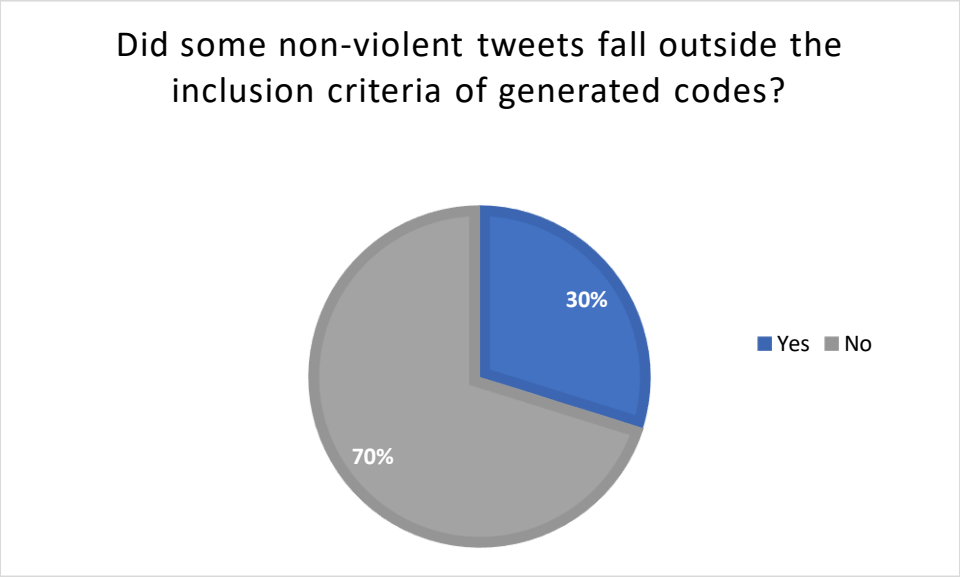
Figure 32 relates to non-violent tweets that were posted during the looting period and whether they were associated the government with corruption while particularly mentioning President Cyril Ramaphosa and issues like poor service delivery and spending. Among the analysed non-violent tweets, 15% of them associated the government with corruption while mentioning Cyril Ramaphosa and issues such as poor service delivery and spending during the looting period. This suggests that a portion of the tweets examined r emphasised perceived connections between government actions and corruption, specifically in the context of the ongoing looting. For example, the tweets below linked corruption, unemployment, and poverty with the civil unrest.

Figure 33: Tweet about unemployment and President Cyril Ramaphosa



However, most non-violent tweets, accounting for 76%, did not associate the government with corruption, Cyril Ramaphosa, or issues like poor service delivery and spending during the looting period. These tweets have discussed other topics or aspects of the looting events without focusing on government corruption. A smaller portion of non-violent tweets, comprising 9%, were categorised as "not related". These tweets were not directly relevant to the association of government with corruption and have been unrelated to this study's topic. However, they were under the #LootingSA, #FreeZuma, and non-violent tweets.

Figure 34: Tweets not related to the study's codes.



n = 67

Figure 34 pertains to tweets posted under the hashtags #LootingSA and #FreeZuma that do not align with the specific codes of this study. Among the analysed tweets under the hashtags #LootingSA and #FreeZuma, 30% of them were identified as being used for personal agendas by opportunistic tweeters. This suggests that a portion of the tweets examined were unrelated to the main themes of looting and calls for the release of Jacob Zuma and were instead used by individuals with their own personal motives. Figure 35, provided below, did not fit in any codes except "others" as it did not respond to the context of #LootingSA and #FreeZuma.

Figure 35: Tweet that form part of the "other" code.



The majority of the tweets, constituting 70%, were not used for personal agendas by opportunistic tweeters. Although, they were not directly related to this code they used images of looting acts

under the #LootingSA and #FreeZuma. These tweets aligned more closely with the primary themes associated with the hashtags, #LootingSA and #FreeZuma, either discussing the looting events or advocating for the release of Jacob Zuma. The significance of these results lies in understanding how social media can be used for various purposes during significant events. Analysing the distribution of tweets that deviate from the main themes can provide insights into the diversity of motivations, agendas, and engagement patterns among users during times of social and political upheaval. As such, many people used X (formerly Twitter) to trend the hashtags, #LootingSA and #FreeZumaZuma, irrespective of whether they are involved or not. Many people used this platform for entertainment purposes, hence the creation of memes out of the tweets.

Conclusion

The analysed tweets reveal the nature and dynamics of social media discourse during a period of civil unrest. The high prevalence of violent tweets indicates a notable level of aggression and potentially harmful content being shared on X (formerly Twitter) in relation to the civil unrest. This suggests that a significant portion of the online discourse was marked by aggressive language, calls for violence, threats, and incitements to harm. Conversely, non-violent tweets encompassed a variety of content, ranging from discussions and updates to opinions, news sharing, and personal experiences related to the civil unrest. These tweets expressed concerns, called for peaceful solutions, shared information, and raised awareness about the situation without advocating violence. It is evident that while a substantial proportion of discourse contained violence, there was also a significant space for non-violent and constructive conversations.

The findings also highlighted the nuances in public perceptions of specific elements within the discourse. While the criteria showed that some "violent tweets" encouraged violence, the majority did not encourage it. Similarly, perceptions regarding the presence of violent graphic images varied with some tweets embedding them and others not embedding them. These findings emphasise the diversity of interpretations in response to online content. When examining associations with political figures and issues, the interpretations of tweets varied as well. Support and opposition to actions such as the arrest of Jacob Zuma yielded mixed results which reflects the complexity of public opinion during times of crisis.

Furthermore, the presence of opportunistic tweeters among hashtags, #LootingSA and #FreeZuma, underscored the multifaceted use of social media during significant events. Some individuals used these hashtags for their personal agendas, while others aligned more closely with the main themes of the hashtags. Overall, this chapter underscored the power and complexity of social media as a platform for public discourse during times of upheaval. This chapter has highlighted the need for nuanced analysis to capture the diverse range of opinions, motivations, and behaviours that emerged during such periods. This understanding can be invaluable for policymakers, researchers, and the public seeking to comprehend the dynamics of online discourse and its implications for society. The succeeding chapter covers the analysis of findings, conclusion, and recommendations of the research.

Chapter 6

Analysis

Introduction

This study investigated the extent to which social media, particularly X (formerly Twitter), served as a platform for the dissemination of violent discourse during episodes of civil unrest with a specific focus on the 2021 looting incidents in South Africa. The research also aimed to provide empirical evidence regarding the role of X (formerly Twitter) as a medium for the expression of violent discourse during periods of civil unrest particularly during the 2021 civil unrest and looting in South Africa. The significance of these results lies in understanding how social media discussions can explore the underlying issues and motivations behind looting activities during civil unrest. As outlined in the preceding chapters, the research questions posed in this study can be distilled into a comprehensive overarching research inquiry:

- To what extent was social media, particularly X (formerly Twitter), employed as a platform for engaging in violent discourse during the 2021 looting incidents in South Africa?

This section presents the key analysis of the study in relation to the research questions that guided this investigation.

6.1 Protest Participation Theory: Politics as an underlying cause.

Numerous social science theories have been postulated to elucidate the causal mechanisms underpinning social movements and revolutions such as the #Me Too and #Black Lives Matters movements (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2008). These theoretical frameworks provide valuable insights into the long-term development of revolutions but are less suitable in elucidating the short-term dynamics of protests that transpire during periods of political turmoil, civil unrest, and mass mobilisations. While these theories are well-suited to inquiries concerning the likelihood of a revolution transpiring within the next three years, they are less adept at addressing queries related to the probability of a mass demonstration occurring within a province or city in a period of three days (Mpofu, 2013). Conversely, Protest Participation Theory seeks to expound upon

individuals' decisions to engage in protest activities. This theory encompasses three overarching categories: biographical availability, political engagement, and structural availability (Wu and Gerber, 2017). Biographical availability pertains to the absence of constraints, such as marital status, parental responsibilities, or employment obligations, which could increase the cost associated with participating in protests (Opp and Kittel, 2010). While this research predominantly concentrated on exploring the content of tweets, as opposed to X (formerly Twitter) users' biographical characteristics, it is noteworthy that the data demonstrated a common interest among X (formerly Twitter) users in discussing the prevailing state of #LootingSA and #FreeZuma. Hence, this category of the theory is particularly applicable to this study.

Political engagement encompasses several dimensions, including an individual's interest and knowledge in politics and their political efficacy — the belief that they can effect political change (Wu and Gerber, 2017). Drawing from our data analysis, we introduced a variable named "politics" which encompasses the political perspective evident in tweets. The data explored the interplay between political parties, political authorities, protests, social media, and looting within the South African political landscape. Notably, this dataset revealed a predominant focus on the African National Congress (ANC) political party and the ANC government's actions and failures. The results underlined the prevalence of political discussions in non-violent tweets during the South African civil unrest with a majority of such tweets addressing political affiliations and viewpoints. This finding aligned with the Protest Participation Theory which suggests that participants possess political knowledge and backgrounds that drive their involvement in protests (Wu and Gerber, 2017). Additionally, it indicates that a significant proportion of tweets scrutinised the actions, decisions, and responses of political entities and authorities in the context of ongoing civil unrest, thus shedding light on the distribution of non-violent social media discussions.

Structural availability pertains to an individual's presence within an interpersonal network, which facilitates recruitment into activism (Kim and Bearman, 1997). This presence often materialises when an individual is asked to or becomes aware of participating in a protest event. The analysis of tweet volumes suggested that many X (formerly Twitter) users share common interests, particularly in the context of violence. Although, this research could not definitively establish physical interpersonal relationships among X (formerly Twitter) users, it did indicate that most tweets were related to violence (68%). This underscores the notion that a majority of tweets shared

a common interest in violent content. Consequently, the theory of structural availability resonates with this research through its two core components: political engagement and structural availability. In accordance with the Protest Participation Theory, this study highlighted that individuals' proclivity to participate collectively can shape the occurrence and scale of protests (Meyer, 2004). This observation was evident during the multiple days of civil unrest, even though this research focused on specific three-day periods. It underscores the fact that people join protests for a myriad of reasons, including dissatisfaction with the political landscape, expressions of discontent with governmental leadership, as well as socio-economic grievances like poverty and unemployment. These findings, supported by Protest Participation Theory, indicated that a majority of the data pertained to violent discourses while only a few related to non-violent discourse. This underscores the idea that individuals often engage in protests as a means of expressing discontent with the political landscape.

6.2 Galtung's Theory of Violence: Civil unrest and politics.

Galtung (1969, p. 168) posits that violence arises when human potential, whether somatic or mental, remains unrealised. Galtung's (1969) conceptualisation of violence as the inhibition of human potential provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted nature of violence, which he categorizes into three overarching types. The first type is direct violence, also known as personal violence, which occurs when there is an identifiable actor responsible for committing violent acts (Galtung, 1969, p. 270). In this study, some of the tweets were classified under the violence classification (68%). It is crucial to note that this research primarily focused on the content of tweets rather than the identities of X (formerly Twitter) users. Furthermore, it is important to emphasise that a substantial majority (32%) of the tweets did not endorse violence during the period of civil unrest. Consequently, the results provided insights into the attitudes and opinions of individuals regarding the intent and impact of the "violent tweets." In essence, Galtung Theory of Violence aligns with certain aspects of the research, particularly highlighting that a significant number of tweets were influenced by instances of direct violence experienced by individuals (Galtung, 1969).

Considering the recent civil unrest, it is not surprising that marginalised groups predominantly featured in protests as victims. This observation is substantiated by the perception that poor government service delivery in communities like Soweto and Umhlanga contributed to the unrest,

which was shown by a significant percentage of tweets pertaining to violence (68%). Codes such as "government" and "corruption" were utilised to analyse tweets pertaining to government system corruption and its role in fomenting civil unrest. This linkage between the findings derived from the analysed data and the central tenet of the Galtung's theory underscores the theory's relevance in this research context. Consequently, the data robustly supported the premises of the Protest Participation Theory and partially corroborates Galtung's Theory of Violence. It demonstrated that factors such as government failures have the potential to influence the occurrence of riots, civil unrest, and protests, including individuals' political affiliations and political knowledge. The analysis identified several key factors underpinning the 2021 civil unrest encapsulated by the hashtags #LootingSA and #FreeZuma These factors encompassed politics, government, corruption as well as socio-economic issues like poverty and unemployment.

6.3 Tweets that pertain to the looting with the hashtags, #LootingSA #FreeZuma, display violence discourses.

This study's findings revealed a notable presence of tweets related to the looting that exhibited violent discourses (68%). While the prevalence of visual content (31%) depicting violence was significant it was not overwhelming. This observation aligns with previous research that has underscored the role of visual content in shaping online discussions and amplifying messages (Bastos and Mercea, 2019). In particular, studies by Johnson and Smith (2020) have reinforced the idea that visually appealing graphics or videos within posts tend to attract higher engagement in the form of likes, shares, and comments. Their research has emphasised that visual content acts as a potent tool for capturing users' attention and facilitating message amplification (Johnson and Smith, 2020). Similarly, research by White et al. (2021) has highlighted that posts featuring striking visuals are more likely to go viral compared to text-only posts. White et al. (2021) argue that visually compelling content not only elicits more user interactions but also accelerates the dissemination of information within online communities which corroborates the findings of Bastos and Mercea (2019).

However, it is essential to note that while some research underscores the significance of visual content in shaping online discussions and message amplification contrary evidence exists (Bastos and Mercea, 2019). For example, a study by Smith and Jones (2021) has found that the impact of visual content in online discussions may be limited. Smith and Jones (2021) contend that textual

content and the quality of arguments yield greater influence in driving engagement and message amplification compared to the mere presence of images or videos. Furthermore, research by Johnson et al. (2020) reveals that the inclusion of images and videos in online discussions can sometimes lead to a decline in the quality of discourse. Johnson et al.'s (2020) findings indicate that visual content often triggers emotional reactions and superficial responses which diverts attention from substantive discussions. These conflicting perspectives within the academic community highlight the complexity of the role of visual content in shaping online discussions and message amplification. The results of this study highlighted the potency of visual imagery in social media discourse during periods of tension. Visual content emerges as a compelling means of conveying emotions, experiences, and messages which consistently garner significant attention and engagement (Marwick and Lewis, 2017). Thus, Brown and Smith (2018) delve into the emotional impact of images and videos shared on social media. They ascertain those posts containing emotionally evocative visuals, such as heart-warming stories or visually striking content, elicit significantly more emotional responses from users in the form of comments and reactions (Brown and Smith, 2018).

This body of research underscores the effectiveness of visual content in conveying emotions and effectively engaging audiences (Brown and Smith, 2018). Patel et al.'s (2019) findings support this by consistently revealing that visual content outperforms text in terms of likes, shares, and comments. Patel et al. (2019) further argues that the visual nature of content enhances its appeal which making it more likely to capture users' attention and trigger engagement. The presence of violent graphic images in this study suggests that individuals may employ visuals to document or draw attention to incidents of violence, potentially as a form of documentation or as an expression of outrage. However, it is important to consider contrasting findings that challenge the assumption that visual content consistently excels in conveying emotions and driving engagement. Research by Green and Johnson (2018) has found that text-based posts often outperform visual content in terms of emotional engagement on social media. They argue that well-crafted textual narratives, coupled with the appropriate use of emotive language, exert a more profound impact on users' emotions and engagement compared to standalone visual content (Green and Johnson, 2018). A study by Wilson et al. (2020) further challenges the prevailing notion that visual content unfailingly garners more attention and engagement. They observe that the effectiveness of visual content varies depending on the platform and context (Wilson et al., 2020). In some instances,

text-based posts featuring concise and compelling messages receive higher engagement rates than visual content that fails to convey a clear message (Wilson et al., 2020). Wilson et al. (2020) underscores the pivotal role of context in determining the impact of visual content. This study collectively emphasises the nuanced nature of the emotional impact and engagement potential of visual content and acknowledge the significance of factors such as the quality of textual narratives and the contextual backdrop in shaping user reactions (Wilson et al., 2020).

6.4 The main uses of X (formerly Twitter) during the 2021 civil unrest by active social media users and the looters.

Based on the accumulated data, it was evident that the social media platform X (formerly Twitter) served multiple purposes during the examined period. The data revealed that X (formerly Twitter) functioned as a prominent forum for public discourse surrounding the topics of looting and the arrest of former President Jacob Zuma. This observation is substantiated by the analysis of non-violent tweets that expressed both support and opposition to Jacob Zuma's arrest. Among these non-violent tweets, it is noteworthy that some articulated opposition to Jacob Zuma's arrest, while a majority conveyed support for Jacob Zuma's cause during the civil unrest. A distinct subset, constituting few tweets, did not exhibit a discernible stance either in favour of or against Jacob Zuma's arrest. Furthermore, the data underscored that X (formerly Twitter) was utilised as a platform for disseminating messages of a violent nature which were predominantly in the form of tweets related to the civil unrest. Within this category of violent tweets, which constituted a majority of the overall tweets, there existed a spectrum of content with some tweets encouraging violent behaviour and others condemning such actions. Among the total of 141 violent tweets analysed, relatively modest tweets were identified as explicitly endorsing violence, while the overwhelming majority, did not convey any explicit endorsement of violent actions.

Consequently, it is apparent that X (formerly Twitter) functioned as a medium for the circulation of tweets addressing various facets of South African political issues, including state violence, corruption, and unemployment. X (formerly Twitter) was instrumental in providing real-time updates to its users regarding the unfolding events associated with the civil unrest particularly under the hashtags, #LootingSA and #FreeZuma. The results highlighted the multifaceted role of X (formerly Twitter) during the examined period which encompassed the public discourse on matters of political significance, the expression of support, and opposition to Jacob Zuma's arrest

as well as the dissemination of both violent and non-violent content pertaining to the civil unrest in South Africa. These findings emphasised the significance of X (formerly Twitter) as a platform for diverse forms of expression and communication which encompassed political activism, information dissemination, and discussions concerning critical socio-political issues within the context of civil unrest.

6.5 Primary roles played by X (formerly Twitter) during South Africa's 2021 looting civil unrest.

X (formerly Twitter) served as a pivotal discussion forum where individuals exchanged information and engaged in discourse regarding the state of the 2021 civil unrest in South Africa. These characteristics were prominently evident as all tweets examined in this research were disseminated under the hashtags, #LootingSA and #FreeZuma. These tweets underwent categorisation into various codes, thereby delineating the relevance of each tweet to the study's objectives. Notably, the analysis revealed that a significant proportion (sixty-eight percent) of the tweets centred around themes of violence, while a minority (thirty-two percent) of tweets pertained to non-violent content within the context of the 2021 civil unrest. Importantly, the majority of the tweets were shared using the hashtags, #LootingSA and #FreeZuma, highlighting the platform's critical role in facilitating discussions about the civil upheaval. X (formerly Twitter) demonstrated its multidimensional role by serving as both a platform for propagating violent tweets and a medium for sharing non-violent tweets that openly condemned looting activity. As such, X (formerly Twitter) emerged as a central hub for information exchange and discourse related to the 2021 civil unrest in South Africa which is substantiated by the exclusive utilisation of the hashtags, #LootingSA and #FreeZuma. The platform facilitated the organisation and analysis of tweets through the implementation of distinct codes. Moreover, X (formerly Twitter) played a dual role in functioning as a conduit for both the sharing of violent content and the dissemination of non-violent messages condemning looting during the civil unrest.

Conclusion

This chapter addressed the analysis and interpretation of data, it also explored the use of the theories (Protest Participation Theory and Galtung Theory of Violence) and how they support the study. The next chapter will focus on conclusions and recommendations of this study.

Chapter 7

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

South Africa has seen incredible violence throughout the years but the events of 9 to 14 July 2021 were the deadliest since apartheid (Jewkes et at., 2023). There has been much disagreement across the country about whether the 'Free Zuma' rallies, looting, and socio-political upheaval were triggered by Jacob Zuma's arrest or not. What stands out, however, is not only the undeniable fact that the developments caused massive socioeconomic damage across the country at a time when the Covid-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on national economic growth and people's lives and livelihoods, but also the valuable lessons for long-term prevention, management, and resolution of conflict, violence, and sociopolitical unrest in South Africa. As such, this research has shed light on the complex and multifaceted role of X (formerly Twitter) during South Africa's 2021 looting civil unrest. It is evident that X (formerly Twitter) played a significant role as a platform for public discourse and information exchange during this turbulent period. The findings of this study have provided insights into the utilisation of X (formerly Twitter) by various users, including those expressing support and opposition to Jacob Zuma's arrest, as well as those sharing both violent and non-violent content related to the civil unrest.

The application of Protest Participation Theory has helped to understand the motivations behind individuals' engagement in protests which highlighted the influence of factors such as political knowledge, political affiliations, and structural availability. The Protest Participation Theory has illuminated the prevalence of political discussions within non-violent tweets during the civil unrest and emphasised the role of political entities and authorities in shaping the discourse. Additionally, Galtung's theory (1978) of violence has allowed for an exploration of the concept violence in its various forms. While not all tweets were explicitly violent, Galtung theory has helped to interpret the data in the context of unrealised human potential and the inhibition of such potential. It has also shown that factors such as government failures and corruption can contribute to civil unrest (Jewkes et at., 2023).

The analysis of tweets containing violent discourses highlights the role of visual content in shaping online discussions. Visual content, in the form of violent graphic images, played a significant role

in conveying emotions and experiences related to the civil unrest. However, the impact of visual content in online discussions remains a topic of debate with some studies suggesting its effectiveness in capturing attention and others emphasising the importance of textual narratives and context (Cacciatore et al. 2016). Overall, this research underscores the dynamic nature of online discourse during times of civil unrest with X (formerly Twitter) serving as a vital platform for communication, expression, and engagement. It highlighted the need for future studies to delve deeper into the implications of social media utilisation on a national scale in encompassing a wide range of participants and social media platforms. Thus, understanding the ways in which politicians and political parties leverage social media for their agendas and examining the evolving dynamics of political communication in the digital age remain important areas for further exploration.

7.1 Summary of the findings.

7.1.1 Violent Tweets pertaining to the South African 2021 July civil unrest.

This study highlighted the utilisation of X (formerly Twitter) as a platform for the dissemination of tweets that encompassed elements of aggressive language, calls for violence, threats, and incitements to harm in connection to the South African 2021 civil unrest, particularly under the hashtags #LootingSA and #FreeZuma. Consequently, the findings posit that a substantial volume of aggressive and potentially harmful rhetoric permeated X (formerly Twitter) during the period of civil unrest. The findings elucidate that a predominant proportion of the disseminated tweets exhibited a violent tone, albeit not overtly advocating violence during the civil unrest protests. In contrast, it becomes evident that the platform was utilised to circulate content related to violence, yet a noteworthy portion of the dataset condemned violent acts. This indicates a considerable segment of individuals who expressed their dissent and criticism concerning violent behaviours.

7.1.2 Non-violent Tweets pertaining to the South African 2021 July civil unrest.

In the realm of non-violent data, the findings revealed that a significant majority of tweets were centred on the arrest of the former president Jacob Zuma during the 2021 civil unrest. Within this discourse, a substantial portion of the data conveyed disapproval and critique of the arrest. Nonetheless, the prevailing sentiment across the majority of tweets was one of support for Jacob Zuma's arrest during the 2021 civil unrest. The results indicated that a portion of non-violent tweets

revolved around discussions pertaining to the roles played by political parties and political authorities during the 2021 civil unrest in South Africa. This illustrated that a noteworthy fraction of the tweets was dedicated to examining or commenting on the actions, decisions, and responses of political parties and authorities in relation to the civil unrest particularly under the hashtags, #LootingSA and #FreeZuma.

Further examination of non-violent tweets revealed discussions concerning the association of poverty, unemployment, and corruption with the looting activities during the 2021 #LootingSA civil unrest. This highlighted that a segment of the tweets delved into and emphasised potential links between socioeconomic issues such as poverty, unemployment, and corruption, and the occurrence of looting during the civil unrest. Although some connections were established among these themes, a predominant proportion of non-violent tweets did not associate the government with corruption, President Cyril Ramaphosa, or issues related to poor service delivery and spending during the looting period. The study suggests that, among the analysed data under the hashtags, #LootingSA and #FreeZuma, there were instances where X (formerly Twitter) was employed for personal agendas and entertainment by opportunistic users. Consequently, this indicates that a portion of the scrutinised data was unrelated to the primary themes and variables explored in this research chapter. Hence, the findings afford insights into the distribution of both violent and non-violent tweets, while acknowledging the existence of other section discussions on social media pertaining to violence.

Among the non-violent tweets, there was a notable expression of opposition to Jacob Zuma's arrest during the civil unrest. This suggests that a substantial proportion of the tweets conveyed dissent and criticism regarding the arrest, potentially reflecting concerns about its timing, implications, or its impact on the unrest. Furthermore, the majority of the tweets conveyed support for Jacob Zuma’s arrest during the civil unrest. In contrast, a smaller percentage were categorised as "not related". These tweets did not take a stance of support or opposition to Jacob Zuma's arrest within the context of the civil unrest and were tangential to the overarching topic. It is important to note that the tweets analysed in this research were primarily focused on measuring the prevalence of looting activities and did not delve into the intricacies of the "how" question.

7.2 Limitations of the study.

The study was subject to several limitations which constrained its scope and hindered a more comprehensive examination across a broader spectrum of focus areas as initially envisioned in the research design. Several limitations and constraints are worth noting. Firstly, due to the revised terms and conditions imposed by X (formerly Twitter), the study encountered restrictions in accessing the desired dataset for research purposes. Consequently, the researcher had to resort to utilising screenshots as an alternative data source, given the financial limitations precluding access to older X (formerly Twitter) data. This limitation influenced the nature and extent of data available for analysis which potentially affected the depth of the study's findings.

Secondly, while the original research plan had included the intention to conduct focus groups and interviews as a means of gathering qualitative data, the researcher encountered challenges in identifying willing participants who had been actively involved in the civil unrest. Despite efforts to engage with potential X (formerly Twitter) users who could provide valuable insights, they were not amenable to participation in the study. Consequently, the research proceeded with content analysis as the primary method. Furthermore, despite assurances of confidentiality and the promise of perpetual anonymity for participants, the researcher encountered difficulties in recruiting individuals who had engaged in looting activities during the civil unrest. This limitation impeded the exploration of the perspectives and motivations of looters which could have contributed valuable insights to the study. Lastly, but not least the study was constrained temporally by a limited time frame for data collection and analysis. Instead of encompassing the entire duration of the civil unrest, from July 9th to July 17th, 2021, the study focused solely on a subset of three specific days within this timeframe. This temporal limitation potentially restricted the breadth of the study's findings and may have influenced the extent to which research questions were addressed.

It is important to note that the tweets utilised in this research primarily served as indicators of looting activities rather than providing insights into the underlying mechanisms or processes "how" questions, basically they were used to analyse the use of social media in times of civil unrest. Consequently, while the study effectively measured the prevalence of looting-related content, it did not delve into the intricacies of the "how" and "why" aspects of looting behaviour during the civil unrest. The study's limitations encompassed challenges related to data access,

participant recruitment, and the scope of research questions addressed. These limitations underscore the need for caution in generalising findings and highlight areas for future research to explore in greater depth. However, the study sample and focus were adequate to yield significant findings.

7.3 Recommendations for future studies.

Notably, not all the content shared on social media, particularly on X (formerly Twitter), corresponds with the real-time state of events. It is evident that some tweets comprised of recycled or reposted content. This practice has the potential to create chaos and portray events in a negative light to the public. Therefore, it is advisable for social media users to exercise caution and discretion. Users should adopt a critical approach by fact-checking the information they engage with and assessing the credibility of their sources or accounts. Vigilance is paramount, as some individuals may create fake accounts with the intention of inciting violence in society while concealing their true identities behind fictitious profiles. These counterfeit accounts are often established to either promote criminal activities or endorse violent behavior.

Considering the current research findings, future studies should consider the following recommendations:

- Explore the implications of social media utilisation on a national scale in times of protest and mass movement.
- Conduct comprehensive investigations into the outcomes of extensive social media usage within social media users.
- Prioritise inclusivity by adopting a nationwide research focus and considering a diverse range of participants.
- Extend the study's scope to encompass all major social media platforms such as TikTok and Facebook.

Additionally, future research endeavours should:

- Investigate how politicians and political parties leverage social media for their agendas.
- Examine the propagation of political ideas and their influence on public perceptions.

- Analyse the evolving dynamics of political communication in the digital age through an exploration of the political landscape on social media platforms.

Given the growing prominence of social media platforms like TikTok, it is advisable for future studies to explore their impact and usage patterns. Understanding the role of emerging social media platforms is crucial, especially as they amass substantial user bases. Moreover, future research could investigate the positive contributions of social media in mitigating public violence or how governmental and non-governmental organisations leverage these platforms to restore peace within societies. Such investigations would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted role of social media in contemporary society.

Conclusion

The study found that the use of social media X (previously Twitter) during #LootingSA and #FreeZuma was active, and the platform was utilised for a variety of purposes, including amusement, informing, and fostering violent conversation about looting. Although the majority of the tweets included violent material, they did not explicitly encourage others to be violent. This chapter also highlighted that unemployment, corruption, and poverty were among the elements that fueled the #LootingSA and #Freezuma rallies. This chapter also addressed the challenges that the researcher encountered while doing the study in order to improve future research. Furthermore, this chapter gave potential recommendations for further research in media studies.

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Appendix A: Coding Manual

CODING MANUAL: TWEET 1

(Select one code with x)

***Apply all 207 tweets**

***Apply only violent tweets (code)**

SECTION 1: Number of Violent tweets (Apply all 231 tweets)

Number	Tick	Codes name	Codes description
1		Non-violent tweet	A tweet that does not display any violence discourses.
2		Violent tweet	A tweet that has violence terms/phrases or images – that the use of vulgarity, or insulative words or phrases, this could be any language/text which is offensive or obscene.

SECTION 2: The violent discourses in tweets (Apply ONLY code 2/violent tweets)

Codes will be applied to most prominent i.e., if text or image

Codes Number	Tick	Codes name	Codes description
1		Violent tweet	This data collection pertains to tweets that include violent terminology or expressions but do not promote violent activity or activities.
2		Violent tweet that encourages violence	This set of data is about tweets that has violent terms/phrases and encourages violence.
3		Visual violence tweet	This tweet contains a violent graphic image (it does not promote violent behaviour or activities).
4		Visual violence through image	This tweet contains a picture that promotes violent behavior/actions.

SECTION 3: Tweets that support or condemns violent behavior/actions in looting (Apply ONLY S1/code 2/violent tweets)

Codes Number	Tick	Codes name	Codes description
1		Tweets that support violent behavior actions of looting/civil unrest	This tweet text/image supports violence during times the time of looting/civil upheaval. It supports violent looting activities/behaviour.
2		Tweets that condemn violent behavior actions of looting/civil unrest	This tweet text/image condemns violence during times the time of looting/civil upheaval. It supports violent looting activities/behaviour

SECTION 4: Topics of non-violent tweets (Only tweets S1/Code 1/ non-violent)

Number	Tick	Codes name	Codes description
1		Jacob Zuma	Tweets expressing support or opposition to Jacob Zuma's arrest.
2		Politics	This data set relates to the roles of both political parties and political authorities, and it connects protests, social media, and looting to the South African political spectrum. Moreover, this tweet is about the ANC political party or ANC government such as its failures, EFF and Julius Malema are two examples
3		Socio economic issues	These set of data consists of tweets that associate poverty, unemployment, and corruption with looting activities.
4		Government and Corruption	These set of data are tweets that have been tweeted during looting period in the name of corruption, they associate government with corruptions. For example, Cyril Ramaphosa and poor service delivery and spending.
5		Other	These set of data consist of tweets that were tweeted under the #lootingSA and #freeZuma but they don't fit within any of the mentioned codes. They just used social media for their personal agenda, opportunists' tweeters.

Comments:

(*Flag tweets for further qualitative analysis and/or *write down analysis here of interesting observations of tweet and/or *Give details about ‘other’ category)