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Mohale, Mphela Precious

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Explicating audience engagement with political debates: A content analysis of the digital debate about youth unemployment on *Daily Thetha* Facebook page.



Compiled by Mphela Precious Mohale

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Humanities in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of the Arts in Media Studies.

Supervisor: Dr. Katlego Disemelo

January 2023

Declaration

I, Mphela Precious Mohale (Student Number: 1240024) am a student registered for a Master of Arts in Media Studies degree in the year 2022. I hereby declare the following:

- I am aware that plagiarism (the use of someone else's work without their permission and/or without acknowledging the original source) is wrong.
- I confirm that the work submitted for assessment for the above degree is my own unaided work except where I have explicitly indicated otherwise.
- I have followed the required conventions in referencing the thoughts and ideas of others.
- I understand that the University of the Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that this is not my own unaided work or that I have failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my writing.

This Dissertation is my own original unaided work. It is being submitted for the Degree of a Masters of the Arts by Research in Media Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination, or to any other University.

Signature



January 2023

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my late grandfather

Maepa Phineas Mohale

Despite being greatly disadvantaged by the apartheid education system, he instilled the significance of education in all his children and grandchildren and invested his funds in my primary schooling.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

I would like to first thank God Almighty for His favour, grace, and provision throughout this journey. I could not have done all this without Him giving me strength and wisdom.

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the ways that young audiences of the television talk show *Daily Thetha*, interpret and construct meanings of political messages communicated on the show. The study seeks to achieve this by exploring the digital engagement patterns of audiences on the *Daily Thetha* Facebook page. The political topic chosen for the study is youth unemployment. For analysis purposes, the study uses five *Daily Thetha* episodes which discussed different facets of youth unemployment. The research questions central to this study are explored by analysing Facebook posts created for the episodes, as well as the comments under each post. The research data is analysed through content analysis. Both manifest and latent content analyses are used for data analysis. Research findings are presented and discussed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Television talk shows are a site for public discussions and the formation of public opinion. Habermas' public sphere is a theoretical basis for debates and the formation of public discourse about societal issues. The freedom of the press as well as the freedom of expression of ideas are vital for democracy and are enshrined in the South African Bill of Rights. The media play a vital role in promoting and sustaining democracy in South Africa. The study based on how the television talk show *Daily Thetha* influences public debate among its young audiences is thus important to explore. Moreover, media audiences are heterogenous, thus, interpreting and engaging with media texts differently. Findings from this study demonstrated that *Daily Thetha* digital audiences can be classified as both active and passive readers. Moreover, findings also show that *Daily Thetha* Facebook page is characterised as a digital sub-public sphere and can be classified as a political, literal as well as a public cultural public sphere.

Keywords: digital public sphere, television talk shows, public sphere, sub-public sphere, South African youth unemployment, democracy, media audiences, *Daily Thetha*.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study:

This study examines the role that the television talk show *Daily Thetha* plays in encouraging public debate on political issues among its young audiences. *Daily Thetha* is a television talk show which discusses various issues affecting young people in South Africa daily. The topics discussed on the television talk show range from politics, the economy, health, religion, and the social aspects of life. The discussions on the show include alcoholism, drug abuse, sexual crimes, abortion, homophobia, unemployment, church cults, teenage pregnancy, and the like. The show airs on the South African Broadcasting Agency (SABC), which is the South African national broadcaster. *Daily Thetha* is an initiative of SABC Education, a division of the public broadcaster which focuses on educational content. According to the SABC Education website, the television talk show reaches over 1,5 million viewers per broadcast. *Daily Thetha* is a publicly mediated platform that affords the youth an opportunity to freely express their views. The discussions on the show occur in the form of debates between featured guests and audiences – both in-studio and viewers at home. Viewers at home have an opportunity to engage and take part in the debate by either calling, sending an email or a Short Message Service (SMS), and posting and commenting on Facebook and Twitter.

Daily Thetha aims to empower marginalised voices of youth across different regions in South Africa (SABC Education 2021). The SABC Education website describes *Daily Thetha* as "a conscious live talk show that engages with its followers via multiplatform approach" (SABC Education 2021). The show engages the youth in three main ways: through the live broadcast of the debates, through social media platforms, and the *Daily Thetha* Outreach Programme (DTOP). The show is broadcast live on SABC1 and Facebook Live, Monday through Thursday between 10:30 am, and 11:30 am. This study explores the ways that young audiences interact with and make meanings of the educational content on political issues communicated on the show. The political issue of interest for this study is youth unemployment. Youth unemployment is among the greatest challenges that the youth of South Africa are faced with today. Youth unemployment rates are staggering and continuously on the rise, posing an economic crisis in South Africa.

There are various episodes that focus on the topic of youth unemployment and job security on the show. The profusion of these episodes on the platform sparked an interest for the study to explore how these intricate issues are discussed on the show. For purposes of this study, the

following episodes have been chosen for analysis “Job Hunting as a Full-Time Job”, “Constructive Dismissal”, “Trainees/Interns: Why I Left My Job Within 6 Months”, “Advice to the Finance Minister”, and “Quarter Life Crisis”. The chosen episodes of the television talk show portray young South Africans engaged in discussions concerning a political-economic issue that directly affects them. In each of the episodes, young people are engaged in an in-depth conversation about some of the factors which contribute to and perpetuate youth unemployment in South Africa, the effects of unemployment, and resolutions to the issue. In each of the episodes, the hosts engage with viewers at home on the phone, and by reading their opinions posted on social media live on the show. In each of the chosen episodes, government officials and field experts form part of the show as guests to discuss and illuminate the issue along with young people. Young people have an opportunity to hold government officials accountable and ask questions. It is interesting how the show encourages young people to be active participants in public debates about important issues.

1.2. **Rationale: Research aims and motivation:**

My interests in the study of audience engagement with *Daily Thetha* content were sparked by the critical communicative exchange of ideas in the form of debate that occurs on the show. I found interest in the ways that young South Africans engaged in critical discussions about political and social issues directly affecting them. This research study aims to investigate the ways that young South African audiences engage with information communicated on the show via Facebook and how they construct meanings of political issues directly affecting them.

Youth unemployment statistics in South Africa necessitate the importance of a political dialogue between those especially affected by unemployment and government officials. *Daily Thetha* is a media text which attempts to achieve this by broadcasting and mediating these important debates. The representation of young people on a national broadcaster’s youth-based television talk show, discussing an issue that directly affects them is of great interest in a democratic country. The open and transparent debates about socio-political and economic issues echo democratic ideals of freedom of expression and freedom of the press as enshrined in the constitution of South Africa. Moreover, audience discussions of information communicated on the show and the meanings that are constructed as a result are worth studying.

The existing literature on media talk shows in South Africa predominantly focuses on radio talk show programmes (Chiumbu and Ligaga 2013; Hungbo 2017; Day et al. 2021; Scullion et al. 2013; Moyo and Chiumbu 2020; Whitehead 2019). This literature explores all aspects of the medium including the production process, content, distribution, and reception by varying

audiences. The literature dedicated to radio talk shows is mainly driven by their vast reach and influence in South African societies. Radio remains one of the prominent traditional mediums in South Africa to date. My study aims to contribute to the literature on South African studies based on television talk shows and their role in encouraging public debate and forming public discourse on political issues. Moreover, mass communication research focused on young people in South Africa largely examines the general internet use and youth-led social movements. This research aims to shed light on how young South Africans interpret and engage with political debates on Facebook and partake in the digital public sphere.

I have also taken note that there is existing literature focusing on the role of the media in raising awareness among young people in South Africa (Sern and Zanuddin 2015; Tully et al. 2019; Catalan-Matamoros and Penafiel-Saiz 2019; Elrod and Fortenberry 2020; Aung et al. 2019). However, this literature is largely based on the media's role in raising health awareness on issues relating to Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) and Human Immunodeficiency Virus /Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS). In most cases, both globally and in the South African context, communication research focusing on political content examines mass media's role during elections and electoral campaigns. This study specifically focuses on the role that the television talk show *Daily Thetha* plays in facilitating debates about the socio-political and economic issue of youth unemployment and the ways in which young audiences engage with and interpret this information.

Debates about significant issues in society are an important contribution to democracy. South African youth is politically savvy and outspoken. This is evidenced by prominent youth-led movements such as #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall. The country has evidenced young students engaging in significant debates pertaining to race, class, education, and gender among others (Weston 2021). In 2015, the social media hashtag #RhodesMustFall revealed a significant dialogue about the prevalence of colonial legacies in post-apartheid South Africa (Hodes 2017). Students from the University of Cape Town presented compelling arguments about the racial privileges afforded apartheid agents such as Cecil Rhodes. Moreover, the #FeesMustFall movement raised critical debates about systems of higher education in South Africa in terms of access, funding, and continuation of studies (Hodes 2017). This student-led movement was mobilised both online and offline and sparked global attention. The use of digital platforms assisted the youth by projecting their educational challenges to a global audience (Luescher et al. 2017). #FeesMustFall did not only highlight issues faced by students but the South African youth. Both #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall demonstrate the power

of digital debate and its ability to enact change among youth in South Africa. Therefore, a television talk show discussing a range of issues affecting young South Africans matters in relation to youth development and democracy.

1.3. Research Questions:

1.3.1. How do *Daily Thetha* young audiences engage with and interpret political information communicated on the show?

1.3.2. What do political discussions about youth unemployment on the *Daily Thetha* Facebook page reveal about the digital public sphere?

1.4. Overview of the chapters:

This study focuses on audience reception of television talk shows and the role that television talk shows play in impacting the youth of South Africa. Moreover, it also seeks to contribute to overall youth studies of media use and studies of the digital public sphere in South Africa. This study will present its argument in various chapters. The first chapter introduced the study by discussing the television talk show *Daily Thetha*, and the chosen episodes for analysis, as well as introducing the research aims and background. Chapter two will review and discuss existing literature that underpins the overarching debates related to this research. The discussion of literature is classified according to thematic categories. The following themes are discussed thusly: the first focuses on youth unemployment in South Africa by discussing its causes, rates, and the effects it has on those who are unemployed. The second theme discusses the history and culture of television talk shows globally. The third theme is related to communication for social change and the role that the media play in raising awareness. The last two themes will discuss the media and democracy, as well as literature related to contemporary media audiences respectively. These discussions highlight both the classical and contemporary contributions to media-related studies.

Chapter three discusses the theoretical and conceptual framework relevant to this study. Political discussions mediated through the show are discussed in relation to Habermas's (1962) theory of the public sphere. This theory is discussed using the earliest notions of the public sphere developed in the early 1980s and, the contemporary digital public sphere that exists today. Moreover, the reception theory of studying media audiences is discussed in the chapter in order to elucidate the relationship between media audiences and texts. The discussion about media texts and audiences is also explained using Stuart Hall's (1993) coding/encoding model of communication. This model explains the relationship between media producers and consumers, and the communication that occurs through the use of language. The basic premise

of reception studies is that media audiences are inherently different, and therefore interact with, and interpret media texts differently. Moreover, media producers use language as a discursive vehicle of signs to transmit messages to audiences, who in turn, interpret those messages.

Chapter four of this study discusses the research method and design chosen to analyse audience engagement with the information communicated and mediated on the show via Facebook Live. The research data will be analysed using content analysis and presented both qualitatively and quantitively. This section will also discuss the mixed-method approach and what it entails for the study. A mixed-method approach was used in the study in order to strengthen research findings and inferences drawn from the study. Content analysis was used to examine screenshots of Facebook posts created for the five episodes, as well as the comments under these episodes. The units of analysis for the study were identified and their meanings were thoroughly explained in this section. Lastly, this section also discussed ethical considerations for a study of digital audiences on Facebook.

Chapter five of the study presents and discusses research findings drawn from the posts of the five episodes on the *Daily Thetha* Facebook page. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section discusses research results from screenshots of Facebook posts created for the five episodes. The second part discusses comments from all five Facebook posts of the episodes. The discussions in these sub-sections unpack digital engagement patterns of *Daily Thetha* audiences as well as the type of public sphere that exists on Facebook. Based on research findings in chapter five, this study coined the term "digital sub-public sphere". The existence of social media platforms makes it possible for mediated mainstream public spheres to be transferred to more focused, smaller groups which in turn form a type of sub-public sphere. This research has shown that participation in the *Daily Thetha* Facebook sub-public sphere is not self-reliant, but rather, it is highly dependent on and influenced by discussions in the mainstream public sphere. Therefore, this study demonstrates that a digital sub-public sphere is a virtual communicative space that is an extension of the mainstream public sphere where ordinary citizens, who may lack access to the main public sphere, debate vital societal issues. The concluding chapter of this study summarises key points raised in the findings chapter and highlights the importance of digital sub-public spheres in political dialogues.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses various scholarly debates underpinning the thematic foci of this study. This study draws conceptual ideas from classical and contemporary media-related studies based on thematic related to television talk shows, media audiences, and the socio-economic issue of youth unemployment in South Africa. These overarching debates are discussed in the form of thematic categories. The first thematic category focuses on studies explicating youth unemployment in South Africa. Youth unemployment is discussed by looking at its causes, its rates, and the effects that it poses on those on the receiving end. Additionally, the history and culture of television talk shows will be discussed. Furthermore, the chapter will discuss literature focused on the media and their role in raising public awareness, as well as promoting and upholding democracy in society. Lastly, the chapter will discuss contemporary literature based on studies of media audiences.

2.1. Explicating youth unemployment in South Africa: causes, rates, and effects of youth unemployment in South Africa.

A key interest in this study is to examine the ways in which young audiences of *Daily Thetha* discuss and debate the issue of youth unemployment in South Africa through the show. The South African National Youth policy as well as the Youth Commission Act defines youth as young adults between the ages of 14-34 years (Youth Policy 2014). There are varying definitions of the conception of 'youth' which are unique from country to country. According to the United Nations, youth consist of those between the ages of 15 and 24 (United Nations 2022). Unemployment refers to the failure to sell labour in the job market (Mago 2018: 1). Youth unemployment in the context of South Africa refers to people between the ages of 14 and 34 who are job seekers and available for work, but for various reasons cannot secure a paid job (Yu 2013: 13). The youth are the largest cohort of job seekers worldwide and are mostly affected by high rates of unemployment (Cloete 2015: 514).

Youth unemployment rates are more prevalent in developing countries of the Global South. The term Global South refers to regions in some parts of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania (Dados and Connell 2012: 12). The term is used synonymously with 'Third World' and denotes those regions with lower development and income rates and are often marginalised either culturally and/or politically (Dados and Connell 2012: 12). South Africa as part of the Global South, has the highest unemployment rate in the world. According to the World Population Review (2022), South Africa was leading with an unemployment rate of 29.2% in 2019. The plight of youth unemployment in South Africa is chronic, especially among black

youths (Yu 2013: 13). The advent of the global pandemic of Covid-19 has worsened an already declining economic growth in South Africa. Figure 12 in the appendices is a visual representation of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) statistics for the first quarter of 2021. Data indicates that the official unemployment rate in South Africa during that period was 32,6% (Stats SA 2021). The plight of unemployment burdens the youth as they account for 59,5% of the official unemployment rate in South Africa. The unemployment rate of young people between the ages of 15 and 34 was estimated to be at 46,3% in the first quarter of 2021 (Stats SA 2021). Statistics show that those aged between 15 and 24 are more affected by unemployment with a rate of over 63%. Moreover, the absorption rate into the labour market for this age was at least 7,6%. According to Stats SA (2021), youth unemployment continues to rise rapidly despite the level of education. The unemployment rate of graduates aged 15-24 was 40,3% and 25,5% for those aged 25-34 (Stats SA 2021). Moreover, within the youth unemployment rates, there are young people who are not active participants in the labour market and are not in the education and training sector. The QLFS categorises these individuals under the Not in Employment, Education, and Training (NEET). These young people were mostly aged 15-24 and accounted for 32,4% of the unemployment rates in the first quarter of 2021. This means that 3,3 million young persons aged 15-24 were not participating in the labour market in quarter 1 of 2021 (stats SA 2021).

There are various reasons to account for the proliferation of youth unemployment in South Africa. Graham and Mlatsheni (2015: 153) highlight four major contributors to the plight of youth unemployment. These are namely: academic challenges in schooling, post-matriculant educational systems, labour market structures, and personal and community backgrounds (Graham and Mlatsheni 2015: 153). According to Yu (2013: 13), there exists a discrepancy between skills yielded by the education systems and skills required in the labour market. Youth with post-secondary school education which does not fit with the demands of the labour market face difficulties in entering the labour market (Marumo and Sebolaaneng 2019: 13479). Youth struggle to secure employment due to the lack of transportation to seek jobs, lack of finances, and because most are located in poor and desolate areas further from job opportunities (Van Aardt 2012: 55). Moreover, population growth also contributes to the increment in unemployment: as the population grows, the labour market does not grow at the same rate (Cloete 2015: 515).

Despite the common causes of youth unemployment in South Africa, research by Statistics SA (2021) shows that youth unemployment exists even among the educated and those with better

socioeconomic status. Young people with relatively better education struggle to enter the labour market. This is because South Africa's economy has little to no formal sector jobs to be able to absorb newer entrants into the labour market (Van Aardt 2012: 56). Youth unemployment is also prevalent among those residing in urban areas (Mago 2018: 1). This is because unemployed young people with a better socio-economic background tend to pick and choose or wait for those jobs which match their wage expectations (Mago 2018: 1).

According to Mlatsheni and Leibbrandt (2011: 120), there are two major features that limit the successful absorption of young people into the labour market. These are, namely, human capital processes that necessitate entry into the labour market and the workforce environment which greatly challenges young people. The majority of job-seeking young people are disproportionally affected by the plight of unemployment due to the great demand for skilled labourers in the market (Marumo and Sebolaaneng 2019: 13479). For example, the current labour market has a high demand for technological and digital skills among job seekers with post-matric education (Graham and Mlatsheni 2015: 154). In most cases, the call for skilled labour is contradictory to the socio-economic realities of the majority of young South Africans (Graham and Mlatsheni 2015: 155). These factors necessitate the importance of the discussion about youth unemployment in South Africa and globally.

Youth unemployment is a global crisis with negative implications on the global economy, and political and social aspects of life. Although youth unemployment is a global issue, the rate, effect, depth, and severity vary from region to region (Mago 2018: 1). Mlatsheni and Leibbrandt (2011: 119) argue that the prolonged deprivation of income and independence imposes great social and psychological effects on those who are unemployed. The plight of youth unemployment has negative implications on the health and well-being of its victims (Graham and Mlatsheni 2015: 156). According to Mlatsheni and Leibbrandt (2011: 119), the extended period of lack of employment is a key marker and a crucial form of social exclusion. Long-term unemployment is intertwined with poverty, which perpetuates heightened socio-economic inequality (Yu 2013: 13). Conversely, Cloete (2015: 519) argues that unemployment leads to poverty, and poverty is the highest contributor to unemployment and its continuation.

A number of debates concerning youth unemployment propose entrepreneurship as the remedial action for this form of social exclusion (Mlatsheni and Liebbrandt, 2011; Chiguta, 2017). This trend is also observable in discussions on *Daily Thetha* episodes where debaters propose entrepreneurship as the solution to youth unemployment. This relationship between

unemployment and entrepreneurship will be discussed briefly in the analytical chapters of this study. Chigunta (2017: 435) highlights the importance of political and economic policies that promote entrepreneurship as a youth development policy in developing countries such as South Africa. Mlatsheni and Leibbrandt (2011: 119) argue that youth development heavily relies on employment. The South African government suggests and promotes the development of small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) as a way to mitigate youth unemployment. Chigunta (2017: 435) argues that job creation for youth in Africa is largely produced through and dependent on entrepreneurship. However, Mlatsheni and Leibbrandt (2011: 121) assert that entrepreneurship emerging out of necessity as opposed to opportunity becomes unsustainable. This is because this type of entrepreneurship lacks vision, and only emerges due to the lack of other resources (Mlatsheni and Leibbrandt 2011: 121). This means that young people who are forced into entrepreneurship due to the lack of employment are likely to face possible failure.

2.2. **The History and Culture of Television Talk Shows**

Since their emergence in the United States in the 1950s, television talk shows have attracted mass communication scholars (Greenberg et al. 1997; Woo and Dominick 2001; Rubin and Step 1997). Research on television focuses on a wide range of factors: writers and producers, guests, in-studio audiences, hosts, and the medium itself. Literature on television talk shows, both academically and in social arenas has shed light on wider and far-reaching themes (Bode et al. 2018; Greenberg et al. 1997; Tolson 2001; Timber and Erler 2010). Existing literature on television talk shows engage in an interesting debate. Whilst scholars from varying perspectives view the phenomenon as a good influence on the public (Oumlil 2017; Tavernaro-Haidarian 2017), a number of critics are opposed to this notion and characterises these television programmes as controversial (Mittel, 2003; Tolson 2010; Timberg and Erler 2010; Woo and Dominick, 2001). Tolson (2001: 5) argues that the popularity and controversy of talk shows emanate from the gratification of observing and listening to others participate in colloquial types of talk.

Television talk shows are an invention of twentieth-century broadcasting. Since their earliest invention, television talk shows have developed into several varying formats (Rubin and Step 1997: 109). There are various conceptions of what constitutes television talk shows. Scholars define the phenomenon differently based on the locale, the format, and the target audiences. Tolson (2001: 6) discusses the performance of talk in relation to mediated talk shows. Tolson (2001: 6) argues that the concept of a talk show has two meanings. First, it refers to an interview or a chat with a celebrity (Tolson 2001: 5). This form of talk show dominates the

US media landscape. Second, the concept points to shows with featured guests and involves audience participation. Similarly, Marsh and Bishop (2014: 18) argue that television talk shows are categorised under a wide range of reality TV programming. The discursive performance of talk in talk shows allures modern-day audiences (Tolson 2001: 5).

Marsh and Bishop (2014: 20) describe television talk shows in two ways, first as a benign form and as trash television. Benign forms of television talk shows fixate largely on the interviewing of celebrity guests, whilst trash tv involves ordinary members of the public discussing their issues to the audience and the studio (Marsh and Bishop 2014: 22). *Daily Thetha* is a hybrid of the two meanings of television talk shows. Celebrities are invited onto the show as experts to discuss topics related to the entertainment industry. In comparison with radio talk shows, television talk shows are more structured and preplanned, with little spontaneity. Although television talk shows are inherently topical, the format and style adopted by each show are deliberate and uniquely designed to appeal to their ideal audience. Moreover, television talk shows are discursive platforms where communication about a wide range of topics occurs (Tavernaro-Haidarian 2017: 439). Talk show hosts moderate these discussions and engage the audience, both in the studio and at home (Tavernaro-Haidarian 2017: 440).

In the study exploring the representations of women in Moroccan television talk shows, Oumlil (2017: 436) argued that television talk shows are designed in accordance with a format. The author discussed two formats: first, talk shows that express the views and voices of certain groups within the society, and second, a format that allows debate, tension, and conflict. The second format is also referred to as 'conversational violence' because they include insults, interruptions, and insults (Oumlil 2017: 437). Although each region and country prefer a particular format over the other, the South African media space embraces both these formats. In reference to the first format, *Daily Thetha* is youth-based and expresses views of the youth on political issues in South Africa, and it is hosted by young presenters. Although discussions occur in forms of debate, there is no tension and insults among debators. Moreover, Mittel (2003) used his study to explore the varying conventions of television talk shows from audiences. The author used a qualitative survey to explore the ways that audiences perceive television talk shows. According to Mittel (2003: 36), cultural critics of television talk shows perceive them as a source of differing societal ills ranging from stirring acts of violence to enabling sexual misconduct. Mittel (2003: 36) argues that television talk shows function as a site for identity construction and cultural orders for television viewers. For Mittel (2003: 36),

the definitions of television talk shows vary due to the existing discursive practices and cultural conventions embedded within television programs.

Conflicting debates exist with a key concern on the content, the audience, and the influence that television shows exert. Greenberg et al. (1997: 413) characterised television talk shows as representing controversial media content. Tolson (2001: 7) highlights the two biggest research controversies pertaining to television talk shows. The first controversy relates television talk shows to mass media debates around moral panics. This is because television talk shows are viewed as a site for sensationalism, conflict, and performance Tavernaro-Haidarian (2017: 436). Consequently, television talk shows are believed to exert negative effects on audiences (Tolson 2001: 7). Moreover, Tolson (2001: 7) posits a contrasting controversy that perceives television talk shows as the public sphere. The importance of mediated talk shows lies in their focus on the significant public debate (Tolson 2001: 7). This study will determine whether political discussions mediated on *Daily Thetha* encourage public debate on imperative societal issues.

Based on the analysis of daytime television talk shows in America, Greenberg et al. (1997: 414) argued that television talk show content receives the highest criticism. The inventions of popular American television talk shows hosted by Geraldo Rivera, Oprah Winfrey, and Dr. Phil were considered inappropriate and less engaged in educational and informative content (Timberg and Erler 2010: 4). Woo and Dominick (2001: 599) argue that talk shows, specifically daytime talk, deliberately propel controversy. Central to television talk criticism are the topics of discussion and the groups of people associated with them. The earliest critics debated whether social markers such as issues of race, class, age, and sexuality, were appropriate or relevant for television broadcasting and consumption by the public (Greenberg et al. 1997; Woo and Dominick 2001). Similarly, Greenberg et al. (1997: 415) highlighted that the predominance of sexual themes and debates on sexual practices, deviance, and orientations raised much concern for many critics.

Despite arguments proposed by these scholars, the media landscape of the 21st century, with the aid of the internet, produces content in line with prevalent societal issues. The existence of social media creates alternative media platforms where socio-political issues such as race, gender, and sexuality are debated and form public opinion. Mainstream television talk shows such as *Daily Thetha* shed light on current issues that affect society and that are in the public domain. Conversely, Timberg and Erler (2010) present counterclaims in favor of its broadcast.

Timberg and Erler (2010: 5) argue that television plays a vital role in the public sphere. Similarly, Tolson (2001: 7) discusses a few examples to intensify the debate on Habermas's theory of the public sphere. Tolson (2001: 7) asserts that TV talk shows, with their varying dispositions of audience engagement, establish a new kind of public sphere. To support this thesis, Tolson (2001: 8) argues that "talk shows deliver a new kind of public forum that allows a diversity of voices to be heard."

Television talk shows are considered progressive and democratic (Timberg and Erler 2010: 4). Talk shows are also regarded as political forms of mass communication due to their democratic design (Oumlil 2017: 439). Talk shows provide a platform for varying views and more especially for the expression of marginalised voices (Oumlil 2017: 439). Conversely, Oumlil (2017: 439) argues that mediated talk shows are crucial outlets for discussing societal issues. Moreover, Oumlil (2017: 439) argues that talk shows hold a 'pedagogical function' because they contribute to mass media socialisation by imparting ideas, norms, and values to the minds of audiences. This functionalist view of television talk shows posits that they are a significant medium in society. The ways that this medium affect and influence its audiences are therefore worth studying.

2.3. **Communication for Social Change: Media and Public Awareness**

Advances in traditional mass communication texts such as television, radio, and print have been a catalyst for media research in exploring the role that the media plays in society. In a general sense, the media is a source of information, narrowing down its primary role to communicating and disseminating information through various channels. This section specifically discusses literature focused on the role of the media in disseminating information which raises public awareness.

To better understand the role of the media in raising awareness, it is imperative to analyse its context and position in the overarching discipline of mass media. A copious amount of literature examines the role of the media in communicating health information and raising public awareness (Sern and Zanuddin 2015; Tully et al. 2019; Catalan-Matamoros and Penafiel-Saiz 2019; Elrod and Fortenberry 2020; Aung et al. 2019). Catalan-Mtamoros and Penafiel-Saiz (2019) conducted a study which highlights key issues in the debate about the media and its role in raising public awareness. Research data from this study revealed that print media had positive effects on communicating information. This pattern is also observed in various research papers (Sern and Zanuddin 2015; Tully et al. 2019; Elrod and Fortenberry

2020; Aung et al. 2019). However, Catalan-Mtamoros and Penafiel-Saiz (2019: 414) highlighted three issues related to print media and raising awareness. First, they highlight a biased representation which favoured the status quo and the ruling class (pharmaceutical companies for example) over consumers. Secondly, they observed an information disparity which limited informed dialogue. Lastly, Catalan-Mtamoros and Penafiel-Saiz (2019: 419) observed a gap between newspaper content and information that is accurate for consumers.

Similarly, Tully et al. (2019) provided empirical analyses of the role of the media in raising public awareness of parenting programmes. Their research focused on the relationship between media exposure and knowledge. Their data indicated knowledge variation between participants who had exposure to media campaigns and those who did not. Participants who have been exposed to parenting media campaigns were more knowledgeable about parenting programmes whilst participants with less exposure showed little knowledge about the matter. However, given their findings, the authors made an interesting observation that overall attitude towards media information is a prerequisite which determined the interest in and the attention given to media campaigns. Despite the effectiveness of media texts in raising public awareness, Sern and Zanuddin (2015: 12) argue that mediated communication often lacks practical solutions and is rarely succeeded by policymaking.

Similar to the global trend, debates about the role of the media in raising public awareness in South Africa are largely based on health issues, climate change, and more recently, Covid-19. The existing literature provides an overview of the effectiveness of mass media content in raising awareness and fostering change among their audiences. This is a crucial element central to this study. Literature focusing on media public awareness and young audiences in South Africa are focused on health education about HIV and other STDs. Mass media communication is used as one of the effective tools to enhance health awareness of the spread of HIV in South Africa. Media programs such as *SoulCity*, *Intersextions,* and *LoveLife* programmes were designed to increase awareness of HIV and promote healthy sexual lifestyles. A recent study by Odimegwu et al. (2020) examined the effects of exposure to HIV communication programmes on condom use among South African young people between the ages of 16-24. Their research results indicated that higher exposure to HIV media campaigns heightened the likelihood of condom use. This research result is statistically significant with regard to age, education, employment status, etc. For example, research revealed that respondents with a higher socio-economic status, who had passed matric and lived in urban settlements had the highest exposure to HIV media campaigns and an increased frequency of condom use. Their

study significantly highlights the importance of audience demographics in media reception research.

Similarly, a South African-based study on media exposure and raising public awareness was conducted by Wentzel-Viljoen et al. (2017). The research team evaluated the role of communication programmes in increasing awareness of the reduction of discretionary salt use among black women aged 18-55 in South Africa. Wentzel-Viljoen and team found that respondents with exposure to radio and television adverts containing information about the reduction in the usage of discretionary salt showed significant changes in behaviour and knowledge. Although a number of studies found a positive relationship between media exposure and change in behaviour among audiences, some scholars presented contradicting results. Mai Do and colleagues (2016) studied media exposure effects on HIV testing among youth aged 16-24 in South Africa. Similar to Odimegwu et al.'s study discussed above, media exposure to HIV testing programmes was higher among respondents with higher socio-economic status and education. This research study revealed that the effectiveness of HIV testing media campaigns relied on mediated discussions. The direct HIV media programmes alone were not impactful in encouraging HIV testing among youth in South Africa. Moreover, Do et al. (2016: 2034) highlighted that respondents with prior knowledge about the topic found interest and relevance in the media campaigns.

2.4. **Media and Democracy**

The media are powerful contributors to the state of democracy in different societies. They influence public opinion and policy making. The role that the media play in promoting and maintaining democratic ideals is critical not only in South Africa but globally (Ceron and Memoli 2015: 341). The constitution of South Africa and the Bill of Rights highlights the importance of freedom of expression, including the freedom to access and share ideas as well as the freedom of the press (Bill of Rights, Section 16(1)). Television talk shows and particularly, *Daily Thetha*, are entirely dedicated to the communicative exchange of ideas and information and therefore play an important role in the sustenance and solidifying of democracy in South Africa. The media offers a glimpse into the political state of affairs in society.

Studies relating to mass media and democracy date back to the early 1960s (Lardner 1993). Govender (2019) discussed the role of the media in society using the libertarian theory. She highlighted that the media are an information source and a platform for public debate

(Govender 2019: 10). Similarly, Safdar et al. (2015: 949) argued that the media, television in particular, largely contributes to the development of political public opinion. Fundamental to democracy is the freedom of the media (Safdar et al. 2015:949). Ceron and Memoli (2015: 341) argue that the state of democracy is defined by its freedom to broadcast varying viewpoints and political information. Ceron and Memoli (2015: 341) highlighted that the media have an obligation to disseminate information to citizens and expand their level of awareness on various issues. Information communicated on *Daily Thetha* is disseminated through various platforms, on television through a national broadcaster, and on social media networks such as Facebook Live, YouTube, and TikTok.

Moreover, the media play a role in achieving and maintaining representative democracy (Ceron and Memoli 2015: 342). In their study exploring citizens' satisfaction with democracy, (Ceron and Memoli 2015: 342) found that the accessibility of political information from the media intensified trust between the media and audiences. According to Ceron and Memoli (2015: 345), the broadcast of political information by the media strengthens interest, knowledge, and engagement in political issues. The levels of participation and interest in political affairs are greatly determined by the audience's trust in the media as a progressive tool for democracy (Ceron and Memoli (2015: 345). *Daily Thetha* encourages representative democracy by offering audiences a chance to participate in the conversation through social media platforms, as well as in-studio guests for the broadcasting of the show. Young people from all walks of life and with varying social markers, can engage with the show and present their own views on the topic discussed in the show.

Safdar and colleagues (2015) studied the media's role in raising political awareness and forming public opinion in Southern Pakistan. According to Safdar et al. (2015: 950), the media is a powerful instrument in steering the public's view of interests, behavior, and opinion. The researchers surveyed 450 participants between the ages of 18 and 48 across six districts of Pakistan. Eighty-three percent of the participants agreed that the media is a great tool for promoting democracy, whilst 63,3% of respondents agreed that the media influence political opinion. Moreover, 76, 2 % of respondents agreed that television is more effective in raising political awareness than radio. Similarly, 59,1 % of respondents agreed that talk shows, on both television and radio, contribute to and promote democracy. Similarly, Stoddard (2014: 1) contributes crucial insights into the relationship between the media, democracy, and education. The author argues that the role of the media as an instrument for education is imperative and a great contribution to democratic education (Stoddard 2014: 1). Stoddard (2014: 1) highlights

the importance of democratic education in a media ecology dominated by young people. For Stoddard (2014: 1), the media is crucial for encouraging global citizenship among youth, as well as developing skills and knowledge.

Lardner (1993) contextualises the relationship between the media and democracy in an African context. Lardner (1993: 89) brings into focus three crucial elements that underpin this relationship. The first element refers to the widening of African media and the kind that is specifically tailored for the African context. The second element focuses on the role of the media in the continent versus the state of democracy. The third element highlights the use of technological tools to democratise and disperse the flow of information (Lardner 1993: 89). The manifestation of the third element is most salient in the present-day political and social movements largely facilitated digitally. African media have traditionally been controlled by the state due to colonialisation. The flow and control of information inherited previous colonial policies even after the attainment of independence (Lardner 1993: 89). The process of democratisation in Africa relies on the role of the media being an agent for development and having independence from state control (Lardner 1993: 89).

Moreover, there is growing literature on mass communication in relation to democracy and transformation on the African continent. Hyden et al. (2003) discuss the role of the media in fostering political transformation in Africa. Hyden et al. (2003: 1) argued that the democratisation process of the media does not occur exclusively from exposure to media content. Moreover, Hyden et al. (2003: 1) argued that strengthening freedom of expression increases citizens' confidence in participating in political processes. There is a great contestation of the limitations of the freedom of expression in Africa and a demand for it in the public domain (Hyden et al. 2003: 1). In the context of their discussion about democratisation and African media systems, Hyden et al. (2003: 1) concluded that mass communication influences the political arena and behaviour of political actors, whilst political actors also shape the information communicated, and the ways that it is communicated.

Aalberg and Curran (2012: 4) argue that political awareness is key to the functioning of democracy in society. The media has the mandate to deliver relevant and current information on current affairs (Aalberg and Curran 2012: 4) The free flow of information is crucial for democracy for two main reasons. First, it assists citizens to make informed choices. Second, it helps citizens to hold government officials accountable (Aalberg and Curran 2012: 5). Aalberg

and Curran (2012: 6) argue that informed citizens are more inclined to have a critical and meaningful attitude towards issues and the freedom to express their political viewpoints.

2.4.1. The South African Media and Democracy

The existing literature on the South African media and the public sphere is largely based on the democratisation of the media. South Africa has a history of racial segregation that was legalised and maintained through apartheid laws. Thus, the South African media play an important role in the process of social transformation in the post-apartheid era. Zegeye and Harris (2003: 1) argue that South African mass communications are a crucial component of the continuing democratisation of the political system. The South African mass media offer an imperative forum for public debate and the shaping of public opinion in society (Zegeye and Harris 2003: 1). Research in media studies of the 20th and 21st centuries show a positive relationship between democracy and systems of communication in South Africa (Jacobs 2002: 280) (Zegeye and Harris 2003: 20). Zegeye and Harris (2003: 20) argue that the condition of democracy in South Africa is connected to the condition of systems of communication. Although the health of democracy cannot merely be lessened to the health of the media, democratic states have to ensure a free flow of information and communication (Zegeye and Harris 2003: 20).

The media acts as vehicles for public debate and opinion formation in South Africa. The majority of societal communication occurs within the mass media (Zegeye and Harris 2003: 20). The great concern for democracy by contemporary societies necessitates the concern about the types and consequences of the mass media (Zegeye and Harris 2003: 20). According to Zegeye and Harris (2003: 20), the South African media have had a great influence in the democratisation of the political system in the post-apartheid period. Debates concerning the media in South Africa are often related to democracy (Jacobs 2002: 280). Jacobs (2002: 295) argues that the media, as a "liberal democratic institution of civil society", largely influences the process of democratising the public political arena. The South African media landscape in the post-apartheid period focuses largely on media freedom and state intervention. It is mostly concerned with how the state obstructs or hinders media freedom (Jacob 2002: 295).

The process of democratisation and the enhancement of transformation in South Africa is mandated by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) among other institutions. The SABC is a public service broadcaster with the aim to "safeguard, enrich and strengthen

the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of South Africa" (SABC 2021). The media system of public broadcasting is an invention of the 1920s and is largely based on the BBC's motto "to inform, to educate, to entertain" (Wilson 2020: 253). Harrison and Wood (2001) discuss various roles that the Public Service Broadcaster (PSB) serve in society. They argue that the role of a PSB in a society is characterised by its cultural, social, and democratic functions. PSB's serve to encourage social cohesion, democracy, pluralism, and diversity (Harrison and Wood, 2001: 480).

The SABC has a formal framework and policy that are particularly suitable for the nation of South Africa. According to the SABC Broadcasting Act, the public service broadcaster aims to "contribute to democracy, development of society, gender equality, nation building, provision of education and strengthening the spiritual and moral fiber of the society" (SABC 2021). The television talk show, *Daily Thetha* is a SABC Education initiative that fulfils the educational mandate of the public broadcaster (SABC 2021). Horowitz and Michalis (2020) in agreement with Armstrong (2005: 287) similarly highlights the importance of educational content by PSB's. The scholars argue that programming which serves to educate the public should be more prioritised, including programming that educates on national and regional identity (Armstrong 2005: 287). On SABC, this mandate is achieved by "delivering compelling educational content for diverse audiences in South Africa and the rest of Africa" (SABC 2021). Central to this study is exploring whether or not the television talk show, *Daily Thetha*, as a product of the SABC, educates, and impacts the youth of South Africa through its content.

2.5. **Understanding Contemporary Audiences**

This section provides an overview of both classical and contemporary studies of media audiences and the overarching debates that underpin them. This discussion will outline how media audiences have been studied in the past and how the literature on media audiences has evolved over the years.

Studies of media audiences date back as far as the first World War when mass media were viewed as a tool to spread propaganda. Early scholars at Frankfort School began examining the use of propaganda and persuasive campaigns and techniques and the effects they exerted on audiences, or the masses (Gullace 2011: 687). Classical mass communication theories of media effects perceived mass media as a powerful tool that influenced and persuaded the powerless public. Several early studies postulated that vulnerable individuals were at the mercy of the mass media (Robertson 2014: 246). Interestingly, the concept of 'mass communication'

emerged as an umbrella term to encompass research and theories devoted to media effects (Valkenburg and Oliver 2019: 18). A substantial body of literature emerged when early scholars used varying paradigms to explore the relationship between the media and audiences. The advent and popularity of traditional media, particularly television, radio, and print, in the early 1990s, propelled many media scholars to study the effects that media exert on audiences (Nwabueza and Okonkwo 2018: 1). Moreover, the term 'mass' was not exclusive to audience reach, it pointed also to the homogeneity of media use and effects (Valkenburg and Oliver 2019: 19). Audience research studies have historically aimed at exploring the relationship between the media and society (Baya 2013).

Livingstone (1998: 20) highlights that the early conceptualisation of media effects theories was grounded in studies on child audiences and the effects of violent content, with no account for different social groups, cultures, and institutions. The author asserts that research devoted to media effects of violent content presents a bidirectional contention. Livingstone (1998: 20) presented empirically grounded evidence that indicated that audiences selectively opted to consume violent media texts. This, however, does not negate the possible effects of consuming such texts or that those willing consumers can effectively subvert any probable effects (Livingstone 1996). Furthermore, Livingstone (1996: 307) argued that in a broad sense, media effects theory is also inclusive of the relationship between the media and politics, the public, health institutions, or education. According to the author, these are important aspects that early literature failed to consider. Livingstone (1996: 310) highlights that early research on media effects was subject to epistemological confinements of social science research. These were partly driven by the governmental agenda of education, restriction, and regulation, without serving the interest of media theory.

Since the inception of early mass communication media effects, scholars have searched for alternative ways to interpret and define media influence and processes. Media research has shifted from the notion that media influence flows through a linear channel to a homogenous, passive, and uncritical audience (Pantic 2020: 150). The contemporary media arena is constantly being reshaped to accommodate ongoing digital and technological developments. In a compelling article, *"Audiences Across Media",* Jensen and Helles (2015: 8) entered into a discussion about contemporary digital media and audiences. Jensen and Helles (2015: 8) argued that despite the digitisation of the media globally, the geographical and cultural contexts of audiences remain key to understanding them. The cultural context of media users refers to varying sets of economic, political, and/or media systems (Jensen and Helles 2015: 8). Jensen

and Helles (2015: 8) view media consumers as cultural agents "who participate in, and contribute to, the ongoing structuration of their societies." Mediated discussions on *Daily Thetha* show young audiences participating in and contributing to debates about social issues which are of national importance and in the interest of the public. Participation and contribution occur both in the studio and by using digital platforms. Jensen and Helles (2015: 8) argue that digital media aids the culture of media participation among audiences.

Baya (2013) adopts an interesting standpoint about contemporary media audiences in post-postmodern societies. The author highlighted that postmodern media reception studies focused on individualised interpretations of media texts and argued for the development of newer perspectives to study audiences in a highly digitised media arena. This is because the advent of online media has made it possible for media users to become both producers and consumers of media content. This is exemplified by audiences on *Daily Thetha*, where audiences watch and consume content on the show and, in turn, create their own on social media platforms by either commenting on the topic or creating a new post. In Baya's view (2013: 158), we are in "a new era of cultural history, which is dominated by the paradoxical combination of social automation and individual automation" (Baya 2013: 159). The researcher's argument is however dismissed by Samuels (2010). According to Samuels (2010: 21), the current media landscape that is infiltrated by the internet is characterised as the 'automodern' media. Samuels (2010: 21) defines 'automodern' as the automated digital tools that afford digital users an increased sense of power and control over what they consume and over the public sphere.

In *Media Effects*, Potter (2012: 8) ventures into a significant and interesting discussion about the importance of media effects research. Media texts are now ubiquitous and have exponentially increased due to technological and digital advances. Advertising agencies spend millions to reach audiences on both traditional and digital mediums to increase sales. Potter (2012: 9) argues that the media is responsible for various effects, in part, that may often go unnoticed. Contemporary societies are heavily saturated with media content, and the media are responsible for distributing messages to the masses. Media use is at its highest and continues to increase as the digital arena expands. Additionally, media use is even more prevalent among people in their youth than in the elderly (Potter 2012: 9). The rise of media use has also increased information sharing. Information is continually being produced, reproduced, and shared across various media platforms. This is exemplified on *Daily Thetha* where home audiences receive information and either create their own to share on the show or reproduce it

by posting on social media platforms. The media are a significant part of the everyday life of modern societies.

The media offer various choices of content to consume (Potter 2012: 12). Media users consume information out of choice and for various reasons. This echoes contentions of uses and gratification of media effects studies. Several scholars align with the argument that the uses and gratification model is a significant framework to elucidate that media audiences actively select media texts based on motivation and choice (Nabi and Oliver 2009; Rathnayake and Winter 2009; Can et al. 2019; Ma et al. 2021; Pantic 2020; and Mondi et al. 2008). Similarly, *Daily Thetha's* young audiences have various options of television shows and/or other media content that they can consume, but they still choose to tune in regularly between 10h30 and 11h30 from Monday to Thursday.

Nabi and Oliver (2009: 8) critically discuss the background and development of the uses and gratification theory. In the wake of its historical formation, the uses and gratification marked a paradigm shift for mass communication research of media effects studies. Uses and gratifications researchers shifted from the perception of "what do media do to people" to an important query of "what do people do with the media" (Nabi and Oliver 2009: 8). Nabi and Oliver (2009: 8) argue that the study of media effects does not occur in isolation from the audience. They stated that "if we seek to explain media effects, we must first understand media audiences" (Nabi and Oliver 2009: 8). Researchers aim to answer 'how' and 'why' individuals actively consume media texts to satiate specific needs (Can, Gemelz-Burakgazi, and Celik 2019). These needs are characterised as follows: affective, cognitive, and social needs (Ma et al. 2021). In addition to the list, Rathnayake and Winter (2018: 373) discuss that audiences seek to satisfy the following needs: these are namely, tension release and personal integrative needs.

Can, Gemelz-Burakgazi, and Celik (2019) point out that uses and gratifications are a psychological communication perspective. Can and colleagues propose that audience behavior is driven and willful. Equally, Nabi and Oliver (2009: 10) concur with this contention by pointing out the importance of psychological and social elements, relationships, and social groups, which intercede in communication behavior and influence. Can et al. (2019: 90) propose that media users each have varying motives and reasons for media texts of their choice. To support their contention, Can et al. (2019: 91) argue that "cognitive and affective needs motivate people's choices when consuming media and reveal the consequences that follow

from needs, motives, and behavior." For Pantic (2020: 150), research on uses and gratification requires recognising the idiosyncratic 'uses and gratifications' of audiences, and developing and testing measures on different groups, platforms, and locations. Consequently, a growing body of literature examines the uses and gratification in the context of digital media (Mondi, Woods, and Rafi 2008; Can et al. 2019; Rathnayake and Winter 2018; Pantic 2020). In the study of students' perceived e-learning experience, Mondi et al. (2008: 245) argue that the advent of digital media produces new uses and gratifications worth studying.

Potter (2012: 15) maps out the media effects literature into two sections. The first section focuses on media influences on individuals, and the second focuses on media effects on macro units such as society, institutions, and the public (Potter 2012: 15). Early researchers largely based their literature on the former whilst neglecting the latter. For Potter (2012: 16) media exposure is intertwined with attention. Essentially, both exposure and attention are prerequisites for media texts to successfully take effect on audiences. In media effects studies, experiential inspections are continuously subject to differences (Livingstone 1998: 7). Different research yields varying results based on empirical design, the kind of effects under study, the target population, or the kind of media text (Livingstone 1996: 309). Observable variations are inexorable as far as audience research is concerned (Livingstone 1998: 9).

This chapter discussed classical and contemporary literature related to the aims of this study. The discussion of literature was categorised into themes. The first theme focused on youth unemployment in South Africa by discussing the causes, rates, and effects. The South African education system and entry requirements into the labour market are the common causes of unemployment among youth in South Africa. Youth unemployment has negative effects on the social well-being of its victims, as well as the economic growth in society. *Daily Thetha* discusses this issue along with young people who are in the plight of unemployment in South Africa. Television talk shows are important for facilitating debates about important issues in society. Conversely, television talk shows are the public sphere where ordinary citizens discuss societal issues and form public opinion. The conceptual framework chapter to follow will theoretically demonstrates why television talk shows are regarded as the public sphere. The Habermas' (1962) theory of the public sphere will be discussed to provide a historical account of political and social debates which greatly impact society. Moreover, the media play an important role in raising political, economic, and social awareness of issues occurring in society. The media are significant for promoting and preserving democratic ideals in society such as freedom of speech and representative democracy. The SABC upholds a democratic

function in South Africa. *Daily Thetha* as a SABC Education initiative, aims to educate the youth on important societal issues. Lastly, this chapter has highlighted that media audiences are important to study in a society infiltrated with media texts. The manner in which media audiences are studied has shifted due to the media ecology that is now saturated with digital media. The next chapter will outline an audience-focused media effects theory. Reception theory will be used to explain varying factors that contribute to audience interpretation and engagement with media texts.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter discusses theoretical stances which locate this study to broader and overarching debates within media studies. In order to understand the relationship between media texts and audiences, as well as the resulting effects, this study draws from the following theoretical frameworks: Reception Theory and Habermas' theory of the public sphere. Reception Theory is imperative for this study as a theoretical background for understanding media audiences because this study is audience-focused. The discussion will thereafter explain various theoretical conceptions of the public sphere. The theory of the public sphere was coined by Habermas (1989) and is largely based on the formation of public opinion and democracy. The theory of the public sphere provides a theoretical background for political debates and how they impact citizens, the state, and democratic values. *Daily Thetha* as a debate-based television talk show signifies a specific kind of public sphere, where young people form public opinion and exercise their democratic rights.

3.1. Reception Theory

The media reception theory emerged from a socio-political stance that perceived audiences as active participants in cultural construction (White 1993: 9). Televisual texts are similar to all media texts in that they are "a site of struggle for meaning" (Castleberry 2016: 89). Reception theory is used in this study to examine the construction of social and cultural meanings between *Daily Thetha* and its audiences. Reception theory was developed on the premise that the relation and deconstruct of media messages are relative to audiences' cultural background, education, age, race, gender, and so forth (Staiger 2005: 2). Similarly, audience engagement with political messages communicated on *Daily Thetha* will be highly influenced and informed by the South African context within which these audiences are situated. In order to grasp the relationship between media texts and audiences, it is important to discuss theoretical conceptions of reception theory.

The study of audience reception is rooted in the social and historical literature on cultural and social meanings (Thompson 1993: 249). Reception theory focuses on exploring the interchangeability of media texts by identifying codes and conventions which have varying meanings for different audiences at different times (Staiger 2005: 2). Reception theory is not merely a hermeneutic study, nor does it intend to find the true or real meanings of media and cultural texts (Thompson 1993: 249). It explores "how does a text mean? For whom? In what circumstances? With what changing values over time" (Staiger 2005: 2). Moreover, reception

theory measures the degree to which textual meanings result in any effects, positive or negative, in social, political, cognitive, or emotional aspects of life (Staiger 2005: 2).

The definition of the term 'reception', in both theoretical and practical terms, is often juxtaposed with 'effect' or 'response' (Holub 2013). Reception is always related to the reader, whilst, response or effect is related to 'textual aspects' (Holub 2013). According to Holub (2013), reception theory entails an overall shift from the producer to a concern for the reader and the text, and their relationship thereof. In reception studies, the terms "viewer", "audience", "reader" and "spectator" are used interchangeably. For the purposes of this research, the term 'audience' is used as an umbrella term to refer to any individual who consumes any form of media text.

Studies focused on media reception use varying approaches in an attempt to explore the relationship between the audience and media texts. One such approach is the symbolic interactionist approach. The symbolic interactionist approach is a sociological theory that studies mutual interactions between individuals in a social environment and the meanings and symbols that emerge as a result (Aksan et al. 2009: 902). In relation to media reception studies, this approach views both media producers and consumers as integral to the production of meanings (White 1993: 13). The media reception theory is founded on the premise that both media producers and consumers are in constant negotiation with each other, in order to get responses that parallel the intentions of the other (White 1993: 13). This mutual interaction exists between the production of *Daily Thetha* content and the target audience. Issues faced by young South Africans are the focal point of the production of content on show. Young people form part of media production as members of the in-studio audience, as studio guests, as well as through social media posts integrated into the show. Audiences in turn interact with the show on a relational basis of issues being discussed.

Moreover, cultural studies give insight into the relationship between the media and audiences, and the construction of meaning (Hall 1993). Cultural studies view the mass media as a site where cultural meanings are evaluated and debated (Butsch and Livingstone 2013: 9). Critical cultural studies contend that the public cultural sphere of the media is managed by the dominant alliance, where audiences respond by either agreeing, challenging or reinterpreting preferred readings emerging from cultural businesses in a capitalist society (White 1993: 17). *Daily Thetha* audiences debate with messages communicated on the show through social media channels and more prominently, by using the Facebook comments section. Similarly, Strelitz

(2007: 40) argues that media texts are rich in political and social meanings, which either reinforce or contradict existing beliefs that govern their audience. Human beings are social creatures who constantly seek meaning. In this sense, meaning is constantly formed, re-formed, and transformed (White 1993: 14).

Furthermore, people continually question and reconstruct ideologies that govern their world (White 1993:14). Media audiences learn to negotiate with media texts and their constructed meanings with the aim to create, attain, and authenticate their subjective identities (Burgess 1990: 141). Similarly, White (1993: 14) argues that audiences use the media for both the definition and validation of identities. Media texts define social constructs such as masculine/feminine identities, status, and power relations (White 2993: 14). Therefore, it is vital for reception studies to take into account the details concerning everyday lives, which give context as to how audiences engage and respond to media texts (Livingstone 1998: 5). The construction of meaning embedded within media texts is used to interpret media uses and effects (Strelitz 1993: 38). This research is rooted in reception studies and aims to analyse those meanings using the audiences' focal point (White 1993: 9). Textual meanings de-constructed by audiences are highly influenced by their behaviour, beliefs, and attitudes (White 1993: 9). Ultimately, there are no universally accepted meanings of media texts, and thus their interpretations are subjective. Stuart Hall (1993) developed the encoding/decoding model based on this premise. Stuart Hall's (1993) model of encoding and decoding emerged from the theorist's interest in hegemony and the ways in which it upholds the status quo and the ruling class (Castleberry 2016: 85).

3.1.1 **Stuart Hall's Encoding and Decoding model**

Stuart Hall contributed to a branch of media studies that analysed the role of media audiences in 'the ideological role of media' (Castleberry 2016: 85). A communication model is defined as a formula consisting of a message, the sender, and the receiver (Castleberry 2016: 86). In the context of this research, the sender, *Daily Thetha*, transmits a message along mediums of television and Facebook Live, to a receiver, *Daily Thetha* fans, who then deconstructs the message (Castleberry 2016: 86). Media communication models have evolved and shifted from the traditional one-to-many model which restricted audience response. Contemporary audiences interact and respond to media texts in real-time and in various ways. *Daily Thetha* audiences respond by live commenting, liking, sharing posts, and calling during the show. This shift in communication culture signifies an integration between traditional and new media, a theoretical conception of convergence culture. According to Jenkins (2006), convergence

culture refers to "the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences." Despite the ongoing transformations of media models and communication patterns, encoding and decoding processes coined by Hall (1993) are still relevant in studies of contemporary audiences.

In order to understand the processes of media communication between *Daily Thetha* and its audiences, it is imperative that this research unpacks theoretical concepts of encoding and decoding models. These models of communication highlight the discursive use of language to create media messages and interpret them. Encoding and decoding models use a semiotic approach to explain a communication procedure between broadcasting producers and audiences. The semiotic approach of the model explores television discourse, communicative social relations, and varying 'competences' at the production phase, as well as the media consumption point in the use of language (Hall 2007: 386). According to Hall (2007: 368), television production methods and systems consist of a message or "sign vehicles." These messages of language operate through codes (Hall 2007: 386). The communication procedure at the production phase refers to the process of 'encoding' in this model of communication. The distribution of media messages to varying audiences becomes discursive due to the language codes embedded within them (Durham and Kellner 2009: 164). This makes both the encoding and decoding processes a language communication between media producers and the audience (Hall 2007: 386).

Based on the arguments above, *Daily Thetha* uses language to encode a message embedded with modes of discourse and delivers it to an audience. Moreover, the dissemination of this product and its response also occurs in the form of language codes (Hall 2007: 386). The communication process is completed when the message is interpreted or decoded in accordance with social rules (Hall 2007: 287). The message as a 'sign-vehicle' is therefore crucial to the communication exchange. The manner in which *Daily Thetha* audiences respond to and engage with messages cannot be isolated from the production process of encoding messages. Language use is central to both the creation and interpretation of a debate show televised for public consumption. Language embedded with discursive and ideological codes is used to communicate issues related to power, dominance, and democracy, and it is packaged as a product for the target audience. Conversely, the communicative model begins at the production level, where television production methods institute the message (Hall 2007: 287). Production methods do not occur exclusively from overarching socio-political and cultural systems which shape their topics, audiences, agendas, events, and the like (Hall 2007: 287).

Television production and reception procedures are related opposites of the communication process and are therefore not similar (Hall 2007: 287). Production methods produce a coded message relevant to the communication process (Hall 2007: 287). Based on the contention above, the communication process becomes void if the coded messages use a language that cannot be understood by the audience. The message will only have any kind of effect or be used or gratify a need, only when it is regarded as relevant and be decoded accordingly (Hall 2007: 288). In order for the communication process to be complete and impact the audience, there has to be comprehension and recognition of coded messages at the reception point of the communication process. Arguably, relativity is essential in both processes of encoding and decoding. The production point of communication has to package a message that speaks directly to its target audience in order to receive any kind of response. Producers of *Daily Thetha* create messages that mirror and relate to their young audiences in order to elicit a response and complete the communication process.

Mediated messages on television are deliberately and decisively encoded (Hall 2007). The process of encoding is worth noting, including the text design, the script, the cast, directors, the marketing strategy, the airing, the choice of network or streaming service, and commercials. (Castleberry 2016: 87). Everything is deliberate and never accidental when it comes to the encoding process (Castleberry 2016: 87). Similarly, the choice of airing *Daily Thetha* on a public broadcaster channel SABC1 and Facebook Live is important to note. This SABC channel caters largely to the black audience in the country and the programming is carried out in English, Nguni, and Sesotho languages. (SABC Annual report 2021 - 2022). The in-studio audience and the guests are largely made up of young black people. The choice of the timeslot is also important to take note of. The show airs Monday to Thursday between 10:30 and 11:30, meaning that the target audience is probably unemployed and black. As highlighted in chapter one, black young South Africans are mostly affected by high rates of unemployment, which makes SABC 1 the right platforms to air the show. Moreover, the rate of Facebook usage in South Africa is highest among the youth with a total of 66%. Facebook use is the highest for those aged 18 to 24 and 25 to 34, with 27.1 % and 29.4% respectively. The choice to air the show through Facebook Live is also deliberate in order to access and reach young people on the platform.

The process of decoding occurs in three potential categories for interpretation of media texts: the dominant-hegemonic position, negotiated position, and the oppositional position (Hall 1993: 101). Martin (2007) argues that audiences use these positions to interpret and make

meanings of cultural texts. Audiences decode meanings in diverse ways and these meanings are largely based on their subjective experiences and worldviews (Castleberry 2016: 85). The dominant-hegemonic position refers to instances where an audience member relates to the general ideology communicated through media texts (Hall 1993: 101). Both the sender and the receiver relate and conform to similar cultural biases, rule sets, and ideologies (Martin 2007). The transmission of ideas occurs with little miscommunication and/or misunderstanding.

Moreover, the negotiated position occurs when an audience member or receiver decodes and understands the sender's message and locates it within the domineering societal and cultural ideologies (Hall 1993: 102). Although the message is largely understood, there is a slight difference between the negotiated and the dominant-hegemonic position (Martin 2007: 1). In this instance, the receiver is not operating within the dominant ideology, rather, they are familiar with the hegemonic viewpoints but decode media texts critically (Durham and Kellner 2009: 168). Moreover, audience members may interpret the message on a more personal and contextual level, given that the message reflects their own biases and beliefs (Martin 2007). Lastly, the oppositional position of the decoding process refers to when the receiver decodes the message in the most accurate way but interprets an unintended meaning based on their own beliefs and rule set (Hall 1993: 102).

Due to the nature of debates, the discussions of varying topics presented on *Daily Thetha* will be decoded differently by different audiences. There is a greater possibility that audience interpretations of the televised debates will assume all three interpretive positions proposed by Hall (1993). This contention marks a paradigm shift from the traditional premise that all media messages are decoded as intended and responded to accordingly (Castleberry 2016: 84). The process of interpretation or decoding is based on audiences' ideologies based on race, gender norms, and beliefs, as well as the socio-economic status (Castleberry 2016: 89). Media producers encode messages in texts on the basis of their subjective ideas and views. In turn, those messages are decoded by the audience based on their subjective ideals and views (Garner 2010: 571). Consequently, the encoding and decoding processes may cause miscommunication between the reader and the receiver, with audiences interpreting messages contrary to the sender's intention (Martin 2007: 1).

3.2. **Habermas' Theory of the Public Sphere**

The discussions on *Daily Thetha* occur among an in-studio audience of young South Africans and studio guests as representatives of varying fields. This form of mediated communication and the space of discussion echoes the ideals of the Habermean theory of the public sphere. Habermas's theory of the public sphere is used in this study to provide an academic conception of political discussions and the power they have in shaping discourse and public opinion.

The theoretical stance of what is understood today as the public sphere was coined by Jürgen Habermas (1989) in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. The idea of a public sphere refers to an arena where rational individuals meet and engage in a joint discussion about various societal issues. These discussions occur in order to form public opinion and possibly reach political consensus. The joint discussions and debates have a greater impact on political actions and outcomes. The free expression of ideas contributes to participatory democracy - which empowers members of the civil society to form and shape politics and policies which govern them. Although the term 'public sphere' essentially refers to public debates, the scene or the setting, as well as participants, have evolved and changed over time. The concept of the public sphere is now inclusive of multiple publics and the recent emergence of digital publics. The existence of these multiple publics all serve a political purpose in varying democratic contexts. Although a single public no longer exists, the theory of the public sphere provides a critical background in the culture of communicative exchange in political debates.

Using the European bourgeois political life of the 17th and 18th centuries, the theory of the public sphere explores social positions under which a rational and critical argument relating to public issues occurs (Calhoun 1992: 1). Habermas (1989) posits "by 'public sphere' we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed." Gripsrud et al. (2010: 111) identified two main public spheres: the literary public sphere and the political public sphere. The literary public sphere challenges the basic qualities and ethical challenges of the state of humanity (Gripsrud et al. 2010: 111). The political public sphere is defined as a space where citizens form public opinion (Gripsrud et al. 2010: 111). Other theorists present parallel conceptions of the public sphere. Calhoun (1992: 7) perceived the classical bourgeois public sphere as "public individuals who join in a debate of issues bearing on the state of authority." Conversely, Dahlberg (2005: 111) posits that the public sphere can also be described as an "intersubjectively shared space" replicated through communicative

rationality. Political consensus is perceived as an imperative goal during participation in the public sphere (Fraser et al. 2014).

Based on the cultural nature of what constituted a public sphere in the political era of the 17th and 18th centuries, it is important to consider the types of individuals who participated in these debates. According to Calhoun (1992: 70), aristocrats were the main participators of the early bourgeois public sphere. An aristocrat is an individual who dwells at the tipping point of social hierarchies in society, or what could be also understood as elites. The class composition of the early public sphere was highly influenced by a society that was essentially bourgeois and that exhibited elitism. This highlights an important factor in the public sphere, that the social position of participants shapes the kind of public sphere that is formed. The kind of public sphere formed on *Daily Thetha* is young, predominantly black, and not gender specific. The conditions of participation in the *Daily Thetha* public sphere are mostly based on age and the ability to contribute to a political debate despite the differences in race, social class, or gender. Building on arguments made by Habermas concerning the classical public sphere, Dahlberg (2005) proposed the formal pragmatics or conditions of the debate required by participants engaged in the communicative exchange. Dahlberg (2005: 112) identified such conditions, which include but are not limited to "the reasoned critique of problematic validity claims, reflexivity, ideal role-taking, sincerity, formal inclusion, and discursive equality."

In Habermas' view, dialogues are the standard model of the type of communication that is democratic (Garnham 2007: 205). The quality of discourse as well as the quantity of participation are both paramount in democratic polity (Calhoun 1992: 2). Calhoun (1992: 6) argues that the significance of the public sphere relies on its possibility of being a "mode of societal integration." Fuchs (2014: 60) argues that the public sphere is linked to the notion of civil society. Civil society can be regarded as "a public realm of private individual's association" (Reitzes and Friedman 1996: 59). A civil society is important for democracy as it encourages citizen participation in public matters and the surveillance of the exercise of state power (Reitzes and Friedman 1996: 59). Garnham (2007: 203) argues that Habermas' main concern is the relationship between public and private autonomy, law and rights and the complexities that exist between them. The classical bourgeois public sphere echoed ideals of a society segregated from the state or ruler and separate from the public (Thompson 1993: 175). In other words, a sphere liberated from state censorship, private control, as well as commercial benefits (Fuchs 2014: 60), (Dahlberg 2005: 112).

3.2.1. **African traditional forms of the Public Sphere**

The classical concept of the public sphere is applicable to traditional African joint discussions in cultural settings of *kgoro* or *kgorong*. According to Kistner (2012: 1), traditional African collective discussions of *lekgotla* or *imbizo* are linked to the concept of *kgorong*. The African setting of *kgorong* has two distinctive connotations. First, it refers to a traditional setting of a fenced compound with shrubs, woods, and thorns. Secondly, it is a meeting area where community members, along with their traditional leaders, gather to discuss issues affecting their locale (Kistner 2012: 10). In essence, *kgorong* is a place where an *imbizo* or *lekgotla* takes place. *Imbizo* is an isiZulu term meaning the summon/calling, whilst *lekgotla/kgotla* is derived from Sesotho languages meaning 'meeting' or 'court'. Although the African traditional concept of *kgorong* is similar to the seventeenth and eighteenth-century European public sphere in terms of public discussions, the two differ significantly in terms of access and participation. Access and participation in the African concept of *kgoro/imbizo* are based on age, gender, and seniority. Kistner (2012: 11) posits that the African public sphere of *kgoro* represents a 'knowledge flow'. *Daily Thetha* represents a kind of African public sphere that is modernised through its technical tools that allow mediated communication.

The traditional nature of *lekgotla* or *imbizo* is used in modern-day South Africa as a mechanism for direct democracy. The post-apartheid government of South Africa adopted this traditional African collective communicative exchange into 'government *imbizo*' (Mathangu 2010: 84). Governmental *imbizo* was introduced in 2001 in order to strengthen democracy in South Africa (Mathangu 2010: 83). *Imbizo*, as a democratic tool, facilitates participatory democracy (Baloyi 2017). Governmental *imbizos* offer South African citizens the opportunity to raise their concerns and enter into a significant discussion with political leaders. The governmental *imbizo* takes place in all three spheres of government: mayoral, ministerial, as well as presidential. According to the Government Communicators' Handbook (2014: 57), *imbizo* is a "style of interactive governance and communication that should promote dialogue between government and people without mediation." A governmental *imbizo* is a democratic tool for cooperative engagements tailored for outcomes (Izimbizo Programme Definition 2015). Governmental *imbizos* remain largely traditional in present-day South Africa despite the presence of digital platforms for online engagement and feedback. Although discussions on *Daily Thetha* are not defined as governmental imbizo, they can, to a limited extent, be categorised as such. This is because government representatives often form part of discussions on the show. For example, in the discussion about youth unemployment in the episode, "Job-Hunting as a Full-Time Job",

a senior manager of the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) joined the conversation as a government representative.

3.2.2. **The public sphere and the Media**

The critical debates on the television talk show *Daily Thetha* are a perfect example of the convergence between the public sphere and the media. The influx and expansion of technical tools for mass dissemination have enabled the exposure of what could have been private political conversations. Similarly, Bruns and Highfield (2016: 56) argued that the infiltration of daily newspapers and the expansion of radio popularity in the 18th century greatly challenged early notions of the public sphere. The rational-critical public sphere of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was significantly substituted by a largely mediatised public sphere of the early 20th century (Bruns and Highfield 2016: 56). According to Habermas (1987), the early press played a significant role in the public sphere and was viewed as the convention for public reasoning (Gripsrud et al. 2010: 111). Newsletters as a broader literary form were used as a printed source of important 'public' information (Calhoun 1992: 8). Habermas (1984, 1987) posited that a medium is an object that facilitates social relations. Similarly, Fuchs (2014: 60) argues that the public sphere relies on the media for communication, information, and access for all citizens. Conversely, the media are "systems for publishing" – information mediums disseminate ideas in public to a wider range of people (Fuchs 2014: 66). Public information created by the media challenges people of different social roles, who in turn construct meanings due to that particular information (Fuchs 2014: 66). Media systems also require contribution from political systems (laws and regulations), and economic systems (Fuchs 2014: 66).

The Habermasean theory of the public sphere in media studies can be analysed using the western Marxist lens of "the structure and dynamics of capitalist societies and the role of the media within them" (Garnham 2007: 204). Garnham (2007: 204) argues that this analysis was crucial in order to shed light on the great surge of western democracies within the overarching social democratic welfare archetype of capitalism. The theory of the classical bourgeois public sphere in media studies examines the implications of print media in market economies (Calhoun 1992: 8). The media is seen as ideologically biased in terms of ownership structures, which are capitalist in nature (Calhoun 1992: 8). Calhoun (1992:8) argues that capitalist ownership of the media produces capitalist propaganda, which in turn leads to a conservative political system. Habermas thus formulated his concept of the public sphere as an arena

organised and framed by procedures of the mass media, particularly broadcast and print (Bruns and Highfield 2016: 56). As in the case of *Daily Thetha*, political communication is mediated by field experts consisting of television producers, scriptwriters, and the public – audiences – who are granted access into this arena of mediated communication.

3.2.3. **Digital Media, Democracy, and the Public Sphere**

The political discussions on *Daily Thetha* are mediated through multiple channels of communication including social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube. The study focuses on the digital broadcast of *Daily Thetha* episodes on Facebook Live, a livestream feature that allows digital audiences to access the debate and participate in real-time. Moreover, digital audiences on other digital spaces like Twitter are able to partake in the debate through commenting as it occurs live on television. The rise of social media networks critically challenges the early notions of the bourgeois public sphere. Benkler (2006: 213) contends that the advent of a networked public sphere has meant "the easy possibility of communicating effectively into the public sphere that allows individuals to reorient themselves from passive readers and listeners to potential speakers and participants in a conversation" (Benkler 2006: 213). The relationship between citizens and the public sphere has undergone tremendous change in recent years. Benkler (2006: 272) argues that ordinary citizens no longer dwell on the margins of the public sphere but are possible creators and participants. This study aims to investigate participants' engagement with *Daily Thetha* content through the social media platform Facebook. This will determine whether or not young people form part of the digital public sphere and participate in digital democracy.

Social media has proven to be more rapid, connected, and offer various spaces for discussion and distribution of news and public affairs (Bruns and Highfield 2016: 57). Moreover, Papacharissi (2009: 244) relates the existence of the internet with the emergence of the 'virtual sphere' where citizens participate in public debates and form public opinions. This political expression can be done in various ways, by posting viewpoints on blogs, partaking in virtual discussion groups, commenting on political topics, or posting visual political texts on YouTube (Papacharissi 2009: 244). Similarly, Burgess and Green (2009: 77) perceive YouTube as a "cultural public sphere". According to Burgess and Green (2009: 77), the video content sharing platform "is an enabler of encounters with cultural differences and the development of political 'listening' across belief systems and identities."

Social media platforms, particularly Twitter and Facebook, can be perceived as political public spheres due to their ability to rally political protests and give citizens a voice (Fuchs 2014: 86). The majority of today's political movements use the internet to gain momentum and create awareness about socio-political and economic issues. Social media are modern-day opinion leaders – communicating information to the public and influencing behaviour and attitudes towards certain ideologies (Ravi and Vasundara 2015: 293). According to Bruns and Highfield (2016: 57), the emergence of social media has fused the existing public sphere into a larger and more complex "global network of information flow." Social media have replaced the media field dominated by commercial media establishments and major publics, resulting in a diverse and intricate media ecology (Bruns and Highfield 2016: 57).

The advent of new media tools such as social media is often interlinked with the concept of digital democracy in mass communication literature. Different regions apply notions of democracy differently. However, central to notions of democracy is the freedom to participate (Ravi and Vansundara 2015: 292). The proliferation of new media platforms in sub-Saharan Africa has improved communication and participation between the public and their political leaders (Mutsvairo 2016:71). Mutsvairo (2016: 72) argues that new media platforms have empowered ordinary citizens to engage in the public discourse of issues related to democracy, transformation, and development. Although social media in western countries may seek to encourage debates about political issues, various factors such as power relations hinder this digital tool from influencing social or political change in some parts of the Sub-Saharan African contexts (Mutsvairo 2016: 8). Thus, the African conceptualisation of digital democracy or the digital public can be limiting and to some extent, un-democratic. This is because digital activism in some regions of Sub-Saharan African countries often subjects activists to political sanctions and in extreme cases, incarceration (Mutsvairo 2016: 8). Although western conceptualisation of digital democracy is largely sanguine and beneficial, it remains a complex and unprecedented concept in most sub-Saharan African countries.

3.2.4. **The Emergence and Existence of a Sub-Public Sphere**

The theoretical discussions above have demonstrated that *Daily Thetha* studios represent a mainstream public sphere for young people in South Africa to discuss significant sociopolitical and economic issues. The show transfers the debate on the main platform to social media pages

in order to allow audiences to partake in the debate. Online audiences contribute to the debate through the Facebook page and Twitter account in hopes that their views and opinions reach the main platform on a wider scale. Social media comments are incorporated as part of the discussion during the live show. Based on this observed trend of communication, this study has coined the term 'sub-public sphere'. This is an extension of the mainstream public sphere. The sub-public sphere is digital in form and a space where digital audiences participate in conversations occurring in the mainstream public sphere in hopes to be recognised and counted in the main debate.

This sub-public sphere differs significantly from counter publics proposed by Nancy Fraser (1990). Digital counter publics are facilitated independently on blogs, Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, or YouTube channels. On the other hand, the existence and management of a sub-public sphere are highly dependent on the mainstream public sphere as the parent. Access to this digital sub-public sphere depends solely on internet accessibility, whereas access to the main or parent public sphere requires participants to comment on social media platforms created by the main public sphere. However, it is important to note that the mere act of commenting on the digital sub-public sphere does not always guarantee access to the main discussion.

This digital sub-public sphere is examined using theoretical conceptions of what constitutes a public sphere. Based on the two types of public spheres proposed by Habermas, the digital conversations on Facebook denote both the literary and political public spheres. By discussing the causes, effects, and extent of youth unemployment in South Africa, young people challenge the basic and ethical state of humanity. This is an example of a literary public sphere. The discourses that emerge from the digital conversation form public opinion through consensus. The formation of public opinion is essential in the political public sphere. Moreover, the formal pragmatics proposed by Dahlberg (2005: 112) for the normal conditions applicable to participants engaged in a public sphere debate - viz, reasoned critique, reflexivity, sincerity, and role-taking - were used to examine the quality of this digital sub-public sphere. One obvious challenge of digital public spheres is the lack of a personal aspect in participation. One cannot easily deduct from a virtual conversation whether a participant is sincere, or that they are reflexive of their own contribution to the debate. However, logical reasoning and role-taking can be detectable from a virtual conversation. The absence of some of the proposed pragmatics does not automatically discard the virtual debate as a public sphere.

With the expansion and influx of digital media in the post-postmodern era, one cannot deny the possibility of the existence of sub-public spheres within the main public sphere. This is also due to the types of audiences that exist on varying platforms. For example, the manner, style, and depth of debate will differ significantly between Facebook audiences and Twitter audiences, resulting in a multiplicity of varying types of digital sub-public spheres dedicated to one main public sphere. As Fuchs (2014: 86) argued, Facebook and Twitter are forms of political public spheres due to their ability to rally political protests. The types of public spheres existing on social media are either independent or an extension of another public sphere outside the medium. This observation echoes arguments postulated by Bruns and Highfield (2016: 57) about social media and the public sphere - social media fuses and combines existing public spheres resulting in complex and diverse media ecology.

3.2.5. **Critiques of the Public Sphere**

A number of scholars critique the early work of Jügen Habermas' theory of the public sphere. The most apparent issue with the theory of the public sphere is that it uses the early European bourgeois society as a point of analysis. Fraser (1990: 58) posits two main issues with the theory of the classical bourgeois public sphere, namely, the structure and the function, and nature of discourse. In terms of structure, it is important to clarify whether or not the public sphere is thought of as unitary or consists of many public spheres (Fraser 1990: 58). Similarly, it is important to explore access to this public sphere or public spheres, what are the main requirements for access? Furthermore, it is equally important to distinguish the boundaries between the 'private' and the 'public' (Garnham 2007: 209). At the centre of the classical bourgeois public sphere of the 17th and 18th centuries is the rational-critical debate in which the standard of arguments outweighed the identities of participants (Thompson 1993: 175). This argument is strongly contented by Fraser et al. (2014), who argued that debates among citizens are one of the prerequisites of a strong democracy.

Habermas proposed that the formation of the public sphere required the gathering of individuals or private citizens where the force of the better proposition dominated the debate. Dahlberg (2005: 113) argues that this stance posits a "reflexive, impartial, reasoned exchange of validity claims where only the force of better argument 'wins out'." The requirements posed by the classical public sphere model privilege a form of discourse that is considered 'rationalist'. The one that favours logical intelligibility, representational accuracy, and non-emotional opposition of contrasting opinions (Dahlberg 2005: 113). Moreover, Dahlberg (2005: 113) asserts that this

idealised discourse within the communicative interaction of the public sphere is highly influenced by the modern western philosophy of communication as well as the academic manner of the argument of modern scholarly pursuit and legal adjudication.

Habermas' ideas of power within the public sphere have been critically scrutinised and criticised by Dahlberg (2005). Dahlberg (2005:121) strongly contends with Habermas' idea that a public sphere is a space for a communicative exchange where common ground can be achieved. According to Dahlberg (2002: 121), this style of communication supposes that power in the forms of manipulation, insincerity, domination, and coercion can be easily eliminated from the process of communication in order to reach a common ground. Similarly, Peters (1993: 549) argued that Habermas' view of the communicative exchange in the public sphere assumes the operation of power in the public sphere as a negative one. Peters (1993: 549) argues that power cannot be easily identified and withdrawn from the normative communicative interaction. Adut (2012: 240) argues that discourse does not occur in a vacuum and that it is intertwined with the conception of power. Dahlberg (2005: 121) asserts that because the space of the public sphere requires a certain kind of behaviour from participants, communication in the public sphere is under the operation of positive disciplinary power.

This chapter discussed theoretical stances relevant to this study, namely, reception theory and the public sphere. Reception theory was discussed in order to understand the relationship between media audiences and texts. This chapter showed that media audiences are diverse and cannot, therefore, be thought of as linear. Their diversity is influenced by varying social identities, which in turn influence the manner that they interpret and interact with media texts. Moreover, the proposed arguments by media reception scholars are supported by Stuart Hall's (1993) communication model of encoding and decoding. Through the use of language, media producers and audiences are in constant communication with each other. Language, as a discursive tool, is imperative and reveals institutions of power and ideologies in society. Furthermore, the theory of the public sphere was discussed in order to provide a theoretical lens for the political discussions that occur on the television show, *Daily Thetha*. The chapter discussed the early notions of the public sphere that occurred in exclusive saloons of the 17th and 18th centuries amongst aristocrats. African forms of the public sphere were also discussed in this chapter. This chapter also argued that the emergence of social media platforms has expanded the media ecology and greatly challenged what was previously understood as the public sphere. *Daily Thetha* can be understood as a public sphere where the critical rational

debate about issues affecting the youth of South Africa occurs. It was also argued that *Daily Thetha* audiences participate in the debate through digital platforms. This study coined and defined the term 'sub-public sphere', to explain the existence of a digital public sphere that is managed and dependent on the mainstream public sphere. The next chapter will discuss research designs and procedures that were undertaken in this study in order to examine the digital engagement of audiences with *Daily Thetha* content on Facebook.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter discusses the research approach and design for this study. Audience participation with Facebook posts created by *Daily Thetha* audiences will be measured and analysed using both qualitative and quantitative research tools. The discussion begins by giving an overview of the research design and procedure for this research. Quantitative and qualitative research methods will be discussed in order to provide their theoretical stance and explain the ways that they will be implemented in the study. The combination of the qualitative and quantitative research tools means that the study is a mixed approach design. Moreover, the analytical method for this study is content analysis. Content analysis can be implemented either qualitatively and quantitively or both. This section will demonstrate how the study will use content analysis both qualitatively and quantitively. Additionally, the procedure for data analysis will be discussed in two ways. The first discussion is based on data analysis of screenshots of the five Facebook posts. The screenshots are of the episodes posted on the *Daily Thetha* Facebook page. The second part of the data analysis procedure is of Facebook comments from all five Facebook posts created for each episode. The categories of the units of analysis that were extracted from data in both the screenshots and Facebook comments will each be explained herein. Lastly, the ethical considerations undertaken in this study for the process of data analysis of online audiences will be discussed briefly.

This study used content analysis to measure the overall engagement of audiences with Facebook posts produced by *Daily Thetha* for the following episodes: “Job Hunting as a Full-Time Job”, “Constructive Dismissal”, “Trainee/Interns: Why I Left My Job Within 6 Months”, “Advice to the Finance Minister”, and “Quarter Life Crisis”. These five episodes were chosen because they relate to the topic of discussion which is youth unemployment in South Africa. Each episode tackles varying aspects of the issue through a mediated debate. The episode “Job Hunting as a Full-Time Job” particularly discusses the financial costs needed for job hunting, the difficulties of securing a job, and the impacts that unemployment pose on the mental health of young people. In the episode titled “Constructive Dismissal”, young people enter a debate about toxic work structures and organisations that have contributed to their unemployment. The South African labour law under the Labour Relations Act no. 66 of 1995 section 186 (1) (e) defines constructive dismissal as a situation where “an employee terminated a contract of employment with or without notice because the employer made continued employment intolerable for the employee” (The South African Labour Guide 2022). In this episode, young

people shared their personal experiences with constructive dismissal within the workplace. Similarly, the episode, "Trainee/Interns: Why I Left My Job Within 6 Months" discusses some of the reasons why young people leave their traineeship or internships within a short period of time. There was a consensus in the debate that intolerable and toxic workspaces are one of the biggest contributors to youth unemployment.

Furthermore, in the episode, "Advice to the Finance Minister", the majority of the commentary or advice addressed the problem of youth unemployment. The majority of *Daily Thetha* fans believe that the finance minister should prioritise job creation and economic growth in the country. Youth unemployment is a socio-economic, political, and health issue with detrimental effects on those who are unemployed. In the episode, "Quarter Life Crisis", young people discuss the ways that unemployment affects their dreams and aspirations in life. Young people who participated in the debate argued that the lack of employment halts or delays dreams and goals that they have set for themselves. There is a general consensus that the delay in achieving one's goals contributes to mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and in some extreme cases, suicide.

4.1. **Research Design**

4.1.1. Quantitative and Qualitative Research Approaches

Mass media and cultural scholars use various research methods that are either qualitative, quantitative, or mixed approaches to study mass communication processes, media texts, and audiences The study combined qualitative and quantitative research approaches in order to analyse and discuss research data. Qualitative research is defined as "a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell 2003: 4). The qualitative approach of research is inductive in that generalised themes are constructed from observations and patterns (Creswell 2003: 4). Qualitative research collects non-numerical data such as words, visuals, and audio data. This study used qualitative content analysis to draw conclusions from data presented in the form of themes and words. For the analysis of Facebook comments, the patterns and relationships of data extracted from the corpus were categorised and discussed according to their thematic categories in this research. Bengtsson (2015: 9) argues that qualitative research helps with the comprehension of the human condition in varying contexts and situations. The study seeks to uncover the social and cultural meanings that young people attach to the issue of unemployment in South Africa.

Moreover, the quantitative research approach is defined as "a means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables" (Creswell 2003: 4). Quantitative variables are measured, analysed, and presented through statistical data (Khaldi 2017: 19). Quantitative content analysis is a research method for systematically analysing distinct visual or audio content (Bock 2011:265). This empirical technique presents research data in statistical forms of percentages, frequencies, and numbers (Quick and Hall 2015: 193). The study used this technique to summarise research data and to determine 'how many' (Mayr et al. 2012: 1459). The quantitative aspect of this study was used to count the frequency of research data on Facebook posts and to statistically present results. The combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods in a research study is known as the mixed methods approach.

4.1.2. Mixed methods approach

The purpose of mixed methods is to provide a better understanding of research problems by using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The choice for a mixed method approach for this study was informed by the research questions. The quantity of comments, post shares, likes and reaction that emerged from Facebook posts determined audience engagement patterns on *Daily Thetha* Facebook page. Conversely, qualitative content analysis was used to analyse and form themes which in turn were used to draw conclusions about meanings created by audiences about youth unemployment in South Africa. Mixed methods research incorporates the strengths of qualitative and quantitative approaches, reducing research errors associated with monomethod research (Ostlund, Kidd, Wengstrom, and Rowa-Dewar 2011: 370). According to Molina-Azorina (2012: 35), a mixed method approach enables researchers to make solid inferences about research data based on qualitative and quantitative results. A mixed method approach benefits the aims of this research by providing all-inclusive findings, increasing the reliability of results and validity of conclusions (McKim 2015: 203). McKim (2015: 203) argues that the integration of components in mixed methods increases confidence in research results and conclusions. Moreover, a mixed method approach provides insightful comprehension of fundamental phenomena (Molina-Azorina 2012: 35). This research approach has proven to be advantageous for this audience-based research. By presenting and discussing research data quantitatively and qualitatively, the research findings and conclusions of this study were more enriched.

4.1.3. Content Analysis

This study used the content analysis research technique to assess and interpret data gathered from the Facebook video posts of the five episodes published on the *Daily Thetha* Facebook page. The choice for content analysis for this study was circumstantial. The initial research design chosen for this study was a focus group of at least 150 participants. However, the rapid spread of Covid-19 virus and the emergence of the third wave in South Africa in the years 2021 and 2022 caused major concerns for the research processes and safety for participants. The study later opted for a survey method for data collection. This method was chosen based on both ethical considerations and the convenience and comfortability it would allow prospective participants. Data collection using this method was conducted in line with the ethics regulations set in place by the Wits HREC, Human Research Ethics Committee and the established ethical principles associated with social science research. The ethics clearance certificate was issued on the 28 March 2022. The participant recruitment process for the survey began on 31 March 2022 and abandoned on the 31 April 2022, approximately after a month. The online survey was abandoned largely due to low turnout in responses and time constraints for the research. Content analysis was a perfect research method alternative because it allowed the study to collect data from audiences digitally without endangering or compromising the health of both the researcher and audiences.

Content analysis has a long history in social science and mass media research dating back to 1952. This method of analysis was first used by Harold Lasswell's study of mass media propaganda during World War II to answer the question "who says what, to whom, and with what effects" (Franzosi 2008: 22). It is a scientific method used to study communication contents with regards to symbols and meanings incorporated in a message (Krippendorff 2019: 11). This study seeks to conduct a systematic examination of data collected in order to draw inferences about engagement patterns of young South African audience with *Daily Thetha* on Facebook. This will elucidate how digital audiences interpret and engage with the issue of youth unemployment in South Africa, and form part of a digital public sphere.

Content analysis is more than just a counting game, it is "the manifest and latent content of a body of communicated material through classification, tabulation, and evaluation of its key symbols and themes" (Krippendorff 2019: 11). Manifest analysis examines data on a surface level, while latent analysis studies the deeper meanings of data (Lindgren et al. 2020: 103632). The manifest analysis uses the exact words that are in the research data and describes what is visible and noticeable in the text. The latent analysis is used to elucidate the fundamental

meanings of the texts under study (Roller 2019). Both manifest and latent analysis were used in this research. For example, manifest analysis was used to analyse the screenshots of Facebook posts because these screenshots are a visual representation of Facebook posts where the number of comments, shares, and likes is noticeable. Latent analysis of these screenshots was used to discuss research results in relation to scholarly literature in media studies. Moreover, latent analysis of Facebook comments was used to categorise research data into thematic categories, and discuss the meanings formed in the debate about youth unemployment under the comment sections. Manifest content analysis was used by integrating Facebook comments as research evidence in the discussion of findings.

Content analysis is used in different disciplines to uncover varying themes pertaining to cultural symbols, dynamic trends, social change, mass media convergence, social movements, propaganda trends, and so forth (Prasad 2008: 4). Content analysis research procedure aims to understand the social phenomena using language in communications modalities of texts, presented either through written, visual or audio (Hsieh and Shannon 2005: 1279). Data is perceived as curated communication that is subject to interpretation and reflection by the receiver (Krippendorff 2019: 12). For purposes of this research, content analysis was used to quantitatively and methodically pinpoint language attributes embedded in a message in order to draw conclusions and inferences about *Daily Thetha* audiences (Neale and Nichols 2001: 168). Similarly, inferences made in this study were highly drawn from the message about youth unemployment communicated by the sender *Daily Thetha*, and the ways the receivers interpret and engage with the message. By using the content analysis research technique, this study aims to reveal information regarding the nature of audiences or the effects of the content (Lin and Pena 2011: 19).

4.2. **Research Data Analysis**

Prior to the analysis of research data, the five Facebook posts produced by *Daily Thetha* were screenshotted and saved on a Microsoft Word document. Similarly, the comments from the five posts were copied from Facebook and pasted on a Microsoft Word document, which was converted into a Portable Document Format (PDF) file and printed for data analysis. These processes made the process of analysis more secure by preserving and saving the research data. Data analysis was conducted in two separate ways: a content analysis of Facebook post screenshots and a data analysis of Facebook comments. This was done in order to examine audience engagement patterns on the Facebook posts, as well as to assess the debate in the

comment sections. Analysis of both the Facebook posts and comments was essential in answering the research questions that are central to this study.

The analytical procedure of content analysis consists of units of analysis, categories, and codes. The unit of analysis refers to what is analysed and the ways that research data will be analysed: in its entirety or divided into smaller parts (Bengtsson 2015: 9). Categories are words or phrases that comprises of themes that were extracted from data. White and Marsh (2006: 25) describe a code as the "smallest unit that contains some of the insights the researcher needs, and it is the constellation of sentences or paragraphs containing aspects related to each other, answering the question set out in the aim."

Data analysis procedure

Data analysis rooted in content analysis follows specific rules, ensuring the generalisability of results in similar contexts (Lombard et al. 2002: 589). The research data was analysed using four steps of content analysis: decontextualisation, recontextualisation, categorisation, and compilation. These steps were mainly used to analyse the digital debate in the Facebook comment sections. The analytical procedure for Facebook posts was a basic visual analysis of the screenshots. The number of comments, reactions, and post shares are visible on the screenshots.

Stage 1: The decontextualisation

Analysis began by thoroughly studying the texts and familiarising them with their contents. The five Facebook posts were examined in order to observe the main discussions associated with youth unemployment in South Africa. The texts were then disintegrated into categories. The categories that were identified were then arranged relationally according to their concepts. The identified categories revealed concepts that were later grouped into braoder themes. Content analysis draws meanings and possible effects from emerging themes and symbols (Guthrie et al. 2004: 283). Although there are different computer software programs used to organise data into categories, analysis for this research was done manually from start to finish. The manual analysis of data was imperative for familiarising with the research data, and it aided with critical analysis, as opposed to automated procedures provided by software.

Stage 2: The recontextualisation

For this stage, researchers are required to repeat the first stage in order to achieve validity of results (Bengtsson 2015: 12). Facebook comments from the five Facebook posts were re-analysed along with the list of categories that were identified from the text.

Stage 3: The categorisation

This stage of data analysis requires the researcher to shorten categories to fewer words. This stage was implemented carefully, without losing the content of the categories. The condensed categories were used to identify domains which are an important focus of the study (Bengtsson 2015: 12). For the analysis of Facebook comments, the categories that were identified were arranged and used to create broader themes. Bengtsson (2015: 12) defines a theme as an all-inclusive fundamental meaning at an interpretive level. Themes give answers to questions that ask 'how'.

Stage 4: The compilation

For the analysis of Facebook comments, 284 Facebook comments along with their categories were compiled and saved on a word document. The categories that appeared frequently in the data were selected and grouped to form broader themes. Once the broader themes for the study were chosen, a new document containing Facebook comments that formed the themes was created. The document is in appendix three of the appendices. This document was then used to examine data both quantitatively and qualitatively. The compilation of data commenced on 29 April 2022 and ended on 03 May 2022.

4.2.1. Content analysis of Facebook posts

The unit of analysis for this section was the five screenshots of Facebook posts produced by *Daily Thetha* for episodes: "Job Hunting as a Full-Time Job", "Constructive Dismissal", "Trainees/Interns: Why I Left My Job Within 6 Months", "Advice to the Finance Minister", and "Quarter Life Crisis" were analysed. The following categories emerged from the screenshots of the Facebook posts.

Categories of the unit of analysis:

The number of Facebook comments: This category counted the total number of comments under the Facebook posts created by *Daily Thetha* for the five episodes. The Facebook comment section can be filtered into three categories: "most relevant", "newest", and "all comments". The "most relevant" option filters the comments and prioritises the ones that show

the most engagement. The "newest" filter is self-explanatory insofar as it shows the most recent comments under a post. Lastly, Facebook users may choose the 'all comments' option to view every single comment on a post including spam. The most relevant comments appear first in this category. The total number of comments for this study was collected under the 'most relevant' category.

The number of views: This category was the count of the number of views for each Facebook post created for the episodes. Video posts on Facebook show the number of times a post was played. The metric for Facebook video views is 3 seconds or 97% of the video length in cases where the video is longer than 3 seconds (Facebook Meta Business 2022). This means that each time a video is played for 3 seconds or more, it counts as the number of views.

The number of post shares: This category was used to count the number of times each Facebook post was shared to audiences outside of the *Daily Thetha* Facebook fan page. Users are able to share a post and distribute it to other audiences. Facebook post sharing is achieved by clicking this icon . A post can be shared with different audiences: on one's feed, on one's story, on a page, on a friend's timeline, or sent to Facebook messenger. The sharing of posts can be customised by either including a description of the shared post or choosing to share just the link or the original contents of the post.

The number of post reactions: Facebook reactions are emojis used to express how one feels about a certain post. Emojis are non-verbal communication cues used popularly on social media to express emotional reactions to posts or content, and commentary. This category analysed the total number of Facebook reactions visible on each Facebook post of the episodes. The current version of Facebook uses seven reactions: the popular like, sad, love, care, haha, angry, and wow. The seven reactions are accessible on the traditional like option signified by a thumbs up. Users have to hover over the 'like' button in order for more reactions to appear.

Facebook post caption: This category was used to analyse Facebook captions used in the five posts created for the episodes. A Facebook caption provides background information about a picture or video shared on a post. This category analysed the background information that was provided to audiences for each episode.

The number of hashtags used: This category was used to analyse the Facebook posts in two ways: the types of hashtags used, and the number of hashtags used on each post. A hashtag refers to the use of a hash (#), right before a word or congested phrase.

4.2.2. Content analysis of Facebook comments

4.2.2.1. The sample size and the unit of analysis

The unit of analysis for this section was Facebook comments from the five episodes discussing youth unemployment on *Daily Thetha* Facebook page. A sample refers to a small section of the population being studied (Scheuren 2004: 9). The sample size is the total number of comments from the five posts created for the episodes. Data for this research study was collected from 284 Facebook comments. According to Bengtsson (2015: 9), the sample size is determined by information requirements in order to draw conclusions confidently. Research data collected was quantified and analysed qualitatively to determine the meanings of and relationships between data.

List of categories identified from the corpus of research data:

The list of categories below will be used in this study to discuss research results. There were several categories that emerged from the corpus, however, only the ones listed below form part of the broader themes important for the analysis of Facebook comments.

Government leadership: This category was used to identify Facebook comments which mentioned and alluded to government leadership in the digital debate. Words and phrases that were synonymous with this category were also selected. These included: leaders, the government, our government, this government, this party, ANC, and politicians.

Government grants: This category identified words and phrases that mentioned social grants associated with the government. The common references to government grants chosen for this category were: R350, Social Relief of Distress (SRD), and grants or grant.

Job creation: Facebook comments that discussed and suggested ideas about the creation of jobs were identified with this category. Phrases and words used in this category were: open up companies, create/creation/creating (more) jobs, employment, small business development, create internship opportunities, fund/boost small businesses, and invest in small businesses.

Elections: This category was used to identify Facebook comments which mentioned or alluded to elections. Words synonymous with elections were also identified and placed under this category. Words and phrases associated with this category are elections, vote, voters, voting, and *votela* (a Zulu word meaning to vote).

Unemployability: This category was allocated to Facebook comments which mentioned or discussed challenges with getting a job. Phrases and words used to identify this category were: lack/no experience and/or skills.

South African education system: Facebook comments which discussed the issue of unemployment by mentioning the education of South Africa were identified and placed in this category. Keywords used in this category were: education, education system, university/FET/college/matric, degree/diploma, qualifications, *skolong* (a Sesotho word meaning school), and N levels.

Skills development: This category was used to highlight Facebook comments which mentioned and suggested skills development programmes for young people to address unemployment. Phrases and words used to identify this category were: skills development, skills centers, provide/create skills, and train/training.

Corruption: Facebook comments which mentioned and alluded to nepotism, cronyism, partisanship, and bribery as the reason for unemployment were identified and placed under this category. Keywords used to identify this category were: jobs given to, relatives and friends hired, family/relative, and friends. All the Facebook comments in this category linked nepotism, cronyism, partisanship and bribey to corruption. The keywords used for corruption were related to the sales of jobs: sell/selling jobs, *bayayithenga* (a Zulu word meaning that people buy jobs positions), *esebewuthengile lomsebenzi* (job positions are already bought).

Exploitation: Facebook comments which mentioned exploitation in the workplace were identified and placed under this category. Actions related to the concept of exploitation were also placed under this category. These words and phrases were: no payment, low payment, unpaid overtime, long working hours, less pay/salary or peanuts, no work no pay, work overload, less than minimum wage, salary fluctuation, no/less lunch time, activities irrelevant to job description, and breach of contract.

Workplace bullying: This category identified Facebook comments discussing the concept of bullying within the workplace. The selection was informed by the mention of 'bullying/bullied/bullies' and words synonymous with it, as well as behaviors exemplifying this concept. These were the keywords: bullying, bad treatment/treated badly, mistreated/mistreatment, horrible experience, unfair treatment, shouting, gossiping/bad mouthing, name-calling, threats, and abuse.

Discrimination: Facebook comments which mentioned and alluded to different types of discrimination experienced in the workplace were identified and placed under this category. The types of discriminatory acts that emerged from the data were: racism, tribalism, language-based discrimination, and sexual abuse. All the words and phrases which explained the types of discrimination are in this category.

Toxicity in the workplace: This category included Facebook comments that discussed the concept of toxicity in the workplace. The keyword 'toxic' was observed in Facebook comments and categorised accordingly. Toxicity in this category was used in relation to the workplace structures, management, and co-workers.

4.3. Ethical Considerations for the study

The data collection process for this research is from secondary data that is already published on Facebook. Unlike human-related data, Facebook posts and material published online for consumption are considered public and free to peruse. Social media posts are also used by mainstream news outlets on both television and radio as part of their daily news broadcasting. According to the Wits Human Research Ethics Council, research not involving human participants does not require ethics clearance. However, in the stage of research data collection, it was found that Facebook users use identifiable information like names and some, geographical locations when commenting on the posts. Consequently, the names of Facebook users who commented under the five posts chosen for this study were removed and replaced with a code 'FC' plus a number, e.g., FC20. This was done to ensure confidentiality and respect for persons. The original document containing usernames and some of their identifiable information is saved on a password-encrypted computer. Due to the nature of this research, an ethics application for a waiver was sent to the Wits ethics committee and a waiver letter was

issued. The letter is in appendix four of the appendices. This was done to ensure that data collection for this process has no ethical implications for both the researcher and Facebook users.

This chapter discussed the research method suitable for the aims of this study. The research design chosen for the study was both qualitative and quantitative. Conversely, a mixed-method approach was used in order to strengthen the research findings of the research. Content analysis was chosen based on its ability to analyse data both qualitatively and quantitively. There are two types of content analysis: the manifest and latent content analysis methods. Both these methods were used in this study in order to present data on a basic level and discuss the meanings emerging from it. Data analysis and gathering occurred in two separate stages. The first stage included screenshots of Facebook posts created for the five episodes. The second stage was an analysis of Facebook comments that were divided into categories and broader themes. The categories that emerged from the analysis were explained thoroughly in this section. Lastly, for ethical considerations, the names of Facebook users were erased and replaced by a code, e.g., FC1. The next chapter presents and discusses research findings from five screenshots of *Daily Thetha* episodes and content analysis of Facebook comments.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter discusses research findings obtained through content analysis. This chapter consists of two sections. The first section of this chapter presents content analysis findings of five Facebook posts produced by *Daily Thetha* on the following episodes: "Job Hunting as a Full-Time Job", "Constructive Dismissal", "Trainees/Interns: Why I Left My Job Within 6 Months", "Advice to Finance Minister", and "Quarter Life Crisis". The research findings are presented quantitatively in the form of tables and the meanings are discussed. The second section of this chapter examines comments from the sample of five Facebook posts produced by the show. Qualitative content analysis was used to analyse the sample and identify categories. These categories were organised and placed under broader themes and presented statistically in tables. The research results are discussed according to the identified thematic categories that were derived from the comment sections of the posts. Both the latent and manifest content analysis methods are used in this chapter to discuss research findings from the five screenshots as well as the comments.

5.1. CONTENT ANALYSIS OF FACEBOOK POSTS.

This section of the chapter presents a quantitative analysis of Facebook posts produced by *Daily Thetha* for the five episodes. The research sample for this study was drawn from five Facebook posts of *Daily Thetha* episodes which aired in real time through Facebook Live. Data analysis of the five screenshots of Facebook posts occurred on the 3rd of May 2022. The screenshots of the Facebook posts for each episode are included in the list of figures (Figure 13 to Figure 17) in the appendices. The discussion of results is based on the follwing categories: number of views, number of shares, number of comments, number of reactions, number of hashtags used, and post captions used. The research results are also tabulated for each category of analysis.

Social media users engage with digital content for various reasons. These may include entertainment, communication, being informed, or connecting with others. This section presents research findings and discusses audience engagement patterns with posts created by *Daily Thetha* on Facebook. The research results presented will be discussed in order to make inferences about audience engagement patterns on Facebook posts. The data collected revealed that audiences engage with posts on varying levels of interest, effort, and emotional expressions. User engagement tools such as sharing, liking, and commenting are highly influenced by content features and the source (Heiss et al. 2019: 1498).

5.1.1. **Number of post views**

Daily Thetha audiences watch and engage with the show in real time via Facebook Live while the debate takes place at SABC studios. Facebook viewership of video posts is found in the Facebook engagement section. The Facebook engagement section consists of the following: reactions, views, comments, shares, photo views, click to play and clicks for links. The engagement section is found under the caption or media (photo, video or link) of the Facebook post. The *Daily Thetha* Facebook page as a virtual community is relatively substantial. At the time of data collection, the Facebook page had a total number of 240,692 users who like their Facebook page and 255,448 people who follow this page. The two numbers were used to determine the average number of *Daily Thetha* Facebook fans in order to determine the quantity of the virtual community. The average number of Facebook users who showed interest in the show amounted to 248,070 during data collection.

The number of views each episode garners on the page is surprisingly low compared to the number of members of the virtual community. The average number of views calculated from the five episodes is 3979. This means that there is a negative relationship between the size of the virtual community, reach and engagement. In other words, the number of fans on a Facebook page does not necessarily translate into the number of engagements with posts. In a general sense, social media users engage with content they deem compelling. Based on this assertion, it is safe to assume that the average number of views from the five episodes represents Facebook audiences who showed genuine interest in content about youth unemployment in South Africa. The average number of viewers is used to calculate the viewership percentage on each episode and the results are tabulated below. The total number of views on the video posts is a combination of the number of views during and after the livestream. The number of views differs on each post. The total number of views on each episode was drawn from the Facebook page of the show. The results are tabulated below:

Title of episode	**Number of views**	**Viewership %**
Job hunting as a full-time job	1500	38%
Constructive dismissal	680	17%
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	1300	33%
Advice to the finance minister	778	20%
Quarter life crisis	3700	93%

Figure 1: Number of views on each episode

Figure 1 above indicates that the episodes with the highest views in the sample are "Quarter Life Crisis", "Job Hunting as a Full-Time Job", and "Trainees\Interns: Why I Left My Job Within 6 Months" respectively. "Advice to the Finance Minister", and "Constructive Dismissal" are episodes with the least views. Data presented above show that 93% of Facebook audiences were more interested in discussions about obstacles that young people face in achieving and realising their dreams and aspirations. Out of the average number of views for the shows, only 20% viewed the debate about advising the finance minister on the economic decisions of the country. Similarly, only 17% of viewers watched the conversation about constructive dismissal. There are various reasons to account for variations in the number of views. These may include but are not limited to the general interest in the show, the topic of discussion, internet access, and online status (online or offline).

The viewing process is a determinate moment of the communication between the producer and the consumer of media content. This communication is based on Hall's (1993) model of encoding and decoding. The viewing process signifies a communicative exchange where coded messages forming part of the encoding process are exposed to the audience. As Hall (2007: 287) argued, this communication is semiotic and uncovers media discourses and overarching socio-political systems that form part of media communication. Through the use of language, *Daily Thetha* producers communicate carefully compiled messages to audiences, and audiences decode those messages also through the use of language. As Hall (2007: 287) has argued, this decoding process determines the response to content and the extent that information communicated will exert any kind of effect. Additionally, as the reception studies theory discussed in this study has argued, meanings attached to media texts will vary significantly among audiences.

5.1.2. **Number of post shares**

The sharing of posts on Facebook or any other social media platform transfers information from one virtual community to the other, either on the platform or external platforms. The number of post shares increases the reach and audience engagement with the social media posts. *Daily Thetha* fans are able to share the debate on their own Facebook timelines, with their friends on Facebook Messenger, or with other fan pages that they follow/like. They do so by clicking the 'share' button found in the engagement section of a Facebook post. The total number of post shares for each episode is tabulated below:

Title of episode	**Post shares**	**% of sharing rate**

Job hunting as a full-time job	19	1.3%
Constructive dismissal	10	1.5%
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	12	0.9%
Advice to the finance minister	3	0.4%
Quarter life crisis	28	0.7%

Figure 2: Number of times each video post was shared

Figure 2 above indicates that the episodes with the highest number of post shares are "Quarter Life Crisis", "Job Hunting as a Full-Time Job", and "Trainees/Interns: Why I Left My Job Within 6 Months", respectively. With reference to Figure 1 above, video posts with the most views have the greatest number of post shares. This shows a positive relationship between the number of views and the number of times a post will likely be shared – the higher the number of views, the higher the likelihood that the post will be shared. The option to share a post on Facebook requires a bit of effort. This is because when sharing posts, Facebook users are required to select a specific group of audience they would like to share the post with. Moreover, when Facebook users share posts, further elaboration about the contents of the post is required, however, users may opt to exclude it.

Data in Figure 2 clearly indicates that the number of times a post is shared is relatively low in comparison to the number of views each post has. An episode with the highest views of 3700, "Quarter Life Crisis", has a post-sharing rate of 0.7%. Conversely, an episode with the least views of 680, "Constructive Dismissal", has a post-sharing percentage of 1,5%. Although Figure 2 shows a positive relationship between the number of views and post sharing, the sharing rate is relatively lower compared to the number of views on each post. This means that the majority of *Daily Thetha* Facebook audiences consume content on the livestream without sharing it with other users.

The lower rates of sharing Facebook posts observed in the research data limits participation with the Facebook content within the parameters of the *Daily Thetha* virtual community. The chances that Facebook users external to this digital community will be exposed to the Facebook posts of the episodes are decreased. This is because interaction with Facebook posts by liking, commenting and sharing increases the exposure of a post. Heiss et al. (2019: 1497) argue that the sharing of Facebook posts increases the visibility of the post. The number of times a post is shared markets it to a wider audience. The exposure afforded by the sharing of Facebook

posts increases the interaction among users and encourages participation in important political conversations (Larsson 2018: 329). Research data in Figure 2 shows that visibility or exposure on each post is less than 2%. The relationship between exposure and interaction with the posts suggested by Larsson (2018: 329) means that interaction from Facebook users external to the digital community is also decreased.

This simple and effortless form of engagement has great potential to expose political debates to a wider audience. Facebook users share posts as a suggestion to their networks (followers, friends, and groups) that a post deserves attention and engagement (Junco 2012: 164). Direct engagement with posts such as sharing has the propensity to influence public discourse (Heiss et al. 2019: 1498). The decreased interaction caused by lower exposure rates may, to some extent, limit representativeness and the plurality of ideas in the comment sections. However, this is not to say that interactions on the page among Facebook users are linear. It has already been established in the study that media audiences vary and that responses are influenced by social markers such as race, class, education and so forth. Based on this premise, there is a plurality of ideas expressed on the Facebook page, however, they are only limited to the *Daily Thetha* virtual community.

5.1.3. **Number of post comments**

The basic function of social media is to enable users to connect and communicate with each other despite differences in time zones and geographical locations. The comment section is found just below the Facebook post. Users use this section to respond to information on the post and communicate with brands and other users. The total number of comments in each episode is tabulated below. The total number of comments in the table below represents all the comments under the five Facebook posts.

Title of episode	**Number of comments**	**Comment %**
Job hunting as a full-time job	117	7.8%
Constructive dismissal	60	8.8%
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	134	10.3%
Advice to the finance minister	40	5.1%
Quarter life crisis	82	2.2%

Figure 3: The total number of comments on each Facebook post

Figure 3 shows that the episodes with the highest number of comments are "Trainees/Interns: Why I Left My Job Within 6 Months", "Job Hunting as a Full-Time Job", and "Quarter Life Crisis", respectively. "Constructive Dismissal" and "Advice to Finance Minister" posts have the least comments. With reference to Figure 1, the data presented in Figure 3 show that there is no relationship between the number of views and the number of comments. The number of views on a post does not influence the number of comments on that post. Equally, data on comment percentage show a significant decrease in the number of comments in comparison to the number of views. For example, the comment percentage of the post with the most views, "Quarter Life Crisis", is only 2.2%, whilst the post with the least views in the sample has a comment percentage of 8.8%.

Data in Figure 3 shows that the majority of digital audiences are not active in commenting on the information communicated on the show. There are various reasons to account for the decrease in comments in relation to the number of views on a post. Unlike reactions, commenting on posts requires a little bit of effort and permits emotional expression (Gearhart and Kang, 2014: 246). Spottswood and Wohn (2019: 254) conducted a study which investigated factors that influence varying response patterns on Facebook. The study identified the following factors: closeness, reciprocity and automaticity. Spottwoods and Wohn (2019: 254) argue that audiences with close relations and close ties are more inclined to support each other in interactions, both online and offline. Similarly, Shaw et al. (2015: 576) conducted research to determine usage patterns and found that active interaction on Facebook is linked to strong ties with friends or brands. A user is likely to take the effort to comment on a post as a way to offer support to those close to them or support a brand. Moreover, research conducted by Dutceac Segesten et al. (2020: 10) shows that users are more likely to comment on posts in response to a 'friend' who responds to their posts as well.

The act of commenting is a perfect example of active participatory culture on digital platforms. Users directly interact with information communicated on the show and amongst themselves. The digital conversations make the Facebook comment section a digital public sphere because it is a shared space where rational communication occurs, and public opinion is formed. The term 'public' in this context refers to the virtual community of the *Daily Thetha* Facebook page. The culture of online commenting on *Daily Thetha* transfers the debate from a mainstream traditional medium to a digital platform. This is an example of a sub-public sphere discussed in the conceptual framework. This enables those who are directly affected by the issue to discuss and debate freely. The discussions and debates in the comment sections continue

beyond the time frame of the Facebook livestream. Moreover, the Facebook comment section encourages democratic ideals linked to digital public spheres such as free participation in political issues, freedom of expression and representativeness.

Although the Facebook comments section encourages the democratic ideal of freedom of expression, this study found that this element can be limited, posing a disadvantage of social media use. Facebook pages tend to regulate the extent of freedom that is afforded to participants in the comment sections. As previously argued by Zegeye and Harris (2013: 20), the state of the media reflects the state of democracy. Healthy democratic states encourage the free flow of ideas in varying systems of communication (Zageye and Harris 2013: 20). The idea of the free flow of ideas remains a challenge on Facebook for various reasons. Facebook comments are censored by both page admins and Facebook users. The *Daily Thetha* Facebook page is managed by the film production company of the show, Thabo Mphelo Films. Facebook page administrators are able to edit and delete comments which they deem inappropriate. This assertion complements that of Dahlberg (2005: 121) which proposed that discourse is connected with power. The editorial privilege given to Facebook administrators influence the power to shape public discourse and influence public opinion. Based on this assertion, Facebook commentators in the sub-public sphere have little to no control over democratic discussions occurring virtually. This form of gatekeeping may challenge the idea of the free flow of ideas in a digital debate because this 'free flow of ideas' may be surveilled and censored by Facebook page administrators. Moreover, the Facebook users may exercise positive disciplinary power by monitoring communication on the platform. Facebook users are also able to exercise their power by reporting a comment they deem inappropriate in the comment sections. However, this power is limited and only effective on the basis of frequency of reports and the review decision by Facebook Meta.

5.1.4. **Number of post reactions**

Social media platforms have integrated nonverbal communication tools referred to as emojis. Emojis are non-verbal expressions of feelings/emotions regarding information communicated on digital platforms. Facebook reactions are an addition to the traditional 'like' button. The Facebook 'like' is characterised by a blue icon symbolising a thumbs up. The Facebook like was the first and long-lasting non-verbal cue used on the Facebook engagement section. Its use lasted until early 2016. With time and constant updates on the platform, users have an opportunity to choose from a wide range of reactions on a post. The following non-verbal

reactions are used on the current version of Facebook: like, love, care, laughter, sadness, and angry. The table below summarises the total number of reactions that were used on each post:

Title of episode	Number of reactions	Reaction %
Job hunting as a full-time job	142	9.5%
Constructive dismissal	84	12.4%
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	246	19%
Advice to the finance minister	90	11.6%
Quarter life crisis	302	8.2%

Figure 4: Number of Facebook reactions on each post

The Figure above shows that "Quarter Life Crisis, Trainees/Interns: Why I Left My Job Within 6 Months", and "Job Hunting as a Full-Time Job" received the most post reactions respectively. "Advice to the Finance Minister", and "Constructive Dismissal" had the least Facebook post reactions. In reference to Figure 1, Facebook posts with the most views have the most reactions. This shows a positive relationship between the number of views on a post and the number of reactions. With reference to Figure 3, the numbers of reactions on each post are greater than the number of comments found on that post. The reaction percentage of the episode with the most views, "Quarter Life Crisis" is 8.2%, whilst the comment rate is 2.2 %. The reaction percentage of the episode with the lowest viewers, constructive dismissal is at 12.4 %, whilst the comment rate is at 8.8%. Unlike commenting on and sharing a Facebook post, reactions require a slight effort and consideration when engaging with a post (Spottswood and Wohn, 2019: 253).

The data discussed above show that engagement with Facebook posts through reaction is slightly higher compared to the number of comments on each post. This means that *Daily Thetha* audiences prefer to engage with the content more with non-verbal responses than relaying their responses in words. A study by Spottswood and Wohn (2019: 254) has shown that users are likely to engage with a post due to automaticity. This phenomenon refers to Facebook users' habits of clicking on reactions. Users who have developed a conscious-unconscious habit of reacting to *Daily Thetha* posts may react to posts visible to them. Although the trend shown in Figure 3 indicates that the number of views on each episode influences the number of post reactions, this is not always the case. Facebook users can react to a post without consuming or interacting with the information communicated on the posts.

For example, a Facebook user may react to a post based on the caption or the visuals on the image or video without the effort of fully consuming the text.

The current version of Facebook allows users to express their feelings towards a post beyond the traditional 'like' button. The most used reactions on the five posts were the 'like' and the 'love' emojis. The meanings and interpretations of the reactions vary according to the poster, context and the user (Phua and Ahn 2016: 545). *Daily Thetha* audiences reacted to the posts in accordance with their understanding of and feeling about the information communicated. *Daily Thetha* audiences may use these reactions to signal their feelings towards information communicated without the effort of debating the issue. This means that participation in this digital sub-public sphere is not only limited to comments but also occurs through post reactions. Facebook users may express their stance about a certain idea by either liking, laughing or expressing a heart on the post. The use of Facebook reactions in this digital sub-public sphere encourages the formation of public opinion. The number of times certain emojis are used to react to the post represents the stance of the majority concerning the message being communicated. For example, if the majority of the reactions to a post are the sad face emoji, this means that there is a general consensus among audiences that the contents of the post are unpleasant. Based on this assertion, Facebook reactions represent a non-verbal digital sub-public sphere where public opinion is formed through emojis.

Similar to sharing of posts, the number of 'likes' or reactions increases the visibility of a Facebook post (Kabadayi 2014: 205). When a Facebook user engages with fan pages by either liking, commenting or sharing a post, the engagement activity becomes visible on the user's timeline (Reynolds and Su 2015: 1776). This heightens the exposure of Facebook posts beyond the number of followers and those who like the page. For example, "Quarter Life Crisis" with 302 Facebook reactions means that the episode was visible on 302 Facebook walls beyond the 248,070 fans of the show. Facebook reactions encourage participation outside of the *Daily Thetha* virtual community. The exposure of the Facebook post encourages public debate on issues that are communicated on the post. This is because Facebook users outside of the *Daily Thetha* virtual community are able to react to posts visible on their timelines. Visibility is key when it comes to Facebook post reactions outside of the original timeline.

5.1.5. **Facebook post captions**

Visual posts on Facebook are accompanied by what is known as a caption. A caption adds context to the visual post by describing or providing additional information about what is

posted. Facebook captions are not mandatory, users may or may not choose to include a caption on a post. The table below shows the number of posts with a caption:

Episode title	**Facebook caption**
Job hunting as a full-time job	1
Constructive dismissal	1
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	1
Advice to the finance minister	1
Quarter life crisis	0

Figure 5: Facebook captions on Facebook posts

Figure 5 shows that four out of five posts for this sample consist of a caption. Based on research data presented in Figure 5, engagement patterns of viewing, commenting, sharing, and reacting to a Facebook post are not dependent on a caption. For example, the video of the episode "Quarter Life Crisis" was posted on the Facebook page without a caption, however, this episode garnered the most views and reactions. There are a number of reasons that could account for this pattern, such as interest in the show, loyalty to the *Daily Thetha* brand or the automaticity of engaging with content produced by the show on Facebook. *Daily Thetha* uses captions to introduce the topic of discussion in order to encourage engagement. Moreover, Raynolds and Su (2015: 1773) argue that brands should be aware of what topics are relevant and interesting for their fans in order to increase engagement on Facebook. The captions used on the four posts shares background information regarding the topic of discussion on each episode. Below are examples of captions on the Facebook posts of the episodes "Constructive Dismissal" and "Job-Hunting as a Full-Time Job" respectively:

"Constructive dismissal can be defined as a situation or an environment in the workplace which has been created by an employer in which it becomes intolerable for an employee to continue employment and where the employee is left with no choice but to resign. Today we get a better understanding of what 'constructive dismissal' means. We will unpack different types of ways in which someone can be constructively dismissed. Furthermore, we zoom into how this type of dismissal can impact one's mental health & how they can get help. ***#DailyThetha****".*

"According to Stats SA, South Africa's unemployment rate rose to 34.4% in the second quarter of 2021 from 32.6% in the previous period. Today we look at how job hunting itself has become

*a full-time job. Young people's struggles when it comes to job hunting will be highlighted, they will also be given a chance to express themselves about some of the things that they are not happy about in the job seeking process. **#DailyThetha** **#WozaEmabhozeni**"*

In relation to Hall's (1993) encoding and decoding model, Facebook posts use a semiotic approach of communication where media producers and audiences communicate through language. The Facebook caption forms part of the production or encoding process where messages are coded or act as 'sign vehicles' through the use of language. As Hall (2007: 386) argued, the production processes are intertwined with cultural and socio-political systems which shape content. The Facebook caption used as example two above is embedded with imperative information pertaining to unemployment rates sourced from Statics South Africa. Unemployment rates sheds light on the socio-economic and political status of the country. Moreover, Facebook caption used as example two above includes a semiotic code addressing the cultural aspect of unemployment i.e., 'struggle'. Moreover, it is observable that the caption is encoded with information that encourages participatory culture, 'they will also be given a chance to express themselves.' The coded messages in the production phase play a crucial role in the ways that messages are decoded by audiences in order to generate a response, exert an effect or gratify a need. Based on this assertion, Facebook captions are useful for audience attraction in order to increase engagement with the content.

5.1.6. **Number of hashtags used on posts**

A hashtag refers to the use of a hash (#) in front of a word, congested phrase or abbreviated word. Hashtags were traditionally used on Twitter before being adopted on other social media platforms. The table below provides a summary of the hashtags used on each post:

Title of episode	**Number of hashtags used**	**Hashtag used**
Job hunting as a full-time job	2	#DailyThetha WozaEmabozheni
Constructive dismissal	1	#DailyThetha
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	2	#DailyThetha #WozaEmabozheni
Advice to the finance minister	3	#DailyThetha #WozaEmabozheni #BudgetSpeech2022
Quarter life crisis	0	N/A

Figure 6: Number of hashtags used per Facebook post

The hashtags presented in the research data were observed and collected from Facebook captions on each post. Figure 6 above shows that the *#DailyThetha* is used on almost all of the Facebook posts. The use of this hashtag enables Facebook users to follow every conversation that occurred and is related to the show. Equally, the use of *#BudgetSpeech2022* connects digital discussions about the budget speech with conversations under the Facebook post. This ultimately increases the number of reach, and to some extent, influence. Moreover, it was observed that the posts contained *#Wozaemabozheni*, meaning 'come to the bosses.' Arguably, this hashtag is used on the Facebook page of the show in order to distinguish it from a number of fan pages dedicated to the show. There are over ten Facebook fan pages that also use *#DailyThetha* in their digital discussions. The hashtag traces the conversations to the original page of the show. The use of hashtags on social media posts has evolved and now encompasses many pragmatic functions (Triq et al. 2020: 1184). For example, hashtags can be used as a reference, for political movements, as an identity marker, or as a search keyword. The *#DailyThetha* hashtag is an identity marker of the brand connected to the television talk show on Facebook.

The use of hashtags on Facebook posts form part of the encoding process of the digital communication process. The hashtags used in the five Facebook posts are encoded with messages which function through the use of language. As Hall (2007: 287) argued, elements that form part of the production process are carefully selected and constructed in order to relay a specific message. Similarly, the use of hashtags in this communication process was deliberate and used for purposes of engagement with the digital content of the show posted on Facebook. Brands use hashtags as part of a marketing strategy. Similarly, media producers also use hashtags to market media texts and interact with their audiences. Triq et al. (2020: 1184) argues that hashtags are used on social media posts to grab users' attention with the goal of increasing engagement with content. Ferrer-Conill et al. (2021: 14) argue that numbers matter in media news production. They posited that "the desire for numbers can be understood as a form of rationalising both the societal and commercial relevance of an industry that embraces publishing." Additionally, the use of hashtags as a marketing strategy and specifically *#DailyThetha,* helps Facebook posts to trend. Social media trends increase the exposure of the content and reach a wider audience outside of the virtual community. The hashtag *#DailyThetha* can also be used as a search tool to collect and organise available comments that include this hashtag. Its function as a search tool presents plurality of ideas where discussions

on Facebook related to the show from varying users are presented on a single platform. This also allows other Facebook users to further engage with ideas presented under this hashtag. Based on the functioning of hashtags as a search tool, the exchange of ideas between Facebook users means that hashtags can create a form of a digital public sphere where debates about issues related to the hashtag occur.

This section of the chapter examined audience engagement patterns with *Daily Thetha* episodes posted on Facebook. Results presented above show that audience engagement with the show by commenting, liking and sharing is relatively low compared to the average number of views on the Facebook page. This is because engagement with Facebook content requires effort and emotional expressivity. That being the case, *Daily Thetha* virtual community can be characterised as both active and passive readers. Active readers refer to those who engage with *Daily Thetha* posts by either sharing, commenting or reacting. Activity is solely linked to online engagement with Facebook posts of the episodes. Gkikas et al. (2022) argue that user engagement varies depending on the industry division. There are different factors that influence user engagement on digital platforms. Gkikas et al. (2022) attributed user engagement to the following factors: the type of post, emotional versus informational factor, publishing time, the number of comments, likes and shares.

Passive readers in the context of this study refer to audiences who consume online content without contributing to the virtual community. Passivity is not linked to any negative effects, nor does it imply non-response to the media text itself outside of Facebook. This study acknowledges that audience engagement with the show is not only limited to Facebook engagement tools such as reactions, comments, and sharing. It is very possible that some audiences watch the show on Facebook Live but engage with the content outside of the platform. Offline engagement with the content may be through sharing information with friends, or family members. Because interaction on Facebook is not a physical communication, users can observe and interact with a post passively (Shaw et al. 2015: 578). Data has revealed that the rates of sharing, commenting and reactions are relatively low in comparison to the number of views on each episode. This means that the number of audiences who passively watch the episodes exceeds those who actively engage with the show on Facebook. Although the study observed this pattern of engagement with Facebook content, passive engagement is not central to the research aims of this study. The audience engagement pattern of *Daily Thetha* audiences observed in this study classifies them as navigational readers of media content.

This section of the chapter presented research results gathered from a sample of Facebook posts of *Daily Thetha* episodes and discussed the results. Research results have revealed that the viewership of *Daily Thetha* on Facebook is relatively low compared to its average number of fans on the page. The number of views on an episode does not influence the number of comments on a post. However, the number of views of each episode influences the number of reactions to the post. The sharing rate of Facebook posts is relatively low for each episode. Acts of engagement such as commenting and sharing require more effort. The act of commenting requires emotional expressivity whilst sharing may require further elaboration on the post being shared. Moreover, reacting to a post requires a slight effort and results have shown that the rate of post reactions is higher than those of comments and sharing on each post. Hashtags and captions are mainly used to increase audience engagement on Facebook posts. *Daily Thetha* audiences are either active or passive consumers of content, making them navigational readers. The act of liking, sharing and commenting exposes the post to a wider audience outside of the *Daily Thetha* virtual community. Due to its ability to encourage exchange of ideas among users, the Facebook comment section on *Daily Thetha* page can be classified as a digital public sphere.

5.2. CONTENT ANALYSIS OF FACEBOOK COMMENTS

The second section of the chapter discusses research results from Facebook comments aggregated from five *Daily Thetha* episodes. The titles of the episode are namely, "Job-hunting as a Full-Time Job", "Constrictive Dismissal", "Trainees/Interns: Why I left my Job Within 6 months", "Advice to the Finance Minister", and "Quarter Life Crisis". The comments were copied from *Daily Thetha* Facebook page and pasted onto a Microsoft Word document. Comments were initially organised by their episodes for analysis. This assisted in familiarising the Facebook comments with content on each episode. The analysis of the corpus began on 05 May 2022 and proceeded until 04 June 2022. The categories that emerged from the data were grouped according to their conceptual relationship, and broader thematic categories were formed. The following themes emerged and will be discussed thoroughly in this section: The Role of Government in Combating Youth Unemployment, Factors Inhibiting Job Security Among SA Youth, and Toxic Work Environments. The discussions in this section are based on research findings emerging from the three themes. The research findings are also discussed in conjunction with theoretical concepts and literature in order to make inferences about digital political discussions and young South Africa audiences on virtual spaces.

5.2.1. Thematic categories

A total of 284 comments were analysed and each assigned a category. This number represents the total number of relevant comments gathered from the five episodes. The identified categories were re-analysed and grouped to develop overaching thematic categories. Several themes emerged from the corpus of data, however, only three were chosen for the study. The themes were chosen based on the frequency of comments addressing a similar issue, i.e., relational content analysis. A large number of comments in the corpus discussed the issue of youth unemployment in relation to the government, unemployability, and toxic work environments. The table below illustrates the number of comments in each thematic category.

The pie chart or a circular chart below demonstrates a statistical graphic of the numerical quantity of the research sample (Bertini et al. 2016: 91). Data in Figure 8 below illustrates the numerical data of comments under the three themes (256) in comparison to the total number of comments collected from five episodes (284). As argued by Spence (2005: 354), a circular chart signifies 100% of a whole, so this pie chart represents 100% of the Facebook comments from five episodes. The pie slices in the Figure below represent portions of Facebook comments on each theme. The total number of comments in each theme is represented by a different colour. Theme one is represented by the blue-coloured proportion, theme two by the

orange proportion, and theme three by a grey pie slice. The gold pie represents the remaining comments that made up the corpus of this research.

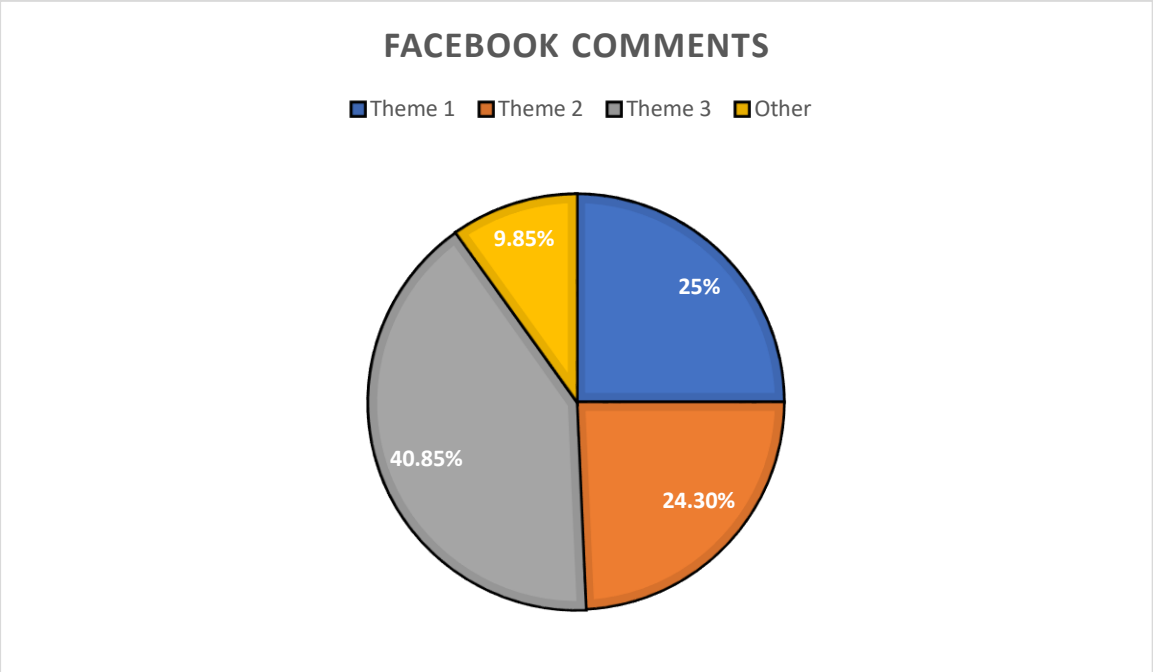


Figure 7: A pie chart of Facebook comments from the corpus.

Figure 7 above shows that Facebook comments which make up the three themes account for the largest data in the corpus. The comments under the three themes account for 89,79% of the conversation from the five episodes that discussed youth unemployment on *Daily Thetha* Facebook page. This means that 256 of the 284 comments mostly discussed youth unemployment in relation to the government, hostile work environments, and factors impeding job security. Moreover, data shows that the largest proportion of comments makes up theme 3, which accounts for 40,85% of the comments from all five posts. The second-largest comment data is allocated in theme one, the role of government in combating youth unemployment. 25% of the comments in the corpus discuss youth unemployment in relation to the government. 24,30% of the Facebook comments discussed challenges in securing a job in South Africa. The gold-coloured pie on the chart represents the remaining 28 Facebook comments of the corpus that did not form part of the chosen themes. These Facebook comments were not chosen because the issues they addressed and the frequency of those issues in the corpus were not sufficient to form a theme. For example, there were two comments addressing data costs and two comments addressing crime associated with youth unemployment.

5.2.2. **Theme 1: The Role of Government in Combating Unemployment.**

The Figure below illustrates the development of this theme from the categories of unit of analysis associated with it. The number of comments in each category was counted manually, with no assistance from content analysis software. The frequency of the categories for each thematic category is tabulated below:

Category of unit of analysis	**Number of comments**
Government leadership	13
Government grants	22
Job creation	30
Elections	6
	Total no. of comments: 71

Figure 8: Frequency of categories in themes 1

Figure 8 summarises the number of comments in each category of the theme. Theme one has a total of 71 comments from all five Facebook posts. The majority of comments under this theme are related to job creation. 22 comments in this theme discussed government grants such as R350 Social Relief of Distress. There are 13 comments related to government leaders and the ruling party of the African National Congress (ANC). The least of the comments on this theme showed a link between unemployment rates with elections, and those were only six comments.

The categories in Figure 8 above show that the discussions about youth unemployment among audiences in all five *Daily Thetha* episodes mentioned and connected the issue to the government in varying ways. 13 Facebook comments under this theme linked the issue of youth unemployment to leaders in government. Facebook commentators expressed that the high rates of unemployment should be attributed to leadership in government or the lack of it thereof. The ANC has been in power since the inception of democratic rule in 1994. In its election manifesto of 1994, the ANC stated that it aimed to prioritise unemployment and create jobs "the millions of people without jobs will be at the top of the ANC government`s agenda" (ANC Manifesto, 1994). The political party promised to address the issue of unemployment through the Public Works Programme (PWP) "an ANC government will immediately start a national public works programme which will address community needs and create jobs." The ANC also stated its aims to create job opportunities by changing licensing laws, making loans accessible and providing training for aspiring business owners (ANC Manifesto 1994).

The ANC's attainment of governance in 1994 ignited hope in those who were previously disadvantaged. The ANC has been the ruling party in South Africa since the 1994 democratic elections. The democratic government developed and implemented several initiatives and programmes to address the issue of economic imbalance in the country. The ANC government addresses unemployment in the country through its PWP and by funding small businesses. There are currently two biggest government public employment programmes for job seekers in South Africa, namely, the Community-based Public Works Programme (CBPWP) and the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). Although these programmes employ candidates in different spheres of government, the employment contract is temporary (Public Works 2017). The government aims to provide temporary relief to individuals with poor backgrounds through public works programmes (Public Works 2017). Employment through these programmes places eligible candidates in both the public sector and the private sector.

Despite the ruling party's promises to address unemployment in the country, unemployment rates continue to hike, especially among young people. Some Facebook commentators showed a pessimistic view of leaders in government. Some examples include:

> *"Unemployment rate will increase as long as we still lack leaders who know the worth of the citizens. We all deserve better than being educated and still not get.a job . The only question is what more do the government want to offer jobs to the youth and others?"* (FC17).

> *"#dailythatha.Hi everyone.As long as we live under this party,nothing will change.We will always struggling."* (FC28).

> *"The Government is making empty promises companies still demand experience from Graduates in order to be employed which is impossible"* (FC252).

The Facebook comments presented above show that young people who formed part of the digital debate held government officials accountable for the economic crisis of youth unemployment. This freedom to hold political leaders accountable highlights a free flow of information in the debate, a crucial element of democratic processes proposed by Aalberg and Curran (2012: 1). By surveilling state power and rule, Facebook participants form part of civil society. As previously argued by Fuchs (2014: 86), the public sphere is strongly linked to civil society. Research data presented above show individuals of the general public discussing issues concerning the state of authority. Facebook commentators FC17, FC28 and FC252 presented critical arguments concerning the rule of the ANC in the country. As Livingstone (1998)

argued, details of everyday life provide context into audiences' patterns of engagement and response to media texts. The critique of the rule of the ANC is common in South African societies both on small and large scales, and in the private and public arenas. Due to the freedom of the press that exists in SA, the ANC is constantly under scrutiny by news media houses, creating and reinforcing a culture of free and open critique of state rule. This highlights democratic processes that govern the media arena in South Africa, both on mainstream and alternative media levels.

It is also important to highlight that the digital discussions on Facebook occurred in the absence of government leaders. In relation to Samuels's (2010: 21) argument about digital audiences, the Facebook comment section does not operate as an auto-modern media – giving audiences the power to access, communicate and interact with political leaders. Although audiences hold leaders accountable, they are the only active participants in this digital sub-public sphere. The absence of political leaders in this digital debate means that this public sphere cannot be classified as a governmental imbizo, despite the political debates about an imperative socio-economic issue of youth unemployment that affects majority of South Africans.

Moreover, the democratic element of the digital debate was observed in Facebook comments which linked youth unemployment to elections. Based on the data in Figure 8, a minimum of six Facebook comments linked the issue of youth unemployment to elections. Elections in South Africa are used as a democratic tool to choose a ruling party through votes. Every citizen in South Africa who is 18 years of age and older has the right to vote and choose a political party of preference. The choice of government leaders is often informed by policies that political parties promise to implement when running for office (Aarts 2013: 1). In the South African context, citizens vote for party leaders associated with a political party. Voters choose the political party, the leaders and policies simultaneously (Aarts 2013: 2). The process of voting is, therefore, crucial in the change or preservation of power of political parties. Voting and elections are central to government leadership in democratic countries. Some of the *Daily Thetha* commentators show an understanding of the democratic process of voting, and thereby expect policy implementation by the ruling government incumbents.

"hi every one, am highly appreciate the platform that you gave us ,well if i were the minister iwould allocate the money in the small business,health , education and to the unemployed pepol in South Africa at large in our days we as a youth finds our self unemployed ,poor and remains

with no dignity yes we all voting for the better improvement in our country,so they must try by all means that every one remains satisfied ,thank you" (FC128).

" But they keep voting for ANC that kills economy" (FC47).

The research data presented above reveal that the link that Facebook commentators make between the issue of unemployment, the government, and elections suggest a cause and effect dynamic. Due to the democratic process of elections, the ANC government was placed in power and is therefore responsible for addressing the socio-economic issue of unemployment and the creation of jobs. That being the case, the failure of the ruling party to address and combat unemployment in the country makes it eligible for being removed from power as a resulting effect. The political public opinion formed by commentators in the digital debate is crucial for democratic processes in South Africa. As Govender (2019: 10) highlighted, the media is crucial for promoting and upholding representative democracy. Based on this view, this digital sub-public sphere allows citizens to present varying views which represent their political opinion and stance toward the ruling party.

Research data in Figure 8 shows that the majority of Facebook comments associated with this theme made a strong connection between the government and job creation. A number of Facebook commentators expressed that the government is responsible for creating job opportunities for unemployed youth. Some commentators emphasised the importance of financing the sector of Small Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs). The establishment and growth of SMMEs are often central to discussions about unemployment and employment creation (Rogerson 2008). Similarly, the South African government aims to develop SMMEs in order to address the challenges of unemployment and job creation in the country (Meston and Naidoo 1995, ANC Manifesto 1994). SMMEs play a crucial role in the creation of new markets, labour absorption, and the expansion of economies in innovative and creative ways (McCormick et al. 1997). The development and success of SMMEs contribute to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), thereby reducing poverty in the country (Mahadea and Pillay 2008). Facebook comments suggesting financial support for small enterprises are exemplified as such:

> *"If I were the minister I would focus more on small developmental business and uplift them to lower the unemployment rate in SA, and also on education as well, I'm also a newly baking business and only bake from home and would like a pure location conducive enough for my clients in need of funding but do not know were to start"* (FC103).
>
> *"Good day there at studio,*

I would like to advise minister to put more focus on developing businesses because that will create more job opportunities." (FC118).

The current South African government supports the expansion and sustainability of small businesses through solid policies and legislature (Njiro and Compagnoni 2010). The National Small Business Act No. 102 of 1996 views the SMME sector as a driving force in transforming the socio-economic aspect. The National Small Business Advisory Council (NSBAC) emerged from the National Small Business Amendment Act No. 26 of 2003 (Njiro and Compagnoni 2010). The (NSBAC) aims to encourage participation, reparation, and fairness in the economy through the Empowerment and Enterprise Development Division (National Small Business Advisory Council Presentation, 2009). The NSBAC also aims to create a socio-economic environment favourable for the establishment and expansion of SMMEs (National Small Business Advisory Council Presentation 2009).

Furthermore, the common strategy for SMMEs by the NSBAC is to improve access to grants, suitable markets and crucial information to small businesses and cooperatives (National Small Business Advisory Council Presentation 2009: 6). One of the strategic objectives of the NSBAC is to "facilitate an increase in access to market opportunities through 10 designated products, BEE procurement and enterprise development, and supply development programmes" (National Small Business Advisory Council Presentation 2009: 8). The support of the SMMEs sector by the government is theoretically plausible but not viable in practice due to a lack of training and sufficient information about developing successful and sustainable businesses. The Facebook discussions mention the need for training and equipping aspiring business owners:

"I will allocated a lot in Economic development and order the department to train unemployed South Africans in to starting their businesses. The money will be used to start those businesses" (FC133).

"Funding small young owned business. Training am talking about how to sustain their business and money management" (FC110).

Commentators FC133 and FC110 raise a crucial issue related to SMMEs. There are several grants developed by the government to support the growth of small businesses and promote entrepreneurship. The department of Small Business Development of Trade and Industry lists over 15 different grants/incentives aiming to boost economic growth in the country. For example, through the Informal and Micro Enterprise Development Programme (IMEDP),

applicants can receive up to R80 000 in incentives to assist the growth of their business. The Black Business Supplier Development Programme (BBDSP) aims to assist black-owned businesses by providing the necessary machinery, 'business development services, tools and equipment.' Moreover, there are funding programmes that specifically assist enterprises owned by young people. The Youth Challenge Fund (YCF) and the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) are some examples. The Youth Challenge Fund was developed in 2021 following the State of Nation Address (SONA) (Department of Small Business Development 2001). During his speech, President Cyril Ramaphosa committed to supporting about 15 000 youth-owned start-up businesses by 2024, funding 5000 businesses each year. The YCF was implemented to address the negative impacts that Covid-19 has on the economy (Department of Small Business Development 2021). The YCF aims to stimulate the formation and expansion of youth-owned enterprises that are also 100% South African-owned.

Based on the Facebook comments presented in this category, it is observable that the communicative exchange among commentators in the sub-public sphere engaged with the topic using varying styles of debate. Data presented above show Facebook commentators FC113 and FC110 participated in the debate by 'advising' government officials on the distribution of funds in order to accelerate economic growth and job creation. This contribution of citizens to political decisions echoes the ideals of participatory democracy. In a participatory democracy, the demos (citizens), as the focal point of democracy, have a voice in crucial decisions concerning imperative political decisions that affect them. In this instance, the digital sub-public sphere encourages participation in decisions concerning the economy of the country. This research finding concurs with arguments by Dahlberg (2005: 114) who argued that a strong democracy necessitates a public sphere where ordinary citizens form a public opinion that informs the political system. Participation in the form of advising leadership in government is more salient in Facebook comments under the episode: "Advice to the Finance Minister". It was also observed that the style and manner that Facebook participants used in contributing to this debate were different under each Facebook post dedicated to the episode. This research finding proves that Facebook post captions play a crucial part in influencing and shaping the direction of digital debates.

The research data observed in the digital debate revealed a strong relationship between job creation and the R350 Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant. The Social Relief of Distress is a government initiative which temporarily provides relief to those with socio-economic challenges and who fail to meet basic needs. The SRD programme originates from Section 15

of the Fund Raising Act No. 107 of 1978. The initiative was initially meant to address gaps in the Fund Raising Act No. 107 of 1978 (Makiwane and Rama 2004). The initial proposal of the SRD in the Social Assistance Act No.59 of 1992, was to assist victims of violence (Makiwane and Rame, 2004). The democratic government of South Africa describes SRD as "a temporary provision of assistance intended for persons in such a dire material need that they are unable to meet their families' most basic needs." (SA Government 2022). The SRD programme is currently implemented through the South African Security Agency (SASSA). The eligible applicants for the SRD either receive a grocery voucher, food parcels or a grant upon registration and approval from SASSA (SA Governement 2022). Facebook users mentioning the SRD R350 grant expressed that the fund could be used to create jobs instead of being allocated to those who are unemployed and have no other sources of income. Examples of such comments include:

> *"I believe the R350 that are given to our youth that are not working could have been given to private sectors that are creating internship opportunities and apprenticeship can be more effective in enhancing better future opportunities for our Youth in SA."* (FC109).

> *"R350 by 100k of people gives us R35 mil this could be number of beneficiaries per town per month. In 3 months its R105 mil how many companies could be opened with with this money? So much"* (FC111).

The R350 SRD initiative was introduced and implemented in May 2020 as a response to the global pandemic of Covid-19 in 2020. In April 2020, the country went into full lockdown as a precautionary measure to contain and prevent the spread of the advent virus. The national unemployment rate in the first quarter of 2020 was approximately 35%. This meant that millions of South Africans, especially those living from hand to mouth and below the poverty line, would be greatly affected by the lockdown. The amended regulations of the Social Assistance Act number 13 of 2004 define distress in the context of SRD as "a condition that is usually precipitated by a crisis situation, which could emanate from the sudden change in statuses such as death, loss of a job, illness or an accident." The government of South Africa Implemented the R350 relief fund as a remedial action to address food insecurity and ameliorate poverty under lockdown. The R350 SRD was administered on a national level, and citizens were required to register for this programme using the following channels: USSD, by sending an email, online application and Whatsapp application. Eligible applicants received

R350 per month for 6 months, which was later extended by another 6 months. The R350 SRD continues to be implemented in the country to date.

Young people in South Africa are mostly affected by unemployment and the SRD is a financial assistive device to assist such citizens. However, some of the Facebook commentators who joined the conversation on *Daily Thetha* expressed negative comments regarding the R350. The debate revealed that some young people believe that the R350 is not economically viable for meeting basic needs, whilst some regarded it as 'useless':

> *"The government has money to give to us as unemployed youth why doesn't he use the money to open up companies in order for me to earn even R3500 so I can provide for me and my son, wht will I do with R350 this is money for my toiletries only as for me I completed my college diploma in 2018 my son was two years old now the his six, is this fair on him course now I can not provide him with a bright future tht he deserves coz I am not working first thing tht our government needs to fixs #dailythetha"* (FC35).

> *"R350 grants are a waist of money, rather cancel those useless R350's and give a special grant to unemployed over 35"* (FC113).

Moreover, others expressed that young people misuse the funds and suggested the allocation of funds be directed towards the funding of SMMEs to create more jobs.

> *"I'm friends with people receiving that money,they not doing anything productive with it but drink and buy clothes. After two days they broke again. If that money was used towards creating jobs and boosting small businesses. Most of us would be less depressed"* (FC137).

> *"The R350 strategy could have worked for people but there is less growth in it besides those who started small businesses with it, otherwise it is not a long term structure or set up, where is the country's vision board economically for the next 5 years"* (FC106).

The conversation about the R350 SRD grant revealed vast and contradicting views about the government initiative. Some of the audiences expressed that the R350 SRD is used by the ruling government as a ploy or bribe to get more votes in the next cycle of elections.

> *"You made a valuable and wise point. There's plenty of Vandalized Industrials and Mines that can creates lots of jobs for Citizens, only if can be taken care of, but this Government want Blacks to keep on relying on them with this grants after grants. It is their strategic plan to hold poor voters hostage to keep on voting for them. People need permanent with descent*

salaries in order to provides for themselves and their loved ones, not this insulting R350" (FC36).

"Let alone the corruption, coz most of people sells jobs, how funny it is buh painful if can sit and meditate about it. Coz bayayithenga and some are not even qualified, wena you'll do interviews buh never get hired, and bayawakhipha abapost but that just ukwenza nje, bona they already have their own people asebewuthengile lomsebenzi. Kubebuhlungu ukuzwa abantu abasha bethi "bayovotela amaR350" ts very painful it leads ekuthenini ne youth igcine izifaka ezintwen eziWrong 😭🤌" (FC38).

[There are those who buy jobs and some are unqualified. Job posts are published, however, it is only for show, because companies already have candidates for the job positions. It pains me when young people say that they going to vote for the current government (ANC) because of the R350 SRD grant.] (FC38).

The research findings discussed above show that Facebook commentators are knowledgeable about the government funding policy of the SRD for citizens in need. The SRD is eminent in the discussion largely due to the free flow of information and freedom of the media, state-owned and private, in South Africa. The South African media played a crucial role in broadcasting and informing citizens about governmental decisions from the initial stages of the global pandemic. Based on this conception, external flows of communication and the political scene on macro levels influence information discussed on micro platforms of political debates such as Facebook. Due to the state and health of the South African media, Facebook commentators contributed well-informed information to the digital debate. This research finding complements the general consensus in reception studies which asserts that media audiences and texts cannot be studied outside of their contexts. As Staiger (2005: 2) argued, reception studies are concerned with the meanings of texts for audiences under certain circumstances and with changing values over time. The changing values in this discussion are the macro levels of the government SRD and mediated systems of communication in democratic South Africa. For example, the study of a digital debate about youth unemployment in South Africa in the early 2000s will reveal concepts that vary significantly from the digital debate studied herein.

This study observed interesting topics emerging from Facebook comments mentioning job creation in relation to the government. Some Facebook users, notably commentators FC99, FC30, and FC116 below, mentioned the importance of access to land as crucial for the creation

of jobs. The issue of land reforms became more salient after a parliamentary debate between the ruling party, ANC and the opposition, Economic Freedom Fighters, EFF in 2017. The Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994 and Section 25(7) of the Interim Constitution of 1993 provide a legal base for land restitution. The 1996 constitution of South Africa states that individuals and communities who were victims of land dispossession after 19 June 1913 have the right to claim restitution of land. Although audiences allude to the restitution of land, there are no references to the eligibility for the process. Audiences discuss access to land in relation to farming and subsidy:

> *"Hello Daily Thetha my advice to the minister and His cabinet is to provide R3500 stippend to people over 35 unemployed and give them land to farm vegetables and Livestock and help the State to stop importing food and instead for us to export . We need food security more than anything else R350 is an insult people are hungry why not produce our own food and save ?"* (FC99).

> *"We can spot the porvaty ana unemployment when if the government keep land for planning e.g fruits, Vegas,help our youth to open our own farm to create the job opportunities."* (FC30).

> *"I'd introduce land subsideies for historically disadvantaged group, which would help on job creation and advancement of our economy"* (FC116).

Borrowing from the cultural studies tradition of reception studies, the Facebook comment section acts as an arena where cultural meanings are re-assessed, debated, and altered. The cultural symbol emerging from the debate is land restitution. The cultural studies tradition emphasises the importance of cultural antecedences in studying and understanding cultural meanings in media texts. Land reforms in South Africa have a cultural history dating back to the apartheid era. The recent and ongoing debates about land redistribution without compensation in the media play an important role as a cultural symbol influencing the debates in this digital sub-public sphere. Evidence from the digital debate shows that Facebook commentators accept the hegemonic view by presenting the general consensus that land should be redistributed for purposes of farming and job creation. Based on arguments borrowed from critical cultural studies, the digital debate on Facebook is not only a political and literary public sphere but it can also be characterised as a public cultural sphere. Moreover, as previously observed in the research data discussed prior, Facebook commentators are in tune with the

political scene in South Africa, also as a result of external media communication channels on the macro levels.

Despite the consensus that exists among Facebook users that the government is responsible for the creation of jobs, some audiences expressed opinions contradicting this view. Some audiences argued that young people should be responsible for creating their own jobs instead of relying on the government. Similarly, some audiences expressed that young people are often sluggish and entitled, expecting handouts from others, or the government in this instance.

> *"Sometimes we blame the government wheres we hv our own hands to start the business in my view I say government must check n assist lapho socale khona* [where we are truly in need] . *Hence he must stop corruption that all"* (FC102).

> *"Most Of our youth we stuck because We have Dreams but no goals, we have Vision With no Mission nor Action Plan Most of us we are too lazy and very dependent. We always want an easy way out to a point that we end up blaming society and our government. I honestly sympathize with graduates with no luck and those that are working Very hard to get there ."* (FC250).

The arguments made by commentators FC102 and FC250 contribute to a significant national debate about the role of the government and the private sector in creating job opportunities in a country with the highest unemployment rates. Although the current government prioritises unemployment and job creation as stated in their policies, the rate of employment absorption in the public sector is fairly low compared to the rate in the private sector. In the 2022 State of Nation Address (SONA), President Cyril Ramaphosa stated that the government is not responsible for job creation in the country (Khosa 2022). The president mentioned that majority of workers in the country are employed in the private sector. The private sector absorbs about 80% of workers into the labour market (Khosa 2022). During his SONA speech, the President argued that the role of government in the labour market is to create an environment that is conducive for the emergence and growth of the private sector – to enter new markets and employ job seekers (Khosa 2022). The government aims to foster economic growth and increase job creation through the private sector. Some of the *Daily Thetha* commentators made reference to the President's SONA speech in response to a Facebook user who suggested that government should create more jobs:

"Employment? How is that money going to create employment after the President last week said the government does not create jobs?" (FC127).

"I believe the R350 that are given to our youth that are not working could have been given to private sectors that are creating internship opportunities and apprenticeship can be more effective in enhancing better future opportunities for our Youth in SA." (FC109).

The most salient pattern of communication in this digital debate about the government and youth unemployment is freedom of expression, a central and crucial factor in democratic states. These overt political discussions relating to leaders in government show that the digital conversation occurred independently from state interference and control. Unlike other African countries, the overt opposition of government observed in this digital sub-public sphere does not necessarily lead to arbitrary arrests or abductions. Interestingly, there were few Facebook comments that opposed those who argued that leaders in government are to blame for the economic crisis of high rates of youth unemployment. The general consensus in the debate was that the ANC is responsible for both the economic crisis of unemployment and fixing it by creating jobs.

The right to freedom of expression is a democratic right enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa. As Lardner (1993) argued, technological tools are important to enhance information flow and democratise African media systems. This sub-public sphere on Facebook enhances and extends the information flow shared in the main public sphere. However, it is vital to ask ourselves whether these debates influence policy change and bring transformation and if they do, to which extent? We have observed and highlighted those political discussions holding the government accountable occurred with no government representatives in the digital sub-public sphere. The absence of political leaders in the digital conversation limits government intervention and the elevation of these issues to relevant stakeholders. Conversely, Facebook comments in the digital debate broadcasted on a public broadcaster television channel in the presence of government representatives also do not guarantee policy change and transformation. This research finding supports Mutsvairo (2016: 8) conception of African digital public spheres which limit digital democracy and, in some instances, are undemocratic due to power imbalances.

The political debates under this theme were centered around the South African government, elections, and job creation. Although the Facebook comments made reference to important political concepts, there were no comments providing background information about these

concepts. Concepts such as the SRD, elections and land restitution were casually discussed in the comment sections. Equally, there were no enquiries about concepts mentioned and discussed on the show. Moreover, Facebook users discussed the idea of job creation through SMMEs, however, there were no mentions of funding opportunities offered by the government such as the YCF and the NYDA. A number of Facebook commentators only argued that the government should reserve a budget for establishing and expanding small businesses. Equally, there were no mentions of the funding Acts and policies drafted and mandated by the government in this digital sub-public sphere.

5.2.3. **Theme 2: Factors Inhibiting Job Security Among SA Youth**

The debate about unemployment cannot be isolated from factors that contribute to and perpetuate this economic crisis. Youth unemployment in South Africa is caused by numerous factors ranging from micro levels of family background to macro levels of systems of education. Discussions in this thematic category were drawn from a sample of Facebook comments discussing factors contributing to youth unemployment in South Africa. The sample revealed the three most salient issues that young people perceived as barriers to securing employment: unemployability, the South African education system, and corruption. In addition to these conversations are suggestions for skills development in order to equip young people for employment. The Figure below depicts a basic statistical description of category extracted from the sample to compile this thematic category. The number of comments in each category was counted manually. The frequency of the categories for each thematic category is tabulated below:

Categories of the unit of analysis	**Number of comments**
Unemployability	22
South African education system	23
Corruption	14
Skills development	10
	Total no. of comments: 69

Figure 9: frequency of categories in theme 2

Figure 9 shows the frequency of comments in each category of this theme. Facebook comments that discussed the challenges of securing a job are 69 in total. The majority of Facebook comments under this theme attributed the greatest inhibitor of securing a job in South Africa to the systems of education. This number is followed by unemployability, with a total of 22 comments. A total of 14 Facebook users attributed unemployment to challenges of corruption in hiring processes of most workplaces. Data also show that a total of 10 comments discussed the issue of skills development for youth in the country.

Unemployability refers to the lack of employment due to the absence of necessary skills, experience, or qualities to successfully perform a job. The communicative exchange between Facebook users in the comment sections showed a unanimous agreement that the demand for experience in the South African labour market is one of the greatest factors contributing to unemployability. These arguments are also confirmed by various scholars who have studied

and produced empirical data on youth unemployment in South Africa, notably Mlatsheni and Leibbrandt (2011), and Maruma and Sebolaaneng (2019). As highlighted in the literature review chapter, Mlatsheni and Leibbrandt (2011: 120) discussed the human capital processes that are imperative for access to the labour market as key features that inhibit the successful conversion of young people into the labour market. The digital debate occurring in the Facebook comment sections prove that commentators are in complete awareness of this demand for experience, and these are some of their sentiments regarding the issue:

> *"As youth we struggle To find employment because of job experience ..."* (FC10).

> *"Like for why are they doing that, for who don't they know kuthi they are hurting us by asking for experience"* (FC56).

The arguments made by commentators FC10 and FC56 concur with conclusions made by Marumo and Sebolaaneng (2019) about youth unemployment in South Africa. As highlighted in the literature review chapter, the two authors concluded that a number of young people who are job searching are excessively affected by the plight of unemployment due to the great demand for skilled labourers in the market.

The conversations pertaining to unemployability also revealed that race is a factor contributing to experience and unemployment. According to Kingdon and Knight (2004: 199), there is a persistent disparity in unemployability between varying race groups in South Africa. As already established in literature discussions, young black South Africans with poor backgrounds are greatly affected by high rates of unemployment. Dais and Posel (2006: 2) discussed the relationship between education and unemployment in the South African context and argued that this relationship is not only racialised, but it is greatly gendered. Their study discovered that both white and African males are more likely to get employment, whilst white and African female counterparts are less likely to receive employment despite their education level (Dais and Posel 2006: 2). Although the conversations about youth unemployment related to race are slightly lower in the sample, this is a crucial contribution to the debate given the racial history of apartheid in South Africa. Unemployability related to race was discussed in the digital debate as follows:

> *"Whites groom their children from an early age, but us we wait for matric to decide what is it that we want but a white kid has already performed a particular job practically before going out looking for a job which puts him or her at advantage, while all we have is theory"* (FC241).

"Many black people have good qualifications. But they don't get best offers. That makes them being desperate and end up getting fraud offers. Our government must try to do something" (FC240).

The emergence of race in the digital debate highlights the importance of context and social markers of audiences in audience-based research. The politics of race in South Africa are important considering the apartheid and colonial histories that disproportionately disadvantaged Africans whilst benefiting white counterparts. The arguments made by Facebook users FC241 and FC240 contribute to a significant debate about white privilege that exists in post-apartheid South Africa. In simple terms, white privilege refers to the ethnic advantage given to white individuals solely based on their race. White privilege in South Africa is rooted in its colonial and apartheid histories which politically, socially and economically benefited white ethnic groups. Despite its roots, white privilege continues to permeate all spheres of life in contemporary South Africa including the workplace. Based on arguments made by both FC241 and the racial history of South Africa, white ethnic groups in post-apartheid are at a better socioeconomic advantage to upskill and prepare for employment than their black counterparts.

The digital debate about unemployability is interestingly intertwined with systems of education in the country. As depicted in Figure 9, conversations about the South African education system are slightly higher in this thematic category. A number of Facebook users in the sample argued that the demand for skilled labourers is contradictory to the realities of skills produced by education sectors in South Africa. It is a general perception that schools are institutions of knowledge which equip learners with knowledge and skills. Various skills are acquired from schooling, of which some are deemed necessary in the labour market. Examples of such skills are communication skills, numeracy, and interpersonal skills. Institutions of learning are the foundation and core of human capital. The assertion made by commentators is also supported by empirical research. According to Yu (2013: 13), there exists a discrepancy between skills yielded by the education systems and skills required in the labour market. In a study of the relationship between education and job sectors in South Africa, Mpendulo and Mang'unyi (2018: 87) postulated that education is positively correlated with unemployment – the less educated a candidate is, the more likely they will face unemployment. These are some of the arguments made by Facebook users relating to experience and education in South Africa:

"It always says 1year to 3years experience ,how can u have a job experience while u coming from school ,some of the companies they state age which is also wrong 🤦🏽‍♂️" (FC13).

"Eish company can not hire us because we don't hef experience. Re tlaba le experience jwang ele gona o tswang skolong" (FC45).

[How could we have acquired experience when we just came out of school.] (FC45)

The research data presented above show that engagement with *Daily Thetha* content is influenced by personal experiences. Facebook users discussed the issue of unemployment based on their experiences with educational qualifications and entry into the labour market. This finding is crucial to reception studies of audiences which highlights that audiences engage with and interpret media messages based on social markers, and notably in the study, education levels. Moreover, engagement with media texts is greatly influenced by context. These research findings correspond with an argument made by Jensen and Helles (2015: 8) that the expansion of digital media does not negate the geographical and cultural contexts of audiences. Conversely, it is vital that we delve into the status of the current systems of education that exist in South Africa in order to understand the responses emanating from the digital debate.

The Facebook comments linking education and years of experience required by companies show that there is a relationship between schooling and unemployment. This finding is also supported by Marumo and Sebolaaneng (2019: 13479) who postulated that youth with post-secondary education that does not fit with the demands of the labour market face difficulties in entering the labour market. Mpendulo and Mang'unyi (2018: 13479) argued that although schools are important, the level of schooling is a factor in securing employment in South Africa. Like any other labour market, in South Africa, there are skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled candidates. Spaull (2013: 3) argues that of 100 pupils who begin school, only 50 reach grade 12, 40 pass and only 12 qualify for university entry. This means that the rate of young people without post-secondary education surpasses those with post-secondary education. Post-secondary education in the South African context refers to education and training after the completion of Grade 12 and more specifically the attainment of diplomas and certificates. In South Africa, a matric certificate is a minimum requirement in securing an entry-level job and skills development programmes. In the context of the labour market, the level of education increases human capital and chances to enter the labour market (Mpendulo and Mang'unyi 2018: 13479). Those with higher education levels possess the necessary skills for productivity in the workplace and thus are more eligible to enter the market. Data drawn from the sample

of Facebook comments also reveal this relationship between education and unemployment. Young people with post-secondary qualifications such as diplomas, and training certificates struggle to enter the labour market.

> *"I have diploma in bm frm fet and diploma in bm from learnership....buh wen u hustle thy took abt expirience"* (FC55).
>
> *"My life crisis iyho kuyabheda I hve matric nd diploma in Tourism.buy iyho Spain asitholakali totally manje mina ne friend yam we have started a project which we help abo Gogo ngama daily basis routine and we clean for nd we focus on disabled people too coz siyabonga ukuthi we dnt get jobs so we gve help to those who need it. Please like our page on Facebook Asibambaneni sibemunye project and donate with whatever you can thank you or contact us 0837188199"* (FC282).
>
> [My life crisis is very bad. I have a matric certificate and a Diploma in Tourism but I struggle to find a job. My friend and I have started a project which assists the elderly with day-to-day tasks. We also assist the physically challenged because we realise that we are unemployed.] FC282.

Despite the argument presented by commentators FC55 and FC282 above, young people with higher levels of education such as degrees are also affected by unemployment. The term 'graduate' has different meanings in different contexts. In broader global contexts, graduates refer to those with post-secondary education. However, a graduate in South Africa refers to individuals who possess a university degree (Broekhuizen 2016). Although the labour market absorption rate is high among young graduates, there is a slightly lower rate of unemployment among this cohort. The Quarterly Labour Force Survey shows that unemployment rates among graduates in Q3 of 2021 were 12.5% and 23.2% for those with post-secondary education.

The existing unemployment rate among graduates contributes to global debates about how well education equips graduates for them to be competent in the job market (Van Der Berg and Broekhuizen 2012: 3). Van Der Berg and Broekhuizen (2012: 4) argue that existing literature on unemployment in South Africa excludes graduate unemployment. The cause, nature and magnitude of graduate unemployment are not well studied in South Africa. Moreover, Baldry (2016: 789) argued that there is a disparity in graduate unemployment between varying fields of study. One of the biggest contributors to graduate unemployment is pursuing study fields that are not in demand in a specific time and context (Baldry 2016: 789). Skills that are in demand vary across borders. Despite the shortage of skills in some fields, there is a disparity

between skills graduates acquire in tertiary and skills that are demanded by the labour market in South Africa (Baldry 2016: 789). The debate about youth unemployment on the *Daily Thetha* Facebook page offers a glimpse into the nature and extent of graduate unemployment. Graduates who formed part of the digital debate shared their personal experiences with unemployment:

> *"We have degrees, diploma and certificates to be hired, but unemployment rate have more percentage rather than going down. End CORRUPTION in RSA END!!"* (FC46).

> *"Imagine going to school completing your matric. Then completing your degree, N or Levels but still struggling to find a job. Then looking for a jobs for 5 years but nothing.Seems like those documents are now like I'd books .Mostly corruption is more involved. Only relatives and friends are hired. Corruption never ends"* (FC47).

The disparity between skills that are demanded by the labour market and skills that are offered in institutions of learning warrants an important conversation about transformation and curriculum reforms of education systems in South Africa. A report on the quality of education in South Africa by Spaull (2013: 3) posited that South African education is in a continuous crisis, and that it is disappointing the youth. Spaull (2013: 6) argues that the majority of young people are unable to transition to tertiary institutions due to poor quality education that has persisted from primary through secondary. Pupils lack basic numeracy and literacy skills despite the school subjects and grades (Spaull 2013: 4). The inequality that exists in educational results is influenced by socio-economic status, area of schooling, language and provincial location. The author found that black youths in South Africa are products of an under-average education that hinders them from furthering training in post-secondary institutions. The minimum of those who pass matric exams still struggles to secure employment. This is because the acquisition of a Grade 12 certificate does not ensure employment. Rather, it ensures entrance into tertiary institutions. Interestingly, the quality of systems of education in South Africa is debated by Facebook users in the digital debate:

> *"The question that we should really be answering is , "is our current education system preparing learners for the "real" world ?? I think there's a relationship between our education system and unemployment. Please dive into this conversation #DailyThetha"* (FC11).

"I think it would be wise of our government to invest more on education, which and also useful type of education which is skills, theory only produces citizens that talk but can't do anything just as our government has been doing' (FC121).

Commentators FC11 and FC121 discuss and challenge the systems of education in South Africa. This shows that Facebook users in the digital debate questioned ideologies that govern their world. This finding concurs with arguments made by White (1993: 4) that audiences constantly negotiate with media texts to reconstruct ideologies shaping their worldview. Research data presented in this discussion show that Facebook commentators battle with the realities of their education and the demands in the labour market. It is also observable that Facebook commentators question the cultural meanings of education in South Africa. Based on this research finding, the digital debate represents a public cultural sphere where the current systems of education are re-assessed and debated in order to construct or reconstruct the ideologies governing them. The critical cultural studies proposed by Butch and Livingstone (2013: 9) argued that the dominant alliance embedded in media texts is responded to by either agreeing, challenging or reinterpreting the meanings. Research data drawn from the Facebook comments show that debate participants FC11 and FC121 greatly challenged and reinterpreted the hegemonic systems of education which govern their world.

Moreover, the discussion about the quality of education in South Africa poses a great threat on the future of the economy and the social well-being of South Africans. Broekhuizen (2016: 1) argues that the current labour market depends less on higher education in South Africa. The supposed skills mismatch between graduates and the labour market can be attributed to the lack of response to technical and structural innovations by South Africa's institutions of learning. A slight number of commentators expressed a sense of hopelessness in the education system of South Africa:

"South African no longer need people who a educated I'm 22 years older but I can make living via forex to make about 1500" (FC245).

"Education that does not teach you to create things for yourself but teaches you to go & look for a job it puts you in bondage...Education was supposed to equip us to stand for ourselves & to empower others." (FC265).

Research data presented in this category show that there is a general consensus in the Facebook discussions about the relationship between South African education and youth unemployment. Interestingly, there were no commentators who opposed the consensus that systems of

education in South Africa perpetuate youth unemployment. As Fraser et al. (2004) argued, political consensus is an imperative factor in the public sphere. Moreover, the debate related to systems of education involves Facebook comments that are solution-based. A number of commentators from the sample suggested the creation of skills development programmes in order to substitute the gap between skills produced by institutions of learning and those demanded by the labour market. Facebook commentators in the debate believe that the government is responsible for investing in skills development programmes for youths.

> *"Iwill like government to invest in skill development for youth people"* (FC120).

> *"@daily thetha Money should be directed at creating skills centres for the youth to acquire skills that will better their chances of being employed or better yet,stimulate self employment"* (FC112).

The South African government supports and encourages the development of skills among young people through various programmes. The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) was founded in 2003 in order to achieve "more jobs, better jobs, decent work for all" (South African Government 2022). The EPWP programme aims to provide training and skills development to previously disadvantaged groups in order to equip them for the job market " through various skills and training that the participants receive from the EPWP, they (participants) stand a better chance to enter the formal job market and/or become entrepreneurs" (South African government 2022). Whilst some *Daily Thetha* Facebook commentators attributed skills development as a government mandate for the youth, others argued that young people are responsible for developing skills for themselves in order to equip themselves and increase their chances of employment.

> *"The young people of 2021 please do not select job take every opportunity that is arising such as piece jobs even if you have degree do not ignore piece jobs because is where there is a potential to create job. it looked like the university degree is not matching with today's economy in south Africa"* (FC29).

> *"Le try to attend workshops, and volunteer so that we gain experience so that we can be able to achieve something"* (FC234).

> *"I think we should engage ourselves with many organisations and more and also seek for help and also avoid sitting and do nothing"* (FC248).

Data in Figure 9 above show that 14 Facebook comments mentioned and discussed corruption in the workplace. This corruption is specifically linked to the processes of hiring. Corruptive actions that emerged from the Facebook sample were nepotism, cronyism, patronage, and bribery. Corruption is used as a category in the thematic category to include all four acts of showing favouritism in hiring processes of the workplace. Nepotism refers to favouritism based on familial relationships whilst cronyism occurs when friends benefit from such favours. Patronage is favouritism based on political party support. Bribery refers to the sales of jobs, where the hiring process is highly influenced by monetary value rather than merit. At the core of these corruptive acts is the abuse of power - those who hold power and status in the workplace offer opportunities to those they are affiliated with, whilst manipulating out-groups for monetary gains. Corruption can be linked to various opportunities including hiring preference, funding, skill development, and many more.

Nepotism and cronyism remain an issue in most companies in South Africa, despite public complaints about them. Facebook users who participated in the digital debate are aware of these corruptive practices in both the private and the public sectors and brought them up in the discussions. A number of Facebook users mentioned and alluded to nepotism as a barrier to securing employment in South Africa. Interestingly, nepotism and cronyism were used simultaneously in the digital debate:

> *"Thing of experience it's killing us nd the other thing it's corruption in companies because they hire there friends nd families so that's why"* (FC31)

> *"Imagine going to school completing your matric. Then completing your degree, N or Levels but still struggling to find a job. Then looking for a jobs for 5 years but nothing.Seems like those documents are now like I'd books . Mostly corruption is more involved. Only relatives and friends are hired. Corruption never ends"* (FC47)

Based on the sample presented above, commentators FC31 and FC47 made a connection between nepotism, cronyism, and corruption. The majority of Facebook comments discussing nepotism and cronyism in the workplace mention the word 'corruption'. This interesting research finding means that a number of *Daily Thetha* Facebook commentators perceived nepotism and cronyism as acts of corruption in the digital debate. Moreover, data has shown that Facebook commentators tend to juxtapose family/relatives and friends in the comments. Both nepotism and cronyism are used in conjunction to describe corruption that hinders employment security.

Nepotism is discriminatory in nature and an unethical conduct. The abuse of power used to hire candidates solely based on favouritism hinders justice in the workplace. This behaviour in the workplace is highly prohibited by the Employment Equity Act number 55 of 1998. Chapter 3 section 15 of the Act outlines affirmative action measures that "are designed to ensure that suitability qualified people from designated groups have equal employment opportunities." Section 15 subsection 2A states that employers have to analyse and recognise factors that prevent employment such as unfair discrimination of designated groups. Corruption in the workplace discriminates against suitably qualified candidates whilst prioritising relationships and monetary gains. Chapter 3 section 20 of the Act discusses the employment equity plan, which states that employers are obligated to plan and execute an employment equity plan which encourages equity in the workplace. Equity in the workplace means that every candidate, internal and external to the workforce, is to be treated fairly and without bias.

The discussions on corruption in the workplace focused greatly on the sales of jobs and/or bribery. Several Facebook users argued that they were unable to secure employment due to the sales of jobs by most hiring companies. This poses a great challenge for unemployed youth who lack the necessary economic means to buy available jobs due to their poor socio-economic backgrounds. Unemployment alone perpetuates and deepens the cycle of poverty. The bribery of jobs is an unjust practice which contributes to this cycle of poverty, especially among those with lower socioeconomic status. According to South African law, bribery is regarded as a criminal offence. The Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act number 12 of 2004 is the legal basis for corruption in South Africa. Chapter 2 section 3 of the Act stipulates that "any person who, directly or indirectly accepts or agrees or offers to accept any gratification from any person in order to act in a manner that amounts to the illegal exercise that amounts to abuse of a position of authority is guilty of the offence of corruption." In the same section, it is also stipulated that those who agree to offer or participate in dishonest acts resulting from the abuse of authority are guilty of corruption. The comments below prove that bribery negatively affects young job seekers in South Africa:

> *"Let alone the corruption, coz most of people sells jobs, how funny it is buh painful if can sit and meditate about it. Coz bayayithenga and some are not even qualified, wena you'll do interviews buh never get hired, and bayawakhipha abapost but that just ukwenza nje, bona they already have their own people asebewuthengile lomsebenzi. Kubebuhlungu ukuzwa abantu abasha bethi "bayovotela amaR350" ts very painful it leads ekuthenini ne youth igcine izifaka ezintwen eziWrong 😭🤚"* (FC38)

[Because there are those who buy jobs and some are not even unqualified. Job posts are published, however, it is only for show, because companies already have candidates for those job positions that are already bought. It is painful to hear young people say that "they going to vote for the R350" it is painful it leades to youth partaking in illegal activities] (FC38)

"Finding a job is a very hard thing, especially now that you have to bribe for a job or have someone u know that can put you in that job, if you don't do the above you won't get a job, it's been 3 years and even every job website , they know me it's really hard to get a job I was even one of a candidate who where scammed from looking for a job and it really hurt to lose money while u need it that's how hard it is." (FC41)

Nepotism in the workplace is practised in many countries globally, and it is more prevalent in the public sector. Nepotism, patronage and bribery are the most practised forms of corruption in the South African public sector. The South African news media constantly sheds light on individuals with political connections and those with family names connected to prominent political leaders who receive preferential treatment in the public sector. Nepotism and patronage in the South African government is more prevalent in municipal hiring processes (Chassamboulli and Gomes 2021: 345). Chassamboulli and Gomes (2021: 345) argue that nepotism and patronage in the public sector is likely to occur when wages are higher. *Daily Thetha* audiences are aware of the corruption that occurs in the public sector and they raise these issues in the digital debate:

"I think job Hunting is a Challenge because of online application, how certain are we with geographic that locals benifit? Am speaking on a concern as a community member in Merafong a city with mining house as a economic hub in Gold production, we don't have alternative industries that are Sustainable. It's difficult to get entry with experience demand vs education and a red tap entry of Criminal record. It's tough and jobs are given to party volunteers..." (FC6)

"ANC should stop selling jobs we loss our families and home's!!! 🌍🤧😕*"* (FC44).

Although the general consensus in the sample above is that corruption in the workplace is wrong, Chassamboulli and Gomes (2021: 345) argue that nepotism decreases the unemployment rate and shortens the job-seeking que, especially in the private sector. Although an interesting and perhaps important observation, this practice is exclusionary to the majority

of job seekers who are qualified for employment but are not affiliated with recruiters and managers. The affiliation with recruiters and managers is commonly referred to as 'connections' in South Africa. Facebook users discuss how these connections or the lack of them contribute to their inability to secure a job:

> *"Unemployment will never decrease because CONNECTIONS lately VOLUME more than QUALIFICATIONS, and again this thing of work experience is killing us greatly why not create a post a a junior so an individual would get used to the work environment while getting that required experience. Young people are getting depressed some resort to drugs."* (FC5)

> *"Jobs in SA are for those connected to the bosses or recruiters. You will look for job until 35 years old an never get one because of age limit"* (FC25)

> *"Good morning to the daily thetha team I'm 27 years old and I had to go back to school because there's no job you will apply until kingdom kuhamba ngo kuthi you know who* [it depends on who you know]*, I'm doing business management and business students are really limited when it comes to jobs we are told that we have to go to insurance companies to work and mina I know I won't cope in that environment #dailythetha"* (FC53).

With a great demand for skills in the labour market, corruptive acts such as nepotism are the biggest factors hindering the expansion of human capital. A study by Perz-Alvarez and Strulik (2021: 212) shows that nepotism has negative effects on schooling input and outcomes. Job seekers who perceive the labour market as nepotistic put less effort into education (Perz-Alvarez and Strulik 2021: 212). This in turn affects the human capital and consequently the economic growth (Perz-Alvarez and Strulik 2021: 212). Nepotism only benefits the few, whilst greatly marginalising those without connections. Based on this premise, it is undeniable that nepotism is detrimental to society. The study also observed that discussions about nepotism in the digital debate is emotionally charged, highlighting the seriousness of the issue among some of the young people in South Africa.

The most salient factor that emerged from the research data presented in this theme is language use. The communicative exchange in the digital sub-public sphere occurred both formally and informally. The formal use of language in the sample refers to grammatically correct and coherent sentences, whilst informal refers to the language used for online chatting. Research data presented in the discussion show that the majority of the Facebook comments were posted in chat style. The discussion on language use in public spheres is highlighted by Dahlberg

(2005: 113) in the theoretical framework discussed in this study. Dahlberg (2005: 113) argued that language use and styles of communication in the classical public sphere adopted western philosophies of communication and the academic manner of argument. According to Dahlberg (2005: 113), this formal way of communicating creates an environment where the force of the better argument wins. This view of the public sphere alienates those with no formal training in academia. For example, research data revealed that some Facebook users showed lower skills of literacy in the English language in the digital debate. Although these commentators lacked the basic literary components for communicating in English, their contribution to the debate is as imperative as those who showed fluency and coherence in the debate. In addition, it is important to note that English is one of the 12 official languages in South Africa. It is therefore expected that some of the Facebook commentators are not first speakers of the English language.

Moreover, the required rationalist discourse proposed by Habermas is exclusionary in nature and to some extent undemocratic, especially in developing countries where rates of illiteracy are the highest. Based on the discussions of youth unemployment in the digital debate, the coherence of the argument cannot outweigh what is actually being communicated. Based on this assertion, the informal way of communicating political issues used in this digital sub-public sphere highlights Dahlberg's (2005) criticism of the bourgeois public sphere. Taking into consideration the context and time period, communicative interaction between debaters will differ significantly. Language use also differs significantly based on geographical location and between generations. The manner of communication between old white males of the 17th and 18th centuries differs significantly from the one of youth living in 21st century South Africa. The classical western formal and academic style of debate in the political public sphere cannot be imposed on public spheres in African contexts and neither can it be imposed on the current generation of young people.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the Western rational style of debate of the earliest public sphere will take newer forms of communication models in digital formats and especially in African contexts. The research findings and literature of this study show that the digital public sphere deviates from the rational and academic style of debate. This does not disqualify Facebook discussions about unemployment as the public sphere. As research data has shown, unemployment affects youth across all education levels. Therefore, contribution to the debate should reflect the real demographics of those who are affected by the issue. These research findings show that this digital sub-public sphere is democratic. By allowing every Facebook

user to contribute to the debate despite their education level, socioeconomic status or any other social marker, this digital sub-public sphere upholds democratic ideals of freedom to participate in political discussions.

Due to the natural progression of debates, *Daily Thetha* audiences who partook in the digital debate presented varying stances on the issue of youth unemployment in South Africa. Facebook commentators critically debated by assessing and re-assessing cultural meanings that exist within society. Although there are numerous factors which contribute to the high rates of unemployment in South Africa, the most salient factors that emerged from this digital conversation were lack of experience and skills, the South African education system, lack of skills development opportunities, and corruption in hiring processes. Most of the Facebook comments in this thematic category were related to systems of education in South Africa. This conversation did not occur in isolation from experience and skills. There is consensus among Facebook commentators that the South African education system does not properly equip learners with skills that are compatible with the current labour market. These findings are significant given that research-based data suggests that there is a disparity between the supply and the demand of labour in South Africa. Moreover, *Daily Thetha* Facebook commentators revealed that there is corruption in hiring processes in the workplace. Nepotism, cronyism, and patronage are common in the South African public sector. The research findings presented in this thematic category showed that most arguments proposed in the digital debate were backed up by literature discussed in chapter two of this study. This means that issues that were raised in the digital debate are not new in the South African socio-economic, political, and news media landscapes.

5.2.4. **Theme 3: Toxic Work Environments**

The digital debate about youth unemployment revealed that most young people face difficulties in the workplace that affect their employability. Studies and political debates pertaining to unemployment are often fixated on causes external to the work environment, neglecting factors that perpetuate the issue within the workplace (Mlatsheni and Murray 2011; Cloete 2015; Mago 2018; Yu 2013; Marumo and Sebolaaneng 2019). *Daily Thetha* Facebook commentators shared that they face extreme forms of abuse in the workplace. The most salient forms of hostile behaviour most young people are subjected to in the workplace include exploitation, bullying, discrimination, and toxic management. These forms of abuse in the workplace emerging from the sample of Facebook comments were categoryd and placed under this thematic category. The Figure below illustrates basic statistical data of the number of Facebook comments in each category. The number of comments in each category was counted manually. The frequency of Facebook comments in each category for this thematic category is tabulated below:

Categories of the unit of analysis	**No. comments**
Labour exploitation	47
Workplace bullying	36
Discrimination in the workplace	23
Toxicity in the workplace	10
	Total no. of comments: 116

Figure 10: Frequency of categories in theme 3

Figure 10 is a summary of Facebook comments that discussed forms of abuse young people face in work environments. The total number of comments under this theme is 116, the largest proportion out of the three broad themes. The categories with the highest comments on this theme are labour exploitation and workplace bullying. The comments from both categories account for 29.2% of the entire conversation about youth unemployment in South Africa. Moreover, the Figure above shows that 23 comments discussed varying kinds of discrimination experienced in the workplace. Facebook users also discussed their experiences with toxic management and colleagues. A total of 10 comments in the corpus discussed toxic behaviour in the workplace. Facebook comments in this thematic category account for 40.85% of the digital conversation about youth unemployment. This means that a large number of *Daily Thetha* Facebook commentators attributed unemployment to abusive and harmful work environments.

This research finding corresponds with arguments made by Mlatsheni and Leibbrand (2011: 119) that lower absorption rates in the workforce are due to workplace environments that greatly challenge young people, and thus contribute to unemployment. It is commonly known that the labour force is made up of workers who trade their skills for money, and capitalists who are invested in making a profit. This trading process in the labour market refers to a phenomenon known as capitalism. Karl Marx and Frederic Engel (1975) are two notable scholars who coined the theory of capitalism. The two scholars classified the workforce into two classes, the bourgeois and the proletariat. The bourgeois refers to a class of individuals who own the means of production, whilst the proletariat refers to those who form the working class (Marx and Engel 1975). Due to the relationship between the two classes, the desire of capitalists to make a profit has the propensity to lead to exploitation in the workplace. Data in the Figure above show that Facebook comments which mentioned and alluded to exploitation in the workplace were slightly higher in this category.

In its broadest sense, exploitation in the workplace refers to the abuse of workers' labour in order to increase profit. Labour exploitation violates Section 23 (1) of the South African Constitution (1996) which aims to ensure the right to reasonable labour practices. Despite exploitation being prohibited by the constitution, exploitative practices are still present in the workplace. Facebook users discussed various forms of exploitation in the workplace. These were related to working hours, remuneration, contractual agreements, leave, minimum wage, and refreshment breaks. Facebook commentators revealed that they are overworked and paid less, not paid for overtime, paid below the national minimum wage, have little or no meal break, and that they performed jobs outside the contractual agreement. Moreover, others expressed that they have experienced fluctuating salaries and unpaid leaves. The issues mentioned above do not encourage the fair labour practices that the constitution aims to uphold and achieve.

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1998 is a legal basis for fair labour in South Africa. Chapter 2 of the Act explains rules and regulations for working hours in the workplace. Section 9(1) postulates that employers are not permitted to allow employees to work more than 45 hours in a week. The average working hours in 24 hours must not exceed 9 hours for employees who work five days and 8 hours for those who work more than five days. Section 10 of the Act explains regulations applicable for overtime work and states that employees may not permit workers to work overtime, provided that there is an agreement between involved parties. Workers are not allowed to work overtime for more than 3 hours in 24 hours and 10 hours in a week. Data from the sample revealed that some *Daily Thetha* commentators are/were

not paid for overtime work. Employees are obligated by law to pay workers "one and one-half times the employee's wage for overtime worked" (Basic Conditions of Employment Act 1998). The Act also states that employees who worked overtime are entitled to 90 minutes off for every hour of overtime worked. Moreover, section 14 of the Act postulates that workers are entitled to a 1-hour meal interval when working constantly for 5 hours. The issue of meal intervals, commonly known as lunchtime, was also observed in the sample. Below are examples of Facebook comments addressing working hours in the workplace:

> *"I worked for a month and never looked back after I've got paid. Reasons being long hours of work, unpaid overtime, disrepect, racism, less than 15 mnts lunchtime and for my safety nje. Sometimes i would be alone at around 9pm and by that time there isnt transport and kamo i was earning R2.8 not enough to hire a special. I was working as a cleaner at one of the restaurants in Cullinan"* (FC150).

> *"Long hours but less salaries we even work on weekends 😢 and the treatment was bad we have to clock at 6am until 20pm for R100 per day (no job no pay 😢)"* (FC151).

> *"i also left my job after 3 days, i cldnt stand for such a long time with no lunch time"* (FC181).

Research data also revealed that there were exploitation issues related to payments. A number of comments revealed that most young people are paid less than the national minimum wage. The national minimum wage in South Africa in accordance with the Basic Conditions of Employment Act was increased from R21.69 to 23.19 per hour effective from 1 March 2022. The national minimum wage represents the earnings threshold (Mather 2022). By law, no employee must earn below the earnings threshold. The minimum wage is set as a standard for national wages. Employers, in both skilled and unskilled labour sectors, are legally obligated to pay employees no less than the minimum wage (Mather 2022). Despite this legal obligation, research data revealed that some Facebook commentators received payments below the minimum wage:

"I left a job in 3 months at some call centre ....they said we get paid by the number of customers we sign for 2 months we never got paid only to find out that our customers whenever called back to confirm the policy ....i remember getting only R80 ..mind u i catch a taxi to work everyday and i have to eat...ae it was just volunteering srs" (FC182)

"I used to work as a security officer at tshwane mamelodi the reason why I left the owner paid me 2800 for 26 days and I worked 12 hours on top of that he forced me to work with an unlicensed fire arm" (FC163).

Moreover, issues related to payments in the digital debate discussed unstable salaries and non-payments. According to section 29(1) of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1998 employers should provide employees information in writing pertaining to the rates of payments, deductions, and the frequency of remuneration payments. Section 32 (2) of the Act states that remunerations in money should be paid either in cash or by cheque to employees. Some of the Facebook commentators who participated in the debate revealed that they did not receive payment for hours worked, payments agreed upon in the hiring stage, and some experienced payments fluctuations each month:

> *"Working without a contract for a period of 3 months without pay"* (FC154).

> *"Hi i was working at school with a contract of EAs and GSAs on phase 1 i didn't get my last payment of April that contract ended last year End of April up until now they never paid me. I tried to go to District office at HR but they never gave me a solution until they said I must go to the Department of Education even there I didn't get halp i even submitted all my documents"* (FC91).

> *"I worked as a domestic worker and left after 3 months. 1. First month I got paid R1300. 2.2nd month I got paid late R500 and a week after R1500. 3.I wasn't supposed to work over the weekends but I did.. sometimes I would start working as early as 05:00 am on the weekends and she promised to pay overtime but never did and she did many bad things and I left on the 3rd month without getting paid"* (FC162).

Data in the Figure above show that workplace bullying is the second-largest category in this theme. It was observed that Facebook commentators attributed their reasons for unemployment to bullying in the workplace. Majority of comments allocated in this category mainly discussed bullying from management. In the context of the working place, employees are categorised by varying levels of seniority. The existence of hierarchies means that there is a power imbalance between personnel in the workplace. In a general sense, the existence of power imbalance between individuals will most likely lead to abuse and exploitation. Bullying in the workplace is characterised by harassment, offence, social exclusion, and a negative impact on someone else's work (Samnani and Singh 2012: 583). An activity is only considered bullying when it occurs frequently, and consistently over a period of time (Samnani and Singh 2012: 583). The

digital debate in the Facebook comment sections revealed a few bullying behaviours that young people were subjected to, namely, name-calling, threats, gossip, insults, yelling, criticism of work, and withholding information. Examples include:

> *"That's true. What I have experience was horrible. The managers just need to be felt and throwing waits around. I mean they even said "you just an intern and your purpose is to run around" literally. I was shook. Treatment is just malicious."* (FC235).

> *"I had a similar experience, being called slaves, slaap tiger, and all those kinds of names...mina I was prepared to stand for my self...they used leave their positions and say "di mpatha" diteng they will work...I pushed until I was out of 3probation and one of them started with those names...I stood up and confronted him, and told him to call me slaap tiger in my face, he kept quiet, told him to call me slaap tiger again, I'll wait for him at the gate after work and ngizom hlafuna amasende 🙈and even to this day he never ever mentioned those names again"* (FC236).

> [A slaap tiger is a slang word used as an insult and it means that someone is lagging behind. The phrase "ngizom hlafuna amasende" used in this excerpt refers to chewing of testicles.] (FC236)

The digital debate pertaining to bullying in the workplace is filled with negative emotional tones. Facebook commentators described their experiences using words such as 'horrible', 'inhumane', 'depressive', 'brutal', 'malicious', and the like. There is substantiated research on the causes and effects of bullying in the workplace and the general consensus is that these forms of behaviour have detrimental effects on the health and well-being of workers (Ahmed et al. 2021; Okechuku et al. 2014; Tsuno et al. 2018; and Samnani and Singh 2012). Bullying in the workplace is significantly correlated with depression and anxiety (Tsuno et al. 2018: 1067). The digital conversation also revealed that bullying contributes to absenteeism in the workplace and a decrease in tenure. Some of the Facebook users expressed that they have resigned from their previous work due to the amount of abuse they were subjected to. Reasons for resignation were largely attributed to depression or the preservation of one's mental health. Bullying leads to an environment that is hazardous to the health and well-being of workers. Section 8 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act number 85 of 1993 propels every employer to ensure a safe working environment with no risk to the health of employees. Moreover, the Employment Equity Act number 55 of 1998 states that all forms of harassment in the workplace are considered unfair discrimination. Despite policies and Acts that prohibit bullying in the

workplace, it is still persistent and is one of the greatest causes of depression within the labour force.

> *"I am currently in tears right now because I left my job 22nd of March because of unfair treatment from management and Xhosa women who made it a point to make sure bad mouthed me to management. I was ill treated to a point I couldn't handle this. I am deep I depression and I have children"* (FC77).

> *"Currently am watching on TV I didn't go to work today because ngyahlukbeteka emotional and physically sengcabanga nekyekela msebenti am still a trainee manager and my regional is not a good leader and there's a lot of my colleges that resigned some just go without saying and its for years now but from the divisional no one is doing anything its like they are scared of him I don't know"* (FC76).

> [Currently I am watching on TV, I did not go to work today because I am emotionally and physically abused, I am even considering leaving my job] (FC76).

Data from the research sample has revealed that one of the factors that contribute to high rates of youth unemployment is discrimination in the workplace. Young people who joined the conversation on Facebook expressed that they experience(d) varying forms of discrimination in their places of work. The forms of discrimination that emerged from the digital debate were on the basis of race, language, tribe, age, and sex. Civil society strives for diversity in the workforce through various laws and policies. Discrimination can occur in a subtle and covert manner, whereas in other instances it is blatant. Discrimination in the workplace can either be structural or interpersonal. Corporations may have structures in place that systematically encourage discriminatory outcomes. Moreover, discrimination may occur as a result of demographic variations in personnel and ideologies that influence their worldview. Interpersonal discrimination is established in interactions and is usually manifested as jokes, harassment, insults, innuendo, and the like (Van Laer and Janssens 2011: 1205). Moreover, Lee (2020: 514) argues that discrimination in the workplace is categorised as either objective or subjective. Objective discrimination occurs when an observer interprets a situation as discriminatory based on pre-existing perceptions of what comprises discrimination (Lee 2020: 514). Subjective discrimination occurs when individuals describe their circumstances as discriminatory (Lee 2020: 514).

Discrimination on any basis is greatly prohibited in democratic South Africa. The Constitution of South Africa (1996) and the Employment Equity Act (1998) serve as legal interdicts against

discrimination in the workplace. Section 6 of the Employment Equity Act number 55 of 1998 states that employees should not be subjected to discrimination, directly or indirectly, on grounds of race, gender, pregnancy, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, belief, language, culture, and religion. Data from the research data show that the most salient forms of discrimination in the workplace were on the basis of race and language. Below are some of the examples extracted from the sample:

> *"I left in 4 months it was either that or somebody would eventually get hurt and trust you me it wouldnt have been me the passive racism I could handle but the toxicity of the environment, mistreatment, long hours and not being paid what was due to me. Mugg n BEAN"* (FC215)

> *"I worked for this company from 2008 and i was promoted in 2010 to Sales Department...i was the first black person to work in their offices since the company's inception in 1987...i was a threat to most of this white people who were working in those offices untill my boss told me to resign because i was a threat to his stuff in the office and if i dont do as he says we might have a problem,,,i knew his tactics on how he operates so i decided to just leave without taking him to CCMA."* (FC64).

Facebook commentators FC215 and FC64 raise an important debate about race relations. Given the racial history of South Africa, it is important to dive into this debate and highlight its importance in this context. South Africa has a colonial history which subjected African natives to extreme forms of racism. Racism was institutionalised, systematic, and legalised through apartheid laws. The inception of democratic South Africa in 1994 necessitated the establishment of laws and policies that aimed to dismantle the colonial history that greatly disadvantaged minority groups. The Constitution of South Africa (1996) is the basis for laws and principles that govern democratic South Africa today. Similarly, the Employment Equity Act number 55 of 1998 was established to amend apartheid labour laws by promoting equality, equity, and democracy in the workplace. The emerging comments about racism in the workplace prove that South African workspaces still lack transformation in post-apartheid South Africa.

In addition, data has also shown that those who speak against racism in the workplace may be subjected to abuse. One Facebook user said that they resigned from work after exposing and speaking against racism in their place of work:

"I left a job because of racism that I exposed and they ended up treating me bad for it.

A small brokerage firm in Cape Town." (FC166).

Moreover, research data has revealed that young people are subjected to discrimination on the basis of language. The discussions relating to this form of discrimination are both external and internal to the workplace. Facebook commentators expressed that external discrimination on the basis of language materialises through job requirements that mostly require English and Afrikaans languages only. Section 6 of the Employment Equity Act number 55 of 1998 states that the exclusion or preference of people based on job requirements is not a form of unfair discrimination. This law significantly highlights conceptions of subjective and objective discrimination. The specificity of language preference by companies for job positions is perceived as discriminatory by other young people, whilst the law permits it.

> *"Agree. Afrikaans is a home language like Xhosa or Sepedi it should not be used in selecting jobs. English should only be used to select candidates. Just imagine if we start selecting jobs based on our languages."* (FC160).

Research data has also revealed that language barriers in the workplace may lead to possible abuse and/or firing from the job.

> *"Someone i know was fired because she can't communicate in Afrikaans ...this is what we face in Western Cape no Afrikaans no job"* (FC157).

> *"I once worked for a well known grocery store where I was also treated badly by the store manager from the first day because I didn't speak his language, I did not enjoy because we were always called black sheep. We were not afforded the opportunities to find better jobs and if you asked for a day off maybe for an interview at another job tomorrow when you come back your warning will waiting for you even though they admitted for you to go."* (FC62).

Another form of discrimination observed from the sample was on the basis of sex. The digital debate revealed that young people experience varying forms of sexual discrimination from both the management and colleagues.

> *"Treatment at the working place is very bad ; instead of the Boss lead the stuff by examples they treated their stuff like the slaves; sometimes Boss approaches you to be his woman and u disagre jeerrr you will be in hell"* (FC225).

"Bosses some sleep with women stuff for promotion .They can also beat you inside work places .Blacklist you from not getting employment. Provide you with false records. Deducted life cover and housing while they don't fund Beck. They can allow a follow co-worker to talk bad or post things about you, all the stuff help against you and customers. Some they can just make get fired for jealous sake." (FC230).

Commentators FC225 and FC230 raise a prevalent issue in South Africa and globally. South Africa has the highest rates of incidences of sexual violence. The media, specifically digital media, are used as tools in contemporary society to shed light on the issues of sexual violence and mobilise digital movements. The recent #MeToo movement in America and #AmINext movement in South Africa shed light on gender-based violence that womxn are subjected to on a daily, and in different spheres of life. Gender-based violence can take the form of sexual harassment and sexual assault. Sexual violence is widespread and prevalent in all spheres of life, including the workplace. Sexual harassment refers to unwanted sexual misconduct that can manifest verbally or physically. A set of behaviours associated with sexual harassment are sexual comments/innuendo, sexual advances, whistling, sexual comments about another person's body, etc. Sexual harassment is a form of unfair discrimination on the basis of gender, sex, and sexual orientation. Section 6 of the Employment Equity Act and section 9 of the Constitution prohibit unfair discrimination against employees. Sexual harassment in the workplace is often bidirectional – it is based on hierarchical power and organisation culture. A quid pro quo sexual harassment occurs when an employee is offered a promotion or benefits in exchange for sexual favours from those in management (Schoemanlaw 2021). This is also associated with threats or mistreatment should the employee refuse those advances. On the other hand, sexual harassment may occur in the workplace as a result of company cultures that not only encourage but are blind to their pervasive sexual nature.

Moreover, data also revealed that sexual harassment is not only internal to the workplace but external as well. External sexual harassment occurs when those within the organisation ask for sexual favours from job seekers in exchange for a job position. Facebook commentator FC18 in the excerpt below highlights sexual harassment that is external. This conduct is prohibited by the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act number 12 of 2004, which states that sexual exchange for jobs is a form of corruption. Section 3 of the Act prohibits the offering or acceptance of any gratifications from others in order to influence an outcome.

"Going to school complete your matric and degree and when you looking for a job the bosses is other want money or to sleep with you before getting what you want. SA is corrupt 😭😭😭" (FC18).

Furthermore, another form of discrimination that emerged from the Facebook comments is based on tribe. The discussion about tribal discrimination in the sample of Facebook comments is slightly lower in this category. Below are examples addressing tribal discrimination in the workplace:

"What's so bad about this it's a black race against black race" (FC196).

"I am currently in tears right now because I left my job 22nd of March because of unfair treatment from management and Xhosa women who made it a point to make sure bad mouthed me to management. I was ill treated to a point I couldn't handle this. I am deep I depression and I have children" (FC77).

Commentators FC196 and FC77 highlight an imperative issue of tribalism in South Africa. Tribalism in South Africa dates back to the apartheid era. The apartheid government, through policies and laws, strategically used the existing tribalism as an instrument to further divisions among black South Africans (Baloyi 2018: 1). Baloyi (2018: 2) defines tribalism as an act of displaying strong ties and loyalty to one's tribe to the extent that one is prejudiced against those outside the tribe. Tribalism in society infringes on unity and reconciliation. The democratic government of South Africa developed laws and policies to dismantle the discriminatory policies of the apartheid government. The Constitution of South Africa was developed to fulfil this purpose. Despite attempts to encourage unity and transformation, South Africa remains a fragmented society, both racially and ethnically. Although there has been a gradual change since 1994, the current society still battles with historical antecedents of discrimination as observed from the digital conversation on the *Daily Thetha* Facebook page.

This study observed that the digital conversation in the Facebook comment sections about conditions of workplaces occurred in conjunction with the word 'toxic.' It is known that the word toxic is synonymous with the word poisonous. Several Facebook commentators in the digital debate revealed that the cause of their joblessness was due to toxic work environments that they were subjected to. Facebook commentators either attributed toxicity to the environment or management. Toxic work environments can be observed and measured from interpersonal relationships between employees, work-related structures, and existing

organisational culture (Botez and Cotet 2021: 125). This research finding is no surprise given the categories discussed above relating to the exploitation of employees, bullying, and discrimination in the workplace. These ultimately lead to hostile and toxic work environments. Employees within toxic work environments are engulfed by negative emotions that are detrimental to their health and well-being (Botez and Cotet 2021: 125). This was also observed in the sample where Facebook commentators discussed the matter using words such as 'depressive,' 'sad,' or by using emojis that signifed negative emotions. Rasool et al. (2021: 2) argued that toxicity in the workplace decreases job-related productivity and satisfaction. The decrease in productivity and satisfaction will consequently decrease tenure. Examples of comments mentioning toxic work environments are FC191 and FC220 below:

"Yes... I got in a fight with one of the stuff member not knowing that his father is a shareholder so I couldn't manage the toxic behavior so I just left without a notice 🤦🏾‍♂️😔*"* (FC191).

"The main reason would be that the environment is toxic. You are not seen as a person, you'll be sent to do errands that aren't even on your job description. You not even allowed to share ideas." (FC220).

The overall discussions in this thematic category showed that *Daily Thetha* audiences discussed youth unemployment based on experience, both personal and vicarious. The discussion of personal matters in this digital sub-public sphere supports Fraser's (1990) argument that the boundaries between public and private matters are undefined within the public sphere. In this instance, personal experiences relating to exploitation, bullying, and discrimination are private to Facebook commentators, however, because these issues occur within the public spaces of the workplace, they are a public matter. Additionally, these private and personal experiences are also public concerns that speak to democracy and labour laws in South Africa. Based on this research finding, it is arguable that the day-to-day life details in the micro-levels mirror the overarching political, social, and economic aspects in the macro-levels of society.

The basic premise of reception theory is that audiences interact and interpret media messages differently. These differences are informed by context and social markers such as race, gender, culture, education, age, and others. The discussions concerning racial prejudice in the workplace locate the participants within a specific social location and identity. Based on colonial history, Africans are more likely to be subjected to racism in South Africa than their white counterparts. Moreover, the discussions about sexual violence may categorise a specific commentator as either man or a womxn. This is because womxn are more likely to be sexually

assaulted in South Africa than men. This finding significantly defies early notions made by Habermas (1989) that in the public sphere, the identities of participants outweigh the quality of debate. In a multicultural society such as South Africa, the identities of participants contribute significantly to the manner in which political issues are debated and discussed. This observation is also supported by Fraser's (1990: 90) critique of the classical bourgeois public sphere. For Fraser (1990: 90), the removal of participants' identities in the early public sphere served to privilege aristocrats whilst disadvantaging groups on the margins of society "in most cases, it would be more appropriate to unbracket inequalities in the sense of explicitly thematising them" (Fraser 1990: 90). Based on research data, the quality of the debate in this digital sub-public sphere is determined by both identities of participants and the critical exchange of ideas.

The discussion of results in this thematic category shows that Facebook commentators discussed politically significant issues that are relevant to today's society. The digital conversation between audiences mirrors the current societal issues related to racism, tribalism, sexual harassment, the minimum wage, and labour practices. This observation concurs with the symbolic interactionist approach used in reception studies to study the relationship between audiences and media texts. As argued by Aksani et al. (2009: 902), both media producers and audiences are in constant communication in the production of meanings, producing responses that equal the intentions of the other. The codes and conventions used in the main public sphere guide the digital conversation in the sub-public sphere on Facebook. As Hall (2007: 386) proposed, the production of meaning occurs through the use of language. Through the use of language in the digital debate, one is able to extract codes and conventions used to form discourses around current affairs. The importance of language in the production of meanings in mass communication is also supported by Hall's (2007) models of encoding and decoding. Similar to production methods in television, communication in this digital debate is not isolated from overarching socio-political and cultural systems that shape their content. Moreover, based on arguments made by Aalberg and Curran (2012: 1), this digital sub-public sphere is key to the functioning of democracy by mandating relevant and current information in the country. Moreover, the digital debate not only sheds light on current news but also increases awareness of the political climate in South Africa. As Aalberg and Curran (2012: 1) argued, political awareness is imperative in democratic societies, and the media are a tool in facilitating this functioning.

Moreover, as Hall (2007: 386) argued, the coded messages relevant for communication used in the production phase will only exert any kind of effect or elicit a response if they are deemed relevant by the reader. Research findings in this thematic category show that information communicated on *Daily Thetha* had an emotional effect on Facebook commentators. This is exemplified by research data where Facebook commentators used emotionally charged words and emojis in discussing issues relating to discrimination, exploitation, and bullying. Facebook commentators discussed their experiences with unemployment using emotional terms such as 'painful,' 'sad,' 'depressing,' 'horrible' and the like. Emojis used in the debate that denoted negative emotions were a broken heart, sadness, a teary eye, and a sobbing emoji. The emotional effect observed in the digital debate is negative, meaning that most Facebook users who joined the digital conversation have negative experiences within the workspace.

The emotional communication observed in the digital debate highlight audience vulnerability in digital spaces. The phenomenon of virtual vulnerability is defined and understood differently, and it is therefore context-based. For example, Stoller (2013); and Kodjo and Jenna (2018) proposed varying definitions of the phenomenon, one from a student's perspective and the other from an African context respectively. Kodjo and Jenna (2018: 1) argued that in relation to virtual spaces, vulnerability refers to the susceptibility to being exposed to fraud on social media. Kodjo and Jenna (2018: 1) also argued that virtual vulnerability is more prevalent among young people who lack education and training on the use and management of social media interactions. According to Stoller (2013: 7), virtual vulnerability is a phenomenon associated with the ability to connect with other virtual members. Unlike the virtual vulnerability proposed by Kodjo and Jenna (2018: 1), the kind of virtual vulnerability observed in the Facebook digital debate refers to the freedom to express emotion and share personal matters on a public platform. Research findings presented in the discussions showed that Facebook commentators freely discussed personal issues concerning unemployment, both external to and within the workplace. Moreover, the virtual vulnerability observed in the digital debate was also based on shared experience. Facebook commentators with similar experiences connected through the platform and shared their stories.

Moreover, findings from this study revealed that there is a relationship between the Facebook caption and vulnerability. Vulnerability in the digital sub-public sphere is mainly influenced by the language structure of the Facebook caption. For example, the Facebook caption used on the post of the episode, "Trainees/Interns: Why I Left my Job Within 6 Months" used language

categories such as ‘vulnerable,’ ‘bullying,’ ‘harassment,’ and ‘toxic,’ to elicit a response from the audience. The response will either be on an emotional level or a relational one:

> *This is a time when thousands of young people are preparing to enter into the ‘world of work’ and are eager to kick-start their careers. It has been found that trainees and interns may be considered vulnerable targets of bullying, harassment and exploitation because of their age, inexperience and hierarchical status. Today we reflect on the experiences of trainees in the workplace and highlight the battles that they have to overcome, as well as those that push them over the edge. We will get an understanding of how toxic work spaces and mistreatment while one is a trainee affects one’s outlook on life.* ***#DailyThetha*** ***#WozaEmabhozeni***

The discussions under this thematic category shed light on factors within the labour force that contribute to and perpetuate the issue of youth unemployment in South Africa. Much of the conversation in this thematic category is centred around exploitative behaviours and bullying in the workplace. The discussion about exploitation mainly pertained to unskilled labour corporates such as restaurants and domestic work. The exploitation of workers in formal and skilled work settings was attributed to the banking sector. The types of workplace exploitation discussed in the digital debate were mainly related to working hours and payments. The general consensus in the digital debate is that most young people are overworked, whilst the payment they receive does not correlate with the hours worked. Moreover, Facebook commentators shared their experiences with bullying in the workplace. Bullying behaviours were mostly attributed to authoritative figures in the workplace. The debate also revealed issues of discrimination that are present in corporate South Africa. The conversations about bullying, exploitation, and discrimination occurred in conjunction with toxicity in the workplace. Interestingly, the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation, and Arbitration (CCMA) was brought up in the conversation. This means that some of the Facebook commentators have some form of knowledge about the rights of employees in South Africa.

Chapter five of this study presented and discussed research findings collected through content analysis. This chapter was divided into two sections. The first section presented research results from screenshots of five Facebook posts labelled Figure 13 to Figure 17 in the appendices. Research data was presented based on Facebook comments, video views, post reactions, post sharing rates, post captions, and the hashtags used on each post. Research data in the first section showed that the rates of engagement with *Daily Thetha* Facebook posts differed

significantly in terms of comments, reactions, sharing, and the number of views on each post. Data from the five posts showed that the number of views on each post were significantly higher than engagement tools of commenting, reacting, or sharing on each post. This means that the majority of *Daily Thetha* audiences on Facebook are passive readers of the content. Due to the activity that occurs through Facebook engagement tools, *Daily Thetha* Facebook audiences are classified as both active and passive readers or navigational readers. The second section of the chapter presented data analysed from Facebook comments on the five posts created for the episodes. Data in theme one showed that *Daily Thetha* digital audiences held the ANC accountable for the economic crisis of youth unemployment. There was a general consensus that the government is responsible for job creation. Research data in theme two showed that the experience demands of the labour market limit job security, whilst skills produced by systems of education in South Africa do not match those demanded by the labour market. Factors such as corruption are the greatest inhibitors of employment among youth in South Africa. Lastly, data in theme three showed that some work environments have structures in place and cultures that disrupt the success of employees. The digital debate on Facebook revealed that young people are exposed to exploitation related to working hours and payments. Research data also revealed a different kind of virtual vulnerability within this digital sub-public sphere – one where debate participants freely share their personal experiences and show emotion.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

In the pursuit to explore the ways that *Daily Thetha* Facebook audiences engage with political messages communicated on the show, this study discovered that *Daily Thetha* Facebook audiences can be classified as both active and passive readers. Activeness on this digital platform refers to engagement with Facebook posts by either commenting, reacting, or sharing posts. Passivity refers to viewing or consuming post content without engaging with them directly on the platform. The research data presented in the first section of chapter five showed that audience engagement patterns analysed from the number of comments, reactions, post shares, and views varied significantly on each post. For each Facebook post of the episodes, the number of comments, sharing rate, and reactions were slightly lower than the number of views. This means that the number of audiences who consume the texts passively is higher than those who actively comment, share, and react to content. These acts of engagement expose Facebook posts to a wider audience outside of the Facebook page and thus contribute to the virality of posts. Moreover, research also revealed that post captions influenced engagement with posts. Through the use of language, the social media manager of *Daily Thetha* hails prospective audiences to consume and engage with the content through a Facebook caption. Furthermore, the use of hashtags on the post caption also exposes the post to a wider audience when they are used as search words on the platform. This study also argued that the Facebook comment section qualifies as a digital public sphere. This is because the comment section represents a digital space where commentators engage with the content actively through argument and opinion formation.

Chapter three of this study highlighted that Reception Theory is a branch of the effects tradition in media studies and asserted that media audiences are different and cannot be thought of or studied homogenously. This study analysed Facebook comments in order to examine how young audiences interpret and engage with the content about youth unemployment in South Africa, and to draw conclusions on the kind of public sphere that exist on Facebook. The digital debate about youth unemployment in South Africa revealed that young people discussed the issue from varying perspectives. Participants in this digital public sphere discussed the issue of youth unemployment in relation to the government of the ANC, systems of education, land reforms, elections, as well as labour, cultural, social, and racial relations in the workplace. Facebook commentators discussed the issue of youth unemployment by assessing and re-assessing cultural meanings attached to the factors mentioned above.

The analytical chapters of this study revealed that the Facebook comments sections of the *Daily Thetha* Facebook page act as a sub-public sphere of the main public sphere of the show. This is because the discussions in the comment sections are reliant on and influenced by discussions occurring in the *Daily Thetha* live studios. Chapter three of this study discussed the Habermas theory of the public sphere which was developed from a society of the 17th and 18th centuries, where aristocrats met in saloons and engaged in critical discussions about the state of society. The participants of this classical public sphere critically discussed varying issues and formed public opinion through consensus. The digital sub-public sphere studied herein differs slightly from the classical public sphere studied by Habermas. This sub-public sphere mainly occurs virtually, meaning that access and participation are largely based on internet access and access to a smart device. Participation in this digital sub-public sphere is inclusive to individuals of different races, ethnicity, education levels, socioeconomic status, and the like.

The research data presented in this study showed that the existence of the digital sub-public sphere is crucial and aids democracy in society. This is because Youth-based television talk shows such as *Daily Thetha* play a crucial role in facilitating and mediating critical debates about socio-political and economic issues that affect society. The existence of a digital sub-public sphere creates a space for focused debates among individuals who, for various reasons, cannot access the main public sphere. The *Daily Thetha* digital sub-public sphere offers the youth a platform to critique the state of affairs, form public opinion, and question the socio-political institutions that govern them. Moreover, discussions about youth unemployment revealed that the *Daily Thetha* digital sub-public sphere is political, literal, and a public cultural public sphere. *Daily Thetha* Facebook page is a useful platform for youth who have no access to a mainstream platform but wishes to form part of critical political debates.

Literature in chapter two highlighted that the youth are mostly affected by the plight of unemployment in South Africa. Young people struggle to enter the labour market due to the system of education that inadequately prepares them and the labour market that demands skills that are not compatible with the education system. Youth unemployment rates discussed in the literature in chapter two show that this issue is a national crisis and this study suggests that it should be treated as such. Youth unemployment affects young people despite their education level and geographical location. It is also prevalent among youth who are graduates and those residing in urban areas. Research data has also revealed that unemployment is detrimental to the health and well-being of its victims. Facebook discussions between commentators highlight the importance of a national debate about youth unemployment in South Africa.

Recommendations:

The arguments presented above highlights the importance of digital sub-public spheres in South Africa. Based on the democratic importance of digital sub-public spheres demonstrated in this study, this study recommends an infusion of digital sub-public spheres into Governmental *Izimbizo* in all three spheres of government. This will allow citizens who cannot access main debates such as the State of The Nation Address (SONA), to form part of the discussions and form public opinion about issues of societal importance. This integrated approach is imperative in a society that is undergoing digital migration to gradually venture into the fourth industrial revolution.

This study also recommends a holistic approach which addresses youth unemployment. This approach should look at factors that are both external and internal to the work environment in order to tackle the issue in all facets. More research should be dedicated to issues internal to the work environment that contribute to the issue and more especially exploitation, bullying, discrimination, and sexual harassment.

APPENDICES

Appendix one: QLFS quarter 1 of 2021

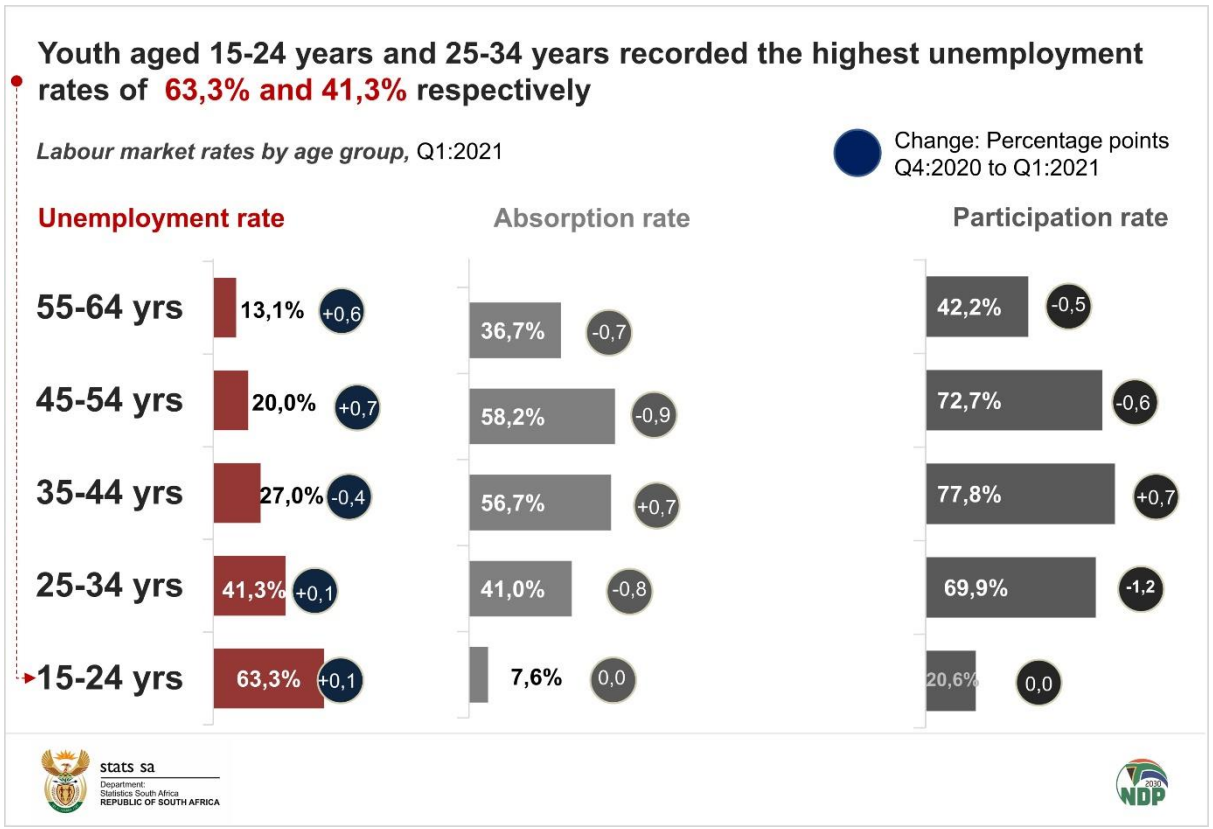


Figure 12: 2021 Quarter 1 unemployment rates.

Appendix two: Screenshots of the analysed Facebook posts



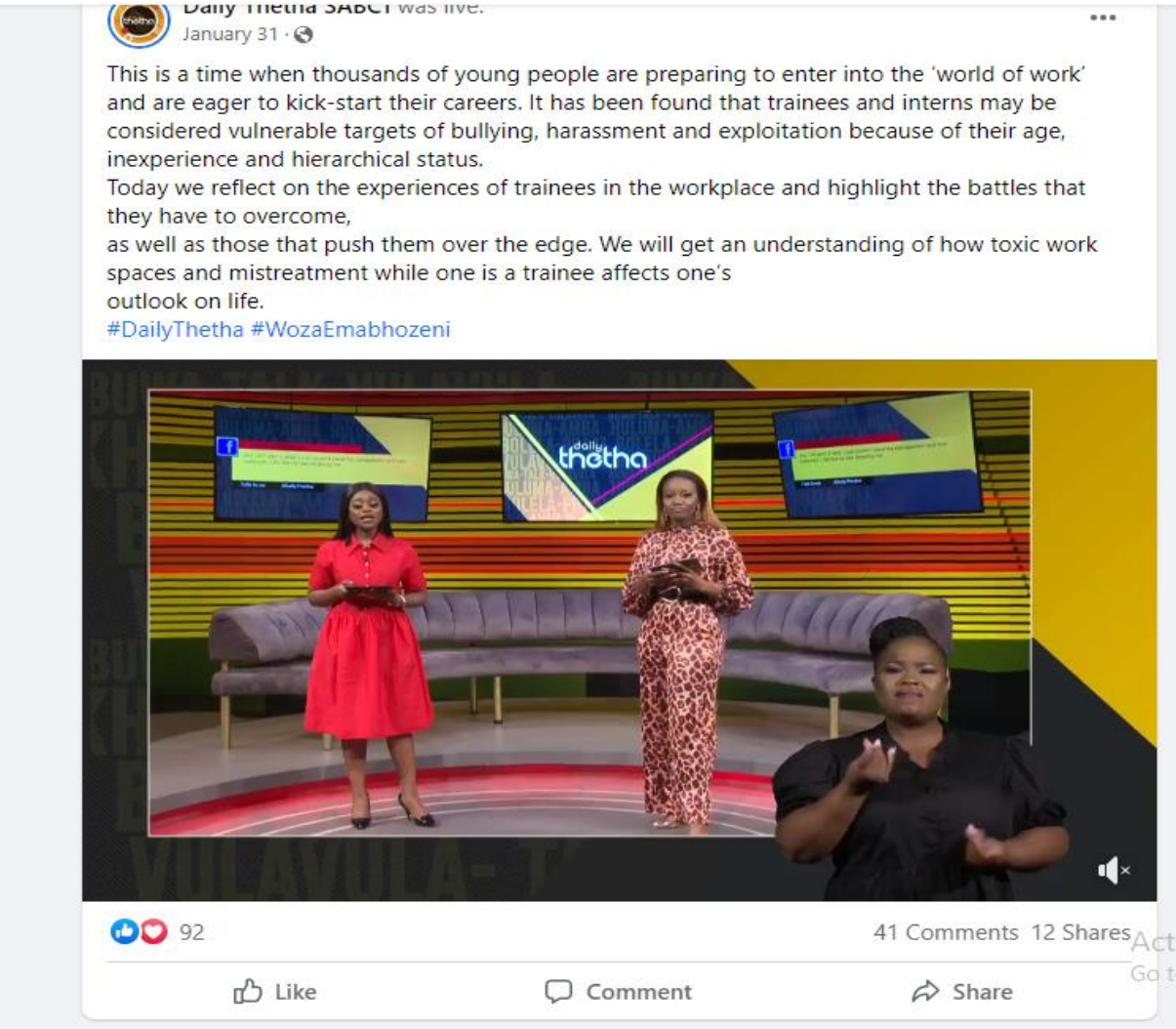
Figure 13: A screenshot of episode: Job Hunting as a Full-Time Job.



Figure 14: A screenshot of episode: Constructive Dismissal.



Figure 15: A screenshot of episode: Advice to the Finance Minister.



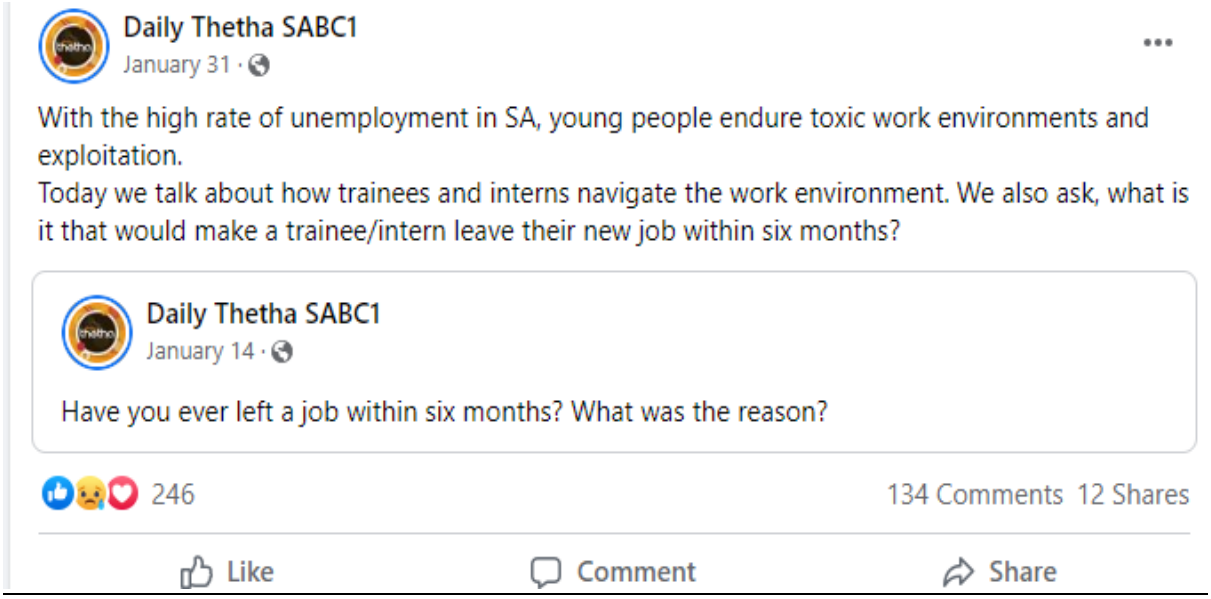


Figure 16: A screenshot of episode: Trainees/interns: Why I left My Job Within 6 Months.

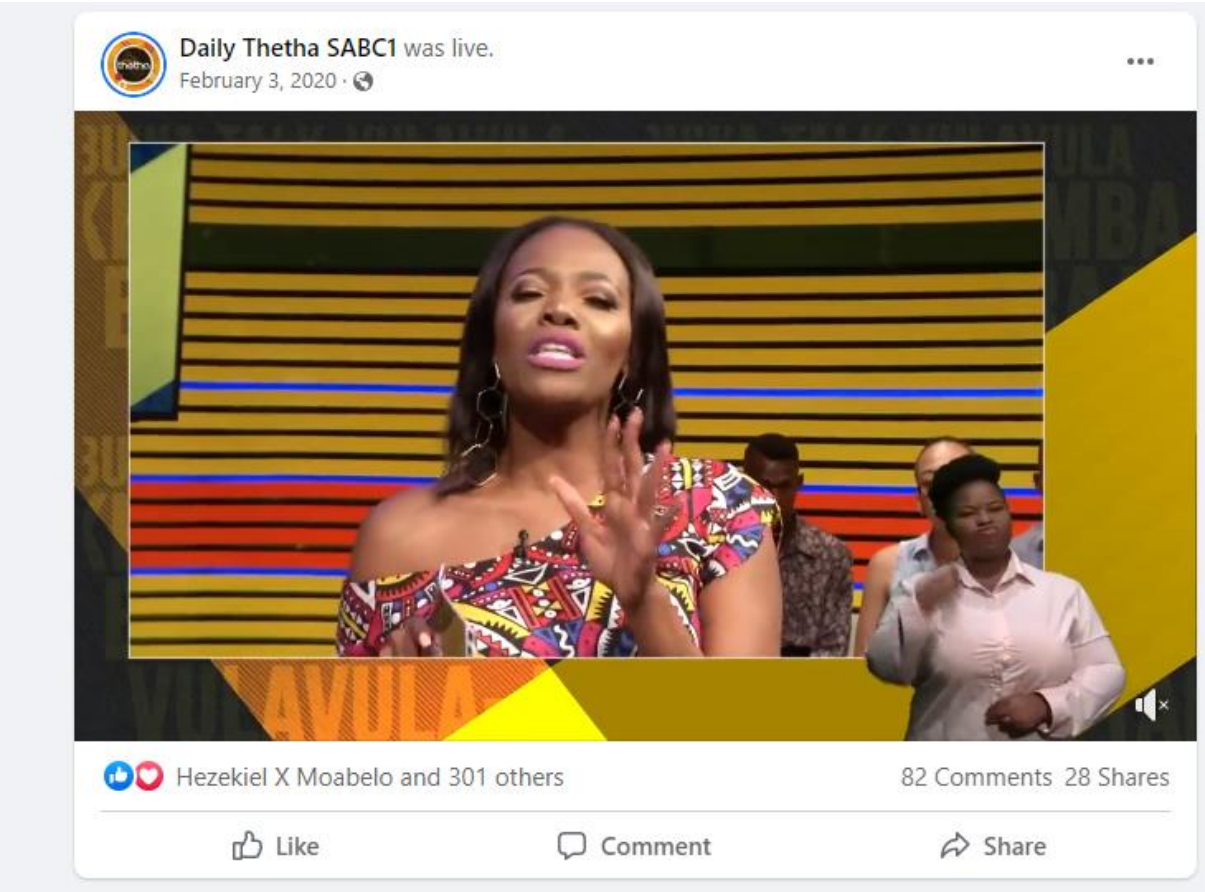


Figure 17: A screenshot of episode: Quarter life crisis.

Appendix three: Broader themes and categories from Facebook comments

Theme 1: The role of government in combating youth unemployment

Episode title	Facebook comment	Facebook user code	Date of publish	Categories
Job hunting as a full-time job.	Unemployment rate will increase as long as we still lack leaders who know the worth of the citizens. We all deserve better than being educated and still not get.a job . The only question is what more do the government want to offer jobs to the youth and others?	FC17	03/11/21	Governmental leadership
Job hunting as a full-time job.	#dailythatha.Hi everyone.As long as we live under this party,nothing will change.We will always struggling.	FC28	03/11/21	Governmental leadership
Job hunting as a full-time job.	The government has money to give to us as unemployed youth why doesn't he use the money to open up companies in order for me to earn even R3500 so I can provide for me and my son, wht will I do with R350 this is money for my toiletries only as for me I completed my college diploma in 2018 my son was two years old now the his six, is this fair on him course now I can not provide him with a bright future tht he deserves coz I am not working first thing tht our government needs to fixs #dailythetha	FC35	03/11/21	Job creation Minimum wage Government grant Governmental leadership Cost of living
Job hunting as a full-time job.	You made a valuable and wise point. There's plenty of Vandalized Industrials and Mines that can creates lots of jobs for Citizens, only if can be taken care of, but this Government want Blacks to keep on relying on them with this grants after grants. It is their strategic plan to hold poor voters hostage to keep on voting for them. People need permanent with descent	FC36	03/11/21	Job creation Government grant Race Elections

	salaries in order to provides for themselves and their loved ones, not this insulting R350			
Job hunting as a full-time job.	Let alone the corruption, coz most of people sells jobs, how funny it is buh painful if can sit and meditate about it. Coz bayayithenga and some are not even qualified, wena you'll do interviews buh never get hired, and bayawakhipha abapost but that just ukwenza nje, bona they already have their own people asebewuthengile lomsebenzi. Kubebuhlungu ukuzwa abantu abasha bethi "bayovotela amaR350" ts very painful it leads ekuthenini ne youth igcine izifaka ezintwen eziWrong😭✌	FC38	03/11/21	Corruption Nepotism Government grant
Job hunting as a full-time job.	But they keep voting for ANC that kills economy	FC42	03/11/21	Elections, government leadership
Job hunting as a full-time job.	ANC should stop selling jobs we loss our families and home's!!!🌍🤒☹	FC44	03/11/21	Government leadership Nepotism
Job hunting as a full-time job.	I don't vaccination I don't vote i living this things in world 🙋	FC49	03/11/21	Elections
Advice to finance minister	The minister of finance must overlooked the tender systems in all spheres of government especial security services, those security companies who were granted contracts to work for municipalities and other government are looting taxpayers money on the expenses of securities while they robing them when it comes to salaries, we urge the minister to cancel all contracts that were given to those security companies and government must insource all securities working under government departments and municipalities	FC94	22/02/22	Government Corruption
Advice to finance minister	I would like the minister of Finance to speak directly on Mining communities to be strengthened meaningful as per mining	FC95	22/02/22	Economic growth Job creation

	charter III, SLPs are a strategic piller in the wheels of driving economic recovery. Accountability and Social Audits (oversight). DMRE is having a policy that mining houses must comply with but the system has delay to delivery of projects on SLP (social license responsibility). Also a understanding of what does it mean when he takes loans that he knows he wont be there when we as young people inherit unnecessary debts. Why dont we see actions of security agency arresting, freezing accounts,...If his honest why did he critique Tito Mboyeni when he considered a loan?			
Advice to finance minister	#dailythetha. Hi everyone. I don't see any reason about R350 because any time it will be end. Why they don't create jobs for community ? They even reject to help 36 years to around 50s about jobs. But look at them in politics,they're too old but they still working. They must open the jobs for community & hire 18 to around 50s. When it comes to the votes, weather you're young or old they welcomed you to vote. Politicians they're very unfair and they always fail us as community. They must open the jobs for community, at least 18 years old to around 50s. We don't want free money which is R350.... Lordwin Blom	FC96	22/02/22	Government grant Job creation Discrimination Elections Government leadership
Advice to finance minister	Hello Daily Thetha my advice to the minister and His cabinet is to provide R3500 stippend to people over 35 unemployed and give them land to farm vegetables and Livestock and help the State to stop importing food and instead for us to export . We need food security more than anything else R350 is an insult people are hungry why not produce our own food and save ?.Eric Tyalo Soweto	FC99	22/02/22	Government grant Access to land Job creation

Advice to finance minister	Those 350 its a waist of money to all communities the government must allocate people who will come across with people's needs rather to waist money. Urban schools can manage all why not us rural?	FC100	22/02/22	Government grant Rural development
Advice to finance minister	Sometimes we blame the government wheres we hv our own hands to start the business in my view I say government must check n assist lapho socale khona . Hence he must stop corruption that all.	FC102	22/02/22	Job creation Corruption
Advice to finance minister	If I were the minister I would focus more on small developmental business and uplift them to lower the unemployment rate in SA, and also on education as well, I'm also a newly baking business and only bake from home and would like a pure location conducive enough for my clients in need of funding but do not know were to start	FC103	22/02/22	Job creation SA education system
Advice to finance minister	Private sector to Create Jobs that's how south African money get lost misused Madness taxes chassis lot of investors It is helpful to give but at least they must do something I'm talking about 350s	FC105	22/02/22	Job creation Government grant
Advice to finance minister	The R350 strategy could have worked for people but there is less growth in it besides those who started small businesses with it, otherwise it is not a long term structure or set up, where is the country's vision board economically for the next 5 years	FC106	22/02/22	Government grant Economic growth
Advice to finance minister	I believe the R350 that are given to our youth that are not working could have been given to private sectors that are creating internship opportunities and apprenticeship can be more	FC109	22/02/22	Government grant Job creation

	effective in enhancing better future opportunities for our Youth in SA.			
Advice to finance minister	Funding small young owned business. Training am talking about how to sustain their business and money management.	FC110	22/02/22	Government grant Job creation
Advice to finance minister	R350 by 100k of people gives us R35 mil this could be number of beneficiaries per town per month. In 3 months its R105 mil how many companies could be opened with with this money? So much	FC111	22/02/22	Government grant Job creation
Advice to finance minister	R350 grants are a waist of money, rather cancel those useless R350's and give a special grant to unemployed over 35	FC113	22/02/22	Government grant
Advice to finance minister	The government should also look at people who are hand gifted and talented and grow them as they will create more jobs	FC114	22/02/22	Skills development Government leadership
Advice to finance minister	All I can say minister must increase 350 to 700 coz even if he opens job opportunities not all of us will work 😐	FC115	22/02/22	Government grant
Advice to finance minister	I'd introduce land subsideies for historically disadvantaged group, which would help on job creation and advancement of our economy	FC116	22/02/22	Access to land Job creation Economic growth
Advice to finance minister	I agree for creating the jobs instead of giving R350	FC117	22/02/22	Government grant Job creation
Advice to finance minister	Good day there at studio, I would like to advise minister to put more focus on developing businesses because that will create more job opportunities.	FC118	22/02/22	Job creation
Advice to finance minister	I believe that the minister should invest more on the small business and try to grow them so that more jobs will be created	FC119	22/02/22	Job creation: funding SMMEs

Advice to finance minister	Create jobs for unemployed 35-59, home owners	FC122	22/02/22	Job creation
Advice to finance minister	Add 350 to unemployment grant 😢	FC123	22/02/22	Government grant
Advice to finance minister	Create more job.....for South African youth	FC124	22/02/22	Job creation
Advice to finance minister	Cancel SRD and have R1000+ for Unemployed graduates Invest more in healthcare, education	FC125	22/02/22	Government grant
Advice to finance minister	1, education 2, employment 3, Community development 4, health and SAPS 5, infrastructure remove all departments of Army with immediate effect, RAF and decrease parliamentary committee salaries	FC126	22/02/22	SA education system Job creation
Advice to finance minister	Employment? How is that money going to create employment after the President last week said the government does not create jobs?	FC127	22/02/22	Job creation
Advice to finance minister	hi every one, am highly appreciate the platform that you gave us ,well if i were the minister iwould allocate the money in the small business,health , education and to the unemployed pepol in South Africa at large in our days we as a youth finds our self unemployed ,poor and remains with no dignity yes we all voting for the better improvement in our country,so they must try by all means that every one remains satisfied ,thank you	FC128	22/02/22	SA education system Job creation Poverty Elections

Advice to finance minister	Young Mlambo then they are educated where are the job opportunities?. I think locating money to create more job opportunities is better.	FC129	22/02/22	Job creation
Advice to finance minister	R350 by 100k of people gives us R35 mil this could be number of beneficiaries per town per month. In 3 months its R105 mil how many companies could be opened with with this money? So much	FC131	22/02/22	Government grant
Advice to finance minister	First things first I'll want to create more job opportunities create more factories for graduates because I understand that the first thing as a whole nation need we money to sustain our needs and also create more goverment bursaries because wow Nsfas.	FC132	22/02/22	Job creation Higher education funding
Advice to finance minister	I will allocated a lot in Economic development and order the department to train unemployed South Africans in to starting their businesses. The money will be used to start those businesses	FC133	22/02/22	Economic growth Skills development Job creation
Advice to finance minister	Will create jobs for single parents aged 40 +,CUZ no one is considering them	FC134	22/02/22	Job creation Discrimination
Advice to finance minister	Cancel the R350 grand and create jobs,boost small business and provide skills for those who are sitting at home. I feel like the education system we are using up to this day is no use to our communities. Lets teach people to create jobs instead of teaching them to be dependent on jobs/work	FC135	22/02/22	Government grant Job creation Skills development SA education system
Advice to finance minister	Tainee Hlahane why would you cancel R350?	FC136	22/02/22	Government grant
Advice to finance minister	Ozalwekuphakameni Siyabonga Mdletshe I'm friends with people receiving that money,they not doing anything productive	FC137	22/02/22	Substance abuse Government grant

	with it but drink and buy clothes. After two days they broke again. If that money was used towards creating jobs and boosting small businesses. Most of us would be less depressed			Job creation Mental health
Advice to finance minister	We need a post graduate stipend to help graduates go for interviews and maintain doing applications!	FC138	22/02/22	Government grant
Quarter life crisis	Many black people have good qualifications. But they don't get best offers. That makes them being desperate and end up getting fraud offers. Our government must try to do something	FC240	03/02/20	Race Government leadership Crime
Quarter life crisis	I'm a qualified teacher but the disadvantage is that I was using NSfAS so those who was funded by Fundza must be placed first before us I don't know why because we have the qualification	FC242	03/02/20	Government grant
Quarter life crisis	The pressure we give ourselves is bigger that the effort we give for making them come true... sometimes we talk things and expect someone or the government to make them happen... we invest more time in things that are useless	FC247	03/02/20	Pressure Government leadership
Quarter life crisis	Most Of our youth we stuck because We have Dreams but no goals, we have Vision With no Mission nor Action Plan✊Most of us we are too lazy and very dependent. We always want an easy way out to a point that we end up blaming society and our government. I honestly sympathize with graduates with no luck and those that are working Very hard to get there✊□	FC250	03/02/20	Laziness Government leadership Sympathy
Quarter life crisis	The Government is making empty promises companies still demand experience from Graduates in order to be employed which is impossible	FC252	03/02/20	Government leadership Unemployability
Quarter life crisis	It's very sad and frustrating how we predict our own life set targets and goals. The hardest part of it is that we plan and	FC276	03/02/20	SA education system Mental health

	execute enough effort to be what we chose or worked so hard to become. Attaining diploma or degree would at most gives one a better view of success which in real life things doesn't manifest as is. Young adult we are so drowning in depression and it's real.unemployment as a graduate is likely to kill alot of young. It's tough out here, we are screwed by believing that after completion o your studies then prestigious life is awaiting. It's tough competition too much out here. With our government being in its state of poor socio-economic strategies we are doomed. It's bad.			Economic challenges Government leadership Job opportunities
Job hunting as a full-time job.	We can spot the porvaty ana unemployment when if the government keep land for planning e.g fruits, Vegas,help our youth to open our own farm to create the job opportunities.	FC30	03/11/21	Access to land Poverty Job creation
Job hunting as a full-time job.	We can create jobs but we do not have funding to create those jobs. I was told after Grade 12 life would be smooth but it is a different story now	FC39	03/11/21	Job creation

Theme 2: Factors inhibiting job security

Episode title	Facebook comment	Facebook user code	Date of publish	Categories
Job hunting as a full-time job.	I think job Hunting is a Challenge because of online application, how certain are we with geographic that locals benifit? Am speaking on a concern as a community member in Merafong a city with mining house as a economic hub in Gold production, we don't have alternative industries that are Sustainable.	FC6	03/11/21	Internet access Unemployability SA education system Nepotism

	It's difficult to get entry with experience demand vs education and a red tap entry of Criminal record. It’s tough and jobs are given to party volunteers...			
Job hunting as a full-time job.	If u can see my email account right now my inbox is full of job opportunities from a various career portals...and i do apply but none of them has landed me a job since 2016. Job hunting has became a stressful matter and it has killed the positivity I've had and the dreams or goals bive targeted.... Tried everything in my powers even these knocking to government doors with business certificates trying to reach for tenders... But they are always awarded to friends and families 😔... Life is hard out here	FC8	03/11/21	Unemployability Mental health issue Nepotism
Job hunting as a full-time job.	As youth we struggle To find employment because of job experience ...	FC10	03/11/21	Unemployability
Job hunting as a full-time job.	The question that we should really be answering is , "is our current education system preparing learners for the "real" world ?? I think there's a relationship between our education system and unemployment. Please dive into this conversation #DailyThetha	FC11	03/11/21	SA education system
Job hunting as a full-time job.	As young people, we are unemployed yet we have skills in different disciplines. For instance, this is time for technology and we do have skills for Ethical hacking, programming, software development, Cybersecurity, etc. Many young people have no significant years of experience in their fields, if companies are still employing in terms of experience, we will not get employed and we will use our skills in a wrong way.	FC12	03/11/21	Unemployability

Job hunting as a full-time job.	It always says 1year to 3years experience ,how can u have a job experience while u coming from school ,some of the companies they state age which is also wrong 💔	FC13	03/11/21	Unemployability Discrimination SA education system
Job hunting as a full-time job.	Unemployment won't decrease until they change the thing of job experience while u are coming from school	FC16	03/11/21	Unemployability SA education system
Job hunting as a full-time job.	What we need to do is empower ourselves and multi-skill ourselves	FC27	03/11/21	Unemployability
Job hunting as a full-time job.	The young people of 2021 please do not select job take every opportunity that is arising such as piece jobs even if you have degree do not ignore piece jobs because is where there is a potential to create job. it looked like the university degree is not matching with today's economy in south Africa	FC29	03/11/21	SA education system Job preference
Job hunting as a full-time job.	Thing of experience it's killing us nd the other thing it's corruption in companies because they hire there friends nd families so that's why	FC31	03/11/21	Unemployability Nepotism Corruption
Job hunting as a full-time job.	Eish company can not hire us because we don't hef experience. Re tlaba le experience jwang ele gona o tswang skolong.	FC45	03/11/21	Unemployability SA education system
Job hunting as a full-time job.	We have degrees, diploma and certificates to be hired, but unemployment rate have more percentage rather than going down. End CORRUPTION in RSA END!!	FC46	03/11/21	SA education system Corruption
Job hunting as a full-time job.	Imagine going to school completing your matric. Then completing your degree, N or Levels but still struggling to find a job. Then looking for a jobs for 5 years but nothing.Seems like those documents are now like I'd books .	FC47	03/11/21	SA education system Corruption Nepotism

	Mostly corruption is more involved. Only relatives and friends are hired. Corruption never ends			
Job hunting as a full-time job.	My diploma did not come knocking at my door it took me sleepless night and money tht even my mom does not have wht about the job my education is not paying off, the keep on telling us to open up business to help with the employment, questions is who will buy if too many of us are not working	FC50	03/11/21	Job creation SA education system
Job hunting as a full-time job.	It is real hard to find a job	FC52	03/11/21	Unemployability
Job hunting as a full-time job.	I have diploma in bm frm fet and diploma in bm from learnership....buh wen u hustle thy took abt expirience	FC55	03/11/21	Unemployability SA education system
Job hunting as a full-time job.	Like for why are they doing that, for who don't they know kuthi they are hurting us by asking for experience	FC56	03/11/21	Unemployability
Advice to finance minister	@daily thetha Money should be directed at creating skills centres for the youth to acquire skills that will better their chances of being employed or better yet,stimulate self employment	FC112	22/02/22	Skills development
Advice to finance minister	Iwill like government to invest in skill development for youth people	FC120	22/02/22	Skills development
Advice to finance minister	I think it would be wise of our government to invest more on education, which and also useful type of education which is skills, theory only produces citizens that talk but can't do anything just as our government has been doing	FC121	22/02/22	SA education system Skills development
Advice to finance minister	1, education 2, employment	FC126	22/02/22	SA education system Job creation

	3, Community development 4, health and SAPS 5, infrastructure remove all departments of Army with immediate effect, RAF and decrease parliamentary committee salaries			
Advice to finance minister	hi every one, am highly appreciate the platform that you gave us ,well if i were the minister iwould allocate the money in the small business,health , education and to the unemployed pepol in South Africa at large in our days we as a youth finds our self unemployed ,poor and remains with no dignity yes we all voting for the better improvement in our country,so they must try by all means that every one remains satisfied ,thank you	FC128	22/02/22	SA education system Job creation Poverty Elections
Advice to finance minister	First things first I'll want to create more job opportunities create more factories for graduates because I understand that the first thing as a whole nation need we money to sustain our needs and also create more goverment bursaries because wow Nsfas.	FC132	22/02/22	Job creation Higher education funding
Advice to finance minister	I will allocated a lot in Economic development and order the department to train unemployed South Africans in to starting their businesses. The money will be used to start those businesses	FC133	22/02/22	Economic growth Skills development Job creation
Advice to finance minister	Cancel the R350 grand and create jobs,boost small business and provide skills for those who are sitting at home. I feel like the education system we are using up to this day is no use to our communities. Lets teach people to create jobs instead of teaching them to be dependent on jobs/work	FC135	22/02/22	Government grant Job creation Skills development SA education system

Quarter life crisis	Le try to attend workshops, and volunteer so that we gain experience so that we can be able to achieve something	FC243	03/02/20	Unemployability
Quarter life crisis	South African no longer need people who a educated I'm 22 years older but I can make living via forex to make about 1500	FC245	03/02/20	SA education system Gambling
Quarter life crisis	The Government is making empty promises companies still demand experience from Graduates in order to be employed which is impossible	FC252	03/02/20	Government leadership Unemployability
Quarter life crisis	Education that does not teach you to create things for yourself but teaches you to go & look for a job it puts you in bondage... Education was supposed to equip us to stand for ourselves & to empower others.	FC265	03/02/20	SA education system
Quarter life crisis	I am stuck because ..I always apply for Nsfas successfully but I don't get space from College	FC270	03/02/20	SA education system
Quarter life crisis	It's very sad and frustrating how we predict our own life set targets and goals. The hardest part of it is that we plan and execute enough effort to be what we chose or worked so hard to become. Attaining diploma or degree would at most gives one a better view of success which in real life things doesn't manifest as is. Young adult we are so drowning in depression and it's real.unemployment as a graduate is likely to kill alot of young. It's tough out here, we are screwed by believing that after completion o your studies then prestigious life is awaiting. It's tough competition too much out here. With our government being in its state of poor socio-economic strategies we are doomed. It's bad.	FC276	03/02/20	SA education system Mental health Economic challenges Government leadership Job opportunities

Quarter life crisis	People have qualifications but can't find jobs. This end up making people as if they did nothing.	FC280	03/02/20	SA education system Job opportunities
Quarter life crisis	My life crisis iyho kuyabheda I hve matric nd diploma in Tourism.buy iyho Spain asitholakali totally manje mina ne friend yam we have started a project which we help abo Gogo ngama daily basis routine and we clean for nd we focus on disabled people too coz siyabonga ukuthi we dnt get jobs so we gve help to those who need it. Please like our page on Facebook Asibambaneni sibemunye project and donate with whatever you can thank you or contact us 0837188199	FC282	03/02/20	SA education system
Job hunting as a full-time job.	Finding a job is a very hard thing, especially now that you have to bribe for a job or have someone u know that can put you in that job, if you don't do the above you won't get a job, it's been 3 years and even every job website , they know me it's really hard to get a job I was even one of a candidate who where scammed from looking for a job and it really hurt to lose money while u need it that's how hard it is.	FC41	03/11/21	Corruption Nepotism Crime
Job hunting as a full-time job.	Unemployment will never decrease because CONNECTIONS lately VOLUME more than QUALIFICATIONS, and again this thing of work experience is killing us greatly why not create a post a a junior so an individual would get used to the work environment while getting that required experience. Young people are getting depressed some resort to drugs.	FC5	03/11/21	Nepotism
Job hunting as a full-time job.	Let alone the corruption, coz most of people sells jobs, how funny it is buh painful if can sit and meditate about it. Coz bayayithenga and some are not even qualified, wena you'll do interviews buh never get hired, and bayawakhipha abapost but that just ukwenza nje, bona they already have their own people asebewuthengile lomsebenzi. Kubebuhlungu ukuzwa abantu	FC38	03/11/21	Corruption Nepotism Government grant

	abasha bethi "bayovotela amaR350" ts very painful it leads ekuthenini ne youth igcine izifaka ezintwen eziWrong😭👌			
Job hunting as a full-time job.	ANC should stop selling jobs we loss our families and home's!!!🌍🤧😕	FC44	03/11/21	Government leadership Nepotism
Job hunting as a full-time job.	Jobs in SA are for those connected to the bosses or recruiters. You will look for job until 35 years old an never get one because of age limit	FC25	03/11/21	Nepotism Discrimination
Job hunting as a full-time job.	Good morning to the daily thetha team I'm 27 years old and I had to go back to school because there's no job you will apply until kingdom kuhamba ngo kuthi you know who, I'm doing business management and business students are really limited when it comes to jobs we are told that we have to go to insurance companies to work and mina I know I won't cope in that environment #dailythetha	FC53	03/11/21	Nepotism
Constructive dismissal	I found out that his father in law is MD of the company, there is nothing we can do to him	FC88	20/04/22	Nepotism
Job hunting as a full-time job.	As young people we are not happy about Nepotism eyenziwa ngama employers	FC15	03/11/21	Nepotism
Job hunting as a full-time job.	Good morning daily Thetha yazi mina i think now when you need a job you must know people if you don't know people you won't get a job	FC43	03/11/21	Nepotism
Quarter life crisis	I think we must be up to date with what happens in our universe as a whole,firstly theres 4th indistrial revolution,how do we squeeze ourselves into the update and what are the opportunities there,this way we can tuckle this challenge so we can become who we always wanted to be.Also the lack of support from our	FC257	03/02/20	Digital migration Skills development Support

	family affects us,i had to drop out of college after my father passed on,i had to take over,it was that until now,i cant even afford a child,and nobody has bothered to ask how im doing			
Quarter life crisis	I think we should engage ourselves with many organisations and more and also seek for help and also avoid sitting and do nothing	FC248	03/02/20	Skills development
Quarter life crisis	I believe that we change our perspectives let learn to do something with wat we have .	FC244	03/02/20	Skills development
Quarter life crisis	Whites groom their children from an early age, but us we wait for matric to decide what is it that we want but a white kid has already performed a particular job practically before going out looking for a job which puts him or her at advantage, while all we have is theory.	FC241	03/02/20	Unemployability: race
Quarter life crisis	The problem is not dreaming big, it the the economic challenges that affects our dreams... it being not stable slows down our process of success. Issues like unemployment have a huge affect on us... and also the fact that we ignore our personal talents also contributes	FC239	03/02/20	Economic Skills development
Advice to finance minister	The government should also look at people who are hand gifted and talented and grow them as they will create more jobs	FC114		Skills development Government leadership
Job hunting as a full-time job.	Completed my degree in social work 2017 still unemployed. Applying every week but no luck. Lost hope and depressed 😔😔. We went to study with hope of being employed one day but it seems that desire its not happening #daily thetha. How cpuld the young generation be empowered to go and study while they see us struggling like these. Its really painful..	FC2	03/11/21	SA education system Mental health issue

Job hunting as a full-time job.	Being unemployed is heartbreaking especially when you have qualifications. I hope everyone gets jobs they've been praying abd searching for. 	FC3	03/11/21	SA education system Mental health issue
Quarter life crisis	Many black people have good qualifications. But they don't get best offers. That makes them being desperate and end up getting fraud offers. Our government must try to do something	FC240	03/02/20	Unemployability: race

Theme 3: Hostility in the workplace

Episode title	**Facebook comment**	**Facebook user code**	**Date of publish**	**Categories**
Job hunting as a full-time job.	I think nowadays departments and companies use people each and year hire more interns knowing they will pay them minimum wages.they don't hire permanent workers	FC14	03/11/21	Exploitation
Constructive dismissal	I had such experience I absconded Even now no contact from the employer about this now I couldn't find other placement because I am still on their payroll with no pay	FC67	20/04/22	Exploitation
Constructive dismissal	Currently am watching on TV I didn't go to work today because ngyahlukbeteka emotional and physically sengcabanga nekyekela msebenti am still a trainee manager and my regional is not a good leader and there's a lot of my colleges that resigned some just go without saying and its for years now but from the divisional no one is doing anything its like they are scared of him I don't know	FC76	20/04/22	Exploitation Mental health

Constructive dismissal	Hi i was working at school with a contract of EAs and GSAs on phase 1 i didn't get my last payment of April that contract ended last year End of April up until now they never paid me. I tried to go to District office at HR but they never gave me a solution until they said I must go to the Department of Education even there I didn't get halp i even submitted all my documents	FC91	20/04/22	Exploitation Human Resources
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Mina i worked as an intern and I was earning R500 per month just because I don't have an experience and still studying.... I decided to leave before my inservice training end.... But this year they called and hired me as a permanent employee	FC142	31/01/22	Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	I worked for a month and never looked back after I've got paid. Reasons being long hours of work, unpaid overtime, disrepect, racism, less than 15 mnts lunchtime and for my safety nje. Sometimes i would be alone at around 9pm and by that time there isnt transport and kamo i was earning R2.8 not enough to hire a special. I was working as a cleaner at one of the restaurants in cullinan.	FC150	31/01/22	Exploitation Discrimination: race
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Long hours but less salaries we even work on weekends 😥 and the treatment was bad we have to clock at 6am until 20pm for R100 per day (no job no pay😥)	FC151	31/01/22	Exploitation Workplace bullying
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Working without a contract for a period of 3 months without pay	FC154	31/01/22	Exploitation

Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Yes. Working conditions were not conducive. It was at the helm of Covid-19 and we had a problem with transport. So we were told that if we have a transport problem we are allowed to not come to work but it's no work no pay. We took that and hoped things will get better but it got worse. We then had to work at least 3/4 hours a day for only 3 days and when it was time to get paid we earned a mere R1200. And my transport alone took R1456 a month. From a salary of R4000. So getting paid R1200 in the month of April 2020 meant I could not afford transport, rent or even putting food on the table. Let alone maintenance for my child	FC156	31/01/22	Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 month	Some jobs u can't survive.. especially ko Di kontrakeng...batlo go phusisa 5 bags ya cement ka wheelbarrow..the next-day u won't go back #dailythetha	FC161	31/01/22	Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Theresho KĭńgVieră Bäløyï I worked at a contract on Monday & had to earn on Friday, and company rules was that,if you can't be there Friday, you don't get paid for whole week, on Thursday I worked and went home, wash,eat,sleep, then woke up the ff day at 11:10 and transport was gone...😭💔😭	FC283	31/01/22	Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	I worked as a domestic worker and left after 3 months 1. First month I got paid R1300 2.2nd month I got paid late R500 and a week after R1500 3.I wasn't supposed to work over the weekends but I did.. sometimes I would start working as early as 05:00 am on the weekends and she promised to pay overtime but never did and she did many bad things and I left on the 3rd month without getting paid	FC162	31/01/22	Exploitation

Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	I used to work as a security officer at tshwane mamelodi the reason why I left the owner paid me 2800 for 26 days and I worked 12 hours on top of that he forced me to work with an unlicensed fire arm	FC163	31/01/22	Exploitation Crime
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Long hours but less salary and bad treatment from the boss😭	FC164	31/01/22	Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Martha Makhubela I relate Too much working hours	FC165	31/01/22	Similar experience Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	I left a job because of pressure their salary are fluctuating this month u got R5000 than next month you got R3500 and its supervisor didn't show respect either you are young or old a sad moments it was during a parate than guy he shouted a old lady so painfully infront of staff	FC171	31/01/22	Exploitation Workplace bullying
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Yes because of too much hours than the rate per day was R50	FC172	31/01/22	Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	In most instances, they resign early due to the heavy work load which they are given peanuts for	FC179	31/01/22	Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Mmagwe Princess Precious Priya i also left my job after 3 days, i cldnt stand for such a long time with no lunch time	FC181	31/01/22	Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	I left a job in 3 months at some call centre ....they said we get paid by the number of customers we sign for 2 months we never got paid only to find out that our customers whenever called back to confirm the policy ....i remember getting only R80	FC182	31/01/22	Exploitation

	..mind u i catch a taxi to work everyday and i have to eat...ae it was just volunteering srs			
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	We worked then girl would calculate our transportation fare then give us only that... I mean what do we buy our cosmetics with ? Then labor? Nicks...Even today she never paid us 💀	FC188	31/01/22	Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Okay, suppose I got a placement in a Finance position as an intern, however I get to work something different from that position; above that, I'm always running errands that are irrelevant to the post, and getting discouraged by the mentor who's critisizes everything I do & always comparing myself with other interns who are on different fields (basically complementing them over me) whereas he/she isn't teaching me the job. These are some of the factors that push interns to leave the job	FC189	31/01/22	Exploitation Pressure
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Is hard to work where ur not happy,spending more than 8 hrs everyday while ur being mistreated is not ok	FC190	31/01/22	Exploitation Workplace bullying
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	My boss hated me she would make me clean the floors and toilets while my job was just to be a receptionist. And there was a person specifically for the cleaning but she would go for 3 hour lunch and l have to be responsible for that . And nothing was done about it	FC194	31/01/22	Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	I worked only one month the payment was way less than the contract agreement	FC198	31/01/22	Exploitation

Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Employers tend to exploit employees because they know that finding a job can be somewhat impossible nowadays...so they threaten us, treat us badly and all these inhumane acts	FC200	31/01/22	Workplace bullying Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Yes.....the hours were hectic with no personal growth within the company.	FC201	31/01/22	Exploitation Growth in the workplace
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	R17/h can make me leave, especially if I'm away from home where im renting for house and traveling to work place by tex	FC202	31/01/22	Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	It was a sales company, I left after a week due to payment issues, lack of communication that resulted fraudulent and toxic working environment	FC203	31/01/22	Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Unpaid salaries	FC204	31/01/22	Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	I once worked at a High School where pressure and pay was not equivalent. It's really difficult to have to listen and submit to a person who cannot lead. There was so much discrimination, so much unhappiness within the workplace one it's own. It was such a toxic environment that the employees of that particular school who I had found there already were taking their time to send me links to different jobs and places as they felt that place was becoming to much and I was still extremely new to the working environment and they did not want me to hate working as that was my first job and they felt it would affect how I look at the work environment as a whole . (I used to teach matriculants English FAL and that was the one subject from that school that the learners ii taught passed with flying colours)	FC205	31/01/22	Exploitation Discrimination Toxic work environment

Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Instead of teaching us we become their children nanny by picking them up at school, we wash dishes, we do errands, bad treatment for being good at your job, exploitation and paying the same as learneships	FC206	31/01/22	Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	I was working very hard and always on time but the salary was dissapointing.	FC209	31/01/22	Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	I left in 4 months it was either that or somebody would eventually get hurt and trust you me it wouldnt have been me the passive racism I could handle but the toxicity of the environment, mistreatment, long hours and not being paid what was due to me. Mugg n BEAN	FC215	31/01/22	Discrimination: racism Exploitation Toxic work environment
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Worked as security officer and my supervisor used to sleep during nightshift & found me asleep charged me,(deducting my daily salary,)so one day I found him asleep,shot him photos then I took sponges,took my shoes off and slept very well,then he woke up and found me asleep,charged me,then during the day I send him his photos or else he better pay me double,so we all lost our jobs by all sending to our manager	FC216	31/01/22	Workplace bullying Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	The payed me peanuts and I left them. Two years down the line, the company lost clients and decided to close down 😜. They deserve it kwaaaaks	FC217	31/01/22	Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	They didn't pay what we agreed on my contract so I have to leave the company	FC219	31/01/22	Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	The main reason would be that the environment is toxic. You are not seen as a person, you'll be sent to do errands that aren't even on your job description. You not even allowed to share ideas.	FC220	31/01/22	Toxic work environment Exploitation Growth in the workplace

Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	I was working more than 24hours but still paying only for the day,working more that 7 months no contract and pressure from my boss like I'm doing nothing for whole day	FC223	31/01/22	Exploitation Pressure
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Treatment at the working place is very bad ; instead of the Boss lead the stuff by examples they treated their stuff like the slaves; sometimes Boss approaches you to be his woman and u disagre jeerrr you will be in hell	FC225	31/01/22	Exploitation Sexual harassment
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	The problem is one about employees at the companies. As a trainee When You Care too much, You will be treated as a fool because they think You can't live without them. Mmashadi Jane Furse ke gae.	FC227	31/01/22	Exploitation Workplace bullying
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Yes very tough cause we always sign short contract at work place at the end of the day your to old work and someone must come in for your space.is very tough in South Africa	FC228	31/01/22	Exploitation Discrimination: age
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Bosses some sleep with women stuff for promotion .They can also beat you inside work places .Blacklist you from not getting employment. Provide you with false records. Deducted life cover and housing while they don't fund Beck. They can allow a follow co-worker to talk bad or post things about you, all the stuff help against you and customers. Some they can just make get fired for jealous sake.	FC230	31/01/22	Sexual harassment Workplace bullying Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Guys mina I worked as a nanny in North gate I was mistreated to point that I didn't get paid and my employer doesn't wanna pay me the money for the days I worked Busy telling me about the fuel she used to pick me up from park station...Pofu mna ndisuke from Eastern Cape nge R540	FC234	31/01/22	Workplace bullying Exploitation Unfair dismissal

	Can you please help me.			
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	That's true. What I have experience was horrible. The managers just need to be felt and throwing waits around. I mean they even said "you just an intern and your purpose is to run around" literally. I was shook. Treatment is just malicious. Noris from Mphanama	FC235	31/01/22	Exploitation Workplace bullying
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	I had a similar experience, being called slaves, slaap tiger, and all those kinds of names...mina I was prepared to stand for my self...they used leave their positions and say "di mpatha" diteng they will work...I pushed until I was out of 3probation and one of them started with those names...I stood up and confronted him, and told him to call me slaap tiger in my face, he kept quiet, told him to call me slaap tiger again, I'll wait for him at the gate after work and ngizom hlafuna amasende 🫣and even to this day he never ever mentioned those names again	FC236	31/01/22	Workplace bullying Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	A very interesting topic, when it comes to exploitation, most of the organizations they capitalize on the interns, whereby they shy away from hiring permanently they keep on using interns other than filing the positions with a qualified candidates. Because of that they expect that you deliver high standards.	FC237	31/01/22	Exploitation
Constructive dismissal	I once worked for a well known grocery store where I was also treated badly by the store manager from the first day because I didn't speak his language, I did not enjoy because we were always called black sheep. We were not afforded the opportunities to find better jobs and if you asked for a day off maybe for an interview at another job tomorrow when you come	FC62	20/04/22	Discrimination: language

	back your warning will waiting for you even though they admitted for you to go.			
Constructive dismissal	I worked for this company from 2008 and i was promoted in 2010 to Sales Department...i was the first black person to work in their offices since the company's inception in 1987...i was a threat to most of this white people who were working in those offices untill my boss told me to resign because i was a threat to his stuff in the office and if i dont do as he says we might have a problem,,,i knew his tactics on how he operates so i decided to just leave without taking him to CCMA.	FC64	20/04/22	Discrimination: race CCMA
Constructive dismissal	I am currently in tears right now because I left my job 22nd of March because of unfair treatment from management and Xhosa women who made it a point to make sure bad mouthed me to management. I was ill treated to a point I couldn't handle this. I am deep I depression and I have children	FC77	20/04/22	Workplace bullying Discrimination: tribalism Mental health
Constructive dismissal	Iyoh please don't get me started. I was working at a certain bank. The toxicity of that brand manager plus he was of another race. I was the youngest and it was my first job. If it wasn't for Covid 19 where we stayed at home but still got fully paid I would have left within a month. Once the levels decreased. I left in November 2020, mind you I started my job in December 2019. Till to date all of my ex colleagues are complaining daily about the manager but nothing is being done to him.	FC80	20/04/22	Workplace bullying Discrimination: race
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	I worked for a month and never looked back after I've got paid. Reasons being long hours of work, unpaid overtime, disrepect, racism, less than 15 mnts lunchtime and for my safety nje.	FC150	31/01/22	Exploitation Discrimination: race

	Sometimes i would be alone at around 9pm and by that time there isnt transport and kamo i was earning R2.8 not enough to hire a special. I was working as a cleaner at one of the restaurants in cullinan.			
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Someone i know was fired because she can't communicate in Afrikaans ...this is what we face in Western Cape no Afrikaans no job	FC157	31/01/22	Discrimination: language
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Kota Chuma they are now tired of hiding it.. In posts mostly they say English and afrikaans	FC158	31/01/22	Discrimination: language
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Anakho Menzi Matwa Apartheid	FC159	31/01/22	Discrimination: racism
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Agree. Afrikaans is a home language like Xhosa or Sepedi it should not be used in selecting jobs. English should only be used to select candidates. Just imagine if we start selecting jobs based on our languages.	FC160	31/01/22	Discrimination: language
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	I left a job because of racism that I exposed and they ended up treating me bad for it. A small brokerage firm in Cape Town.	FC166	31/01/22	Discrimination: racism
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Alani Keiser you are white though how do you get affected by racism	FC167	31/01/22	Discrimination: racism
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Sabelo Proff Jali She doesn't condone a racism at all, regardless of any skin.The problem with the top Management is ,they don't want us to speak our minds ...even when you see wrong in them.	FC168	31/01/22	Discrimination: racism

Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	I never left a work. But I've ever had that mind of leaving a job while I was still a trainee because of they were treating so badly because of they were taking advantage of me cause I started to work at the early age of 19 years. But I remain strong and I never leave my job because I was having a pation of that work. And even now here I'm still working at that company and now I'm doing four years in that	FC170	31/01/22	Discrimination: age
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	I am still working in that company where they still look at the colour of the skin when coming to salaries, and we are doing the same job	FC176	31/01/22	Discrimination: racism
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	What's so bad about this it's a black race against black race	FC196	31/01/22	Discrimination: tribalism
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	I once worked at a High School where pressure and pay was not equivalent. It's really difficult to have to listen and submit to a person who cannot lead. There was so much discrimination, so much unhappiness within the workplace one it's own. It was such a toxic environment that the employees of that particular school who I had found there already were taking their time to send me links to different jobs and places as they felt that place was becoming to much and I was still extremely new to the working environment and they did not want me to hate working as that was my first job and they felt it would affect how I look at the work environment as a whole . (I used to teach matriculants English FAL and that was the one subject from that school that the learners ii taught passed with flying colours)	FC205	31/01/22	Exploitation Discrimination Toxic work environment

Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Unfairly treated..... discrimination	FC212	31/01/22	Discrimination
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	I left in 4 months it was either that or somebody would eventually get hurt and trust you me it wouldnt have been me the passive racism I could handle but the toxicity of the environment, mistreatment, long hours and not being paid what was due to me. Mugg n BEAN	FC215	31/01/22	Discrimination: racism Exploitation Toxic work environment
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Yes very tough cause we always sign short contract at work place at the end of the day your to old work and someone must come in for your space.is very tough in South Africa	FC228	31/01/22	Exploitation Discrimination: age
Constructive dismissal	Thank you daily thetha for coming up with this topic am experiencing the same thing at my current work people who were once good and motivated me at work just stopped and started treating me badly in a way that I can't even explain coz I was junior and they hated umlungu I don't know for their reasons but to me He was good n paying me well at times he I'll give me a ticket to watch derby with his son coz he knew I liked soccer yangthola then the senior started to say ngiyi mpimpi imagine working with people almost yr father s age and you see the hatred in them even when I was off you won't be at peace coz all you think is them that made me to start smoking weed too much they ended up using that to sabotage me Ku mlungu and i was fired	FC63	20/04/22	Sabotage Mental health Substance abuse Workplace bullying Unfair dismissal
Constructive dismissal	I am currently in tears right now because I left my job 22nd of March because of unfair treatment from management and Xhosa women who made it a point to make sure bad mouthed me to	FC77	20/04/22	Workplace bullying Discrimination Mental health

	management. I was ill treated to a point I couldn't handle this. I am deep I depression and I have children			
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Eish i remember leaving a great opportunity as a final year student worked there for two weeks ka re no no no this ain't for me.. Dai Maan can't be shouting at me like this My friends and family didn't really understand the toxicity I was exposed to and when I decided to quit some of them called me weak. However my mental health came first and I decided to bounce	FC141	31/01/22	Workplace bullying Mental health Toxic work environment
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Eish i remember leaving a great opportunity as a final year student worked there for two weeks ka re no no no this ain't for me.. Dai Maan can't be shouting at me like this My friends and family didn't really understand the toxicity I was exposed to and when I decided to quit some of them called me weak. However my mental health came first and I decided to bounce	FC141	31/01/22	Workplace bullying Mental health Toxic work environment
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Toxic environment	FC183	31/01/22	Toxic work environment
Constructive dismissal	I once worked for a well known grocery store where I was also treated badly by the store manager from the first day because I didn't speak his language, I did not enjoy because we were always called black sheep. We were not afforded the opportunities to find better jobs and if you asked for a day off maybe for an interview at another job tomorrow when you come back your warning will waiting for you even though they admitted for you to go.	FC62	20/04/22	Workplace bullying Discrimination

Constructive dismissal	Daily Thetha .. I was once working in a banking sector for about 5 years . In one off major Banks * Capitec Bank* so I was brutal bulid by my manager , I even got an angar to my children to my wife I ended up quiting the job😭💔	FC68	20/04/22	Workplace bullying
Constructive dismissal	Iyoh please don't get me started. I was working at a certain bank. The toxicity of that brand manager plus he was of another race. I was the youngest and it was my first job. If it wasn't for Covid 19 where we stayed at home but still got fully paid I would have left within a month. Once the levels decreased. I left in November 2020, mind you I started my job in December 2019. Till to date all of my ex colleagues are complaining daily about the manager but nothing is being done to him.	FC80	20/04/22	Workplace bullying Discrimination
Constructive dismissal	I'm still a victim even now,my supervisor once booked me AWOL while I was on duty and after reported to the head of department I'm still going to hearing from last year January, I have been summoned to go to hearing again on this coming Friday, it's a pity for us.He claimed that I have insulted him.	FC82	20/04/22	Workplace bullying
Constructive dismissal	Barko Financial Services Area managers and HR s must see this.its sad because bullies at work get away with it 😢	FC83	20/04/22	Workplace bullying
Constructive dismissal	So I left the job because of him and the regional manager, but all is well. I am at peace and I will officially start a new job in which I studied for.	FC83	20/04/22	Workplace bullying
Constructive dismissal	I so wish I can get another job then this one Due to manager's unfair treatment	FC85	20/04/22	Workplace bullying

	#securityguard			
Constructive dismissal	I was working as per shitf leader which is supervisor, my operation manager I gave me a promotion to work at the cctv operator without consulting me about my health. One in the morning I was working at cctv, he came in shouted me inside the working place in front of my colleague that why I refused to work there. I said I must listen to him everything because he is my manager, He can't acted HR says she must canceled my shift because I refuse to work to cctv operations. Since then now 3 months he don't want to see at all. He told me to leave to be a shift leader because I refuse to there.	FC89	20/04/22	Workplace bullying
Constructive dismissal	Yaz mina ngino boss ovele akhulume he doesn't care ukuthi wen how do you feel and i see i can't make that longer on that job if his still manager	FC90	20/04/22	Workplace bullying
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Some issues we face is working in a huge company as a contractor,realising people who hirer you are close with managers and they treat any how they like because they can replace you...everyday life people fear to speak out fearing for their jobs	FC139	31/01/22	Workplace bullying
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Long hours but less salaries we even work on weekends 😨 and the treatment was bad we have to clock at 6am until 20pm for R100 per day (no job no pay😨)	FC151	31/01/22	Exploitation Workplace bullying
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Treatment from permanent staff being calling me intern instead of calling me by my name and disrespect	FC155	31/01/22	Workplace bullying

Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Managers don't really know how to talk to people 💔	FC169	31/01/22	Workplace bullying
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Very bad treatment from the boss ,I was working at a restaurant , I was still in my training phase ❤ I was getting a very bad treatment yhoooo	FC174	31/01/22	Workplace bullying
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Toxic environment	FC153	31/01/22	Toxic work environment
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Toxic environment	FC183	31/01/22	Toxic work environment
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	My boss loved me at first but while time passed ,he started being intimidated by me because i was so gud at my job dat even the big bosses wanted me to get a promotion so he started treating me bad nd so are my fellow colleagues. It was like going into a lion's den alone until he trapped me nd got me fired	FC187	31/01/22	Workplace bullying
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Is hard to work where ur not happy,spending more than 8 hrs everyday while ur being mistreated is not ok	FC190	31/01/22	Exploitation Workplace bullying
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Yes... I got in a fight with one of the stuff member not knowing that his father is a shareholder so I couldn't manage the toxic behavior so I just left without a notice 👌😢	FC191	31/01/22	Workplace bullying Abuse of power
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Got a Job as a Nanny, been working there from November. Heard different stories of how they used to treat other nannies before me and they didn't last long. Well now January I see all the reasons why they left but am not planning on leaving anytime soon not tt am desperate I think is high time we teach	FC192	31/01/22	Workplace bullying

	them how to behave and how to treat human beings. I have learned that if someone is making your job difficult then make their life difficult too....if they nolonger need me I want full payment don't care if I worked for that month or not....			
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Been mistreated by ur trainer, simply because they think that you will do the job better than them	FC193	31/01/22	Workplace bullying
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Yes I was bit young and I was employed as an assistant to uncle at some who is a Brother to my father n he was giving me ..ish shouting me around	FC197	31/01/22	Workplace bullying Nepotism
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Some jobs are demeaning and unbearable.. then the employer comes and further the agony with their threats and all that	FC199	31/01/22	Workplace bullying
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Employers tend to exploit employees because they know that finding a job can be somewhat impossible nowadays...so they threaten us, treat us badly and all these inhumane acts	FC200	31/01/22	Workplace bullying Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	I once worked at a High School where pressure and pay was not equivalent. It's really difficult to have to listen and submit to a person who cannot lead. There was so much discrimination, so much unhappiness within the workplace one it's own. It was such a toxic environment that the employees of that particular school who I had found there already were taking their time to send me links to different jobs and places as they felt that place was becoming to much and I was still extremely new to the working environment and they did not want me to hate working as that was my first job and they felt it would affect how I look at the work environment as a whole . (I used to teach	FC205	31/01/22	Exploitation Discrimination Toxic work environment

	matriculants English FAL and that was the one subject from that school that the learners ii taught passed with flying colours)			
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	abuse from boss	FC208	31/01/22	Workplace bullying
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	I left in 4 months it was either that or somebody would eventually get hurt and trust you me it wouldnt have been me the passive racism I could handle but the toxicity of the environment, mistreatment, long hours and not being paid what was due to me. Mugg n BEAN	FC215	31/01/22	Discrimination Exploitation Toxic work environment
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Worked as security officer and my supervisor used to sleep during nightshift & found me asleep charged me,(deducting my daily salary,)so one day I found him asleep,shot him photos then I took sponges,took my shoes off and slept very well,then he woke up and found me asleep,charged me,then during the day I send him his photos or else he better pay me double,so we all lost our jobs by all sending to our manager	FC216	31/01/22	Workplace bullying Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	I'm in that toxic thing😭😭😭we are 2 with the other guy .all of the staff don't talk to us ever since the manager who took us in went to maternity leave, that place is hell .I'm thinking of leaving. but n do what?where?	FC218	31/01/22	Toxic work environment Workplace bullying
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	The main reason would be that the environment is toxic. You are not seen as a person, you'll be sent to do errands that aren't even on your job description. You not even allowed to share ideas.	FC220	31/01/22	Toxic work environment Exploitation Growth in the workplace

Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	I was working more than 24hours but still paying only for the day,working more that 7 months no contract and pressure from my boss like I'm doing nothing for whole day	FC223	31/01/22	Exploitation Pressure
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Yes, I was mistreated by the person who had experience. She would take my customer while I'm still approaching the customer.	FC224	31/01/22	Workplace bullying
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	We are struggling to find jobs even though we have qualifications sometimes we get abused by our boses	FC226	31/01/22	Workplace bullying
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	The problem is one about employees at the companies. As a trainee When You Care too much, You will be treated as a fool because they think You can't live without them. Mmashadi Jane Furse ke gae.	FC227	31/01/22	Exploitation Workplace bullying
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Bosses some sleep with women stuff for promotion .They can also beat you inside work places .Blacklist you from not getting employment. Provide you with false records. Deducted life cover and housing while they don't fund Beck. They can allow a follow co-worker to talk bad or post things about you, all the stuff help against you and customers. Some they can just make get fired for jealous sake.	FC230	31/01/22	Sexual harassment Workplace bullying Exploitation
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	I had to quit my job 2yr ago because of bad treatment, Sexual abuse.one of S A retail store. N they'll have same story to make u feel bad " unemployment id very high "	FC231	31/01/22	Workplace bullying Sexual harassment
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	Guys mina I worked as a nanny in North gate I was mistreated to point that I didn't get paid and my employer doesn't wanna pay me the money for the days I worked	FC234	31/01/22	Workplace bullying Exploitation Unfair dismissal

	Busy telling me about the fuel she used to pick me up from park station...Pofu mna ndisuke from Eastern Cape nge R540 Can you please help me.			
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	That's true. What I have experience was horrible. The managers just need to be felt and throwing waits around. I mean they even said "you just an intern and your purpose is to run around" literally. I was shook. Treatment is just malicious. Noris from Mphanama	FC235	31/01/22	Exploitation Workplace bullying
Trainees/interns: why I left my job within 6 months	I had a similar experience, being called slaves, slaap tiger, and all those kinds of names...mina I was prepared to stand for my self...they used leave their positions and say "di mpatha" diteng they will work...I pushed until I was out of 3probation and one of them started with those names...I stood up and confronted him, and told him to call me slaap tiger in my face, he kept quiet, told him to call me slaap tiger again, I'll wait for him at the gate after work and ngizom hlafuna amasende 🍒and even to this day he never ever mentioned those names again	FC236	31/01/22	Workplace bullying Exploitation

Appendix four: Ethics waiver

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

Registration number: REC-101114-044

18 August 2022

Re: Miss Mphela Mohale (1240024)

Waiver letter number: HRECNMW22/09/02

To whom it may concern,

Miss Mohale is a registered student at the School of Literature, Language and Media at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. This letter is to confirm that, at the time of writing, Miss Mohale does not need ethical clearance for her study entitled *'The role of television show Daily Thetha in raising awareness of political issues among youth in post apartheid South Africa'.* This decision has been reached based upon a description of the project supplied by Miss Mohale to the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), which has been evaluated by the Chairs and Deputy Chairs. If, however, if Miss Mohale changes the methods of data collection and analysis for this study, this decision may no longer be valid. If such changes take place, this should be communicated to the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) as soon as possible. This waiverletter is valid until 17 August 2025.

Please feel free to contact me should you require any further information.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,
S Schoeman

Shaun Schoeman (Administrative Officer)

Solomon Mahlangu House, 10th Floor, Room 10004, Jorissen Street, Braamfontein, Johannesburg Private Bag 3, Wits 2050

T + 27(0)11 717 1408 | **E** Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za | hrec-medical.researchoffice@wits.ac.za

www.wits.ac.za/research/about-our-research/ethics-and-research-integrity/

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