

Social media and resource mobilisation for COVID-19 pandemic related initiatives in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

Social media has transformed communication processes in society and presented individuals and organisations with a myriad of platforms to access and disseminate information, exchange views and opinions, network and form online communities. Studies have proven the effectiveness of social media use in different settings. One area in which social media has played a critical role is in mobilising resources for charitable causes. With the COVID-19 pandemic wreaking havoc throughout the world and affecting livelihoods of individuals and families as well as economic fortunes of countries around the globe, social media has played a significant role in the mobilisation of resources for various COVID-19 related social causes. Through the lens of the social influence theory, this study examined how social media was utilised to promote, mobilise, drive support, and persuade the public to donate towards COVID-19 related charitable initiatives in Zimbabwe. The study also ascertained the prospects and challenges as well as the effectiveness of social media in galvanising support for health pandemic related social causes. Methodologically, data was gathered through a combination of virtual ethnography and in-depth interviews. Overall, the study found that social media was effective in publicising charitable initiatives, inspiring the public to action and encouraging donations even in an economically unstable country.

Keywords: Social media, resource mobilisation, charitable initiatives, COVID-19, Zimbabwe

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Introduction

Social media has transformed communication processes in society and has presented individuals and organisations with a myriad of platforms to access and disseminate information, exchange views and opinions, network and form online communities (Arli & Dietrich, 2017; Appel, Grewal, Hadi & Stephen, 2020). Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of social media use in different settings (En, Formación & Reuben, 2013; Fotis, 2015; Salo, Lankinen & Mäntymäki, 2017; Babu & Babu, 2018; Benetoli, Chen & Aslani, 2018; Cho & Son, 2019; Jones, Carter, Wikerson & Kramer, 2019). One area in which social media has played a significant role is in mobilising resources for charitable causes (Li(Kim & Um, 2016; Chugh, 2018; Khan, Zaher & Gao, 2018; , He, Song, Yang & Zhou, 2018); Li With the COVID-19 pandemic wreaking havoc globally and affecting livelihoods of individuals and families as well as economic fortunes of countries around the globe, social media has played a significant role in the mobilisation of resources for various COVID-19 related social causes (Edmond, 2020). In Zimbabwe, there have been several charitable initiatives aimed at strengthening the country's health care system as well as providing support to the vulnerable and those economically and socially disadvantaged by the pandemic. Social media platforms have been used extensively to galvanise and drive support for these charitable initiatives. The main aim of this study was to examine the use of social media in publicising, promoting, mobilising, driving support and persuading the public to donate towards COVID-19 related charitable initiatives in Zimbabwe. The study also ascertained the effectiveness of social media in galvanising support for health pandemic related social causes. Data was gathered through a combination of virtual ethnography and in-depth interviews and the results were analysed thematically.

Social media, resource mobilisation and charitable causes

The internet has changed the way people communicate all around the world (Eckhaus & Sheaffer, 2019). Most notably, it has altered the landscape of communication for individuals and non-profit organisations by introducing new methods for mobilising and driving support online (Zhou & Pan, 2016). Since it generates a variety of voluntary involvement activities spanning from advocating social causes to contributions, the internet and particularly social media platforms, have become excellent channels of communication in philanthropic efforts (Mano, 2014). Social media platforms have been used to provide information, encourage donations, inspire others to action, and build online communities (Khan, Zaher & Gao, 2018; Tugrul & Lee, 2018; Di Lauro, Tursunbayeva & Antonelli, 2019). Social media applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and so on provide easy to use interactive platforms that require fewer resources and minimum information technology skills (Kim & Um, 2016: 1865; Zhou & Pan, 2016: 2436). Individuals and organisations can easily make donation appeals, acknowledge donations and raise public awareness campaigns online (Zhou & Pan, 2016; Ortiz & Tripathi, 2017).

Social media platforms have played a significant role in mobilising support for those affected by natural disasters and diseases (Kim & Um, 2016; Chugh, 2018). During the 2015 earthquake disaster in Nepal, the Nepalese community in Australia used Facebook to disseminate critical information and for mobilising resources for those who were affected by the earthquake in Nepal. Through this initiative, medicines, blankets, tents and non-perishable foodstuffs were collected and shipped to Nepal (Chugh, 2018). Due to its viral nature, social media helped to change the coordination of disaster relief efforts and proved to be an effective and efficient vehicle for disseminating information (Chugh, 2018). The Ice Bucket Challenge is another example that showcases the effectiveness of

social media in mobilising resources for social causes (Milde & Yawson, 2017). Due to the viral nature of social media, the challenge became international and raised more than US\$100 million (Kim & Um, 2016; Milde & Yawson, 2017).

According to Okada et al, (2017) and Nageswarakurukkal, Gonçalves and Moshtari (2020), social media is considered one of the most effective platforms for non-profits to publicise charitable initiatives and motivate the public to take voluntary actions because social media platforms are where individual donors are most inspired to give. This is because on social media there are high levels of interactivity, close connections between donors and the cause, relatively low costs, and transparency (Nageswarakurukkal et al, 2020: 289). For individuals and charitable organisations, social media presents opportunities to engage large audiences quickly, rally the public for a common cause, access to new and younger audiences, reach to local and international donors or supporters who help spread messages and easier, quicker, and direct donation to non-profit organisations (Mano, 2014: 287; Kim & Um, 2016; Young, 2017: 46; Milde & Yawson, 2017; 'Li, He, Song, Yang & Zhou, 2018; Samuelson-Cramp & Bolat, 2018; Jeong, 2020).

It should be noted that people do not actively seek for opportunities to donate; instead, they respond to the calls and requests from individuals and charity organizations (Samuelson-Cramp & Bolat, 2018: 128). Charities must understand the motives for charitable giving to come up with appropriate and effective strategies for the 'calls to action' that entice, encourage and inspire sharing "(ibid: 128). Social media is a critical vehicle for disseminating these calls to action. It has been noted that effective calls to action can spur charitable giving regardless of the economic situation (Khan et al, 2018: 810). Research has confirmed the effectiveness of social media in getting more people to talk about a cause or issue, raising money for causes, motivating

people to take online/offline/in-person actions to help causes, building new relationships and getting corporations to support a cause (Georgetown University -Centre for Social Impact Communication, 2013; Phethean, Tiropanis & Harris, 2013: 296; Goldkind, 2015). Studies have also proven that social media contributes more to crowdfunding success (Borst, Moser & Ferguson, 2018) than in-house media (Okada et al, 2017).

Auter and Fine (2018: 186) posit that social media offers many advantages over traditional media tools such as allowing communication directly with the public and permitting control and shaping of the content of messages without fear of distortion. Other benefits of using social media for fundraising for social causes have also been highlighted by different scholars. These benefits include increased involvement and engagement of donors, increased transparency of the fundraising process and accountability through information disclosure (Soboleva, Burton, Daellenbach & Basil, 2017; Di Lauro, Tursunbayeva & Antonelli, 2019: 6; Zhou & Ye, 2019).

Related to the Coronavirus Disease of 2019 (COVID-19), it was noted that several charitable initiatives showed the effectiveness of using social media to mobilise and drive support for social causes. In Britain, a British war veteran Captain Tom Moore raised more than US\$15 million to support Coronavirus efforts after his campaign went viral on social media (Edmond, 2020). Other social media-based charitable initiatives related to COVID-19 include the 'Run 5 Donate 5 Nominate 5' challenge- an Instagram based initiative which surpassed fundraising expectations (Edmond, 2020). In Italy, social media stars Chiara Ferragni and Fedez in their Coronavirus related initiative managed to mobilise more than 200 000 people to donate to the cause and raised more than US\$4.3million(Edmond, 2020).

Although social media have been hailed for being effective in mobilising and driving support for social causes, some studies have noted that the fundraising of non-profit organisations could be criticised or even openly opposed via social media by donors who do not agree with their strategies which can negatively affect the whole campaign (Di Lauro et al, 2019). Due to the open nature of social media, negative posts, comments and reposts or scandals can quickly become viral and this could discourage potential donors from supporting the causes for fear of being swindled or harming their reputation (Zhou & Ye, 2019).

Despite social media being considered one of the most effective channels for non-profits and individuals to publicise opportunities to take voluntary actions and promote causes, there is a scarcity of research that address this phenomenon from the perspective of developing countries, particularly a nation in an economic crisis such as Zimbabwe. Furthermore, there is a paucity of research that examines how social media has been used to mobilise resources in the context of an active health pandemic. These are the gaps that this study seeks to address. The study also complements and broadens existing knowledge on the use of social media for soliciting support for charitable initiatives.

Theorising social media resource mobilisation

For this study, the social influence theory is utilised to explore how individuals and non-profit organisations use social media to mobilise, promote and drive support for COVID-19 charitable initiatives in Zimbabwe. The central tenet of the social influence theory is that an individual's attitude, beliefs and subsequent actions are influenced by referent others (Kelman, 1958; 1974). According to Kelman (1958; 1974), a person's emotions, opinions, and behaviours impact others in their circle or social setting. For this study, social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp constitute the social settings. The social influence

theory aids in understanding how netizens are influenced and motivated on social media into supporting social causes. As propounded by Kelman (1958; 1974) the process of social influence happens through three broad forms; compliance, identification, and internalisation. Compliance occurs when individuals accept influence and adopt the induced behaviour to gain rewards or approval, identification happens when individuals adopt the induced behaviour to create or maintain a desired beneficial relation to another person and internalisation takes place when individuals accept influence after perceiving the content of the induced behaviour to be in line with their values (Kelman, 1958; 1974).

On social media, individuals accept influence and adopt the induced behaviour to gain rewards or approval, adopt the promoted behaviour to create or maintain a desired and beneficial relationship to another person or a group and accept a belief or behaviour if the idea is innately rewarding (Khan et al, 2018). It has become a common trend on social media for individuals to show their support for causes, encourage and influence others to also support charitable initiatives. This is the primary reason why individuals like, retweet, share or comment on posts related to social causes on social media (Georgetown University-Centre for Social Impact Communication, 2013). Borst, Moser and Ferguson (2018) explain this as the herding behaviour where potential supporters and funders follow the behaviour of peers visible on social media. Social media celebrity and influencer networks are also effective in eliciting positive responses for causes and further inspire fans to action (Khan et al, 2018).

It has been established that social media visibility concerning participation on social causes is a strong motivator for joining and supporting social causes. The opportunity to convey an individual's desired image to friends can be a strong motivator for joining a cause on social media (Jeong & Lee, 2013). Individuals

and non-profit organisations into charity work can also tap the cascading effect of their followers' networks on social media sites to redistribute their mobilisation messages and fundraising requests (Auter & Fine, 2018). The social influence theory is employed for this study to examine how social media was used by individuals and charitable organisations in mobilising support for the different COVID-19 related initiatives.

Methods and Analysis

This article is qualitative, and it employs an interpretive approach to explore the use of social media in mobilising resources for health-related charitable initiatives in Zimbabwe with the COVID-19 pandemic being the case in point. Five charitable organisations and two individuals involved in mobilising support for COVID-19 related social causes on social media were purposively selected for this study. To get rich data one individual was selected for the study based on her family being featured on social media platforms appealing for assistance. In terms of the organisations, these were Zimbabwe Against COVID-19 Trust, Citizens Initiative, Feed the City Zimbabwe, and Community Water Alliance. The individuals were Mr Martin Chivhoko, Mr Edson Muchenje and Ms Chengetai Maputuka. The researcher combined virtual ethnography with in-depth interviews in order to collect primary data. Steinmetz, in Chibuwe (2020: 9) explains that virtual ethnography is a method that investigates online interactions and the researcher may interact with the people in these online spaces “in order to write the story of their situated context, informed by social interaction.” The researcher took advantage of her presence on Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp to track and passively observe how the aforementioned organisations and individuals promoted and mobilised support for their COVID-19 related charitable initiatives on these platforms. Additionally, she also tracked the publics' reactions to the different messages that were shared by individuals and organisations championing COVID-19 related social causes. The researcher took screenshots

of the posts and comments and archived them for thematic analysis.

Regarding the interviews, eight key informants were interviewed. All the informants consented to their identities being disclosed. The informants were Dr Edmore Mahembe (Zimbabwe Against COVID-19 Trust), Mr Freeman Chari (Citizens Initiative), Mr Edson Muchenje (DJ Brickcity), Mr Martin Chivhoko (Ward 4 Councillor, Gweru Urban Constituency), Ms Samantha Muzoroki (Kuchengetana Trust), Miss Charmaine Dube (Feed the City-Zimbabwe), Mr Hardlife Mudzingwa (Community Water Alliance) and Ms Chengetai Maputuka who was featured on The Feed ZW social media platforms appealing for donations.

Initially, the researcher wanted to conduct face-to-face interviews but due to the COVID-19 induced lockdowns, which restricted intercity movement, the researcher conducted telephonic interviews that lasted between 20 to 30 minutes from the 1st to the 10th of August 2020. As suggested by Creswell and Creswell, (2018) the researcher developed and used an interview protocol for asking and hand recording answers during the interviews. To explore the use of social media for COVID-19 related resource mobilisation in Zimbabwe, determine the prospects and challenges associated with the phenomenon and assess the effectiveness of social media in mobilising and driving support for health-related resource mobilisation the following questions were asked during the interviews; What kind of COVID-19 related social cause are you promoting and mobilising resources for? What sort of resources/donations are you requesting from the public? Which social media platforms are you utilising for your mobilisation efforts? Why did you choose those platforms? What are the benefits that you have realised from using social media to mobilise and drive support for your cause? What are the challenges that you have encountered? How would you rate the effectiveness

of social media in mobilising and driving support for your cause?

The researcher then used thematic analysis to analyse data. Thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Scharp & Sanders, 2019). The themes are presented and discussed in the section below.

Findings and Discussion

Results from the study are presented under the broad themes below.

Popular social media platforms for resource mobilisation in Zimbabwe

Regarding the most used social media platforms for mobilising support for COVID-19 related social causes, it was found that WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter were frequently used. With regards to social influence, all three forms of social influence; compliance, identification, and internalisation, were observed on these platforms. Respondents indicated that they used these platforms because they were popular in Zimbabwe, and they were a perfect fit in terms of influencing or motivating the public to donate to their social causes.

Although the three are the most popular in the country, it was noted that WhatsApp was the most widely used among the three platforms as all respondents indicated that they were using WhatsApp to share information, engage and encourage the public to donate. The Councillor for Ward 4, Gweru Urban Constituency, Mr Chivhoko stated that WhatsApp was very popular and widely used in his constituency and this influenced his decision to use the platform for mobilising support for those who were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The sentiments raised by the Councillor echo views by Zúñiga, Ardèvol-Abreu and Casero-Ripollés (2019:

1) that WhatsApp provides an intimate environment in which users can gather, share news, discuss politics and mobilise others.

Although the other informants indicated that they also shared information about their initiatives on WhatsApp, they pointed out that they used the platform in combination with other platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. They reiterated WhatsApp's popularity and ease of use as the reasons why they utilised the platform for appealing for donations and sharing information about their social causes. Nonetheless, the interviewees noted one major challenge for using WhatsApp for sharing resource mobilisation information. Dr Mahembe (Zimbabwe Against COVID-19 Trust) pointed out that the limit imposed on the number of people or groups that information could be forwarded to at one go was frustrating especially when one wanted to share information to many people or groups.

Related to Facebook, 7 out of the 8 respondents (88%) indicated that they used Facebook for sharing information about their initiatives, fundraising, and making appeals. Mr Chari of the Citizens Initiative indicated that Facebook attractive for mobilising support for charitable initiatives because one could write as much as they wanted about the initiative on a single post and there were no sharing restrictions. One could share the post with as many people as possible. About Twitter, it was noted that 4 of the 8 (50%) interviewees indicated that they used Twitter for mobilisation efforts. They pointed out that the downside of Twitter was the word limit which forced them to summarise or break the message into segments which could lead to the message losing its intended meaning or distortion of facts.

The nature of COVID-19 related social causes

The study revealed that social media played a critical role in raising awareness, mobilising, and driving support for various COVID-19 charitable initiatives in the country. The initiatives

ranged from feeding programmes, basic foodstuffs distribution and COVID-19 equipment mobilisation. In terms of the feeding programmes, they were in two forms, distribution of basic foodstuffs to the vulnerable or soup kitchens where individuals received at least two meals a day. Respondents pointed out that due to COVID-19 and the lockdown, some companies had downsized, and some people were laid off. Additionally, families that relied on the informal sector were also affected by the COVID-19 induced lockdowns as they could not operate their businesses. Most of the affected families faced hunger and starvation.

The same sentiments were raised by Ms Maputuka. She was featured on The Feed ZW social media pages appealing for donations. Ms Maputuka- a hairdresser indicated that her husband was a vendor. Due to the COVID-19 induced lockdown, they could not carry out their businesses as their businesses were classified as non-essential. To exacerbate an already dire situation Ms Maputuka found out a few days before giving birth that she was carrying triplets. The family was struggling to make ends meet and on the verge of starvation which prompted them to approach The Feed ZW to raise awareness about their plight and appeal for donations. Videos of the family explaining their situation and pleading for assistance were broadcast on The Feed ZW social media platforms.

Individuals such as; Mr Muchenje (Dj Brickcity) and Mr Chivhoko and organisations; Feed the City, Zimbabwe and Kuchengetana Trust mobilised support for the vulnerable as well as households hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Using different social media platforms, they shared information about their initiatives and encouraged the public to donate towards the causes. They appealed for donations in monetary form or basic foodstuffs that were distributed to affected families. On the other hand, Kuchengetana Trust operated a soup kitchen which fed children and the elderly affected by the pandemic. Still, on food

distribution, the Citizens Initiative mobilised financial support for the procurement of foodstuffs for healthcare workers who were quarantined or isolated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These foodstuffs were delivered at the doorsteps of the affected families. Social media played a critical role in appealing for funds to buy the basic foodstuffs. Posts calling the public to action were shared on Twitter and Facebook urging the public to help the frontline workers who were on the forefront in the fight against COVID-19. The Citizen Initiative posted this on their social media pages,

“For the mandatory 2 weeks that these frontline workers are in mandatory quarantine or isolation, it is imperative that they also eat well. They are working for us under extremely difficult conditions. Let's keep supporting them. Donate, share, retweet...Do something.”

It was noted that the Zimbabwe Against COVID-19 Trust, Citizens Initiative and Community Water Alliance mobilised resources aimed at strengthening the country's healthcare in the form of Personal Protective Equipment for frontline workers, sanitisers, and COVID-19 test kits. According to the respondents, their COVID-19 related initiatives were meant to mobilise support in the form of manpower, finances, and materials to ease the health crisis in Zimbabwe in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was after the realisation that the country had a weak health system and was ill-prepared in the fight against COVID-19. Social media platforms were used to share calls to action by different organisations.

It was noted that inspiring messages such as:

“Let's choose hope and action over fear and despair. Please donate towards this great initiative to strengthen Zim's COVID testing capacity. Any amount will go far! Together we can beat this!!! RETWEET to build awareness” (shared by the Zimbabwe Against COVID-19

Trust through their Chairperson Fadzayi Mahere on different social media platforms).

These messages were meant to motivate and encourage people to act through donating as well as to act to raise awareness instead of wallowing in misery. Calls to action shared by Community water Alliance specified the donations they were requesting for such as sanitisers, gloves, soap, disinfectants, and masks. It was also interesting to note that they stated that, “*Accounting for resources raised will be done on a weekly basis.*” The fact that they included this statement on their call to action shows that they wanted to show that the organisation would be transparent with donations thereby enhancing the credibility of the organisation.

Nature and quality of virality of the social media posts

In terms of the nature and virality of the posts, it was found that posts by popular social media personalities such as Advocate Fadzayi Mahere, and Mr Freeman Chari attracted considerable interest from netizens. On Twitter, on average, Advocate Mahere's posts attracted more than 400 likes and more than 150 retweets as depicted in Figures 1 and 2 below.

Figure 1: A sample of a post showing users' reactions to Advocate Mahere's Tweet



Figure 2: A sample of a post showing users' reactions to Advocate Mahere's Tweet



On Facebook, the Advocate's posts also had considerable reactions from Facebook users as shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: A sample showing reactions to Advocate Mahere's post on Facebook



Regarding social influence, it was noted that Zimbabwe Against COVID-19 Trust, managed to leverage the influence of their Chairperson. The Chairperson, Advocate Mahere had more than 300 000 followers on Twitter alone. It was fascinating to observe how Advocate Mahere managed to take advantage of Dr Lennon Gwaunza asking her on a date (*popularly known as shooting his shot*) on Twitter to raise awareness and mobilise donations for the COVID-19 relief. Dr Mahembe explained how Adv Mahere managed to leverage her influence for the benefit of the initiative:

“Fadzayi Mahere commands a huge following on social media and when Dr Gwaunza shot his shot on Twitter, she decided to take advantage of the situation to raise awareness as well as mobilise support for our initiative. She promised Dr Gwaunza that she would go on a date with him date if he managed to secure enough retweets about Zimbabwe Against COVID-19 initiative. In no time the initiative was trending as many people retweeted and shared the story. The hashtags #TeamLenon and #ZimAgainstCovid19 trended for some time and raised awareness about our initiative.” (Dr Mahembe).

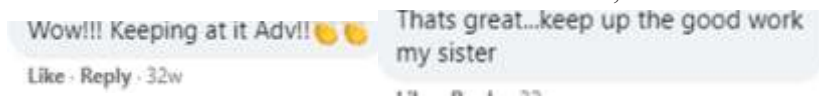
Social influence processes were observed on the platforms from the reactions to the posts by Advocate Mahere. The fact that several users liked, commented, shared, or retweeted after being called to is evidence of compliance. In one of the posts, Advocate Mahere called upon people to retweet and raise awareness. 749 heeded the call and reacted to the post. What this means is that the contacts of all these 749 users managed to get the post on their timelines. Some users reported that they had sent their donations in response to Advocate Mahere's call to action:

Replying to @advocatemahere @EcoCasn and @igwaunza

Awesome. I just sent my donation.



Identification and internalisation processes were also found in some of the comments from users as noted below,



Related to the Citizen Initiative spearheaded by Mr Chari, the posts also drew the attention of quite many people as depicted in the posts below (Figure 4). The posts managed to attract an excess of 170 retweets, 10 Quote tweets and more than 800 likes on Twitter.

Figure 4: A sample showing reactions to Mr Chari's Tweet



On Facebook, Mr Chari's calls to action were able to obtain considerable reactions as shown by Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: A sample showing reactions to Mr Chari's Facebook post



Mr Chari a prominent activist and social media personality also used his influence to raise awareness and mobilise support for the Citizens Initiative COVID-19 project. On Twitter, Mr Chari had over 56 000 followers. Social influence processes were observed from the social media users' reactions to Mr Chari's appeals. Evidence of compliance, identification and internalisation was observed from the way users reacted. Some retweeted, shared or

liked the tweets because they wanted to comply with what their influencer/ celebrity was asking for while others complied because they believed what the Citizens Initiative was noble as shown below:



Kuchengetana Trust also obtained sizable reactions on Twitter as depicted by Figure 6 below. On average the Trust got excess of 200 likes and more than 40 retweets.

Figure 6: A sample of reactions to Kuchengetana Trust's Tweets



Social influence processes were also observed from the reactions to Kuchengetana Trust posts. Users had this to say:

Concerning Councillor Chivhoko's initiative, it was found that the



What they are doing is amazing. I'd love to see it replicated in other communities. We know there is a huge need.

[#Covid19LockdownReliefKitchen](#)

Replying to [@Semaino](#) and [@TertaksZ1](#)

This is leadership. God bless

Replying to [@Semaino](#)

Well done. God bless

Councillor leveraged on his position as Councillor to garner support for his initiatives. The Councillor had this to say:

“I use the WhatsApp Ward 4 residents' groups to mobilise support for those affected by COVID-19 induced lockdowns because provides a friendly environment in which people can be persuaded to donate. I have six residents' groups that I manage, and it is in these groups that I post information and appeals for donations. Since the residents know me as their Councillor and the close relations that exist in these groups, I have had positive responses from the residents.” (Councillor Chivhoko).

It is evident from the Councillor's response that residents responded positively to the calls to action because they knew the Councillor and they identified themselves with the Councillor. One user's response to a call to action in the Southview Residents WhatsApp group attests to this, *“Good people lets heed the call and support our Councillor in this worthy cause. If we don't support our own, who will? Please let's donate.....”* From this response, one can see the compliance and identification processes as propounded in social influence particularly with the use of 'our'.

In Ms Maputuka's case, reactions by users on Twitter and Facebook could have been because of the internalisation process. The users could have reacted to posts because it appealed to altruistic values.

On Twitter, the video managed to attract 16 retweets, 1 Quote tweet and 13 likes whereas on Facebook the video got 68 likes, 48 shares and 5 comments as shown in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7: A sample of reactions to Ms Maputuka's post on Facebook



Ms Maputuka informed the researcher that appealing for donations on social media platforms had assisted the family as they had received help in the form of money, clothes for the babies as well as groceries.

Benefits of using social media for mobilising support for social causes

Social media provides numerous opportunities for individuals and organisations to succeed in mobilising resources for charitable initiatives. According to the interviewees, the main benefits of using social media for mobilising support for social causes were low costs, wide reach, immediacy, transparency, engagement, and trust. Related to costs, individuals and non-profit organisations could afford to use social media platforms to disseminate information or promote their mobilisation efforts due to the relatively low costs of accessing and utilising social media. Respondents indicated that they could not afford to place advertisements and raise awareness about their initiatives on

traditional media channels such as newspapers, radio or television because of the exorbitant prices charged for time or space.

Additionally, interviewees indicated that they used social media for their efforts because it dissolved barriers related to time and space. Social media ensured that the messages they disseminated about their initiatives had wider reach and its instantaneous nature guaranteed instant reception of messages by the public. It provided the respondents with an opportunity to reach even those who were not in the same geographical locations as them. The representative of Feed the City Zimbabwe explained this in detail:

“Social media has helped us in terms of raising awareness about our programme. The messages and appeals we have shared on social media have not only reached different corners of the country but have reached people in countries on different continents who have come aboard and assisted us.” (Charmaine Dube).

These findings confirm the results of Chugh, (2018) who noted that the Nepalese Community in Australia managed to galvanise support for those who were affected by the 2015 earthquake. The community managed to coordinate mobilisation efforts via social media for Nepal despite being miles away. It is noted that the key person in the Citizens' Initiative, Mr Freeman Chari is based in the United State of America, but he has managed to harness social media to mobilise support for charitable initiatives in Zimbabwe. Additionally, it has been noted that many people based outside the country have supported and donated to numerous charitable initiatives in the country. This attests to the power of social media in dissolving geographical barriers.

The interviewees indicated that social media had provided them with access to people who they would normally not have access to in real life. They explained that due to the various networks that existed on social media they managed to get access to high offices

and prominent individuals. Mr Mudzingwa of Community Water Alliance had this to say,

“Social media has helped us to access high offices and prominent personalities we would not normally have access to. Through the options of sharing, tagging, liking, and retweeting, our messages have reached prominent people and high offices. And when these people show support for our causes on social media it boosts our campaigns as some people come on board because of the influence of these celebrities, politicians or influencers.”

The interviewees indicated that social media was beneficial to charitable initiatives because it provided individuals and organisations mobilising support for social causes with the opportunity to engage and interact with the public. They explained that social media had helped them in terms of interacting and engaging with the public which united people towards their social causes cultivated relationships and built trust between the organisers of the initiatives and the public. These attributes were critical to the social causes as they encouraged the public to support charitable initiatives.

The respondents also stated that social media was advantageous in the mobilisation of support for social causes in that it facilitated transparency and increased credibility. The interviewees indicated that with the help of social media, they had managed to disclose to the public what they received from donors and how they had used or distributed the donations. They explained that this had increased the credibility of their initiatives and helped in building trust. Moreover, transparency and disclosure on the donations received had also persuaded those who were previously sceptical to donate to the causes.

Interviewees indicated that social media had raised awareness about their initiatives and inspired people to donate. Ms Muzoroki

of Kuchenetana Trust stated that she had been featured on CNN Africa which shows that social media created awareness about her initiative. As further testimony to this, Kuchenetana Trust also received donations from the Kenyan Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Her Excellency Lucy Chelimo. This serves as evidence that social media had raised the public's awareness about her initiative including those in high offices.

In terms of the donations that the individuals and organisations received, they ranged from foodstuffs, money, Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) for health care, labour, and equipment. Related to the money, respondents indicated that it was in local currency as well as foreign currency. Foodstuffs included basic commodities such as cooking, mealie-meal, sugar, salt, and beans. Regarding the PPEs, interviewees stated that they had received gowns, gloves, masks, and sanitisers. Concerning equipment, it was noted that Zimbabwe Against COVID-19 Trust had received a ventilator from a well-wisher. It was interesting to note that some supporters offered to donate their labour. According to Dr Mahembe of Zimbabwe Against COVID-19, some medical doctors offered to go to the front-line in the fight against COVID-19 in Zimbabwe as donations.

Challenges of using social media for mobilising support for charitable initiatives

Although the respondents revealed many benefits that they had realised from using social media for promotion and mobilisation of their COVID-19 related social causes, they also indicated that there were challenges that could be encountered such as lack of control. Due to the lack of regulation on social media, it was impossible to stop people from posting negative comments or to control the narrative which could adversely affect the initiative.

This was confirmed by observations that were made related to Zimpapers COVID-19 Fundraising Campaign on Twitter. There were so many negative comments about the initiative and the organisation such as:

“This is a ponzi scheme, donating to this call is throwing money down the drain!!! All those thinking of donating don't say you were not warned”, “Contribute to Zimpapers at your risk they must not be trusted even with words”, “Stop propaganda then we can contribute, for now, contribute the salaries you are getting from omitting the truth in your reporting”.

Other comments were centred on Zimpapers being an organisation that could not be trusted and full of thieves. The organisation could not stop people from posting negative comments about the organisation due to the nature of social media and these negative comments could have discouraged potential donors from donating to the cause. If these comments had come in the form of letters to the Editor for the printed newspapers, the Editorial team would have simply ignored them and not publish them. Furthermore, the viral nature of social media can impact the initiative negatively if negative news or a scandal about the individual or organisation spearheading the programme breaks out. The fact that information on social media travels fast makes it difficult to contain or manage negative publicity.

Conclusion

From the study, it can be deduced that social media can play a critical role in the mobilisation of resources for charitable initiatives even in countries struggling economically. Social media allows individuals and organisations involved in charity work to leverage their influence and social networks as well that of supporters and donors to increase reach, encourage donations and inspire the public to action. Supporting charitable initiatives can be in the form on a donation or actions such as liking, retweeting, commenting, or sharing information about the initiative.

From the findings, it is noted that using social media to mobilise and drive support for health-related charitable initiatives in Zimbabwe was effective since the individuals and the organisations that were spearheading the initiatives managed to

receive support in various forms. This resonates with the findings from scholars such as Zhou & Pan, 2016; Okada et al, 2017; Khan et al, 2018) who found that social media was effective in raising awareness and mobilising support for social causes. Additionally, the study confirms the findings from Khan et al, (2018) that show that effective calls to action inspire giving regardless of the economic situation. It was found that the individuals and charitable organisations involved in the COVID-19 related resource mobilisation efforts recorded success in their endeavours despite the economic situation that is currently prevailing. Despite Zimbabwe facing economic challenges and other countries also struggling economically due to COVID-19, Zimbabweans in the country and those in the diaspora managed to rally behind the various COVID-19 related charitable initiatives in the country.

In conclusion, this research established that social media was being used to mobilise resources for charitable initiatives in Zimbabwe especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was discovered that social media provided individuals and organisations spearheading charitable initiatives with several opportunities that ensured the success of their programmes. These included greater reach of appeals and other information related to the cause, leveraging on social influence and social networks, building relationships and trust, ensuring transparency, and increasing credibility. It was also discovered that the absence of gatekeepers and lack of regulation were major challenges that needed to be taken cognisant of when mobilising support for social causes through social media. The study also found that social media was an effective channel for publicising the initiatives, inspiring the public to action, and encouraging donations even in an economically unstable country.

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