

Assess The Role of Social Media in Transforming Police Services. The Case of Zrp Harare Province [2010-2020]

David Foya^{*1} and Nkosana Ncube²

¹Department of Business Management, National University of Science & Technology, Zimbabwe; Bulawayo.

²National Aids Council, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

*Corresponding author

David Foya, Department of Business Management, National University of Science & Technology, Zimbabwe; Bulawayo

Submitted: 06 Apr 2022; Accepted: 11 Apr 2022; Published: 14 Apr 2022

Citation: David Foya, Nkosana Ncube (2022) Assess The Role of Social Media in Transforming Police Services. The Case of Zrp Harare Province [2010-2020]. *J Huma Soci Scie*, 5(2): 60-68.

Abstract

There has been a very significant widespread use of social media by the large sections of the population including in the uniformed forces. This study was assessing the role of social media in transforming police force in Harare Province of Zimbabwe Republic Police between 2010 to 2020. To identify the current services being offered by the police in Zimbabwe. Some of the objectives of the study included investigating the importance of social media use within ZRP in Zimbabwe and examining the challenges faced by police in using social media in the operations of the police. Some of the research questions included what is the importance of using social media in the operations of ZRP and what are the benefits and challenges of the police using social media in Zimbabwe? The research used a descriptive research design as this design suited the topic which is not quantitative in nature. The study is critical to ZRP as it will assist to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the operations of the police force. The research adopted the use of convenient sampling in selecting respondents for this study. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data from the respondents. Findings of the research do indicate that there is widespread use of social media within the Zimbabwe Republic Police. It further indicated that there is official position with regards to use of social media but officers in various ranks have resorted to use of the social media in their operations and this has enhanced the success of the police work. The study concludes by arguing in favour of using social media for police work. Finally, the study recommends adoption of policy that regulates the use of social media within the police force and the police training should integrate the issues of cyber-crime and social media.

Keywords: Social Media, Twitter, Cyber- Crime, Uniformed Forces, Whatsapp

Introduction and Background to the Study

The 21st century is becoming known as an Age of Technology, and one of the most important and complex types of new technology is social media [1]. At its core, social media is a tool for communication that has become an integral part of daily life for people of all ages. Technology is without doubt a vital resource for police forces across the world. According to Williams, at el, police work relies heavily on information communication technology (ICT) systems from recording crime to communicating with the public [2]. Use of the internet and social media has grown substantially over the last decade, and the use of these new web-based technologies for work related activities has been a major part of that. Schafer puts forward that in recent a year that is last ten years, social media sites have emerged as a useful tool for friends, co-workers, and families to keep in touch and interact with one another [3]. Persons and groups can share photos or videos, coordinate meet-ups or plans for the weekend, and/or provide updates on newsworthy events to their friends, family, or customer base.

One of the goals of these types of sites is instantaneous connections among people, businesses, and organizations, leading

to greater and quicker sharing of information and enhanced relationships. Social media sites can also serve as a platform to enable people to express their First Amendment rights, including their political ideals, religious beliefs, or disappointments with government agencies. According to Trottier some government entities, including law enforcement agencies, are now using social media sites to interact with the public and provide information on crime trends and community events and tips for keeping citizens safe [4].

In addition to these types of information sharing exchanges between and among persons and entities, social media sites have become a tool that criminals are using for nefarious and criminal purposes [5]. Examples of the use of social media to conduct criminal activity include individuals coordinating a criminal-related flash mob or utilizing a social media site to plan a robbery. Furthermore, online predators joining a social media site to identify and interact with potential victims, and terrorist groups using social media to recruit new members and espouse criminal intentions. Social media sites are increasingly being used to instigate and conduct criminal activity.

Kelling and William are of the strong view that law enforcement personnel should understand the concept and function of social media sites [6]. The law enforcement personnel should know how social media tools and resources can be used to prevent, mitigate, respond to, and investigate criminal activity.

Diamond and Marc asserts that social media sites can be valuable sources of information for law enforcement personnel as they fulfil their public safety mission [7]. There are numerous ways that public information officers may use social media to interact with the public such as detectives may access social media sites to assist in the identification and apprehension of criminal subjects. Secondly intelligence analysts may utilize social media resources as they develop intelligence products regarding emerging criminal activity. Thirdly fusion centre analysts may use social media resources to assist in the development of analytic assessments. To successfully and lawfully harness the power and value of social media sites, while ensuring that individuals' and groups' privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties are protected, agency leadership should support the development of a policy within their agency regarding the use of social media sites in criminal intelligence and investigative activity [8].

Hintz asserts that social media sites and resources should be viewed as another tool in the law enforcement investigative toolbox [9]. The social media sites should be used in a manner that adheres to the same principles that govern all law enforcement activity. The enforcement agencies actions must be lawful and personnel must have a defined objective and a valid law enforcement purpose for gathering, maintaining, or sharing personally identifiable information (PII). In addition, any law enforcement action involving undercover activity (including developing an undercover profile on a social media site) should address supervisory approval. The required documentation of activity is periodic reviews, the audit of undercover processes and behaviours. On the other hand according to Mackenzie law enforcement agencies should also not collect or maintain the political, religious, or social views, associations, or activities of any individual or group, association, corporation, business, partnership, or organization unless there is a legitimate public safety purpose [10]. These aforementioned principles help define and place limitations on law enforcement actions and ensure that individuals' and groups' privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties are diligently protected.

Communication systems in the Zimbabwe Republic Police just like many other police organisations in the developing world have largely depended on the two-way radio communications as well as on the telephone network. Professional Standards readily acknowledge the benefits of such new ways of communicating but many cases have been documented when officers fail to understand the dangers of SNS – both to themselves and their families and to the Police Service. The Zimbabwe Republic Police has also utilized to a large extent printed materials such as memoranda and other reports to communicate messages to subordinates and commanders alike. However, due to rapid technological advances, this mode of communication has not only become obsolete but has also left the police unable to match or effectively fight criminals who on the other hand have adopted

advanced technologies in their operations. In addition, budgetary constraints have also dealt the ZRP a huge blow as they are unable to constantly upgrade their communication systems and have also accrued debts to telephone operators thereby comprising effectiveness of this system. What was once a private domain of communication has become one that is very much public. This advice has been created with the intention of informing police forces and individual officers and staff of the challenges such SNS sites present. By following the guidance the police forces and our staff will be better informed and able to provide the professional service the public wants from us all. It is important that high quality customer service is provided as part of the guidance on the safe use of the internet and social media and the standards specified in the customer service policy apply through-out this document.

Law enforcement organisations throughout the world are increasingly turning to modern technology. Internet usage has grown, the way people are using the internet has also changed. Over the last few years, society has witnessed a rapid increase in the number of police organisations using social media to communicate and interact with the communities they serve. Prominent examples of social networking sites are facebook, twitter, LinkedIn, MySpace and YouTube. The police service is encouraged to embrace the many benefits available through effective use of the Internet and social media. Such benefits can include more effective communication with communities, more informed consultation and local engagement, and an opportunity to demonstrate greater accountability and transparency. Law enforcement agencies, like many other types of organizations, are finding ways to use social media to disseminate information to the public [1]. More interactive online technology such as blogs, social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook are allowing users to interact and collaborate with each other in a social media dialogue and have become more prominent. In fact, police agencies in larger cities are finding that their communities expect them to have an online presence on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. With the rapid expansion in the use of social networking by law-abiding citizens as well as criminals, many law enforcement agencies are feeling the need to have a team of experts to study social media activity. The intelligence developed through effective observation of social media communications can have a significant impact on tactical police operations.

Similarly, the frequency of social media use by law enforcement, including to aid in carrying out their public safety mission, with a primary goal of preventing and investigating crime is already high and projected to rise even further in the coming years. According to Bertot, et al, , few agencies have adopted formal training, policies or have dedicated staff in place, resulting in barriers to consistent and broad application throughout all of law enforcement [11]. On the other hand according to Diamond and Marc, local neighbourhood policing teams are either using or looking at using Twitter or Facebook to provide short updates to people within their neighbourhood on what is happening where they live Hintz explains that in the current environment criminality is now more organized, global, digital and operating across complex networks. Criminals are easily moving around,

both nationally and internationally, using better equipment and technology [7,9]. Furthermore, the ease of modern travel, technological advancements, and more open borders are inevitably expanding the opportunity for organized crime, online radicalization, cybercrime, trafficking and related offences [10]. In short, criminals are becoming harder to trace and have more places to hide, making traditional crime reporting and investigation less effective.

Citizens are demanding greater levels of transparency, prioritization and quality service to be delivered by the police. More so with the emergence of 24-hour news channels, availability of social media, and the explosion of apps, citizens are actively engaging in conversations with and about the police, in-person, online and around the clock. In fact, citizens want the police to be just as actively engaged, they expect to receive relevant, up-to-date and complete information instantly and through a variety of mediums [11]. They expect a more focused police service that mirrors the approach in the private sector; banks, retailers, and telecommunications providers who are all using customer data to gain deeper customer insights and enable them to address individual customer needs. Above all, citizens want to know who they can speak to, not only when they are a victim of crime but also when they need to air their more general safety concerns and how they can, if necessary, hold their police service to account. Lopez and Slessor (2013) buttress this view by asserting that, Police services must embrace a range of contact channels that enable interaction with citizens in new, dynamic, personalized and cost effective ways. Citizen engagement should be online, social as well as face-to-face, and underpinned by trust.

In Southern Africa, police organisations such as South African Police Service, Botswana Police Service, Namibian Police, among others have embraced social media in their operations. In Zimbabwe, however, the police are yet to fully exploit social media platforms. Tablet and smartphone technology is now commonly available and relatively cheaper way of communication. Many people in Zimbabwe now have smartphones in their pockets, giving instant access to a variety of information including world news, financial services, travel and much more. Equally incredible is that police officers have personal smartphones and tablets yet when they arrive at work they take a step back in time. There are of course pros and cons to police using social media. However, with the right guidelines in place and the right safety nets the pros far outweigh the cons. To this end, there is need for an academic inquiry that investigates the role of social media in transforming police services within in Zimbabwe.

Research objectives

The objectives of this paper are to:

- identify forms of social media being used by the Zimbabwe Republic Police in Zimbabwe.
- assess the role of social media in transforming police services with particular focus on the Zimbabwe Republic Police.
- investigate the importance of social media use within police force in Zimbabwe.
- assess the challenges associated with use of social media by the police service in Zimbabwe.
- recommend appropriate strategies that can enhance the

effective use of social media by the police in Zimbabwe.

Research questions

The following are research questions for this paper:

- What types of social media are currently being used by the police in Zimbabwe?
- What is the role of social media in transforming police services in the ZRP in Zimbabwe?
- What is the importance of using social media within Zimbabwe Republic Police in Zimbabwe?
- What are the benefits and challenges of the police using social media in Zimbabwe?
- What strategies can be adopted by the police in Zimbabwe to exploit social media to transform police services?

Interim Literature

Concept of Social Media

According to Chadwick, (2006) social media is a phenomenon that has transformed the interaction and communication of individuals throughout the world. In recent times, social media has impacted many aspects of human communication, thereby impacting business. Social networking has become daily practice in some users' lives. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2012) defines social media as forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos).

According to Daniel (2010), social media is hard to define and is a two-way street that gives you the ability to communicate. Social media include social networking applications such as Facebook and Google, micro-blogging services such as Twitter, blogs, wikis, and media sharing sites such as YouTube and Flickr. Social media is characterized by user-generated content, online identity creation, and relational networking. Social media has a particularly appealing potential for electronic-participation.

According to Bertot et al. social media has four major potential strengths: collaboration, participation, empowerment, and time. Social media is collaborative and participatory by its very nature as it is defined by social interaction. It provides the ability for users to connect with each [other] and form communities to socialize, share information, or to achieve a common goal or interest. Social media can be empowering to its users as it gives them a platform to speak [11].

It allows anyone with access to the internet the ability to inexpensively publish or broadcast information, effectively democratizing media. In terms of time, social media technologies allow users to immediately publish information in near-real time. There are several differences between social media and social networks (Hartshorn, 2010). Social media can be called a strategy and an outlet for broadcasting, while social networking is a tool and a utility for connecting with others (Stelzner, 2009) [12].

Social media is still a media which is primarily used to transmit or share information with a broad audience, while social networking is an act of engagement as people with common interests associate together and build relationships through community [12]. Another difference is the communication style as

it is reported by Bedell (2010). Indeed, social media is simply a system, a communication channel; it is not a location that you visit. In contrast, social networking is a two-way communication, where conversations are at the core, and through which relationships are developed (Bedell, 2010).

Then, the timely responses and the asking or telling fact are another dissimilarity between social network and social media. Social media is hard work, and it takes time in which you cannot automate individual conversations; whereas, social networking is direct communication between the user and the people that he chooses to connect with. Despite the fact that in social networking people can write blogs or discuss anything, social media does not allow users to manipulate comments, correct errors or other data for personal or business benefit (Stelzner, 2009).

Types of Social Media Networks

According to Mastrofski (2006) there are many types of social networks available. This study reviews the social networks privacy and security implications of using a few of them. Most social networks combine elements of more than one of these types of networks, and the focus of a social network may change over time. The study does not provide an exhaustive definition of the social networks that can be used by law enforcement officers but it considers the security and privacy applicable to most networks.

Broadly speaking, all networks are characterised by purpose, structure and style. The purpose of a network as put forward by Quinton (2011) is established for learning, mission, business, idea, and family or personal reasons. Secondly the structure of any network is a group of interlinked entities that form a cluster. Most social structures tend to be characterized by dense clusters of strong connections. Lastly the style is the place, space, pace and styles of interaction of the networks give an understanding of the style of the networks.

Personal Networks

In the words of Namkee, Seungyoon and Jang Hyun (2012) networks allow users to create detailed online profiles and connect with other users, with an emphasis on social relationships such as friendship. A personal network is a set of human contacts known to an individual, with whom that individual would expect to interact at intervals to support a given set of activities. In other words, a personal network is a group of caring, dedicated people who are committed to maintain a relationship with a person in order to support a given set of activities.

Having a strong personal network requires being connected to a network of resources for mutual development and growth. For example, Facebook, Friendster and MySpace are platforms for communicating with contacts. These networks often involve users sharing information with other approved users, such as one's gender, age, interests, educational background and employment, as well as files and links to music, photos and videos. These platforms may also share selected information with individuals and applications that are not authorized contacts.

O'Reilly (2005) argues that personal networks are intended to be mutually beneficial—extending the concept of teamwork beyond

the immediate peer group. The term is usually encountered in the workplace, though it could apply equally to other pursuits outside work. Personal networking is the practice of developing and maintaining a personal network, which is usually undertaken over an extended period. Personal networking is often encouraged by large organizations, in the hope of improving productivity, and so a number of tools exist to support the maintenance of networks. Many of these tools are IT-based, and use Web 2.0 technologies.

Status Update Networks

According to Sayre, et, al. (2010) these types of social networks are designed to allow users to post short status updates in order to communicate with other users quickly. For example, Twitter focuses its services on providing instantaneous, short updates. These networks are designed to broadcast information quickly and publicly, though there may be privacy settings to restrict access to status updates.

In this regard, O'Reilly (2005) argues that status updates can be shared among all friends, to a select group or to individuals. Many users also tag other friends in photos and messages so that Facebook will alert them that they have been mentioned. A users' friends can comment, like and sometimes share their friends' status updates. Users may also adjust their account privacy settings to determine who can see their updates.

Shirky, (2009) put forward that a Facebook status is a feature that allows users to post and share a small amount of content on their profile, on their friends' walls and in Facebook news feeds. A user's Facebook status may be updated using the "Update Status" bar that appears at the top of the user's homepage and profile page. User's often use this space for updates about their day or to post clever quips; website, video and photos can also be shared this way.

Research Methodology

Descriptive survey design was adopted in conducting this study. According to (Sarantakos S, 2008) a descriptive research is a process of collecting data in order to to answer questions concerning current status of subjects in the study.

Sampling Techniques

This research paper used convenience sampling. Chief amongst the reason for use of convenience sampling is that it is very easy to carry out with few rules governing how the sample should be collected. The study employed two research instruments to collect data for analysis from the respondents. A combination of questionnaires and interviews were used as data collection instruments. The researchers used interviews with key informants in order to get the very critical information questionnaires were used

Findings Of This Research Paper Hierarchical Level

A question was asked with regard to the ranks of the participants and the resulted are shown in the below,

Above shows that forty-eight point six percent of the participants were junior officers or without leadership responsibilities

and the least number was from the executive that is the senior / assistant commissioners. Most of the respondents who took part in the survey were general police officers like patrol officers, criminal investigators or officers working in administration and support units.

The high number of participants from the junior but especially senior management, which is not proportional to the number of personnel working at the various levels, indicates a higher interest in this topic. This could be explained by the fact that the project STEM is being implemented by the Ministry of Higher Education and that the cyber-crime bill consultations are under way from the Ministry of Information and Postal Telecommunication where a much higher number of management staff are being engaged.

Police Section or Department

A question on demographic group sheds light on the various working fields, departments and units the participants work in. The reason for this question was to determine if there are different attitudes towards social media depending on the field of activity of the participants. The results of the survey identified that the forty-three point three percent participants mostly work with criminal police while twenty-five percent of those respondents are in the operations. That gives a total of twenty-two percent. Noteworthy, however, is that eleven percent of work in the specialised branches listed in the question. Interestingly, participants working in cybercrime and community policing are barely represented. This may well be due to the fact that only a small number of police officers work in those specific cybercrime units. The relatively high average of age of the officers working in community policing could have negatively influenced the probability of participation.

Knowledge of Social Media

Sixty-eight percent of respondents' shows great knowledge and experience of using social media. The first set of questions collected data regarding the participants' personal view about their knowledge and experience with social media. Of particular note is that forty-eight point six percent assess their personal experience with social media as low but only twelve-point percent evaluate their level of knowledge as low. This suggests that police officers have sufficient knowledge about social media but lack the practical experience. This result could be explained by the traditional scepticism towards new technologies.

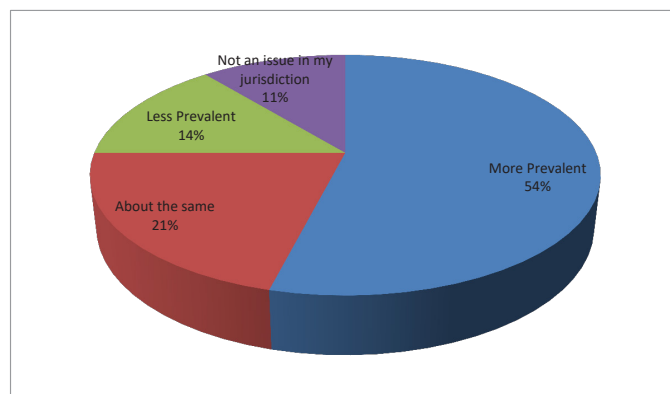
Positive Knowledge And Risks Available With The Use Of Social Media

A question was asked which focussed on the level of knowledge about the opportunities and risks of social media for police work. As a result, it can be determined that both knowledge and associated risks are assessed as slightly above fifty-eight percent. The results do indicate that more than fifty-eight percent of the respondents were well versed with the knowledge and risks associate with the use of social media in police work. They further maintained that they had knowledge about the possibilities of social media for police work is better than average. The results are tabulated below,

The Usefulness Of Social Media For Police Services

Despite the knowledge of the threats that social media has but ninety-two percent of the respondents agree that the social media is very useful to the police duties. During the interview the participants brought in an interesting dimension that social media is useful for police activities, in that it would increase the efficiency of police organisations, improve the reputation and image, and the effectiveness in the police organisation it is critical to fund processes that fully integrate predictive, preventive, detective and incident-response capabilities to minimise the impact of these incidents.

The least is only one percent believed or regarded the social media as not useful to the daily duties of the law enforcement agents. Nevertheless, it has to be stated that during the key informant interviews there were a few number of participants that did not agree with the statements that social media is useful. Most of them seem to be convinced about the usability of social media but the possible implications for police work are not recognised.



Source: SPSS based data analysis

Figure 1: above shows that the highest number participants noted that cyber- crime was now prevalent as compared to the yester years of policing duties. The least number of 11% could not reveal the actual effects of cyber- crime as it was not an issue in their jurisdiction. Strategic security spending demands that individuals and businesses identify and invest in cyber security practices that are most relevant to today's advanced attacks.

As individuals' use of social media has grown exponentially, in recent years a number of law enforcement agencies have integrated a cyber-vetting component into the comprehensive background investigations they conduct on applicants and on-board employees.

Usefulness Of Social Media For Police Officers Employees Personal Use Of Social Media Over The Years

There has been increased use of social media by the police officers over the years for the past ten. Only seventeen percent of the participants noted that social media use is less prevalent the results are shown in the figure below. The Internet has been available for widespread public use since the early 1990s. In its two decades of existence, the Web has become an integral part of everyday life. It is difficult to recall how society functioned without it. The web no longer is a fixed object for passive observation. It has become a dynamic venue for proactive often passionate interaction. The growth, power, and influence of social media have proven phenomenal as evidenced by the decline of

traditional newspapers and the outcome of the 2008 presidential election for instance.

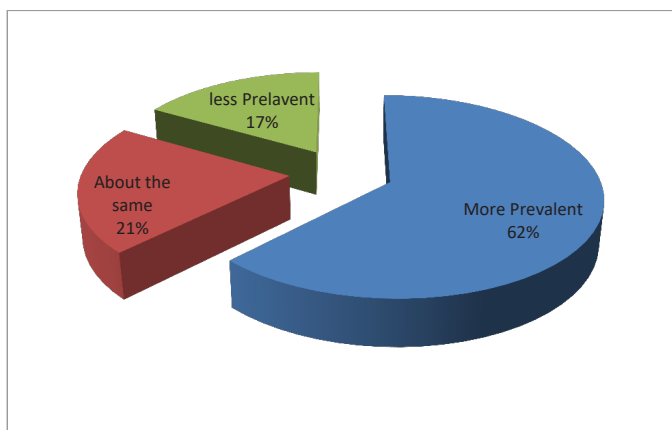
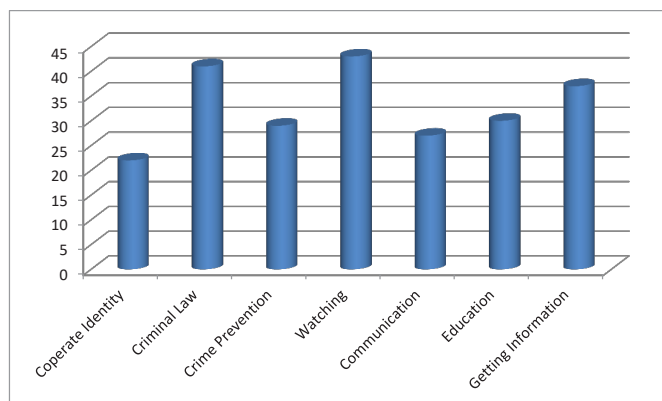


Figure 2: Time Spent on Social Media

Rank The Usability Of Social Media For Various Policing Services

Question collected information regarding the activities for which the participant’s police organisation or unit already use social media. It has to be taken into account that the question did not offer a selection of possibilities between the strict official usage and where applicable an unofficial recourse to social media. This may explain why participants state their police organisations get information from the citizens despite the fact that they do not operate an official social media presence.



Source: research data

Figure 3: Social media tools valuable for police activities

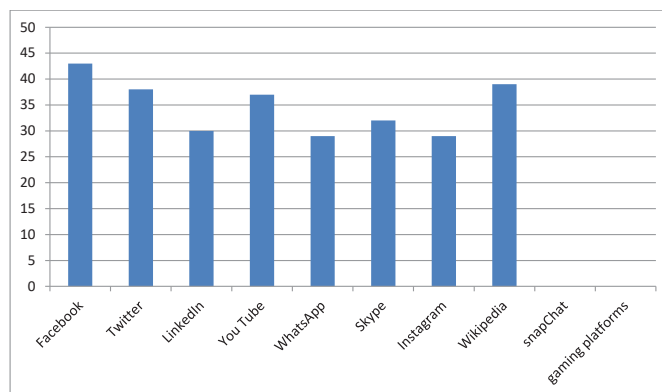
Subject to that reservation, the agreement level for the activity “Intelligence gathering” stands out in particular. This could be due to the fact that police organisations, where applicable, use official or private hardware (smart phones, tablet-PC, and notebooks) to run investigations in social media regarding operational environments, persons, and emergency situations for thorough risk assessments and preparation for police operations.

The answers given may especially put emphasis on this fact. Such investigations do not require a social media presence or profile. The police do not even have to be engaged in direct communication or interaction with users and can remain undetected. Police activities which require a direct communication with the society or individual citizens received the lowest rates. The

activities such as informing public about criminal issues, information to the public about disasters, emergencies, crisis, crime prevention activities, and establishing good communication with public. These results indicate that social media is only used to a limited extend for official purposes.

Social Media Applications Which Could Be Used For Policing Purposes

It can be noted that police officers mainly have a positive attitude towards the use of social media as an individual tool as well as an instrument for police organisations. This in particular applies to the traditional platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.



Source: Research data

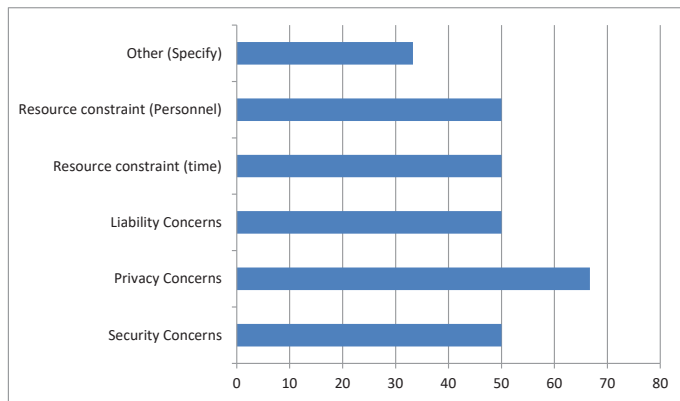
Figure 4: Social media application useful for police activities

The most preferred application that could be used by the police officers was the Facebook for social interaction. The main reason for this preference is that it was easy for crime investigations and even intelligence as the law enforcement agencies would be able to trace the friends and the person who generated the information. The second one was Wikipedia and the twitter. The other site or application when unfamiliar on how they would be used as the officers was used to the common applications. LinkedIn and Wikipedia were mainly used for professional networks and academic research as pointed out during the key informant interviews.

It is striking that the platforms which are considered to be less useful for the police are typically used by the young target group. Children and juveniles usually start their online careers with on-line games and gaming platforms. Snap Chat and Instagram are very popular amongst juveniles.

Barriers to Using Social Media in the ZRP

Figure 5 below shows the main constraints of social media use in the police activities. Of major concern is privacy of individuals and the organisation as well. In addition, the participants of the interviews also highlighted that invasion of privacy was a major concern that was slowing the adoption of the social media in the activities of the police.



Source: SPSS based data analysis

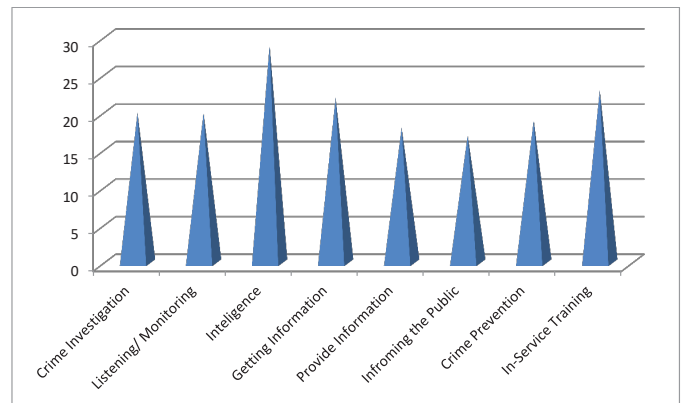
Figure 5: Barriers of social media use

In the past, social networking services were viewed as a distraction and offered no educational benefit. Blocking these social networks was a form of protection for employers against wasting time, bullying, and invasions of privacy. In an institutional setting, Facebook, for example, is seen by many instructors and employers as a frivolous, time-wasting distraction from work, and it is not uncommon to be banned in officers' computers or even the administration computer labs.

According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police's (IACP) Centre for Social Media website, Facebook users share approximately 684,478 pieces of content every minute, and the average user creates 90 pieces of content each month, including links, news stories, blog posts, notes, photo albums, and videos. Each day 1 million accounts are added to Twitter, and Instagram records approximately a billion "likes" for material posted on the site.

Rank In Order Of Importance The Usage Of Social Media By Police Organisation

The question focused on fields of policing and activities for which social media could be important and useful as shown in Figure below. The participants were asked to evaluate the importance of social media for pre-chosen fields/activities. The statement that social media can be useful for intelligence gathering purposes to combat crime and criminal phenomena got the highest agreement level from the respondents. The low score indicates that there is doubt about whether a clever social media strategy could strengthen the corporate identity of the organisation. Furthermore, twenty percent of the respondents do not seem to believe that social media can be especially useful for informing the public about criminal activities and for in-service training for police employees. No reason could be attributed to this doubt by the respondents. It could be a result of lack of training and general awareness on their part as individuals.



Source: Research data

Figure 6: Policing activities that are useful with social media

Future Plans With The Use Of Social Media

Data collected from the participants reveal that key informants intend to further use social media for official purposes or even plan to expand it in the future. It is conspicuous that questionnaire respondents seventy-four percent strongly want to continue to use social media but only seven percent strongly disagree to expand their social media activities. The results are tabulated below,

Formal Training On Social Media Use

Social media has become an integral part of every human being including the law enforcement agents in Zimbabwe and worldwide. Despite the vast knowledge on the merits of using the social media most seventy-nine percent of the participants did not receive any formal training as shown in the table 10 above. There is considerable knowledge gap on e-learning in the police force emphasis on advanced education in order to estimate if and to what extent police officers have already received official training for social media. During the interview it was emphasised that they have already taken part in an e-learning course during the police academy but it did not focus on social media courses.

This is very surprising because to the authors acknowledge there is not such a thing as an e-learning course for police officers available which covers these topics? This may have been due to the fact that the survey participants did not pay attention to the fact that there is a difference between cybercrime and social media and possibly confused the available cybercrime e-learning application with one for social media.

Management Attitude Towards The Use Of Social Media For Policing

The findings on above subject shows that fifty-eight point two percent of the respondents agreed that management has a positive attitude towards the use of social media for policing activities. There is twenty-one percent of the respondents were neutral about the use of social media as there is no social media policy in place and also that there is privacy concern and the accuracy of the information that is circulating on the social media platforms. Most of the respondents in this category were those who were in the age range of 49 to 55 years. The study also indicates that those in the age group 24 to 38 strongly believe that some

of the laws have to be changed to be in tandem with developments in the world with regards to fighting crimes in Zimbabwe. During the interviews, it was noted that the main social media in Zimbabwe was the WhatsApp and it was difficult to rely on such kind of information for intelligence gathering but as a way of informing the public. The social media was liable to abuse by the public. This might indicate that the utilization of social media is not one of the top topics discussed by supervisors of the various police departments.

Availability of a Social Media Policy

A question was asked to find out if the organisation had a social media policy in place for adoption. The respondents' views showed that the organization does not have a social media policy with over seventy-five percent of the respondents denying the existence while slightly over ten percent of the participants highlighted that it is in the process of being developed. These results do show that the social media policy is not being properly communicated to other staff members that why five point nine percent of the respondents were neutral about their attitude towards the use of the social media in police activities. The participants of the key informant interviews highlighted that there were mixed feelings towards the social media policy adoption. Without a proper policy it will be difficult to effectively monitor the activities that are being productive and those that are uneconomical [12-22].

Conclusion Recommendations

Conclusions

The findings from this research paper notes that the majority of police officers that is close to sixty percent have certificates from police academy. The next largest number is those with degrees at both undergraduate and post graduate levels which makes a combined seventeen percent. This makes the officers very literate and a large category of people who use technology both for personal use and work related use.

The findings indicate that police officers are very knowledgeable and use social media in its various forms both for personal and business purposes. This is prevalent with the young generation of police officers who are technological than most senior officers. The findings do show a smaller percentage of officers who are sceptical of the role of social media in the police work.

The findings do indicate that there is no official policy with regards to use of social within the force, but the officers do regularly it successfully and they do obtain positive results which advances police work.

Over sixty percent were agreement that social media plays significant role in fighting crimes in the fast changing world and also indicated that there were risks associated with social media and they argued that police needed to be on top situation and move abreast with technology otherwise they will remain irrelevant in their operations.

The findings do indicate that there are vast opportunities for use of social media in within the police force. At individual level, the members of ZRP have been using social media variously with so much success and if its embraced by the whole force, it will

produce tremendous results which benefits the country. Majority of interviewed members strongly believed that there are vast opportunities that are available when members of the force use social media.

Respondents concurred that despite threats that are caused by social media; they have adopted it because it enables them to achieve the best for their organisation thereby leading to success in achieving for the nation. In addition, respondents argued that police work has become much easier as information can be relayed easily fast and reach the intended targets timely. The work of police work involves urgency and as such there is serious need to move with technology otherwise it becomes redundant and criminals may escape and cover their foot- steps.

The study noted that cyber- crime was now prevalent as compared to the ten years ago in policing duties. Large number of respondents was of the strong view that cyber-crimes require that officers moves with speedy and accuracy such that any delay negatively affect the operations of the police. Strategic security spending demands that individuals and businesses identify and invest in cyber security practices that are most relevant to today's advanced attacks. The respondents strongly supported the fact that police should be proactive in the use of social media and that traditional intelligence gathering cannot continue to use old ways of doing things.

As individuals' use of social media within the Harare Province has grown exponentially, in the recent five years in recent years a number of law enforcement agencies have integrated a cyber-vetting component into the comprehensive background investigations they conduct on applicants and on-board employees.

The research findings do indicate that the most popular social media include Facebook, twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, Wikipedia and LinkedIn. These are effective in various circumstances. More than sixty percent of the respondents agreed that the most common of these media used by police is mainly Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and WhatsApp. However, WhatsApp has proved extremely popular amongst the police as this required less in terms of type of cell phone and data bundle. Hence, according to the findings most police officers tend to resort to this mode of social media.

The majority of the respondents said despite the risks associated with social media, there are barriers that tend to stop or prevent effective use of the social media in the police work. The largest barrier according to the respondents is fear of privacy. The belief is that there is limited or control over privacy when one uses social media. More so when police work needs to have confidentiality and privacy. They also argued that the information can get to many hands at the same time and in some cases to wrong hands. In addition, the respondents raised concerns over liability issues when social media has been used in the public interests.

Recommendations

These researchers would like to make the following recommendations:

The police should include the social media issues in its training curriculum so as to improve the operations of the police force

and this will cascade to the all the members of the force.

The police should further advocate for a proper police and regulatory mechanism for incorporation and use of social media in the police and the rest of the country. Without regulatory framework it becomes everyone's business and yet nobody's business. Regulation is critical in the success of any methods. Once it becomes official that social media is part and parcel of police work then the success is guaranteed.

There should be should be serious training on matters of cyber-crime amongst police officers and better use of social media to enhance efficiency of police work.

The study further recommends that the police force should design social media policy that can be adhered to and this policy framework should be applicable within SADC and with Interpol.

References

1. Burnap, P., Williams, M. L., Sloan, L., Rana, O., Housley, W., Edwards, A., ... & Voss, A. (2014). Tweeting the terror: modelling the social media reaction to the Woolwich terrorist attack. *Social Network Analysis and Mining*, 4(1), 1-14.
2. Williams, M. L., Edwards, A., Housley, W., Burnap, P., Rana, O., Avis, N., ... & Sloan, L. (2013). Policing cyber-neighbourhoods: tension monitoring and social media networks. *Policing and society*, 23(4), 461-481.
3. Schäfer, M. (2014) "Policing the Social Media. Control and Communication in a networked Public Sphere". Paper presented at Social Media and the Transformation of Public Space conference, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
4. Trottier, D. (2015). Open source intelligence, social media and law enforcement: Visions, constraints and critiques. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 18(4-5), 530-547
5. Lyon, D. (2007). *Oxford Handbook of Information and Communication Technologies*, chapter Surveillance, Power and Everyday Life
6. Kelling, G. L., & Bratton, W. J. (1997). Declining crime rates: Insiders' views of the New York City story. *J. crim. L. & criminology*, 88, 1217
7. .Diamond, L., & Plattner, M. F. (Eds.). (2012). *Liberation technology: Social media and the struggle for democracy*. JHU Press..
8. .Kelly, Heather (2014) "Police Embracing Tech that Predicts Crimes." CNN. May 26, 2014. <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/07/09/tech/innovation/police-tech/>
9. Hintz, A. (2015). Social media censorship, privatized regulation and new restrictions to protest and dissent. *Critical perspectives on social media and protest: Between control and emancipation*, 109-126.
10. .Lowe, T., & Innes, M. (2012). Can we speak in confidence? Community intelligence and neighbourhood policing v2. 0. *Policing and Society*, 22(3), 295-316.
11. Bertot, J. C., Gorham, U., Jaeger, P. T., Sarin, L. C., & Choi, H. (2014). Big data, open government and e-government: Issues, policies and recommendations. *Information polity*, 19(1-2), 5-16.
12. Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2002). *Research methods in education*. routledge..
13. Chisnall, P.M., (1997), *Marketing Research*, (5th Edition), Berkshire, McGraw-Hill.
14. .Cooper, D. R., Schindler, P. S., & Sun, J. (2006). *Business research methods* (Vol. 9, pp. 1-744). New York: McGraw-hill
15. Dillon, W., Firtle, N. C., & Madden, T. C. (1990). *Marketing research in a marketing environment* (No. 658.83 D5871m Ej. 1). IRWIN,.
16. .Hofmann, M., & Beaumont, L. R. (2005). *Content networking: architecture, protocols, and practice*. Elsevier.
17. Laird, P. W. (2009). *Pull: networking and success since Benjamin Franklin* (Vol. 48). Harvard University Press
18. Lampos, V., & Cristianini, N. (2012). Nowcasting events from the social web with statistical learning. *ACM Transactions on Intelligent Systems and Technology (TIST)*, 3(4), 1-22.
19. MacKenzie, D. (2008). *An engine, not a camera: How financial models shape markets*. Mit Press
20. Park, N., Lee, S., & Kim, J. H. (2012). Individuals' personal network characteristics and patterns of Facebook use: A social network approach. *Computers in human behavior*, 28(5), 1700-1707.
21. Trottier, D., and Lyon, D. (2012) "Key Features of Social Media Surveillance." In C. Fuchs, K. Boersma, A. Albrecht-slund and M. Sandoval, eds., *Internet and Surveillance: The Challenges of Web 2.0 and Social Media*, 89-105. Abingdon: Routledge.
22. Twitter. "Guidelines for Law Enforcement,". <http://support.twitter.com//entries/41949-guidelines-for-law-enforcement#>

Copyright: ©2022 David Foya. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.