



Pitfalls Of The Internet As A Developmental Tool:

A Study Of The Politics Of Internet Use
by Gender And Sexual Minorities
In Zimbabwe

by Koliwe Majama Consultancy

Research Supported by:



Background of the Research

Objectives

Introduction

The internet a '**political**' weapon to infringe on the rights of marginal sexual and gender communities rather than a **developmental tool**.

Objectives:

To Explore:

- The opportunities that the internet brings for gender and sexual minorities in Zimbabwe.
- The trends in use of the internet by gender and sexual minorities in Zimbabwe.
- Opportunities for the improvement of the online visibility and integration of gender and sexual minorities in Zimbabwe.

Background of the Research

Why

Why?

- Inform civil society, human rights defenders and activists on the trends and pitfalls of online and social media use by gender and sexual minorities.
- Recommend to the communities the ideal use of social media and the internet for mobilising and engaging on sex and sexuality issues in Zimbabwe.
- Submit recommendations to the Zimbabwe Internet Governance Forum on policy and legislation on the protection of the rights of gender and sexual minorities.

Background of the Research

Methodology

Methodology

Target groups: Sex workers and the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) communities in Harare, Bulawayo and Gweru.

- 1) Online questionnaire 2 weeks - 22 October to 2 November, 2018.
- 2) 70 participants took part in the focus group discussions.
 - 67 responses collected and analysed.
 - 3 responses were resident outside Zimbabwe.
 - 6 focus group discussions, held with the assistance of civil society groups: Katswe Sistahood, Bulawayo-based Sexual Rights Centre, LGBTQ rights group, Vovo Bulawayo, GALZ, Hands of Hope, Gweru.
- 3) Desk research and literary analysis

Summary of survey + focus group discussions

Main Findings and Analysis

- Generally participants who took part showed an understanding that same-sex relations are illegal in Zimbabwe although very few could specifically point to the legislative instruments that render them so.
- The majority of participants considered the rights of gender and sexual minorities as an important issue and would openly and actively advocate for the rights of the group.
- Conservative views were evident among those who participated on the online survey - holding religious or cultural beliefs that denounced or did not recognize the existence of gender and sexual minorities.
- Continued criminalisation of the LGBTQ community's makes it very difficult to openly and actively advocate for their rights without the protection of the law - leaving them subject to violence and discrimination both offline and online.

Summary of survey + focus group discussions

Methodology

Do Zimbabweans support the rights of gender and sexual minorities?

67% (41 Responses) - Said YES

- Viewed such issues as human rights and were in support of equality for all people regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.
- Desire to support friends.
- Desire to dispel misconceptions about and negative attitudes towards LGBTQ people.
- Want to fight against mistreatment of LGBTIQ individuals and as an ethical or moral issue.

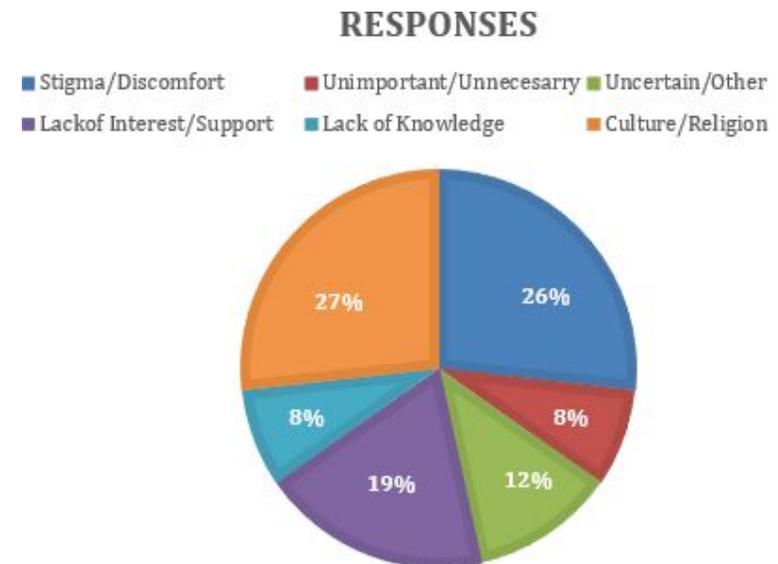
Summary of survey + focus group discussions

Main Findings and Analysis

Do Zimbabweans support the rights of gender and sexual minorities?

33% (26 Responses) - Said NO

Expressed their views as follows:



Summary of usage trends

As with citizens across the globe, Zimbabweans have progressed in the nature of use of internet services in all facets of life.

Usages:

- Q1 of the Postal and Telecommunications Sector Performance Report of 2018 by Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) reported that the total number of active internet subscriptions in the country stood at 52,1%.
- Agencies and individuals now use Facebook and Twitter to post lurid photographs alongside detailed descriptions of names and location to solicit sexual clients or procurement.
- With an economic recession accompanied by cash shortages mobile money transfers increased by 6,35% in the first quarter of 2018 as opposed to the last quarter in 2017

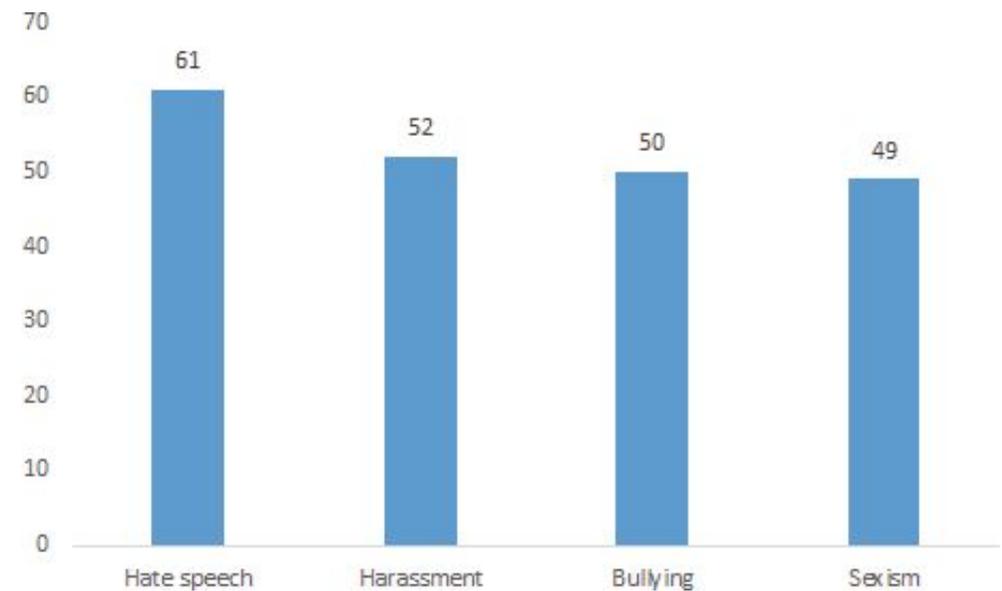
Summary of usage trends

- Both the sex workers and the LGBTQ community use Whatsapp and Facebook for regular communication and sharing of information.
- Overall sex workers accessed internet less than the LGTBI community.
- The LGBTQ community was more sophisticated in its use of the internet, going beyond the use of only Whatsapp and Facebook to include regular emailing, publishing of content, dating sites and applications, watching pornography and general browsing and research.
- The relationship between the monthly income, access and usage of the internet was apparent - the LGBTQ group said they spent on average \$20-30 on data monthly while sex workers spent 50% less on mobile data.

Summary of violations

The top online violations, in order of frequency mentioned during the discussions include:

- **Hate speech** to be the greatest threat 61 out of 67 respondents (91%)
- **Harassment, bullying and sexism** as shown in the chart. Recognition of hate speech as a severe threat was consistent between LGBTQ respondents (6 out of 7) and heterosexuals (55 out of 60).



Policy Recommendation s

Recommendations were offered by both participants in the survey and the focus group with respect to the advancement of rights of the gender and sexual minority groups both offline and online:

Recommendations:

- Decriminalisation of the groups
- Recognition of rights of gender and sexual minorities
- Advancing rights online

Thank You

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