

**Managing a broadcast newsroom during a crisis: The case of three campus radio stations
during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa in 2020**

by

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Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, and I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Date: March 2023

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ABSTRACT

During the Covid-19 lockdown level five between 26 March and 30 April 2020 regulations by the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (Icasa) stipulated that radio stations should be operational and broadcast on weekdays between 7am and 9pm. Yet, the government had restrictions imposed for regulations of social distancing between people, meaning that buildings and public spaces could not be accessed.

This study explores the practical ways in which staff members at campus radio stations – community radio stations managed by universities – fulfilled their journalistic duties of operating in the public sphere during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown five. Universities had to adhere to the lockdown regulations as it is a public space and the facilities and premises were shut down. Students were sent home and remote learning instituted, meaning that campus radio stations, where the majority of the workforce is student volunteers, suffered staff shortages amid the limitations of social distancing imposed by the government.

Considering the factors such as social distancing and little to no access to studio facilities, the researcher embarked on a study to explore the changes exercised by the staff members during a crisis at three campus radio stations in their efforts to produce news and information for its communities during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown in South Africa in 2020.

Journalists, members of management and the production teams at three campus radio stations – MFM 92.6, Vow FM and Tuks FM – were interviewed to explore how campus radio stations managed to fulfil its role in the public sphere and be part of the digital public sphere during the Covid-19 lockdown level five, while having to adhere to restrictions imposed by the government. By applying the Habermasian public sphere theory and a qualitative research method of semi-structured interviews, the researcher identified seven themes that lead to the main finding that the staff members at the three campus radio stations performed their journalistic duties during the Covid-19 pandemic by operating in the digital public sphere through creative management and professional innovation by using existing technologies and incorporating new technologies.

OPSOMMING

Tydens die Covid-19 pandemie vlak vyf grendeltydperk tussen 26 Maart en 30 April 2020 het regulasies uitgereik deur die Onafhanklike Kommunikasie-owerheid van Suid-Afrika (Okosa) gestipuleer dat radiostasies operasioneel moet wees en uitsaai op weekdae tussen 7 vm en 9 nm. Tog het die regering beperkings ingestel vir die toepassing van sosiale afstand tussen mense, wat beteken dat daar geen toegang was tot openbare geboue en spasies nie.

Dié studie verken die praktiese maniere hoe werknemers by kampusradiostasies – gemeenskapsradiostasies wat deur universiteite bedryf word – hulle joernalistieke pligte vervul het deur in die publieke sfeer te funksioneer tydens die Covid-19 pandemie vlak vyf grendeltydperk. Universiteite was ook onderhewig aan hierdie regulasies omdat universiteitspersele openbare spasies is en die persele was as gevolg hiervan gesluit. Studente is huis toe gestuur en afstandsonderrig is ingestel, wat beteken het dat kampusradiostasies, waar die oorgrote meerderheid van die werknemers studente is wat vrywilliglik daar werk, erge tekorte aan werknemers gehad het te midde van die beperkings van sosiale afstandbeheer wat deur die regering daargestel is.

Deur faktore soos sosiale afstandbeheer en min of geen toegang tot ateljeefasiliteite te oorweeg het die navorser begin met 'n studie om vas te stel watter veranderinge die werknemers by drie kampusradiostasies tydens 'n krisis moes aanbring in hulle werkwyse om nuus en inligting te versprei aan hulle gemeenskappe tydens die Covid-19 grendeltydperk in Suid-Afrika in 2020.

Daar is onderhoude gevoer met joernaliste, bestuurslede en die produksiespanne by drie kampusradiostasies – MFM 92.6, VoW FM en Tuks FM – om vas te stel hoe kampusradiostasies te werk gegaan het om hulle rol in die publieke sfeer te vervul en deel te wees van die digitale publieke sfeer tydens die Covid-19 grendeltydperk vlak vyf, terwyl hulle onderhewig was aan die beperkinge wat deur die regering daargestel is. Deur Habermas se publieke sfeer teorie toe te pas en 'n kwalitatiewe navorsingsmetode van semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude te gebruik, het die navorser sewe temas geïdentifiseer wat lei tot die slotsom dat die werknemers by die drie kampusradiostasies hulle joernalistieke pligte nagekom het deur in die digitale publieke sfeer om te gaan deur hulle kreatiewe maniere en professionele innovering met bestaande tegnologie gebruik het en ook nuwe tegnologieë geïnkorporeer het.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Motive for the study

During the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 universities were subjected to the same restrictions and regulations as the rest of the country, which meant social distancing and no or little access to public spaces. While some universities quickly had plans in place for online learning and virtual classes, their campus radio stations also had to adapt (Tlou, 2020). As universities closed for students and widely implemented online learning, staff members at campus radio stations were required to work from home (Tlou, 2020).

Campus radio stations are community radio stations based at universities, tertiary institutions and colleges and are managed by those institutions, broadcasting mainly to the student community and the closest geographical area (Bosch, 2014: 29). Campus radio stations are not only classified as community radio stations (Icasa, 1999) but are also a valuable part of the Habermasian public sphere (more about this concept follow in the discussion of the theoretical framework for this study which will be introduced below and explored more in depth in Chapter 3). Campus radio stations are part of the public sphere because it serves communities in their local language, giving community members a useful and important tool to stay up to date and engage with current affairs (Bosch, 2018: 54; en.unesco.org, 2021). Providing relevant and up to date information is critical during a crisis, such as the Covid-19 pandemic (en.unesco.org, 2021).

Campus radio stations fall in the community of interest stations category and are increasingly serving more than just the student community, but also extend beyond its geographical location (Bosch, 2018: 54). Campus radio stations are usually located and established within a tertiary educational institution and have volunteers as their staff members – who were faced with the same safety challenges as the rest of the public during the Covid-19 pandemic (Tufan, Kökat & Bal, 2021: 1; en.unesco.org, 2021). Campus radio stations are also considered alternatives to popular radio broadcasting (Tufan *et al.*, 2021: 1). As a community radio station, a campus radio station plays a key role in reaching and informing citizens during times of crisis and plays a crucial role in disseminating information that serves the communities (en.unesco.org, 2021; Sen, 2020: 165).

According to Veldfiremedia.com (2022), there are nearly 20 campus radio stations operating currently, with students volunteering their services forming the largest part of the staff complement at

campus radio stations. Station management at campus radios stations had to explore and implement measures to ensure that the station still delivers on its mandate of broadcasting during the hours that they were required to during the pandemic (Tlou, 2020). The management of campus radio stations had to arrange for their staff members and volunteers to work from home to curb the spread of the coronavirus, and equip them with the necessary tools to perform duties which were usually done in-studio, from their homes.

If campus radio stations had to cease broadcasting altogether, or close down during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown period, it would have a widespread effect on not only the campus community, but the broader local community. Campus radio brings students together and gives them a voice to share with their peers, it creates a deep connection with the local community by being part of the public sphere and serve as a rich training ground at tertiary level for future broadcasters (Wilkinson, 2020). Chaudhary, Ghani, Khan, Saeed and Tanveer (2021: 2320) mention that campus radio is an excellent way to promote knowledge, education and mass awareness of its environment and beyond, providing a creative outlet for students running the stations.

During the Covid-19 lockdown the sustainability and, by implication, the survival of community radio stations were threatened because a community radio station serves as a crucial port of information and communication to the remote, marginalised and the most vulnerable communities during natural disasters (Selvaraj & Kuppaswamy, 2020:102). Not only did the Covid-19 pandemic affect the economy for the country, but also the way that students learn and form part of their university societies. With campus radio stations being inaccessible during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, volunteer student staff members had to adhere to the same pandemic restrictions as the rest of the country. Jukes, Fowler-Watt and Rees (2022: 997) suggest that the Covid-19 pandemic has long-lasting effect on journalists and journalism, and journalists had to find alternative ways to deal with the economic, personal and professional effects of the pandemic because they worked on the frontline of the pandemic while having to report on it.

It begs the questions: how did campus radio stations fulfil their mandate of delivering news and content to their audiences, while their journalistic activities were being curbed by the pandemic? What was the journalistic cost and how did the pandemic influence the way that campus radio stations operated in terms of news gathering, packaging and producing news and information? How did the staff members at campus radio stations perform their journalistic duties during the pandemic?

Considering the factors such as social distancing and little to no access to studio facilities, the researcher embarked on a study to explore the changes exercised by the editorial teams, in other words the editors, newsroom managers, content gatherers and presenters, during a crisis at three campus radio stations in their efforts to produce news and information for its communities during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown in South Africa in 2020.

The three campus radio stations selected to form part of this study are MFM 92.6 at the University of Stellenbosch, Voice of Wits at Wits University, and Tuks FM at the University of Pretoria. The three stations were selected because it is located at three of the largest and most well-known universities in the country, and was easy to liaise with remotely, or to conduct the research as it is situated in major cities and provinces which are easily reachable.

1.2 Research problem

The Covid-19 pandemic was declared a natural disaster for the country (Republic of South Africa, 2020a), amid similar announcements around the world, in March 2020. This triggered emergency crisis management measures for many industries across the country, including the broadcast industry. The pandemic forced news organisations to adopt measures to ensure that it still produced quality content while keeping staff members safe and in a healthy and socially distanced environment (Flueckiger, 2020).

South Africa introduced strict measures to curb the spread of the virus. From midnight on 26 March 2020 (Republic of South Africa, 2020a), South Africans were urged to stay at home, work from home as far as possible, sanitise regularly and maintain social distance. It was called a lockdown, and five stages (alert levels) with different regulations were introduced, with level five being the most severe.

Only citizens performing essential services were allowed to travel to their places of work during the lockdown period. From midnight on 26 March 2020 until 30 April 2020 South Africa was on alert level 5, and alert level 4 was implemented from 1 to 31 May 2020 (Republic of South Africa, 2020b). Essentially this meant that certain sectors of economic industries could start operating again within the boundaries of the regulations as set out by the South African government from 1 June 2020. The dates are important to mention because South Africa moved to lower levels of lockdown as time passed. With each shift to a lower level of lockdown, more activities were allowed, people could

move around more and for example access their places of work and continue with their lives so to speak.

The hard lockdown, as level five was also known, took place between 26 March and 30 April 2020 during which movement was severely limited for the country. The dates between 26 March and 30 April 2020 is important for this study as it is the timeframe which this study will focus on, to explore how the editorial teams at the three campus radio stations performed their journalistic duties during this time. Had campus radio stations not been able to broadcast during the Covid-19 lockdown level five, it could potentially have left a gap in the role that campus radio stations play in the local public sphere, which it fulfils through sharing news and information and providing an opportunity to the surrounding communities to interact via its various platforms and programmes.

Broadcasting services such as radio stations were issued with operating regulations and restrictions in March 2020 when the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (Icasa), the South African body which allocates broadcasting licenses, released the guidelines named the Information and Communications Technology Covid-19 National Disaster Regulations prescribing minimum standards that broadcast licensees must adhere to (Republic of South Africa, 2020a).

Under these regulations, the Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies, Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams, declared that as an essential service, the performance period for both radio and television broadcasting shall run from 07h00 to 21h00 (Republic of South Africa, 2020a). Before Covid-19, community radio stations with a community radio broadcast license, like campus radio, were required to operate 24 hours, seven days per week (Icasa, 1999).

Campus radio stations are classified as community radio stations (Icasa, 1999). A community broadcasting licence allows a non-profit organisation to serve the broadcasting needs of a community for a maximum of four years, renewable on condition that the licensee has complied with the conditions set out by the licensing authority (Republic of South Africa, 2021). Opposite to this, commercial radio stations operate for profit and can be a full-spectrum radio station broadcasting news, current affairs, advertisements and music; a music station or a talk radio station (Krüger, 2007:16).

The research problem is thus to explore how campus radio stations managed to fulfil its role in the public sphere and be part of the digital public sphere during the Covid-19 lockdown level five, while

having to adhere to the restrictions imposed by the government. This research will examine the ways in which campus radio stations had to adapt to the new circumstances amid the pandemic and how its journalistic content sharing practices at campus radio stations have changed to accommodate the world-wide crisis. The study examines the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown level five on newsrooms and the work which needs to take place to keep the newsroom running as a point of information to the public (Pantti, 2019: 5). The impact of Covid-19 regulations on the way that staff members at the campus radio stations gathered, packaged and presented news content during the Covid-19 lockdown level five between 26 March and 30 April 2020 will be explored by conducting semi-structured interviews with members of the three campus radio stations.

1.3 Working definitions of key terms

For this study, four key terms are explained – journalist, radio journalist, news and crisis. These key terms are selected because it is frequently used throughout the study. In this study content creators, gathers and presenters are referred to as journalists or radio journalists.

The definitions of three of the key terms – journalist, radio journalist and news – are highlighted to show the similar roles that journalists have in different media – broadcasting, print and online - and that the primary focus of a journalist is to gather news and share information with the public. The distinction between a journalist and a radio journalist is important because a radio journalist do not have the added bonus of using visuals such as in a newspaper or on television to illustrate the news or add visual components to aid the impact of a story, but only has the ether and sound to broadcast news and information to its audience.

The definition news is important in this context to illustrate the value that news has for the public and the responsibility of a journalist to present the news to the public. News has to be fresh, interesting, contextualised and important for its audience to truly appreciate the significance of what is being shared by the journalist. Campus radio staff members are also members of the community which the radio station serve and therefore needs to report news that is relevant to the community.

The two definitions of the fourth term – crisis – as stated by Coombs (2010: 477) and Blaney and Hunt (2021: 1) show that the Covid-19 pandemic can be described as a crisis which disrupted normal societal activities because of social distancing, wearing of masks in public to curb the spread of the coronavirus. The conclusion can thus be drawn that the Covid-19 pandemic also disrupted the way

that broadcast newsrooms worked because its staff members had to adhere to the restrictions and regulations imposed by the government. Below are brief definitions of the four terms.

1.3.1 Journalist

Thenewsmanual.net (2022) describes a journalist as:

someone who finds and presents information as news to the audiences of newspapers, magazines, radio or television stations or the internet. Journalists traditionally work within a set of generally agreed societal principles or within professional codes.

Professional journalists are usually trained and receive payment for their work, while the Cambridge Online Dictionary describes a journalist as:

a person who writes news stories or articles for
a newspaper or magazine or broadcasts them on radio or television
(dictionary.cambridge.org, 2022).

1.3.2 Radio journalist

Wisegeek.com (2022) offers the following description of a radio journalist:

A radio journalist has similar duties to a print journalist in that his or her job is to collect, collate, and then report the news. This could be in a local, national, or worldwide capacity. A good radio journalist typically will use sounds such as interviews, press conferences, and sound effects to make the listener feel as though they are also on the scene.

1.3.3 News

News is described as:

Information which is new, unusually and interesting or significant to the recipient. It is usually about people or related in some way to their lives. News is produced in a structured way by journalists (Thenewsmanual.net, 2022).

1.3.4 Crisis

Blaney and Hunt (2021: 1) describe a crisis in the following way: “Crisis occurs when a person or organisation experiences an interruption in attempts to achieve goals of varying nature such as day-to-day operation of normal activities”. Coombs (2010: 477) describes a crisis as “the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectations of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organization’s performance and generate negative outcomes.”

1.4 Literature review

Covid-19 is a relatively new research field in communication studies and not much research findings have been published on its impact on radio journalism. However, more literature exists about communications and disaster management for the broader media – including print and broadcast media – in terms of management, information gathering and new ways of delivering news in times of crises such as terror attacks and earthquakes. These sources, in addition to research about the Covid-19 pandemic, are explored in the literature review in Chapter 2. A brief introduction follows here.

The Covid-19 pandemic has been, and still is, a devastating global pandemic affecting nearly every country on the planet, and has become an integral part of social reality today (Pantti, 2019: 1). Since March 2020 already struggling newsrooms have been placed in an unexpected and unprecedented situation when the Covid-19 pandemic struck: because of the unique challenges brought on by the pandemic, newsrooms had to fight even harder to serve the public (Rabe, 2022).

Several issues were highlighted which emerged in print media and television broadcast newsrooms in different countries: journalists had to maintain their professionalism while also personally experiencing the pandemic (Perreault & Perreault, 2021: 982; Konow-Lund, Hågvær & Olsson, 2019: 952; García-Avilés, 2021: 1); the enhanced use of technology during the pandemic (Perreault, 2018: 1; Santos & Mare, 2021: 1391); the importance of maintaining local news networks (Wentzel & Crittenden, 2021: 15); the speed at which newsrooms started focusing and dedicated their resources towards Covid-19 coverage (Blaney & Hunt, 2021: 1); focusing on other relevant issues instead of only covering Covid-19 related content (Finneman & Thomas, 2021: 1); and the use of tools which were previously not solely dedicated to assist in content gathering, creation and presenting (Ndlovu & Sibanda, 2021: 1). Based on these findings, it is clear that journalism has an important role in how the

public is informed on crises, impacting how it is perceived and digested by the public and governments, and the public's responses to the crisis (Pantti, 2019: 1).

The argument which emerges from all the literature reviewed is that there were several methods engaged by content creators, content gatherers and presenters in newsrooms when disaster struck and they were forced to innovate and change their ways of working. However, these studies mostly focus on print media and television broadcast newsrooms, while the current study focuses on campus radio stations and the unique challenges they faced during the Covid-19 lockdown level five. The highlighted literature raises several questions to be answered and can be used as background information to aim to answer the research question: how was the journalistic public sphere at campus radio stations affected by the crisis brought on by the Covid-19 lockdown level 5?

1.5 Theoretical framework

Campus radio stations operate within the public domain and therefore the theoretical departure point of this study is that campus radio stations are part of the digital public sphere. Public sphere theory originated in 1962 when German philosopher Jürgen Habermas first described the members of the public sphere in 18th century Europe as white, educated males from the upper classes as the average member of the public who formed and expressed public opinion through the media (Habermas, 1991: 27). His theory has since been developed, by applying an 18th century example to the 20th century to refer to the interaction of the public on different platforms of communication and how the public's viewpoint is affected and formed through the discussion of matters of common concern (Caldwell, 2017: 112).

Habermas' view of the media is one that sees it as being constructive in representing the public, and which has the power to make the public's voice heard, making it a pivotal part of the public sphere (Tufan, Kökat & Bal, 2021: 2). Habermas sees the media as a constructive element in speaking the public, and which has the power to make the public's voice heard (Tufan *et al.*, 2021: 2). Bello and Wilkinson (2017: 26) say that Habermas' view makes the media an important part of constituting a public sphere of informed citizens in a democracy.

Over time, Habermas has altered the theory of the public sphere to also be more inclusive of contemporary society, new technologies and democracy (Duvenhage, 2007: 342). Dahlgren and Sparks, cited in Rodny-Gumede (2017: 10), say that more recent conceptualisations of the public

sphere also consider new media platforms such as the internet and social media as being part of a public sphere more suitable for interaction within the current society and its methods of communication. The way that it transforms into contemporary society and the forms in which it delivers content shows that the public sphere adapts to the changes of the 21st century, such as the use of new, advanced technology (McNair, 2018: 149).

McNair (2018: 150) describes the public sphere as the place where knowledge is easily found in the form of news and content publicly being engaged with and utilised by news outlets and organisations, for example in today's digital media such as blogs and other forms of social media. McNair (2018: 149) notes that how it is consumed by members of the public for its own needs is proof that the public sphere is receptive and largely accommodating to change. In its accessibility, it creates richer information available to the public, being diverse and more widely available to more people around the world (McNair, 2018: 166).

Social media forms an integral part of the digital public sphere by disseminating information through social interaction via new technology such as mobile devices, tablets, computers and laptops (Keim & Noji, 2011: 47). According to Keim and Noji (2011: 47) social media's role in communicating about crises became more prominent during the 2010 Haiti earthquake, in the sense that it became the main news source immediately after the earthquake had passed - "social media became the new forum for collective intelligence, social convergence, and community activism" (Keim & Noji, 2011: 47). With journalism being part of the digital public sphere accessible to more people, the public can contribute more to the conversation through new channels such as online commentary, blogs and social media with wider content forms such as Twitter and Facebook (McNair, 2018:166).

The digital media brings with it heightened visibility of disasters because journalists can get the news out faster and as it happens, and puts the media in the middle of the global public sphere (Pantti, 2019: 6). Covid-19 and the pandemic provided a space for the journalism industry to become more flexible and embrace change in its new ecology (Perreault & Perreault, 2021: 976). Pantti (2019: 1) states that disasters and the people suffering from it have become more visible because of the use of technological advancements in the media such as global television news channels, online news, mobile technologies and social media, which have all taken over traditional media, i.e., printed media and television news broadcasts, as the main sources of information. By being forced to employ other ways of content creation, generation presentation, such as digital media platforms being used as the main source of content creation and presentation platforms, journalists had to innovate by thinking

outside the box to bring updated, factual and engaging content for their listeners during an extreme crisis situation – the Covid-19 pandemic (Perreault & Perreault, 2021: 983).

1.6 Research questions

The main aim of this study is to explore how journalism practice at the campus radio stations were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic regulations, which prohibited staff members from working from the studio and maintaining social distancing at all times. The findings by Perreault and Perreault (2021) provide important background information for the intended study of the three radio stations, reinforcing the argument that content gatherers and presenters had to use other ways to engage with their audiences.

The **general research question** is: How were the journalistic public sphere at campus radio stations affected by the crisis brought on by the Covid-19 lockdown level 5? Flowing from this, the following secondary research questions are addressed:

SRQ1: Based on the fact that social distancing had to be maintained, how did the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown level five regulations influence the way that presenters gathered and packaged news for the radio station?

SRQ2: Given the fact that campus radio staff members had to work from home and were not allowed to enter the studio during lockdown level five between 26 March and 31 May 2020, how did the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown level five regulations influence the way that programmes could be packaged and scheduled for the station?

SRQ3: Based on the fact that the Covid-19 pandemic was declared a natural disaster in South Africa and everyone were urged to work from home, what was the station's immediate contingency plan in terms of news creation, gathering and presenting to resume regular operations as soon as possible during the lockdown level five?

1.7 Research methodology and design

A qualitative research method, semi-structured interviews, will be used. Semi-structured qualitative interviews are based on a set of topics using open-ended questions, for which the respondent is asked

to provide his or her own answers (Babbie, 2010: 256). The interviews will inquire about the experience in newsgathering of journalists during the Covid-19 pandemic at three campus radio stations.

A more detailed outline of the research methodology and design will be presented in Chapter 4.

At least three participants per campus radio station will be approached to participate in the study - one each in campus radio station management, a presenter and a programmer. The possibility exists that one person might be responsible for multiple roles at the radio station, which will be taken into account. In this instance, the person will be allowed to respond in his or her different professional capacities at the radio station.

Participants will be given the option to respond via virtual meeting platforms such as Zoom, MS teams, Google Hangout or Skype, or telephonic or video call via WhatsApp messenger service. The interviews will be arranged at a time suitable for the researcher and the participants to have a private conversation in a relaxed atmosphere, and the telephonic interviews will be recorded on a dictaphone by the researcher for accuracy and transcription purposes.

The participants will be selected through a snowball sampling method. Snowball sampling is the method of using a certain group of respondents and asking them to refer you to acquaintances that could possibly be respondents for the same study (Du Plooy, 2009: 124). A snowball sample method is also useful for “exploratory purposes” (Babbie, 2010: 185), as this study aims to do.

1.8 Chapter layout

The chapter layout is as follows:

Chapter 1: This chapter describes the researcher’s motive for undertaking the study, outlines the research problem and focus, and provides a brief overview of the literature on the subject as well as the problem statement, brief theoretical overview, research questions and chapter outline.

Chapter 2: This chapter provides a literature review of previous studies conducted on the changes and challenges experienced by the broader media - including print and broadcast media - in terms of management, information gathering and new ways of delivering news in times of crises such as terror

attacks and earthquakes. More recent literature is also reviewed as studies about the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on the broader media landscape have become more available in recent months.

Chapter 3: This chapter discusses the public sphere, the theoretical departure point for this study.

Chapter 4: This chapter discusses the research design and methodology for this study. A qualitative research method - semi-structured interviews - will be used.

Chapter 5: This chapter will discuss the research findings for this study.

Chapter 6: This chapter will offer a conclusion drawn from this study. It will also discuss recommendations and possible topics for future studies.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

A literature review is important in a research study because it provides the opportunity to review what has been published about a subject, evaluate current debates around the subject and identify possible gaps in the literature regarding the subject (Babbie, 2010: 119, 506). A literature review is also a way of finding related material to your research problem, and can be found in professional and academic journals, books and unpublished works such as theses and dissertations (Du Plooy, 2009: 60). The literature review is used to determine what others had to say about the topic, finding existing or previously published literature about the topic, examining and critically investigating consistent and inconsistent findings and to look at flaws in the existing literature about the topic (Babbie, 2010, 146).

In this study, the performance of South African campus radio journalists working during the Covid-19 pandemic is explored. This chapter will examine literature related to crisis management in a newsroom and the factors taken into consideration when journalists have to perform under extreme circumstances, such as a global pandemic, an event which has been labelled “one of the largest societal crises of the 21st century” (Rauchfleisch, Vogler & Eisenegger, 2021: 129).

2.2 Information sources for the literature review

The literature review will attempt to engage in an evidence-based, in-depth analysis of the subject through a systematic survey of publications that are relevant to the research project (Du Plooy, 2009: 63). As stated in Chapter 1, Covid-19 is a relatively new research field in communication studies and not many research findings have been published on its impact on radio journalism because there is no precedent for the Covid-19 environment (Perreault & Perreault, 2021: 980). However, more literature exists about communications and crisis management for the broader media – including print and broadcast media – in terms of management, information gathering and new ways of delivering news in times of crises such as terror attacks and earthquakes.

A variety of keywords were used to search for bibliographic citations, full-text online academic journal articles, academic books and online articles on the websites of newspapers, magazines and journalism blogs. The search engines used are Google and Google Scholar, as well as the Stellenbosch University Library database for books and online academic journal research articles.

Articles from the databases of five academic research journals were used, namely from the *Journal of Radio and Audio Media*, *Journalism Practice*, *Digital Journalism*, *American Behavioral Scientist* and *Jovnost – The Public*. Online articles were sourced from *Themediaonline.co.za* and *Researchgate.net*. Several academic books were also consulted and used as reference works in the literature review.

The keywords used include, among others, Covid-19 and radio journalism, Covid-19 and radio, pandemic reporting, crisis reporting, journalism during a public health crisis, Covid-19 reporting, broadcast newsrooms and crisis reporting, radio journalism surviving Covid-19, radio journalism survival during Covid-19; and Covid-19 and journalism. For the online academic articles, articles published between 2020 and 2022 were searched for because the Covid-19 pandemic started at the end of 2019 and the first academic journal research articles relating to the pandemic emerged and were published during late 2020. Some seminal sources from before 2020 (Perreault, 2018; Bosch, 2018; Konow-Lund *et al.*, 2019) relating to campus radio and crisis reporting were also consulted to provide context and information on previous reporting relating to natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, fires and hurricanes.

The themes in the chapter were identified through the literature reviewed, which provided the sub-themes under which the literature will be discussed. The sub-themes emerged as common themes could be seen between different sets of information. The most common themes revolved around the challenges that journalists faced during the pandemic, work conditions in newsrooms during the pandemic, the use and adaptation of existing technology in newsrooms, the communities and their interaction with the media during the pandemic, the role of management in newsrooms during the pandemic; and changed news gathering practices during the pandemic because of regulations and restrictions.

2.3 Themes emerging from the literature review

2.3.1 Challenges for journalism amidst the Covid-19 pandemic

Journalists had to adapt to and face unprecedented challenges such as social distancing, not having access to their places of work, not being allowed to go out in public to cover news stories and do in-person interviews during the Covid-19 pandemic. During crises they often have to fulfil many roles and multitask in their workplaces to perform the services of news reporting and information gathering and sharing to their audiences (Mellado, 2021: 5).

Mellado (2021: 5) says that during the Covid-19 pandemic, journalism and the media had a huge task of addressing the many facets of the global health crisis and as a result, had to wear multiple hats: that of interventionist, loyal-facilitator, watchdog, civic, service, and infotainer.

Mellado and Lagos (2014: 2110) say that the interventionist takes sides, explains causes and or the effect of certain facts, explains the need for change and presents stories in the first person. The watchdog questions decision-makers and provides information on for example, judgements against people of groups of power (Mellado & Lagos, 2014: 2111). In the loyal-facilitator role a journalist supports formal policies and paints the government in a positive light, often highlighting its triumphs. In service, according to Mellado and Lagos (2014: 2111) the journalist provides information on the impact of everyday life such as consumer issues, while an infotainer journalist looks for sensation and focuses on emotions (Mellado & Lagos, 2014: 2111). The civic journalist provides the citizens' perspective on certain issues and focuses on specific communities (Mellado & Lagos, 2014: 2112). This study will explore which of the different roles identified above were adapted by campus radio journalists.

Campus radio stations serve communities in their local language, giving community members a useful and important tool to stay up to date and engage with current affairs (Bosch, 2018: 54; en.unesco.org, 2021), which is especially important during a crisis, such as the Covid-19 pandemic (en.unesco.org, 2021). Campus radio stations as agents of news delivery and information hubs providing a civic service to its communities and how they performed their journalistic roles during the pandemic will be explored in this study.

Given the fact that campus radio stations faced challenges to stay on air and broadcast during the lockdown level five, the conclusion can be drawn that journalists, content producers and broadcast newsroom managers had to find alternative ways of communicating with their audiences since the pandemic brought unusual circumstances to the fore to which they had to adapt. The intended research links to the possibility that journalists had re-examine their newsgathering practices because the research will explore the changes exercised by the editorial team, in other words the editors, newsroom managers, content gatherers and presenters, during a crisis at three campus radio stations in their efforts to produce news and information for its communities during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown in South Africa in 2020.

2.3.2 Work conditions for journalists during the pandemic

Perreault and Perreault (2021: 976) – in researching journalists’ patterns of newsgathering and distributing information in the USA during the Covid-19 pandemic – found that journalists work equally hard in alleviating the challenges of working through the pandemic as they do in avoiding reporting false information on the pandemic. Through discourse analysis and interviews Perreault and Perreault concluded that journalists were in a vulnerable position during the pandemic in that they not only suffered personally and professionally as a result of the pandemic, but also from conditions that were present from before the pandemic, like threatened job security and dwindling human resources in the newsroom as a result of job cuts and cost saving measures (Perreault & Perreault, 2021: 981).

The Perreault and Perreault study points to various factors, such as personal loss, economic loss and a challenging workplace environment influencing how content creators, content gatherers and presenters performed their tasks during a crisis, which bears the question: how did journalists manage to communicate professionally during a crisis, while also being part of the public that needs to live curing the crisis? The conditions present from before the crisis as mentioned by Perreault and Perreault (2021: 982) – threatened job security and dwindling human resources in the newsroom as a result of job cuts and cost saving measures – are part of valuable background information for the study about campus radio stations, and are relevant factors to consider which might have had an influence on how the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated pre-existing and current working conditions in the newsroom.

2.3.3 Enhanced use of existing technology in content generation during the pandemic

Perreault (2018: 1), in a study about journalists covering the 2010 Haiti earthquake, researched the processes by which information was collected and distributed in the aftermath of the earthquake, by examining the way journalists work. Through conducting interviews and using questionnaires, it was found that technology and its use in content gathering became very important in how they covered the news about the earthquake (Perreault, 2018: 1). This speaks directly to the intended study about campus radio stations and how the content gatherers and presenters packaged information during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown level five, raising the question: was there an increased and enhanced use of technology to bring the news to the radio station’s listeners?

Konow-Lund *et al.* (2019: 952) explored how occurrences such as terror attacks in Norway can contribute to innovation in the newsroom in terms of the editorial process, products, and even journalistic genres. The authors performed their research through case studies by doing qualitative interviews with the participants, drawing the conclusion that innovation follows once journalists are faced with a situation which takes them through three phases: shock, start-up and transformation to diffuse the situation. Konow-Lund *et al.* (2019: 952) speak to content gatherers' resilience and their attitude to get on with their professional duties amidst crisis – and using innovative ways to bring news to the public during times of adversity. Thus, can it be assumed that the content gatherers, content creators and presenters and the campus radio newsrooms went through similar phases and used innovative ways of content generation to bring the news to its listeners during the Covid-19 lockdown period?

2.3.4 Community and local news networks during a crisis

Wentzel and Crittenden (2021: 1) researched community-led journalism and the links between local media and information organisations in Philadelphia, USA. By using the community infrastructure theory as framework, they conducted focus groups combined with interviews to do a case study on how community projects and resources for collaboration help spread information within storytelling networks in the region (Wentzel & Crittenden, 2021: 1). The study concluded that even though local information networks are constantly adapting to the ever-evolving circumstances surrounding Covid-19, the role of local community-centred and collaborative resources are critical in relaying information to the community during a crisis (Wentzel & Crittenden, 2021: 15). Wentzel and Crittenden (2021) highlight the importance of local news networks and the value it adds to information sharing within the community – so how did campus radio stations manage to perform this pivotal role to serve certain geographical areas?

2.3.5 Changing information sharing practices during the Covid-19 pandemic

Blaney and Hunt (2021: 1) performed a content analysis of state broadcast associations in the USA and found that most of the associations quickly directed their website content to focus more on the Covid-19 pandemic during the early days of the worldwide response to the pandemic. They also found that although the association websites focused more on industry-related news and news content for the communities, the industry websites contained more Covid-19 related news than community websites (Blaney & Hunt, 2021: 1). This study offers an examination of the broadcast industry's

response to the Covid-19 crisis and the quick thinking to utilize alternative broadcasting mediums and information sharing practices – is this an element of what transpired at campus radio stations in their quest to deliver news during the Covid-19 lockdown level five?

Finneman and Thomas (2021: 1) explored how reporters, columnists, editors and newspaper associations in the USA communicated the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic to its audiences. Through a content analysis of newspaper articles and columns, the study found that journalists use discursive strategies to keep journalism alive by focusing on previous crises, the strain of the pandemic on how journalists do their jobs, the historical legacies of newspapers and the role performed by journalism in a democracy (Finneman & Thomas, 2021: 1). The study displays the value of keeping news content fresh by focusing on other, relevant topics during a crisis, to distract the audience from the harsh reality of the Covid-19 pandemic, but also by highlighting other important issues worth considering. The question raised is: did campus radio stations improvise in terms of content creation, gathering and presenting to keep their audiences engaged during the Covid-19 lockdown level five?

2.3.6 Adopting digital media technologies for news gathering during the pandemic

Santos and Mare (2021: 1391) focused on the effect of Covid-19 on journalist's work during the pandemic in newsrooms in Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. By conducting virtual interviews via technology supported means (for example such as Zoom, Skype, Google Hangouts and MS Teams), it was found that Covid-19 has had a severe impact on newsgathering, processing, distribution and funding, nearly creating a situation of exclusion of marginalised groups and communities.

In an effort to curb the threat of exclusion, the media organisations in Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe adopted the use of digital media technologies faster, launching new distribution channels and monetizing virtual events, among others (Santos & Mare, 2021: 1404). This study relates directly to what the proposed study of the three campus radio stations will aim to highlight – the need for innovation, different thinking and the propensity to engage other methods of news gathering and packaging at the campus radio stations amidst the social distancing rules and Covid-19 lockdown level five regulations.

Ndlovu and Sibanda (2021: 1), based on the concept of journalism culture, conducted interviews with 21 journalists from Zimbabwe to determine their lived experiences of covering the Covid-19 pandemic and how they used digital technologies in their work. The study found that Zimbabwean journalists, despite challenges relating to finances, protective gear and internet connectivity, largely used tools such as WhatsApp and Twitter to generate content, conduct virtual meetings and sourcing information, and that they are creatively using these digital tools in their everyday professional work (Ndlovu & Sibanda, 2021: 1).

The creativity of content gatherers highlighted by Ndlovu and Sibanda opens a useful discussion point for the intended study – tools which were previously not often used for news gathering – which became indispensable during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown and the challenges introduced by the social distancing regulations.

2.3.7 Management's role in encouraging cohesion in the newsroom during the pandemic

García-Avilés (2021: 1) focused on the managerial side of newsrooms during the Covid-19 pandemic and newsroom managers' responses to the disruption and displacement. García-Avilés explored management's roles in virtual newsrooms by conducting semi-structured interviews with 17 news managers in Spain. The study found that the situation and social distancing while doing their work, redefined relationships among colleagues and increased collaboration, introducing new ways of news gathering and communication (García-Avilés, 2021: 1).

In addition, García-Avilés (2021: 1) also found that management used the opportunity to implement new strategies to build trust and cooperation and redefine the dynamics within the professional groups. The findings are useful to consider for the intended study, by focusing on the personal relationships between staff members at the campus radio stations and how the unfamiliar regulations and new ways of working affected the overall work ethic in the newsrooms.

In an article about the annual Radio Days Africa conference held in 2020, Schwellnus (2020) mentioned a comment by Nadia Bulbulia, the executive director of the National Association of Broadcasters, in her opening statement saying that the Covid-19 pandemic brought a sense of urgency to adapt new ways of working:

We've all had to adapt to find new ways to make sense of everything, she said. She also mentioned that as broadcasters were regarded as essential services when South Africa first entered into lockdown in March, over 72 000 public service announcements giving updates about the virus have aired across radio stations. This showcases the ability of the industry to respond efficiently and adapt very quickly, even in times of great uncertainty. (Schwellnus, 2020).

Schwellnus (2020) confirms the basis of the intended study: that there were definitely changes that had to be made in broadcast newsrooms to manage the crisis brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.4 Gaps identified in existing literature

An important gap in the existing literature emerged from literature review: practical examples of the strategies applied by radio journalists to ensure that they compiled content for broadcasting during the Covid-19 pandemic, for example an outline of how, for instance, an in-person interview was conducted differently during the Covid-19 lockdown than before, looking at the use of for example, virtual meeting platforms or pre-recordings.

Although Mellado (2021: 5), Perreault and Perreault (2021: 976) and Tufan *et al.* (2021: 1) highlight challenges such as the safety and shifting roles in the news space, it does not provide practical examples of what radio journalists had to do to gather information to be able to broadcast during the pandemic. After considering and noting that aspects such as personal compromises, economic concerns and job security played a role in journalists' performance during the pandemic, it still does not provide answers to the questions relating to the changes journalists in broadcast newsrooms had to adopt to fulfil their mandates of bringing news to the public. The study looks at the practical side of content generation during the Covid-19 pandemic, which will address the gap identified by practical examples of the strategies applied by radio journalists to ensure that they compiled content for broadcasting during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Most of the studies – in seven of the nine studies examined – relied on interviews to base its research. The reviewed studies mostly focus on print media and television broadcast newsrooms, while the current study focuses on campus radio stations and the unique challenges journalists, presenters and content generators faced during the Covid-19 lockdown level five.

When examining all the literature reviewed, it is evident that media, in the case of the broader print and broadcast media, underwent operational changes during the pandemic. Some of the literature alluded to factors contributing to difficult work environments, such as economic factors, personal issues and newsroom management challenges, but a logical question arising after reviewing the literature, is what about campus radio stations? How did campus radio newsrooms adjust to the changes, and what did journalists, content gatherers and presenters at campus radio stations do practically to avert the challenges? This study looks into the ways that campus radio newsrooms adjusted amidst the pandemic and provide answers to the questions.

2.5 Summary

The argument which emerges from all the literature reviewed is that there were several strategies, such as redirected content on websites to reflect Covid-19 focused news, enhanced use of technology, innovation in the newsroom, and new strategies by management engaged by content creators, content gatherers and presenters in newsrooms when disaster struck and they were forced to innovate and change their ways of working.

The literature review indicated several suitable methodologies for example discourse analysis, interviews, questionnaires, content analysis and focus groups, reiterating that the proposal to perform the intended by means of interviews is a good course of action which could provide the researcher with rich information to draw conclusions from and base findings on.

In Chapter 3 the public sphere theory, which provided the theoretical departure point for this study, will be discussed and expanded.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the theoretical framework of this study will be outlined. First the terms “theory” and “theoretical framework” will be briefly addressed.

A theory is a statement of a problem within a certain framework, presented logically to prove a point (Stam, 2010: 1499). It consists of elements or beliefs, and through those beliefs a theory is applied and tested in scientific or life sciences research (Race, 2010: 301). A theory provides an opportunity to question our beliefs and how we make sense of the world (Race, 2010: 301).

A theoretical framework is an important component of any research study and has mandatory aspects: a principle, a building block, a concept and the support structure of the theory (Adom, Hussein & Agyem, 2018: 438). The principle will be the relevant theory, the building block the knowledge base of the occurrence to be researched, the application of the theory will be the concept and its tenets, and the support structure will be the theoretical constructs applied to the study (Adom *et al.*, 2018: 438). Therefore, the theoretical framework is the structure that supports a theory of a research study and describes why the research problem under study exists. The theoretical framework provides a path and should speak to every aspect of the research study, from the introduction of the problem, the literature review, the methodology, the discussion, findings and conclusion of the research study (Adom *et al.*, 2018: 438).

3.2 Public sphere theory

Public sphere theory forms the basis of the theoretical framework in this study. Public sphere theory originated when German philosopher Jürgen Habermas first shared his theory of the public sphere in a thesis and later book *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* in German in 1962, and only translated into English in 1989 under the title *Structural transformation of the public sphere* (Wessler, 2020: 6).

Habermas’ works originated partly while he was part of the Frankfurt School, a school of social theory and critical philosophy associated with the Institute for Social Research at Goethe University Frankfurt (Scott, 2008: 29; Kellner, 2008: 49). The Institute was associated with a group of German-American

theorists who developed analyses of Western capitalist societies inspired by Marxists theory (Scott, 2008: 29; Kellner, 2008: 49). Public sphere theory is a socially and culturally embedded key concept in contemporary social science (Eder, 2013: 27), and Habermas' earlier work drew heavily on the Frankfurt tradition of critical theory, which is described by Thompson (2017: 1) as a way of understanding social reality in terms of its structures and dynamics within modern society, a form of critique of social life. Thus, it can be derived that Habermas's public sphere theory is a critical social theory, described by Leonardo (2004: 11) as "a multidisciplinary knowledge base with the implicit goal of advancing the emancipatory function of knowledge. It approaches this goal by promoting the role of criticism in the search for quality education."

Public sphere theory describes the members of the public sphere in 18th century Europe as members of the public coming together to discuss matters of the day in coffeehouses (Habermas, 1991: 27), developing when people started moving away from being passive participants in their fates and took an active interest in matters of mutual concern in society (Habermas, 1991: 10). The basic premise of public sphere theory is that it requires all members of society to have access to a discussion forum where a large variety of social experiences can be expressed and exchanged; that the sharing of ideas and opinions takes place through rational discussion and that the media should provide access to all viewpoints and not only the popular viewpoints, and a regular check on government policies to see if it still serves the collective positively (Verstraeten, 2000: 73).

Habermas took an 18th century example and applied it to society and the media of the 20th century - thus the theory which was based on the coffee house culture of more than 200 years ago, refers in in contemporary society to the interaction by users on different platforms of communication – be it in person, online, via mass media and in the printed media - and how public opinion is influenced and shaped by the discussion of matters of common concern (Caldwell, 2017: 112).

3.3 The mediated public sphere

Habermas' view of the media is one that sees it as being constructive in representing the public, and which has the power to make the public's voice heard, making the media a pivotal part of deliberations which can be described as a public sphere (Tufan *et al.*, 2021: 2). Bello and Wilkinson (2017: 26) say that Habermas' view makes the media an important part of constituting a public sphere of informed citizens in a democracy.

Hartley (1992: 1) makes the statement that the media are part of the conception of the public sphere in that the communication channels such as broadcast media, print media, social media and digital media, are the places where the public meets and communicates, in other words, creating the mediated public sphere. The mediated public sphere is enabled by the mass media creating the opportunity for citizens to meet and debate issues of concerns (Hartley, 1992: 1). The conception of the public sphere has changed since Habermas first identified it in a 18th century setting and it is not seen as a space where citizens can come together physically, but are enabled by new technologies and digital spaces for figurative interaction.

However, it is precisely the massification of the media and the mediation of the media, in other words the mass media being dominated by mediums such as talk shows, online commenting and digital engaging in the virtual space created by the internet, which adds to the decline of the public sphere in contemporary society (Eder, 2013: 28) – people do not interact face-to-face as such to participate in the public sphere, but rather utilise modern platforms to air their views. However, Hartley (1992: 2) points out that to establish a “more accurate view of the real public, you only come across more media, and more institutions which produce and peddle their own visualization of the public for their own purposes”.

Habermas referred to the commercialisation and commodification of the media, as the refeudalisation of the media, and said that through the rise of mediums such as radio, television, film and magazines, the distinction between the public and private spheres became very blurred because the public media permeated the private lives of the members of society (Habermas, 1991: 158; Verstraeten, 2000: 73). The result is that the relationship between private and public spheres have been destroyed (Habermas, 1991: 158). Eder (2013: 28) states that the media distorts reality biased towards political news, while Garman (2011: 4) adds to the argument that Habermas’ ideal of the public sphere is not as simplistic as originally stated, but has become very complex under today’s strain of being “publicity-ridden, highly commercialised and individualised by the media for its own gain” (Garman, 2011: 4). Butsch (2007: 7) offers a viewpoint with democracy at its core, and says that the media has three roles to play in a democracy: that of watchdog over the state, as a facilitator of information and debate to the people, and to act as a voice of the people, in other words, it acts as a collaborator to the citizens in a democracy. Eder (2013: 28) agrees and states that the public discussion about the decline of the public sphere, is exactly the critique that keeps the public sphere evolving and changing to adapt to societal evolution.

Even though the refeudalisation of the media was cause for concern for Habermas and the ideal view of the public sphere, Habermas has altered the theory of the public sphere over time to also be more inclusive of contemporary society, new technologies and democracy (Duvenhage, 2007: 342).

Dahlgren (1993: 9) says that more recent conceptualisations of the public sphere also consider new media platforms as being part of a public sphere more suitable for interaction within the modern society and its methods of communication. The way that it transforms into contemporary society and the forms in which it delivers content shows that public sphere theory adapts to the changes of the 21st century, such as the use of new, advanced technology (McNair, 2018: 149).

McNair (2018: 149) notes that the view of the public sphere and how members of the public form part by fulfilling their own needs is proof that the theory is accommodating to change. In this new conception of its accessibility, the idea of the public sphere includes a description of how richer information becomes available to the public via the media, which is diverse and more widely available to more people around the world (McNair, 2018: 166). Dahlgren (2015: 18) notes that the media has endured many evolutionary shifts over time and that these changes bring into focus how networked and global the public sphere has become, paving the way for emerging digital technologies and interconnectivity through the internet and social networking to find its way into the public sphere.

3.4 The digital public sphere

Since the conception of a digital public sphere, scholars have hotly debated, discussed, theorised and studied how to apply the characteristics of the original public sphere described by Habermas to the envisioned digital public sphere (Schäfer, 2015: 322). Even though the openness and visibility of digital media has been questioned, researchers, according to Schäfer (2015: 322) agree that the common characteristics of the digital public sphere are that it is a communicative space which is supported by the online and social media, where anyone with internet access can democratically participate and contribute, by allowing diverse voices to be heard across different communication styles (Schäfer, 2015: 322).

To view digital media, which includes social media platforms and online fora, as part of the digital public sphere brings with it heightened visibility of, for example, crises because journalists can get the news out faster and as it happens, and puts the media in the middle of the global public sphere (Pantti, 2019: 6). Assuming that campus radio stations can be viewed as part of the digital public sphere being constituted by participating members of the public who had to all adhere to the South

African government's call to limit the spread of Covid-19, stay at home, maintain a social distance and wear masks at all times in public, Covid-19 and the pandemic influenced the media to become more flexible and embracing change in its ecology, creating new opportunities to engage with public – online and digitally (Perreault & Perreault, 2021: 976). The embracing of new media methods creates the opportunity for the media to share content in multimedia format, with different versions of stories shared across several platforms (Bosch, 2014: 31). The researcher concludes that the Covid-19 pandemic did not create a new public sphere, but merely provided an opportunity for the media to use existing spaces to engage with the public, and for members of the public to engage with each other.

Pantti (2019: 1) states that crises and the people suffering from it have become more visible because of the use of technological advancements in the media such as global television news channels, online news, mobile technologies and social media, which have all taken over traditional media, i.e. printed media and television news broadcasts, as the main sources of information. By being forced to employ other ways of content creation, generation presentation, such as digital media platforms being used as the main source of content creation and presentation platforms, journalists had to innovate by thinking outside the box to bring updated, factual and engaging content for their listeners during an extreme crisis situation – the Covid-19 pandemic (Perreault & Perreault, 2021: 983). The researcher concludes that in terms of applying public sphere theory to this study, the engagement between the media and the public during the pandemic became more digitally focused because the Covid-19 pandemic required social distancing, and for the first few weeks of lockdown, most people were indoors most of the time.

Social media is a digital platform made up of web-based or application-based sites, popular for the immediate communication podium that it offers to which millions of people subscribe digitally worldwide (Kruse, Norris & Flinchum, 2018: 62). Butsch (2007: 1) states that there has been a concern throughout the 20th century that mass media has not been enabling ideal conception of the public sphere and subversive of democracy in civic society by limiting the exchange of ideas among citizens and restrict debate, but Kruse *et al.* (2018: 62) counter-offer the argument that social media heralded the return of Habermas' public sphere by attracting large numbers of people to interact digitally, also during disasters.

Social media forms an integral part of some conceptions of the public sphere by disseminating information through social interaction via new technology such as mobile devices, tablets, computers and laptops (Keim & Noji, 2011: 47). According to Keim and Noji (2011: 47) social media's role in

communicating about crises became more prominent during the 2010 Haiti earthquake, in the sense that it became the main news source immediately after the earthquake had passed - “social media became the new forum for collective intelligence, social convergence, and community activism” (Keim & Noji, 2011: 47).

During crises, conceptions about how an ideal public sphere operates undergoes a transformation as communication takes on a different direction and advancement in comparison to non-crisis times (Rauchfleisch *et al.*, 2021: 129). With journalism being part of the digital public sphere accessible to more people, the public contributes more to the conversation through new channels such as online commentary, blogs and social media with wider content forms such as Twitter and Facebook (McNair, 2018: 166). Benrazek (2021: 153) made similar findings in a research study about social media use during unrest in Algeria, and said that social media platforms were used as an alternative to traditional media by providing people with an alternative way of communicating and expressing themselves during exceptional circumstances such as the unrest, promoting democracy and freedom.

3.5 Covid-19 and the public sphere

Rauchfleisch *et al.* (2021: 129) calls the Covid-19 pandemic “one of the largest societal crises of the 21st century”, affecting people across the globe in the same way very fast and at the same time. The pandemic has brought disruption to the normal modes of communication, such as conducting in-person interviews and broadcasting live from studios, and therefore public sphere theory had to adapt to account for unusual circumstances (Trenz, Heft, Vaughan & Pfetsch, 2021: 111).

The pandemic caused a situation of trial-and-error in how members of the media coped, how they interacted with the public and their modes of transposition of information (Trenz *et al.*, 2021: 111). According to Rauchfleisch *et al.* (2021: 129) during crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic the public sphere changes tack and starts performing a crisis communication function, with vastly different modes of and dynamics in communication displayed than in “normal” times, or example more interaction via social media, online and digital media. The researcher draws the conclusion that the Covid-19 pandemic enhanced and accelerated the interaction of the public with the media in different ways and on various platforms.

3.6 Goals and theoretical points of departure

The goal is to examine whether campus radio stations operated in and maintained a public sphere during Covid lockdown level five by creating spaces for its listeners to engage, discuss and participate in a way which is advantageous to democracy. The theoretical departure point, based on public sphere theory, is that campus radio stations, as a communication medium and part of the media, are part of the mediated, digital public sphere. The overarching question to be answered is:

- 1) How were the journalistic public sphere at campus radio stations affected by the crisis brought on by the Covid-19 lockdown level 5?

3.7 Summary

The concept of the public sphere, since its first conceptualisation by Habermas, has undergone many changes, including by Habermas himself as he applied it to different historical periods. Where it was first applied to the intellectual interactions of white males about matters of the day in European coffee houses in the 18th century, Habermas then transposed it to the 20th century and the rise of the so-called mass media and described different transformations, including the commercialisation of the media and public sphere, because before the mass media existed, the only way that people could come together and discuss matters of mutual concern, was to gather in physical public spaces and share opinions about intellectual, literary and political issues, creating the space called a public sphere.

Other scholars have taken up the challenge to develop public sphere theory to the challenges and changes of the 21st century to include forms of media such as social and digital media. The concept has morphed and changed and therefore include new methods of communication and new forms of media engagement, creating the concept of a digital public sphere. Thus, the concept is and was never a tangible, touchable item, but a conceptual description of a collective situation which has been adapted through the years as people's means and modes of communication evolved and advanced technologically.

Broadcast media can be theorised as part of the digital public sphere. Different formats of media co-exists and are being used conjunctively to create content for radio stations, whether it be through streaming, podcasts and online articles, to name a few. Campus radio stations, in an effort to deliver

on its mandate of staying on air during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown level five, has faced challenges during this time. The challenges were numerous: financial challenges brought about by the economy slowing down during the pandemic, to human capacity challenges brought about by the health threat and social distancing mandate issued by the South African government, to the practical side of operations, for example how to conduct fresh interviews, gathering new content and packaging it while having to socially distance and having no access to studio facilities during the lockdown.

The mutual characteristics of a participatory public sphere as Habermas originally described it, the mediated public sphere and the digital public sphere, is that all three has at its core the advancement of democratic participation in discussing ideas and opinions of mutual interest in society. Habermas' public sphere using the 18th century example to describe how the 20th century media has changed the appearance of the public sphere under the heavy influence of commercialisation and commodification, has adapted and morphed into the mass media view of how people exercise democracy, with political influences also playing a role in how the public sphere is advanced in the media.

The digital media, in turn, has created more spaces for people to interact online and on digital platforms, giving rise to a digitised public sphere, although this time the interaction happens behind computer and cell phone screens instead of face-to-face. However, it needs to be pointed out that simply because a media platform provides people with the opportunity to engage and talk about societal matters, that does not mean that it is actually encouraging an engaging public sphere. To successfully maintain a public sphere, a media platform needs to encourage democratic debate and engagement to reach a consensus which can give rise to sustainable solutions for the benefit of society.

Thus, this study seeks to establish whether campus radio stations encouraged a democratically engaging public sphere during the Covid-19 level five lockdown by speaking to journalists, members of management and programme producers at radio stations during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown level five.

Chapter 4 will discuss the research design and methodology for this study. A qualitative research method - semi-structured interviews will be used.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline and discuss the research methodology and design which the researcher will follow to explore the changes experienced by the editorial teams, in other words the editors, newsroom managers, content gatherers and presenters, at three campus radio stations in their efforts to produce news and information for its communities during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown in South Africa in 2020.

After the choice for a qualitative research approach, the qualitative research method of semi-structured interviews will be explored.

First, the terms qualitative and quantitative research will be discussed.

4.2 Qualitative research vs quantitative research

Qualitative research methods are used to collect empirical evidence non-numerically, and through conducting interviews and performing observations (Staller, 2010). No counting of data is involved, it examines the subjects of a research study more closely and is used to explore deeper meanings and messages in behaviour (Wigston, 2009: 4). By making unique observations, qualitative research methods create an opportunity for the researcher to document the unique experience of the same reality for each participant (Hartell & Bosman, 2016: 38; Du Plooy, 2009: 34). In a qualitative research approach the researcher also acknowledges that there is a strong possibility of unpredicted results and is more cognisant of environmental and human influences (Du Plooy, 2009: 38).

The qualitative research method is chosen for this study because it will address the “how” question – in the case of this study, how were the journalistic public sphere at campus radio stations affected by the crisis brought on by the Covid-19 lockdown level 5? By asking questions, the qualitative method will form spoken descriptions of the experiences of the participants in the study (Du Plooy, 2009: 33), which is the data that the researcher will use to formulate an answer to the research questions. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2013: 139) all qualitative research methods have two things in common: it focuses on real-world occurrences, and studies and captures the complexities of those real-world occurrences.

A quantitative research method is used when a scientific method is applied and involves counting of data or information sets (Wigston, 2009: 4). When using a quantitative method, the research is conducted in a predetermined manner which cannot be swayed from, the effectiveness of communication is predicted and the result is used to confirm the prediction (Du Plooy, 2009: 38). Quantitative research methods are mostly used to answer the “what” and “why” questions in experimental studies (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013: 140). Wimmer and Dominick (2014: 50) says that one of the differences between qualitative and quantitative research is the method of asking questions: qualitative research uses adaptable questioning while quantitative research uses fixed questioning.

The researcher has drawn the conclusion that a qualitative research method is best suited for the study as it relies heavily on human behaviour and interaction via semi-structured interviews.

4.3 Non-probability sampling: Purposive sampling and snowball sampling methods

4.3.1 Purposive sampling

Non-probability sampling is when a researcher uses a subset of the population to represent the population or to share important information about the processes outside of the usual cases, individuals or terrains, thus, through non-probability sampling, the researcher cannot guarantee that that each element of the population is represented, with some members of the population not being sampled or all (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013: 214; Leedy, Ormrod & Johnson 2019: 177). In the case of this study, the population refers to the employees of the radio stations, of which three are selected to participate in the study - one each in campus radio station management, a presenter and a programmer. The reason for selecting individuals in these three positions is that the research problem focuses on how radio stations fulfilled its mandate of bringing news and information to its audiences during the Covid-19 lockdown level five, and the researcher believes that a member of management, a presenter and a programmer will provide a good overview of events at the radio stations during that period because they are involved in decision making at the stations, and content gathering, presenting and production of news at the stations.

Purposive sampling and snowball sampling are both examples of non-probability sampling. A purposive sampling method is used when participants are selected for a specific purpose and reason (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013: 215). For this study, the participants are selected because they were working

at the radio stations during the Covid-19 pandemic and can provide insight into the challenges they faced during that time. It is not a requisite for this study that the participant is still employed at the station to provide insight into the post-Covid-19 pandemic newsroom situation, the most important information needed for this study is to gather information about the situation during the pandemic. Therefore, current and former staff members were approached through snowball sampling.

4.3.2 Snowball sampling

According to Leedy *et al.* (2019: 242) in the case where the researcher faces constraints beyond their control and have difficulty in gaining access to participants, a snowball sampling method is advised. The method of snowball sampling involves asking one person to refer the researcher to another person or recruit another individual, for example a co-worker or friend, who might be able to assist and provide valuable information for the study (Leedy *et al.*, 2019: 242). In the case of this study, snowball sampling was applied by making contact with the station managers and asking for recommendations of people to approach to be possible participants. All the participants were acquired in this manner. The researcher made contact with one person at the station and asked for contact details of former or current colleagues, who in turn was also asked the same. Through this method the research was able to secure the participation of nine individuals, five who are former employees at the stations, and four who are currently working at the stations. All of the participants worked at the radio stations during the Covid-19 lockdown level five period of between 26 March and 30 April 2020, and were thus suitable to participate in the study.

4.4 Limitations of this study

Several campus radio stations across the country were approached to take part in this study. The initial focus was to focus on four campus radio stations – MFM 92.6, Vow FM, Tuks FM and UCT Radio. However, the researcher faced some challenges in terms of obtaining the necessary approvals and permissions from gatekeepers at the various radio stations, as the workforce at the radio stations are mostly student volunteers.

Radio DUT at the Durban University of Technology, the University of the Western Cape's Communications department, NWU FM at the University of the North West, Madibaz Radio at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Gqeberha, SMU Radio at the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, Unisa Radio at Unisa, Rhodes Music Radio at Rhodes University, and UJ FM at

the University of Johannesburg were all contacted and requested via email and telephonically to be part of the study, to no avail. In some cases, several emails and telephonic messages to members of management went unanswered, or promises to the researcher of willingness to participate, were later retracted.

For example, the station manager at UCT Radio initially confirmed the station's participation, but later requested that the researcher first apply for ethical clearance through the University of Cape Town's official channels because the interviews would require the participation of a full-time staff member and student volunteers, which had ethical implications for the University. At the time of data gathering and completing this study, no feedback on the outcome of the application had been formally provided by UCT to the researcher and the station was therefore excluded.

After initially indicating that they were prepared to be part of the study, the current management of Tuks FM withdrew, but former employees at the station assured the researcher verbally and via email that they were prepared to participate and needed no permission from the current management for participation. Subsequently three former staff members were approached to participate in the study and agreed to be interviewed.

At MFM 92.6 the station manager was contacted a period of several months and requested to participate. Requests went unanswered even though the individual participated in a smaller related study previously. However, it was decided to include two current staff members of MFM 92.6 and one former member of management because the researcher already received ethical clearance from Stellenbosch University, the institution managing MFM 92.6, to conduct the study, and was cleared to approach the possible participants.

The current management of Vow FM gave its consent to speak to staff members past or present via email. A more extensive outline of the ethical approval process will be given in the section titled "Ethical considerations".

Initial plans were made to include a content analysis of programme lists of the radio stations to confirm whether there has been a change in how the articles were packaged and presented to the public during the Covid-19 lockdown level five between 26 March and 30 April 2020 in comparison with the same time period the year before, i.e. 26 March and 30 April 2019. However, after speaking to several of the participants, it emerged that campus radio stations do not keep programme lists, or

scripts as it is known in the radio industry, for longer than six months. The fieldwork for this study was done in 2022, and with the focus dates being more than two years prior (26 March - 30 April 2020 and 26 March - 30 April 2019), it was not possible to gain access to the radio stations' lists as intended.

4.5 Accessible participants

It is important to know the difference between the target participants and the accessible participants, because a small sample size might limit the findings (Du Plooy, 2009: 109); and according to Leedy and Ormrod (2013: 215) it is always better to have a bigger sample size, although in qualitative research the richness of the data rather than the number of participants is often the deciding factor. The accessible participants in the case of this study consists of a member of management at the three radio stations in the form of the station manager; and a presenter and a programmer, in other words, three people per radio station, which is nine participants in total. The possibility exists that one person might be responsible for multiple roles at a radio station, which will be taken into account. In this instance, the person will be allowed to respond in his or her different professional capacities at the radio station. In a workplace setting such as the radio stations, it is also advisable to sample participants from various levels of the hierarchy to get different viewpoints (Leedy *et al.*, 2019: 242), which the researcher believes is achieved through enlisting the participation of the three different people per radio station.

The three campus radio stations selected are MFM 92.6 at the University of Stellenbosch, Voice of Wits at Wits University, and Tuks FM at the University of Pretoria. The three stations were selected because they were willing to participate, are located at three of the largest and most well-known universities in the country, and was easy to liaise with remotely via email, telephone, messenger service or social media.

4.6 Aim and research questions

The main aim of this study is to explore how journalism practice at the campus radio stations were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic regulations, which prohibited staff members from working from the studio and instructed them to maintain social distancing at all times.

The general research question of this study is: How were the journalistic public sphere at campus radio stations affected by the crisis brought on by the Covid-19 lockdown level 5?

In order to answer the general research question, the following specific questions will be used to gain further insight:

SRQ1: Based on the fact that social distancing had to be maintained, how did the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown level five regulations influence the way that presenters gathered and packaged news for the radio station?

SRQ2: Given the fact that campus radio staff members had to work from home and were not allowed to enter the studio during lockdown level five between 26 March and 30 April 2020, how did the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown level five regulations influence the way that programmes could be packaged and scheduled for the station?

SRQ3: Based on the fact that the Covid-19 pandemic was declared a natural disaster in South Africa and everyone were urged to work from home, what was the station's immediate contingency plan in terms of news creation, gathering and presenting to resume regular operations as soon as possible during the lockdown level five?

4.7 Research design

A qualitative research method, semi-structured interviews, will be used. The interviews will inquire about the experience in newsgathering of journalists during the Covid-19 pandemic at three campus radio stations.

Qualitative interviews are based on a set of topics using open-ended questions, for which the respondent is asked to provide his or her own answers (Babbie, 2010: 256). Qualitative interviews also take the research beyond the limitations of quantitative research by means of focusing on social and historical backgrounds (Engelbrecht, 2016: 110).

4.8 Data gathering

In qualitative data gathering the researcher decides where, when and how the data will be gathered (Engelbrecht, 2016: 110). Qualitative data can be obtained in various ways, for example during interviews, through observation or the examination of documents (Engelbrecht, 2016: 112).

4.8.1 Semi-structured interviews

During semi-structured interviews it is assumed that the participants have a good understanding of the research subject and can thus respond easily and spontaneously (Engelbrecht, 2016: 113). The researcher can also, during semi-structured interviews, be flexible with the questions in case more clarity is needed in terms of responses (Engelbrecht, 2016: 113; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013: 190). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2013: 190) interviews have the benefit that the researcher can establish a unique rapport with each participant and yield a very high response rate.

At least three participants per campus radio station were approached to participate in the study - one each in campus radio station management, a presenter and a programmer. If a participant fulfilled multiple roles at the radio station, the person was allowed to respond in his or her different professional capacities at the radio station.

During the Covid-19 pandemic the researcher has become adept in hosting and attending virtual meeting platforms for work purposes, and therefore participants were given the option to respond via virtual meeting platforms such as Zoom, MS teams, Google Hangout or Skype, or telephonic or video call via Whatsapp messenger service. Meeting virtually involves no cost other than a stable internet connection.

The interviews were conducted on different days and times during September 2022 in order to find a time suitable for the researcher and the participants to have a private conversation in a relaxed atmosphere. Interviews were recorded on a dictaphone and the researcher's cell phone's voice recorder for accuracy and transcription purposes. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher and a copy of the recordings stored on the researcher's personal Microsoft OneDrive backup cloud, to which only the researcher has access. Tables 1, 2 and 3 below lists the names and/or job titles and their job duration or the year since they have been at VoW FM, MFM 92.6 and Tuks FM respectively.

Table 1: Details of the participants of VoW FM that formed part of the study

Participant	Position
Shoeshoe Qhu	Former station manager (2019-2022)
Participant 2	Presenter (since 2013)
Thato Mathibi	Programme producer (since 2019)

Table 2: Details of the participants of MFM 92.6 that formed part of the study

Participant	Position
Participant 1	Former member of management (2013-2021)
Jan-Willem Lotz	Programme scheduler (since 2018)
Wilné van Rooyen	Presenter (since 2018)

Table 3: Details of the participants of Tuks FM that formed part of the study

Participant	Position
Leanne Kunz	Former station manager (2018-2021)
Mike Bower	Former programme manager (2018-2022)
Qiniso Phungula	Former presenter (2018-2020)

Informal preliminary discussions took place via telephone calls, WhatsApp messages and email correspondence before the interviews were formally scheduled for the researcher to get a sense of the suitability of the participants for the study, to help the researcher to gain insight into their work environment during the Covid-19 pandemic level lockdown five between 26 March and 30 April 2020; and for the researcher to establish a relationship with the possible participants before formally scheduling the interviews. This way the researcher and the participant were at ease with each other by the time the semi-structured interview took place, which provided the researcher with an opportunity to confidently ask follow-up questions for clarity and elaboration during the interview. The informal preliminary discussions also helped the researcher in performing the snowball sampling method, by asking a particular possible participant to put the researcher in touch with other possible suitable participants to approach to take part in the study. By doing this, the researcher could approach possible participants with an entry point through the referral and an established connection between the researcher, the person who referred the researcher, and the person being approached.

Semi-structured interviews were done with one member of management at each of the three campus radio stations to talk about the station's crisis management plans pre-Covid-19 lockdown; the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic had on the participant's management of the station; the challenges the participant had to deal with in performing work duties at the station; the contingency plans amid the pandemic; the impact that the lockdown regulations had on the way that the station operated during the pandemic; and the lessons that the member of management has learned for future crisis management at the station.

The semi-structured interviews with one journalist from each of the three campus radio stations were aimed at establishing how the pandemic impacted the journalist's way of gathering news; the challenges that the participant faced during the Covid-19 pandemic in performing work duties as a journalist at the station; additional measures that the journalist had to implement to successfully deliver news for the radio station during the Covid-19 lockdown level five period between 26 March and 30 April 2020; and the participant's opinion on what the station management could have done better in terms of crisis management during the lockdown level five period.

A programme manager, also referred to as a programme scheduler, from each of the three radio stations participated in the semi-structured interviews. The aim of the interview was to talk about the daily scheduling for the radio station, the challenges the programme manager had to deal with in performing work duties at the station during the Covid-19 lockdown level five; the impact that the

pandemic had on programme scheduling for the station; additional programmes implemented at the station during the pandemic; and the participant's opinion on what the station management could have done better in terms of crisis management during the lockdown level five period.

4.9 Data analysis

When performing a data analysis, the researcher takes the available information and arranges it into themes, patterns, trends and relationships (Mouton, 2001: 108). In qualitative research, a data analysis is performed to closely examine the various elements which makes the information to see if there are any patterns or trends that can be identified, connected and isolated, and used to form themes in the specific data (Mouton, 2001: 108).

However, Leedy and Ormrod (2013: 217) warn about bias creeping into the data analysis process. Bias is “any influence, condition, set of conditions that singly or in combinations distort the data” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013: 217). Bias can enter the data analysis process very subtly, for example during the interview process if the researcher's manner of interaction or personality affects the participants' responses, which could affect the integrity of the facts (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013: 217). If the researcher is biased to certain information in the research interpretation phase, it will lead to the researcher only using information that suits him or her, leading to threatening the integrity of the study (Mouton, 2001: 110).

In qualitative research textual analysis is used by means of transcriptions or notes being made during the data gathering process (Engelbrecht, 2016: 117). There are different types of textual analysis, of which documentary analysis, content analysis, narrative analysis, thematic analysis and discourse analysis are a few examples (Engelbrecht, 2016: 117). A thematic analysis is used in the study to answer the questions and also identify different themes which emerged during the interviews.

In the case of non-electronic data, it should always be recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure a meaningful analysis, even if it is time-consuming (Engelbrecht, 2016: 117). The data should be examined carefully and from different angles and will move through different phases of analysis to ensure that it brings forth themes and provides the researcher to see “the bigger picture” (Engelbrecht, 2016: 117).

In this study the data which was analysed was the responses gained from participants - one member each from station management, a presenter and a programmer at the radio stations - during the semi-structured interviews. The interviews took no longer than 20 minutes and the researcher was guided by a specific set of questions, but an allowance was made to ask follow-up questions for clarity and to give the participants the opportunity to elaborate as much as possible. The participants were given the option of having the interview conducted virtually and at a time which was suitable to both the researcher and the participants. The interviews were recorded on a dictaphone and the researcher's cellphone's voice recording function by the researcher for accuracy and to aid the transcription process. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher and a copy of the recordings is stored on the researcher's personal Microsoft OneDrive backup cloud, to which only the researcher has access. The transcriptions were analysed at a later stage and themes developed inductively to form the data.

4.10 Ethical considerations

The underlying principles of research should be based on mutual respect, trust, protection, cooperation, promises and agreements between all parties participating in the research (Hartell & Bosman, 2016: 40). University faculties and research institutes usually have a rigid ethical clearance process which must be completed and adhered to before commencement of any research (Hartell & Bosman, 2016: 41). There are two basic ethical responsibilities for researchers: a responsibility towards the participants in a project (human and non-human); and a responsibility towards the particular discipline to work accurately and honestly with the information and data gained (Hartell & Bosman, 2016: 41).

In this regard the researcher has completed the required Stellenbosch University ethical clearance process and it has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee for Social, Behavioural and Education Research (ethical clearance letter attached as Addendum A).

Verbal and written gatekeeper permissions / ethical clearance were obtained from current station managers to approach individuals at the three radio stations before data collection commenced. Permission from all the gatekeepers have been obtained.

All the participants were informed of the aims of the research and were given an extensive outline of the research questions before the semi-structured interviews took place. The required Stellenbosch University format consent forms were sent to the participants via email, and asked to be completed

and sent back the same way. The consent forms are stored in electronic format on the Microsoft OneDrive backup cloud in Word and PDF format. No physical (paper) hard copies of the consent forms will be used.

The raw data is stored in voice recordings on a personal dictaphone and the transcriptions thereof on the researcher's Microsoft OneDrive backup cloud. The recordings are stored in MP3 format on the dictaphone. The researcher's computer and cloud are password protected, which is only known by the researcher.

The participants were given the option of participating anonymously, with their names, job titles and employers not made public, if the participant wished to do so. In this instance, two participants requested to stay anonymous but had no objection to the name of the radio station which they worked or work at, and their job titles being mentioned. These participants' names are not mentioned and the participants are identified as Participant 1 and Participant 2 respectively. The remaining seven participants all agreed that their names, radio stations and job titles could be mentioned.

4.11 Summary

Chapter 4 outlines how the data and information for this study was gathered, analysed and interpreted. A qualitative research design was used, by conducting semi-structured interviews to determine journalists' content generation practices during the Covid-19 pandemic at three campus radio stations. The ethical considerations for the researcher are also discussed.

This study will contribute to the body of work available for managing a broadcast newsroom during a crisis, in case at campus radio stations, with emphasis on practical ways that broadcast newsroom workers can adjust their methods of content generation, newsgathering and presentation.

In Chapter 5 the findings of this study will be discussed.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 will focus on the findings from the semi-structured interviews done with nine staff members at three campus radio stations in South Africa – MFM 92.6 at the University of Stellenbosch, Cape Town, Tuks FM at the University of Pretoria, Gauteng and Voice of Wits at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, Gauteng.

By analysing the data from the semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to identify themes, which will be presented below.

5.2 Discussion of findings

Themes which emerged during the semi-structured interviews are listed in Table 4 below, together with brief explanations of what it entails. The researcher identified seven categories. By generating the categories inductively from the data it is noted that the data generated from the interviews are in some ways similar to the categories identified in the literature review. These include challenging work conditions for journalists during the pandemic; enhanced use of existing technology in content generation during the pandemic; adapting digital media technologies for news gathering during the pandemic; and management's role in encouraging cohesion in the newsroom during the pandemic. However, the categories discussed below originated solely from the data gained from the semi-structured interviews.

Table 4: Themes identified during the semi-structured interviews

Theme	Explanation
Theme 1: Quality of news and information and avoiding the spreading of fake news relating to Covid-19.	During the Covid-19 pandemic the circulation of fake news regarding the pandemic was a concern for journalists and editors.

Theme 2: Encouraging audience engagement during the Covid-19 lockdown level five.	Campus radio stations had to engage their audiences amid challenges related to access to the studios and resources.
Theme 3: Agility and innovation at the radio station during the Covid-19 lockdown level five.	The Covid-19 pandemic forced staff members at campus radio stations to find new ways of delivering accurate and reliable news and information.
Theme 4: Leveraging existing technology to adapt to the challenges brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic.	Technical challenges and access to the radio station's studios brought on by the limitations as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic played a role in campus radio stations having to think innovatively and creatively in delivering news and information.
Theme 5: Challenges in performing work duties at the radio station during the Covid-19 lockdown level five.	Staff members and members of management at campus radio stations faced challenges related to funds, technical breakdown and access to the studio while performing work duties to adhere to the regulations of radio being deemed an essential service during the Covid-19 pandemic.
Theme 6: The role of station management during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown level five and how they managed the challenges for staff members while having to adhere to Icasa regulations of broadcasting between 7am and 9pm on weekdays.	Campus radio station management had to make split-second decisions to stay on air during the pandemic while not having a contingency plan ready for such an event.
Theme 7: Lessons learned by campus radio station management for managing a crisis in future	Members of management at the three campus radio stations had to ensure that staff members could perform their work duties and the radio station could continue broadcasting. This led to lessons being learned should the campus radio stations be faced with a similar challenge such as a global pandemic in future.

The findings from the semi-structured interviews will be discussed according to these seven themes.

5.2.1 Theme 1: Quality of news and information and avoiding the spreading of fake news relating to Covid-19

The participants discussed how they managed to ensure that they shared accurate and vetted information during the Covid-19 lockdown period. In the initial days after lockdown was announced for the country, vast quantities of information circulated in the public domain, and the sharing of inaccurate, or fake news as it was called, was a major concern. Most of the participants said although current news was easily available, it was a priority for them to ensure that they shared news which was accurate and reliable, and sourced from reliable sources.

Participant 1 (2022), who requested to stay anonymous, was at MFM 92.6 for a number of years until 2021. The most recent position was that of a member of management. Participant 1 (2022) explains how MFM 92.6 handled the challenge of spreading fake news during the Covid-19 pandemic:

Our news stayed top class because as a member of management it was very important for me that we had reliable information to share with the public. We also outsourced our newsgathering to a company, *Bulletin*, to ensure that we received vetted information which was trustworthy and unbiased. We would edit and tailor it for our needs and our news presenters would read it on air, but we would source it from *Bulletin* after it was vetted for credibility and validity, and appropriately credited.

It is important to note that outsourced resources were used to assist with the compiling of news bulletins and information sets at campus radio stations during the Covid-19 lockdown level five.

Wilné van Rooyen, a presenter at MFM 92.6 since 2018 – first as a student volunteer and now as a full time employee – echoed Participant 1's comments about using *Bulletin*, and says that she tried to balance the deluge of Covid-related news with some lighter hearted and unrelated news of events elsewhere in the community, the country or the world. Van Rooyen (2022) says that they used *Bulletin* which made it much easier to compile news and also knowing that it comes from a trustworthy source, saved a lot of time in terms of newsgathering, rewriting and editing.

However, Van Rooyen (2022) had another strategy for managing the steady stream of Covid-related news:

When there was a lot of Covid news, I would at least try to find something not Covid related at the time, something positive. The public became kind of saturated with the Covid news and at some point I think people would just stop listening. So I tried to find news on something else that was happening around the world, in South Africa or the local communities, to just make it a variety of what is happening in the news.

Leanne Kunz, Station Manager at Tuks FM from 2018 to 2021, said that in her experience the journalists at the station worked harder to ensure that they compiled high-quality news and information, and not only information related to Covid-19. Kunz (2022) says:

It was an enormous responsibility that we all had to make sure that the news that we shared were accurate, timely, relevant and served its purpose for our market. I laid a big emphasis on that, so there was certainly no watering down of the news. One thing that we may have seen was that the Covid-related news became a bit much and people became Covid fatigued, so we tried to make sure that we don't only share Covid-related news, but find a balance by giving the public the information that they needed while also trying to be light-hearted, and speak about pertinent issues such as mental health.

Qiniso Phungula, a Presenter at Tuks FM between 2018 and the end of 2020, says that it was important for him to double check his facts and sources before using it in a news story. Phungula (2022) says:

With gathering content for my shows I would always cross-check my information. We received a lot of training from the programme manager at the time, and he made sure that we broadcast accurate and reliable information. There was a lot of fear mongering and spreading of false information to scare people. For example, if somebody told me that the country was going to a certain level of lockdown, I would verify it with four or even five different sources before using it as the truth in my broadcasting. You were more conscientious about what you told as the truth on air. There were always different versions of information about the virus. So you had to get the right story.

Shoeshoe Qhu, station manager at VoW FM between 2019 and 2022, says that there was a high demand for news and content from the public, and the station worked very hard to bring fresh content to its audience each day. Qhu (2022) explains:

There was a high demand for content during the pandemic - people were at home and not able to do anything outside – so there was a very high demand for content. In my opinion there was no compromise in the quality of the content, or the variety of issues to cover in the period. This was largely enabled by the technological tools that we adopted for the use of radio. However, in the earlier days – when we were still exploring the techniques and improving sound quality in the presenters' homes – I would say the quality of the audio was compromised, but we found that our listeners were forgiving because we were all locked in together.

Participant 2 requested to stay anonymous but was happy that the radio station he works at and his job title can be mentioned. He has been a presenter at VoW FM since 2013. Participant 2 explains:

It was a challenge, because we were starved of direct contact and interaction and you had to be very careful with how much of that you read you would use. There was a lot of [Covid] information coming from all directions and we would spend a lot of time deciding who is being factual and who is being genuine [in their reporting]. We had to move very meticulously and carefully with the way that we gathered news.

It can be concluded that news teams had the challenge of having to sift through the news to ensure that what they reported on was factual and correct. They also tried to balance the news offering by included non-Covid-related material.

5.2.2 Theme 2: Encouraging audience engagement during the Covid-19 lockdown level five

The three programme managers, also referred to as programme schedulers or programme producers, and the three members of management at the stations spoke about audience engagement. Under normal circumstances, or pre-Covid lockdown, while a show, segment or insert was presented live the audience interaction could be monitored live via social media, telephone dial-ins and commentary on the station's website, and later on, by observing metrics such as information gathered through a media monitoring service.

However, during the Covid-19 lockdown period campus radio stations had to engage their audiences amid challenges related to access to the studios and resources, while pre-recording shows and playing podcasts. Despite this, some of the campus radio stations still saw a positive difference in audience engagement during lockdown compared to before.

Thato Mathibi, a programme producer at VoW FM since 2019, says that during programmes on which issues such as mental health were discussed, he noticed a spike in audience participation through an increase in the dial-ins they would receive from people who wanted to participate in the conversation. Mathibi (2022) explains:

Most people were at home and not working during that time and some people were going through different challenges such as mental health, because they were stuck in their homes. I think we managed to speak to them while they were going through a lot and it highlighted the importance of being able to talk to them in their homes. Mental health challenges were on the rise, and when we had those conversations that's when we had the most responses from the audience. Finding that niche made a huge difference in terms of our broadcasting and audience participation.

Jan-Willem Lotz, programme scheduler at MFM 92.6, says that they saw an increase in audience participation through the station's social media platforms and website when president Cyril Ramaphosa held a "family meeting" – the name given by South African citizens to the president's regular updates to the country on the Covid-19 pandemic. Lotz (2022) says:

Every time president Ramaphosa spoke on television to give us a Covid-19 update, we saw a lot of interaction because it was big news and everyone was eager to know what would happen next. Afterwards we would have an on-air discussion. Sometimes we did a live survey before the "family meeting" about what members of the public thought would happen, and that also increased interaction, and afterwards we would evaluate and discuss the survey. People also felt more free to share their opinions because they might have thought 'you know what, I have nothing better to do and might still be stuck at home for the next few months, I might as well send in this voice note'.

Lotz (2022) explains further about the platforms that the audience engaged on:

They would use mostly WhatsApp, and on our one website we had dedicated space for Covid-19 updates. We used other platforms such as Instagram for polls and surveys about topics such as for example music choices, and we gathered the audience data through that.

Participant 1 had a similar experience as Lotz and says that MFM 92.6 also encouraged audience engagement by creating content for school learners and engaging with the community on social issues, which brought an increase in audience engagement through on-air commentary, social media and on the MFM 92.6 website. Participant 1 (2022) explains:

We started producing a show which focused on empowering the communities around Cape Town and Stellenbosch on issues relating to, for example, municipal problems, housing, health and teenage pregnancies, to encourage more community integration. We also brought educators to the station (once we could access the studio under strict regulations) to keep the learners busy by talking about different school subjects such as mathematics and languages. We had a live insert every second day with educators from different schools. We then noticed that high school learners and students would also tune in and engage on the radio station's social media platforms, the website or dial in to the studio. Later during the lockdown the university also started using the radio station for important announcements, and we started a campaign labelled "Do you miss Stellenbosch?" which saw a spike in audience engagement in terms of streaming. There was a definite increase in audience engagement because people were at home not doing much and just wanted to hear other voices.

Qhu (2022) says that at VoW FM they also focused more on creating conversations for people to relate to, for example inserts on what is happening in and around their immediate area and the campus community:

We wanted to keep the conversations going, but we also understood people's need for wanting to connect with their familiar surroundings, and we were happy to serve that need. By the second month of lockdown our content had changed a bit, so we focused on a lot of stuff that happens within Braamfontein, in our community, within the university and what students needed to know while they were away, so we engaged with the audience through those conversations. There was a definite need for maintaining more connection with our audience which increased engagement from the audience.

Kunz (2022) explains that radio is a unique way of connecting with people and there was a definite need from the audience for a human connection while everyone was mostly at home:

People had a lot of time on their hands, people were afraid and scared and this [Covid-19] was a new thing, the massive unknown. The fear element and the time element played a big role and people were yearning for a connection, they needed to be informed and know what was going on. That is where community radio plays such an important role. [At Tuks FM] we were telling people what they needed to know in their community, their neck of the woods. All of the engagement metrics shot right through the roof and it was sustained like that for a long period, even after the lockdown.

5.2.3 Theme 3: Agility and innovation at the radio station during the Covid-19 lockdown level five

The Cambridge online dictionary (dictionary.cambridge.org, 2022) describes agility as “the ability to think quickly and clearly and ways of planning and doing work in which it is understood that making changes as they are needed is an important part of the job”. The Covid-19 pandemic forced staff members at campus radio stations to find new ways to ensure that they stay on air, and more importantly, to deliver accurate and reliable news and information, thus compelling them to be agile, adaptive and flexible to the situation.

Participant 2 (2022) says that agility to adapt to the available technologies during Covid-19 which was not necessarily used pre-Covid, was an important step for him. Participant 2 (2022) explains further:

Everything was a fresh news challenge and then Covid happened. We chose Zoom as a tool to use and that brought its own set of challenges, in terms of getting used to the medium and the functionality. In many ways the Covid-19 pandemic advanced my skills set because we had to adapt to doing our shows pre-recorded instead of live, and I had to familiarise myself with editing software and software that I did not use before. That is a skill that I was able to transfer to other shows over the course of the pandemic, so it served to enhance my skills set as a broadcaster.

Mike Bower, programme manager at Tuks FM between 2018 and 2022, says that the team also acquired new skills during the pandemic. Bower (2022) says:

There are things we have learned during the Covid-19 pandemic that will help us in the long run. My ability now to do an outside broadcast has tripled because of Covid, needing to broadcast from home and needing to think like a home producer has been hugely beneficial to me.

Kunz (2022) says that at Tuks FM the management understood that from a technology perspective, the way that they used to work has changed during the Covid-19 lockdown. Kunz (2022) elaborates:

The ability to be agile and to shift away from everything that you knew before and change your entire business model is critically important, especially now. We moved to a mind shift of “look what we can do with so little. Look what we can achieve, look at how innovative we are, look at how we serve our market, we have 100% met our targets on what a community radio station should be with no support, no money, just with smart, driven and creative people and some help from technology”. We knew and understood what we were capable of, not only as a team, but also as a management team, but also saw technologically what was possible for us moving forward. Now it has shifted from “you need to be here 9 to 5” to “we are not paying you for your time, we are paying you for your output, expertise and skills”. There was an enormous shift and change from that perspective.

Qhu (2022) echoes Kunz’s comment on agility:

One of the biggest lessons I have learned is that you need to be agile. I don’t know how the next crisis would play out, but because we lived through this pandemic, what I learned was how technology and emergent technologies became enabling. If it wasn’t for the ability to record high quality audio on our mobile phones, it would have been near impossible to do the work that we do.

5.2.4 Theme 4: Leveraging existing technology to adapt to the challenges brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic

Campus radio stations had to contend with technical challenges and access to the radio station's studios brought on by the limitations as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Staff members had to think innovatively and creatively in delivering news and information to its audiences.

Kunz (2022) said that were it not for Tuks FM's technology that was not new and up to date, they would not have had issues such as equipment failing, difficulties with internet access and access to the studio. Kunz (2022) explains further how they managed to handle the challenges:

We leveraged technology and I think that was the golden thread and strategy during that period. We wanted to see what was technically possible, and we used WhatsApp [in other ways]. Nowadays people send WhatsApp's to radio stations and it gets played out on air, so the audio quality is fine. We decided to record our links on WhatsApp, send it to a producer to edit and correct the sound quality to make it sound like it was live [on air]. It was then broadcast that way. It was an enormous innovation on our side. We managed to come up with ideas and plans such as these and we managed to stay on air throughout.

Participant 1 said that at MFM 92.6 management started preparing themselves for the possibility of a lockdown before it was officially announced and the regulations stipulated, by working through scenarios where they would not have access to the studio. They already started working from home and experimented with broadcasts and recordings done remotely from four weeks before the official announcement of the Covid-19 regulations.

We did several podcasts, such as live interviews with government ministers and we would also generate an income while doing that. We have a good relationship with other community radio stations, and when one or more of them would have technical difficulties, we would suggest that they stream MFM 92.6 from their stations. In this way we helped each other to stay on air during challenging times (Participant 1, 2022).

Qhu (2022) mentions that the news production team at VoW FM went through a brainstorming session trying to work out which strategy would serve them best in bringing news and information to their audiences by using existing technology such as WhatsApp messenger services and the TeamViewer remote access platform.

We decided that we would record the bulletins and people had to use whatever devices they had, recording using our cell phones and the mics on the cell phones to avoid having other ambient noise. We discussed and used certain techniques to find good spots in our houses to be able to record, and found easy-to-use editing tools on the phone.

Qhu (2022) continues:

We had to negotiate with the university to give us the TeamViewer [remote access platform] which gave us access into the studio remotely, so that we could schedule the news after the news anchors recorded their bulletins. The news would then be scheduled remotely to play out in the studios. The first few times it was not perfect, but by the time we got to the second week, we had gotten it to work very smoothly.

Mathibi (2022) says that he had a renewed sense of the importance and the power of social media:

For every show that I produced, I posted on social media platforms. I also had a huge number of people streaming from different countries, and some people came to know about us through social media. It made me realise that only are we supposed to just turn on the mic and talk, you also have to realise the importance of posting each and every topic that we talk about. The internet and social media is also part of marketing, with those tools I never took them for granted after the pandemic, I have a renewed sense of appreciation.

5.2.5 Theme 5: Challenges in performing work duties at the radio station during the Covid-19 lockdown level five

Staff members and members of management at campus radio stations faced challenges related to lack of funds, technical breakdowns and access to the studio while performing work duties to adhere to the regulations of radio being deemed an essential service during the Covid-19 pandemic. All the participants say that most of the issues were related to technology, internet access, machinery and equipment breaking down, combined with intermittent loadshedding, the Eskom power utility's electricity saving measure implemented in South Africa since 2008 (eskom.co.za, 2022).

Bowers (2022) says that Tuks FM's plans to revamp the studio came to a grinding halt early in 2020, and soon after the country went into Covid-19 lockdown level five. Technical challenges and technological difficulties at the station made the lockdown period so much more difficult.

We stopped the upgrade in the first week of 2020, and then went through lockdown. At the time we had one internet connection at the station, which was an ADSL connection which could not handle what we needed to do. There was absolutely no way that we were going to be able to broadcast live, there was no way that we were going to be able to do anything other than pre-recorded shows. What we ultimately needed to do was get pre-recorded shows to producers and the producers would then take the shows and upload it onto TeamViewer. Eventually one of the computers just died and we had to move onto another one. Technically speaking, the station was a shambles, and there was no way that we would be able to continue with that. It was chaotic.

Participant 2 mentions several issues which posed challenges for him to perform his duties as a presenter at VoW FM. Having to work on previously unused platforms for newsgathering such as the Zoom meeting platform, guests' availability, technological challenges, access to the internet, loadshedding and his own time management during a time when most people were not going anywhere and the world so to speak shut down, are some of the issues mentioned. Participant 2 (2022) explains:

The most difficult challenge was depending on Zoom in putting my work together, and on the day of the interview the Zoom link would get lost in the emails or the guest forgot that they agreed to the interview. The challenges of technology, access to the internet, network issues also played a big role during that time. I was also forced to take time management very seriously because everything shut down and we were in lockdown, hardly anyone was going anywhere, we had to use our time to get things right or else that stage of nothingness could potentially swallow your whole day. We had to live our lives online even much more than before.

5.2.6 Theme 6: The role of station management during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown level five and how they managed the challenges for staff members while having to adhere to Icasa regulations of broadcasting between 7am and 9pm on weekdays.

The Covid-19 level five lockdown was in effect between 26 March and 30 April 2020 and campus radio station management had to make split-second decisions to stay on air during the pandemic while not having a contingency plan ready for such an event.

Participant 1 (2022) says that members of management had to fulfil multiple roles as staff members were not allowed in the studio during the lockdown level five, and they had to run each and every decision by the University management first before proceeding.

I felt like the communication between station management and the university management cost valuable time, while my role changed into crisis manager more than anything else. I had to fulfil the role of journalist, editor, programme manager, presenter and much more, simply because no-one was allowed to access the studio. I had to multitask and eventually we worked out a schedule of who could enter the studio on which days, dividing the workload that way (Participant 1, 2022).

Kunz (2022) says that it was never an option for Tuks FM to be off air during the Covid-19 lockdown level five to “find their bearings”. Kunz (2022) elaborates:

Within a short space of time, we arranged special permits for a small percentage of our staff to come into the studio on campus. We were one of a few, if not the only campus radio station, that continued to broadcast during that entire hard lockdown period. Tuks FM refused to go down that route [of closing down]. We felt that that radio was a service that we would continue to provide to our listeners and it was our duty to do that. We came up with an entirely new way of creating radio, which was unheard of before, and we managed to stay on air for that entire time, we were broadcasting and we managed to get that essential information out [to our audience].

Qhu (2022) had a more emotive approach than Participant 1 and Kunz in her role as station manager at VoW FM:

One of the big turning points in my style of management was to be more empathetic. The student volunteers were struggling and the circumstances in the households were difficult. I had to learn about their pressures and I had to appreciate the limited resources. I’ve become a more humble leader and I also had to do so much more work than I did before, I myself had

to go in and edit audio and support the team and record where I could. I had to do so much more and make the decisions every day. I became a more involved manager and a more empathetic manager who understood issues because we were not spared from the pandemic, we all suffered.

5.2.7 Theme 7: Lessons learned by management for managing a crisis in future

The continuation of broadcasting on campus radio stations amid the Covid-19 pandemic was challenged through various factors. Firstly, because the radio stations did not have contingency plans in place for anything closely resembling a pandemic, but rather for other types of crises such as a student strike or a fire on the premises or surroundings. Technology and the failing thereof at crucial times, technical challenges relating to equipment not working properly and the Covid-19 social distancing regulations all exacerbated the situation. Members of management at the three campus radio stations had to ensure that staff members could perform their work duties and the radio station could continue broadcasting. All the participants being interviewed for this study shared the lessons they learned or had advice for the station management should the campus radio stations be faced with a similar challenge such as a global pandemic in future.

Lotz (2022) says that in future it would be beneficial for them to at least have a short term plan for immediate actions should the country go into lockdown again. Lotz (2022) explains:

It was a tough time for everyone, but I think in order to better perform our work duties, decisions about the continuation of programming for the station should be made swiftly and the staff informed accordingly.

Van Rooyen (2022) agrees:

Now that we know that pandemics and lockdowns are a thing, we need to have a planned set of measures for if this happens again – a plan that sets out what will happen to the presenters and how broadcasting will the show carry on. We need to have a more emphatic crisis management plan in place because once we realised what was happening, there was a little bit of chaos, but I think they actually handled it pretty well considering what happened.

Participant 1 (2022) felt that plans for the continuation of broadcasting should have been thought about more strategically and possible problems attended to before lockdown was announced for the country:

We should have done our reconnaissance pre-Covid lockdown and looked into more ways of becoming a mobile radio station. If we had spent more money on acquiring software and equipment for the presenters to work from home, it would have helped a lot.

Qhu (2022) was more concerned about the regulation around campus radio stations going forward as the Icasa regulations added to the challenges they faced at the radio station. Qhu (2022) explains:

In the community radio sector the industry is highly regulated and because of our limited resources – I will even go as far as saying that it is over regulated because the requirements from Icasa for us to comply are higher than our capability. To remain active in the sector, we need to look into the regulator regulating us differently from the commercial sector, we can't be expected to perform at the same level as the commercial radio sector while we are severely limited in terms of resources. Some of the compliance areas for the community radio sector need to align with the capabilities of the sector going forward.

Mathibi (2022) says that training in alternative ways to grow a listenership online could benefit the radio station:

Many people were not familiar with alternative ways to broadcast and grow a listenership online. Management could have given us a workshop to teach us how to broadcast from home in order to grow listenership. Also, digitalisation and ensuring the transformation of the radio station to communicate with its listeners via a video platform could go a long way in ensuring that we invite those listeners into the studio.

Bower (2022) echoes Mathibi's sentiment by saying that he thinks that the station management handled it very well and that feels that student based radio needs to be teaching and investing in training.

Participant 2 only had praise for the station management and said that they performed well under the pressure with the limited resources and limiting regulations:

For the limited resources that we had pre and during the Covid pandemic, I can't fault the station management for the efforts and lengths that they went to, to make sure that the ship didn't sink. I can't fault them for how they managed the situation, it was a situation that none of us were prepared for, actually that no-one saw coming, and no-one was able to possibly plan for. Decisions were made on the fly because of how pressing the matters were. For the circumstances that we were presented with we did well and that showed in the recognition we received – VoW FM won an SA Radio Award, which is testament to the way how we all rose to the challenge. In the future, all we need to do is find a way to keep the ship from sinking, and find a way to keep the content compelling and interesting to listen to (Participant 2, 2022).

Phungula (2022) says that multitasking played a huge role in saving the radio station:

We tried everything to mitigate the crisis in terms of multitasking and allowing people to fulfil multiple roles. I commend the management of Tuks FM at the time because they honestly did the best that they could with the little that they had. That is partially why Tuks FM is still alive today. They were relentless and pushed us to keep finding content and keep presenting and we still won radio awards after that while broadcasting during that time.

Kunz (2022) says that technology was Tuks FM's biggest curse, but also its biggest blessing during the Covid-19 lockdown. She shares an extensive list of lessons that she has learned pertaining to operating a campus radio station during the Covid-19 pandemic:

A little bit of innovation goes a long way. Innovation about money – you can have all the money in the world, but if you don't have a smart, innovative person handling it, who thinks about how you can use this money to your best benefit, it doesn't mean anything. The innovation factor is critical and it is something I now place an enormous emphasis on. The ability to be agile and the ability to shift away from everything that you knew before. From a management perspective you need to be drilling down all the time, and agility is key. Readjust, re-analyse and re-evaluate, those are the buzzwords. You need to be able to shift quickly, the ability or the need to have processes in place that allow for that is key - and of course having staff members that are willing and able to shift with you. You need to have a workplace culture that embodies that and leading from the front in terms of looking out for

what is coming ahead and what could potentially come ahead. For instance, a pandemic situation like Covid is now in my risk register, and it wasn't before. I now plan for it, because I now know it is a possibility and it could happen again.

5.3 Summary

In this chapter the research findings of the study were discussed. The findings are based on the data which was gathered during semi-structured interviews with nine current or former staff members of three campus radio stations, namely Tuks FM at the University of Pretoria, VoW FM at the University of the Witwatersrand and MFM 92.6 at the University of Stellenbosch.

The findings from the semi-structured interviews were then discussed according to seven themes identified by the researcher during the decoding process. The themes for the semi-structured interviews were: the quality of news and information and avoiding the spreading of fake news relating to Covid-19; encouraging audience engagement during the Covid-19 lockdown level five; agility and innovation at the radio station during the Covid-19 lockdown level five; leveraging existing technology to adapt to the challenges brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic; challenges in performing work duties at the radio station during the Covid-19 lockdown level five; the role of station management during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown level five and how they managed the challenges for staff members while having to adhere to Icasa regulations of broadcasting between 7am and 9pm on weekdays; and lessons learned by campus radio station management for managing a crisis in future.

The findings indicated that although there was a lot of misinformation and fake news surrounding Covid-19 in circulation during the lockdown level five period, the journalists and presenters at campus radio stations were much more circumspect and watchful in identifying and validating their sources before sharing news and information with their audiences. The members of management at the stations also laid emphasis on double checking facts and avoiding fake news relating to Covid-19.

According to the findings, audience engagement spiked in some cases by listeners participating more on different platforms such as social media, sending voice notes via WhatsApp and commenting on the website, or streaming from the station's website. The increase in audience participation was most notably during discussion around Covid-19, and in some cases, where the radio station piloted a new programme on societal issues or educational programmes for children. Discussions and surveys

around government information related to Covid-19 and music also drew increased audience participation.

The findings show that campus radio stations' agility and ability to adapt was tested severely during Covid-19 lockdown and it demanded of staff members to think out of the box, learn new skills and apply technology and platforms which were not previously used for broadcast news gathering and editing to be used in new ways. Platforms such as WhatsApp, which is primarily a messenger services, TeamViewer for remote computer access, and Zoom for video conferencing, were repurposed to assist with broadcasting. It was being used for audio recordings, video recordings, programme scheduling and conducting interviews and meetings virtually. Learning new functionalities of everyday technologies also served to enhance staff members' skills, such as learning how to conduct mobile or outside broadcasts.

Leveraging off existing technology runs like a golden thread through the findings. Cell phones and its myriad of applications, pre-installed on the device or later downloaded, were utilised for pre-recordings, podcasts, editing news bulletins, voice recording, the mic on the phone and audio recording. The enhanced and heightened use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as well as the websites of the radio stations were also used in ways not done before, such as co-streaming between stations.

The challenges which were exacerbated during the Covid-19 level five lockdown were harshly highlighted because as Participant 2 (2022) said: "we had to live our lives online even much more than before". Technology failing, equipment packing up, learning to use new platforms, contending with intermittent loadshedding and time management, were all factors which influenced presenters, programme managers and station managers' ability to perform their work duties as effortlessly as pre-Covid-19.

As stated in the findings, members of management had to fulfil multiple roles: being a decision maker, a regulatory watchdog for the station, a voice for the station when dealing with University management and an emotional support for their staff members are some of the difficult roles they had to fulfil.

The findings also pointed out some valuable lessons. Proper planning for another eventuality such as a global pandemic, effective communication between management and staff at the radio stations, a

closer look at the official regulations in relation to resources at the stations, new ways to communicate with audiences and grow listenership; and innovation in terms of cross-purposing equipment, technology and funds, are some of the lessons mentioned by participants.

Chapter 6 will summarise the study and answer the research questions.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 Chapter summaries

6.1.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1 the researcher outlined the motivation for this study, as well as the research problem and focus of this study.

6.1.2 Literature review

Chapter 2 provided an overview of the literature explored for this study, looking at the performance of South African campus radio journalists working during the Covid-19 pandemic. The chapter examined literature related to crisis management in a newsroom and the factors taken into consideration when journalists have to perform under extreme circumstances, such as a global pandemic. Several themes were identified, such as redirected content on websites to reflect Covid-19 focused news, enhanced use of technology, innovation in the newsroom, and new strategies by management engaged by content creators, content gatherers and presenters in newsrooms when disaster struck and they were forced to innovate and change their ways of working.

6.1.3 Theoretical framework

Chapter 3 outlined the theoretical framework for this study. Public sphere theory, as shared by German philosopher Jürgen Habermas in 1962, forms the theoretical basis for this study, arguing that campus radio stations operate within the public domain, which forms the public sphere, campus radio stations are part of the digital public sphere.

6.1.4 Research design and methodology

In Chapter 4 the research design and methodology was outlined and discussed. It detailed the research process which the researcher followed to explore the changes experienced by the editorial teams, in other words the editors, newsroom managers, content gatherers and presenters, at three campus radio stations in their efforts to produce news and information for its communities during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown in South Africa in 2020.

6.1.5 Findings

Chapter 5 provided the findings of the study, focusing extensively on the semi-structured interviews with nine staff members at three campus radio stations in South Africa - MFM 92.6 at the University of Stellenbosch, Cape Town, Tuks FM at the University of Pretoria, Gauteng and Voice of Wits at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, Gauteng.

6.2 Examining the research questions

In this section the three specific research questions and the general research question, outlined in Chapter 1, will be addressed.

The main aim of this study is to explore how journalism practice at the campus radio stations were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic regulations, which prohibited staff members from working from the studio and instructed them to maintain social distancing at all times.

The overarching question of this study is: How were the journalistic public sphere at campus radio stations affected by the crisis brought on by the Covid-19 lockdown level 5?

In order to answer the main research question, the following specific questions were asked:

6.2.1 SRQ1: Based on the fact that social distancing had to be maintained, how did the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown level five regulations influence the way that presenters gathered and packaged news for the radio station?

From the semi-structured interviews the researcher gathered that one of the radio stations, MFM 92.6, started piloting work-from-home scenarios for its staff members should the country go into lockdown. Although this could have given them an advantage over other campus radio stations, it was hampered by the absence of a clear contingency plan in the case of a total lockdown. VoW FM and Tuks FM made emergency plans because they too didn't have a contingency plan that included a total lockdown possibility. Journalists had to find alternative ways of packaging news. Some used their cell phones to record newsclips and sound, combined with applications they could download on their devices to assist with editing and production. MFM 92.6 also used a news service, *Bulletin*, to assist

with newsgathering and vetting content. The presence of fake news and misinformation was a challenge, and presenters had to verify their content carefully before sharing it with the public. It was a careful line which they tread in ensuring that the news and information that they shared was reliable and trustworthy. Some station managers and programme managers mentioned that they laid heavy emphasis on sourcing credible information, not only Covid-19 related, but for all news and information shared by the radio station. Presenters also used other platforms for news sharing and content gathering by incorporating meeting or video conferencing platforms such as Zoom to conduct interviews with guests and commentators. Whatsapp messenger service, which is usually used for personal purposes between individuals or groups, was purposed for professional use and used to send news and sound clips, or voice notes for links on programmes. Staff members' homes thus became makeshift studios from which they worked and gathered news because they could not access the studios and going out in public was not allowed unless they were given special permits to travel to the studio, and access was granted to the studio.

It can be concluded that presenters, content gatherers and journalists did what was needed for the radio station - used their facilities and equipment at their disposal and utilised it to bring news and information to their communities, connect with their communities and keep their audiences tuned in and engaged by sharing content that is fresh, up-to-date and reliable.

6.2.2. SRQ2: Given the fact that campus radio staff members had to work from home and were not allowed to enter the studio during lockdown level five between 26 March and 30 April 2020, how did the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown level five regulations influence the way that programmes could be packaged and scheduled for the station?

The Icasa regulations had to be adhered to for campus radio stations, during which they were required to broadcast on weekdays between 7am and 9pm. The regulations, although still not allowing access to studios as regulated by government, posed a problem for programming and scheduling. Remote computer accessing programmes such as Teamviewer became an essential tool in packaging and scheduling news and programmes remotely for the radio stations, as during the first few weeks of the Covid-19 lockdown level five, no-one was allowed to access the studios. Special permits for accessing the premises were only granted a week or two later, and then only for certain people who had to work on a rotational basis to ensure social distancing and that the studio was sanitised between uses. Programme managers and schedulers had to work out a plan to automate programming, for instance compiling hours of music to automatically play or podcasts being played between

programmes and news bulletins. Together with skeleton staff, because most student volunteers returned home during the Covid-19 lockdown level five, members of management had to multitask to fulfil multiple roles. As a result some of them learned news skills such as mobile and remote broadcasting. The researcher concluded that even though all the challenges made it very difficult for campus radio stations to operate as normal, it provided them the programme managers and schedulers an opportunity to think creatively, explore previously unknown territory in terms of mobile applications and trust existing technology to work in different ways to reach the end result - to share news and information and stay on air.

6.2.3 SRQ3: Based on the fact that the Covid-19 pandemic was declared a natural disaster in South Africa and everyone were urged to work from home, what was the station's immediate contingency plan in terms of news creation, gathering and presenting to resume regular operations as soon as possible during the lockdown level five?

From the findings it is clear that one of the immediate emergency reactions for management and staff members at the three radio stations was to think of ways to automate shows, inserts, segments and programmes, in other words, pre-record a show and its audio on mobile devices and applications WhatsApp and edit and play it at the normal time when that particular show, segment, insert, programme or bulletin was supposed to play as if it was live on air.

Equipping staff members with new or at least additional equipment was not always possible, as all three station managers pointed out that funds was and will always be a problem. The radio stations immediately started making emergency plans to turn their living spaces into makeshift studios, and work from there - the main aim for everyone was to stay on air. As permits were given to staff members to enter the studio on a rotational basis, the programming and news bulletins were more regularly scheduled and started to resemble normal programming.

However, it is clear that station management and its staff members were not ready for the enormity of the Covid-19 situation, and had to make hasty, haphazard plans driven by trial-and-error to see what worked and what didn't work, to comply with Icasa regulations of broadcasting between certain hours on weekdays.

6.2. General research question: How were the journalistic public sphere at campus radio stations affected by the crisis brought on by the Covid-19 lockdown level 5?

Campus radio stations' core purpose is to create a connection to its audience and act primarily as a news service and information service. Especially during the lockdown period when everybody was isolated, community radio provides that much-needed connection which draws people into the public sphere, listen to their peers and exchange ideas and opinions on issues of the day. The quality of information and the encouragement of public interaction, albeit remotely because of social distancing regulations, were paramount to the radio stations' upholding of the digital public sphere.

Through innovation and forward-thinking by leveraging existing technologies and incorporating new technologies, the three campus radio stations operated in the digital public sphere because they could only connect remotely and use technology to perform the function of connecting with their communities - under lockdown regulations journalists were not allowed to go out in public and do vox pops, interviews and move among their communities in person. Campus radio stations, as community radio stations managed by universities, indeed provide an essential service to its audiences in times of crisis, which is exactly what radio is for: to create a sense of community.

However, one of the negative effects of the Covid-19 lockdown on campus radio was that they did not have live feedback and interaction with their audiences, even though the presenter would ask the audience to still participate via website/social media platforms to send in comments and requests. Despite this, the researcher has drawn the conclusion that the three campus radio stations continued to operate in the digital public sphere during the Covid-19 lockdown level five through innovative ways to connect to their audiences.

6.3 Contributions and recommendations

In future, a similar study could benefit from an analysis of the audience metrics for the news and actuality programmes, which will hopefully provide a closer look into radio audience participation during times of crisis. A content analysis of programme lists, or scripts as it is known in radio terms, could also be useful to ascertain whether programming has changed during a crisis period to reflect the current affairs affecting the community at the time.

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Addendum A



CONFIRMATION OF RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL

REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form

13 June 2022

Project number: 24949

Project Title: Managing a broadcast newsroom during a crisis: the case of four campus radio stations during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa in 2020

Dear Miss VJ Rowland

Identified supervisor(s) and/or co-investigator(s):

Dr GJ Botma

Your REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form submitted on 05/05/2022 12:03 was reviewed and approved by the Social, Behavioural and Education Research Ethics Committee (REC: SBE).

Your research ethics approval is valid for the following period:

Protocol approval date (Humanities)	Protocol expiration date (Humanities)
13 June 2022	12 June 2025

GENERAL COMMENTS PERTAINING TO THIS PROJECT:

INVESTIGATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.
2. Your approval is based on the information you provided in your online research ethics application form. If you are required to make amendments to or deviate from the proposal approved by the REC, please contact the REC: SBE office for advice: appjethics@sun.ac.za
3. Always use this project ID number (24949) in all communications with the REC: SBE concerning your project.
4. Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, and monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process, where required.

RENEWAL OF RESEARCH BEYOND THE EXPIRATION DATE

You are required to submit a progress report to the REC: SBE before the project approval period expires if renewal of ethics approval is required.

If you have completed your research, you are required to submit a final report to the REC: SBE to close the active REC record for this project.

Project documents approved by the REC:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Research Protocol/Proposal	Research proposal V Rowland Feb 2022 updated final revised by G Botma (2) copy for Ethical Clearance April 2022	07/02/2022	3
Request for permission	Ethical clearance permission request to gatekeepers Motie FM	26/04/2022	1
Request for permission	Ethical clearance permission request to gatekeepers UCT Radio	26/04/2022	1
Request for permission	Ethical clearance permission request to gatekeepers Voice of Wits	26/04/2022	1
Request for permission	Ethical clearance permission request to gatekeepers Tuks FM	26/04/2022	1

Recruitment material	Example of Letter to participants (for Ethical clearance) 4 May 2022	04/05/2022	1
Informed Consent Form	Ethical clearance consent form May 2022	04/05/2022	2
Data collection tool	Ethical clearance interview guide: questions to be asked	04/05/2022	1
Default	Response letter V Rowland 12617849 ethical committee comments 4 May 2022	04/05/2022	2

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at applyethics@sun.ac.za

Sincerely,

Mrs Clarissa Robertson (cgraham@sun.ac.za)

Secretariat: Social, Behavioral and Education Research Ethics Committee (REC: SBE)

*National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number: REC-050411-032.
The Social, Behavioural and Education Research Ethics Committee complies with the SA National Health Act No. 61 2003 as it pertains to health research. In addition, this committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research established by the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) and the Department of Health Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes (2nd Ed.) 2015. Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.*

Principal Investigator Responsibilities

Protection of Human Research Participants

As soon as Research Ethics Committee approval is confirmed by the REC, the principal investigator (PI) is responsible for the following:

Conducting the Research: The PI is responsible for making sure that the research is conducted according to the REC-approved research plan. The PI is jointly responsible for the conduct of co-investigators and any research staff involved with this research. The PI must ensure that the research is conducted according to the recognised standards of their research field/discipline and according to the principles and standards of ethical research and responsible research conduct.

Participant Enrolment: The PI may not recruit or enrol participants unless the strategy for recruitment is approved by the REC. Recruitment and data collection activities must cease after the expiration date of REC approval. All recruitment materials must be approved by the REC prior to their use.

Informed Consent: The PI is responsible for obtaining and documenting affirmative informed consent using **only** the REC-approved consent documents/process, and for ensuring that no participants are involved in research prior to obtaining their affirmative informed consent. The PI must give all participants copies of the signed informed consent documents, where required. The PI must keep the originals in a secured, REC-approved location for at least five (5) years after the research is complete.

Continuing Review: The REC must review and approve all REC-approved research proposals at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk but not less than once per year. There is **no grace period**. Prior to the date on which the REC approval of the research expires, **it is the PI's responsibility to submit the progress report in a timely fashion to ensure a lapse in REC approval does not occur**. Once REC approval of your research lapses, all research activities must cease, and contact must be made with the REC immediately.

Amendments and Changes: Any planned changes to any aspect of the research (such as research design, procedures, participant population, informed consent document, instruments, surveys or recruiting material, etc.), must be submitted to the REC for review and approval before implementation. Amendments may not be initiated without first obtaining written REC approval. The **only exception** is when it is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants and the REC should be immediately informed of this necessity.

Adverse or Unanticipated Events: Any serious adverse events, participant complaints, and all unanticipated problems that involve risks to participants or others, as well as any research-related injuries, occurring at this institution or at other performance sites must be reported to the REC within **five (5) days** of discovery of the incident. The PI must also report any instances of serious or continuing problems, or non-compliance with the REC's requirements for protecting human research participants.

Research Record Keeping: The PI must keep the following research-related records, at a minimum, in a secure location for a minimum of five years: the REC approved research proposal and all amendments; all informed consent documents; recruiting materials; continuing review reports; adverse or unanticipated events; and all correspondence and approvals from the REC.

Provision of Counselling or emergency support: When a dedicated counsellor or a psychologist provides support to a participant without prior REC review and approval, to the extent permitted by law, such activities will not be recognised as research nor the data used in support of research. Such cases should be indicated in the progress report or final report.

Final reports: When the research is completed (no further participant enrolment, interactions or interventions), the PI must submit a Final Report to the REC to close the study.

On-Site Evaluations, Inspections, or Audits: If the researcher is notified that the research will be reviewed or audited by the sponsor or any other external agency or any internal group, the PI must inform the REC immediately of the impending audit/evaluation.

Addendum B

List of questions asked during semi-structured interviews

Presenter

1. How has the Covid-19 pandemic impacted the way that you work in gathering news?
2. How has the Covid-19 pandemic impacted the way that you package news?
3. What were the most difficult challenges to deal with in performing your work duties as a journalist for the station during the level 5 lockdown period between 26 March and 30 April 2020?
4. Which additional measures/steps did you implement in your own way of work to handle the newsroom challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown?
5. In your opinion, what could the station management have done better in terms of disaster management during the lockdown period?

Member of Management

1. Please tell me about the station's crisis management plans pre-Covid?
2. How has the Covid-19 pandemic impacted your management of the station?
3. What were your contingency plans amid the Covid-19 pandemic?
4. What were the most difficult challenges to deal with in performing your work duties as a manager for the station during the lockdown period?
5. How did the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown regulations impact the way that the station works?
6. What are the lessons you have learned for future crisis management for the newsroom at the station?

Programmer/Scheduler

1. How does your typical scheduling work for the station?

2. How has the Covid-19 pandemic impacted your programming for the station?
3. What were the most difficult challenges to deal with in performing your work duties as a programmer for the station during the lockdown period?
4. Which additional programs did you implement during the Covid-19 pandemic?
5. In your opinion, what could the station management have done better in terms of disaster management?