

How refugees in South Africa use mobile phones for social connectedness



By

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Be blessed!

Dedication

I dedicate this study to my amazing son, MCJan Jisar.B, for him to grow
and make his parents proud.

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Abstract

Background: Refugees find it difficult to integrate and assimilate in their host country because of a myriad of challenges. Mobile phones have become one of the main tools for promoting their wellbeing and supporting the integration of refugee communities on the margins of society. Mobile phones can contribute towards reducing isolation and loneliness, and assist in improving interpersonal relations and fostering processes of assimilation.

The purpose of the research: The main objective of this study was to examine how the use of mobile phones by refugees in South Africa contributes to their social connectedness. To this end, the study discusses the role of mobile phones in the process of acculturation, in creating a sense of belonging, and in maintaining relationships.

Design/methodology/approach: This research employed a qualitative method and an interpretivist epistemological perspective. A conceptual framework was developed on the basis of a literature review. Data was collected from semi-structured interviews and WhatsApp group chats, and analysed using thematic analysis. The interviewees comprised 27 refugees living in South Africa, and the WhatsApp group had 15 members.

Findings: The findings demonstrate that the refugees face a multitude of obstacles, including language and culture barriers, the challenge of obtaining legal status, physical separation from their friends and family, and feelings of being judged, insecure, and excluded. Mobile phone usage offers refugees several benefits, especially through their affordances that include accessing information, pursuing economic and institutional opportunities, enabling communication, and developing linguistic and cultural knowledge of the host country. At the same time, mobile phones enable refugees to maintain connection with their country of origin. Refugees nevertheless considered it difficult to develop a sense of belonging through their use of mobile phones.

Research contribution: This study adds to perspectives on utilising mobile phones to achieve social connectedness for two categories of refugees: newcomers and old-timers. The study contributes to theory by proposing a framework for understanding and analysing the relationship between social connectedness and mobile phones. The study contributes to knowledge through the investigative approach of using WhatsApp group chat to collect data. The findings can contribute to enabling non-profit organisations and UNHCR to develop strategies and processes for providing interventions for refugees.

Keywords: Mobile phones, refugees, South Africa, social connectedness, acculturation, belonging

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CPMT	Communication Privacy Management Theory
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
DT	Dialectical Theory
GPS	Global Positioning System
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IT	Information Technology
MMS	Multimedia Messaging Service
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
QSR	Qualitative Research Software Developer
SA	South Africa
SMS	Short Message Service
SST	Sociotechnical Systems Theory
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UN	United Nations
RRO	Refugees Reception Office

Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Gumtree	Website or app comprising mainly free listings and service advertisement to clients.
Information and Communication Technology	Technology that provides communication or the process of accessing information.
Social assimilation	The process by which two or more people of different cultures are engaged in the dominant culture of the community.
Social inclusion	Method of increasing the conditions whereby persons and communities engage in society.
Social integration	Procedure for the adjustment of outsiders into the system of the host community.
Social media	Websites or applications that enable users to exchange information and enhance social connections.
Social participation	Individuals collaborating with many others in the group or society.
Sense of closeness	Feeling close to someone.
Wellbeing	The condition of being comfortable, good, or healthy.
Asylum seeker	A person who claims to be a refugee but whose claim has not yet been determined.
Refugees	People who have fled their country because of war, violence, conflict, or persecution.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Mobile phones have become the main tool of communication in contemporary societies (Chen & Li, 2017). Marginalised and vulnerable communities such as refugees use mobile devices to communicate and increase their social connectedness (Vuningoma, Lorini, & Chigona, 2020). Social connectedness refers to the subjective awareness of experiencing a close relationship with an individual, group of people or social world (Wilkinson, Bowen, Gustavsson, Håkansson, Littleton, McCormick, Thompson, & Mulligan, 2019). This study investigates how refugees in South Africa achieve social connectedness through the use of mobile phones. The use of mobile phones has had a positive impact on social change. For example, it allows individuals to access services at their convenience, promoting equality and saving time. This has led to the general availability of services and the empowerment of the people who use them (Oreglia, Elisa, & Janaki, 2016). The findings of this study should serve to promote understanding of whether increasing mobile phone usage can support, promote, and integrate the wellbeing of people, especially refugees.

The rest of this chapter is organised as follows: Section 1.1 discusses the research background and context. Section 1.2 highlights the problem statements, which are followed by the research objective and questions in Section 1.3. Section 1.4 highlights the research approach, while Section 1.5 outlines the significance of the study. The chapter concludes with an overview of the thesis chapters in Section 1.6.

1.1 Research Background and Context of the Study

The term “refugee” refers to someone who has fled from his or her country of origin to another country due to unbearable living conditions such as persecution, war, or violence (Kavuro, 2015; Rutinwa, 2018). In general, a person entering a new country as a potential refugee applies for an asylum seeker’s permit. This is a temporary permit, pending the decision by the government to grant the applicant refugee status (Department of Home Affairs, 2019a). It is important to differentiate between the terms refugee and asylum seeker, even though they are often used interchangeably (Handmaker & Parsley, 2010). The asylum seeker permit is a temporary one, indicating that a “request for sanctuary has yet to be processed” (Marlowe, 2019), while a refugee is a person who has been granted a refugees’ permit (Department of

Home Affairs, 2019a). In this thesis, the word “refugee” is used to refer to people who have been granted asylum status and protection as well as those who are still seeking recognition.

The number of refugees and asylum seekers continues to rise (UNHCR, 2016). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)’s annual Global Trends report, there were 25.4 million refugees and 3.1 million asylum seekers globally in 2017. By 2019, the number had increased to 26.0 million refugees and 4.2 million asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2019). According to the 2019 UNHCR annual report, in South Africa, there are 189 491 asylum seekers and 90 513 refugees (UNHCR, 2019). South Africa is a peaceful country with a relatively stable economy, and this attracts asylum seekers from countries around the African continent (Rugunanan & Smit, 2011). The majority of refugees in the country are from African countries such as Somalia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Nigeria, Rwanda, Angola, and Burundi (Bisimwa, 2017). The reasons why refugees emanate from these countries differ, though the majority of the countries of origin are at war and/or experiencing high rates of crime (UNHCR, 2016; Zihindula, Meyer-Weitz, & Akintola, 2015). There have been several waves of refugees entering South Africa, due to various crises in those countries.

South Africa is one of the most developed countries in Africa, with a strong economy and an advanced degree of social development (Kollamparambil, 2020). The South African Refugees Act No. 130 of 1998 states in Section 27 that a refugee is eligible to look for jobs and enjoy access to the same essential medical care as citizens (Department of Home Affairs, 2019a). This is helpful in the daily lives of refugees. However, they inevitably face many challenges, such as language barriers, lack of cultural knowledge of the new country, and concerns arising from ethnic difference (Sowane, 2019). Further, the UNHCR is concerned about the ongoing abuse of migrants, including refugees in South Africa. South Africa is a country with one of the highest rates of inequality (Pillay, 2017), which has a huge impact on the less privileged population of the country (Murenje, 2020). The residents treat foreigners poorly, including refugees from other African countries, with xenophobic attacks occurring regularly (Zihindula, Meyer-Weitz, & Akintola, 2017). Migrants are ready to work for a lower income without complaint because they are scared of being sent back home. They continue to suffer injury and lose their lives, while knowing that they are resented by the local population for allegedly taking their jobs. The xenophobic attacks are among the reasons refugees feel uncomfortable

and isolated (Makanda & Naidu, 2019). The prevailing xenophobic attitude poses a challenge for refugees wanting to rebuild their lives and experience a sense of community in the host country.

Since many refugees are not familiar with local South African languages, they struggle to assimilate and integrate into the new place (Bacishoga, Brown, & Johnston, 2016). They nevertheless need to achieve social connectedness in the host country, including South Africa (Liamputtong, Koh, Wollersheim, & Walker, 2016). Social connectedness can be associated with acculturation and emotional development (Rockinson-Szapkiw, Heuvelman-Hutchinson, & Spaulding, 2014; Walker, Koh, Wollersheim, & Liamputtong, 2015). Acculturation refers to the process of socialisation and perpetuation of the existing standards of culture, qualities, and ideas dominant in a locale (Kim & Alamilla, 2017). It has also been identified as a significant key in the success of refugees (Fang, 2020), enabling refugees to acquire positive emotions and make positive commitments to the new environment (Fang, Sun, & Yuen, 2016).

Refugees can gain easy access to electronic communication devices like mobile phones, which can lead to social connectedness (Kavuro, 2015). The mobile phone is the most ubiquitous instrument encouraging social connectedness between individuals and fostering a stronger society (Francis, Cross, Schultz, Armstrong, Nguyen, & Branch-Smith, 2020; Thomas, Orme, & Kerrigan, 2020). Concerning refugees, the literature shows how being in touch with relatives and members of the host community reduces their sense of loneliness and helps them feel secure and comfortable in a new place (Bacishoga et al., 2016). Social connectedness via a mobile phone not only helps build social integration but is also essential from a health perspective (Thomas, 2019). In addition, South Africa's telecommunication network is one of the largest growing industries in the nation's economy. The network is mainly powered by mobile phone user growth and the widening accessibility of internet services that refugees can also access.

1.2 Problem Statement

Refugees live in a difficult situation because of being separated from families and friends, which causes instability and insecurity (Silove, Ventevogel, & Rees, 2017); some have been affected by violence (xenophobic attacks). They have suffered during their displacement and because of the difficulty of securing their status; furthermore, they struggle to access health

care services (Sowane, 2019; Hinger, 2020). Due to these challenges and barriers, refugees may struggle to accomplish social connectedness. Culture and language are high-level challenges faced by refugees (Gordon, 2016). The language barrier results in victimisation and miscommunication in attempts to access the services of government and private organisations (Harney, 2013; Sowane, 2019). This affects refugees' sense of wellbeing and may increase their vulnerability (Abujarour & Krasnova, 2018). However, it must be said that the literature on social connectedness among refugees is not entirely explicit as to whether it references refugees who live in camps or refugees who are integrated into the local social environment.

In South Africa, refugees are integrating into the local community (Smit & Rugunanan, 2015). They embed themselves in the social and economic development of the host country, send their children to schools, find jobs, and set up their own businesses (Crush, Skinner, & Stulgaitis, 2017). Studies tend to generalise the term "refugees," and as such may not always provide appropriate answers to questions asked today. Old-timer refugees who have been in the country for a long time have acquired knowledge of things such as local languages and Home Affairs regulations, compared with newcomers who have not been in the country for a year. Their levels of social connectedness will be different. This research investigates and analyses the contribution of mobile phones to social connectedness amongst refugees, highlighting differences in the use of mobile phones between these two categories of refugees: newcomers and old-timers.

Mobile technology may help mitigate many challenges, and its benefits are significant. Mobile phones assist persons to solve the connectivity issues induced by physical separation. They also facilitate access to different types of support, thus increasing the chance of being successful in life. Further, mobile phones offer an opportunity to share information and transfer assets over borders for those who are completely isolated (Marlowe, 2020); they have improved the standard of the services that refugees may access. In sum, refugees are using mobile phones to achieve their communication goals.

1.3 Research Objectives and Research Questions

The main objective of this study is to examine how refugees in South Africa achieve social connectedness through the use of mobile phones. Furthermore, the objectives of this research are set out as follows:

- i. To compare the effects of mobile technology on refugees, based on how long they have lived in the country.
- ii. To investigate the benefit of mobile phones in the acculturation process of refugees.
- iii. To examine how refugees use mobile phones to stay in touch with their families and friends
- iv. To investigate the ability of refugees to create a sense of belonging through the use of mobile phones; and

The study seeks to answer the following main research question:

How do mobile phones help refugees to achieve social connectedness?

In other to answer the main question, the research has been broken down in the following sub-questions:

- How does mobile phone usage benefit refugees in the acculturation process?
- How does mobile phone usage help refugees maintain contact with their families in their home country?
- How does mobile phone usage affect refugees in creating a sense of belonging?

1.4 Research Approach

The study employed an interpretivist approach and a qualitative method. The researcher investigated a social construct mainly from the perspective of the responses of the research participants. The role of the researcher was to interpret and analyse the data in an impartial way that respected the participants' subjectivity. The data collection and analysis were guided by a conceptual framework which the researcher developed from the literature consulted. Data was collected from semi-structured interviews and WhatsApp group chat. The sample for the study consisted of refugees residing in Cape Town, and comprised 27 refugees for the interviews and 15 refugees in the WhatsApp group chat. The study used thematic analysis to analyse the data.

South Africa was chosen as the sample country for this study for convenience' sake: the researcher is based in the country and has direct knowledge of the legal system and processes, as well as connections with local organisations. She could work directly with the participants, not only digitally. The researcher is herself a migrant living in South Africa and has first-hand

knowledge of the challenges faced by refugees. Just like other black African immigrants in South Africa, refugees have experienced xenophobic attacks and violence. South Africa has one of the highest refugee populations in Africa, while mobile phones are the most accessed form of ICT in the country (Chiumbu & Ligaga, 2013).

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study should serve to expand the existing literature through its focus on the use of mobile phones, social connectedness, and the condition of refugees. One of the gaps in the literature is the absence of differentiation between what we have chosen to call the newcomer and old-timer categories of refugees. This study is important because it can provide researchers with evidence of the situation and experiences of refugees, and some understanding in this context of the benefits and disadvantages of the use of mobile phones. The study's results might be useful to organisations such as UNHCR and the South Africa government. It is hoped that the study will contribute to reducing the discrimination and other challenges faced by refugees in the host country. The findings might also be of use to telecommunication companies, in terms of mobile phone usage and the service suggestions proposed by users.

1.6 Overview of the Thesis

This thesis is organised into six chapters as follows:

Chapter One: **Introduction.** This chapter describes the background of the study and provides an introduction. It outlines the research problem, research questions and objectives, research approach, research contribution, and the context of the study.

Chapter Two: **Literature review.** This chapter presents an overview of existing literature relating to the research topic in an attempt to address the research question and further define the present topic. The literature review outlines the context of the use of mobile phones, the development of social connectedness, and the condition of refugees. The chapter also indicates such gaps as exist in the literature.

Chapter Three: **Theoretical underpinning.** This chapter presents the conceptual framework adopted to investigate the use of mobile phones for social connectedness among refugees in South Africa.

Chapter Four: **Research methodology.** This chapter describes the research paradigm and methodology, as well as the sampling technique, data collection techniques and methods of analysis. The chapter also addresses the ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter Five: **Research findings.** This chapter presents the empirical findings of the study. Key themes that have emerged from the data analysis are highlighted.

Chapter Six: **Discussion and conclusion.** This chapter discusses the research findings from the data analysis to answer the research questions and address the research objective. The implications of concepts from the conceptual framework are also presented in this chapter. The chapter summarises the findings and discusses the limitations and contribution of the research. Recommendations for practice and a suggestion for further research are made.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

The objective of this chapter is to review studies on the situation of refugees, specifically in South Africa, on the use of mobile phones for the purpose of social connectedness, and on mobile phone usage among refugees. The chapter is organised as follows: Section 2.1 presents an overview of refugees globally. Section 2.2 discusses the conditions experienced by refugees in South Africa. Section 2.3 provides a description of social connectedness. Section 2.4 discusses the use of mobile phones. The chapter concludes with a summary of the literature review in Section 2.5.

2.1 Refugees Globally: An Overview

A refugee is “any person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country” (Zimmermann, Dörschner, & Machts, 2011, p. 577). There is an alarmingly high number of refugees in the world who are victims of war and political crisis (Salehyan, 2018). The global refugee crisis that has emerged in the recent past presents seemingly overwhelming challenges to society globally (Abujarour, Wiesche, Díaz Andrade, Fedorowicz, Krasnova, Olbrich, & Tan, 2019a). The term “refugee” includes people who have sought asylum in other countries, as well as internally displaced persons (IDPs). An asylum seeker permit is a temporary permit associated with an application for refugee status. If this application is denied, the asylum seeker can appeal the decision or be asked to leave the country. An IDP is a person who leaves their region of origin for reasons of disagreement or conflict, but who remains inside their own country (Mooney & Jarrah, 2005).

As per the UNHCR (2019) report, the number of refugees worldwide continues to increase every year. This situation is exacerbated by huge numbers of people who have fled their country for economic reasons (Carballo & Nerukar, 2001). Given this refugee displacement, compounded by migrancy, the possibility of continuous communication through the various regions and some kind of unification need to be considered (Marlowe, 2020). Figure 2.1 shows that global displacement has had significant growth from 2011 to the end of 2019.

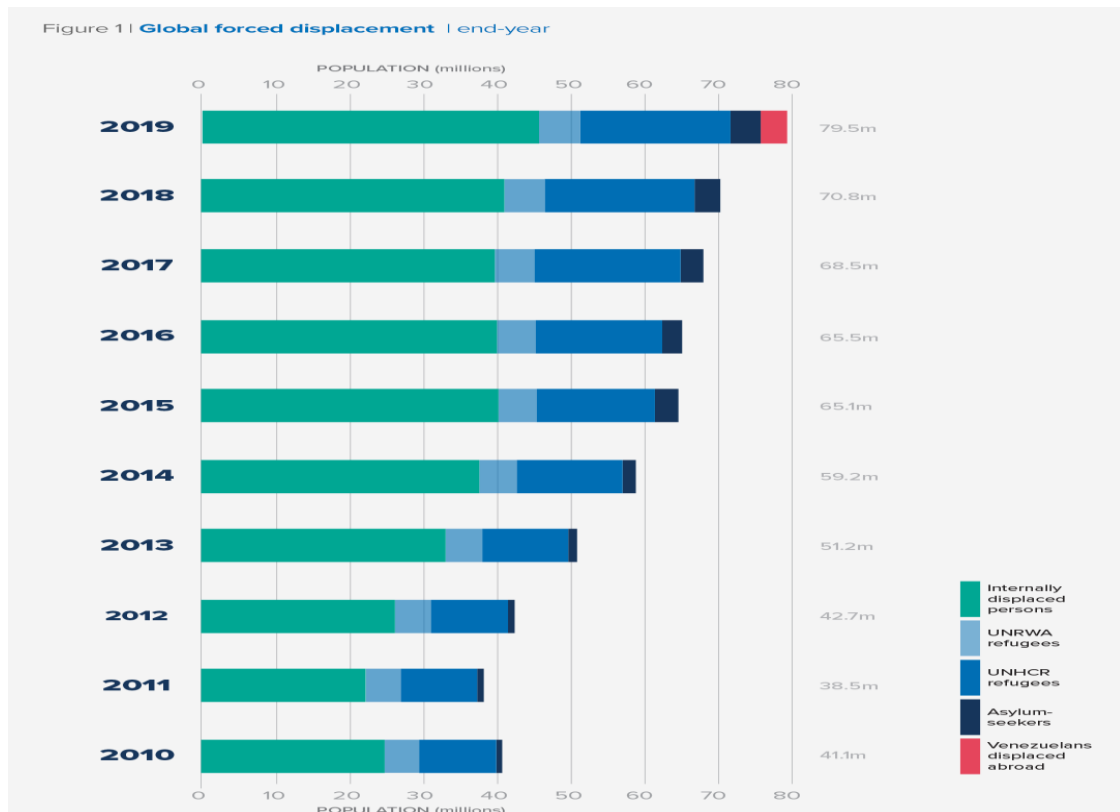


Figure 2.1: Trend of global displacement and proportion of displacing 2010-2019 (UNHCR, 2016).

Moreover, Figure 2.1 indicates that the overall proportion of refugees and asylum seekers among displaced persons has increased significantly. The number of refugees decreased between 2010 and 2011, but in the following years (2011-2019) there has been a significant increase in the total population of displaced persons, from around 38.5 million to 79.5 million. Figure 2.1 further indicates that the population of UNHCR refugees is larger than that of asylum-seekers. This status is the result of “persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order” (UNHCR, 2019, p. 2).

2.2 Conditions of Refugees in South Africa

2.2.1 South African Refugee Legislation

South Africa is a signatory to treaties recognising the rights of refugees (Rutinwa, 2018). It was party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, the 1967 UN Refugees Protocol, and the 1969 African Refugees Convention concerning certain aspects of refugees in Africa. Further, the country issued asylum legislation to endow the rights of refugees with standards and principles

initiated in international law protecting refugees. According to the Refugees Act, 130 of 1998, Section 55(a), a person qualifies for refugee status if that:

person, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted by reason of his or her race, tribe, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of his or her nationality and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, or, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his or her former habitual residence is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it. (Department of Home Affairs, 2019b)

South Africa employs a system that allows asylum seekers to live in the country freely after applying for asylum (Ruedin, 2019). The South African Refugees Act, no. 130 of 1998, authorised the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) to grant the right documentation to refugees and asylum seekers to secure their freedom and become legalised in the country. The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) is therefore committed to implementing refugee policies and providing appropriate permits and supporting documents to refugees and asylum seekers.

To upgrade the services provided by the reception offices, the Government of South Africa agreed in 2009 to cooperate with the UNHCR to improve the asylum system, provide refugees with information on their countries of origin, and furnish technical assistance and support to the reception offices (UNHCR, 2019). The South African Refugees Act Section 22(a) states that refugees are allowed “to seek employment and obtain basic education”; a temporary asylum seeker’s permit will cover them “for the duration of their legal status” (Department of Home Affairs, 2019b).

The Act stipulates that the outcome of the asylum seeker application should be issued within six months, at which time the applicant can be granted refugee status or be asked to leave the country in the absence of any other legal immigrant status (Bisimwa, 2017). Yet in practice this procedure is not strictly adhered to. Only a few people receive the outcome of their application within the prescribed period. The applications are often delayed and many wait for as long as 10 years before receiving an outcome (Bisimwa, 2017).

The Refugees Act, no. 130 of 1998, states that when an asylum application is approved, the applicants are assigned a Section 24 permit. This permit recognises them as refugees in South Africa, and is valid for four years (Department of Home Affairs, 2019a). Many refugees obtain a temporary legal document that allows them to access services. The refugee is required to

renew the temporary document before it expires. However, most of the time, refugees face challenges in the process of renewing documents such as “long queues, inability to lodge appeals, bureaucratic irregularities, and corruption” (Bisimwa, 2017, p. 17). Table 2.1 summarises the steps a refugee must take when they enter the country.

Table 2.1: Asylum seeker application process in South Africa (Department of Home Affairs, 2019a, 2019b)

Asylum seeker application process	Period
Application for asylum in person at Refugees Reception Office (RRO).	Within 14 days of the arrival
The asylum seeker is required to fill out an eligibility determination form.	–
Once this determination form has been filled out, the RRO must receive the application and issue a Section 22 asylum-seeker permit.	–
A hearing with the refugee status determination officer should be scheduled.	Any time
The status determination officer will interview an asylum seeker to assess the asylum claim.	–
If an asylum application is approved, the applicant will be issued with a Section 24 refugee status permit.	Valid for four years
The RRO must, pending the outcome of an application in terms of Section 21(1), allow the applicant to sojourn in the Republic temporarily.	–
If an asylum application is rejected then it will be classified as: “manifestly unfounded, abusive”, “fraudulent”, or just “unfounded”.	–
If an application is rejected as unfounded, applicants have a right to appeal the decision.	Within 30 days

Refugees have the right to access services such as health care and education, similar to South African citizens (Sowane, 2019). As stated in the Refugees Act 130 of 1998, Section 22(a), refugees “may temporarily reside in the Republic; and where appropriate, seek employment and obtain basic education” (Department of Home Affairs, 2019a). Table 2.2 summarises the key legislation pertaining to refugees in South Africa.

Table 2.2: Summary of the key legislation related to refugees in South Africa

Acts	Details
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Refugees Act 130 of 1988 Section 55(a)	Person qualifies for refugee status
Refugees Act 130 of 1998	Authorised the DHA to grant the legal documentation to refugees and asylum seekers
Refugees Act Section 22 (a)	Refugees allowed to work
Refugees Act 130 of 1998 Section 24	Approval of asylum application
Refugees Act 130 of 1988 Section 27(g)	Refugees can access basic health services and primary education

2.2.2 Challenges that Refugees Face in South Africa

A survey of the literature reveals that refugees face numerous challenges in South Africa (Adepoju, 2003; Bacishoga et al., 2016; Bisimwa, 2017; Crea, Loughry, O’Halloran, & Flannery, 2017; Sowane, 2019). Unemployment has a particularly potent impact on the life of migrants coming to this country in search of work opportunities or escaping critical situations in their own countries (Pillay, 2017). The reality they face upon arrival is bleaker than expected. Black South African citizens have stereotypical views about black African immigrants, regarding them as a threat in the labour market (Amnesty International, 2015). This is the chief cause of the xenophobic violence that has recurred in the country since 1994 (Pillay, 2017). The xenophobia arises from the belief that immigrants “are the cause of unemployment among nationals and that they frustrate efforts of trade unions to achieve realistic wages for the workers and improve the working conditions of the employees” (Adepoju, 2003, p. 11).

The xenophobic violence that has continued long after the demise of apartheid may in a sense be a result of the “eradication of the apartheid system” in South Africa (Dumani, 2015). Apartheid was a system of segregation on the grounds of race. Rattansi (2007) has argued how “the notion of race, and its associations with skin colour, facial features, and other aspects of physiognomy, has been intertwined, amongst other things, with issues of class, masculinity and femininity, sexuality, religion, mental illness, and the idea of the nation, and crucially, with the development of science” (p. 12). Racism is a systematic expression of the distinction between superior and inferior that exists throughout human society (Grosfoguel, 2016). In South Africa, the race-based discrimination between black and white still exists, but now also displaced onto a we/them dichotomy that “others” non-South Africans.

Xenophobia has increased over the years, with xenophobic violence mainly targeting the migrants who share phenotypic, linguistic and cultural commonalities with black South

Africans (Tewolde, 2020). Refugees are viewed as a burden on the host society and a threat to national security (Bacishoga et al., 2016). Survivors of xenophobic violence who sought medical treatment from healthcare centres in South Africa also experienced xenophobia in the processes of medical treatment they received (Zihindula et al., 2017; Sowane, 2019). Xenophobic violence is not the only risk that refugees face. The other main concerns of refugees are a lack of money and basic needs such as nutrition, English language competence, and the IT skills necessary to achieve social interaction (Bisimwa, 2017).

Refugees have described language barriers as among the major elements prompting their victimisation, with miscommunication leading at the very least to inferior service delivery (Sowane, 2019). Language issues can be detrimental to success in life. Language skills are not only used in communication but also facilitate empowerment generally. The language problem is partly why refugees experience significant psychosocial-related challenges, specifically self-doubt and depression (Crea et al., 2017). Another challenge faced by refugees is the absence of “legal security” (Kavuro, 2015), the foundation of self-reliance or earning a living through legal action. The term “legal security” refers in the case of refugees to the provision of legal status documentation (Kavuro, 2015). In addition, refugees typically face challenges in the process of renewing documents such as “long queues, inability to lodge appeals, bureaucratic irregularities, and corruption” (Bisimwa, 2017, p. 17).

2.3 Social Connectedness

Connectedness could be an important need in the everyday life of human beings (Townsend & McWhirter, 2005), incorporating self-relation in connection with other people (Wilkinson et al., 2019). Wilkinson et al. (2019) describe social connectedness as an aspect of individuality that represents the subjective acknowledgement of being in close relationship with one person or a group of people. Social connectedness can be promoted by social relationship and emotional development among individuals (Taylor, Pearlstein, Kakaria, Lyubomirsky, & Stein, 2020). The term social connectedness also alludes to a feeling of belonging, getting provided for, the process of acculturation and being bolstered by family members, friends, and associations (Foster, Horwitz, Thomas, Opperman, Gipson, Burnside, & Stone, 2017). The literature points out that social connectedness explains the capacity of an individual to collaborate (Hausknecht, Schell, Zhang, & Kaufman, 2015). A person who fails to feel connected starts feeling isolated and disconnected from others. Social connectedness can also

be perceived as a strategy to increase social experiences and integration in society (Samuel & Bagwiza, 2017).

Not being fully connected with a social community causes loneliness and boredom and can bring on feelings of homesickness (Repke & Ipsen, 2020). In this context, social activities function to reduce feelings that negatively affect the lives of refugees, such as isolation, being lost, and feeling frightened in society. Figure 2.2 illustrates the relationship between social connectedness, social participation, and loneliness:

1. Social connectedness – size of social network, number of individuals connected, and frequency of interaction;
2. Social participation – volunteering, group activities, and religious involvement; and
3. Loneliness – perception of not being socially connected.

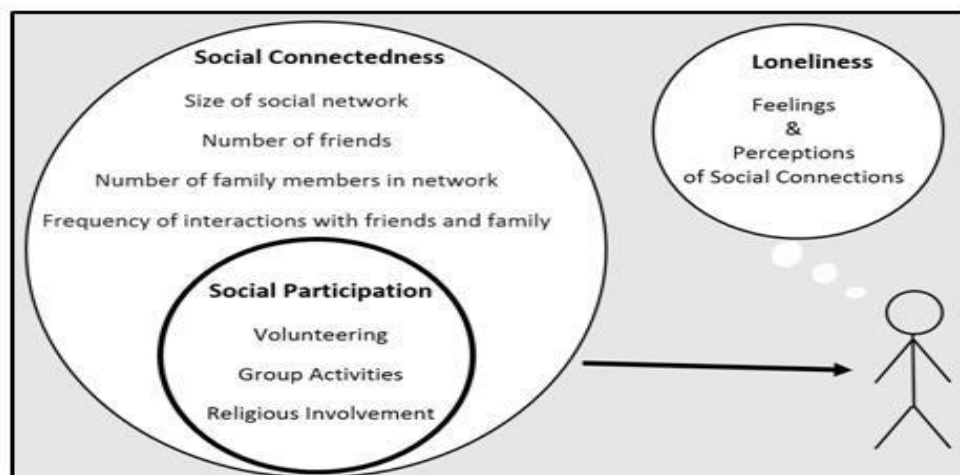


Figure 2.2: Social connectedness, social participation, and loneliness (Beer, Mitzner, & Stuck, 2015)

The existence of several close relationships, the satisfaction derived from social contacts, and the experience of loneliness are all used to measure social connectedness (Menec, Newall, Mackenzie, Shooshtari, & Nowicki, 2020). Reduced engagement by an individual in social groups and/or gatherings with other people leads to loneliness (Menec et al., 2020). It is arguable that less digitised societies face greater challenges of social connectedness because of the limited means of information sharing available. While any sort of social connectedness and participation are important in isolated communities (Repke & Ipsen, 2020), individuals tend to

regard the connections created through technological links as weak compared to face-to-face connections (Francis et al., 2020).

2.3.1 The Benefits of Social Connectedness

Social connectedness is associated with social interaction and relationships with others (Wilkinson et al., 2019). An increased sense of social connectedness can help people to obtain emotional wellbeing and reduce feelings of isolation (Wilkinson et al., 2019). Further, social connectedness has been credited with diminishing the rate and prevalence of depression (Cruwys, Dingle, Haslam, Jetten, & Morton, 2013). Moreover, relationships with family, ethnic group, and host country are believed to have multiple and interrelated integration outcomes, including language acquisition, cultural knowledge, belonging, identity, civic engagement, social and economic participation, and access to public services (De Anstiss, Savelsberg, & Ziaian, 2019). Networking with friends and family facilitates a sense of belonging and wellbeing (Skierkowski & Wood, 2012; Beer et al., 2015). Having a sense of belonging makes people feel secure, esteemed and included (Southwick & Southwick, 2020).

Social connectedness has a huge impact on the observed simplicity of practice, helpfulness, and gratification offered by social commerce (Cho & Son, 2019). The more people experience friendliness and social support from others, the more they notice social commerce as “easy to use, useful, and enjoyable” (Cho & Son, 2019, p. 12). Social connectedness is essential from a health perspective, and arguably also for building the kind of social cohesion (Thomas, 2019) that can result in a stronger society (Thomas et al., 2020).

Although, at the present time, one of the ways of combatting the spread of the coronavirus is to practise social distancing, people can do this while maintaining social connectedness (Bergman, Bethell, Gombojav, Hassink, & Stange, 2020). The provision of emotional support for those who are vulnerable and isolated is vital (Bergman et al., 2020). A person who is amiable and contributes to community initiatives will likely engage in charitable activities and offer support to others, which in turn has a positive influence on their behaviour (Lee, Draper, & Lee, 2001). Table 2.3 presents an overview of the benefits of social connectedness.

Table 2.3: Overview of the benefits of social connectedness

Description	References
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- Facilitation of health and wellbeing	Beer et al. (2015) Wilkinson et al. (2019)
- Reduce sense of isolation	Wilkinson et al. (2019)
- Economic development	De Anstiss et al. (2019) Cho and Son (2019)
- Personal sense of satisfaction	Thomas et al. (2020)
- Indicative of the main objective and ambition in human wellbeing	Thomas et al. (2020) Cruwys et al. (2013)
- Emotional support	Bergman et al. (2020)

2.3.2 Acculturation Process

Acculturation is a process of socialisation which helps reproduce standards of culture, qualities, and ideas (Kim & Alamilla, 2017). The literature describes the culture as comprising the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music, and arts. Acculturation is a process of culture change that involves connecting with a community that has a dissimilar cultural background from one's own (Berry, 2012). Acculturative change is usually the result of cultural transmission (Bhugra, 2016). From a psychological perspective, culture is “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from other” (Hofstede, 2001, p. 5). Generally, people learn deictically by practising and participating in the activities of a particular culture (Veissière, Constant, Ramstead, Friston, & Kirmayer, 2019). Habits, principles, and expectations are developed by individuals through their deep involvement in cultural activities (Veissiere, 2016).

Any local culture reflects the nature of the country or area in which it is based; it develops out of the region and reflects the culture of its community (Edensor, 2020). Regional identity is thus defined by physical characteristics and culture (e.g., history, ethnicity, poetry, and song) differentiate it from other regions (Kotler & Gertner, 2001). Regional culture has an important effect on people's behaviour (Bisconsin-Júnior et al., 2020).

The aptitude to network with a new culture can reduce loneliness (Ma, 2020) and provide an opportunity for making new friends. Yet, making friends and developing new relationships in a monocultural community are difficult processes (AbuJarour, Bergert, Gundlach, Köster, &

Krasnova, 2019b). The stressful and difficult adjustment to another culture, the task of acculturation, can sometimes be exaggerated by the insularity of the culture concerned and result in too much emphasis on restricted, arbitrary standards (Toth-Boss, Wisse, & Farago, 2020).

2.3.3 The Creation of a Sense of Belonging

Belongingness is a measure of individuals' participation, of the extent to which they can recognise themselves as part of society (Liu, Xiao, Fang, Zhang, & Lin, 2020). The most common source of a sense of belonging is the understanding of a particular set of human values, aspirations, and desires (Liu et al., 2020). The inability to find a sense of belonging can be unbearably painful to human beings (Cameron & Granger, 2020). The experience of belongingness develops emotional connections and conquers the feeling of loneliness for individuals (Liu et al., 2020), thus improving their lifestyle (Strang & Quinn, 2013). A sense of belonging is an essential part of a secured future for youngsters (Allsopp & Chase, 2019), and key to developing the level of integration in a society. The development of a sense of belonging strengthens connections between unfamiliar persons and improves relations among family and friends (Vella, Johnson, Cheng, Davenport, Mitchell, Klarkowski, & Phillips, 2019).

2.4 Mobile Phone Usage

Mobile phones are an important communication device in developed and developing countries (Bacishoga et al., 2016). The literature testifies to the impact of mobile phones in supporting the general progress of human beings, and notes how they have become the primary device for communication (Chen & Li, 2017). A mobile phone can be a lifesaver, especially for desperate people (Nguyen, Chib & Mahalingam, 2017; Marlowe, 2020), and both an incentive and a means to communicate with others anywhere in the world (Marlowe, 2019). Moreover, mobile phones have significant implications for developing a sense of relatedness among people (Walker et al., 2015).

2.4.1 Benefits of Mobile Phones in South Africa

The mobile phone is an increasingly significant device for communication in South African society (Bacishoga et al., 2016). South Africans have access to the most advanced communication devices and telecommunication networks in Africa, including the latest

developments in fixed-line. In South Africa, the presence of mobile phones provides more opportunities for communication than fixed-line telephones (Hawthorne, 2018), which is why mobile phones are “the most accessed ICTs in South Africa” (Chiumbu & Ligaga, 2013, p. 246). The use of digital devices has significantly reduced the cost of many services, such as medical support, learning, and transport (Mancini, Sibilla, Argiropoulos, Rossi, & Everri, 2019). The increasing use of mobile phones also plays a significant role in South Africa's economic, social and political development (Chiumbu & Ligaga, 2013). Connectedness and integration through mobile phone usage can be deemed critical from a health perspective, and arguably also for building social cohesion. The literature reviewed indicates that information transmission is the building block of social participation, while at the same time representing a potential stumbling block in community-based programmes (Mahoney & Siyambalapitiya, 2017). Table 2.4 presents a summary of the benefits of mobile phone usage.

Table 2.4: Summary of the benefits of mobile phones in South Africa

Benefit of the use of mobile phone	References
Increase advanced communication between individuals	Bacishoga et al. (2016)
Assist in delivering services to and from different organisations	Harney (2013)
Reduce the cost of medical support, education, transport	Mancini et al. (2019)
Provide information transition for community-based programmes.	Mahoney and Siyambalapitiya (2017)
Play a significant role in economic growth, social development, and political activity.	Chiumbu and Ligaga, (2013)

2.4.2 Use of Mobile Phones among Refugees

Mobile phones are important tools for promoting and facilitating the wellbeing of people, especially refugees (Dahya & Dryden-Peterson, 2017). The sharing of knowledge, support, and the exchange of information through electronic communication are progressively impacting the integration of refugees (Marlowe, 2019). Mobile phones can also help the refugees to integrate in their new community by facilitating learning new languages, cultural participation, and bridging into a new society (De Anstiss et al., 2019). The ability to link up with other refugees is hugely reassuring for refugees and helps them establish trust, gain happiness, and

start to build their future (Alencar, Kondova, & Ribbens, 2019). In the process, there is a reduction in negative feelings such as fear, anxiety, and stress (Alencar et al., 2019).

Mobile phones enable refugees to develop ties in their new environment and provide options for participating in various services (Walker et al., 2015). They enable refugees and residents to know each other, resulting in mutual wellbeing and stronger social integration (Chib & Aricat, 2017; Abujarour et al., 2019a). The value of mobile phones for refugees is highlighted by aspects such as the cost-efficiency of communication through social media (Alencar et al., 2019). Further, using mobile phones can play an important role in the development of social capital, thereby aiding in the social and economic integration of refugees into the community (Mahoney & Siyambalapatiya, 2017). Gaining social connectedness has helped refugees to become strong in their self-advocacy (Mentor, 2015).

Other studies have observed how refugees have used communication technology to reduce the impact of uncertainty about the wellbeing of friends and family and the general circumstances in their home country (Strang & Quinn, 2013; Alencar et al., 2019). For communication purposes, refugees rely on mobile phone affordances to bridge into the new society and gain connectivity (Kutscher & Kreß, 2018). Affordances are the links between the subject and the characteristics of the situation (Chemero, 2003). Refugees use various platforms to bring together their families and friends via audio and visual interaction (Kutscher and Kreß, 2018; Marlowe, 2019). Mobile phones are essential for refugees to receive advice and emotional support from their siblings (Dekker, Engbersen, Klaver, & Vonk, 2018), and they afford them various opportunities to develop ties to cultural associations and participate in activities such as gatherings and support groups (Liamputtong et al., 2016). The aspect of improving social integration by mobile phones for refugees is also demonstrated by Walker et al. (2015). Benefits flowing from the use of mobile phones among refugees, as presented in the literature, are summarised in Table 2.5, below.

Table 2.5: Summary of the advantages of mobile phone usage for refugees

Aspect	Description	Authors
Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduces isolation, loneliness of refugees. - Contributes towards the positive wellbeing of the refugees. 	Liamputtong et al. (2016) Dahya and Dryden-Peterson (2017)

Integration	Supports the successful integration of refugees in society. Breaks down barriers to integration.	De Anstiss et al.(2019)
Emotional support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enables refugees to access different services and assists in emotional support. - Refugees received social and emotional support by communicating with their friends and family from their countries of origin through mobile phones. 	Dekker et al. (2018)
Social environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opens up life opportunities for refugees, including access to medical care facilities, jobs, learning, etc. 	Walker et al. (2015)
Family & friends connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refugees obtain social and emotional support by communicating with their relatives from their countries of origin. - The connection between refugees and their family from their countries of origin via mobile phones improves their interpersonal connectedness. 	Alencar et al. (2019) Marlowe (2019)

2.5 Summary of Literature Review

Mobile phones are today essential for communication between individuals, including refugees. Refugees are individuals who have escaped their country of origin due to unbearable living conditions such as persecution, war, or violence (Kavuro, 2015). South Africa has promulgated asylum legislation to guarantee the rights of refugees, with standards and principles initiated in international law protecting refugees. Yet refugees have experienced xenophobic violence in South Africa, even when seeking emergency health care (Zihindula et al., 2017), and face many other challenges, including legal security. Studies have found that refugees use mobile phones as the main instrument for communication with friends and family, as well as to help rebuild their lives in the host country by facilitating social participation and thus a sense of belonging.

Chapter 3. Theoretical Underpinning of the Study

A theoretical framework can be utilised to clarify a phenomenon under study, to direct the investigator regarding the problem to be studied, and to indicate how the analysis should be performed (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). The purpose of this chapter is to describe the conceptual framework that guided this study's research approach.

Section 3.1 discusses the theoretical background, while Section 3.2 presents the conceptual framework. Subsequent sections address certain key concepts with a bearing on the overall research trajectory.

3.1 Theoretical Background

The general context of individuals' lives – including their background, culture, ethnicity, emotions, and life situation – is highly relevant to the development of social connectedness. There have been various attempts to theorise this complex set of interrelations, some of which have been used in social connectedness studies to measure the effect of the use of ICTs on motivating individuals. These include Sen's Capability Approach, Sociotechnical System Theory, Communication Privacy Management Theory, and the Theoretical Framework for Social Connectedness through Texting. But none of these theories is entirely satisfactory, and they are not applied in this study. A brief description and account of their limitations appear in Table 3.1. The theories are illustrated diagrammatically in Appendix G.

Table 3.1: Theories considered in this study

Theory	Author	Description	Limitation
Sociotechnical Systems Theory (STS)	Bostrom & Heinen (1977)	Improve the orientation and connection between the social and technical features of the structure, while taking into consideration the environment.	STS focuses on individuals, but is limited when seen from the bigger socio-technical system perspective. It does not discuss the individual's engagement with another community.
Communication Privacy	Petronio (2015)	Covers the social engagement of an individual from self-	CPMT discusses the social engagement of individuals through texting, but

Management Theory (CPMT)		disclosure and private-disclosure perspectives. CPMT focuses on how individuals disclose their private information.	prioritises privacy management over communication.
Theoretical Framework for Social Connectedness through Texting	Mentor (2011)	Defines the socio-emotional and cognitive processing effects related to the text designs, and describes the socio-emotional and social connection as keys of interconnectedness.	SCT discusses the social network of individuals mediated by ICTs, but has limitations in terms of texting.

These theories demonstrate the significance of interaction among individuals in society. However, due to the limitations outlined above, the theories were not adopted in this study. As noted in Chapter 1, this study is concerned with the social use of mobile phones by vulnerable individuals. It seeks to investigate how mobile phone usage can promote social connectedness among refugees.

3.2 Proposed Conceptual Framework

Refugees can communicate and trigger social connectedness through ICTs, and specifically through mobile phones (Kavuro, 2015). Van Belle, Smolders, and Jsselsteijn (2009) give an account of the concept and measurement of social connectedness. They suggest that the use of communication technologies enhances a sense of belonging and relatedness. “The ever-extending palette of communication devices, including telephone, text messaging, email, instant messaging, online communities, and awareness systems has broadened our communication horizon meaningfully” (Van Belle et al., 2009, p. 68). They argue that the social psychology of communication indicates how it conduces to a sense of belonging and the achievement of social connectedness. Further, they provide preliminary propositions concerning approaches to promote social connectedness, including relationship salience and social appraisal. Relationship salience comprises informing individuals about their social relationships, while social appraisal improves their satisfaction through their social situation. These are the factors that help refugees to achieve social connectedness, and measure the extent of that achievement (see Figure 3.1).

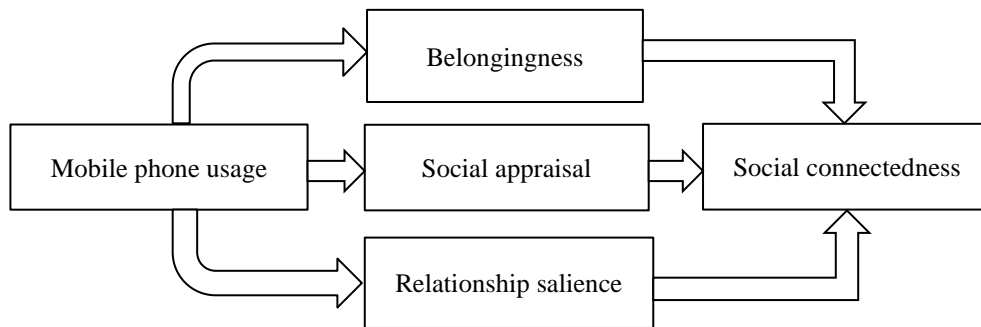


Figure 3.1: A proposed conceptual framework for the link between social connectedness and mobile phones

The choice of conceptual framework is motivated by the literature review. This framework permits the investigator to analyse precisely how the adoption of mobile phones and their usage among refugees might help them to attain social connectedness. It also focuses on social situations and the integration of the refugees through their use of mobile phones.

3.3 Social Appraisal

Appraisal relates to the inner core of emotional experiences (Moors, 2020). In appraisal processes, emotions are evaluated and considered as reflecting people’s personal judgment of circumstances and the meaning to be given to them (Scherer, Schorr, & Johnstone, 2001). Appraisal theory tends to study processes at the level of the individual (Moors, 2020), sometimes at the cost of considering the social environment (Van Belle et al., 2009). Social appraisal is not simply the fact that other people are involved in an event. It includes the appraisal – consideration – of other people’s reactions in shaping each other’s emotions (Mumenthaler & Sander, 2012). The whole process is socially shaped: emotions are caused or influenced by social and cultural factors (Mumenthaler & Sander, 2012). Social appraisal is defined as assessments concerning one’s social condition (Van Belle et al., 2009). It is an outcome of social knowledge and has a significant impact on emotional development in all cultures (Scherer et al., 2001).

Social appraisal tends to rely for its assessments on inferences drawn from the obvious behaviour of others (Parkinson, 2011). Refugees are connected with the host society, local culture and their own culture as well. Their relationships with these influence their perception

of the situation in which they live. For example, if everybody is worried about xenophobic attacks or feels discriminated against due to their lack of knowledge of the host community's language, the fear will grow. On the other hand, if the refugees develop an understanding of the host culture, on top of the surviving link with their culture of origin, this will enable them to participate socially and integrate into the host country's activities, and experience the positive emotional reward of doing so. For example, as they gain more knowledge of the local language(s), they will feel more accepted.

3.4 Relationship Salience

Relationship salience refers to the degree of connection expressed in social relationships between individuals (Van Belle et al., 2009). Wu (2019) describes relationship salience as the degree to which one person knows about the relationship or has a relationship at the forefront of her/his thoughts. Relationship salience reflects the benefits of people connecting and upholding experiences of togetherness (Howard, Kjeldskov, Skov, Garnæs, & Grünberger, 2006; Van Belle et al., 2009). To capture such experiences, people produce artefacts that capture other individuals' thoughts and the sensation of being together even without social contact or in physical separation (Van Belle et al., 2009). People achieve social salience when they have explicit social similarities. The more they communicate the more salient the relationships become. Constant communication is essential for developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships.

Relationship salience involves experiences such as the sense of being in touch and of continuing presence despite absence (Van Belle et al., 2009). That touch can be indicative of the touch provider's love and care (Jakubiak & Social, 2017). This can promote inherent, selfless desire, and a willingness to sacrifice, as people pay more attention to their partners or relatives (Wu, 2019). Refugees typically experience feelings of loneliness caused by physical separation from their loved ones. This has a negative effect on their life conditions in the host country. However, if they are able to communicate with their family and friends from their home countries, amongst themselves and with the local community, they can stay strong and not feel depressed. This will renew their sense of hope and help them become more integrated into their new home.

3.5 Belongingness

Belongingness answers to the need of an individual to be associated and participate actively in a specific group where they can feel secure, included and approved (Thomas, 2019). The term belongingness has been defined as follows: “the deeply personal and contextually mediated experience that evolves in response to the degree to which an individual feels (a) secure, accepted, included, valued, and respected by a defined group, (b) connected with or integral to the group, and (c) that their professional and/or personal values are in harmony with those of the group” (Levett-Jones, Lathlean, Higgins, & McMillan, 2009, p. 440).

Belonging to a community is a key component of human wellbeing (Moeller, Seehuus, & Peisch, 2020). The more human beings integrate into a society, the stronger their sense of belongingness becomes. Integration into a community is significant for decreasing an individual’s sense of isolation or exclusion (Bisimwa, 2017). Being excluded creates inequality and marginalisation for individuals (Kollamparambil, 2020). Further, a sense of belonging reflects an individual’s understanding of the extent of their social support and participation, the extent to which they can recognise themselves as part of a community (Liu et al., 2020). Studies (e.g. Kavuro, 2015) that require the comprehension of connectedness in communities often approach it from the perspective of a sense of belonging. The anger, dissatisfaction or sorrow accompanying the sense of not belonging can affect the capacity of the person to operate fully in life (Cameron & Granger, 2020). The more their sense of belonging increases, the more they feel integrated in the new place.

3.6 Social Connectedness

Connectedness involves valuing relationships and being sensitive to the outcome of one’s actions on others (Wilkinson et al., 2019). The literature suggested that, in social connectedness, the benefit of acculturation in the context of culture and language can promote emotional wellbeing and close relationships. Cognitive and emotional reactions represent the interest earned from contextual value, a source of inspiration that leads to positive behaviour (Cameron & Granger, 2020). As explained in Section 2.3, one’s guardians, other relatives, instructors, and parental figures can promote social connectedness by communicating sincerely and truly, as well as by providing understanding and support.

3.7 Summary of the Chapter

The aim of this chapter was to discuss the theoretical underpinnings of the study. Thus a conceptual framework for understanding social connectedness was proposed, informed by a review of the literature. The social connectedness conceptual framework is essential to assessment of the link between mobile phones and the social wellbeing of refugees. It also requires an understanding of the concepts of belongingness, social appraisal, and relationship salience. These concepts and their interrelations were defined and explained. In sum, to achieve social connectedness, appropriate degrees of belongingness, social appraisal, and relationship salience are needed (Van Belle et al., 2009).

Chapter 4. Research Methodology

Research methodology refers to the systematic way in which we go about discovering knowledge (Creswell & Robinson, 2007). This chapter presents the research methodology deployed in this study, arranged in the following way: Section 4.1 describes the research philosophy, Section 4.2 highlights the research approach, and Section 4.3 discusses the research strategy. Section 4.4 presents the sampling techniques, while data collection techniques are outlined in Section 4.5. Section 4.6 discusses the methods of data analysis, and the issues of research validity and reliability are canvassed in Section 4.7. Section 4.8 presents research ethics and approval, and the chapter concludes with a summary in Section 4.9.

4.1 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy covers the researcher's ontological and epistemological perspectives (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality, while epistemology refers to how knowledge about that reality can be acquired. A basic ontological question is whether there is a single objective reality independent of the actors within it, or multiple subjective realities, so that "reality" becomes something to be interpreted and negotiated (Hughes & Sharrock, 2016). This study proceeded within a subjective research ontology when exploring and developing an understanding of social connectedness in mobile phone usage among refugees. Reality is subjective to the extent that it should be understood from the context in which it is investigated and from the perspective of the person experiencing it (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2015). Assuming this ontological position, the researcher tries to understand people through the phenomena under study (Wahyuni, 2012).

Epistemology here to the researcher's perspective on how knowledge is produced (Creswell & Robinson, 2007). Is knowledge a matter of accessing an absolute truth that is out there waiting to be discovered, or is it socially constructed, living only in the minds of people (Creswell & Robinson, 2007)? Three epistemological perspectives are relevant in qualitative research in the area of information systems: positivist, interpretive, and critical (Becker & Niehaves, 2007; Myers & Klein, 2011). Positivist research focuses on scientific evidence through structured propositions, experimental hypotheses, and sampling assumptions (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). In a critical research perspective, social reality is "produced and reproduced by people" (Zihindula et al., 2017, p. 42). Interpretivists take this a stage further, arguing that fundamental laws and observations cannot explain social realities. They try rather to

comprehend a situation through analysing social interactions (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007). Interpretivists believe that social realities are inherently meaningful and should be viewed through participants' perspectives and actions (Pascale, 2011). Therefore, what holds true today might not hold true in the future, which means that social context is important to an understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Livesey, Morrison, Clift, & Camic, 2012).

The researcher adopted an interpretivist epistemology for this study. The interpretive perspective facilitated a deeper and more detailed understanding of the use of mobile phones by refugees, and of the reality of the social connectedness that is thereby constructed.

4.2 Research Approach

Qualitative data analysis can use both inductive and deductive approaches (Armat, Assarroudi, Rad, Sharifi, & Heydari, 2018). A deductive approach refers to “data analyses that set out to test whether data are consistent with prior assumptions, theories, or hypotheses identified or constructed by an investigator” (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). Deductive data analysis is thus informed by a theory or framework that supports the research (Thomas, 2006). In the inductive approach, a researcher identifies initial relationships and expands and qualifies these as the inquiry progresses, seeking to explain or determine the meaning of the knowledge gained (Neuman, 2014).

This study adopted a deductive approach, making use of the conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 3.1. The initial framework was informed by the literature review. The data collection and analysis were guided by themes emerging from this framework.

4.3 Research Strategy

A qualitative research approach views “human thought and behaviour in a social context and covers a wide range of phenomena to understand and appreciate them thoroughly” (Daniel, 2016, p. 93). It uses arguments and observations to reveal truth, focusing on the efforts of individuals in normal circumstances to define their reality (Amaratunga, Baldry, Sarshar, & Newton, 2002). Various human behaviours, including communication, opinion, thinking, structure, and standards, are investigated in a systematic manner through in-depth analysis of phenomena (Daniel, 2016). This approach respects the experiences of real-life persons and examines them in detail (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020). In a qualitative study, data is

collected through interviews, documents, and observation, in order to identify and describe social and cultural phenomena.

Qualitative research involves the gathering and investigation of a diversity of empirical resources: case study, individual understanding, self-examination, interviews, and cultural texts and results. These include observed and/or documented interaction and visual content that represents the significance of both ordinary and challenging times in people's lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Qualitative research allows the researcher to gain a thorough comprehension of the cultural and social situation in which participants in the study are involved (Myers & Newman, 2007). The objective of qualitative research is to explore structured understandings on the basis of rich, appropriate, and accurate information. The study adopted this approach because its focus is on participants' unique experiences of social connectedness through using a mobile phone.

4.4 Sampling Techniques

This study adopted a purposive and convenience sampling technique to select participants. Purposive sampling, typically employed in qualitative studies (Ramorola, 2013), involves choosing individuals who meet the requirement as defined by the researcher of being able to provide the necessary information (Sekaran, 2003). A sample of refugees appropriate to the scope of the study was identified and invited to participate in the interviews and WhatsApp chat. Convenience sampling involves the selection of the most accessible subjects (Marshall, 1996). The researcher selected participants from among the refugees she knew or who had been introduced to her by an organisation, and who were willing to participate in the research (Etikan, Abubakar Musa, & Sunusi Alkassim, 2016). To look for refugees, I went in front of the offices where the refugees are queuing to apply for documents, and I asked if there is someone whose interested to participate in the study.

The researcher tried to balance the sample according to age, gender, location, and level of education. This was necessary because the study sought to understand the views of people from a variety of refugee groups. The sample also included old-timer refugees and newcomers, the former being those who had lived in South Africa for more than a year and had already been granted legal refugee status, the latter, those who had lived in the country for less than a year, had applied for refugee status, but whose applications were still under consideration. The

researcher interviewed only refugees who owned or used mobile phones and were at least 18 years old.

The researcher chose to work with people with legally valid permits because refugees are vulnerable people due to their temporary status. Asylum seekers who had not applied for a permit or whose permit had expired and not been renewed were illegal immigrants and represented an even more vulnerable category of people. The interviews were conducted among refugees residing in Cape Town because the researcher had ready access to them. The selection criteria for participants are summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Summary of selection criteria for participants

Criteria	Details
Status	Refugees with valid legal documents
Location	Cape Town
Age	>=18
Digital	Use mobile phones
Gender	Male and female
Language spoken	English and French

4.5 Data Collection

In this study, the data was collected through two techniques, semi-structured interviews and WhatsApp group chat.

4.5.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews are a common method of gathering data for qualitative research, as they consist of “talking, and talking is natural” (Griffie & Hitchcock, 2005). The interviews for the study were conducted face-to-face to enable the researcher to obtain maximum information from the respondents, comprising details of their actions and attitudes. The interview conversation was started with a presentation and outline of the research, and continued with the questions on the interview schedule (Thomas, 2013). With the agreement of the participants, the interviews were on average lasted to 30 minutes.

Interviews can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured (Myers & Newman, 2007). The study used semi-structured interviews because it allowed the researcher to ask open-ended

questions (Sankar & Jones, 2007). Semi-structured interviews consist of “several key questions that not only help to define areas to be explored, but also allow the interviewer or interviewee to pursue an idea or response in more detail” (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008, p. 291). Since refugees are usually a vulnerable population category, this approach helped them to speak freely and explain the challenges they faced in respect of social connectedness in South Africa.

4.5.2 WhatsApp Chat

A WhatsApp group was used for the second phase of data collection. WhatsApp is the most popular instant messaging mobile phone application in South Africa (Mpungose, 2020). It permits smartphone users to send text messages to, call, and video chat with an individual or a group of persons (Church & De Oliveira, 2013). A WhatsApp group chat is a common feature for the application. The researcher created a group for the purposes of the study, to open the discussion to new topics or to elaborate answers to questions raised during the interviews. The group, named “Research data collection,” was created on 22 January 2020, with the researcher as group administrator. Table 4.2 presents information about the WhatsApp group data collection.

Table 4.2: Summary of WhatsApp group information

Description	Details
Number of members	15
How many people actually contributed	9
Number of messages	36
Date established	January 22, 2020

During the interviews, the respondents were asked if they were keen to be added to a WhatsApp group with other participants to further discuss the research topic. The 15 participants who consented (out of the 27 interviewed) were added to the WhatsApp chat group. The participants used the English language and openly shared their views without mentioning their names. WhatsApp group chat was open for the group members to communicate anytime.

In the WhatsApp group chat, the group members debated and shared their understanding of how the usage of mobile phones helped them to achieve social connectedness. This offered the researcher an opportunity to engage with the participants.

4.5.3 Research Instruments

The design of the interview allowed respondents to provide sufficient information to enable the study to obtain appropriate answers. South Africa has a mixed refugee population of people from various countries with different cultures and languages. The interview questionnaire was designed in two languages, French and English, as these are the languages used by the majority of refugee communities. The choice was influenced by the researcher's knowledge of these two languages, which meant that interpreters were not required during data collection. Elements of the conceptual framework informed the interview schedule, which was divided into five major parts:

- Section A: demographic questions
- Section B: belongingness questions
- Section C: social appraisal questions
- Section D: relationship salience questions
- Section E: concluding questions that enabled participants to express their understanding and provide suggestions relating to individual experiences and challenges faced while using mobile phones to achieve social connectedness.

A mobile phone and recording device were used in gathering data. The researcher took notes during the interview sessions to capture ideas and key points highlighted by participants. The recorded interviews were transcribed as Microsoft Word documents. The interview question schedule is presented in Appendix E and Appendix F.

4.5.4 Research Time Frame

Studies could be either longitudinal or cross-sectional. Longitudinal studies are conducted over a long period of time, while cross-sectional studies are conducted over a short period and aim to offer a snapshot view of that time (Levin, 2006). This study adopted a cross-sectional time-frame due to the time limitations of the Master's programme. The data was collected between November 2019 and February 2020. The research plan is attached in Appendix A.

4.6 Data Analysis Methodology

Thematic analysis was applied in this research. Braun and Clarke (2006) recommend thematic analysis as a way of analysing data in qualitative research. Thematic analysis is guided by the themes necessary for explanation of the phenomenon under investigation (Kiger & Varpio,

2020). Braun & Clarke (2006) distinguish six phases in thematic analysis: familiarisation with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing a report. These six phases are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Six phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Phases	Description
Phase 1	Familiarisation with data: This phase involves the act of transcribing the data, becoming familiar with the data, and creating meaning rather than putting sounds or words on paper.
Phase 2	Generating initial codes: This phase involves noting and organizing interesting features and relevant data into meaningful groups.
Phase 3	Searching for themes: The different codes are sorting the different codes into potential themes. Relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes are collated.
Phase 4	Reviewing themes: This phase involves refining the candidate themes, forming coherent patterns to form a thematic map, and assessing whether themes work with coded extracts.
Phase 5	Defining and naming themes: At this stage, the researcher defines and refines the themes into clearly defined what each theme represents.
Phase 6	Producing report: This phase involves a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive final analysis by demonstrating the commonness of the theme through data extracts, and making an argument that relates to the research question. A report is then produced.

The researcher transcribed the interviews and interpreted their content by carefully reading each statement to better understand the context and intent of the speaker. The emerging themes were tracked and populated across different constructs within the conceptual framework. The process of thematic analysis went through six phases, making use of qualitative data analysis software called NVIVO.

4.7 Research Validity and Reliability

The data gathered for this research was used to obtain the findings and results of the study. The qualitative data gathering process facilitated the trustworthiness and consistency of the research. It is essential to establish the validity and reliability of the data to evaluate the accuracy and reliability of the research results (Thomas, 2013).

4.7.1 Research Validity

The validity of a qualitative study is measured by the reasonableness and accuracy of the data and its ability to stand up to questioning (Chen, Huang, & Davison, 2017). Validity is thus an expression of the credibility and accuracy of the data (Bernard, 2006). In qualitative research, two perspectives are relevant: internal validity and external validity. Internal validity certifies that repeated checks to maximise understanding have been done. This includes the accuracy of the data and looking for bias in explanation during analysis (Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001). External validity refers to the degree to which the research results can be generalised from the data in question (Thomas, 2013). To establish the internal validity of the study, the researcher ensured that the data gathered was treated with care and that the themes that emerged were consistent and comprehensive when analysed. Further, low-inference descriptors such as quotations were utilised to outline the applicability of the themes. External validity was accomplished by documenting the steps taken to ensure the generalisability of the research.

4.7.2 Research Reliability

Reliability refers to the stability of research findings and the possibility of precise replication of the process (Golafshani, 2003). Reliability in qualitative research is measured by the consistency of the results over time and the accuracy of the findings. Reliability is informed by the data collection method(s): for example, collecting data from multiple sources or using multiple research instruments is called triangulation (Golafshani, 2003). Triangulation enhances reliability by ensuring the compressibility and comprehensibility of data, and seeing to it that data ignored by one technique is attended to by other techniques (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

We achieved a degree of data triangulation by using two data collection techniques: interviews and WhatsApp. Data triangulation assisted in validating the specific information presented by the interviewees. The researcher performed a verification method to evaluate, validate, and demonstrate the significance of the data collecting approach, the aim of the research, and the data collected (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). The verification process was achieved by “checking, confirming, making sure, and being certain” of the significance of the data gathered to the research (Morse et al., 2002, p. 17).

4.8 Research Ethics and Approval

Research ethics is the application of moral principles in the planning, conducting, and reporting of the outcomes of the research (Myers, 2009). Four ethical principles could be applied to the conduct of research: truthfulness, thoroughness, objectivity, and relevance (McNabb, 2002). This study recognised and adhered to these four principles.

The study obtained ethics approval from the University of Cape Town (UCT) Ethics Committee. Further, the researcher followed the code of conduct as established by the committee. Before conducting the interviews, participants were asked to consent to the interview being recorded. The participants read and signed the consent form. The researcher made them aware that their participation in the study was voluntary, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. She also emphasised that all information would be treated confidentially and used for research purposes only.

Data was stored on a secure UCT data repository and could be accessed by password; only the researcher and supervisor had access to the data. The data was treated with confidentiality at all times, and participants' identities were anonymised. Further, the identities of the members of the ethics committee were anonymised. The ethics approval letter is attached as Appendix B.

4.9 Research Method Summary

This chapter presented the methodology employed in the study. A qualitative research approach was considered appropriate to obtain a deep and nuanced understanding of the benefit of the use of mobile phones for social connectedness among refugees living in South Africa. This study pursued qualitative research, based on an inductive approach (defined as a systematic procedure for analysing qualitative data guided by specific evaluation objectives). Multiple data collection strategies were applied. Thematic analysis was performed to analyse the data collected from participants. The data collection method and triangulation ensured the validity and reliability of the research conducted. The chapter closed with a description of the ethical issues that were considered. The design of the research method is summarised in Figure 4.1.

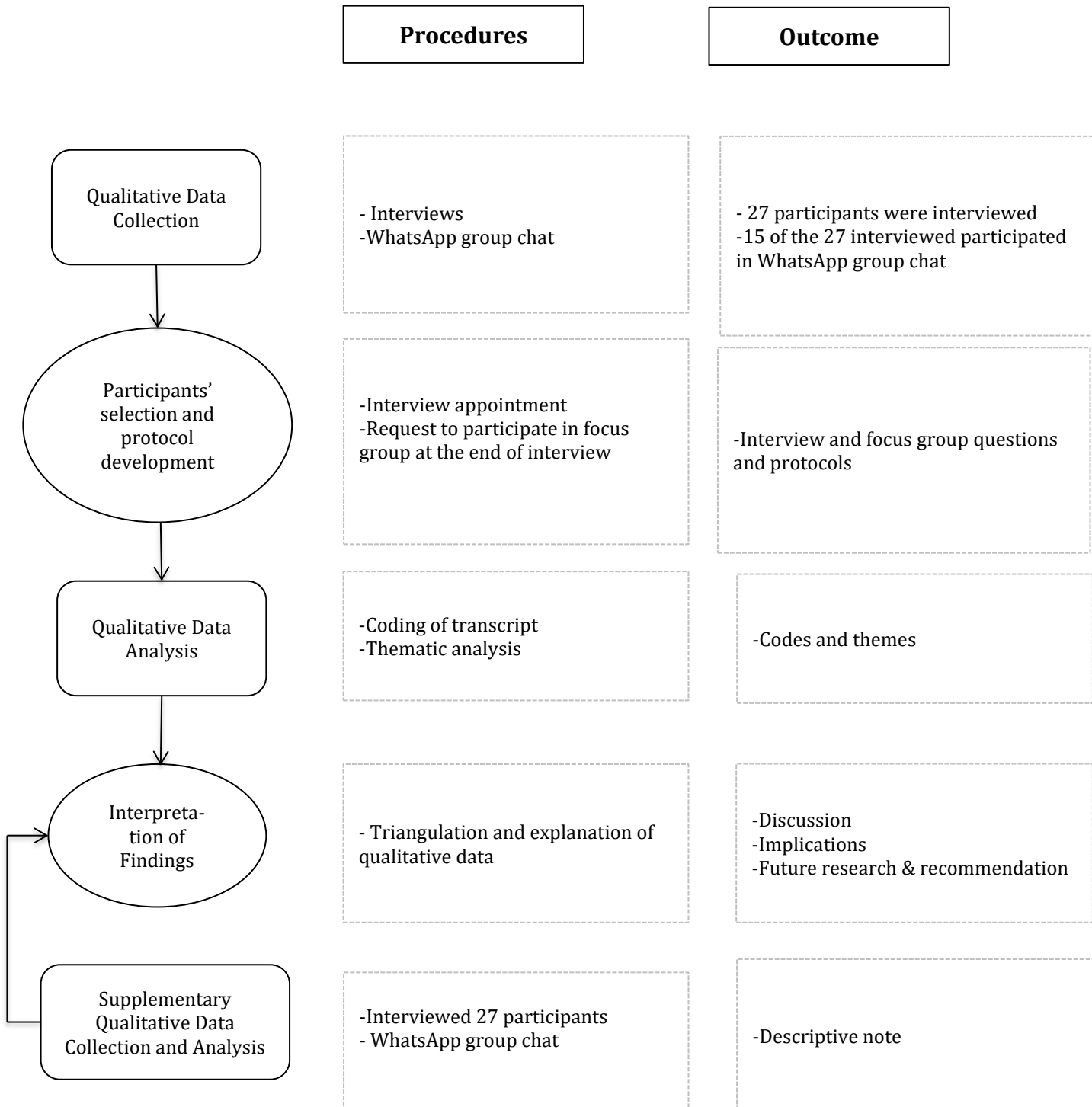


Figure 4.1: Summary of the study's research design

Chapter 5. Research Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine how refugees in South Africa achieve social connectedness through the use of mobile phones. This chapter presents the research findings, identifies some new concepts, and summarises the key themes.

This chapter is organised as follows: Section 5.1 presents the participants' profile. Section 5.2 discusses the situation of refugees in South Africa, and Section 5.3 highlights mobile phone applications used by refugees. Section 5.4 discusses the benefits of mobile phone usage. Sections 5.5 through 5.7 present the benefits of the use of mobile phones in social appraisal, relationship salience, and belongingness Section 5.8 summarises the chapter.

5.1 Respondents' Profile

All the participants in this study had received their refugee permits between 2004 and 2018. Table 5.1 shows that at the time of the study the majority of them had renewed their permits more than twice. The respondents had had various work experiences, and some of them were unemployed. Detailed data regarding the participants is presented in Appendix H.

Table 5.1: Demographic profile and selected data pertaining to participants

	Refugees demographics	Number interviewed	Number in WhatsApp chat group
Gender	Male	16	5
	Female	11	10
Language use	English	16	13
	French	11	2
Refugees categories	Newcomers	9	4
	Old-timers	18	11
Number of renewals	None	4	-
	Less than 5 times	7	5
	More than 5 times	16	10
State of employment	Employed	3	6
	Self-employed	14	4
	Unemployed	10	5
Total Participants		n=27	n=15

5.2 Situation of the Refugees in South Africa

The way refugees felt when they first arrived in the country was different from how they felt at the time of the interviews. Their perceptions had changed; they had become aware of other things and faced various challenges, such as languages and cultures different from their own, being excluded, and problems with legal documentation. The conditions of refugees and the challenges that they faced in South Africa are highlighted in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Summary of the situation of refugees and the challenges they face in South Africa

Categories	Themes	Sample of responses
The initial feeling of excitement vs. the reality	Feeling good and excited to move	<i>“The first time I was very excited. It was my first time to see tall buildings, white people everywhere”</i> [Participant 9].
	Reality of the life of refugees	<i>“I feel safe when I’m in my house.... There is a lot of violence. I don’t feel at home here”</i> [Participant 23].
Feelings of the refugees	Feeling judged	<i>“I used to work in a restaurant. Clients could ask me something in the Xhosa language and when I replied in English, it would not be received well. They started judging me because they realised that I was a foreigner”</i> [Participant 25].
	Being insecure	<i>“I don’t feel really safe, I get worried every time. There are a lot of crimes in South Africa”</i> [Participant 25].
Language and culture barriers	Language and culture challenges	<i>“For the first time, I was scared to talk to them because I didn’t know English. It was hard to communicate. Their pronunciations are very difficult for me”</i> [Participant 17].
Refugees legal document and exclusion	Lack of access to services	<i>“On these days, we are not allowed to open a bank account as an asylum seeker”</i> [Participant 7].
Refugees legal documents concerns	Legal documents issues	<i>“Before with status document, they gave us four years of validation but for now, they only give us six months”</i> [Participant 7].

5.2.1 The Feelings of the Refugees

The majority of participants felt “*happy and excited*” when they came to South Africa. They were hoping that their lives were going to change for the better. They were fleeing various challenges and were searching for peace and stability. The majority of the participants were coming from a life of insecurity and poverty in their countries of origin. The challenges they faced were missing their home country and the insecurity of new surroundings.

After settling down, most refugees began to feel lonely and isolated. Being separated from their friends and family impacted on them negatively. Of the 27 participants, 26 expressed grief over the separation from their families and friends. “*I was very sad because I was separated from parents and friends*” [Participant 17]. This finding is in line with those of Rugunanan and Smit (2011), who maintain that refugees in South Africa felt that their social life was better in their home country. For, some living alone in a new country surrounded by strangers was a big challenge.

They came to realise that there was not much security to be found in the new place, and they experienced a fear of crime in their everyday lives. Thirteen participants felt unsafe due to the high rate of crime in the country. “*We are living in fear*” [WhatsApp chat]. They were uncomfortable, anxious and afraid:

“We are not secure because South Africa is dangerous for everyone, especially a foreigner. We don’t feel safe; there are a lot of crimes” [Participant 3].

Insecurity and violence against foreign black Africans had an impact on refugees as well. Twenty-one participants stated that most of them, including friends and family members, were afraid of possible outbreaks of violence. The xenophobic attacks and violent speeches against foreigners affected their daily lives. One participant explained that black South Africans use their mother tongues to call them names that express hatred.

“... when I arrived it was better, but things keep getting worse every day. In the past, there has been xenophobic violence in the country. We were treated badly and being called hateful names like “makwerekwere” [a person who speaks gibberish]
[Participant 7].

This worried the refugees and limited their social participation in the host society. It affected their lives and mental wellbeing, and limited their freedom of movement within the country.

These findings agree with those of Zihindula et al. (2017), who argue that the violence keeps returning, with many refugees suffering constant damage to their property and personal injury, some of them even getting murdered.

5.2.2 Language and Culture Barriers

Twenty-three participants reported that they faced challenges with language and culture. Due to a lack of confidence in their language use, they were reluctant to talk to South Africans. They found the local pronunciation different from what they were familiar with. These challenges were especially keen for newcomers who were not yet familiar with their new community and surroundings.

“...the first time I came to South Africa; I had the big challenge of the South African language and culture when they talked to me. I could not figure out what they said”
[Participant 6].

The majority of participants felt that the host population had a disrespectful attitude towards refugees due to their lack of language proficiency. One participant explained how officials employed in some organisations often became rude if the refugees could not converse in their local languages. The respondents felt that the manner in which refugees are treated was affected or determined by the race of the South Africans.

“... here in South Africa there are a lot of people and different races. If I meet a white person, I feel comfortable because they understand me even when they recognise that I am black and a foreigner. This is different from the black South African” [Participant 2].

Most of the participants who had lived in the country for a long time, and/or who spoke English, were not as troubled as the newcomers. Once they understood the behaviour of the host community, they knew how to handle it and how to avoid conflict between them. These findings are consistent with those of Walker et al. (2015), who argued that for newcomers, certain expressions were difficult to understand until the refugees had learnt the local English idiom.

5.2.3 Legal Document Concerns

The refugees were confused and concerned about the validity period of their legal documents. For example, temporary documents have a validity span of between one and six months. Those who had obtained refugee permits claimed that they had earlier received documents that were valid for four years. This situation subsequently changed: those who had previously received a four-year permit were now issued with a six-month one.

“Before with status document, they gave us four years of validation but for now, they only give us six months” [Participant 2].

This contradicts the Refugees’ Act (Act 130 of 1998), which states that if an asylum application is approved, the applicant receives a refugee permit that officially recognises him or her as a refugee and is valid for four years (Department of Home Affairs, 2019a). As the Refugees Act Section 22(a) also states, permit holders may “temporarily reside in the Republic; and where appropriate, seek employment and obtain basic education” for the duration of their legal status (Department of Home Affairs, 2019b). The majority of participants reported that they were granted temporary legal status for periods of from one to three months only. The temporary document and status have to be renewed before the date of expiry, otherwise, their holders become illegal in the country (recall Section 2.2.1). Yet typically, refugees encounter problems in the process of renewing documents (Bisimwa, 2017). In sum, the participants reported that they experienced many challenges in the host country due to legal documentation issues.

5.2.4 Legal Documents and the Sense of Exclusion among Refugees

The absence of security and feelings of being judged and excluded were the principal factors contributing to the anxiety experienced by all the participants. They felt insecure and wanted to leave the country or be expelled. The likelihood of integration seemed slim as there seemed to be so few future opportunities. The lack of a job that might enable them to earn a living and support their families was one of the challenges faced by many refugees. Participants who were employed felt that they were not treated equally or paid the same wages as other people with the standard work permit, even when they had similar responsibilities or did the same job.

“All the rights and advantages go straight to them [South African citizens]. For example, in my work, they are more privileged than us. We have the same work, same position, but we don’t get the same salary” [Participant 9].

One of the old-timer refugee participants described the difficulties that they faced in receiving service in some organisations, given their temporary legal status. They were required to provide a Refugee ID, which participants identified as a “Maruna ID” – an ID issued to people after obtaining a refugee ID after extending the permit twice. This made them feel like failures.

“... we are not allowed to open a bank account as an asylum seeker. We must have a Maruna ID (it is refugees’ ID, me I [call it] Maruna because the colour is maroon)” that makes me feel like a failure. It was started four years ago; only people at Nedbank can help you with that permit of six months. That is a big challenge we face as refugees” [Participant 7].

5.3 Mobile Phone Applications Used by Refugees

The refugees mostly used the following applications to achieve their goals: social media platforms, GPS, audio recorder, Google translator and dictionary, Google search, Gumtree, Uber, mobile email, and YouTube. These applications helped participants to cope with life in their exiled environment. Table 5.3 summarises refugees’ use of applications to access various services.

Table 5.3: Mobile phone applications used most by the refugees

Application	Reason to use
Social media	Examples of social media used: Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter. Refugees used different social media to be in touch with their families and friends from their countries of origin.
GPS	GPS helped them to navigate the city. For newcomers, it provided assistance with getting to know the country.
Audio recorder	The audio recorder was used to improve their knowledge of local cultures through making recordings and taking videos of cultural practices.
Google translator and dictionary	The Google translator and dictionary apps assisted in learning South African languages and navigating the situations. It is easy

	and fast to translate from one language to another. <i>“I have a translation and dictionary app on my phone. They help me to translate African text to English, for example”</i> [WhatsApp chat].
Google search	Google search was used for many things, such as searching for information needed for business or how to obtain assistance in an emergency, searching for jobs, and doing research about South African cultures – for example, on what dates and how different festivals and holidays are observed.
Gumtree	Gumtree has a significant impact on business. It was used to make announcements or advertise jobs or products.
Uber	The Uber application was used by participants working for the Uber company.
Mobile email	Students used school email for their studies; for sending and receiving schoolwork.
YouTube	YouTube was used to develop the knowledge of culture: <i>“I use my phone to watch how South Africans sing and dance. It helps me to learn about their culture.”</i> It was also used for entertainment, where they could listen to and watch different audio and video clips for relaxation.

5.4 Benefits of Mobile Phone Usage

The findings indicate that refugees overcame some of their day-to-day challenges by using mobile phones to accomplish tasks more efficiently. The mobile phone is a basic requirement for refugees upon their arrival in their host country, as it provides help in identifying general information regarding their countries of origin and connecting with the host government by making information available in their language (AbuJarour et al., 2019a). The benefits of the use of mobile phones are presented in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4: Summary of benefits of the use of mobile phones for refugees

Categories	Themes	Sample of responses
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Mobile phone to get directions	Directions and tracking progress	<i>“I use a GPS mobile application to navigate a city without fear of being lost”</i> [Participant 6].
Mobile phones in finance activities	Mobile phones in business	<i>“It is helping me to do my business.... I use a mobile phone to make the orders and communicate with my customers”</i> [Participant 11].
	Mobile phones for buying and selling	<i>“It is easier to place an order or buy something by using a mobile phone”</i> [Participant 21].
Mobile phones in seeking help and assistance in emergencies	Assistance in any emergency case	<i>“It can help a lot like when you get arrested; you can easily call for help”</i> [Participant 1].
	Medical support	<i>“When my son gets sick, I use my mobile phone to call the pharmacy and make an order for medication”</i> [Participant 21].
Mobile phones in information access	Mobile phones to search for information	<i>“Mobile phones are an important tool in social life. It helps to look for information regarding Department of Home Affairs and the host country in general”</i> [Participant 3].

Mobile phone usage increases the freedom of the user (Bacishoga et al., 2018). According to the research findings, the following principal benefits of using mobile phones were identified among refugees:

- Getting directions;
- Conducting financial transactions;
- Seeking help and assistance in cases of emergency; and
- Accessing information.

5.4.1 Mobile Phones to Obtain Directions

The findings show that mobile phones help refugees to get to know the country. Seven participants stated that they used a map or GPS application to get directions when they are driving.

“I use mobile phones in my everyday life. For example, it helps me to navigate the city by using a GPS” [Participant 6].

“This GPS mobile app helps people like us, who are unfamiliar with the location, a lot. We can go to a new place without getting lost” [Participant 5].

Four Uber¹ drivers emphasised the impact of using mobile phone applications in performing their work: they could drive with confidence wherever they needed to go. Refugees are able to go anywhere without fear of being lost, even if they do not know the place, by using the relevant app on their mobile.

5.4.2 The Capability of Mobile Phones in Financial Activities

Financial activities can include the purchasing and selling of merchandise or services, the management and retention of funds, the issue of securities, and the arrangement of loans, and other financial practices involving particular economic goals. The use of mobile phones in running a business was helpful in communicating with customers, placing orders, and even paying for purchases. In the commercial sector, mobile phones help refugees to order and purchase products without a physical presence in the shop. One participant stated that he was motivated by a business that works on Facebook. This was a platform on which they could easily sell their products and also buy different things.

“You can also purchase goods online. There is a page on Facebook, namely Facebook Marketplace. You can negotiate over the prices with suppliers and can get your needs without physical meetings” [Participant 10].

The findings show that using a mobile phone for these purposes is a convenient way for refugees who are unfamiliar with the country, as it does not require them to leave their place of residence to get what they need. Three participants who worked as drivers reported that mobile phones were the source of their daily income. They used the mobile application that they were given by the company for this work. Clients could only reach them on their mobile phones. A smartphone was a requirement for starting the job; without it, they could not do that job. As the findings show, mobile phones serve as a means of economic *growth* amongst refugees.

“My employer requires me to have a smartphone. There is an application that helps us to be connected with customers who want an Uber taxi, find their location with GPS, and guide us while driving” [Participant 13].

¹ Uber is a trip-hailing business that uses the Uber Mobile App, which assists in delivering an automated demand for a trip to an Uber operator close to you and informs her/him of your address (Rogers, 2015).

5.4.3 Mobile Phones for Seeking Assistance in Emergencies

The findings show the importance of mobile phones for people seeking assistance in emergencies or in the event of an attack. They assist refugees in seeking basic help and justice (including legal counsel) when they are detained or arrested by the police. SMSs and calls were among the most used features in such situations. What is more, eight participants reported that mobile phones helped them to save lives in dangerous situations and cases of emergency such as accidents. They used their mobile phones to call relatives, friends, or the ambulance.

“For example, one of our friends left here at 3 PM, he had a car accident at Goodwood. He just called us for help, and we rushed to him that I can say is the necessity of having a phone” [Participant 1].

Mobile phones helped the mothers in this study to find basic medical care when their children were sick. They used them to call pharmacies to order medicines, and clinics to ask what to do when a child developed a sudden illness. Others also called their religious leaders for prayers for their sick children. These functions mean that mobile phones play a major role in maintaining people’s wellbeing and family life generally, as it has been shown that they are increasingly used for everyday planning. Further, parents with school-going children also reported the benefit of phones in their children’s school lives. They did not worry when they left their child at school because they knew that they would be called in the event of an emergency; for example, they would be informed at once if a child fell ill:

“I have a seven-year-old boy. When he gets sick or has another problem at school, his principal immediately calls me and lets me know” [Participant 25].

5.4.4 The Benefit of Using Mobile Phones for Information Access

Participants indicated that the impact of mobile phones in facilitating information access was remarkable. Twelve participants reported that they used their mobile phones to do research on various websites. They highlighted the importance of being able to use a mobile phone to obtain the information that they wanted without having themselves to move. The Google search engine was the first platform to be accessed for assistance with research. It helped them to know the country and obtain useful information in the new place. Moreover, mobile phones assisted refugees to relax and maintain their confidence. The role of the YouTube platform in

searching for audio and video recordings of music and preaching was also mentioned by the interviewees.

“I use my phone to do some research. I like reading, but mostly listening, because it is what I like and informs me of many things regarding my faith by listening to preachers on YouTube” [Participant 6].

The findings show that mobile phones are also helpful for newcomers when they submit their asylum seekers’ application. Mobile phones can be used to find information about the refugees’ reception office and what is needed for the refugee application. Mobile phones also helped asylum seekers to obtain information about the application processes from other refugees.

5.5 The Use of Mobile Phones in Social Appraisal

The findings of this study show that refugees use mobile phones to learn local languages, become involved in the host culture, and maintain ties with their own culture. These practices have helped them to feel more acknowledged and integrated in the host country. Table 5.5 summarises the importance of the use of mobile phones in relation to social appraisal.

Table 5.5: Summaries of the benefits of mobile phones in social appraisal

Category	Themes	Sample of responses
Language	Assistance of mobile phones in learning South African languages	<i>“I used the Google application on my phone to learn some words in Xhosa so that I could be able to communicate when I am shopping for example”</i> [Participant 16].
Becoming involved in local culture	Assistance of mobile phones in learning and getting involved in South African culture	<i>“We are obligated to play South African music in our phones, and it helps us a lot to know their culture”</i> [Participant 3].
Navigating situations	Assistance of mobile phones in managing situations	<i>“I have a dictionary on my phone that translates from French to English, and if I am stuck with a word, I can easily translate”</i> [Participant 10].

5.5.1 Mobile Phones in Learning Local Languages

The majority of participants used mobile phones to learn local languages. A dictionary and Google Translate on their mobile phones helped to mitigate the challenges associated with their

lack of local language proficiency, specifically English. The ones who spoke only French used mobile applications to translate from French to English. Google Translate helped them learn the meanings and pronunciations of local words. Three student participants noted that the Google translation app enabled them to increase the speed of their learning.

“When I was learning English, the teacher told us to install the Google translator app on our phones. It helped me a lot in learning. When I got stuck with a word, for example, I immediately used that app to find out the meaning in my local language” [Participant 12].

One participant explained how spending time in a chat on social media with residents contributed to *his* awareness of linguistic skills and increased his writing *capacity*. The more they interacted, the more they gained the skills. Interacting with local communities forced them to use the common language.

“Just being friendly with them, helps me to learn their language. Once we spend like two/three days on chat, I have to make sure that I learn something from them” [Participant 9].

5.5.2 Mobile Phones for Involvement in and the Learning of Local Culture

The findings of the study highlight the different ways in which the affordances of mobile phones assisted the refugees in developing their knowledge of local cultures. They used mobile phones to watch local dance and song, and to learn about the new culture. One participant stated that the mobile phone recording function plays a significant part in helping young refugees who attend host cultural clubs or associations.

“I get a chance to participate in a club where they perform South African culture; I record them on my phone so that I can watch it later” [Participant 13].

One participant reported that mobile phones did not help him in this matter. In some regions of the host country, the local population did not make use of mobile phones, so such technological devices could not help refugees to connect to the local culture. Thus this study also highlights how interacting and communicating with the community helps refugees to learn and become involved in South African culture in the absence of mobile phones: *“I learnt about the culture by meeting and interacting with South Africans”* [Participant 20]. Finally, most of the

participants stated that joining social network groups for people from their respective countries via mobile phone helped them to stay connected to their home culture (Bacishoga et al., 2018).

5.5.3 Mobile Phones in Navigating Situations

A majority of participants reported how mobile phones assisted them to resolve language challenges. For instance, they might call friends or family to ask the meaning of words when at a loss. The driver participants stated that the Google Translate application on their mobile phones assisted in communication with foreign customers. Additionally, as language barriers limit communication between refugees and citizens, one participant stated that the mobile phone helped them to avoid feeling judged by the South Africans, by fulfilling their needs without physically meeting.

“It is easier to place an order or buy something by using a mobile phone and you can get your needs without judgment of local people” [Participant 21].

One participant underscored the importance of a mobile translator application to resolve language challenges: *“It helps me in translation because the local languages for me are the big issues”* [WhatsApp chat].

These findings are consistent with those of Bacishoga et al. (2018), who demonstrated that refugees use mobile phones to enhance their ability to communicate in English. For those who have developed their English proficiency, communication was not a big obstacle, as English is the professional language in the country.

5.6 The Use of Mobile Phones for Relationship Salience

Mobile phones afford refugees the opportunity to connect and chat with family and relatives in the host country, from their countries of origin and from other parts of the world (Bisimwa, 2017). Table 5.6 summarises the importance of the use of mobile phones in relationship salience.

Table 5.6: Summaries of the benefits of mobile phones in relation to relationship salience

Category	Themes	Sample of responses
Navigating situations	Assistance of mobile phones in navigating situations	<i>“I have a dictionary on my phone that translates from French to English, and if I am stuck with a</i>

		<i>word, I can easily translate” [Participant 10].</i>
Connection between refugees and family/friends from the country of origin	Social platform to connect with families and friends from the country of origin.	<i>“I use my phone, especially WhatsApp, to talk to my family and friends from my country of origin” [Participant 16].</i>
Connection between refugees and host community	Mobile communication	<i>I call several times my lawyer to request the update of my documents” [Participant 9].</i>

5.6.1 Maintaining Relationships with Families and Friends in the Country of Origin

All the participants indicated that mobile phones helped them to stay in touch with relatives and friends in their home country. The majority of participants reported that their families and most of the people close to them had remained in their home countries. This situation made them depressed and lonely. The possession of mobile phones enabled them to remain in contact with their relatives and hear their news. The participants indicated that their family in their home country gave them frequent updates about the situation back home:

“I use my phone, especially WhatsApp, to talk to my family and friends from my country of origin” [Participant 16].

“The mobile phone contributes a lot to improving social life and making refugees connect with their families and friends from their countries of origin” [WhatsApp chat].

The refugees used mainly social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram to communicate with families and friends in their home countries. The WhatsApp video call was the most common method of communication between participants and their family and friends in their country of origin. They also used voice calls, chat, and SMS to communicate with them. The refugees could contact home every day or as often as they wanted.

Parents in the group of participants reported that, even if they could not live with their family, they were still able to take care of them and to help them financially.

“I don’t live with my children here; I use a mobile phone to support them financially by sending money through mobile banking” [Participant 26].

Three participants reported that there were many ways to send money home, through applications such as mobile banking. This reveals the value of mobile phone devices in terms of economic support for the families left behind in refugees' countries of origin. This is one of several significant roles played by mobile phones in this context.

5.6.2 Use of Mobile Phones to Connect with Fellow Refugees

The findings of this study reveal how mobile phones help refugees to connect with other refugees in the country. Refugees utilise mobile phones to develop a network with their relatives and search for opportunities in the host country (Walker et al., 2015). Mobile phones help them to exchange updates via text messages on social media platforms. The participants reported that there were foreigner forums comprising people originating from the same country, many of whom were refugees. These forums used WhatsApp group chat to keep refugees in touch with other refugees and enable them to exchange ideas. Some members of the chat group might solve their problems by getting help from old-timer refugees. One of the participants explained that in the event of a problem on the way to work, for example, other refugees could help out via the social media group. This enables the refugees to stay connected and live as a family.

“If something bad happens in a certain area, other refugees on our WhatsApp group can warn me. Maybe there is a manifestation of crime in a certain street so I can try to avoid it” [Participant 26].

The refugees helped each other regularly in different ways through the use of mobile phones. In doing so, they became more united, which helped to restore and enhance their self-confidence. Their feelings of loneliness abated as they felt the presence of people who cared for and supported them in difficult situations. This concurs with the study of Liamputtong et al. (2016), who argued that the presence of mobile phones enabled refugees in the host country to develop connections and network among themselves. Even though many of the participants did not live with their families, interacting, meeting, and living with other refugees helped them to heal their emotional wounds. This renders the mobile phone an essential tool in establishing and maintaining a way of life, for both newcomers and old-timers.

5.6.3 Using Mobile Phones to Connect with the Host Community

The majority of participants reported that mobile phones were useful in forging a bond between refugees and the host society. In everyday life, refugees needed to find occupations and employment opportunities that could sustain them. For this reason, they needed to connect with other people living in the country. Using mobile phones to talk to and support each other in a variety of ways, for example, in searching for a livelihood, refugees also found a way to make a living alongside the rest of the population. This encouraged them to network with the local people in the host community. They called and texted with hosts for different reasons. In daily work, the majority of participants stated the importance of mobile phones in connecting with their customers who are primarily South African citizens.

“The main reason is to communicate with customers; they call me when they need something” [Participant 4].

The impact of mobile phones in developing connectivity for refugees with local people was regarded as significant by the participants. It enabled them to arrange to go running together and do other things jointly. One of the participants explained how the mobile phone helped him to communicate with the South African lawyer who assisted him with an asylum seeker application when it was denied.

“I called my lawyer several times asking for an update on my asylum seeker application” [Participant 9].

5.7 The Use of Mobile Phones in Creating a Sense of Belonging

It emerged that there was little sense of belonging for refugees in South Africa. Their lack of legal status and their values are described as a barrier to their integration in the country. Table 5.7 summarises the importance of the use of mobile phones in relation to belongingness.

Table 5.7: Summaries of the benefits of mobile phones in relation to belongingness

Category	Themes	Sample of responses
ID/job search	<i>“... my phone helped me to look for a job and get a connection”</i> [Participant 18].	ID/job search

Having family here	<i>“I live with my family (wife and children) here; It makes me feel good” [Participant 18].</i>	Having family here
ID/legal support	<i>“We don’t have freedom. You can study and get a masters, but you cannot get a good job” [Participant 2].</i>	ID/legal support

In general, refugees did not initially feel confident and comfortable in the host country because of various barriers such as being excluded, denied assistance to services, insecurity, discrimination, and a lack of employment opportunities. Facilitating job opportunities for refugees as a key part of their social integration can be complicated if they are cannot be assimilated into the local society (Alrawadieh, Karayilan, & Cetin, 2019). These challenges affected the development of their sense of belongingness. Most refugees do not consider themselves part of South African society. The instability caused by the uncertainties of legal documentation affects their integration into the country and indeed the very course of their lives.

One participant stated that mobile phones offered assistance in the process of applying for legal documents.

“I use mobile phones to communicate with the organisation that helps foreigners. Let me say like, you got an issue of the legal status, for example. You were using an asylum seeker permit of six months then you go back for extension; they reduced it to three months for no reason. You can call and talk to that group about your issue and they can assist in that matter ...” [Participant 9].

Mobile phones were useful in protecting and improving the wellbeing of refugees. The newcomer participants found ways to rebuild their lives and adjust to the new place, making use of various mobile phone services. As they engaged with mobile phones regularly in their lives, they were able to access more options, but they were still unhappy. They could not feel truly comfortable and self-confident in life. This is evidenced by the findings, which show that the respondents were living here temporarily while waiting for an opportunity to return to their country of origin or move to another country. The challenges posed by the need to obtain legal documents and by the treatment they received from people discouraged them and perpetuated

feelings of insecurity and instability. These conditions created a barrier to development in other aspects of life.

“Mobile phone helps in communication and to get different opportunities. However, it didn’t help me to feel comfortable because of paper issues. Without paper (refugees documents), you can’t get a proper job” [Participant 18].

The majority of the participants stated that owning or using mobile phones did not in the end solve their problems. While mobile phones helped some of them to secure work and fulfil their responsibilities, the difficulty of obtaining legal status permits remained a serious challenge and negatively impacted the quality of their lives. The fact that some had been in the country for a long time did not mean that they were willing and happy to live in the country. The use of mobile phones did not contribute to refugees achieving a desired standard of living. The majority of participants concluded that they did not feel that they belonged in South Africa.

“I still feel like a foreigner in this place. I cannot say the mobile phone would help me to have a sense of belonging here, due to different factors; I have been here for ten years and I still have an asylum seeker paper. I was expecting maybe to be a permanent resident in South Africa. It is why I don’t have any feeling of belonging here” [Participant 5].

The lack of legal status was a significant restriction on access to certain social facilities, including healthcare services, employment, schooling, and legal services. Without legal documents, the refugees could not participate in the mainstream market, and therefore could not achieve their life goals (Rugunanan & Smit, 2011). This reduces refugees’ feelings of belonging in the host country. The majority of participants utilised mobile phones when looking for and applying for jobs, yet felt that the possibility of getting employed remained low. This is because the right to get employment depended on securing the legal status that refugees were struggling to acquire.

“For me, my phone helped me to look for jobs and get a connection. I was invited by a company. ...when they asked me my identification and I showed them my refugee’s document; they said that the document is not accepted” [Participant 18].

Because of the obstacles that prevent refugees from getting a decent job, they have had to look elsewhere for ways of making a living. Small businesses provide them with a means of survival. Many such businesses make use of mobile phones, including a GPS navigation app for taxi

drivers, social media for marketing, Facebook Marketplace home services for the sale of products, and others, as discussed in the previous section. In sum, the ways in which refugees use mobile phones to address challenges of belongingness include:

- Accomplishing the process of refugees' legal document application
- Looking for and applying for employment
- Making a living by running a small business
- Access to social facilities including healthcare services, schooling, and other legal services.

5.8 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter presented the participants' experience of the use of mobile phones and explained the situation of refugees in general. The use of mobile phones among refugees for social connectedness is structured by the belongingness construct, the social appraisal construct, and the relationship salience construct. Participants often used mobile phones to communicate with families and friends from their country of origin, as well as with those who live in the host country. The benefits of mobile phones in learning local languages and being involved in South African cultures were revealed. The findings showed that there was no direct contribution from mobile phone usage to a sense of belonging among refugees.

Chapter 6. Discussion and Conclusions

The aim of the study was to investigate how refugees in South Africa achieve social connectedness through the use of mobile phones. Chapter 5 presented the findings of the study based on the conceptual framework. This chapter discusses the research findings in relation to the research question and objectives, comparing the findings with what has been reported in the literature.

This chapter is divided into the following sections: Section 6.1 presents a summary of the research objectives, while Section 6.2 briefly presents and compare the experiences of two categories of refugees. The section notes that the experience of the refugees could be mapped into the phases of culture shock. Section 6.3 discusses how the use of mobile phones helps the refugees navigate this culture shock. Sections 6.4 through 6.6 highlight the research findings with reference to the research objectives. Section 6.7 presents a revised conceptual framework. Section 6.8 discusses the research contribution, and Section 6.9 outlines the limitations of the study. Section 6.10 offers some suggestions for future research. The chapter concludes with a final summary of the study in Section 6.11.

6.1 Summary of Research Objectives

The main objective of this study was to investigate how the use of mobile phones by refugees in South Africa mitigated their isolation and enhanced their social connectedness. Unlike previous studies, this research also assessed the effects of mobile technology on refugees in relation to how long they had lived in the country. We proposed the following sub-objectives:

- Investigate the role of mobile phones in the acculturation process;
- Examine how refugees use mobile phones to maintain relationships with their relatives and friends from their countries of origin and within the host country; and
- Investigate the ability of refugees to create a sense of belonging through the use of mobile phones.

6.2 Experiences of Refugees

The findings highlight the differences in lived experience between the newcomer and old-timer refugees, although there were also some similarities. Table 6.1 summarises these differences.

Table 6.1: The differences in experience between newcomers and old-timer refugees

Old-timer refugees	Newcomer refugees
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- More knowledge about the host country- Better connection with the local society- Developing and developed language knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Lonely and isolated- Feeling desperate and hopeless- Language barriers- Lack of social participation

Table 6.1 suggests some of the elements of evolution in feeling, attitude, and approach among refugees to the host country, as commonly experienced by the majority of immigrants.

The experiences of refugees may be discussed in terms of the notion of culture shock. A typical presentation of the situation of immigrants was made by anthropologist Kalev Oberg in 1960, when he discussed what he called “culture shock” and the phases of adjustment that immigrants endured when they entered a new country. Culture shock is “the feeling of uncertainty, confusion or anxiety that people experience when visiting some new places, doing business in, or living in a society that is different from theirs” (Пашкевич & Хритonenkova, 2020, p. 293). Culture shock often occurs when individuals experience a new culture for the first time. This may lead to a period of emotional instability (Zhao & Peng, 2020) as they struggle to understand and accept the new cultural setting (Julianti & Hidayati, 2020). Cultural settings comprise social principles, perceptions, and ideas. A large number of people who engage with unfamiliar cultures, usually in a different country, experience some level of loneliness and depression (Pacheco, 2020). Yet the majority ultimately gain some familiarity with the new culture. The transition may be presented in five phases, as illustrated in Figure 6.1.

Culture Shock

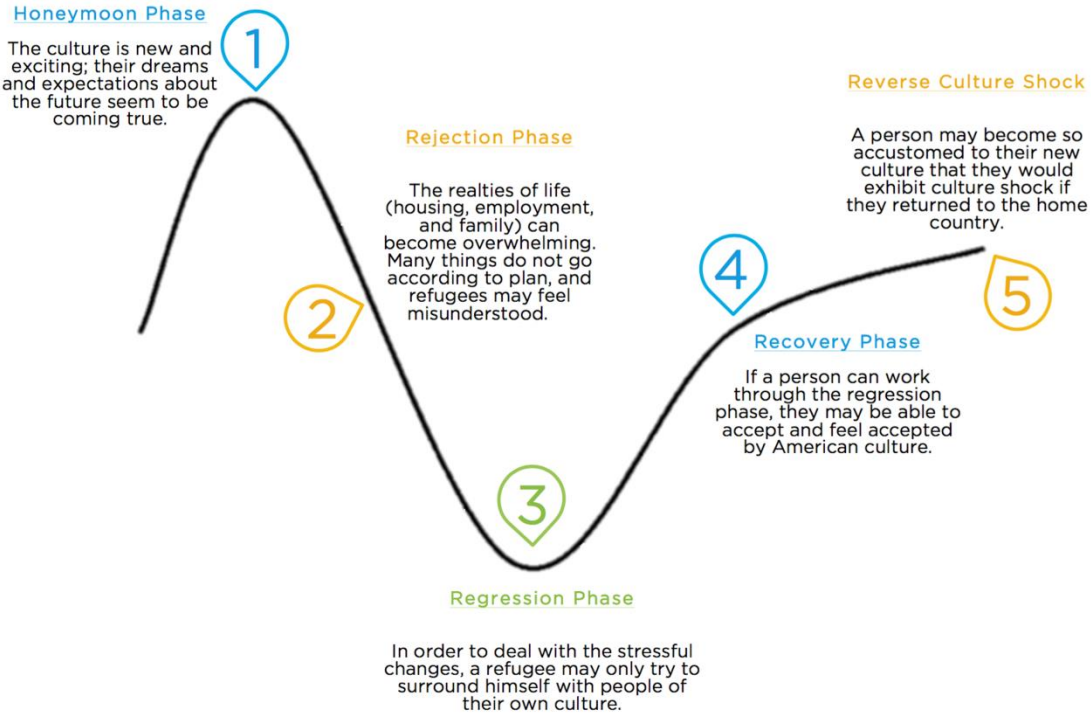


Figure 6.1: Phases of culture shock (World Relief Durham, 2017)

The phases of culture shock identified in this study are summarised for convenience’ sake in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2: The phases of culture shock highlighted in this study

Phase	Description
Honeymoon phase	The participants are initially happy, excited, and curious to come to the new place, with the hope that their lives were going to change for the better.
Rejection phase	The participants become dissatisfied with their experience in the host country. The reality and difficulties that they face quell their excitement. They experience tiredness and stress as a result of not understanding the local language, culture, and behaviour.

Regression phase	Rather than regress entirely, the participants consolidate their ethnic or national base and start to address language barriers and other challenges.
Recovery phases	Participants who have developed sufficient knowledge of the local culture begin to be integrated into the host country. They are recovering and becoming accepting of the new conditions. Some of them begin to identify with the cultures of both South Africa and their culture of origin.
Reverse culture shock	The participants do not experience reverse culture shock (none of them went back to their country of origin and had to re-adapt). Some of them are feeling at ease and reasonably happy in the host country.

The duration of the phases varied, depending on how long the respondents had lived in the country. In the beginning, most newcomers and old-timer refugees experienced a honeymoon phase. At the time of the study, the majority of the participants were in the rejection or regression phase. Only the old-timer refugees who had been in South Africa a long time were in the recovery phase. Few if any had entered the reverse culture shock phase in which they were fully accepting of their new life in the host country.

6.3 The Use of Mobile Phones in Navigating Culture Shock

The study shows that mobile phones assist refugees in South Africa in navigating culture shock. In the regression phase, cultural differences and other challenges lead to a lack of confidence, confusion, and a sense of exclusion from the host community. Mobile phones assist refugees with transition strategies aimed at learning the local language and developing their knowledge of the host's culture (De Anstiss et al. 2019; Allam, 2020). By improving communication, mobile phones helped the participants in this study to bridge to the new place and improve connectivity with the host society (Kutscher & Kreß, 2018). Through social network connectivity with other refugees, the participants could still celebrate in their own languages, network with other people (both other refugees and the local community) and foster connections among themselves. Mobile phone adoption reduced several challenges. For participants to advance to the recovery phase, the use of mobile phones was significant. The findings of this study also show that there are limited differences in the use of mobile phones between newcomer and old-timer refugees. Access to mobile phones was a basic requirement

for all refugees in the host country. The devices enabled both categories to change certain aspects of their lives.

6.4 The Role of Mobile Phone Use in Acculturation

ICT contributes to refugees' involvement in the cultural activities of the host country through the use of mobile phones. It is argued in the literature that the mobile phone has made a tangible contribution to helping refugees participate in the community and create a social network with members of the society. Technologies help individuals to feel less isolated while playing an important role in their acculturation, thus enhancing their feelings of assimilation (Liamputtong et al., 2016). The findings of this study are consistent with those of Phillimore (2011), who said that "too much change, lack of support, pressure to adapt too quickly or inability to follow the desired strategy can all result in acculturative stress, and when major problems are experienced individuals can be susceptible to mental illness" (p. 579). The research has shown the impact of mobile phones, and especially of their affordances, in decreasing the pressure associated with the challenges that refugees face. These challenges limit their ability to build trust with local people and disqualify them from participating in social activities or accessing services offered by institutions and organisations to communities.

Refugees without a South African language faced difficulties in obtaining information, since all host websites were in English or other local languages. To be able to live in the host country, they had to learn at least one local language and assimilate local cultural knowledge. Mobile phones helped them with this, encouraging them to be more determined to rebuild their identities and strive for a purposeful life in the host country. This is one source of difference between newcomers and old-timer refugees, as the latter are more knowledgeable, depending on how long they have been in the country. They have learned the local language partly through the use of mobile phones.

The findings showed how the use of mobile phones can advance the social appraisal of refugees by developing in them the cultural skills of the host country and enabling them to participate in the new culture. Cultural knowledge was often transmitted through social media platforms by those who were more knowledgeable. The aptitude to associate with a new culture can decrease the probabilities of self-isolation (Bacishoga et al., 2016). Conversely, the processes of developing cultural knowledge seem to be hard for those who do not use a mobile phone.

The study found that social appraisal is an important concept in understanding how mobile phones can help refugees to achieve social connectedness.

In sum, it is evident from this research that mobile phones enabled refugees to interact with local communities and develop the extent of their assimilation (Abujarour et al., 2019a). Walker et al. (2015) have also noted how mobile phones help refugees to develop ties with the local people and access public services. Yet refugees with a common language and culture choose at the same time to strengthen the bonds of faith among themselves (Bisimwa, 2017). This was confirmed in this research. Certain participants had been concerned not only to explore local cultures but also to reaffirm their heritage culture. This is evidenced by their shared desire to socialise through social networks with those who were culturally similar. Some participants were content to live as far as possible within their heritage cultures and were not motivated to learn the culture of the host country. When prompted for reasons, they indicated that they felt more connected to their communities and home countries than to the host state. This could be because of the challenges posed by language barriers. Walker et al. (2015) argue that for those who saw mastery of English as an insuperable obstacle to social ties, mobile phones at least provided access to social relationships inside their community. Refugees might also hesitate to interact with residents because of a more general lack of confidence (Bisimwa, 2017). Table 6.3 summarises the condition of refugees before and after acculturation.

Table 6.3: Summary of the acculturation outcomes for refugees

Before acculturation	After acculturation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developed a sense of loneliness - Experienced loss of trust - Were uninterested in participating in local society activities - Experienced language and culture knowledge barriers - Experienced a lack of confidence - Were fearful of interacting with local communities - Felt unable to integrate into the host society - Struggled to use public websites or apps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Were able to participate in local society activities - Developed the identity of heritage culture - Enhanced social assimilation - Were confident and comfortable in communication - Had an increased ability to use a local digital system - Improved local language knowledge - Increased social integration - Developed health and wellbeing

6.5 Mobile Phone in Maintaining Relationships with Families and Friends

Relationship salience proved to be a useful concept in this study. The literature reviewed argued that refugees are affected by physical separation from their people (Bacishoga & Johnston, 2013). As far as relationship salience is concerned, the study found refugees depended on mobile phones to communicate with members of their families in their respective home countries, as well as with friends and acquaintances within the community where they lived in South Africa. This is in line with Bisimwa's (2017) finding that the use of mobile phones empowers refugees to enhance their connection with those residing in the new country, as well as with families and friends back in their home country. Refugees experience a multitude of challenges resulting from physical separation from their friends and family. These challenges have negative effects, notably feelings of sadness, depression, and loneliness (Alencar et al., 2019). Mobile phones helped refugees to overcome these challenges through effective communication, perhaps especially through the advice and emotional care received from relatives in their home countries (Kutscher & Kreß, 2018).

Mobile phones are indubitably a significant device for connecting people with their communities and relatives. Through the use of mobile phones, refugees maintained stable relationships with family and friends from their countries of origin; at the same time, they developed new relationships in the host country. They could manage their lives and focus on finding solutions in the new country. They were not stressed about what was going on back home. Without mobile phones, the refugees would struggle to maintain contact with their people at home and this could lead to feelings of worry, anxiety, and stress on both sides. Mobile penetration has changed many things in various ways. The study outcomes show that the use of mobile phones helped the refugee respondents to alleviate the trauma linked to a lack of connectivity. These outcomes did not show any significant differences between newcomers and old-timer refugees. Communication through mobile phones brought stability and hope to both them and their families and friends from their countries of origin.

The findings show that social networks created excitement and satisfaction since the participants and their relatives/friends were able to see as well as hear each other. Relationships developed on social networks also provided them with access to information about what to do for a living. Developing relationships in the new country, maintaining mental health, and achieving minimum integration were the factors that most helped refugees to begin to settle in

the host society. Mobile phones provided efficient communication between participants and fellow refugees, and access to social relationships inside the refugee community. Communication between refugees and the local community was important for increasing relationships and connections. All forms of communication enabled by mobile phones strengthened the salience of refugees' relationships (Van Belle et al., 2009). The concept of relationship salience proved to be significant in understanding how mobile phones help refugees to achieve social connectedness.

6.6 Mobile Phones in Creating a Sense of Belonging among Refugees

Refugees in South Africa use mobile phones to rebuild their lives and integrate into society. In developing and accelerating these processes, mobile phones facilitate their taking action in looking for and creating opportunities. This is in line with the findings of Nguyen et al. (2017), who argued that the mobile phone, through its many affordances, empowers marginalised communities. Refugees are considered marginalised and vulnerable within their new society, and mobile phones can help them overcome this and achieve some sense of belonging in the host community. This is both a measure of their integration and an aid to their comprehending what is effective in promoting social connectedness. The literature reviewed agrees that the use of communication technologies such as mobile phones can improve a refugee's sense of belonging (Van Belle et al. 2009). However, the respondents in this study reported that the role of mobile phones in creating and increasing their sense of belonging in the host country was limited.

The factors that detracted from a sense of belonging among refugees included the lack of legal documents; a sense of insecurity and employment-related challenges (having to accept an available job as opposed to what they are qualified for); and being far from their families. While South Africa is a signatory to an international treaty to enforce the rights of refugees (Rugunanan & Smit, 2011), the government faces challenges in addressing the legal status of the refugees (Alrawadieh et al., 2019). Mobile phones could provide assistance to refugees with advocacy to address the issue of legal status as identified in this research, and to challenge the legal system with a view to having it changed so they can more easily develop a sense of belonging.

The use of mobile phones can also contribute to activities such as gathering information on how to apply for legal status, how to stay in contact with other refugees who can help them in

the process, finding a way to get their family to join them in South Africa, and acculturation. The small contributions that resulted from the use of mobile phones did not lead directly to the achievement of a sense of belonging among respondents, but they helped build towards integration and connectedness with the host country. Mobile phones assisted the refugees to obtain certain important feedback that could improve their lives. Even if the participants in the study did not yet feel a strong sense of belonging, the literature highlights the connections between the elements listed above (Van Belle et al., 2009). Newcomers can start with a temporary legal document and, by the time that they become old-timer refugees, they should have obtained their permit and/or can apply for a residence permit. At this stage, the person starts to feel better and might even be able to bring their family into the new country.

We noted above that a prerequisite for generating and increasing a sense of belonging among refugees was their acceptance of the new society. Individuals who were able to develop a positive attitude and behaviour were able to achieve this. They could develop strategies for integrating and participating in the host community. Access to mobile phones played a significant role in this process. The facts indicate that mobile phones are supporting refugees to start feeling better, become more hopeful, develop financial activities, connect with other refugees to maintain relationships, and increase their knowledge of the new culture (Beer et al., 2015; Hausknecht et al., 2015; Stavrova & Luhmann, 2016). Developing linguistic skills enabled the refugees to network with local people and provided opportunities to sustain their livelihood. The more the refugees were acculturated and felt integrated, the greater the sense of belonging that they had.

6.7 Revised Conceptual Framework

The literature consulted suggested three constructs that influence social connectedness: belongingness, social appraisal, and relationship salience. The researcher developed a framework to connect these constructs and highlight their relationships. The findings confirmed the relationship that was highlighted in Chapter 3 between mobile phone use, the three constructs, and social connectedness. Analysis of the findings revealed additional complexity in the relationship among mobile phone usage, a sense of belongingness, and social connectedness. This study shows that mobile phones did not directly facilitate the sense of belonging that guides refugees to achieve social connectedness. The reality is more complicated, requiring that more elements be considered to arrive an understanding of the subject. However, the findings indicate that the other two constructs – social appraisal and

relationship salience – were validated and demonstrated to be important in understanding the use of mobile phones for social connectedness.

This research extends the knowledge to be derived from the existing literature. In light of the analysis based on the literature review and the empirical findings, a new framework is proposed. Figure 6.2 presents the mechanism of how mobile phone usage by refugees conduces to social connectedness.

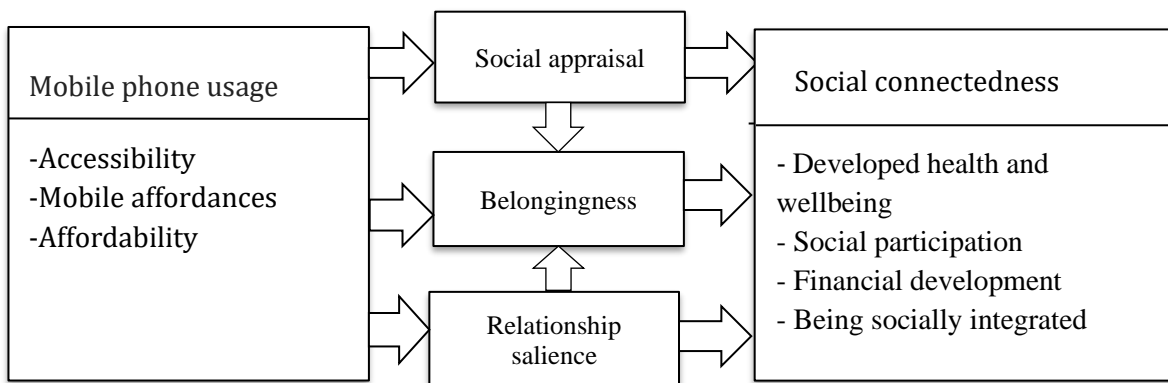


Figure 6.2: Conceptual framework of the link between mobile phone usage and social connectedness

This framework explains the process of how the use of mobile phones can lead to social connectedness in the context of belongingness, social appraisal, and relationship salience. The framework shows the five main relationships that are acknowledged in the literature and the empirical findings of this research. Belongingness is not accomplished through the use of mobile phones; instead, it is a complex and evolving concept. The more relationships a refugee has, and the stronger they are, plus the more cultural knowledge s/he has, the more likely it is that s/he will develop a sense of belonging. In the framework depicted above, the arrows represent vectors of influence between the constructs distinguished, notably the effects of social appraisal and relationship salience on belongingness.

The study found that the accessibility, affordances, and affordability of mobile phones determine the extent of their use. The study also showed that the use of mobile phones enables refugees to develop their knowledge of the culture of their hosts while remaining in touch with family and relatives from their country of origin. As they gain more relationships and more cultural knowledge, their sense of belonging begins to grow. This puts them in a better position to comprehend the measures that are effective in promoting social connectedness. The

outcomes or results of having a sense of social connectedness, which include improved health and wellbeing, social participation, financial development, and being socially integrated, have a positive influence on human behaviour, including that of refugees (Lee, Draper, & Lee, 2001).

6.8 Contribution of the Study

This research contributes to the literature by shedding light on refugees' use of mobile phones to facilitate social connectedness. In this domain, it makes a contribution at the theoretical, methodological, and practical levels.

First, the study contributes to theory in the area of Information Systems by proposing a social connectedness framework (see Figure 3.1) to analyse how the use of mobile phones serves to enhance social connectedness among refugees in South Africa. This framework enabled the researcher to explore certain concepts associated with the achievement of social connectedness in relation to mobile phone use: a sense of belonging, social appraisal, and relationship salience (Van Belle et al., 2009). The study explored these concepts in the context of the social relations of refugees in South Africa, examining the relationships among them and their importance for social connectedness.

Secondly, this thesis contributes to knowledge on the methodological level by showing how to use social instant messaging tools such as WhatsApp group chat for data collection. This approach was used in lieu of a focus group discussion. It proved its usefulness by yielding appropriate data, and it can be recommended for researchers working with participants who are busy or have limited mobility.

Thirdly, the study contributes to practice by achieving an understanding of a new phenomenon, the use of mobile phones by refugees and the benefits accruing from this. Aspects of the research can therefore help non-profit organisations and the UNHCR to develop a strategy and process for conducting interventions on behalf of refugees. For instance, the use of mobile phones can provide advocacy assistance to address the issue of legal status. The study should be of use to organisations dealing with refugees, to illuminate the challenges faced by the refugees in developing a sense of belonging in the host country, and ensure that they are resolved. The same applies with the difficulties that refugees encounter due to their temporary legal status, for example, in seeking employment.

In the research process, the participant refugees learnt something new about their rights by sharing their experiences with others. They also acquired new contacts and networks of support should be able to help them to resolve the legal document concerns. They learned how to use mobile phone applications that could help them to master the host language and become involved in South African cultures.

6.9 Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study derive from the time restrictions, sample, and participation in the study. The time restrictions led to data collection during the holiday period. The participants' availability was a challenge, as they were busy and their time was limited. The research schedule presented in Appendix A was specifically implemented to guarantee effective time management.

The researcher interviewed only refugees who used mobile phones and were at least 18 years old. Of the 27 refugees who participated in this study, 10 were newcomers and 17 were old-timer refugees. The sample chosen for the study recognised only one distinction: refugees who had been granted official refugee status, and those still waiting for it. The sample did not differentiate among categories of refugees such as asylum seekers, refugees, and people appealing Home Affairs decisions. Asylum seekers who had decided not to renew their permits were not included in the study because of their vulnerable status. The study could have provided richer information if the sample had been based on all refugee categories, including asylum seekers, people who had obtained asylum status, those with expired legal status, and those who had permanent residency.

The researcher did not find it easy to locate refugees who were prepared to participate in the study. She contacted numbers of potential participants, however, but only a few agreed to participate. The question of trust and the demands of their work were the reasons they gave for declining to participate. Several appointments were cancelled and had to be rescheduled.

6.10 Suggestions for Future Research

The main objective of this study was to investigate how refugees in South Africa use mobile phones to achieve social connectedness. Since the experiences of the refugees might well differ depending on how long they have lived in the host country and their legal status in the country,

it would be interesting to evaluate the varying use of mobile phones for social connectedness in specific categories.

Given the constraints of the present study, future studies should be performed with different categories of migrants – in particular, differentiating between asylum seekers and refugees. This might increase the quality of the research findings. A further distinction could be to evaluate the differences in ICT usage between asylum seekers who are still waiting for refugee permits and those whose request has been denied. Asylum seekers could be differentiated according to whether they had received a legal permit to work or were waiting for a decision on their applications. In addition to this differentiation amongst the categories of refugees, the study might have achieved greater depth had it focused on other salient differences amongst refugees (such as between those living in refugee camps versus the ones who had migrated individually and illegally entered the country), and in different countries.

It would be interesting to assess the impact of ICT in improving the process of an asylum seeker's application for a permit. In the different scenarios, different ICTs might be used, and the research might consider analysing these approaches and choices. The main recommendation proceeding from this study is to deepen the investigation and develop a conceptual framework for the adoption of mobile phones to provide for, fight, and challenge the legal system on behalf of refugees in South Africa. Further research could also focus on the use of mobile phones amid the new challenges related to the Covid-19 pandemic and other disasters among refugees.

6.11 Final Summary

This study set out to investigate how refugees in South Africa might achieve social connectedness through the use of mobile phones, and the results of the study achieved this aim. The literature shows that ICT contributes to the enhancement of the social connectedness of refugees through communication by mobile phone. The researcher created a conceptual framework to analyse the influence of mobile phones on social connectedness. The questionnaire was based on the concepts involved. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected. The use of mobile phones unquestionably helped refugees to cope with adjusting to an alien environment. The results revealed limited differences in the use of mobile phones between newcomer and old-timer refugees in the acculturation process, in creating a sense of belonging, and in connectivity with their families in their country of origin.

7. References

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8. Appendices

List of appendices,

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- Appendix B: University of Cape Town Ethics Approval
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- Appendix I: List of the applications and websites
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Appendix A: Research Schedule

Tasks	Date
High-level presentation	April 5, 2019
High-level proposal	May 16, 2019
Literature review	July 25, 2019
Research design presentation	September 25, 2019
Research design submission	September 2019
Ethics request	5 November 2019
Data gathering	November 2019 to February 2020
Data analysis	March 10, 2020 to June 10, 2020
Writing of a discussion and conclusion chapter	June 20, 2020 to July 30, 2020
Submission of the first draft of the dissertation	July 31, 2020
Revision and correction	August 13, 2020 to August 30, 2020
Final submission of dissertation	August 31, 2020

Appendix B: UCT Ethics Approval



Faculty of Commerce

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UCT Commerce Faculty Office

13th November 2019

Ms Sarah Vuningoma
Department of Information
Systems
University of Cape Town

Dear Ms Vuningoma

REF: REC 2019/10/067

HOW DO REFUGEES USE MOBILE PHONES FOR SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS? SOUTH AFRICA PERSPECTIVE

We are pleased to inform you that your ethics application has been approved. Unless otherwise specified this ethical clearance is valid for 1 year and may be renewed upon application.

Please be aware that you need to notify the Ethics Committee immediately should any aspect of your study regarding the engagement with participants as approved in this application, change. This may include aspects such as changes to the research design, questionnaires, or choice of participants.

The ongoing ethical conduct throughout the duration of the study remains the responsibility of the principal investigator.

We wish you well for your research.

Shandre Swain
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"Our Mission is to be an outstanding teaching and research university, educating for life and addressing the challenges facing our society."

Appendix C: A Letter of Introduction



Department of Information Systems

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17 October 2019

Request to conduct research and interview participation consent form

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am currently pursuing my Master's degree in Information Systems at the University of Cape Town. I am conducting research entitled "How do refugees use mobile phones for social connectedness? South Africa perspective. The objective of the research is to investigate whether the use of mobile phones by refugees contributes towards their social connectedness.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. All information will be treated in a confidential manner and used exclusively for the purpose of this study. No individual names will be recorded or published. You will not be requested to supply any identifiable information, ensuring the anonymity of your responses. You can choose to withdraw from the research at any time for whatever reason, in accordance with ethical research requirements.

The data collection method will be interviews and WhatsApp discussion. The interviews will be conducted at different places in Cape Town and will take about 30 minutes. The information you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence. All responses will be confidential and used for the purposes of this research only. The answers from your questionnaire and others will be used as the main data set for my research project. The results from this study might be presented at a conference or in a journal article (i.e., SACLA and SAICSIT journals). If you are willing to participate in this study, kindly sign the attached form and return it to me at your earliest convenience.

Should you have any questions regarding this research, please feel free to contact me on SRHVUN001@myuct.ac.za

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated but is entirely voluntary.

Sincerely,

Sarah VUNINGOMA M.Com Student, (UCT) Department of Information Systems University of Cape Town	Prof. Wallaca Chigona Research Supervisor Department of Information Systems University of Cape Town	Dr. Maria Rosa Lorini Co-Research Supervisor Department of Information System University of Cape Town

Appendix D: Consent Form



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

Research Participant Consent Form

I, _____, consent to participate in the research entitled "How do refugees use mobile phones for social connectedness? South Africa perspective.

I am aware that participation is voluntary and that I may choose to withdraw from this study at any time, should I choose to do so.

Signature

Date

Appendix E: Interview Question Guide (English Version)

Demographic:

- Gender: Female Male Prefer not to answer
- When did you get your permit?
Indicate time here (month/year)
- How many times did you renew your permit?
- What is your occupation?

Belongingness:

1. How and why do you use your mobile phone?
2. How did you feel when you came to South Africa?
3. How do mobile phones help you in social life?
4. Can you give me an example of how mobile phones help you?
5. How do mobile phones support you in being comfortable in this country?
For example: Do you use mobile phones to get medical support? To find a solution for your children, to find a spiritual community, in case you belong to a church or religious group?
6. How do mobile phones help you to have a feeling of belonging?

Social appraisal:

7. What is your mother tongue? Do you speak English?
 - Are you facing any language problems in South Africa?"
 - If yes, how do mobile phones help you to solve it?
8. How do mobile phones assist you in learning and being involved in South African culture?
9. How do you feel when you interact with South Africans?

Relationship salience:

10. Where is your family? Here with you or in your country of origin? Do you have friends or acquaintances here in South Africa?"
11. How do mobile phones help you to connect with your family or friends from your home country?
12. How do you feel safe here? Do you feel at home, or that this place might become your new home? Do you feel like you can become a member of this community?

❑ Closing questions:

13. What are the negative experiences that you faced with using mobile phones?
14. Do you have any suggestions that would improve mobile phone usage according to your needs?
15. Are you keen to be added to a WhatsApp group chat with other participants to discuss these topics further?

Appendix F: Interview Question Guide (French Version)

Démographique:

- Sexe Femme Homme Préférez ne pas répondre
- Quel est votre statut de réfugié?
- Quand avez-vous obtenu votre permis?
Indiquez l'heure ici (mois / année)
- Combien de fois avez-vous renouvelé votre permis?
- Quelle est votre profession?

L'appartenance:

1. Comment et pourquoi utilisez-vous votre téléphone mobile?
2. Comment êtes-vous senti quand vous venes en Afrique du Sud?
3. Comment les téléphones mobiles vous aident dans la vie sociale?
4. Donne-moi un exemple de l'endroit où les téléphones mobiles vous aider?
5. Comment les téléphones mobiles aident-vous dans votre confort dans ce pays? Par exemple:
Utilisez-vous des téléphones mobiles pour obtenir un soutien médical? Pour trouver une solution pour vos enfants, pour trouver une communauté spirituelle, au cas a vous appartenez a l'église ou le group religieux?
6. Comment les téléphones mobiles vous aident-ils à avoir a sentiment d'appartenance?

Evaluation Sociale:

7. Quelle est votre langue maternelle? Parles-tu anglais?
 - Etes-vous confronté à un problem linguistiques en Afrique du Sud?
 - Si oui, comment les téléphones mobiles aident-vous à le resoudre?
8. Comment les telephones mobiles vous aidez à apprendre et participer à la culture Sud-Africain?
9. Comment sentez-vous lorque vous interagissez avec les Sud-Africains?

Relation saillance

10. Où est votre famille? Ici avec vous ou dans votre pays d'origine? Aves-vous des amis ou des connaissances ici en Afrique du Sud?
11. Comment les téléphones mobiles aident-vous à communiquer avec votre famille ou vos amis de votre pays d'origine?

12. Sentez-vous en sécurité ici? Sentez-vous chez vous ou que cet endroit pourrait devenir votre nouvelle maison? Avez-vous l'impression de devenir le member de cette communauté?

Questions de cloture:

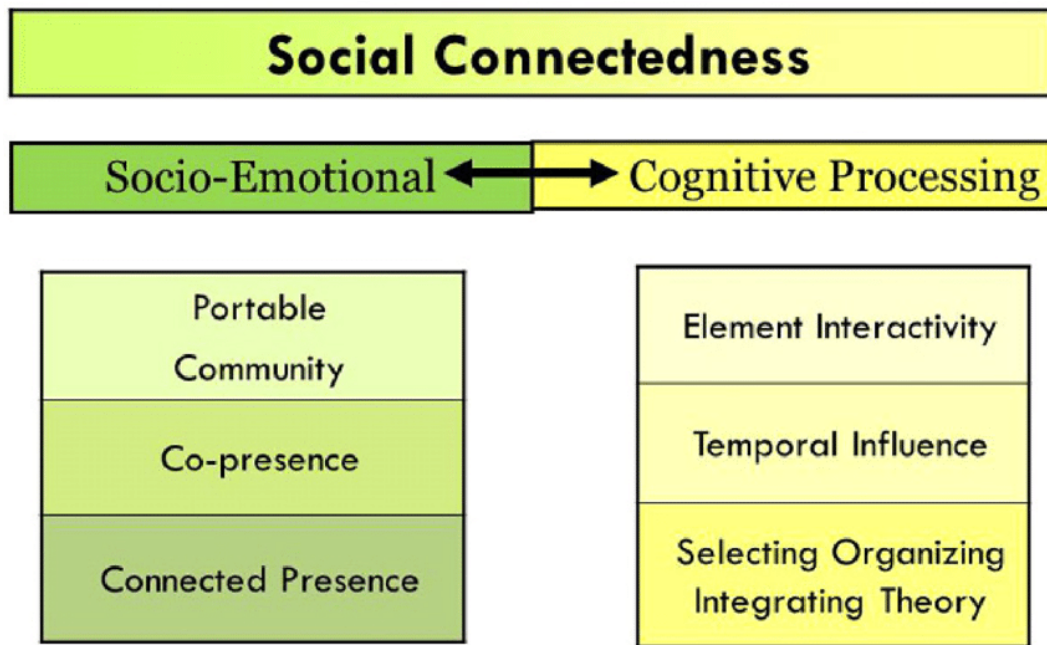
13. Quelles sont les expérience négatives que vous avez vécues avec l'utilisation des téléphones mobiles?

14. Avez-vous des suggestions qui permettraient d'améliorer l'utilisation du téléphone mobiles en fonction de vos besoins?

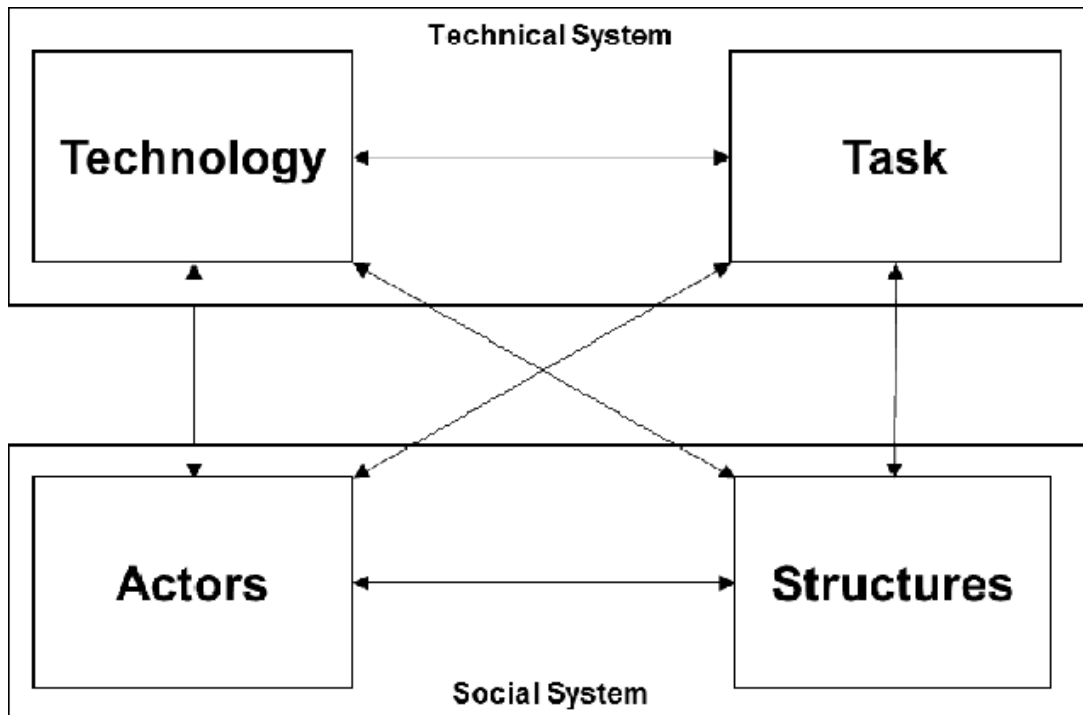
15. Avez-vous envie d' être ajouté dans un group WhattsApp avec d'autres participants pour discuter de ces sujets?

Appendix G: Figures of the ICT Theoretical Framework Related to Social Connectedness

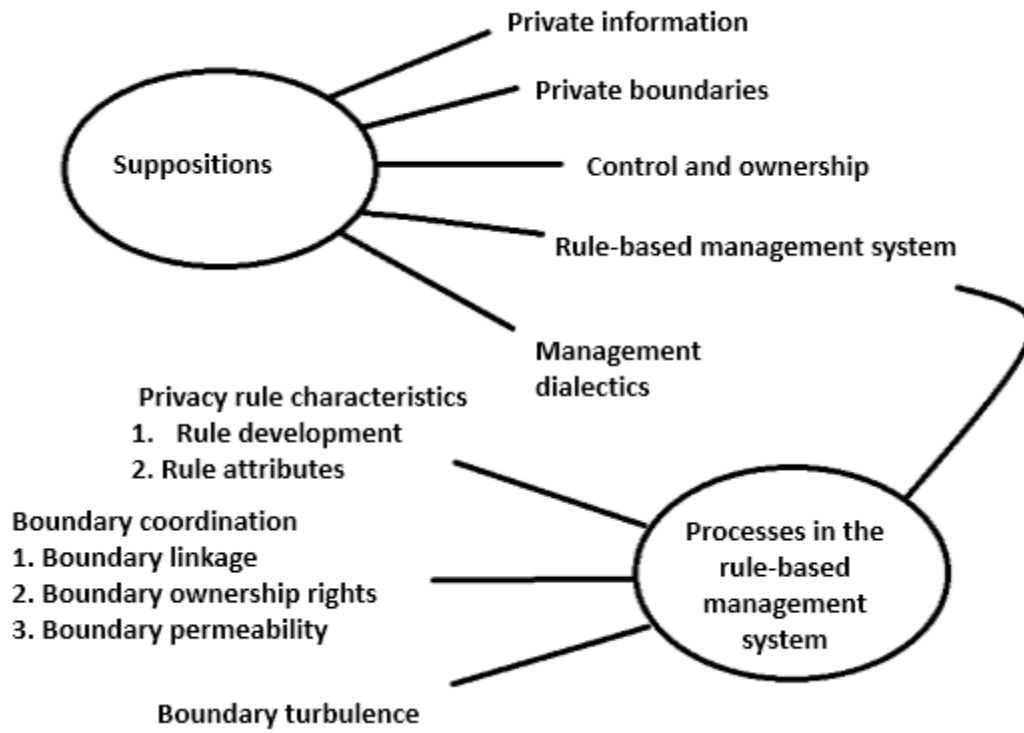
- **Theoretical Framework for Social Connectedness Through Texting (Mentor, 2011)**



- **Socio-Technical Systems Theory: A Socio-Technical Perspective on Organisation Work Systems (Bostrom & Heinen, 1977)**



- **Communication Private Management Theory, Private Information (Petronio, 1991)**



Appendix H: Information and Characteristics of Selected Participants

Refugees	Gender	Receiving legal permit time	Renew time (year)	Time in S.A. (year)	Occupation	Language spoken
Participant 1	Female	2013	2	5	Quantity surveyor	English
Participant 2	Male	November 2008	20>	11	Technician	English
Participant 3	Female	February 2010	6-7	9	Restaurant	English
Participant 4	Male	2011	5>	8	Business	English
Participant 5	Male	August 2008	N/A	11	Part-time job	English
Participant 6	Male	February 2013	7	6	Student	English
Participant 7	Female	March 2018	3	>1	unemployed	French
Participant 8	Female	January 2009	5	10	Jobless	English
Participant 9	Male	October 2018	N/A	>1	Electronics repair	English
Participant 10	Male	February 2009	N/A	10	Business	English
Participant 11	Female	December 2018	4	>1	Jobless	French
Participant 12	Female	March 2018	3	1	Housewife	French
Participant 13	Male	June 2013	12	6	Uber driver	English
Participant 14	Male	September 2017	4	2	Uber driver	English
Participant 15	Male	July 2018	3	1	Security company	French
Participant 16	Female	July 2017	5	2	Housewife	English
Participant 17	Male	June 2004	15	15	I.T.	English
Participant 18	Male	June 2019	N/A	>1	Tutor	French
Participant 19	Male	2019	7	>1	Technician	French
Participant 20	Male	August 2016	6	3	Customer care	English
Participant 21	Male	December 2013	9	6	Business	English
Participant 22	Female	June 2013	10	6	Student	English

Participant 23	Female	September 2018	6	>1	Jobless	French
Participant 24	Male	September 2017	2	13	Uber driver	English
Participant 25	Female	2018	4	>1	Housewife	French
Participant 26	Male	January 2019	3	>1	Carpenter	French
Participant 27	Female	2019	5	>1	Customer service	French

Appendix I: List of the applications and websites

Application/ website	Url
Gumtree	https://www.gumtree.co.za
Uber	https://www.uber.com/za/en/
YouTube	https://www.youtube.com
GPS	https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.gps.route.finder.mobile.location.tracker.maps.navigation&hl=en_ZA
Google translator	https://translate.google.com
Google search	https://www.google.com
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com
Instagram	https://www.instagram.com
WhatsApp	https://www.whatsapp.com

Appendix J: Sample of the WhatsApp group chat

	Sample of responses
Participant 1	<i>“Mobile phone contributes a lot in improving social life and makes refugees connect with their families and friends from back home”</i>
Participant 2	<i>“Reading news related to my country or listening to local radios that help me not to feel alone or being stressed”</i>
Participant 3	<i>“As a refugee, I had a financial problem; mobile phone helped me to seek assistance”</i>
Participant 4	<i>“Mobile phone also helped me to reach places where I could get refugee papers by asking people and using google map”.</i>
Participant 5	<i>” Mobile phone helps me a lot not only to interact with my friends or family members but also to learn local languages”</i>