

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background

In today's rapidly advancing era of information and communication technologies, cultural differences have the potential to seamlessly converge over time, transcending the constraints of space and time (Surahman, 2016). The advent of mobile telephony and the internet revolution has transformed the way information is disseminated, creating a global network that spans the globe (Jean-François, 2012). Alternative communication in today's modern society includes the Internet, increasing the demand for information from humans, and has thus led to the development of technological advances in the exchange of both significant and trivial information about various aspects of human life. Events in other parts of the world are equally easily accessible (Guillaume B, 2018). As a result, the accessibility of information on events, occurs at national and international levels. While physical travel may require hours, the internet, accessible via computers and mobile devices, provides instantaneous access to information from the comfort of one's location.

Disposition, Humans as social creatures, cannot be separated from the context of communication. The rise of communication forums has given rise to social networking sites through the emergence of the Internet. Social Networks, as services, while physical travel may require hours, the internet, accessible via computers and mobile devices, provides instantaneous access to information from the comfort of one's location. To some extent, social networks come from forums, newsgroups, and discussion boards introduced

in these early days of the Internet. In social networks where users can exchange information in voice, photo or video format, for example the social networking site Facebook, the information is very often used as a means of interaction and engagement for users. (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Mark Zuckerberg, the computer programmer and creator of The Facebook launched his platform on February 4th, 2004, while he was a student at Harvard University, the platform's initial launch witnessed an impressive reception, with a staggering 1,200 students promptly registering as users. Within a mere 24 hours post-launch, approximately half of Harvard's student body had already become active members of this innovative digital community. Originally named "The Facebook" and initially inspired by the printed Facebook that were distributed to each Harvard freshman, the platform soon evolved into the household name we know today as "Facebook." (Amanda, 2004)

After becoming a well-known site in the United States, Facebook is essentially a network of educational websites for students in the United States. As its user base burgeoned, the platform extended its reach to include individuals aged 13 and older from all walks of life. Facebook is described as "a social utility that connects you to the people around you." The period between 2006 and 2008 marked the growth of the same platform to 12 million users worldwide. This expansion was facilitated by the introduction of language options beyond English, including Spanish, German, French and 17 additional languages. (Danah m.boyd: 2007)

From there, Facebook not only spread around the world, becoming a very valuable business, but also became one of the most important institutions of the early 21st century. The digitization offered by the convergence of new media, interaction and related development through the activation and dissemination of messages provides capabilities where interaction allows users to choose which information to consume while controlling the output of product information. Interactivity is an important concept for understanding new media. (Volé, 2002: 11-22)

Due to the advancements offered by the new era of increasingly advanced technology, the hardware that underpins telecommunications technology and the Facebook website known as "m.facebook.com" have been developed for the design of mobile web platforms. To meet the needs of all Facebook users via a mobile browser. Notably, Orange, a prominent telecommunications partner, has played a pivotal role in enhancing internet accessibility by introducing offerings such as Facebook Flex and Free Basics offers as well as free consultation fees for Facebook users. The use of the Orange operator in Madagascar is an important step in Facebook's goal of enabling people to build communities and unite the world (Emilar, 2019).

While Facebook use is generally associated with the Internet, it is important to note that Madagascar is a country that lags behind in the emergence of the Internet. Within the African continent, it currently ranks 22nd in terms of internet penetration. Among its population of 28.8 million, approximately 6.43 million individuals are active internet users, with a

substantial portion, numbering 3.5 million, engaging with Facebook. Considering that a substantial 40% of Madagascar's population consists of tech-savvy youth, the rapid expansion of the internet in the country is creating



fresh opportunities for them to explore Facebook in innovative ways. (Digital, 2022)

*Figure 1. 1 Important digital title, Madagascar Orange*

Facebook has gained immense popularity in Madagascar, becoming an integral part of people's daily lives. This trend is largely driven by telecommunication operators like Orange Madagascar, who offer free access to Facebook through various packages. In this developing country, such initiatives are connecting users across various aspects of life, from personal interactions to leisure activities. Facebook, with its wide-reaching capabilities, is an ideal platform for fostering and engaging communities of enthusiasts. (Digital, 2022).



*Figure 1.2 The use of Facebook on other social media in Madagascar*

The deployment of social networking platforms facilitated by advancements in communication technologies has significantly elevated the prominence of Facebook, particularly among the younger and more active demographic. Telecommunication partners such as Orange have played a pivotal role in enhancing Facebook's accessibility, thereby increasing its significance within the realm of social media. As illustrated in Figure 1.2, Facebook outpaces Instagram by 71.13%, with a marginal lead over LinkedIn by 0.72% and 0.48%, respectively. Madagascar boasts approximately 3.5 million Facebook users, with a relatively balanced gender distribution of 55% men and 45% women. Given its widespread popularity and extensive reach, Facebook serves as an excellent platform for establishing and nurturing fan communities. (Digital, 2022)

Facebook's global expansion and technological advancements have bridged the gap among countries, including Madagascar, making it a focal point for Malagasy Facebook users scattered worldwide. Communication channels have seamlessly integrated into contemporary daily life, impacting virtually every facet of human existence, including education (Surahman, 2016). The formation of Facebook user groups on dedicated pages laid the foundation for the platform, facilitating the exchange of information without the constraints of physical boundaries, a hallmark of the digital era.



Figure 1. 3 Facebook page of UMABEX, Union of Malagasy External Scholarship Holders

According to Annette Bamberger, during the time of state formation and the rise of nationalism, diaspora communities were often perceived as foreign or alien entities (Bamberger, 2021). The Malagasy diaspora, however, presents a unique case characterized by its global presence and active

engagement in associations. As depicted in Figure 1.3, the Facebook page of UMABEX (Union of Malagasy External Scholarship Holders), established on April 21, 2020, serves as a hub for Malagasy student communities situated outside Madagascar in countries such as Algeria, China, Cuba, Egypt, Indonesia, Morocco, Russia, and Tunisia. These students are recipients of Malagasy State Scholarships. The inaugural forum, hosted in the capital city of Madagascar in 2017, marked a significant step in fostering economic development and unity. This event inspired the creation of similar Facebook pages, uniting users similarly (Madagascar hosts its first Diaspora Forum, year unspecified).

Madagascar has faced constitutional events that have played a pivotal role in its economic reconstruction, achieving an average annual growth rate of approximately 3.5%. However, the subsequent economic downturn proved to be significantly more severe than in other sub-Saharan African nations. The pandemic-induced shutdown had a substantial negative impact, resulting in a sharp economic contraction of -7.1% (Madagascar Overview).

The global emergence of the Covid-19 virus has had far-reaching implications across various sectors, notably in the realms of the economy and education. In response to the virus's threat and taking cues from China's successful implementation of social distancing measures, numerous African nations, including Madagascar, adopted a series of precautionary steps. These measures encompassed border closures and the temporary closure of educational institutions, actions aimed at stemming the virus's spread and safeguarding public health (Menai, Manadi 2021).

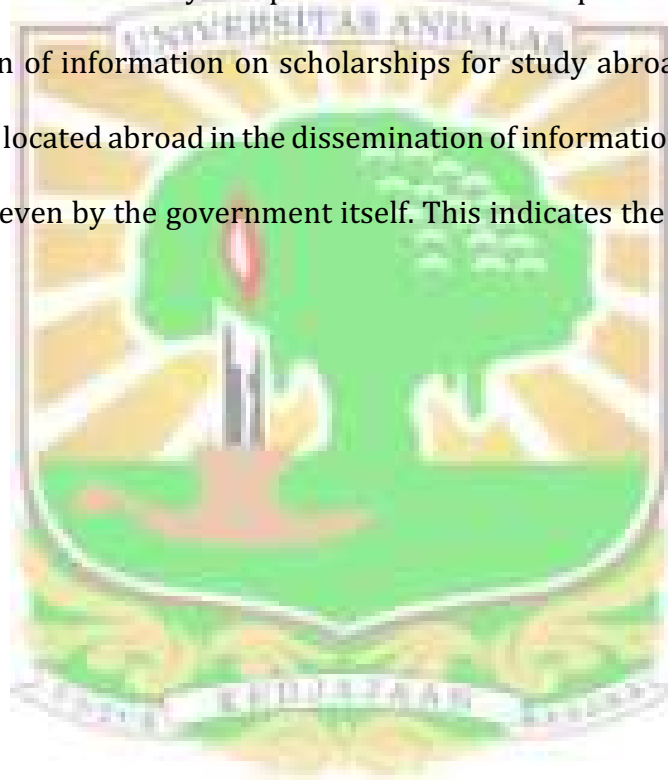
The abrupt shift from traditional face-to-face education to online learning ushered in notable transformations within the administrative framework of the economy. Efforts to curb the virus's transmission led to considerable economic disruptions, notably the suspension of public universities for a three-month period. This disruption in the education system fueled dissatisfaction among students, who grappled with the challenges posed by the altered educational landscape. The transformative impact of the virus outbreak extended to the very foundations of the previous education system, resulting in adjustments that reverberated on an international scale (Sarah, 2022).





*Figure 1. 4 Publications of UMABEX, Union of Malagasy External Scholarship Holders.*

Based on Figure 1.4, we can observe a publication posted on the UMABEX page addressed to the Government of Madagascar, the Minister of Higher Education and the Scientific Research. The content of this publication pertains to a significant delay in the disbursement of annual allowances for the years 2019-2020. Remarkably, this delay persisted for a protracted period of five months without any response from the responsible authorities. Dissemination of information on scholarships for study abroad by Malagasy governments located abroad in the dissemination of information on difficulties encountered even by the government itself. This indicates the acceleration of



the payment of allowances as soon as possible, extended in writing on April



29th, 2021.

*Figure 1. 5 Part of Gascar Fenosoza's publications at UMABEX Union of Malagasy Scholars*

Based on Figure 1.5, we can observe a post shared by "Gascar Fenosoza" on the UMABEX Facebook page, which is directly addressed to President Andry Nirina Rajoelina and the Malagasy government. The post highlights the extension of the release of the annual allowance, stretching from 2020 to 2021. This extension comes after a series of initiated application procedures by students, followed by persistent efforts and advocacy. It's noteworthy that this

change was instigated within the government, following months of anticipation.

Facebook has emerged as a prevalent communication tool in Madagascar, especially among university students. Facebook groups have evolved into pivotal platforms for Malagasy students to exchange information concerning their studies, internship opportunities, scholarships, and academic events. Additionally, students utilize Facebook for seamless communication with peers, professors, and other university community members. Furthermore, Facebook serves as a vital channel for Malagasy students to seek assistance when they encounter issues related to scholarships or tuition fees. Facebook pages and groups also play a role in raising awareness among students about various social issues in Madagascar.

In this research, students who are members of the UMABEX Facebook group, hailing from Andalas University in Indonesia's western part on the island of Sumatra, will be the subjects of the study. These Malagasy students span across different faculties, ranging from humanities to economics. Students who have not received their scholarships from the Malagasy government are facing personal and financial problems as they continue their studies. They have experienced various interactions while navigating challenges associated with scholarships. These students are part of the 2019 class at Andalas University, with some having arrived in Indonesia in 2018 through the Darmasiswa program. (Darmasiswa 2018).

The researchers have drawn upon relevant studies and theories to compare the experiences of these students with those of adolescents in secondary schools in Madagascar. The study is framed within the context of phenomenological theory, exploring how these students utilize Facebook as a problem-solving tool. This research builds upon prior work conducted by Wijaya (2014), which delved into the information exchange processes on Facebook, utilizing theories of new media in interpersonal communication. It also examines the motivations driving users to share information through these new media intermediaries, transcending the barriers of distance, ultimately choosing Facebook as a means to access open information.

In addition, Eda (2021) conducted research focused on the evolution of marriage matchmaking in the 4.0 era within the realm of interpersonal communication. This study employed phenomenological theory to delve into the experiences of couples who use ta'aruf platforms in the new 4.0 digital domains. The essence of this research was to understand how couples engage in ta'aruf in the 4.0 era, driven by their desire to acquire information about potential partners.

Another relevant study conducted by Sabaruddin Adjie Yanto examined the application of social media as a communication tool within the localization division of PT. Indomarco Prismatama Makassar Branch. This research adopted an evaluative approach and employed Facebook as a medium for users to address issues within the PT division program. The findings of this study indicated that research subjects opted for Facebook

due to its user-friendly interface, facilitating the sharing of information amongst platform users and enhancing accessibility to information-sharing.

It is important to note that while Facebook applications are not inherently designed for sharing personal, diverse, and aggregated information, the use of such applications for specific information-sharing purposes can potentially lead to the misuse of sensitive data. This research holds significance as it explores the potential for innovative solutions to financial allocation challenges, particularly for users located abroad, such as in Madagascar. The study centers on user experiences when utilizing applications via computer systems and communication media, with concerns about the efficacy of communication channels in transmitting specific information. (Recueillis & José B, 2022)

The reason why the researchers chose the aim of this study was to solve the problem of the financial allocation challenges faced by Malagasy students studying abroad, utilizing Facebook as a social media platform. Additionally, the researchers conducted comparative analyses of relevant research to gain insights into the experiences of Facebook users, with one of the researchers actively participating in sharing these experiences.

## **1.2 Problem formulation**

Based on the above context, this research may raise questions that can be explored in depth about how Malagasy students abroad experience solving scholarship problems via Facebook?

### 1.3. Research Objective

This study analyzes the effectiveness of Facebook as a platform employed by Malagasy students for addressing scholarship-related challenges through a phenomenological reduction approach.

From the problem formulation, which serves as a guiding framework for data acquisition grounded in the principles of phenomenological structure, Epoch, Edietic, and transcendental, the study aims to:

1. Analyze the experiences of students in utilizing Facebook as a tool for resolving scholarship issues.
2. Analyze students' experiences in evaluating Facebook information to solve scholarship problems.
3. Analyze students' awareness of Facebook's role in facilitating solutions to scholarship-related challenges

### 1.4 Research Benefit

The benefits of this study are:

#### 1.1.4. Theoretical advantages :

This research contributes to the field of communication studies by shedding light on the effectiveness of Facebook as a social media platform for Malagasy students to connect with others and solve scholarship-related problems.

It adds to the growing body of knowledge in the area of social media's role in academic research, which holds increasing importance in today's educational landscape.

#### **1.2.4. Practical features:**

This research is expected to increase public understanding, knowledge and views on relations between Malagasy studying abroad as shared through various media channels.

This phenomenological study can help explain the personal experiences and narratives of Malagasy students, which can be useful in improving scholarship programs.

