

## Abstract

The chapter examines and discusses the role and communicative potential of social media based platforms in citizen political participation and protests in Zimbabwe specifically focusing on the #thisflag movement on Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp. #thisflag is a social media-based platform that rose to challenge the Zimbabwean government over the political and economic decay as well as rampant corruption characterising the country contemporarily. While a new phenomenon to Zimbabwe and Zimbabwean politics, the impact and communicative potential of social media as an alternative public sphere was recently tested in nationwide protest stayaway organised through the Facebook and Twitter movement under the #thisflag handle/brand. This chapter discusses the manners in which such social media platforms impact national politics in Zimbabwe as well as

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### Ethnopharmacological relevance

*Boophone disticha* is one of the most important medicinal bulbs of Southern Africa. Previous in vitro studies have shown that its crude ethanolic extracts and some alkaloidal phytoconstituents possess high affinity for the serotonin transporter protein (SERT) and serotonin receptor 1a (5HT1a) which are both implicated in the pathogenesis and treatment of anxiety disorders. However, there are no in vivo studies that validate the anxiolytic actions of the plant.

### Aim of the study

This study was therefore set to determine the anxiolytic-like activity of an orally administered hydroethanolic extract of *B. disticha* bulbs in naive mice using the behavioural tests of anxiety.

### Materials and methods

Naïve adult male BALB/c mice were randomly placed into five treatment groups (n=6–10): vehicle control (10 ml/kg 0.9% NaCl), positive control (1 mg/kg diazepam) and the hydroethanolic extract of *B. disticha* (10, 25 and 40 mg/kg p.o.). Souk test, elevated plus maze and open field tests were used to evaluate the anxiolytic-like activity of the *B. disticha* extract.

### Results

Diazepam-treated mice exhibited higher number of sector visits and line crossings in the ST, rearings in the OF and head dips in the EPM than the control ( $p < 0.05$ ). *B. disticha* extract treated groups expressed higher sector visits at 10 mg/kg, and, unprotected head dips at 25 mg/kg in the ST, as well as, open arm time entries at 10 mg/kg dose, and unprotected head dips at all doses in the EPM than the control group ( $p < 0.05$ ). The 25 mg/kg *B. disticha* dose group exhibited highest anxiolytic-like activity in both the ST and OF, while the 10 mg/kg was most active in the EPM.

## Conclusion

The extract of *B. disticha* exerted good anxiolytic-like activity in both the ST and OF at medium dose (25 mg/kg), while the low dose (10 mg/kg) showed prominent anxiolytic-like activity in the EPM. globally, specifically looking at the #thisflag movement as a case study.