

NDUGELO PHOPHI

Graduate Behavioural Research & Strategy Candidate

Qualitative Research | Behavioural Insights | Customer Experience | AI & Society

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Graduate Behavioural Research & Strategy candidate with an interdisciplinary foundation in Anthropology and Psychology, combining qualitative research skill with an emerging specialism in AI and digital trust. Experienced in stakeholder engagement, leadership, and evidence-based problem solving, with academic research focused on public trust in AI within South African contexts. Golden Key International Honour Society member. Seeking to bring behavioural insight, structured qualitative analysis, and human-centred thinking to a graduate programme in consulting, banking, strategy, or innovation.

CORE COMPETENCIES

Research & Insight: Qualitative Research, Ethnographic Observation, Semi-Structured Interviews, Thematic Analysis, Literature Review

Business & Consulting: Stakeholder Engagement, Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, Strategic Communication, Organisational Leadership

Technology & AI: Google AI Essentials, Prompt Engineering, Microsoft Office, Cybersecurity Fundamentals, Digital Literacy

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Anthropology — In Progress

Nelson Mandela University | Expected December 2026

Research focus: South Africa's national AI policy discourse and public digital trust in AI, using Critical Discourse Analysis and digital anthropology.

Bachelor of Arts (Psychology & Anthropology)

Nelson Mandela University | Completed 2025 | Overall average: 70% (Upper Second Class)

Coursework: Research Methods, Social Psychology, Qualitative Research, Anthropology, Statistics.

SELECTED RESEARCH PROJECT

Algorithms of Trust — Digital Anthropological Analysis of Public Narratives and AI Policy in South Africa

Qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough) comparing South Africa's national AI policy discourse (2024–2026) against public digital narratives, testing institutional assumptions about AI users against how trust in AI is actually negotiated.

- Found institutional constructions of the AI user grew more attentive to structural inequality over time, while still assuming digital literacy and verification capacity that national survey data shows is unevenly distributed (only 1 in 5 South Africans aware of AI regulation).
- Corroborated by a real-time case: government's own Draft AI Policy was withdrawn in April 2026 after AI-hallucinated citations were found in its reference list, directly evidencing the study's core finding on the gap between AI governance principles and practice.

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Acting President — Ri Vha Venda Students Society

May 2024 – November 2024

- Directed executive decision-making for a society of 120 members and represented the organisation in engagements with university leadership.
- Strengthened stakeholder collaboration across a diverse student community through consensus-building, resolving 4 major disputes and initiatives.
- Coordinated organisational initiatives while promoting accountability and governance, increasing event attendance by 4% and managing a budget of R10,000.

Deputy Treasurer

August 2023 – April 2024

- Supported financial administration and operational planning for a society with 84 members and a budget of R10,000.
- Coordinated logistics for 6 student programmes and events.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Google AI Essentials (Coursera): Responsible AI, Prompt Engineering, AI Productivity, Generative AI Fundamentals
- Cisco Networking Academy — Introduction to Cybersecurity

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Golden Key International Honour Society Member
- Acting President Excellence Recognition

LANGUAGES

English | Tshivenda | isiXhosa | isiZulu | Sesotho | Setswana | Sepedi

PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS

Behavioural Insights | Artificial Intelligence & Society | Customer Experience | Strategy Consulting | Digital Transformation | Innovation