



GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT: SOCIAL MEDIA
STRATEGIES OF THE GHANA ARMED FORCES.

BY

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MAPR 20111

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF A MASTERS
OF ARTS DEGREE IN PUBLIC RELATIONS.

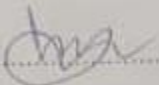
NOVEMBER, 2021.

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation, with the exception of quotation and references contained in published works which have all been identified and acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

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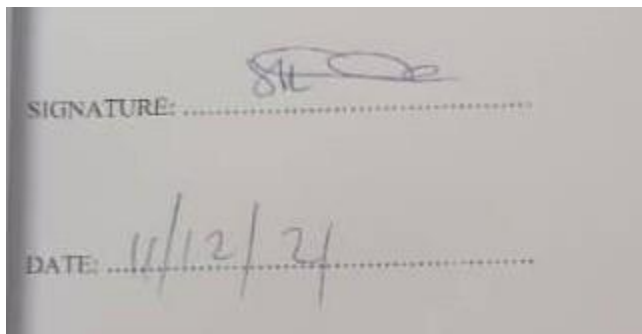
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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of Dissertation as laid down by the Ghana institute of journalism.

DR. JAMES ASANTE



DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to God, and then my family and loved ones who have supported me through my stay in school. Thank you to the academic advisers who have guided me in this process to keep us on track.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my greatest gratitude to God Almighty, who has given me life, strength, wisdom, knowledge and understanding to sail through this program successfully and produce this intellectual work. Thank you to my research supervisor for providing guidance and feedback throughout this project.

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the role of social media in crisis management. Specifically, Social media strategies of the Ghana Armed Forces in managing its crisis. The study considered the excellence theory of public relations and the social media crisis communication model as the underpinning theories.

The mixed method research design was adopted culminating in the use of survey and in-depth interviews were conducted to elicit views from respondents, mainly, army, navy, air force, and civilian employees. Findings revealed there is a high level of inconsistency on the side of the respondents regarding the number of years or period the Ghana Armed Forces has utilized social media. It identified identity theft, recruitment fraud, impersonation, infrastructure and lack of operational incentives as major crisis confronting the Ghana Armed Forces. The study, acknowledging the impact of social media, recommended the evolution of effective social media strategy to complement the traditional media as tools of communication in managing crisis.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the introductory components of the study are provided. These include, background to the study, research problem, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, scope of the study and finally, the organization of the study.

1.1 Background of the study

Social media has been present for many years. Kaplan and Haenlein, (2010) hold the assertion that there should hardly be any person within the civilized population who has never heard of Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia, YouTube and such. For many people, social media have become a natural part of life, used for connecting with others and sharing information with the world. Whereas only a decade ago contents and sites on the internet could only be created and edited by specialists and companies, social media now allows the whole internet-community to do so. By definition social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Social media has truly emerged during the last decade and today, it is part of everyday life for the majority of people in countries where internet penetration is high and most people have smart phones. It is therefore only logical that companies need to be in social media channels as well. As the companies are still somewhat finding their feet in social media, they are more likely to make mistakes in their communication as compared to the traditional media. When this is combined with

people being more connected to the world, commenting on current affairs becoming possible for everyone, there is a potential for crises (Salminen, 2017).

Salminen (2017), argues that crisis communication is needed by organizations whenever a crisis arises. He furthers to say that, crisis can be for example a traditional crisis such as an accident or fire at a factory, a reputation crisis such as the company getting caught for doing something illegal, or someone else claiming, sometimes untruthfully, that the organization has done something wrong. In addition, he posits that social media has its way of creating crises that did not exist before. These crises can result, for example, from consumer complaints that are followed by other consumers sharing their negative experiences in the comment section or consumers rating the company negatively on social media after a crisis (Salminen, 2017).

Social media enable increased communication and collaboration among online users, and they have become a part of everyday life for many. The most common social media platforms attract a large number of users: In August 2017, Facebook had about 2.0 billion, YouTube 1.5 billion, WhatsApp 1.2 billion, Instagram 700 million, Twitter 328 million, and LinkedIn 106 million active users. With such pervasiveness, people use social media not only in everyday life but also during crisis and emergency events (Reuter, Hughes, & Kaufhold, 2018).

Different crises affect societies and take different forms; cyber-attacks, natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, etc. Other forms are also such as political and conflict crises such as the World War I & II and epidemic diseases, which is one of the latest crises that the world is witnessing during the current time of Covid-19. (Haza, Almaqtari, & Al-Swidi, 2021).

According to Palen and Anderson (2016), crisis informatics is a multidisciplinary field combining computing and social science knowledge of disasters; its central tenet is that people use personal

information and communication technology to respond to disaster in creative ways to cope with uncertainty (Palen & Anderson, 2016).

1.2 The role of social media in public relations practices

Kim (2013), posits that the emergence of social media in the public relations arena means that practitioners have new communication tools, adding to traditional mass media and Internet media. While traditional mass media management plays an important part in the public relations arena, many public relations experts are now paying attention to social media to supplement traditional media because social media have unique advantages. Public relations practitioners can distribute their messages through social media and receive reaction from the public almost simultaneously. In contrast, with traditional mass media, it is possible to mass distribute organizational messages, but not to obtain immediate reaction from consumers or target audience.

In addition, the new atmosphere surrounding social media is compelling public relations practitioners to communicate by sending their messages directly to their key audience instead of relying on mass media outlets. Public relations practitioners have sought ways to obtain reaction directly from the public; however, the various measurements used in public relations research have not been satisfactory. (Kim, 2013).

According to Kim (2013), as the number of organizational crises increases, crisis communication and crisis management are essential in the practice of public relations. Just as organizations vary in type and size, the crisis they face vary in nature. Media management is one of the most important public relations strategies in crisis management plans. Social media have changed the way practitioners respond and prepare in crisis. Public relations practitioners now execute crisis plans that include social media.

Researchers have examined whether social media, which are acknowledged as two-way symmetric models, have useful communication effects as two-way communication tools to foster the mutual understanding between organizations and the public in the public relations arena (Choi & Kim, 2011). In addition, the relationships between organizations and publics using social media are becoming stronger because of the characteristics of social media. Researchers have suggested that public relations practitioners must consider the characteristics of social media and use those characteristics effectively. This study shall look forward to ascertaining the level of understanding of social media and crisis and how social media affects crisis management

1.3 Statement of problem

Social media and its tools have improved rapidly and started to influence society especially in recent years. This influence has forced businesses to revolutionize their communication with the external environment especially during a time of crisis, where a business' communication with the external environment is quite critical. For this reason, how the crisis communication is managed through social media is vital for businesses. (Givelek, Cemberci, & Cralp, 2016).

Crisis may occur at any place and at any time. Crisis can either come about as a natural cause that we have no control over, or as a result of human activities while performing social, economic, political and technological activities, which can be accidental or out of negligence. Whatever the causes of crisis are, crisis put individuals under huge pressure and provoke their emotional reactions (Ryenolds & Seeger, 2012). Like individuals, organizations are vulnerable to crisis. Crises disrupt the stability, function, and goals of organizations (Klann, 2003). Crisis have a potential to impose severe strain on an organization's financial, physical, and emotional structures, and might even jeopardize the survival of the whole organization (Jaques, 2010).

Even though crises are traumatic and threatening, they also provide some opportunities for organizations particularly, public ones. Crisis offer a lot of potential lessons for preparation for future crisis (Boin, Hart, Stern, & Sundelius, 2005). They are also opportunities to study the performance of public institutions under extreme pressure (Boin & Hart, 2003). Turning crisis into opportunities however, depends on how effective they are managed. In view of crisis and public institutions, and for the purpose of this study, the Ghana Armed Forces is of no exception when it comes to facing crisis.

1.4 Profile of the Ghana Armed Forces

The Ghana Armed Forces was formed in 1957 and consists of an army, navy and air force. It is a volunteer force under the supervision of the Ministry of Defense. The Ministry of Defense aims to maintain the Ghanaian Armed Forces in a high state of preparedness for national and international engagements, and be actively involved in promotion of peace and stability in the country and the sub-region. In pursuit of this mission, the Ministry is guided by the following objectives: enhance defense policy and control; improve the state of combat readiness; support national effort aimed at transforming the nature of the economy to achieve growth and accelerating poverty reduction especially the vulnerable and excluded; improve logistics and infrastructure facilities; and improve civil-military relations.

The role of the Ghanaian Army is to provide national defense and support the promotion of peace and stability in the country. It is divided into Northern and Southern Commands in a brigade structure. The role of the Navy is to defend the country and deter any aggression from sea, and protect Ghana's lines of communication and the resources of the sea. The role of the Air Force is to provide air transport and offensive air support to the Ghanaian Armed Forces and to protect the

territorial air space of Ghana. In the attempt of the Ghana Armed Forces to achieve its primary objectives, it has been faced with numerous challenges which has in some cases heightened into crisis.

Since the return to constitutional rule in 1992, Ghana has experienced some relative improvement and thus contributed to the country's growing democratic credentials. Political changes have been fairly peaceful taking place in accordance with democratic rules established by the Fourth Republican constitution. The country has seen three political turnovers between two main political parties, New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC), taking turns to run affairs of the country. In the midst of this political process, the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) has gradually metamorphosed from a praetorian military to a professional defense force. It has been at the forefront in efforts to restore peace and security to several countries globally through participation in international peacekeeping. GAF has progressively earned a global reputation for its professionalism in international peacekeeping. Ghanaian peacekeepers have served in several missions around the globe such as Lebanon, Afghanistan, Cote d'Ivoire, East Timor, Cambodia, Kosovo, Liberia, Sudan, Rwanda, the Balkans, and Pakistan. Ghana also contributed to other regional peace operations under sub-regional Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group to help end the bloodshed in Liberia. Others include Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire as well as continental missions in Somalia and Sudan. Participation in peacekeeping demonstrates Ghana's commitment to sustain global peace, security, and stability (Aning & Aubyn, 2013)

This has also contributed to improving civil–military relations at home and contributed to greater professionalism within the military. Participation in peacekeeping has exposed many Ghanaian military personnel to the horrors of state collapse and human suffering. To this end, Ghanaian

peacekeepers seem to have developed some conflict resolution skills and accommodation that support harmonious civil–military relations (Levine, 2016).

Salihu, (2019) argues that the Ghanaian populace appreciates of the role of the armed forces in the society and holds the institution in high esteem. Yet responses secured from a randomly selected sample of Ghanaians in a study conducted by the scholar showed a mixed apprehension on the part of ordinary citizens about their perceptions of the armed forces (Salihu, 2019)

The armed forces has made use of available strategies and tools (of which social media: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Blog posts are no exception) to shape the negative thoughts and perceptions some section of the Ghanaian populace hold about, as well as human caused or induced crisis however, the effectiveness of the use of social media in managing these crisis is somewhat dicey. It is for this reason this study focuses on explaining the role of social media and its effectiveness in crisis management as used by the Ghana Armed Forces.

1.5 Research objectives

The research objectives of the study include:

- A- To understand the concepts of social media and crisis management.
- B- To identify the threats and opportunities open to the Ghana Armed Forces in using social media to manage crisis.
- C- To explain how social media is utilized in crisis management by the Ghana Armed Forces.
- D- To identify the opportunities open to the Ghana Armed Forces in using social media in managing crisis.
- E- To explain the factors that leads to the effectiveness of using social media tools in managing crisis by the Ghana Armed Forces.

1.6 Research questions

The research questions shall include:

- A- How comprehensive are the terms social media and crisis management?
- B- What are the threats and opportunities of using social media in managing crisis?
- C- How is social media used to manage crisis by the Ghana Armed Forces?
- D- What are the opportunities open to the Ghana Armed Forces in using social media in managing crisis?
- E- What are the factors that lead to the effectiveness of using social media tools in managing crisis by the Ghana Armed Forces?

1.7 Scope of the study

The study shall focus on explaining the variables: social media, crisis and crisis management. It shall also seek to explain how social media is effectively utilized by the Ghana Armed Forces in managing crisis and, finally, examine the threats and opportunities open to the Ghana Armed Forces in using social media in managing crisis.

1.8 Significance of the study

This study shall not be the first of its kind as there are numerous studies conducted in this area however; the results of this study shall not be in vain. The results shall serve as a source of policy guide for public relations department of the Ghana Armed Forces on the use of social media in managing crisis. The study shall also seek to guide the construction of public relations messages by the Ghana Armed Forces for broadcasting over their social media platforms. The study shall enable the Ghana Armed Forces to implicitly and explicitly determine the role social media plays

in crisis management, and the threats and opportunities associated to its usage. It shall also add to existing literature on social media usage in crisis management by corporate and civil organizations.

1.9 Organization of the study

The study is organized in five chapters. Chapter one deals with the background of the study, statement of research problem, research objectives, research questions, scope of the study, and finally significance of the study. Chapter two of the study deals with review of related literature and theoretical framework.

Chapter three of the study deals with the research methodology, research design, population of the study, sampling method and technique, sample size, data collection method, data collection instrument, and finally, data analysis tools and data presentation methods.

Chapter four of the study focuses on the analysis of the findings of the study and chapter five focuses on the summary of findings of the study, draws relevant conclusions and provides suggestions for further studies.

1.10 Limitations of the study

The study faced numerous limitations which include: time constraints, unwillingness of respondents to respond to questionnaires and interviews, and finally, inadequate literature on how the Ghana Armed Forces utilizes social media in managing crisis

The researcher had limited time to conduct the study when it was advised that consideration is given to adopting the mixed method research design instead of the initial quantitative design. Even though there was an extension of time, it was not adequate enough considering the research design.

Some responders were also unwilling to respond to the questionnaire and on the other hand, convincing the selected respondents for the interview was difficult. Some of the respondents were not certain of the use of the data they would be providing for the study even after being informed about its academic nature. The study initially had a sample frame of 80 respondents for the survey questionnaire and 10 respondents for the interview. Due to the unwillingness on the part of some of the respondents and the inadequate time, the researcher had to settle with 50 respondents for the survey questionnaire and 5 respondents for the interview.

There was enough literature on the variables: social media and crisis management. However, there was little literature available on how the Ghana Armed Forces makes use of social media in managing crises. For this reason, most of the literature reviewed fell dominantly on the variables: social media and crisis management.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

According to Denney and Tewksbury, (2012) literature review is a comprehensive overview of prior research regarding a specific topic. They explain that the overview both shows the reader what is known about a topic, and what is not yet known, thereby setting up the rationale or need for a new investigation, which is what the actual study to which the literature review is attached

seeks to do (Denney & Tewksbury, 2012). The literature review was placed under the following: conceptual framework, review of related literature and theoretical framework.

2.2 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework shall consider the following themes: defining social media and crisis management; social media strategies in organizational crisis management; and social media as a strategic tool in crisis management.

2.2.1 Defining social media and crisis management

By definition social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The Internet gives everyone the opportunity to share views and experiences (Trusov et al., 2009). There are many different social networking sites on the Internet, and some of these are among the most visited websites on the Internet (González-Herrero & Smith, 2008). Some of these popular social media networks include: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Whatsapp, Youtube, Spotify, Skype and Zoom, among others.

In brief, the Merriam Webster English dictionary defines crisis as an unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending. This is what Salminen, (2017) explained that, it could be natural or artificial depending on its causative factors. According to the scholar, every crisis needs to be managed and that can only be made possible with crisis communication strategies. Salminen (2017), argues that crisis communication is needed by organizations whenever a crisis arises. In addition, he posits that social media has its way of creating crises that did not exist before. These crises according to the scholar, can result, for example, from consumer

complaints that are followed by other consumers sharing their negative experiences in the comment section or consumers rating the company negatively on social media after a crisis (Salminen, 2017).

2.2.2 Social media strategies in organizational crisis management

Benoit, (1997) posited that message options is the key in image restoration discourse. Coombs, (2007) who based his theory on the assumption that communication can change people's perceptions of a crisis also made similar suggestions to the assertion made by Benoit. However, Benoit's statement was in contrast with more recent research conducted by Schultz, et al., (2011) who suggested that the medium is more important than the message (Schultz, et al., 2011).

The strategies that Benoit (1997) provides crisis communicators with are largely similar with the ones that Coombs (2007) suggested ten years later. However, whereas Coombs (2007) divides the strategies into three primary response strategy groups and one secondary response strategy group, Benoit (1997) divides them into five groups. These five main groups are denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing the offensiveness of event, corrective action, and mortification. Communicators can choose the strategy in accordance with the seriousness of the situation and they can often also combine different strategies listed (Benoit, 1997).

Benoit, (1997) in his article, "Image repair discourse and crisis communication" identified five basic strategies organisations adopt in managing crisis. According to the scholar, these strategies include: denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness of even, mortification and corrective action.

Denial: this could be simple denial of the action or shifting the blame on to other factors.

Evasion of responsibility: this strategy is adopted by firms who according to Benoit, (1997) were acting on provocation (responding to acts of others firms or people or even laws), defeasibility (as a result of lack of information or ability), accidents (an act of mishap or unintended occurrences), and good intent (action was meant well but ended in causing chaos)

Reducing offensiveness of the event: this strategy is adopted basically to stress the good traits of the firm and again reduce the credibility of the accuser. It also seeks to compensate or reimburse the victim of the crisis.

Mortification: this strategy is uncomplicated as it only seeks to apologize for the actions of the organization.

Corrective action: this strategy looks at a plan which intends to solve the problem and prevent subsequent occurrences.

According to Coombs (2007), in a crisis situation, there are three factors that form the reputational threat. These factors are initial crisis responsibility, crisis history, and prior relational reputation. Initial crisis responsibility refers to how responsible the organization is for the crisis in the eyes of the stakeholders. The more responsible the stakeholders deem the company, the more severe the reputational threat caused by the crisis (Claeys, et al., 2010). As stated by Seeger (2006: 239), “the public’s perception is its reality.” Therefore, even if the company is not actually responsible for the crisis, but the audience thinks they are, they should act as if they were responsible (Seeger, 2006)

Crisis history addresses the case of the organization having experienced prior crises. This can be especially important if the prior crises have been of a similar nature. If this is the case, the

organization may be deemed more responsible to the current crisis because it will seem like they have not taken enough corrective actions in the past (Coombs, 2007).

Prior relational reputation on the other hand refers to how the company has or is perceived to have treated their stakeholders in general. If the company has a history of treating their stakeholders badly, they may be seen as more responsible for the crisis (Coombs, 2007). This could be an example of Schadenfreude, (a phenomenon where people are happy when another party suffers) according to Coombs, (2007).

2.2.3 Social media as strategic tools in crisis management

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development-OECD, (2013) in a working paper on “public governance” identified major challenges faced by organizations in their attempt to utilize social media: its tools and strategies in managing crisis. Some of these challenges or threats are highlighted below:

- The challenges of multiple players and communication channels: speaking with one voice or choosing multichannel approaches?

The first challenge that emergency officers face is the multiplicity of players and channels of communication that exist during a crisis situation. These can be national, regional or local players. They can be official or volunteers. They can use traditional media or social media. This can blur the picture and provoke an information overload

- Transparency and reliability: avoiding the propagation of rumors or misinformation and the situation of panic in a population

The content of social media does not follow a process of validation to indicate its validity. Therefore there is a risk for propagating rumors and misinformation. Retweeting can make the rumor spread very quickly and get out of control. This could lead to panic in a population which would not be justified by facts but only spread through misinformation. As traditional media can quote online interaction, the traditional media could relay false social media information, without the reader noticing.

- Image damage: limiting negative reputational effect?

OECD, (2013) reported that the Japanese authorities used social media during the earthquake and tsunamis occurring in 2011. On 13 March 2011 they started a Twitter page in Japanese, and on 16 March 2011 a twitter page in English. On 23 March 2011 they started to use Facebook, and the number of followers increased rapidly. However the Facebook and Twitter pages were also used to attack Japan's image, even about unrelated topics- a practice known as trolling. For instance anti-government messages were posted to protest against the killing of whales, as well as against the use of nuclear power plants.

- Keeping in touch: addressing the population segments who are not familiar with social media.

The elderly, the disabled, people who do not speak the local language may not be able to access the data provided by social media. Therefore proving that language barrier and literacy level could hinder the assimilation of social media messages published by organizations in their attempt to control and manage crisis.

- Avoiding the information overload: How to get meaning out of the flow of data?

During a crisis, the number of information exchange through social media can be so high that it becomes impossible to have a clear picture of what is happening. Bloggers or Facebook users can also publish false information. Their perception of the reality might be biased during a crisis, which can lead to a situation where it is difficult for the emergency manager to get the right picture of the situation.

- The question of liability: Who is liable for what? Are social media reliable?

Experts expressed their fears that people could believe they should receive assistance if they indicate via a social media handle that they are in need of help. There is a risk that emergency services could be held liable if they don't answer to an online request. Going one step further, could they be liable for providing incorrect or unclear information or "pranking" the authorities?

- Managing public expectations

The use of social media in emergency management can create new expectation in the population, in a time where human and material resources are scarce. For instance, it was identified by OECD, (2013) that according to the social media emergency management camp organized in 2011, the use of social media by the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) 24- 7, means that they commit three LAFD officers to provide support over a 24- hour period, engaging in information dissemination and discussion across their Twitter profiles, @LAFD and @LAFDtalk. On a steady state basis, they use the tools to monitor user-provided information and look for emergency reports and opportunities to provide clarifying information to citizens with questions or concerns. Not all emergency services can dedicate as much means for the use of social media (OECD, 2013).

Irrespective there are challenges as identified above in using social media to manage organizational crisis, there are also some opportunities in its usage. Social media offer several possibilities to express crisis communication in a new way (Fritzsche, 2012)

Taylor and Perry (2005) therefore compared traditional and innovative media tactics. In a pilot study they identified five new media tactics: dialogic communication when visitors are encouraged to respond to the issue at hand, connecting links allow organizations to connect visitors to relevant site; real-time monitoring for updated information, multi-media effects offer images, videos and audio effect; and online chat to get people involved in the situation (Taylor & Perry, 2005)

Taylor and Perry (2005) focused on the internet in general when identifying these tactics but it shows that social media form a perfect platform to perform them. Results of their research found that even though these new tactics existed, 98% relied on traditional media tactics online, making for example Q&A's and press releases available on the internet. While many organizations engaged in at least one of the new media tactics, 34% relied exclusively on traditional media tactics online. Their research showed that seven years ago many organizations already used the internet for their crisis response. Here again, social media were at that time still on the starting blocks but now shows to be a suited platform performing those new tactics which might also have a positive impact on crisis communication (Taylor & Perry, 2005)

In summary, social media seem to have an impact on crisis communication through the possibility of interactivity, the immediacy, the networking power and opportunities as the new media tactics identified by Taylor and Perry (2005). Interactivity seems to reduce uncertainty. Immediacy changes crisis communication because rumors spread easier and therefore faster but on the other hand accelerate the crisis news cycle so that they are over sooner. And the networking power

possibly empowers certain stakeholders who become influencers of the opinion of others. Researchers highlighted, though, that all these characteristics of social media can be an opportunity or a threat depending on the companies' actions (Taylor & Perry, 2005)

2.3 Review of related studies

This section shall consider reviewing scholarly articles and papers that have similarity in variables to this study. These variables that would be considered are: social media, crisis management, and crisis communication in organizations.

Simon, (2015) conducted a study on “social media marketing: strategic tools in business.” This study determined the effectiveness of use of social media marketing tools of 30 business companies. Specifically, the study sought to find answer to the level of effectiveness of social media as marketing tool.

It was revealed that the company or agency marketers and managers were dominated by females with 67%; 83% belonged to 28-35 age bracket; most were single; all had finished their bachelor's degrees; and all of them were working at contractual basis. The study also unearthed that all of them used Facebook; Twitter ranked second, and Blogs ranked third. Simon, (2015) came to the realization that the effectiveness of the use of social media marketing tool was highly effective along generation of awareness and consistency of products; and only effective along income generation and sustainability of products. The major challenges that study came across on the effectiveness of the use of social media tools were on complaints, unreliability of delivery time frame, and negative feedbacks. It was again revealed that there was no significant relationship between the level of effectiveness on use of social media marketing tools and their profile variables (Simon, 2015).

The study went ahead to conclude that the marketers and managers did not vary much in their profiles. And they primarily used social networking sites. Again, the social media marketing tool was rated to be effective however, there are uncontrollable factors that contribute to the problems encountered by the marketers and managers, and profile variables did not affect the level of effectiveness on the use of social media marketing tools (Simon, 2015).

Another scholar whose work was considered for review under this section was Baruah, (2012) In her study on “effectiveness of social media as a tool of communication and its potential for technology enabled connections” various elements identified on how effective social media can be as a tool for communication.

Sharing of ideas: Social networking sites allow users to share ideas, activities, events and interests within their individual networks. Web based social networking services make it possible to connect people who share interests and activities across political, economic and geographic borders.

Tool of communication: Social networks are increasingly being used by teachers and learners as a communication tool. Teachers create chat rooms, forums and groups to extend classroom discussion to posting assignments, tests and quizzes, to assisting with homework outside of the classroom setting.

Bridges communication gap: Social media bridges the distance among different people. It offers platforms for online users to find others who share the same interests and build virtual communities based on those shared interests.

Source of information: Content generating and sharing sites serve as sources of information for various topics. Users can search for content, download and use the content available on these sites free of cost.

Important marketing tool: Social media is widely used by most of the firms/organizations to market their products/services in the society. The companies resort to social networking sites to generate opinions on the existing and future products that are available in the market.

Important customer interaction tool: Social Media Networking is perfect for customer interaction, customer feedback, and customer support. New business contacts can be obtained for networking purposes.

Important crisis communication tool: When the major forms of public relations tool fail, social media can be used extensively to communicate with the general public regarding any crisis situation that might have gripped the nation or any organization.

Irrespective of the above identified effectiveness of social media and its tools, Baruah, (2012) argued that it is important to remember that while social media can have a positive impact during natural disasters, it can have a less favorable effect during business crises, in which case, corporate communication teams need to understand how they can use social media to their advantage. She went on to posit that the communications landscape has changed thanks to social media, especially during times of crisis (Baruah, 2012)

Another study conducted by Veer et al, (2019) on “effectiveness of social media tools and its impact on promotions” identified that social media achieved the largest number of users of social media network amongst others; it reveals that Social media has a good audience to advertise. Not only Social media, but other social networking organizations also largely generated their revenue through online promotions (Veer, et al., 2019).

Hypothesis testing results showed that the promoted advertisement and involvement in the promoted advertisement are positively correlated. Promotions on the Facebook wall in more

effective. The analysis showed that the influence of banner advertisement placement on the side wall of the social media platform was insignificant and did not change the perceptions of the users towards buying decision. It means that the promotional banner on the side wall of the platform was ineffective. The result of this study showed that the popup content promotions on social media did not fulfil the information need of their users. Users were not motivated due to insufficient product information provided by content promoters on social media through popup promotions. This study also highlighted that promotions via social media did not significantly influence the purchase decisions of users. Indeed promotion is more effective as compared with sidewall banner advertisements or popup banner on the network platform the study revealed. The finding of this study showed that the influence of advertisement on social media does not change with the gender of social media users. There was no significant gender differentiation and promotional influence on social networks. It was also suggested that social media should make users aware of informative promotional content. The study concluded that promotions on a social media platform have different influence with a change in sponsoring promotional content placement on it.

It is evident that numerous studies have been conducted on the use of social and its effectiveness on communication in general however, the scholarly articles adopted for review under this session, although focused on social media and its tools, these papers shifted from crisis management as a dominant variable in this study and focused on social media marketing, technology enabled connections, and social media promotions. It can therefore be said that there is a knowledge gap within the literature on the role of social media in crisis management.

“The role of social media in corporate crisis communication” by Salminen, (2017) aimed to find out how the emergence of social media and its various platforms have changed corporate crisis communication. It also aimed to look at how companies utilize social networking channels in their

crisis communication. The final objective for the paper was to find out if the general guidelines of crisis communication apply to communication through social media networking channels. The study was conducted as a combination of a literature review on current research about crisis communication, and interviews of crisis communication professionals. The literature review identified the key crisis communication theories and the interviews built on those by asking more social media specific questions from the professionals.

It was identified that the nature of crisis communication has changed due to the emergence of social media. Salminen, (2017) argued that crises can develop much faster in social media and often, suggested that communication must be faster too. The scholar posited that the general guidelines and theories of crisis communication usually still apply, but the companies must consider the often-intensifying effect of social media. Again, companies can utilize social media in their crisis communication by using it before a crisis arises. Such as using Twitter to communicate quickly, and addressing crises in the channel where the audience is discussing it.

Ye, (2014) in an attempt to analyze the effectiveness of using social media for crisis communication, focused on British Petroleum Deep-water Horizon and how they utilized Facebook as a social media tool after the oil spillage in 2010. Within the theoretical frameworks of the situational crisis communication theory, the attribution theory, and the social identity theory were adopted. The study specifically analyzed BP America's crisis communication messages and Facebook users' comments on BP America's Facebook page with a quantitative content analysis, and examined influence of congruence between Facebook users' comments and BP's messages on publics' perceived image of BP with an experiment. The content analysis results revealed that rebuilding strategies dominated BP's crisis response, and Facebook users were more likely to comment favorably when BP used accommodative strategies. The results also suggested that

bolstering strategies and third party endorsement may not work as expected. The experimental results suggest that Facebook may have the potential to be an effective crisis communication tool in affecting publics' perceived image of an organization-in-crisis, and the effects of Facebook are limited to the strategies used by the organization, congruence between Facebook users' comments and the organization's messages, publics' pre-crisis attitudes toward the organization, and publics' perceived social connection to Facebook users.

Modeus et al, (2012) in their study, "crisis management in social media" adopted a quantitative survey, qualitative interviews and investigation of secondary data as tools for data gathering to identify critical success factors in the management of a crisis in social media. The study revealed that media and entertainment is the industry, which uses social media to the largest extent. Companies in communication, advertising, PR and marketing is the industry which uses social media second most.

Again, to have a team responsible for crisis management in social media might also influence the effects of the crisis, to a positive outcome in the sense of being strengthened by the crisis. Companies need to monitor social media, to be able to respond quickly to any upcoming crisis. It is important that this response is adapted, to the channel, meaning that it should not be the same message as given to, for example, traditional media in a press release. The response should also be given in a friendly and human way. In social media people want to get a human response and not hear a corporate voice. A crisis plan, crisis response team and a main responsible for crisis management in social media are important parts for successful crisis management.

In the study, the scholars argued that size and how prepared a company is for a crisis, affects each other. Large companies have more preparedness for crisis management and are more prepared to

handle a crisis in social media. It was also revealed that large companies are more likely to have a crisis plan, crisis response team and a main responsible for crisis management in social media. It is more likely for large companies to have a presence in social media. Consequently, as larger companies are more prepared for crises, they are better in managing a crisis in social media.

2.4 Theoretical framework

The study shall consider the excellence theory of public relations and the social-mediated crisis communication model.

2.4.1 The excellence theory of public relations

The Excellence Theory developed as a result of a research programme commissioned by the Research Foundation of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) in 1984. It sought to explore how public relations could evolve from a tactical craft that broadly focused on publicity and media relations to become a management discipline. (Waddington, 2012) James Grunig assembled a team of six public relations academics and practitioners under his leadership. These included his wife Larissa Grunig of the University of Maryland; David Dozier of San Diego State University; William Ehling of Syracuse University; Jon White, a UK consultant, academic and teacher; and Fred Repper, a public relations practitioner.

2.4.2 General underpinning and levels of the Excellence theory

The Excellence Theory's general theory proposed that the value of communication can be determined at four levels (Grunig & Grunig, 2010)

Programme level – effective organizations must empower public relations as a critical management function.

Functional level – Public relations should be an integrated communication function and separate from other management functions including marketing.

Organization level – effective organizations should base internal and external communication and relationship building on a two-way symmetrical model.

Societal level – Organizations must recognize their impact on other organizations and publics. They cannot be effective unless they are socially responsible.

The original Four Models of Public Relations and vision of two-way symmetrical communications as a model of excellence was reinforced by the subsequent analysis that emerged from the Excellence Theory. (Waddington, 2012)

This theory holds much relevance to this study in that, the excellence theory opens up on the core communication principles and models organizations must adopt in their attempt to effectively communicate to their publics. Again, the theory does not only shape professional public relations practice but also helps organizations such as the Ghana Armed Forces in identifying the various levels of communication (program level, functional level, organizational level, and societal level) and how to effectively utilize them. In the Ghana Armed Forces' attempt to paint a positive image of itself in the light of the Ghanaian society by employing effective tools and strategies (and the use of social media) in managing the crisis they face, the excellence theory cannot be overlooked.

2.4.3 Academic criticisms of the Excellence theory

The original Four Models of Public Relations and vision of two-way symmetrical communications as a model of excellence was reinforced by the subsequent analysis that emerged from the Excellence Theory. As we'll see some academics believe this shows Grunig's foresight while

others claim that the research team was unduly influenced by the Four Models of Public Relations. (Waddington, 2012)

Critical appraisal of the Excellence Theory isn't hard to find. A critical review together with responses from members of the original research team would be sufficient material for a paper in its own right. A chronological summary of some of the different aspects of academic criticism is outlined below.

Michael Karlberg (1996), in a paper for the Journal of Public Relations Research makes the case that the Excellence Theory is overly concerned with consumers as a primary audience. He believes that the research team missed an opportunity to explore the broader implications of the relationship between an organization and its markets.

In Paradigms, System Theory and Public Relations, Magda Pieczka (1996), says that the two-way symmetrical component of the Excellence Theory is over-idealized. In doing so, she attacks the research agenda from which it was developed and the premise of systems theory on which the model is based.

Shirley Leitch and David Neilson (2001), challenge the rigid nature of the Excellence Theory in a chapter written for the Handbook of Public Relations. Their belief is that publics are not fixed categories waiting to be identified but are formed dynamically through the conversation in which they participate.

In Public Relations, Society and Culture, Lee Edwards and Caroline Hodges (2001), argue that Grunig's rigid focus on organization theory over simplifies human behavior. They suggest that this singular focus on public relations within organizations overlooks the social world in which those organizations operate.

2.4.4 Relevance of the theory to the study

The excellence theory holds much relevance to this study. Considering the Ghana Armed Forces as a public institution that dwells on the use of public relations tools and strategies in managing its crisis, the theory assists by empowering public relations function. For an effective organization public relation must be empowered as a critical management function. Again, the communication roles of the public relations officers should be an all-inclusive one both in managerial and administrative function. The theory suggests that for an effective public relations practice in an organization, public relations should be an integrated communication function and separate from marketing or other management functions.

2.5 The social mediated crisis communication model

The SMCC model was developed to provide evidence-based guidelines to help crisis communicators decide if, when, and how to respond to influential social media, while also acknowledging the influence of traditional media and offline word-of-mouth communication. The SMCC framework highlights the importance of integrating social media into the media mix for crisis communication and issues management (Liu, Jin, Austin, & Janoske, 2012).

2.5.1 Origin of the BMCC Model

The SMCC model evolved from the Blog-Mediated Crisis Communication (BMCC) model (Jin & Liu, 2010), which provided guidance for crisis managers on identifying influential blogs and implementing communication response strategies for these influential blogs before, during, and after crises. The BMCC model implies that crisis communicators with limited resources must identify influential blogs to maximize resources and monitoring capabilities. Influential blogs are

identified through bloggers' information authority and credibility, and through their issue- and self-involvement. According to the BMCC model, influential blogs address blog followers' informational and emotional needs during crises by providing issue-fit opinion leadership, which exerts influences by providing timely and accurate information on issues that affect and concern blog followers. The original BMCC model included a checklist matrix for evaluating the potential influence of a blog, as well as recommended response and recovery communication strategies based on a variety of organizational and crisis factors. The BMCC model was later enhanced to include all social media, in addition to blogs, and renamed the Social-Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC) model (Liu, Jin, Austin, & Janoske, 2012; Liu, Jin, Briones, & Kuch, 2012). The renaming of the model and its more inclusive focus stemmed from emerging research on the influence of social media and social networks as crisis management tools (Briones, Kuch, Liu, & Jin, 2011; Liu, Jin, Briones, & Kuch, 2012), including a series of interviews with American Red Cross communicators exploring the model's propositions. The SMCC model, therefore, highlights the influence of social media platforms, in addition to influential bloggers, traditional media, and offline interactions (Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014).

2.5.2 Components of the SMCC Model

The SMCC model describes the relationship between the following core concepts: an organization, key publics, social media, traditional media, and offline word-of-mouth communication before, during, and after crises.

Key Publics- first, the SMCC model identifies three key publics who seek, produce, or share information before, during, and after crises: influential social media creators, social media followers, and social media inactives (Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014; Li, Bernoff, Fiorentino, & Glass,

2007). Influential social media creators develop and post crisis information online; social media followers consume this information from social media creators and also share this information both on and offline; and social media inactives do not participate actively in the social media, but receive this crisis information via other channels including traditional media and word-of-mouth communication from social media followers, creators, or other inactives.

The Flow of Information- for example, social media inactives have an indirect relationship with social media, receiving information indirectly from followers and creators. Social media and traditional media directly inform one another's crisis coverage with traditional media utilizing information from social media in news development and vice versa

Forms of Information- the model also highlights three main forms of crisis communication, including social media, traditional media, and offline word-of-mouth communication. Social media, which may include information from influential social media creators or the organization, has a direct relationship with key publics, the organization, and traditional media, while traditional media has a direct relationship with social media, key publics, and the organization.

Organizational Considerations- the SMCC model portrays the crisis management considerations of a single organization and situates the organization responding to an issue or crisis as the central source for crisis information. As Atkins (2010) notes, crises rarely impact only one organization and successful crisis planning should consider multiple organizational perspectives. The model can potentially be applied to multiple-organization crisis contexts, although it is important to note that SMCC researchers acknowledge that external organizations' influences on the crisis and public and media responses are beyond the scope of this model (Jin & Liu, 2010).

2.5.3 The SMCC criteria for responding to organizational crisis.

The SMCC model includes five criteria for organizations to consider in their response to emerging issues and crises: (1) crisis origin, (2) crisis type, (3) organizational infrastructure, (4) message strategy, and (5) message form.

The crisis origin refers to the starting point of the issue, whether internal or external to the organization, which influences publics' attribution of responsibility for the crisis (Coombs, 2007). Publics are likely to respond more negatively to crises of perceived internal organizational origin versus crises of perceived external origin (Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014; Lee, 2004). Based upon the attribution of responsibility, varying crisis message strategies are recommended (Jin & Liu, 2010).

Second, *crisis type* is identifiable based on the characteristics of the crisis and may also influence attribution of responsibility (Coombs, 2007, 2010, 2012; Jin & Liu, 2010). Based on SCCT a crisis may be perceived as victim-based, accidental, or intentional. Organizations should carefully consider how the type of crisis might influence publics and adjust crisis response strategies accordingly.

Third, *organizational infrastructure* refers to whether a crisis should be handled in a centralized way through a unified organizational message or should be localized through tailored messages meant for specific audiences, including branches and affiliates (Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014). Depending on the type and origin of the crisis, a centralized message, which can also be communicated by local entities, may be more effective in facilitating crisis recovery (Liu, Jin, Briones, & Kuch, 2012,

Fourth, *crisis message strategy* refers to the content of the organization's crisis communications, which helps publics respond to and make meaning of the crisis. Content may include instructing

and adapting information for impacted publics (Coombs, 2012), which informs publics of the crisis and any actions they should take. It may also provide them with emotional support. Crisis response strategies for reputation management can range on a continuum from defensive to accommodative strategies (Jin & Liu, 2010). Defensive strategies separate the blame for the crisis from the organization and often include a combination of attacking the accuser, denial, scapegoating, ignoring, excusing, justifying, and separation. Conversely, accommodative strategies emphasize image repair, which is needed as image damage increases, and include bolstering, ingratiation, victimage, endorsement, compensation, transcendence, and full apology. SCCT and SMCC research (Coombs, 2007a, 2010, 2012; Jin, 2010; Jin & Liu, 2010; Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014) provide suggestions for when and how organizations should respond. Grounded in rumor psychology theory, Jin and Liu (2010) adapted the rumor-transmission process to the social-mediated rumor cycle and suggest differing communication strategies for varying stages of rumor transmission including rumor generation, rumor belief, and rumor transition.

Fifth, *crisis message form* refers to how the crisis is distributed or conveyed. The SMCC Model identifies varying crisis message forms including messages distributed through social media, traditional media, and offline word-of-mouth communication. Crisis message form has been shown to impact publics' acceptance of crisis messages (Liu, Jin, & Austin, 2013; Schultz et al., 2011).

2.5.4 Relevance of the theory to the study

The Social Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC) model plays an important role in recent crisis communication. Essential to this model is both the direct and indirect dissemination of information across social media, as well as between traditional and social media (Austin, Liu & Jin, 2012). As a result, this model is useful for communication efforts in emergency situations when defining the

at-risk population and how best to reach them. In a world increasingly connected via social media, information exchanged on this platform during emergencies has the potential to engage with multiple types of public audiences. Although inactive members may be connected to social media indirectly through other members or traditional media, these individuals may require different messaging channels than influencers and followers. This theory provides a model that identifies characteristics of audiences that can help to refine communication strategies and components.

This model holds that in the context of a crisis, multiple publics or audiences exist in the world of social media. These publics or audiences include influencers who create their own content; followers, those who follow the influencers and access information; and the inactive members who do not directly access information from social media but seek for information from other sources or are exposed to information from social media indirectly. The public relations units of the Ghana Armed Forces would have to be able to identify all these categories of social media users to be able to channel their crisis communications appropriately. To effect, some influencers can be contracted into publishing these kind of messages since they have larger social media followership as compared to the other categories.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the research design, the population of the study, the sample size, sampling technique, data collection method, data analysis method and tools, data presentation, and finally, procedure for data collection.

3.1 Research design

Research design refers to the overall strategy that one chooses to attack the problem which requires integration of different components of the study in a coherent and logical way, thereby, solving the problem in an efficient way. It constitutes the blueprint for the collection measurement, analyses of data, interpretation and reporting of conclusions (Kumar, 2015). The study adopted the mixed method research design. The mixed method design allows for a wider research population and sample. It allows for the gathering of both quantitative and qualitative data for analysis.

3.2 Population of study

The population of a study is the aggregate or totality of all the elements, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications. There are two classifications of population in research, namely; target population and accessible population. Target population is used in reference to all elements of group that the study seeks to investigate. The accessible population refers to members of the population that are within the reach of the research (Nworgu, 2006). The study focused on service

personnel of the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF): the Army, Navy, Air Force and the Civilian employees.

3.3 Sample size and sampling technique

The study adopted a sample size of fifty (50) participants using the convenient sampling technique. The convenient sampling technique allowed for the easy sampling of respondents who were easiest to reach and was more available at the time the study was conducted.

3.4 Data collection method and tool

As the study adopted the mixed method design, it was prudent to utilize the survey method and the in-depth interview hence, the survey questionnaire and the structured interview guide were adopted as data collection tools for gathering responses from the respondents for analyses.

3.5 Procedure for data collection

The procedure for data collection commenced with all respondents being detailed about the purpose and main objectives of the study and why their participation in the study was necessary. The consent of all the participants was sought before data was collected from them.

3.5 Data analysis and presentation

The data gathered using the survey questionnaire was analyzed using statistical tools and presented in tables, charts, and graphs. Specifically, the study made use of the descriptive analysis to analyze responses that emanated from the close-ended questions and the discourse analysis to analyze the data gathered from the open ended questions

3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethics is a systematic approach of understanding, analyzing and distinguishing matters of right and wrong, good and bad, admirable and deplorable as they are to the well-being of and the relationship among sentient beings (Rich, 2010). The study considered three basic research ethical principles which include: informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality.

According to Farrimond, (2017) the principle of ‘informed consent’ is a fundamental one in ethical research, stemming from the notion that individuals have personal autonomy and decision-making capacity to decide for themselves whether to participate in a given research project or not.

All the participants of the study were duly informed about the purpose and objectives of the study. The researcher sought for these participants consent before proceeding to gather data from them for the study.

The purpose of offering participants anonymity (not using their real name) and confidentiality (not disclosing what they say to others) is to protect their privacy as the ethical principle of confidentiality posits (Farrimond, 2017). As the principle of anonymity basically calls on researchers to conceal the actual identities of participants or respondents in a study, the study did not go otherwise as posited by Farrimond (2017).

Confidentiality as an ethical principle in research was also duly applied in the study as the researchers ensured that, all data gathered from the participants was appropriately used and for the purpose of the study only. Information or data gathered from these participants were not disclosed to any third or interested parties.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and discussions of the field data emanating from the study in order to examine how the Ghana Armed Forces utilize social media social media in crisis management.

4.2 Bio data

Figure 1. Sex distribution of respondents



Source: field survey, 2021.

From the figure, the sex distribution of the respondents shows that out of 50 respondents, 29 were males; representing 58% and 21 were female representing 44%. Therefore the outcome of the study is more likely to be skewed towards the males' view than the females.

Table 1. Age distribution of respondents

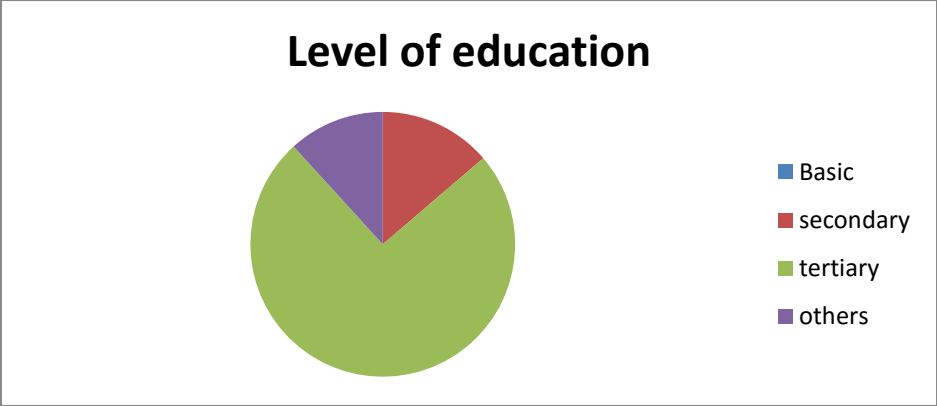
Variable	Frequency	Percentage
18-23	4	8%

24-27	16	32%
28-32	19	38%
33 and above	11	22%
Total	50	100%

Source: field survey, 2021

From the table, 4% of the respondents were between the ages of 18-23, 32% were between the ages of 24-28, 38% were between the ages of 29-34 and 22% were aged of 35 and above. From this, we can say the respondents represent a very youthful population.

Figure.2 Level of education of respondents



Source: field survey, 2021.

The above figure shows an indication that out of the total respondents-50; none of them stopped at basic education. They all went on to further up which amounted to 7 of them attaining secondary education representing 14%; a majority 38 of them attaining tertiary education representing 76%; and 6 of them representing 12% attaining other levels of education.

Table.2 Arm of service of respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Army	15	30%
Navy	9	18%
Air Force	10	20%
Civilian Employee	16	32%
Total	50	100%

Source: field survey, 2021.

The above table shows that 15 of the respondents which represents 30% belonged to the army; 9 of the respondents representing 18% belonged to the navy; 10 of the respondents representing 20% belonged to the air force; and 16 of the respondents representing 32% were civilian employees of the Ghana Armed Forces.

4.3 Knowledge on social media

Table 3 What comes to mind when you hear of social media?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
WhatsApp	4	8%
Facebook	3	6%
Instagram	2	4%
Twitter	2	4%
All the above	39	78%
Total	50	100%

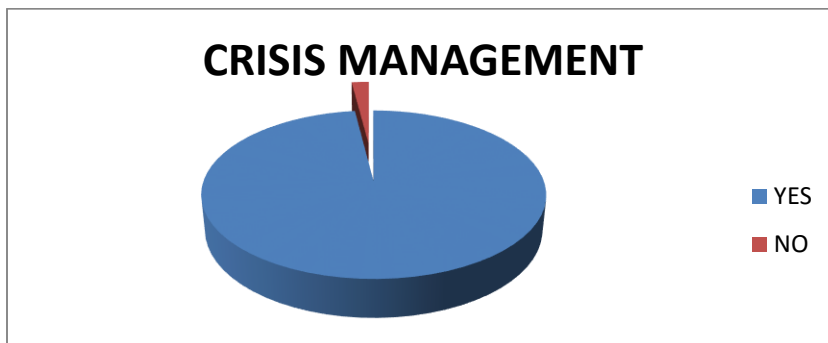
Source: field survey, 2021.

R.Q 7 In your own words how would you define social media?

When asked to define social media in their own terms, the dominant themes gathered from the respondents’ definition of the term social media were that of communication, internet aided, interactive, global, socialization platform. It was however not surprising that the definitions given by the respondents were highly academic as most of these respondents have attained a higher level of education. However, interestingly, a respondent described social media as a life saver in the definition. For a more in-depth understanding of social media as a life saver, an in-depth interview would have been prudent to conduct with that respondent. However, the survey questionnaire as a data gathering tool only allows for close and open-ended questions.

4.4 Knowledge on crisis management

Figure.3 Have you heard of the term crisis management?



Source: field survey, 2021.

Of the 50 respondents assessed on their knowledge on the term crisis management, a whopping majority of 49 representing 98% affirmed their knowledge on the term. A simple minority of 1 representing 2% of the respondents said they had no knowledge on the term.

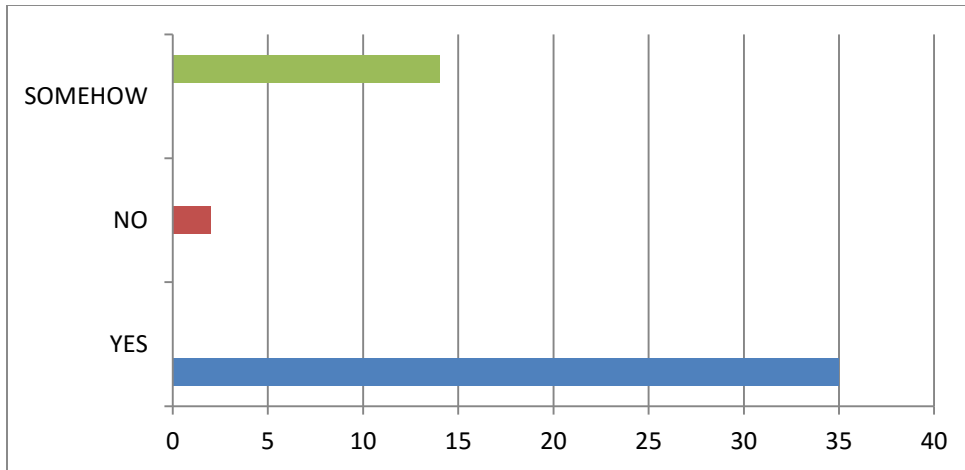
Table.4 Where did you hear the term crisis management?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Television	5	10%
Radio	6	12%
Newspaper	2	4%
Magazine	0	0%
Social media	32	64%
Friends	5	10%
Total	50	100%

Source: field survey, 2021.

Representatively, 5 of the respondents representing 10% heard of the term crisis management on television. 5 of the respondents representing 12% heard of the term crisis management on radio. 2 of the respondents representing 4% heard of the term crisis management in the newspaper. A majority of 32 representing 64% of the respondents heard of the term crisis management on social media, leaving 5 representing 10% of the respondents who heard the term from friends. It was revealed that none of the respondents heard of the term crisis management in the magazine.

Figure. 4 Did you understand the term?



Source: field survey, 2021.

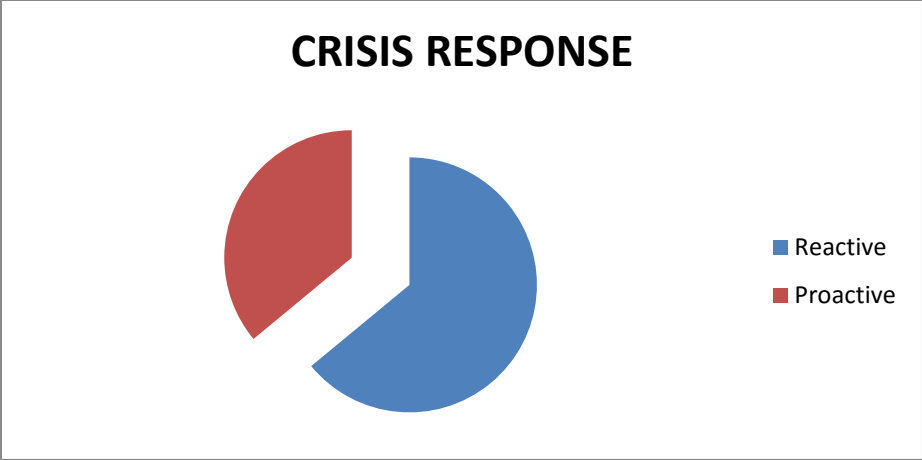
A majority 35 of the respondents representing 70% understood the term crisis management. 14 of the respondents representing 28% somehow understood the term and a minority of 1 representing 2% did not understand the term.

R.Q 11 How would you define crisis management?

The attempt of the respondents to define crisis management led to the identification of some dominant themes. From the definitions given by the respondents these themes were revealed: reducing or minimizing challenges, controlling challenges, avoiding challenges, that are unexpected, happening, or likely to happen.

4.5 Using social media in managing crisis

Figure 5 Ghana Armed Forces’ response to crisis



Source: field survey, 2021.

It was revealed by the respondents that the Ghana Armed Forces in more reactive than proactive when it comes to managing crisis with social media. Among the respondents, 32 representing 64% asserted that the GAF uses reactionary methods in managing crisis on social media as against 18 representing 36% who asserted that the GAF uses proactive methods in managing crisis with social.

Table. 5 Major crisis faced by the Ghana Armed Forces.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Impersonation	12	24%
False recruitment	35	70%
Media reportage	1	2%
Confrontations	1	2%
others	1	2%
Total	50	100%

Source: field survey, 2021.

The problem of false recruitment facing the Ghana Armed Forces has become so prevalent that a whopping majority of 35 representing 70% of the entire respondents identified false recruitment as the major crisis facing the GAF. Second to that as revealed by the study is impersonation representing 24% of the crisis faced by the GAF, where certain characters pose as members of the armed forces. The variables: media reportage, confrontations and others, recorded 2% each of the major crisis facing the GAF.

R.Q 14 How the Ghana Armed Forces utilize social media in managing crisis?

There are numerous ways the Ghana Armed Forces manage its crisis. In an attempt to understand and examine how the GAF uses social media and its tools to manage crisis, it was revealed to a large extent that the Ghana Armed Forces does not heavily utilize social media and its tools to manage their crisis. On the other hand, a section of respondents revealed that, the presence of the GAF on social media in new and hence much have not been done by the public relations and communications department to utilize social media tools to manage crisis. However, a faction of the respondents made it known that, the few years after the establishment of its presence on social media, the Ghana Armed Forces- GAF makes use of press releases, monitoring public opinion on the services of the GAF and making or issuing necessary responses and the use of rejoinders are some ways by which the GAF uses social media and its tool sin managing crisis.

Table. 6 Media elements are mostly used by the Ghana Armed Forces in managing crisis

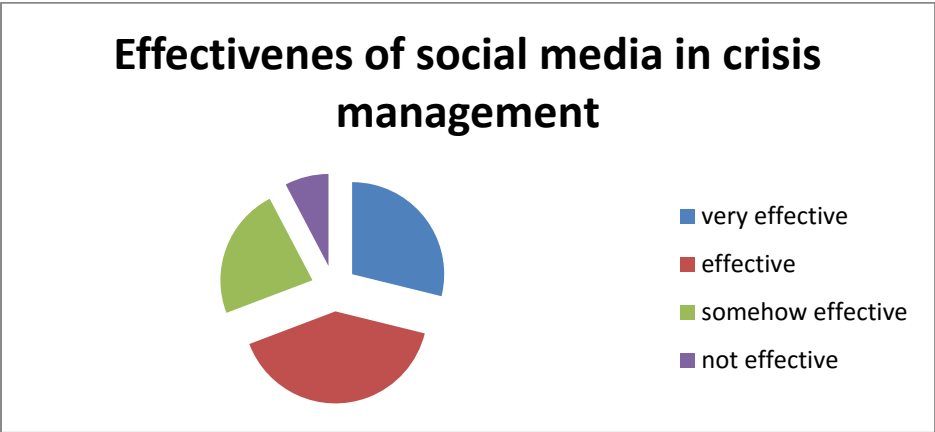
Variable	frequency	Percentage
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Text	25	50%
Images	10	20%
Videos	5	10%
Audios	2	4%
Info-graphs	3	6%
animations	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Source: field survey, 2021.

It was revealed the respondents that the Ghana Armed Forces utilizes text mostly in managing crisis on social media. Among the variables text recorded 50%, images 20%, videos 10%, audios 5%, info-graphs 6% and animations recorded 0%.

Figure 6 The effectiveness of using of social media in managing crisis



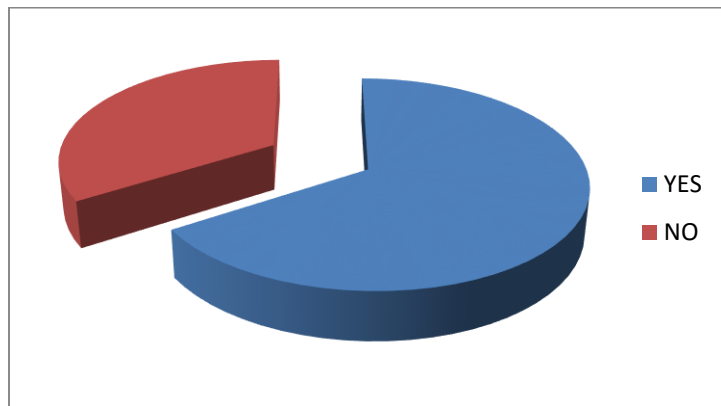
Source: field survey, 2021.

In determining how effective use of social media in managing crisis, it was revealed by 30% of the respondents that it was very effective. A majority 42% of the respondents also said it was

effective. 24% of the respondents believed it was somehow effective, and a minority 4% of the respondents said was not effective.

4.6 Threats and opportunities in using social media to manage crisis

Figure 7 Is the use of social media by the Ghana Armed Forces more advantageous than other crisis management tools?



Source: field survey, 2021.

In determining the advantage of using social media and its tool in managing crisis by the Ghana Armed Forces over other crisis management tool it was revealed by a majority 66% of the respondents that social media had more advantages over other crisis management tools. On the other hand, a minority 34% of the respondents believed that other crisis management tool were better than social media.

R.Q 18 Comparing the advantages of using social media and other crisis management tools

Being given the opportunity to explain their choice of response from question 17 above, the respondents revealed that social media is more advantageous in crisis management in that, social media is time and fast, it covers a wider range of audiences, it allows for easier monitoring of public opinion, encourages a direct interaction with the audience and helps the audience to also identify sources of false information. On the other hand, it was revealed by some respondents that due to the activities of impersonators, it is difficult to identify original source of information from the Ghana Armed Forces since the Armed Forces itself hardly makes use of social media in general.

R.Q 19 Threats that the Ghana Armed Forces may face in using social media to manage crisis

According to the respondents, the dominant threats facing the Ghana Armed Forces in using social media in managing crisis include: ambiguity of texts and coding of messages which makes it difficult for the common citizen to understand the messages clearly often leading to misinterpretation. Another challenge identified is the breakdown of the social app. If social media is heavily depended on in managing crisis, it was revealed that there could be a case where the social apps may breakdown and would largely affect the communication pattern of the Ghana Armed Forces. Again, fake social media accounts of people who usually impersonate being members of the Ghana Armed Forces. This has been the major challenge facing the Ghana Armed Forces to deal with as revealed by the study. The issue of cyber-attack or hacking was also identified by the respondents. It was revealed that the Ghana Armed Forces may have their own credible social media accounts for serving the public. However, these accounts may be subject to cyber-attacks from hackers. Finally, propaganda was another threat identified in using social media by the Ghana Armed Forces to manage crisis. It was explained that if care is not taken to draft

social media messages for public consumption particularly in the times of crisis these messages may be misconstrued and churned towards propaganda

R.Q 20 How the Ghana Armed Forces can turn threats into opportunities to effectively manage its crisis using social media?

Amidst all the threats facing the Ghana Armed Forces in using asocial media to manage crisis, it was identified by the respondents that there are various strategies that can be adopted to minimize the threats. Some of these strategies as suggested by the respondents include: offering timey responses to messages gathered from their social media accounts. According to the respondents, this strategy can only materialize if the Ghana Armed Forces employ dedicated member of staff to handle the social media accounts. Another strategy recommended is directly targeting their audience anytime they are to issue a communiqué or send a message across their social media platforms. Again, the Ghana Armed Forces can also adopt proactive means of dealing with crisis on social media. Since the major crisis has already been identified, it is prudent on the side of the GAF to put mechanisms in place to check for these challenges recurring. The respondents also suggested that on the challenge of cyber-attacks, the Ghana Armed Forces can employ information technology-IT experts to handle their social media accounts. Finally, the Ghana Armed Forces should conduct an in-service training for tits personnel on utilizing social media to combat challenges facing the Ghana Armed Forces in general.

4.7 Qualitative data presentation and analysis

RQ.1 How long has the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) been on the social media platforms?

R1	Since 2010
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R2	5 years
R3	One year
R4	Close to two years
R5	Two years

Source: field survey, 2021.

RQ.2 What motivated the GAF to add social media platforms to the traditional communication networks?

R1	For easy sending of information
R2	Education of the general public
R3	To open further communication channels with the public and facilitate information sharing
R4	The new media has become an effective and efficient way to communicate with our publics as we able to receive feedback and know what the public think of us
R5	The GAF is motivated to add social media platforms to their traditional communication network because the new media (social media) is the easiest means to send, receive and share information about an institution or an organization. Receiving quick and direct

	<p>feedbacks from audience (community) makes GAF understand the community it is operating in</p>
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Source: field survey, 2021.

RQ.3 What key social media platforms is GAF on?

R1	Facebook, Instagram
R2	Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. These platforms are chosen because of the wide coverage. Instagram
R3	Facebook Instagram Twitter (key)
R4	GAF is on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. We chose these platforms because a large number of our target audience is either on all or one of these platforms. Facebook is the key platform, because it is the most visited and has a wider coverage
R5	Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The GAF selected these three social media platforms because a large number of its targeted audience can be reached through these platforms. Facebook is the key social media platform used because it is arguably the most populated social media platform and one of the most visited platform in the country.

Source: field survey, 2021.

RQ.4 What strategies are used by the Ghana Armed Forces in managing its various social media networks?

R1	NIL
R2	Setting up of a social media section to monitor and manage the platform
R3	Careful curating of information that will be shared. Preparation and sharing of accurate, clear information.
R4	GAF uses the timely Information , awareness creation strategies
R5	The strategies used by the GAF in managing its various social media networks are the information and brand building strategy

Source: field survey, 2021.

RQ.5 What crisis does GAF mostly encounter?

R1	Identity theft
R2	Not sure of the question
R3	Recruitment fraud
R4	GAF mostly faces recruitment frauds, impersonation and misinformation

R5	The GAF mostly encounter challenges in terms of accommodation, operational vehicles and infrastructural crisis.
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Source: field survey, 2021.

RQ.6 - Does GAF use social media in managing these crises?

R1	Yes
R2	Not always
R3	Yes. Recruitment fraud is one of the key reasons that GAF has decided to engage on social media in order to reach more vulnerable youth with information on recruitment fraud and the need to be cautious.
R4	Yes we do
R5	Yes, the GAF uses social media in managing crisis

Source: field survey, 2021.

RQ.7 What social media strategies are used by GAF in managing these crisis?

R1	NIL
R2	Not sure of question
R3	Official Publications such as press releases and posts to counter the rising spate of recruitment especially on Facebook.

R4	GAF mostly send out press releases on its various social media platforms and also monitors the public reactions to deal with the problem effectively. We also use the traditional media as well
R5	The GAF uses press releases to manage most of their crisis.

Source: field survey, 2021.

RQ.8 How effective has the use of these tools and strategies been?

R1	Very effective
R2	Very effective
R3	Since GAF just started using Social media, it's still a work in progress. It hopes that with a little more time, clear results will be seen.
R4	They have been fairly effective, however most people still don't know of these platforms thus we don't get the necessary feedback
R5	These tools and strategies have been fairly effective.

Source: field survey, 2021.

RQ.9 What are some of the challenges faced in the use of social media platforms and how do you overcome them?

R1	Delay in feedback
R2	Wrongful usage. Education on the usage.
R3	The current challenge is reaching verified status for all the accounts. Hopefully with more traction from service personnel and the public, verified status can be achieved
R4	Certain individuals are creating social media platforms using GAF name and logo to defraud people thus making it difficult for people to trust the source
R5	Some challenges faced in the use of social media are bad internet connectivity and lack of gadgets for the operation.

Source: field survey, 2021.

RQ.10 What strategies can be adopted by the Ghana Armed Forces to improve upon its use of social media in managing crisis?

R1	NIL
R2	Education and training
R3	Improved education of personnel and the public on GAF's official social media accounts in order to reach the public with credible information.

R4	We are hoping to get our platforms verified to make it a trusted source and also put ourselves more out there. That way we can effectively reach our target audience and receive feedback from them
R5	The GAF can use the brand building strategy to build or improve its use of social media in managing its crisis

Source: field survey, 2021.

4.8 Discussions and analysis

From the data gathered it can be revealed that there is a high level of inconsistency on the side of the respondents regarding the number of years or period the Ghana Armed Forces has utilized social media. Whereas it was revealed that the GAF has utilized social media since 2010, other responses revealed; 5 years ago, 1 year, almost two years, and two years.

It was revealed that the motivation factors that propelled the Ghana Armed Forces to establish a social media presence in addition to the already existing traditional media include: easy communication, education of the general public, receiving direct feedback from audience, and understands public and social dynamics of their audiences.

It was revealed that the Ghana Armed Forces has established its presence on some key social media platforms which include: Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. For a reason, it was revealed that the GAF considered a larger number of its audience were found on these platforms and they are the most visited social media sites in the country.

The Ghana Armed Forces in managing its social media platforms has been identified to make use of various strategies which dominantly include: carefully scrutinizing information which is to be

shared across its social media platforms; timely information, and awareness creation strategies, and brand building strategies.

In view of crisis faced by the Ghana Armed Forces, among the numerous crises, it was revealed that the dominant ones faced by the Ghana Armed Forces include: identity theft, recruitment fraud, impersonation, infrastructure and operational incentives. These crises have become prevalent in such a way that it has become almost impossible for the GAF to eradicate them as social media: under the scope of this study has increasingly accommodated perpetrators of most of these problems.

Whereas a majority of the respondents affirmed that the Ghana Armed Forces makes use of social to manage most of the crises it faces it was also revealed that not all the crises faced by the Ghana Armed Forces are managed with social media and the obvious ones are: infrastructure and operational incentives

Dominant of the social media tools and strategies adopted by the Ghana Armed Forces in managing these crises were identified by the respondents as: press releases and rejoinders aside other traditional media tools and strategies.

In determining the effectiveness of the tools and strategies used by the Ghana Armed Forces in managing crisis on social media, it was revealed by some of the respondents that the tools and strategies are very effective. On one hand some of the respondents revealed that the Ghana Armed Forces is still in an incubation period when it comes to effectively utilizing social media and its tools to manage crisis, in that it commenced using social media accounts not long ago. On another hand, some of the respondents believed that irrespective of the fact that the presence of the Ghana

Armed Forces of social media sites is young, how it has managed to utilize social media tools and strategies in managing crisis has been fairly effective.

The obvious reasons why there are challenges are the very same reasons why there are solutions. The Ghana Armed Forces in its attempt to utilize social media and its tools in managing crisis has been faced with many challenges as identified by the respondents. Among these challenges are: delayed feedback and verification of accounts as many people are not aware of the existence of the Ghana Armed Forces on social media; inadequate computer tools and bad internet connectivity; and impersonation- people using the name of the Ghana Armed Forces, its crest and uniforms to defraud people over the internet.

Pending the crises that the Ghana Armed Forces are likely to face and the already existing ones, numerous recommendations have been made by the respondents on how the Ghana Armed Forces can curtail these crises. According to the respondents the Ghana Armed Forces must increase awareness of its existence on social media to attract a wide range of audience or followers which can potentially aid in their social media accounts being verified easily. Having these social media accounts verified would imply that the general public would begin to trust information published on these social media accounts and, there eradicate the problem of lack of credibility facing the Ghana Armed Forces and their use of social media accounts.

The respondents also suggested that the personnel of the Ghana Armed Forces should be well-educated and trained on the use of social media and its usage in managing crisis. This would go a long way to enable the personnel make well-informed and strategic decisions when responding to crisis. Finally, the respondents suggested that the Ghana Armed Forces can adopt brand building strategies that would strategically position them as distinct from the existing fake accounts.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter of the study dwells on the summary and conclusions of analysis, and making relevant recommendations.

5.2 Summary and conclusion

The study was generically conducted to examine the role of social media in crisis management. Specifically, focus was placed on understanding how the Ghana Armed Forces makes use of social media: its tools and strategies in managing its crisis. The study dwelt on the following objectives: understanding the concepts of social media and crisis management; identifying the threats and opportunities open to the Ghana Armed Forces in using social media to manage crisis; explaining how social media is utilized in crisis management by the Ghana Armed Forces; and explaining the factors that leads to the effectiveness of using social media tools in managing crisis by the Ghana Armed Forces.

Focusing on the conceptual framework of the study, the following themes were considered: defining social media and crisis management; the role of social media in crisis management; social media as a tool for organizational development; the role of social media in contemporary organization communication practice; and social media as a strategic tool in organization crisis management. The study also considered the excellence theory of public relations and the social mediated crisis communication model as the underpinning theories.

To achieve the general and specific objectives of the study, the mixed method research design was adopted. The study focused on the Ghana Armed Forces: army, navy, air force, and civilian

employees as its population of study. As the study adopted the mixed method research, it made use of both the survey questionnaire and the structured interview guide as data collection tools. The ethical principles of confidentiality, anonymity and informed consent were applied in the data collection process.

It was revealed from the study that there is a high level of inconsistency on the side of the respondents regarding the number of years or period the Ghana Armed Forces has utilized social media. It was also revealed that the motivation factors that propelled the Ghana Armed Forces to establish a social media presence in addition the already existing traditional media include: easy communication, education of the general public, receives direct feedback from audience, and understands public and social dynamics of their audiences. Again, it was revealed that the Ghana Armed Forces has established its presence on some key social media platforms which include: Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

The study made a revelation that the major crisis faced by the Ghana Armed Forces includes that of: identity theft, recruitment fraud, impersonation, infrastructure and operational incentives and the various tools and strategies adopted to curb these crises dominantly include: press releases and rejoinders aside other traditional media tools and strategies. It was judged that these tools and strategies used by the Ghana Armed Forces have been very effective on one hand and fairly effective on the other hand.

Delayed feedback and verification of accounts; inadequate computer tools and bad internet connectivity; and impersonation are the major social media challenges the Ghana Armed Forces are faced with.

The respondents suggested that for the Ghana Armed Forces to effectively utilize social media in managing its crisis, it would need to create awareness on the existence of the social media accounts to the general public. It should also take the steps necessary into getting the accounts verified and educate its personnel on the use of social media in managing crisis. It was also suggested that the Ghana Armed Forces should seek the services of IT experts to administrate their social media accounts to prevent any even of cyber-attacks.

5.3 Recommendation

The study recommends that the Ghana Armed Forces in collaboration with the National Communications Authority, the National Commission on Civic Education, and the mass media in Ghana should make a conscious effort to educate and inform the general public on how the Armed Forces is strategized to operate and the specific means of communication channels the Armed Forces utilizes and also, it is recommended that the Ghana Armed Forces put in place clear and specific social media strategies to guide their social media management team to make its use of social media in crisis management effective.

Through this collaborative exercise, impersonators and fraudsters and those who engage in cyber-attacks on the social media accounts of the Ghana Armed Forces would be easily made. It shall also go a long way to encourage the general public to trust the credibility of the existing social media accounts of the Ghana Armed Forces.

For further studies, it is recommended that the researcher(s) should consider the audience: users of social media and their activities that seek to discredit the trust of the general public in Ghana Armed Forces. The study should also give attention to how the Ghana Armed Forces can utilize traditional media and the social media tools and strategies to manage crisis.

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APPENDIX

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM, GIJ

INTERVIEW GUIDE

**TOPIC: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT: SOCIAL
MEDIA STRATEGIES OF THE GHANA ARMED FORCES.**

1- How long has the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) been on the social media platforms?

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2- What motivated the GAF to add social media platforms to the traditional communication networks?

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3- What social media platforms is GAF on, why those platforms and which of them is your key social media platform?

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4- What strategies are used by the Ghana Armed Forces in managing its various social media networks?

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5- What crisis does GAF mostly encounter in using social media?

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.....
6- Does GAF use social media in managing these crises?

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.....
7- What social media tools and strategies are used by GAF in managing these crises?

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.....
8- How effective has the use of these tools and strategies been?

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.....
9- What are some of the challenges you face in the use of these social media platforms and how do you overcome them?

.....
.....
10- What strategies can be adopted by the Ghana Armed Forces to improve upon its use of social media in managing crisis?

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

TOPIC: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT: SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES OF THE GHANA ARMED FORCES.

Dear Research Participant I am a graduate student of the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ) undertaking a research probing the “The Role of Social Media in Crisis Management: Social Media Strategies of the Ghana Armed Forces.

This questionnaire is to aid in gathering data to conduct a study on the above topic and your assistance is needed in gathering the data. Kindly select the right response from the alternative answers for each question by ticking in the appropriate bracket. You are assured of the confidentiality of this exercise because it will be solely used for academic purpose. Thank you for your contribution.

SECTION A – BIO DATA

- 1- Sex Male () Female ()
- 2- Age 18-23() 24-28() 29-34() 35 & Above ()
- 3- Level of education Basic () Secondary () Tertiary () Others ()
- 4- Service branch Army () Navy () Air Force ()

SECTION B- KNOWLEDGE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

5- What comes to mind when you hear of social media?

WhatsApp () Facebook () Instagram () Twitter () All the above ()

6- Which of the social media sites do you use?

WhatsApp () Facebook () Instagram () Twitter () All the above ()

7- In your own words how would you define social media?

.....
.....

SECTION C- KNOWLEDGE ON CRISIS MANAGEMENT

8- Have you heard of the term crisis management?

Yes () No ()

9- Where did you hear of the term crisis management?

Television () Radio () Newspaper () Magazine () Friends ()

Yes () No ()

10- Did you understand the term crisis management?

Yes () No () Somewhat ()

11- How would you describe the term crisis management to a colleague?

.....
.....

SECTION D- USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN MANAGING CRISIS

12- How does the Ghana Armed Forces respond crisis?

Reactive () Proactive ()

13- What major crises are mostly faced by the Ghana Armed Forces?

Technological () Financial () Administrative () Confrontational () others ()

14- How does the Ghana Armed Forces utilize social media in managing crisis?

.....
.....

15- What media elements are mostly used by the Ghana Armed Forces in managing crisis?

Texts () Images () Videos () Audio () Info-graphs () Animations

16- How effective is the use of social media in managing crisis?

.....
.....

**SECTION E- THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO
MANAGE CRISIS**

17- Is the use of social media by the Ghana Armed Forces more advantageous than other crisis management tools?

Yes () No ()

18- Explain your answer in (16) above

.....
.....

19- In your opinion what are some threats that the Ghana Armed Forces may face in using social media to manage crisis?

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.....

20- How can the Ghana Armed Forces turn these threats into opportunities to effectively manage its crisis using social media?

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