

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

ANALYSIS OF THE FACEBOOK PAGE OF THE GHANA POLICE SERVICE

BY

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NOVEMBER, 2021

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES,
GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM, IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF ART DEGREE IN
DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION**

NOVEMBER, 2021

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

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



SIGNATURE:

14TH DECEMBER, 2021

DATE:

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

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

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: DR. BISMARCK NANTOMAH

SIGNATURE:



DATE: 14TH DECEMBER, 2021

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my entire family especially my beloved wife Comfort Asamoah, my first beloved son, Jotham Nana Kwame Nkonim Owusu, my mother, Madam Monica Danquah and my late dad, WO1 Patrick Kwabena Owusu (Rtd.) not forgetting sisters and brother for their massive love, support and encouragement.

Wherever you are Daddy, this is for you. I made it for you because these are the sort of accomplishments you wished for me. It was evident in your burning desire to see me climb to the topmost. Your dedication to my upbringing makes me who I am today. Indeed, some memories will never end. You will forever remain in that special place in my heart. I love you Daddy.

To my son, Jotham Nana Kwame Nkonim Owusu, I get motivated when I see you. Now more than ever, I am committed to plotting a path that would make life easier for you than it was for me. Let this be your motivation son and be a role model to your younger siblings yet to come. Daddy loves you!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ebenezer, “thus far the Lord has helped us” I am extremely grateful to Almighty God for making me achieve my long-life dream. I never knew such a day and time will come for me.

I am particularly indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Bismark Nantomah, for his immense support during my study at Ghana Institute of Journalism and his meticulous correction, suggestions and directions while vetting my thesis helped in shaping the study. I do not see myself get this far on the academic ladder without his counsel and utmost commitment to my academic welfare. Indeed, people like him are very rare and once you come in touch with anyone of his caliber, you know your breakthrough begin from there. A very liberal gentleman who knows no boundaries in showing his love and enormous support to his students. Dr. I am forever grateful to you.

Again, my heartfelt appreciation goes to the faculty members and all the lecturers at the Department of Communication for their contribution to my knowledge for this study as well as all staff of the Graduate secretariat. Studying at this department was an eye-opener and certainly, the world awaits me to share the very knowledge I acquired. Special thanks to the Dean of Graduate School, Dr. Collin Adu-Bempah Brobbey.

I also want to express my profound gratitude to ASP. Mrs. Gladys Asare, my unit commander at the Information room, Ghana Police Service National Headquarters for granting me the permission for my study and also not forgetting C/Insp. Joseph Zanu for your continuous encouragement to undergo my study. My appreciation again goes to Dr. Justice Abudulai Issah, a past student of Ghana Institute of Journalism and a former police Chief Inspector at the Public Affairs Directorate – HQ, who was always prepared to share insights with me regarding the prevailing theoretical dimensions I should consider to make my work even more robust. Even at odd times, I bothered him with loads of unofficial discussion and he did

not hesitate to give me swift responses. Not forgetting DSP. Cecilia Appiah-Ampofo the legon police district commander, Rev. DSP. Jonas Amoakoe-Bekoe, the Chaplain for Ghana Police church, Odorkor and ASP. Priscilla Sedodo, the Cantonment district crime commander. I am grateful.

I cannot overlook the tremendous support to aid me gain a GETFUND scholarship to settle my fees and the academic counselling from my very good friend, mate and big brother Kwasi Obeng-Fosu, the PRO of Ministry of Energy. For recommending this MA programme to me and constantly supporting with ideas with practical examples to help me shape my work. I will remain grateful for these gestures. My warmest appreciation goes to my wife Comfort Asamoah, my son Jotham Nana Kwame Nkonim Owusu for the continuous emotional and physical support along life's roughest roads. I am forever indebted.

I want to show my maximum appreciation to all my classmates on the MA programme especially Anastasia Nanaba Acquah and Sugrinooma Fuseini. I have had the rare opportunity of studying with great minds, many of whom are top industry players and as such, brought deep experiences to bear throughout this journey. My knowledge and experience would not have grown this much if I had not come across you all. I cannot forget the selfless support by Mr. Daniel Boateng a past student and a teaching assistant at GIJ for making this study a success with your enormous ideas and submission.

Special thanks to my GIJ undergraduate study group colleagues especially Louisa Kwakye, Bridget Mensah, Eunice Mensah waking up at dawn, the intensive group discussions as well as the jokes and motivations brought me this far. I do not see myself come this far without contributions to my knowledge. The world awaits your impact.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GPS	Ghana Police Service
PR	Public Relation
CID	Criminal Investigations Department
PAD	Public Affairs Directorate
IGP	Inspector General of Police
ISD	Information Service Department
GIJ	Ghana Institute of Journalism
IT	Information Technology
POMAB	Police Management Board
IPR	Institute of Public Relation
PRAG	Public Relations Association of Ghana

ABSTRACT

The emergence of internet and access to technological gadgets has become important part of daily activities of individuals. Most importantly social media use has transformed the way individuals communicate, sustain friendships, live and work. Social media has become the platform where organisations build and retain relationship with their publics. The increased use of social media by organisations all over the world has led researchers and practitioners to seek to understand how best to employ it into communication strategies for effective communication delivery. This study analysed how the Ghana Police Service utilized their facebook page in communicating with their publics. The study was underpinned by the dialogic public relations theory. The study used the mixed method approach and purposive sampling technique. The study employed cyber ethnography to obtain data from the facebook page of the Ghana Police Service from January to June, 2021. The study generally found that, although the Ghana Police Service actively engaged their publics on facebook, there were some discrepancies in their inability to reply all comments but focused on replying to only positive ones. The study identified that some of these engagements spans from alerting the public on scammers, fake facebook accounts and information about the Ghana Police Service. It was noted that there were posts made each day by the Ghana Police Service on the facebook page which showed a good indication that the Ghana Police Service posted frequently on their facebook page each day. It was also observed that page visitors took advantage of the openness of the police to bully them and used invectives words irrespective of the importance of the posts. The study concluded that, the facebook page strengthened the Ghana Police Service to constantly engage with its publics for effective policing, in Ghana. The study recommends that the Ghana Police Service and public relation practitioners should take advantage of the numerous opportunity social media specifically facebook presents.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

The emergence of the internet, coupled with the miniaturization of technological gadgets, and the dawn of new media have become an important part of our everyday lives, both personal and professional (Djabanor, 2019). New media which is heavily reliant on the internet have transformed the way people live their lives and go about a lot of daily activities including buying, searching for information, shopping and more importantly communicating with family and friends (Djabanor, 2019). For example, in August 2016, there was a law passed in Texas, America that required big cities, county commissions, transit authorities, and school districts among other key governmental units to make video coverages of their council and public meetings and share them on their websites for the citizenry to access (Lieber, 2016). The reason was “to make the delivery of services to the public more effective, efficient, speedy, accountable, accessible, responsive, transparent and traceable” (Garg 2008, p.43). These reasons have compelled many to come up with innovative and diverse ways of engaging with the public.

According to Lieber (2016), the interesting twist to the whole discussion on electronic communication and governance is that even dispensations and regimes that are not democratic but authoritarian is making efforts at creating a governance system which is more open to the citizens. In an authoritarian regime, one would have expected that issues of participatory governance and transparency would have been lowered or totally ignored but the wind of change continues to blow so hard that it becomes alluring and irresistible to even the core of these totalitarian regimes (Lieber, 2016).

Lagerkvist (2005) analyzed China's attempt to overhaul and totally reform the public engagement strategies of what appears to be the world's largest and oldest bureaucracy through electronic governance. According to Lagerkvist (2005), the early 1990's saw some revolution in the Chinese governance structure when they launched the 'Golden Project'. This project had the sole aim of bringing information to the doorsteps of the citizens by the help of technology. By January 1999, about 40 ministries and state commissions in China were roped onto the government's online project. According to Lagerkvist (2005), that year was regarded the Electronic Governance year for China. Even though this study focuses on social media engagement and electronic communication in a democratic dispensation, this twist about an authoritarian regime is relevant to this research because it shifts the argument from democratic paradigms showing that issues of participatory governance are not only the prerogative of the democratic regimes (Lagerkvist, 2005).

Edman (2010, p.1, as cited in Djabanor, 2019) posits that with the advent of the internet, almost anything people want to know or do is virtually at their fingertips. New media have revolutionized interpersonal communication due to its interactive nature that enables people to interact through several social networking sites collectively referred to as social media. Accessibility to social media has led to the proliferation of online news portals which ensures that people now turn to social media for everyday news and information as well as the creation of same (Edman, 2010). Newman et al (2017) state that users can source their own information, independent of any single institution, using the capabilities provided by search and social media. Also, users can create content in many forms like blogs, tweets, comments on websites that provide even greater independence from other institutions and offer a mechanism whereby public opinion can be directly expressed (Newman et al, 2017).

Crump (2011) recounted that businesses and organizations take advantage of the interactive nature of social media as a platform to practice customer services as most public have resorted to the internet when looking for information and product specifications. The interactive nature of the social media platform enables one's customers to give feedback on products used and obtain information on the organizations (Crump, 2011). The increase in the use of social media around the world has caused many professionals in public relations to adopt it in their work (Gordon, 2010 as cited in Djabanor, 2019). Social media has brought and is still bringing about a lot of changes in the public relations industry because of the unique opportunity that it affords public relations practitioners to communicate with their publics through dialogue (Djabanor, 2017).

1.1 Statement of Problem

In recent times, social media have moved from just a social networking site to become a very popular and common place for many businesses in terms of gaining customers and communicating with customers (Djabanor, 2019). New dynamics have emerged within the public relations profession, in regard to social media to engage numerous publics in a two-way communication and the development of new strategies and techniques of communication management with both internal and external publics (Djabanor, 2019).

Since the emergence of social media in the Ghana Police Service, there have been limited studies on the Public Affairs Directorate's use of social media in communicating with its publics even though the Public Affairs Directorate started using social media to reach its publics for long (Issah, 2017). Few studies conducted on the Ghana Police Service were focused on its operational activities, the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) and the management function of the Public Affairs Directorate (Issah, 2017). The literature available on public relations practices within the Ghana Police Service have concentrated heavily on

issues relating to corruption in the police service, public perception of policing in Ghana, and police personnel's perception of public relations department (Issah, 2017).

Agbozo (2018) conducted a study on e-policing model of the Ghana Police Service which assessed the level of policing in Ghana and the use of information technology in fighting and prevention of crime as well as improving policing tactics. This study, sought to examine the Public Affairs Directorate's use of facebook as a public relations tool in communicating with its publics as well as the frequency of posts by the police on their facebook platform.

1.2 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study was to analyze the use and frequency of post on the facebook page of the Ghana Police Service.

The specific objectives were to;

- Examine the level of interaction between the Ghana Police Service and its publics (internal and external) on the facebook page of the Ghana Police Service.
- To assess the frequency of posts (daily, weekly and monthly) on the facebook page of the Ghana Police Service.
- Assess the level of cyber-bullying by the publics (internal and external) on the facebook page of the Ghana Police Service.

1.3 Research Questions

The study sought to address the following questions;

- What is the level of interaction between the Ghana Police Service and its publics (internal and external) on the facebook page of the Ghana Police Service?
- What is the frequency of posts (daily, weekly and monthly) on the facebook page of the Ghana Police Service?
- What is the level of cyber-bullying by the publics (internal and external) on the facebook page of the Ghana Police Service?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The study will help the Ghana Police Service in shaping the overall social media strategy and actively help develop the facebook page to be interactive for the benefit of both the police and the public (internal and external). The study presents policy formulators with ideas to help shape policies on the way and manner which governmental agencies should engage with their key stakeholders and the public at large. This study will serve as reference to development communication practitioners and an opportunity for them to understand the dialogic public relation model to be used in this current era. The study will serve as a reference guide and provide empirical and theoretical foundation for future researchers in areas like social media and public relations, police and security communication as well as electronic governance and new media.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study focused on the use of facebook by the police to engage with its public (internal and external). The study employed a qualitative content analysis of the posts on the Ghana Police Service's official facebook to generally understand what exactly they do on the facebook page as to the sort of messages they share and who they target with those messages. The posts chosen were those shared between January, 2021 and June, 2021. The rationale for this was to have access to the latest and most current issues on the facebook page of the Ghana Police Service.

1.6 Organization of the Study

This study is categorized into five (5) distinctive chapters. The first chapter provides general background and problem of the study. It captures the objectives, research questions, the significance of the study and the scope the study. Chapter two provides the literature review of the study. It also addresses the theoretical underpinnings of the study. Chapter three present the methodology of the study. It captures the research approach, research design, study area, population of the study, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection techniques, data collection processes and data processing and analysis. Chapter four captures the findings and discussion. Chapter five presents the summary of the key findings, conclusion of the study and recommendations for industry and future researchers.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.0 Introduction

According to Taylor (2008, as cited in Issah, 2017), a review of literature is basically an evaluation of what accredited scholars or researchers have already written on a topic. Leedy (1985, page 32), argues that “literature review can show a researcher how the former researcher handled various situations and assists the researcher in evaluating the efforts by comparing them with related efforts made by others”. The review becomes important for understanding the scope within which previous studies have been conducted and appreciated so as to tease out existing gaps that will form the basis for this study.

Thus, this section highlights on a brief history of the Ghana Police Service in retrospect, policing in Ghana, social media, the Ghana Police Service public relations and social media, social media usage in Ghana, internet, social media and facebook, evolution of public relation in Ghana, public relation and social media, dialogue, dialogic communication and dialogic public relations and as well focus on other relevant elements present in the use of social media by organization to engage with their publics.

2.1.1 The Ghana Police Service in Retrospect

In 1821, professional policing emerged in the then Gold Coast introduced by the British Colonial Authorities. Prior to that, policing or maintenance of law and order was organized by the traditional authorities such as the local headsmen and chiefs, who employed unpaid messengers to carry out the executive and judicial functions in their respective communities (Neves and Eisenberger, 2012).

The institution of police was formalized with the passage of the police ordinance which gave legal authority for the formation of a Civil Police Force in 1894 which is now Ghana Police Service and has its motto as “Service with Integrity”. In 1965, the police service Act, 1965, (Act 284) was passed to regulate the institution. The service Act was re-enacted as the police service Act, 1970 (Act 350). The functions of the Ghana Police Service as stated in the police service Act, 1970 (Act 350) of Ghana are as follows; crime detection and prevention, apprehension (arrest) and prosecution of offenders, maintenance of law and order, and due enforcement of the law, (National Reconciliation report, 2004).

In 1902 the force was split into General, Escort, Mines and Railway Police, which was legalized by the Police (Amendment) Ordinance of 1904. The Marine Police was formed in 1916 but disbanded in 1942 and replaced by Customs Excise and Preventive Service. The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) was formed in 1921 with the finger print section fully operational in 1922. In 1948, the Police Reserves Unit was formed to combat riotous mobs, following the 1948 riots in the country. The then Governor of the Gold Coast, Sir Charles Noble Arden Clark, in June 1950 commissioned the wireless and communications unit with the formal opening of the police information room in Accra. The police service has had several other departments including Legal, IT, counter terrorism and the likes.

By 1952, a large number of Africans were enlisted into the police force as junior officers. The women branch of the service was then established, to be responsible for juvenile crimes and offences committed by women. In 1958, the first Ghanaian police commissioner, Mr. E. R. T. Madjitey was appointed to head the service (police.gov.gh/en/index.php/our-history).

Felonies and misdemeanors are the two major crime categorisation in Ghana. The most serious felonies are murder, armed robbery, abortion, rape, stealing, unlawful entry,

possession of dangerous drugs, abduction which is becoming common in Ghana, extortion, forgery, smuggling contrabands, and counterfeiting. Misdemeanor offenses include tax evasion or violation of ordinances that can be disposed of by fines instead of imprisonment (bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/wfbcjsq).

The British colonial administration introduced a formal policing structure to Ghana (then Gold Coast) on policing. Sedame (2011) argues that, before the formal policing structure was introduced by the British colonial administration, maintaining peace and order, instilling discipline and enforcing arrests were the reserve of chiefs and traditional authorities. Later, many Ghanaians were recruited into the formal police force and it has since grown into what we see as the Ghana Police Service in this present day.

The Constitution of Ghana (1992) clearly states that, the Ghana Police Service (GPS) are tasked with the daunting responsibility of protecting life and property. To be specific, Chapter 15 of the 1992 constitution of the Republic of Ghana captures the ensuing clauses among others;

1. That there shall be a police service of Ghana.
2. That no person or authority shall raise any police service except by or under the authority of an Act of Parliament.
3. That the police service shall be equipped and maintained to perform its traditional role of maintaining law and order.
4. That the Inspector-General of Police shall be appointed by the President acting in consultation with the Council of State.
5. That the Inspector-General of Police shall be head of the police service and shall, subject to the provisions of this article and to the control and direction of the Police

Council, be responsible for the operational control and the administration of the police service (Constitution of Ghana, 1992).

2.1.2 Policing in Ghana

Aning (2006) conducted a study which focused on exploring and understanding the transformational changes that have occurred within the Ghana Police Service since the departure of the colonial rulers from Ghana (then Gold Coast). Aning (2006), found that the reputation of the Ghana Police Service keeps dwindling due to their own actions and inactions as well as the existence of massive political manipulation of the Ghana Police Service. The police can make a meaningful transformation to restore their reputation only if they concentrate on the socio-political environment it operates in and creates robust strategies (Aning, 2006). The findings of Aning (2006) were somehow corroborated by Amoakohene (2002) who argued in a study that the Ghana Police Service has not taken up strategic measures to redeem their dwindling image in the public sphere.

Tormeti (2017) conducted a study which focused on exploring how social media is helping the Ghana Police Service fight crime. He found that the Ghana Police Service is able to utilize social media to solicit information in the form of tip-offs from the public and that eventually aids in the fight against crime (Tormeti, 2017). He concluded that the police would have to enhance the way they use the social media platforms to be effective in the fight against crime (Tormeti, 2017).

2.1.3 Social Media

The emergence of the internet has generally brought some changes to the way we interact within our social confines and has not only transformed the mode of communication but has also arguably bridged the physical gaps and distances that existed between people and countries all over the world (Croteau and Hoynes, 2014). McLuhan (1964) described the

world becoming a global village in the logic that with just a click of a button, one can easily send or receive information instantaneously by the help of internet. Scholars such as Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) argued that the emergence of Web 2.0 technological ideology was what changed the face of internet-based communication and made it possible for users to generate and share content like text, images and videos to their target audience.

Howard and Parks (2012) defined social media as a virtual society that allows for the proliferation of information that has elements of individual and group-shared values. Basically, this definition addresses the fact that social media is a virtual society with members identified with shared values and identity without necessarily compromising individual and personal identities and values.

According to Bechmann and Lomborg (2012), social media ought to emphasize the nature of ownership and consumption. For them, social media provides a drift from the traditional media to a more participatory platform where producers of content and information at one point can become consumers and consumers becoming producers at other times (Bechmann and Lomborg, 2012). This assertion by Bechmann and Lomborg (2012) makes social media more of an interactive approach than the top to down approach of communication in the traditional media.

Hilliard (2014) also shares the same position in arguing that one of the striking differences between new and old media is the nature of their audiences. Hilliard (2014) argued that new media presents an audience base that is more of active content creators as they own the platforms, create their own contents and are regarded as core participants in the content production and distribution chain whiles on the other hand, old media audiences are more of passive audiences who have very minimal impact on the content creation and distribution and appear to be more of content consumers rather than creators. From a more general

perspective, social media can be described as that aspect of new media that allows for social interaction between persons with shared values and interests who are as well diverse in locations such that they might never meet each other in reality (Boyd and Ellison, 2008).

2.1.4 Ghana Police Service Public Relations and Social Media Use

In February 2018, there was an official launch of the Ghana Police Service official website and the social media platforms; Twitter and Facebook (Yusif, 2018). Before these social media platforms were officially launched in February 2018, the social media accounts had been in existence and operated as far back as 2016 for the Twitter account and 2017 for facebook account (Yusif, 2018).

For the Ghana Police Service, there is only one central social media account name, Ghana Police Service for facebook and @GhPoliceService for twitter which serves the entire country and it is operated by the Public Affairs Directorate (PAD) at the national police headquarters. The regions, divisions, districts, stations and posts send their content or information to the social media team at the PAD through their respective Public Relation Officers (PRO) in their jurisdiction (Yusif, 2018). The Inspector-General of Police (IGP) at the time, made it clear at the launch of the Ghana Police Service social media platforms that building the platforms was in line with the service's agenda to create a mutual beneficial relationship with the citizenry and get them involved in the activities of the police (Yusif, 2018).

According to Amoakohene (2002), the reputation of the Ghana Police Service has been troubled with several issues ranging from bribery and corruption, police brutality, abuse of power, high levels of unprofessionalism, and excessive show of force among others. Consequently, many people in Ghana have lost confidence and trust in the police service to

such an extent that serious cases that should be reported to the police are not reported to the police (Amoakohene, 2002)

The public relations department in the Ghana Police Service was established by Mr. J.W.K. Harley (Inspector-General of Police - IGP) in 1969, but with no clearly defined functions (Anning, 2006). Baffoe-Antwi (2008) cited by Issah (2017), in a study on the public relations department of the Ghana Police Service acknowledged that a more serious attempt at re-organising the public relations department was in 1978 which was to handle the reputational and image building of the police service. Presently, the public relations department now called the Public Affairs Directorate (PAD) is being headed by the Director-General Public Affairs Directorate, who is a member of the Police Management Board (POMAB).

2.1.5 Social Media Usage in Ghana

There have been numerous researches around social media most especially within the academic sphere and social life such as Boadi (2013) who conducted a study on how University of Ghana students use social media in engaging in civic discourses. Boadi (2013) employed cyber-ethnography in soliciting information from some selected facebook groups of students of the University of Ghana. He found that members who belong to these virtual platforms behaved as though they were bounded physically and would rally support for one another.

Facebook

Facebook is a social networking site which was founded in 2004, and is primarily owned by Mark Zuckerberg but was founded by Mark Zuckerberg, Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes (Griffith and Liyanage, 2008). The headquarters of facebook is sited at Menlo park, California in United States of America. The board of directors of facebook includes the founder, Mark Zuckerberg, Jim Breyer of Accel

Partners and Peter Thiel as well as observers David Sze of Greylock Partners and Paul Madera of Meritech (Facebook Factsheet, 2008). Arguably one of the most influential websites on the internet, facebook is a comprehensive and encompassing clustering of networks originally based on universities and colleges, high schools, workplaces, and geographic areas (Lipsman, 2007c). It was designed to make the world a more accessible and connected place worldwide. Lipman (2007c) opines that facebook originally commenced in February 2004 and hit its first tipping point in the late summer same year with the introduction of groups and public posting ‘walls’. A second heave in the growth of facebook resulted from facebook’s introduction to the global public which the site went from consistently hovering around 14 million unique visitors per month to over 26 million (Lipsman 2007c). Some countries such as China, Iran, Syria and North Korea as at May, 2016 are blocked from using facebook (Kemp, 2021). Facebook has a total of 60,654 employees as at 31st March, 2021. People use facebook to stay in touch with friends and family, to explore what is going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them (Kemp, 2021). Facebook had 2,740 million internet surfers actively using the social networking site on a daily basis as at 25th January, 2021 as compared to the previous years which clearly indicate that facebook is experiencing exponential growth within the social media arena (Kemp, 2021).

Facebook ranked as one of the most visited websites on the internet, with sources claiming as high as the 3rd most visited sites based on page views (Freiert 2007b). Amongst college students the website was a more common stop than google by a significant margin (Anderson Analytics, 2007). More than 60% of facebook members log in daily and many signs on multiple times a day while the average visitor spends over three hours of time on facebook each month (Holahan, Hof, and Ante, 2007). The most common activities with regards to time spent on facebook are browsing profiles, interacting with applications, browsing

pictures, joining or visiting groups, searching for members and groups, and joining and browsing networks (Freiert, 2007a). In 2007 most users were between the ages of 12 and 24, however nearly an equal number amassed in the age demographic of 35 years and above (Lipsman 2007a, 2007b). The website in its whole boasts more than 16 million page views and well beyond 600 million searches per month (Lipsman, 2007a). The most recent count of average daily visitors is nearly 15 million, with the vast majority (85%) connecting from the US and Europe (Lipsman, 2007b). Facebook is the most viewed website by both females (69%) and males (56%) from the ages 17-25 years in the United States, even surpassing MySpace.com (eMarketer Survey, 2007). Facebook has essentially hit full capacity among most colleges and commands a high user rate in many western nations (eMarketer Survey, 2007).

Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying is a relatively new form of bullying which is done by means of electronic act and transmission in the form of text/sound/video or image (Taylor and Stanton, 2007). Cyber-bullying is basically about deliberate threatening, posting sensitive, posting private information about someone without his/her permission, harassing, intimidating or ridiculing an individual or group of persons, placing an individual in a fear of harm and assuming someone's identity to damage that person's reputation (Rémond, Kern and Romo, 2015). Most common reactions to cyber-bullying were as a result of anger, rage, and frustration and also the most found behavioral response to cyber-bullying are informing friends, ignoring the cyber incident and counterattacking (Heiman, Olenik-Shemesh, and Frank, 2019). According to Taylor and Stanton (2007), coping to ignore cyber-bullying signifies conscious efforts to normalize emotion, thought, behavior and the environment in response to the circumstances.

Ybarra, Diener-West and Leaf (2007) have argued that one of the growing trends within the social media circles is cyber-bullying where social media users would engage in harmful interactions or attacks on people through what they post online. Amoakohene (2002) argued that the Ghana Police Service has not taken up strategic measures to redeem their dwindling image in the public sphere and is associated to issues of corruption, unprofessional policing and so on. Some facebook page visitors have taken advantage of the openness to the public by some organizational or individual platforms to bully them and even use invectives in responding to their posts (Ybarra, Diener-West and Leaf, 2007).

2.1.6 Internet, Social Media and Facebook Usage in Ghana

The Ghana Statistical Service (2021) indicates that Ghana has a population of about 30.8 million with an increase of 6.1 million people. The total number of women in Ghana was 15.6 million (50.7%) while the men was 15.2 million (49.3%) according to the Ghana Statistical Service (2021). Kemp (2021), indicates that world's most frequently used social media platform is facebook representing 2,740 million as at 25th January, 2021 but on the other hand the most used social media platform in Ghana was WhatsApp with 83.9% of the Ghanaian population while facebook was ranked second with 70.8% of the Ghanaian population in January, 2021. This statistic is very significant for organisations that use social media to engage and interact with their stakeholders knowing that about 26.1% of the total population is active on social media (Kemp, 2021). Kemp (2021) shows that 7.1 million (33.6%) Ghanaian population are active audience of facebook. For the purpose of reputational gains and marketing, the above statistics should not be downplayed by organisations.

2.1.7 Evolution of Public Relation in Ghana

Adjei (2015) points out that in many ways, the public relation history of Ghana seems to have trodden that same beaten footpath of its European and North American antecedents. It demonstrates a similar growing movement towards appreciating and applying public relations as part of corporate capital investment rather than a supplementary cost element of business operation in Ghana (Adjei, 2015). Wu and Baah-Boakye (2008) recalls that before Ghana's independence, public relations were practiced in big companies by expatriates who were predominantly information officers. On attaining independence, the local people took over from the expatriates in the ministries and big multinational companies (Wu and Baah-Boakye, 2008). The companies therefore needed indigenes to relate to at the ministries on their behalf allowing many Ghanaians who were journalists to be appointed public relation officers in these companies. These indigenes had no formal training although they performed public relation functions (Wu and Baah-Boakye, 2008). There was also the need for a communication bridge between the big multinational companies and the local authorities in the ministries, and this was what led to the eventual acceptance and practice of public relation in Ghana (Wu and Baah-Boakye, 2008).

The Information Service Department (formerly Ghana Information Service), which was in charge of providing information, press and public relation services therefore decided to recruit and train people to perform the public relation functions in state institutions which brought about the public relation being equated to press agency due to their areas of specialisation as information officers Adjei (2015). The Information Service Department (ISD) later became the public relation department of the government during the 2nd republic and began recruiting public relations officers for the various government ministries, departments and agencies Adjei (2015). It was during this same period that journalists and public relations officers were formally trained at the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ) as

practitioners and also at the School of Communication Studies at the University of Ghana, Legon, which formed a body in Ghana known as Public Relations Association of Ghana (PRAG) and was later renamed as the Institute of Public Relation (IPR) Ghana in 1972 Adjei (2015). According to Adjei (2015), the association was formed to better improve the profession. Public relations as a profession began initially as a press agency in Ghana and were not recognised by most organisations but were rather incorporated under other departments. A study conducted by Adjei (2015) in Ghana showed that some changes had taken place and public relations practitioners were now playing significant and leading roles in their organisations. This means that public relations in Ghana is growing as it is developing globally.

2.1.8 Public Relations and Social Media

Grunig and Hunt (1984) argues that, public relations during the late 19th century was merely a press agency role where public relation officers use persuasion, half-truth and manipulation to influence and shape the thoughts of the public to behave as the organization desires no matter what it takes. During the 19th century, practitioners engaged in a one-way communication from the organization to the public with no room for transparency or feedback (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). They hide relevant information and tell the public what they desire them to hear and it was generally described as a tool for deception, insincere public gesture, spin, and mere propaganda machinery within the 1930s (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). The Public Relations Society of America (2016) defines public relations as “a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics”. This addresses the fact that public relations help to sway an audience’s perceptions by building relationships and shaping public conversations about a client or an organization.

Harlow (1976, page 36) defined public relations as a “distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinions; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change; serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools”. Entrenched in this definition are elements of mutuality and beneficial co-operations between an organization and its publics with the public’s interest at the heartbeat of the organisation’s operations. This is a clear retreat from the one-way communication relations, the spin and propaganda that characterized the press agency days of public relations (Harlow, 1976). The issues of ethics, truthfulness and release of full information considered public relations as understanding of human behavior, which identifies issues of critical relevance, analyse trends and predicts their consequences to establish and maintain mutually-beneficial relationships (Kuranchie, 2017).

Another definition that appears to be consistent with the aforementioned definitions is that of Kuranchie (2017) who defined public relations as the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends by deliberately telling the story of the organization. The above definitions are important to this study in the sense that they help position public relations in a manner that reflects these contemporary times. It is evident that public relations in recent times engages the public more in a dialogic and mutually beneficial relationships than it used to be and one of the tools that enhances this dialogic relationship is social media (Kuranchie, 2017). Social media creates that platform for advanced forms of engagement on the principle of enhanced interactivity where users are able to give feedback in comment

sections and also are able to share opinions on posts or messages from organisations due to the Web 2.0 technological ideology (Bentley, 2008). Users of social media are not only able to interact and give feedback but are also able to do so in a quick and spontaneous fashion (Bentley, 2008).

Cornelissen (2014) also asserts that the emergence of social media has drastically democratized the way organisations engage in the proliferation of information. He argues that social media has brought a shift from media practitioners circulating information of organization to the organisations creating and distributing their own content. Social media also presents some level of risks to the reputation of organisations because, everyone and anyone anywhere can create contents, share opinions or distribute false information on social media and some of these contents could tarnish the reputation of the organization (Cornelissen, 2014). Cornelissen (2014) argued that employees of organisations has now become content creators and as such may share information about their organization on their personal social media platforms, usually without any form of gate-keeping from public relations officers. Understanding the relation between public relations and social media is very important for this study because it fortifies the discussion on how the Ghana Police Service (GPS) uses the social media tools available to them and how that impacts their overall relationship and reputation with the public.

2.1.9 Dialogue, Dialogic Communication and Dialogic Public Relations

Dialogic public relations have been making waves in the public relations literature lately and it is in line with attempts by public relations practitioners to move away from the top-to-down and manipulative ways of practicing to embracing a more collaborative and engaging ways (Theunissen and Noordin, 2012). Eray (2016) conducted a study that sought to examine the dialogic nature of key corporate organisations in Turkey and how that shapes their entire

public relations outlook. The study revealed that the elements of dialogue as professed by Kent and Taylor (1998) were practically missing in how they operate their websites. Eray (2016), identified that the websites of most of the key corporate organizations in Turkey had no dialogic loop, generation of return visit, usefulness of information, ease of the interface and rules of conversation of visitors to make their website user friendly and interactive to the public for quality information and feedbacks. This indicates that the dialogic model denotes a shift from merely informing the public to creating and retaining genuine relationships with the public which are not self-centered and manipulative with stakeholders towards their needs (Kent and Chen, 2017). It also emphasizes having an unreserved regard for publics and being socially responsible rather than controlling and managing relationships (Kent and Chen, 2017).

2.2.1 Theoretical Framework

Generally, research is underpinned by some theoretical constructs. The theory that underpinned this study is the dialogic public relations theory. To better appreciate this theory within the right context, Grunig and Hunt (1984) four models of public relations are needed to be explained. These models are press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical. This is so because the dialogic public relations theory was built to fill the practical gaps that exist within the framework of the four models of public relations. The four models of public relations also portray the trajectory through which the practice of public relations has evolved.

The first of the four components of the models of public relations is press agency model of public relations. Grunig and Hunt (1984) opined that this model dwelled on one-way or top-to-down dissemination of information by public relations officers. In this model, public relations practitioners were largely journalist and media relations officers for their

organisations and were only concerned with attaining favourable reportage for their organisations, no matter what it takes. Practicing the press agency was mainly on grounds of deception, insincerity, propaganda, and foul means. There was absolutely no room for openness, feedback or scrutiny by the public. Again, within this model, public relations officers were not situated at the management of these organisations and as such, were unable to influence key decisions.

The second is the public information model of public relations. According to Grunig and Hunt (1984), this model shows a shift from the press agency model which was mainly characterized by publicity stunts to a more information-oriented public relations practice. Under this model, organisations feel obliged to inform their publics on issues that they deem important and the mode of communication does not differ from the press agency model as it still operates with the one-way mode of communication. Grunig and Hunt (1984) argues that the public relations practice with this model does not research into the needs of their publics and that whenever research was conducted, it was to investigate how well the message they sent out was understood. This type of model was mostly used by Governments, NGOs, and some corporations.

The third model is the two-way asymmetrical model of public relations which Grunig and Hunt (1984) argued was the starting point of scientific research in public relations. The two-way asymmetrical model opines that research is undertaken by the organization about the publics just to know and understand their perceptions about the organisation and device means of influencing those perceptions but not to help identify the needs of the publics and find solutions to them. Clearly, this model aforementioned is organisation-centered and not public-centered except for the mode of communication that appears to be a two-way communication than a one-way communication. Under this model, public relations seek to

influence the public to adjust to the organisation's interest rather than the organisations adjusting to meet the interests and demands of their publics.

The last of the four models is the two-way symmetrical model of public relations. According to Grunig and Hunt (1984), this model dwells on mutuality where organisations employ research to understand the needs and demands of the publics with the aim of actually finding solutions to those needs. This model operates with the satisfaction of the publics at heart. Within this model are mutual lines of communication where organisations and the publics adjust to each other.

Many scholars have argued that dialogic public relations go beyond just a two-way communication because the two-way communication may not necessarily be based on genuine relationship with the publics and may not have strong ethical consideration, hence the need for a fifth theory (Kent and Chen, 2017; Kent and Taylor, 1998; Theunissen and Noordin, 2012). For instance, Theunissen and Noordin (2012, p.5) postulates that “dialogue has been uncritically equated to two-way symmetrical communication, which has not done justice to the nature of dialogue, and has effectively stifled concrete development of a dialogic theory in public relations.” Kent and Chen (2017, p.106) postulate that, the dialogic public relations theory was a shift from the individualist, mass communication, orientation of public relations, which involved one-way and two-way messaging to stakeholders and publics found in the four models of the public relations by Grunig and Hunt (1984) to an interpersonal, public centered, rhetorical approach of public relations. The word dialogue has its root in the Greek word “dia” which means through and “logos” which means meaning. Dialogue according to Bohm (2013) helps one to understand another in a more authentic manner. The importance of the theory is seen in its ability to change the nature of the organization public relationship by placing emphases on the relationship (Kent and Taylor, 2002, page 25).

Dialogic public relation theory argues that organisations should interact with their publics willingly in an ethical and honest way to create an effective strong mutual relationship between the organization and the public. There has been a shift from mere managing of communication to using communication as a tool for establishing strong mutual relationship between the organization and its publics (Kent and Taylor, 2002). Kent and Taylor (2002) fathomed the dialogic public relations literature and unearthed some principles that should be employed in any dialogic practice. These are risk, mutuality, propinquity, empathy, and commitment.

Risk represents the willingness of an organisation to be open to the unanticipated experiences and consequences from its publics and to unconditionally accept the uniqueness of other people (Kent and Taylor, 2002). Mutuality talks about equality in every dialogic interaction and holds that genuine dialogic engagements built on grounds that are equally beneficial to the parties involved (Kent and Taylor, 2002). Propinquity also involves being available for interactions with other parties in a manner that is timely and immediate (Kent and Taylor, 2002). Empathy involves the confirmation of others supportiveness and communal orientation where the good or welfare of others matters as much as or more than one's own good (Kent and Taylor, 2002). Commitment also involves devotion to engaging other people genuinely and also making sense of other people's views in an interaction and their general feeling (Kent and Taylor, 2002).

Though there are diverse views on dialogic public relations, Kent and Taylor (1998) proposed a framework for assessing dialogic potential of websites that was specifically adopted for this study (Figure 1.0). Kent and Taylor (1998) advanced some cogent arguments that eventually became concepts in accessing the dialogic nature of websites and social media platforms. They proposed some principles and features that should be present on any organisation's internet platform for the platform to qualify as being dialogic. These principles are dialogic

loop, usefulness of information, generation of return visit, ease of interface and conservation of visitors. These principles eventually became the basis for the dialogic framework for examining dialogue in websites and other internet platforms that are meant for interacting with stakeholders.

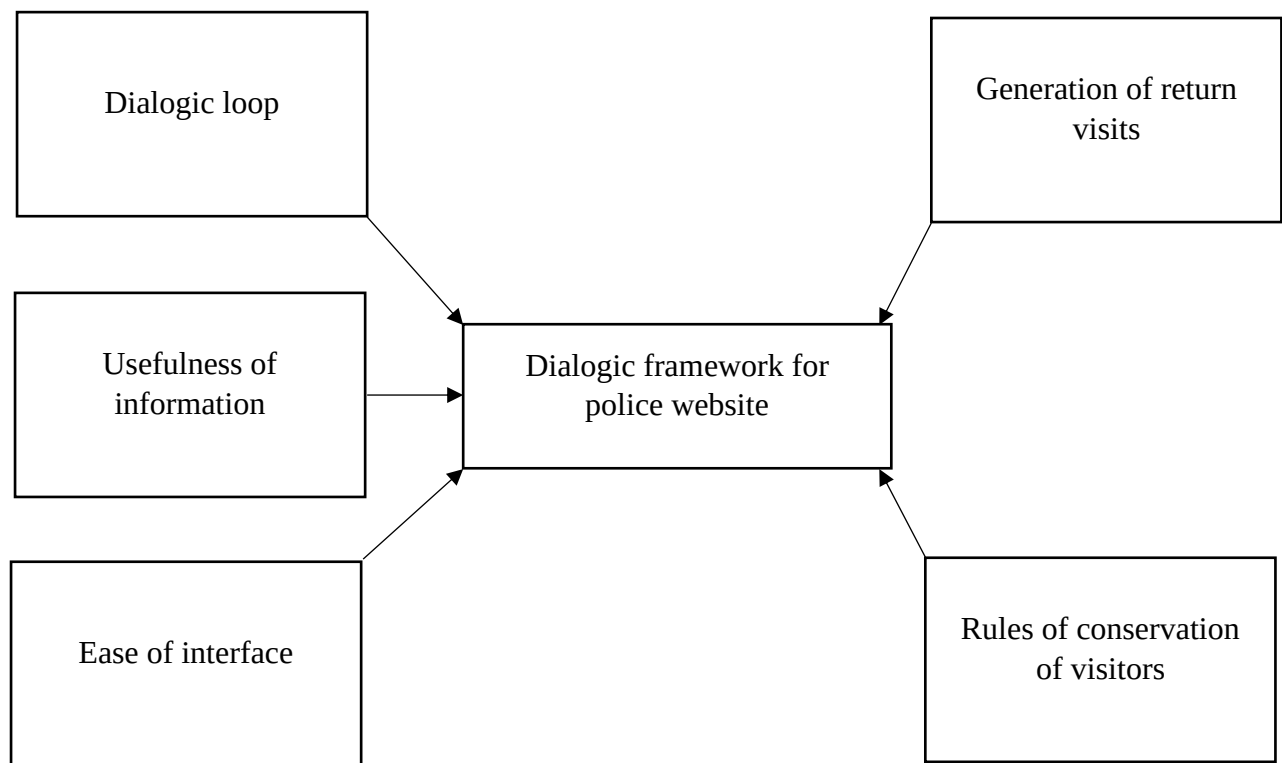


Figure 1.0: Framework for assessing dialogic potentials of websites

Source: Kent and Taylor (1998)

The first principle as proposed by Kent and Taylor (1998) is the dialogic loop which is the interactive nature that allows publics to query organisations to facilitate mutual communication and provides the opportunity to respond to questions, concern and problems. For an organisation to be dialogic on the internet platform there should be a dialogic loop that creates room for the publics to give feedback and also receive feedback from the organisation in real-time and spontaneous manner. The dialogic loop according to Kent and Taylor (1998)

creates the opportunity for visitors or the public to fill out survey instrument and express opinions on issues.

The second principle is the usefulness of information. This seeks to address how useful the information on the internet platforms of the organization is to its publics. It talks about the presence of a mission and vision statement and historical information about the organisation as well as the presence of features such as the organisation's logo, news stories of the organisation, calendar of events, availability of downloadable information and graphics as well as the organisation's emergency contacts. All these will provide a positive relationship with the publics and the organisation.

The third principle is the generation of return visits. The argument here is that when information on internet platforms remains unchanged, publics are unwilling to revisit the platform. Therefore, there is the need to constantly update information on the platform. Kent and Taylor (1998) are cautious of the fact that merely updating or changing content on the platforms may represent a mono-logic relation with the publics and so to be more dialogic, two-way interactions strategies such as question and answer sessions, forums and time with experts should be preferred. The busier the platform is, the higher the possibility of users returning.

The fourth principle is the ease of the interface. This talks about how users are able to navigate easily on the platform. It proposes that the content on the platforms ought to be more textual to reduce the reliance on graphics, adding that texts are able to load faster than graphics. The ease of user interface also talks about the amount of time users should spend loading content on the page and argues that site maps as well as search engines ought to be incorporated into the interface.

The fifth and last principle as proposed by Kent and Taylor (1998) is the rule of conservation of visitors. This principle talks about retaining users on the internet platform when they visit. The principle argues against the sharing of external links that have potentials of leading users astray or away from the original page they intended to visit. Organisations should provide relevant information about them on the home page and the date of site last update for visitors. Kent and Taylor (1998) argue that the engagement with the publics is manipulative, especially when the link takes them to shopping sites they did not intend to visit when visiting your platform.

2.3.1 Review of Empirical Literature

Bruhn, Schoenmueller and Schäfer's (2012) conducted research titled, "Are social media replacing traditional media in terms of brand equity creation?". The study showed that traditional media and social media have significant impact on brand equity. Traditional media mostly have strong influence on brand awareness while the social media has influence on brand image (Bruhn, Schoenmueller and Schäfer's, 2012). They found that communication by organisations through social media affected brand perception significantly.

Waters et al. (2009) conducted a study on, "Drivers of twitter as a strategic communication tool for non-profit organisations" which connotes how social networking sites promote the organizational mission and programmes of non-profit organisations (NGOs). They found that the non-profit organisations had not integrated most of the numerous interactive twitter applications into their profile. They failed to capitalise on the interactivity of social networking, particularly, twitter. They also rarely distributed organisational news to their stakeholders. Non-profit organization and those with large online community mostly communicate through one way or two-way communication on social media particularly

twitter and non-profit organisations with a high degree of donor dependence strive in the use of social media contents as a one-way communication to their stakeholders.

Furthermore, Briones et al. (2011) conducted a study on how the two-way dialogue had been accomplished primarily through facebook and twitter. The research showed that the participants were aware of the importance of social media, and how it could be used to build stronger relationships with publics such as volunteers and the community.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

According to Powell and Conaway (2010), research methodology refers to the strategies surrounding the use of multiple methods of conducting a research study as required by different attempts to achieve a high degree of reliability and validity. This chapter discussed the methodology of the study which includes the research approach, research design, study area, population of the study, sample size, sampling technique, data collection tools, data collection process and data analysis.

3.1 Research Approach

Mixed method approach was employed for the study. According to Tashakkori and Creswell (2007), mixed method approach is an approach where the researcher gathers and analyses data, integrates the findings and draw interpretations using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in the same study. Employing a mixed methods approach can allow for the limitations of each approach to be nullified while strengths are built by providing stronger and more accurate inferences (Bryman, 2006; Creswell, 2003). Creswell and Clark (2007) argued that mixed methods approach helps riposte to the research questions that cannot be answered by quantitative or qualitative methods alone and provides a collection of tools to meet the objectives of a study. Bryman (2006) posits that using a qualitative research approach to illustrate quantitative findings can help paint a better picture of the phenomenon under investigation. The mixed method approach was adopted for this study by analysing the use and frequency of post on the facebook page of the Ghana Police Service.

3.2 Research Design

Research design is purposefully created to draw a master plan with which the entire research and its attendant methodologies are carried out (Zikmund and Babin, 2007). Creswell (2014) argues that the selection of an appropriate research design depends on the nature of the study, research problem and question, personal experiences of the researcher and the type of audience for the study. According to Babbie (2010), the three most common and useful purposes of social research are exploration, description, and explanation. A descriptive research design was employed in this study which aimed at providing accurate, systematic and valid representations by observing and describing the factors that are relevant to the study being undertaken (Babbie, 2010). The descriptive research design is mostly used when the study seeks to identify characteristics, frequencies, trends and validate existing conditions of the study (Babbie, 2010). One of the distinct characteristics of the descriptive research design as discussed by Creswell (2018) is that the nature or behaviors of the variables are not controlled by the researcher. The descriptive research design gives a holistic understanding of the study with varied and thorough information from the observation (Creswell, 2018). This research design allowed the research to be conducted in a completely natural and unchanged environment to ensure that high quality and authentic data was collected by the researcher (Creswell, 2018).

3.3 Study Area

The study area was the Ghana Police Service facebook platform. The Ghana Police Service (GPS) was established by the constitution of Ghana and tasked with the daunting responsibility of protecting life and property as a law enforcement agency. The facebook platform of the Ghana Police Service was created on 27th October, 2016 but was officially launched in February, 2018 with its operational hours from 9:00am to 11:00pm each day. The

facebook platform of the Ghana Police Service has the official police emergency landline as 0302787373 displayed boldly on the interface. Administratively, the Ghana Police Service facebook page is handled by the Public Affairs Directorate (PAD), which is located at the national police headquarters, ring road east – Cantonment. According to the fan-page of the official Ghana Police Service facebook page as at now have about 328,000 total likes and over 418,000 total followers consisting of both police officers and the public (<https://m.facebook.com/GhPoliceService>).

3.4 Population of the Study

According to Bless and Higgon-Smith (2000, as cited in Issah, 2017), the population for a study refers to the entire set of objects or people which is the focus of the research and about which the researcher wants to determine some characteristics. The population of the study was the facebook page of the Ghana Police Service.

3.5 Sample Size

According to Roger et al (2006) sample is a subset of the population that is representative of the entire population. Kusi (2012) points out that in considering a sample size for a qualitative study, it is imperative for researchers to determine an aspect of the population to be used for the study and justify why the sample size was chosen. Based on this assertion, the sample size used was all posts by the Ghana Police Service from January to June 2021 on the facebook page. This is because those are the current posts by the police service on their facebook page.

3.6 Sampling Technique

Lindlof and Taylor (2002) indicated that sampling techniques guides the researcher as to the choices of what to observe or whom to interview. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), sampling is a technique of selecting individual members or a subset of the population to make

statistical inferences from them and estimate characteristics of the whole population. This study employed a purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique was employed in study because the respondents, subjects, or elements were selected with specific characteristics or qualities and those who fail to meet those criteria were eliminated (Roger et al, 2006). Kumekpor (2002), also states that in purposive sampling, the units of the sample are selected not by chance or random but are intentionally chosen for the study because they satisfy certain qualities which are of interest to the researcher.

3.7 Data Collection Technique

The data was obtained using cyber ethnography. Cyber ethnography is the observation and gathering of information on people's behavioral patterns within virtual or cyber spaces, which involves a detailed analysis of text, language, interactions, comments and people's general actions and inactions online (Sade-Beck, 2004).

3.8 Data Collection Process

Cyber data collection process was employed. Cyber data collection is the observation and gathering of information within virtual space about texts, videos, comments and actions and inactions online by people (Sade-Beck, 2004). Cyber data collection process commenced by identifying the official and original Ghana Police Service facebook page. This determination was important because there are other facebook pages bearing the tag and logo "Ghana Police Service" and at best could be described as fake accounts. In determining the official page, the researcher looked out for the blue verification insignia that facebook accords pages that are credible and are actually operated by the organization or individual whose name it bears.

After identifying the official Ghana Police Service facebook page, the researcher conducted manual assessment of the page to determine the presence of the dialogic elements as postulated in the framework for assessing the potentials of websites. The researcher observed

posts, videos, comments by page visitors and comments replies by the GPS. The researcher thoroughly looked at the interface and the kind of information provided at the bio column of the Ghana Police Service facebook page. The researcher also looked out for the page features such as message and call buttons on the Ghana Police Service facebook page. Observations by the researcher on the Ghana Police Service facebook page were recorded in a book which was dedicated for this purpose. The researcher took screenshots of some posts, comments and the bio column to supplement the data gathered and recorded. The researcher revisited the page daily over a period of one month to repeat the same process for purposes of validity as argued by Creswell (2013) who postulates that prolonged engagement and persistent observations can increase the validity of a data. At each occasion of the observation, the researcher spent about 2 to 3 hours on the page.

The observations recorded in the book and the screenshots that were captured were later analyzed to enable the researcher identify recurring language patterns to form themes that became basis for the analysis. These steps were taken in line with the postulations of Nørskov and Rask (2011) who argue that observations in cyber spaces ought to be detailed and repetitive so as to help the researcher unravel the implicit social relations and interactions that exist online that may not ordinarily be obtained through interviews.

3.9 Data Analysis

Frankel and Wallen (2003) argued that data analysis is that task which involves synthesizing all the information a researcher gathers in the field and drawing parallel and logical lines in the data according to the researcher's research questions. This study sought to analyse the use and frequency of post of the facebook page of the Ghana Police Service to address the research objectives and answer the research questions formulated. Taking into cognisance the fact that this study was aimed at soliciting data from the posts on the Ghana Police Service's

facebook page, the analytical strategy employed was quantitative content analysis. Quantitative content analysis is a research method in which features of textual, visual, or audial material are systematically categorized and recorded so that they can be analyzed (Bryman 2012).

Luo (2019) quantitative content analysis procedure was used for this study:

- Choose the content to analyse based on the research objectives. The researcher first chose all the facebook posts of the Ghana Police Service and comments by page administrator and page visitors from January to June, 2021 to be analysed for the study based on the research objectives.
- Define the units and categories of analysis. Observed posts, videos and comments were done through cyber ethnography from January to June, 2021 by the researcher and were recorded by notes taking in a book for the purpose of the study. The bio interface, images and other features were also observed by the researcher to get more detailed data.
- Develop a set of rules for coding. At this stage the researcher developed rules to code all posts, videos and comments observed within the period under review based on their similarities in content. All posts, videos and comments that were closely related and had some similarities were grouped under their respective themes.
- Code the text according to the rules. At this stage the researcher meticulously segmented the posts, videos and comments according to the codes assigned to the research objectives. The researcher read through the written notes to make more meaning out of the data and grouped relevant data according to the research objectives of the study. This was manually done by the researcher from the notes taken. The units and categories of the study were predetermined. The data were

categorized into themes based on similarities in content of the facebook posts, videos and comments.

- Analyse the results and draw conclusions. Statistical analysis was manually done with tables by relevant data gathered to find the trend. The researcher interprets the themes identified using thick description of data gathered and compared the findings with information from literature and theories as espoused in the framework for assessing the dialogic potentials of websites.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and discussions of the study. The findings and discussions are based on: the level of interaction between the Ghana Police Service and its publics (internal and external) on the facebook page of the Ghana Police Service; the frequency of posts (daily, weekly and monthly) on the facebook page of the Ghana Police Service; and the level of cyber-bullying by the publics (internal and external) on the facebook post of the Ghana Police Service.

4.1 The Level of Interaction Between the Ghana Police Service and its Publics on the Facebook Page

Table 1.0 shows the frequency of comments and reply by the Ghana Police Service on the Ghana Police Service facebook page for six months period. The study revealed that for the six months period, there were 37,692 comments from both page administrator and visitors whiles 282 (0.74%) comments received reply from page administrator who only replied to positive comments in favour of the Ghana Police Service. It was found that the month that had the highest comments for the six months under review was June with 13,409 (35.57%) comments whiles the month that had the lowest comments was April with 3,669 (9.73%) comments. The month that had the highest reply from the Ghana Police Service on comments was February with 75 (26.59%) replies whiles the month of June had the lowest reply from the Ghana Police Service with 23 (8.1%) replies to comments. The study found that the Ghana Police Service's facebook page allowed for feedback and comments. Facebook allowed page administrators to either block or allow the messaging features of the page to prevent visitors from sending messages but that of the Ghana Police Service was opened to

the public (internal and external) to send and receive messages from the Ghana Police Service facebook page.

Table 1.0: Frequency of comments and reply by the Ghana Police Service on the Ghana Police Service facebook page for six months period

Months	Frequency of Comments	Ghana Police Service Reply to Comments
January	6,046	52
February	4,920	75
March	3,864	45
April	3,669	43
May	5,784	44
June	13,409	23
TOTAL	37,692	282

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

On the prompt nature of the responses, observation on the facebook page showed that messages were replied typically within a day. It took an average of 24 hours to receive a reply from the Ghana Police Service page administrators whenever the public sent messages or comments. Regarding the fact that facebook specifically has allowed for prompt messaging. One would have expected that the Ghana Police Service had done better to reduce the response time to the public for a reply. The core mandate of the Ghana Police Service is to protect life and property so the police ought to be swift with responses to situations where people's lives or properties could be endangered. Also, being timely means that the police officers who operate the facebook accounts of the Ghana Police Service should keep the page active and running 24 hours daily. Another issue under the dialogic loop is the quality of the responses the visitors will receive when they visit your platform. The dialogic loop concept

argues that mere responses are not enough and that the responses should incorporate the spirit of relationship building. This means, that the police officer who operate the facebook platform ought to be trained on how best to respond to the publics' (internal and external) comments and messages to create a mutual relationship.

The findings in Table 1.0 support the assertion by Kent and Taylor (1998) on the framework for assessing the dialogic potentials of websites because they emphasized on the interactivity between an organisation and its publics. They also show value for the other partner in relationship building and this is important because public relations dwell largely on mutually beneficial relationships (Harlow, 1976). The framework for assessing dialogic potentials of websites argue that for an internet platform to be deemed dialogic there ought to be the presence of a useful dialogic loop that aids in exchange of information. This is to say that the platform should allow visitors to send and receive feedback or messages or comments. Here again, there is an emphasis on the timely feedback. The concept asserts that the response should be in real time. Facebook, allow timely information sharing and reply to comments but the people behind the platform ought to make the efforts to respond to queries and comments in a very spontaneous manner. Facebook allows page administrators to either block or allow the messaging features of the pages to prevent visitors from sending messages but that of the Ghana Police Service has been opened to the general public (internal and external) in order to give room for the public to send and receive messages from the Ghana Police Service facebook page. Facebook allows visitors to comment and also receive comments by way of replies from the page administrators.

The findings in Table 1.0 affirm the assertion by Madichie and Hinson (2014) where a study on the dialogic nature of police websites in some selected African countries. The study found that majority of the police websites lacked the dialogic loop presence and this could be attributed to Crump's (2011) argument that the Ghana Police Service is an organisation with

a tall bureaucratic and regimented order that hampers the release of some information. The Ghana Police Service, however, does better in the dialogic loop when compared to the inferences in Madichie and Hinson's (2014) study because every component under the concept is in place except for the lack of responses to individual comments by the page visitors and the 24 hours waiting time to receive a feedback or reply from the Ghana Police Service.

Avidar (2013) asserts that there are three different levels of feedback or responsiveness which are (1) non-interactive response is where the response may not necessarily be a reaction to the exact message sent; (2) reactive response which is a response that is perhaps a reaction to the message sent; and, (3) the interactive response which is a reaction to the message sent and may even go beyond that to initiate further conversations or responses with the aim of exhausting any requests or discussions that may arise as a result of the initial message. From the online observation, the Ghana Police Service was seen to be practicing the non-interactive form of response which is not the best as they are seeking to be dialogic. This is because they sometimes ignore some vital comments that need prompt response to help their publics (internal and external) with the right information and at the right time.

Table 2.0 indicates the frequency of themes on the Ghana Police Service facebook page for six months period. This study identified eight (8) thematic areas of the facebook posts. These themes were security tips, COVID-19 protocols, news/press release, arrests, missing/wanted persons, donations, police programmes/training and others. It was evidenced from Table 2.0 that, the theme that had the highest comments was news/press release with 12,259 (32.52%) comments whiles theme that had the lowest comments was donations with 418 (1.10%) comments. This showed a clear indication that the Ghana Police Service actively engaged with their publics on their news/press release more as it updates the public on the actions and activities by the Ghana Police Service.

Table 2.0: Frequency of themes on the Ghana Police Service facebook page for six months period

Themes	Frequency of Comments
Security tips	3,086
COVID-19 protocols	3,178
News/Press release	12,259
Arrests	8,704
Missing/Wanted persons	1,938
Donations	681
Police programmes/Training	7,428
Others	418
TOTAL	37,692

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

On the issue of sharing the organisation's news on the platform, evidence gathered on the Ghana Police Service's facebook page indicated that news/press releases form one of the themes of the post by the Ghana Police Service posts made in the 6 months period. This meant that information for public consumption was readily available by the Ghana Police Service. On the other hand, security tips which happened to be the post frequently posted by the Ghana Police Service on the facebook page than all other posts.

Table 3.0 shows the frequency of impressions on the Ghana Police Service facebook page for six months period. The study found that 206,033 pages were liked by page visitors on all post and videos, 23,540 posts were shared by page visitors and 768,600 were page visitors who viewed videos posted by the Ghana Police Service on the facebook page within the six months period (Table 3.0).

The month that had the highest posts likes was June with 51,543 (25.01%) likes and the month that had the lowest post likes was April with 20,150 (9.77%) likes. The month that had the highest post shared by page visitors to their personal page and groups was January with 6,076 (25.81%) posts shared while the month that had the lowest posts shared by page visitors was 1,788 (7.59%) posts shared. The month that had the highest views of video posts by page visitors was March with 644,900 (83.90%) views and the month that had the lowest views of video were January and April with no views of the videos posted on the Ghana Police Service facebook page (Table 3.0).

Table 3.0 frequency of impressions on the Ghana Police Service facebook page for six months period.

	Post Likes	Post Shares	Video Views
Months			
January	39,683	6,076	-
February	34,582	1,788	24,000
March	37,544	4,204	644,900
April	20,150	3,005	-
May	22,531	2,888	54,300
June	51,543	5,579	45,000
TOTAL	206,033	23,540	768,600

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

The findings in Table 3.0 support the assertion by Kent and Taylor (1998) on the framework for assessing the dialogic potentials of websites as it emphasized the ease of the interface which talks about how user-friendly the interface of the facebook platform. The principles suggested that the design of the platform should not be complicated so as to turn visitors

away. It proposed an interface that makes it easy for visitors to be able to navigate on the facebook platform for information. In this regard, the Ghana Police Service's facebook page is designed with the default design for facebook pages which is basic and easy to use. The researcher observed that it was easy to navigate the Ghana Police Service's facebook page. The page was designed such that the comment, like, view and share buttons were made visible for page visitors to see and use when necessary. There were also different buttons that show different columns of the page and just by a click, one is able to navigate these buttons. Columns such as the Home, About, Photos, Videos and Events;

- 'Home' - takes one directly to the homepage.
- 'About'- gives more information about the Ghana Police Service regarding what they stand for, what their mission and vision is, google map address, contact, website and email address.
- 'Photos'- directs one to their image gallery which is made up of images or pictures they have shared on the facebook page.
- 'Videos'- also shows the various videos the Ghana Police Service has posted on their facebook page.
- 'Events'- shows events (both upcoming and past) the Ghana Police Service have organized and so on.

All of these confirmed the willingness of the Ghana Police Service to make the facebook page interface easy for their page visitors to use. The researcher also observed the call and message buttons on the facebook page which makes it very easy for page visitors to call and send messages to the Ghana Police Service.

It was observed on the Ghana Police Service facebook page that, it captured the mission and vision statements of the Ghana Police Service. This becomes useful for page visitors who wants to easily understand what the Ghana Police Service stands for and their core mandate. There was an official logo of the Ghana Police Service which was used as the profile picture of the page. Profile pictures mostly help to easily identify facebook profiles of groups or individuals for a distinctive facebook page and helps the page to standout. The working hours were also captured on the facebook platform as well as the emergency contacts to reach the Ghana Police Service in times of emergency. The Ghana Police Service also provided addresses or usernames to other social media platforms they operate.

The findings in Table 3.0 support the assertion by Kent and Taylor (1998) on the framework for assessing the dialogic potentials of websites as it emphasized on the issue of usefulness of the information shared. The principle argues that for information on the platform to be regarded as useful, it should encompass mission and vision statement and historical information about the organization, the presence of features such as the organisation's logo, news stories of the organisation, calendar of events and the organisation's emergency contacts.

It was evidenced on the Ghana Police Service's facebook page that there was an external link shared that leads to other official social media platforms of the Ghana Police Service. The findings support the assertion by Kent and Taylor (1998) on the framework for assessing the dialogic potentials of websites as it emphasized on the issue of rule of conservation of visitors. This concept holds that in a dialogic interaction on the internet, organisations ought to show value for their visitors by making efforts at retaining them on the page and not sharing external links that are likely to lead them off the platform. The concept kicked against the practice where page administrators manipulate their visitors by sharing links to other

platforms for advertising purposes. An example is a link provided to the official website of the Ghana Police Service. This showed value for the page visitors and also indicates the absence of any form of marketing manipulations. This was in line with the hypotheses of Ryan (2003) when he argued that organisations can only win the trust of their diverse publics using online platforms only when they engage in ethical forms of communication.

Another observation on the Ghana Police Service facebook page were the images posted on the Ghana Police Service facebook page were very sharp and clear indicating that they used professional cameras in taking the photographs making the images very appealing to the page visitors. There were some graphics images that was poorly done per observation with the posts. The colour blend on the page also makes it very easy to read the text and helps navigation on the page. The major corporate colours of the Ghana Police Service are blue and white which can be found in their logo and naturally these colours match with that of facebook. It reduces colour conflict and easy on the eye by page visitors. The font style and size used by the Ghana Police Service page administrator was also clear to be read.

4.2 The Frequency of Posts on the Facebook Page of the Ghana Police Service

Table 4.0 shows the frequency of posts on the Ghana Police Service facebook page for six months period. The study showed that, there were 305 facebook posts made by the Ghana Police Service over the 6 months period under study from January to June 2021. The month that had the highest post was February with 70 (22.95%) posts while the month that had the lowest posts was May with 33 (10.81%) posts. This showed a clear indication that the Ghana Police Service posted more within the month of February than the other months. This was highly attributed to the chain of posts on COVID-19 safety protocols, news/press release and security tips the Ghana Police Service began to broadcast daily to the publics (internal and external) on how to stay safe and be informed of their daily activities and actions (Table 4.0).

Table 4.0: Frequency of posts on the Ghana Police Service facebook page for six months period

Months	Frequency of Posts
January	46
February	70
March	60
April	40
May	33
June	56
TOTAL	305

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

On the Ghana Police Service’s facebook page, it was evidenced that the page was updated regularly. Within the 181 days of the 6 months period under review, the Ghana Police Service posted 305 posts in total, making an average of 1.68 posts per day which was very high per the yardstick by Madichie and Hinson (2014). For the 6 months period under review, the page administrators update the page regularly with posts each day.

The findings in Table 4.0 were in line with the assertion by Kent and Taylor (1998) on the framework for assessing the dialogic potentials of websites as it emphasized on the generation of return visits. This emphasized that, when information on internet platforms is not changed frequently, the publics are unwilling to revisit the internet platform. It emphasized the need for organisations to incorporate features on their corporate websites that will motivate their publics to revisit the platforms. Therefore, there is the need to constantly update information on the organisation’s internet platform. Madichie and Hinson (2014)

proposed that updates on websites should not be more than 30 days if the organisation wants to remain dialogic.

Table 5.0 indicates the frequency of post of the themes on the Ghana Police Service facebook page for six months period. It was found that, the theme with the highest frequency of posts was security tips with 100 (32.78%) posts and the theme with the lowest frequency of posts was donations with 9 (2.95%) posts. The study found that, the Ghana Police Service were so much interested in updating the public on safety tips and actions than donations received or given out.

Table 5.0: Frequency of post of the themes on the Ghana Police Service facebook page for six months period

Themes	Frequency of Posts
Security tips	100
COVID-19 protocols	41
News/Press release	50
Arrests	23
Missing/Wanted persons	17
Donations	9
Police programmes/Training	54
Others	11
TOTAL	305

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

The study showed that there were 305 posts within the six months (181 days) period under review. This indicated that there was an average of 1.68 posts per day by the Ghana Police Service on the facebook page, which was a good indication (Table 5.0). The post that was

frequently seen almost every month was on security tips, COVID-19 protocols, news/press release, arrests. missing/wanted persons, donations to and by the police, and police programmes/training.

4.3 The level of Cyber-bullying by the Publics on the Facebook Page of the Ghana Police Service.

Table 6.0 shows the frequency of cyber-bullying comments on the Ghana Police Service facebook page for six months period. The findings from the study found that, 953 (2.52%) cyber-bullying comments was made by page visitors to the Ghana Police Service facebook posts out of the 37,692 total comments made by the page visitors and page administrators under the period of review. The month of June had the highest cyber-bullying comments on the posts by the Ghana Police Service with 342 (35.88%) cyber-bullying comments made while April had the lowest cyber-bullying comments with 30 (3.14%) cyber-bullying comments (Table 6.0). It was observed that the cyber-bullying comments to the posts were mostly related to extortion, corruption, secret recruitment, politically manipulation by politicians and humiliation of citizens.

It was observed on the Ghana Police Service facebook page that, page visitors took advantage of the openness of the police to the public to bully them and use invectives in commenting to their posts even if it is a positive and educative post by the Ghana Police Service. Some people also think social media is an opportunity to bully and say all sorts of negative things about the police since their whereabouts cannot be tracked. Every post by the Ghana Police Service virtually attracted cyber-bullying comments by the publics (internal and external) due to their previous negative reputation perceived by the public.

Table 6.0: Frequency of cyber-bullying comments on the Ghana Police Service facebook page for six months period

Months	Frequency of Cyber-bullying Comments
January	323
February	129
March	60
April	30
May	69
June	342
TOTAL	953

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

As discussed above, the element of risk in the dialogic public relations theory comes up here as it emphasized on the organisation's willingness to be vulnerable in any form of interaction with their publics, recognizing that they have their own uniqueness and such uniqueness must be tolerated. An example of cyberbullying on the Ghana Police Service facebook page was where a page visitor commented that "a bunch of idiots calling themselves police... Puppets of the politicians".

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The chapter presents a summary of the study, summary of main findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

5.1 Summary of the Study

The main objective of this study was to analyze the use and frequency of post on the facebook page of the Ghana Police Service. The specific objectives were to;

- Examine the level of interaction between the Ghana Police Service and its publics (internal and external) on the facebook page of the Ghana Police Service.
- To assess the frequency of posts (daily, weekly and monthly) on the facebook page of the Ghana Police Service.
- Assess the level of cyber-bullying by the publics (internal and external) on the facebook page of the Ghana Police Service.

This study analysed the use and frequency of posts of the Ghana Police Service facebook page. The study was underpinned by the dialogic public relations theory. The study used the mixed method approach. A descriptive research design was employed which aimed at providing accurate, systematic and valid representations by observing and describing the factors that are relevant to the study being undertaken (Babbie, 2010). The study area was the Ghana Police Service facebook platform. The population of the study was the facebook page of the Ghana Police Service. The sample size used was all posts by the Ghana Police Service from January to June 2021 on the facebook page. This is because those are the current posts by the police service on their facebook page. The study employed a purposive sampling

technique. The study employed cyber ethnography to obtain data from the facebook page of the Ghana Police Service.

The cyber data collection process was commenced by identifying the official Ghana Police Service facebook page and the researcher conducted a manual assessment of the page to determine the presence of the dialogic elements as postulated in the framework for assessing the dialogic potentials of websites. The researcher observed posts, videos, comments by page visitors and comments replies by the GPS. Data was collected from 26th July to 10th October, 2021. Quantitative content analysis was employed in the data analysis.

5.2 Summary of Main Findings

The study revealed that for the six months period, there were 37,692 comments from both page administrator and visitors while 282 (0.74%) comments received reply from page administrator who only replied to positive comments in favour of the Ghana Police Service. It was revealed that the month that had the highest comments for the six months under review was June with 13,409 (35.57%) comments while the month that had the lowest comments was April with 3,669 (9.73%) comments. The month that had the highest reply from the Ghana Police Service on comments was February with 75 (26.59%) replies while the month of June had the lowest reply from the Ghana Police Service with 23 (8.1%) replies to comments. The study found that the Ghana Police Service's facebook page allowed for feedback and comments. Facebook allowed page administrators to either block or allow the messaging features of the page to prevent visitors from sending messages but that of the Ghana Police Service was opened to the public (internal and external) to send and receive messages from the Ghana Police Service facebook page.

On the prompt nature of the responses, observation on the facebook page showed that messages were replied typically within a day. It took an average of 24 hours to receive a reply

from the Ghana Police Service page administrators whenever the public sent messages or comments. The Ghana Police Service was observed to be opened to the general public (internal and external) in order to give room for the public to send and receive messages from the Ghana Police Service facebook page.

The study identified eight (8) thematic areas of the facebook posts. These themes were security tips, COVID-19 protocols, news/press release, arrests, missing/wanted persons, donations, police programmes/training and others. It was evidenced that, the theme that had the highest comments was news/press release with 12,259 (32.52%) comments while the theme that had the lowest comments was donations with 418 (1.10%) comments. On the issue of sharing the organisation's news on the platform, evidence gathered on the Ghana Police Service's facebook page indicated that news/press releases form one of the themes of the post by the Ghana Police Service posts made in the 6 months period. The Ghana Police Service also provided addresses or usernames to other social media platforms they operate.

The study found that 206,033 pages were liked by page visitors on all post and videos, 23,540 posts were shared by page visitors and 768,600 were page visitors who viewed videos posted by the Ghana Police Service on the facebook page within the six months period. The month that had the highest posts likes was June with 51,543 (25.01%) likes and the month that had the lowest post likes was April with 20,150 (9.77%) likes. The month that had the highest post shared by page visitors to their personal page and groups was January with 6,076 (25.81%) posts shared while the month that had the lowest posts shared by page visitors was 1,788 (7.59%) posts shared. The month that had the highest views of video posts by page visitors was March with 644,900 (83.90%) views and the month that had the lowest views of video were January and April with no views of the videos posted on the Ghana Police Service facebook page.

The study showed that, there were 305 facebook posts made by the Ghana Police Service over the 6 months period under study from January to June 2021. The month that had the highest post was February with 70 (22.95%) posts while the month that had the lowest posts was May with 33 (10.81%) posts. This showed a clear indication that the Ghana Police Service posted more within the month of February than the other months. This was highly attributed to the chain of posts on COVID-19 safety protocols, news/press release and security tips the Ghana Police Service began to broadcast daily to the public (internal and external) on how to stay safe and be informed of their daily activities and actions. It was found that, the theme with the highest frequency of posts was security tips with 100 (32.78%) posts and the theme with the lowest frequency of posts was donations with 9 (2.95%) posts. The analysis showed that there were 305 posts within the six months (181 days) period under review. It indicated that there was an average of 1.68 posts per day by the Ghana Police Service on the facebook page, which was a good indication. The post that was frequently seen almost every month was on security tips, COVID-19 protocols, news/press release, arrests, missing/wanted persons, donations to and by the police, and police programmes/training.

The study found that, 953 (2.52%) cyber-bullying comments were made by page visitors to the Ghana Police Service facebook posts out of the 37,692 total comments made by the page visitors and page administrators under the period of review. The month of June had the highest cyber-bullying comments on the posts by the Ghana Police Service with 342 (35.88%) cyber-bullying comments made while April had the lowest cyber-bullying comments with 30 (3.14%) cyber-bullying comments. The findings showed that the cyber-bullying comments to the posts were mostly related to extortion, corruption, secret recruitment, political manipulation by politicians and humiliation of citizens.

5.3 Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn based on the outcome of the study;

The study concludes that the Ghana Police Service utilized facebook to inform and interact with its publics, which reveals the essence of engagement in building a lasting mutually relationship. As advocated earlier, the dialogic loop is one of the very important ways the Ghana Police Service need to explore in improving the relationships with their publics.

The study concludes that the Ghana Police Service is making efforts using social media especially facebook as a strategy to establish and maintain dialogic mutual relationship with its publics. It is therefore important for the Ghana Police Service to seize the opportunity and take advantage of the numerous prospects that social media presents in reaching their publics.

The study also concludes that the Ghana Police Service was battling with cyber-bullying comments by its public on the Ghana Police Service facebook page. Even though this challenge was an obstruction to the use of social media specifically the facebook platform, it did not contradict the efforts of the Ghana Police Service to be dialogic with its public.

5.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the research findings:

The study recommends that, the Ghana Police Service should take advantage of the opportunity in the digital dispensation through the use of social media to reach its publics to create a mutual relationship in order to eliminate the negative perceptions of the Ghana Police Service by its publics.

In order for the Ghana Police Service to be dialogic with its public, the study recommends that the personnel who operate the social media platform should be trained not only on the use of the social media platforms but also on how best to be dialogic on social media with

page visitors. This will best help improve their human relations and uphold the principles of ethics and empathy in their interactions with their publics.

The study also recommends that the Ghana Police Service's facebook page should not relent on their efforts to reply as many relevant comments by page visitors as possible in order to increase public engagement and build public trust by responding to these comments and messages in a manner that is as timely as possible.

The findings of this study will enable the Ghana Police Service to restructure its social media communication strategies to achieve the vision and mission of the service thereby bringing it closer to its public.

5.5 Suggestions for Future Study

Future researchers can broaden the scope of this study by including the other social media platforms of the Ghana Police Service and explore further to ascertain if the dynamics may be different due to the additional platforms.

In addition, future researchers should carry out similar studies on regional and divisional levels. The Ghana Police Service has a decentralised system of operation where law enforcement across the country is on regional levels headed by regional commanders, and further divided into divisions and districts, which are led by divisional and district commanders respectively.

Finally, a comparative study could be conducted on the facebook page and the twitter page of the Ghana Police Service to examine which of the two social media platforms is more dialogic and contribute to the provision of information needs to the publics.

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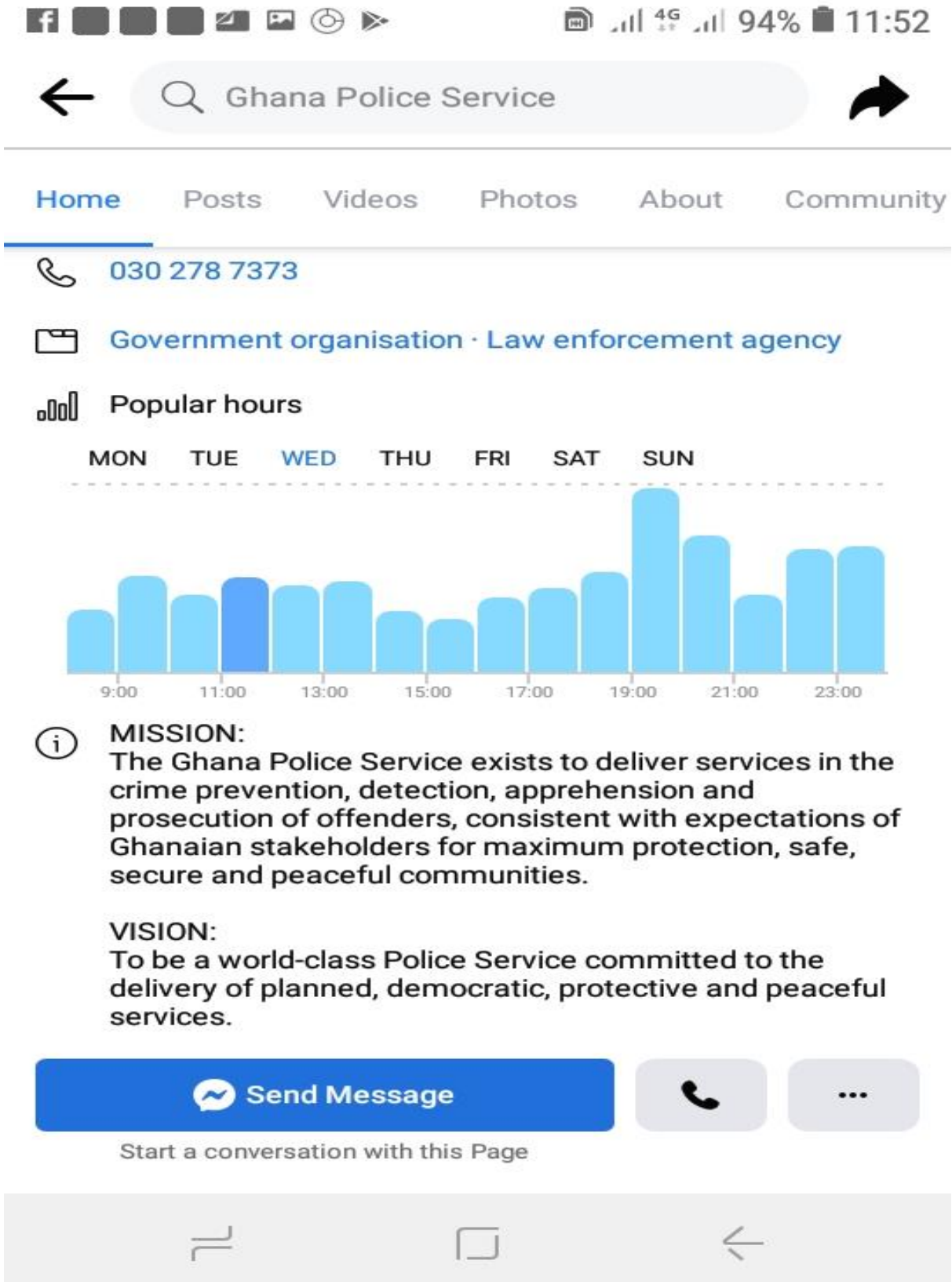
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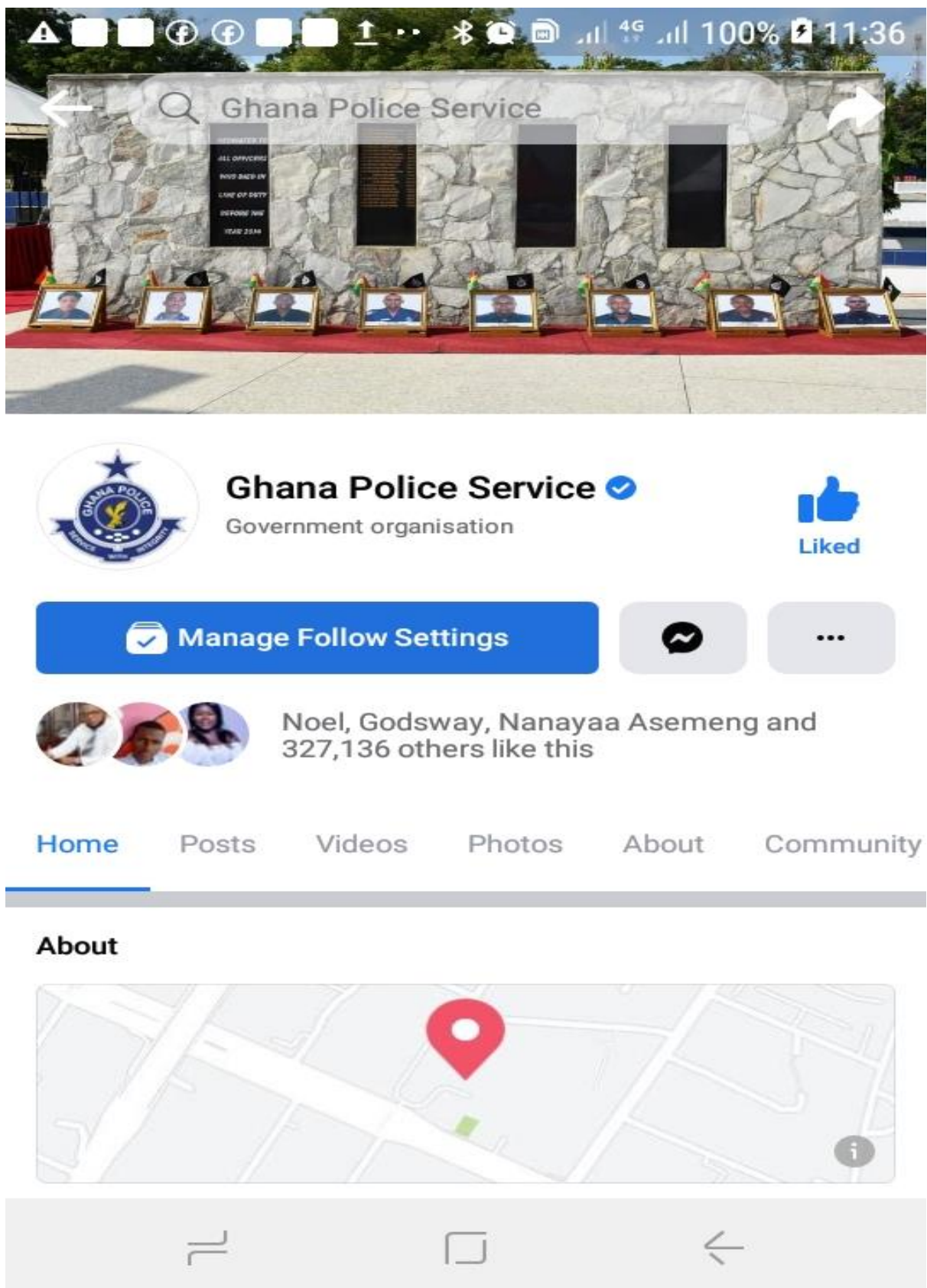
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APPENDIXES

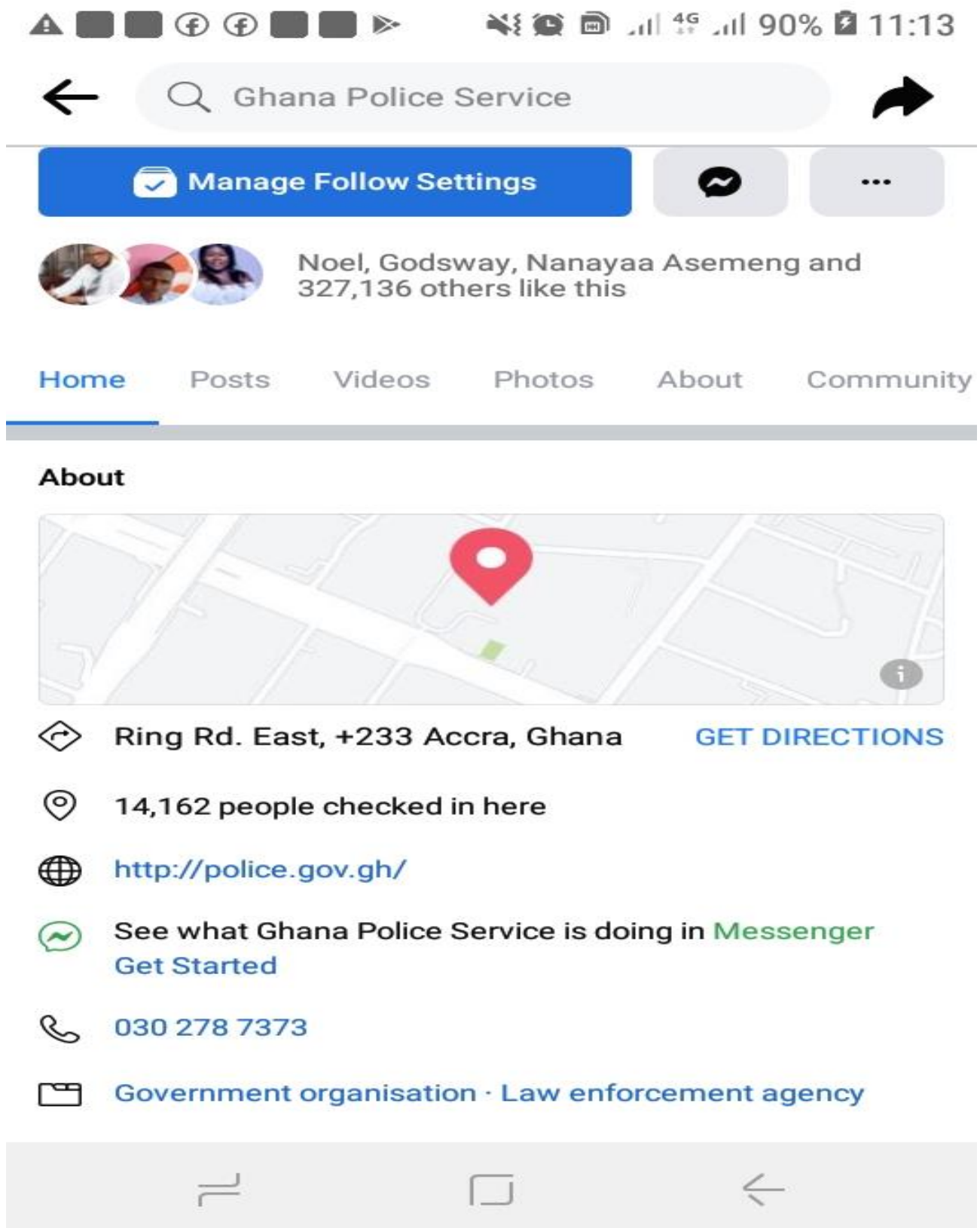
Appendix 1.0 (Screenshot showing the mission and vision statement as well as the contact and working hours of the Ghana Police Service).



Appendix 2.0 (Screenshot showing the use of the Ghana Police Service logo as the profile picture).



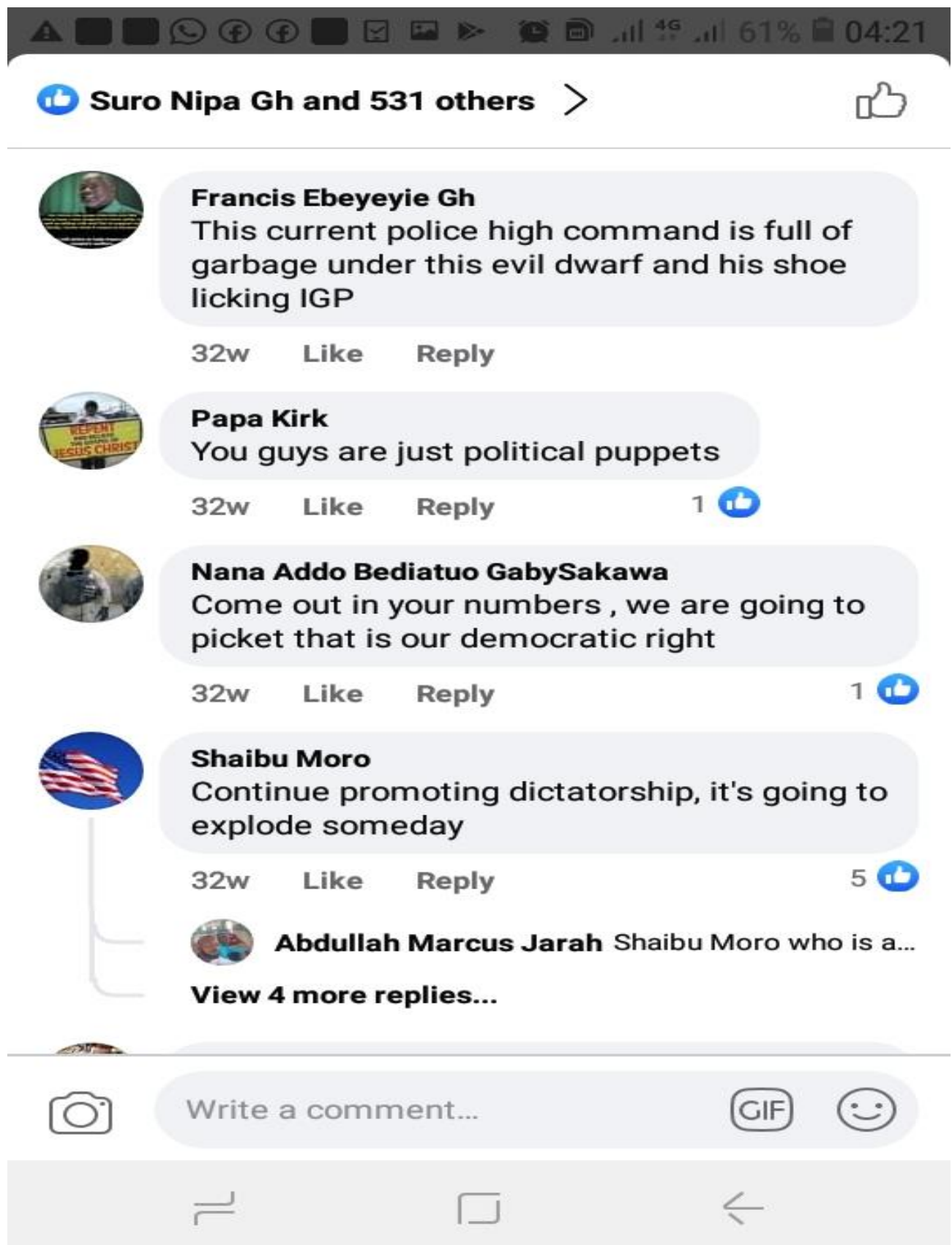
Appendix 3.0 (Screenshot showing google map location and website of the Ghana Police Service).



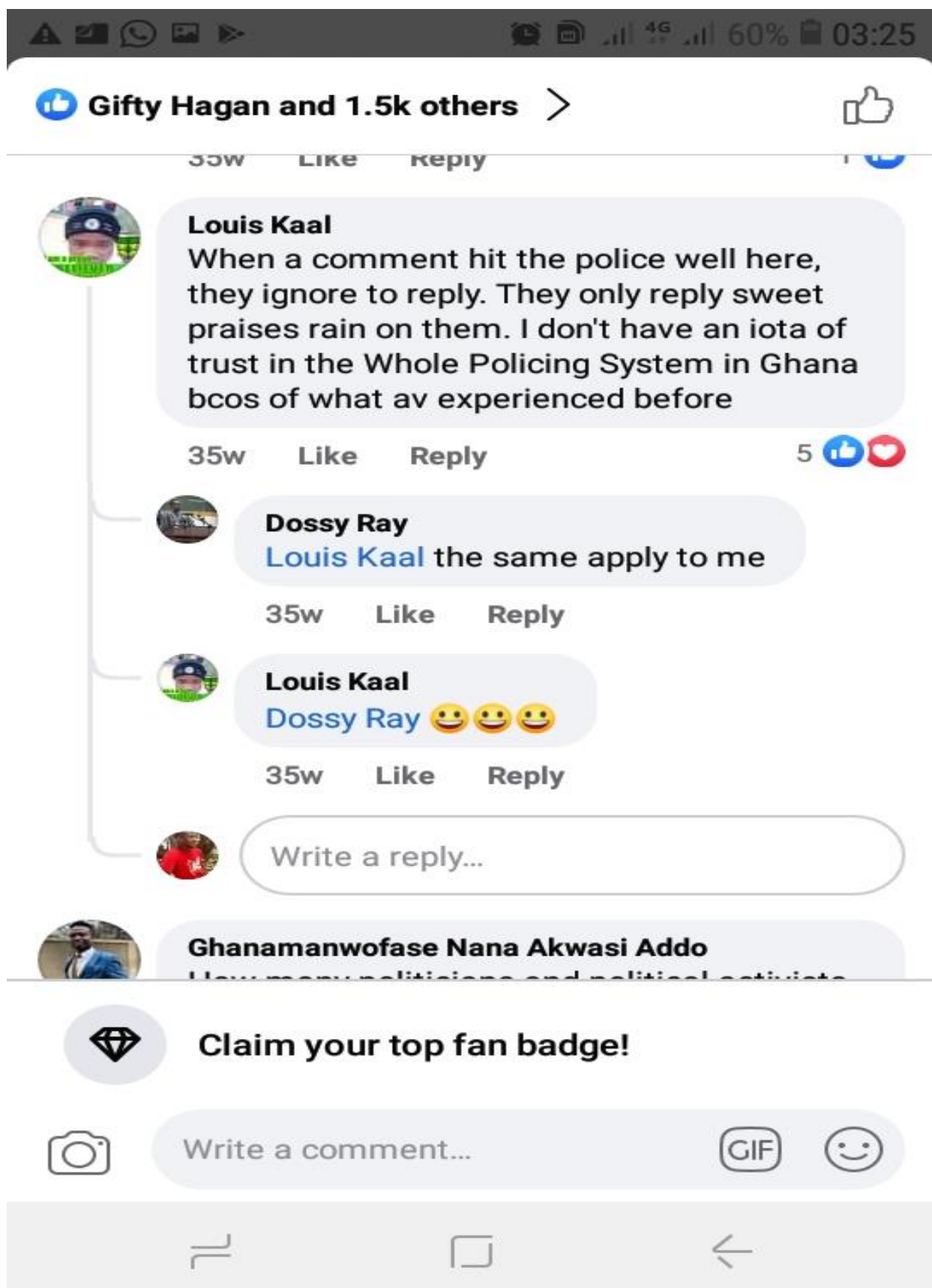
Appendix 4.0 (Screenshot showing an instance of cyberbullying on the Ghana Police Service).



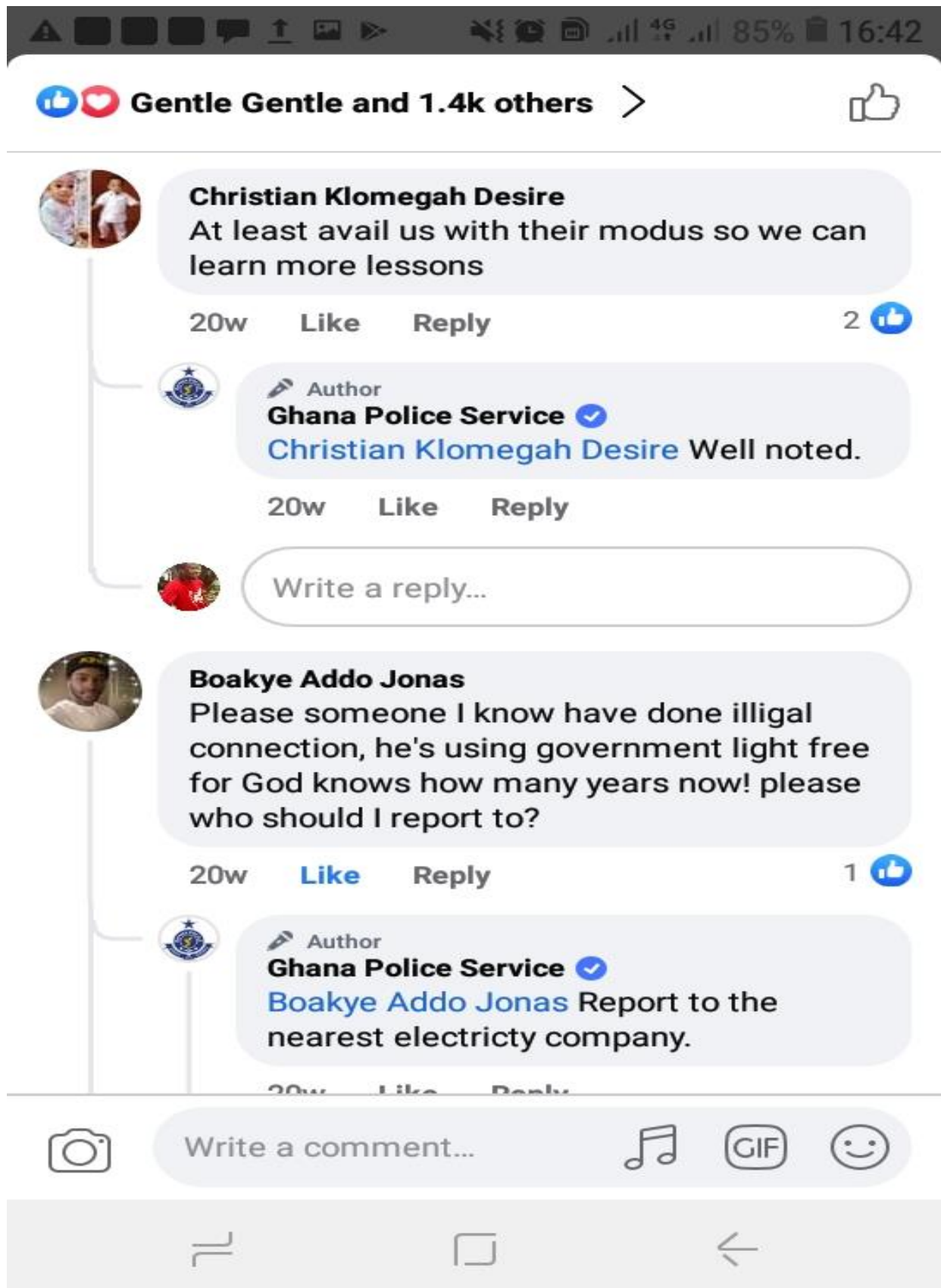
Appendix 5.0 (Screenshot showing an instance of cyberbullying on the Ghana Police Service).



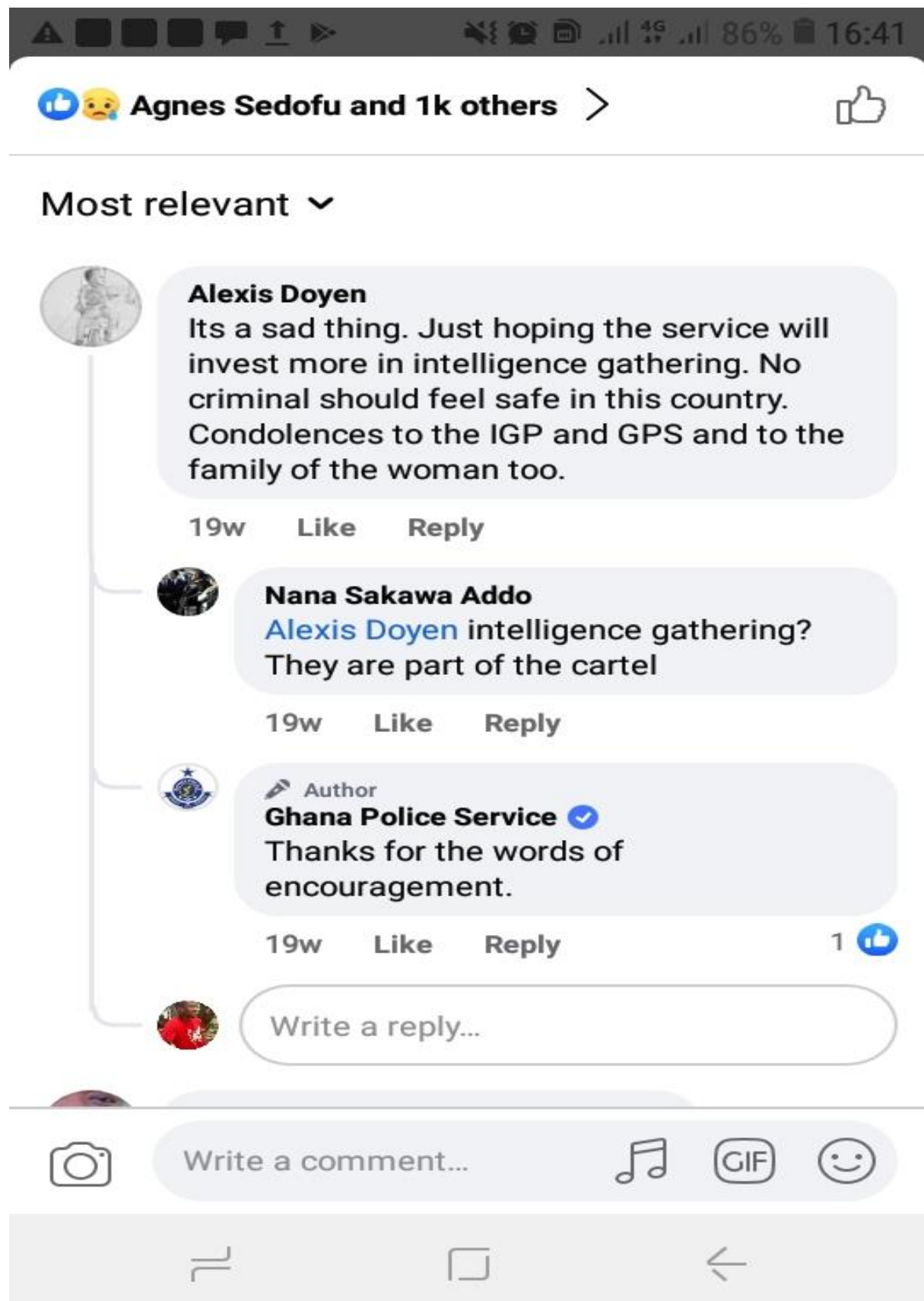
Appendix 6.0 (Screenshot showing an evidence where the Ghana Police Service ignored some vital comments).



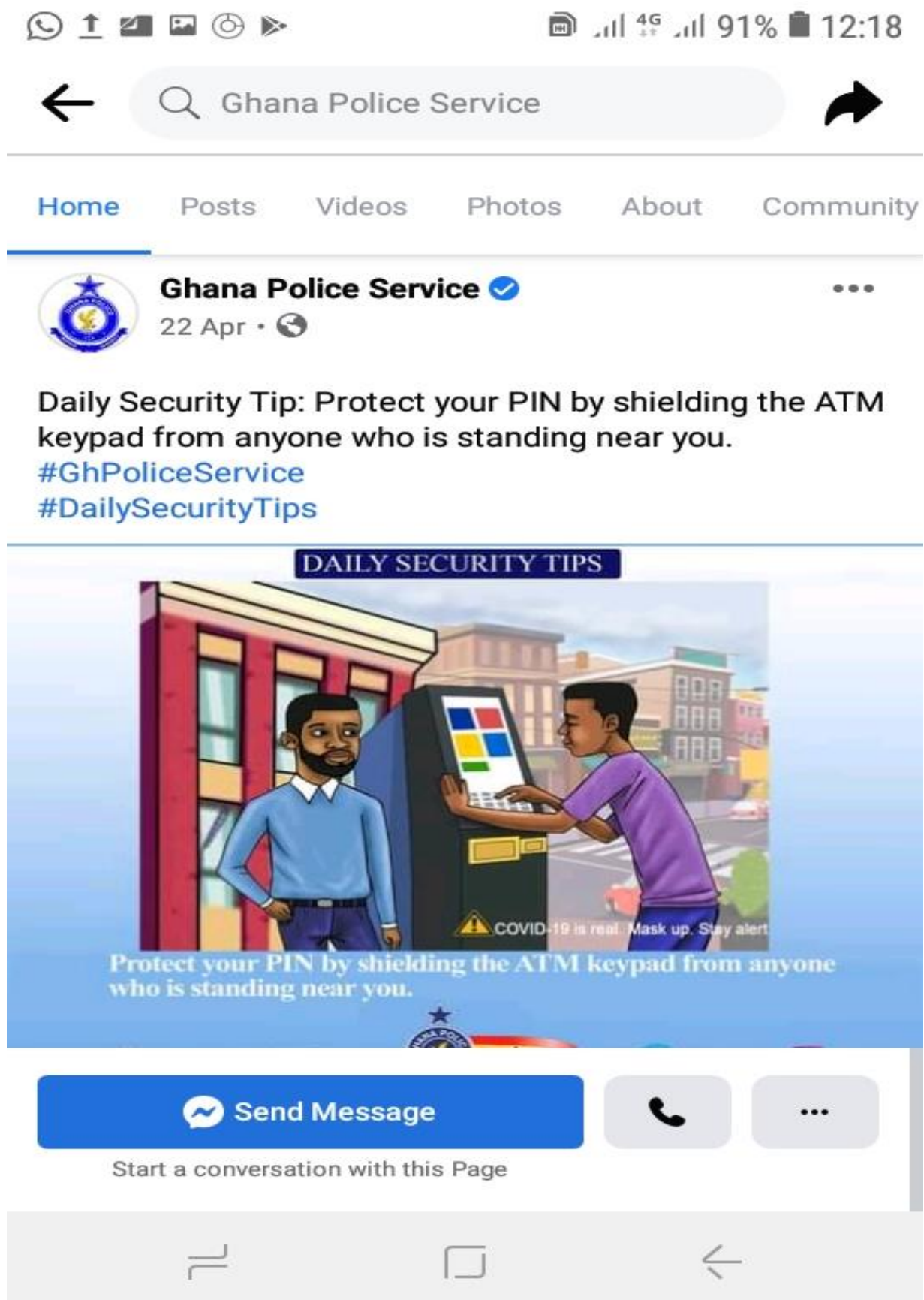
Appendix 7.0 (Screenshot showing an instance where the Ghana Police Service replied some comments).



Appendix 8.0 (Screenshot showing an instance where the Ghana Police Service replied some comments).



Appendix 9.0 (Screenshot showing a sample security tips which happens to be the highest category of post of the Ghana Police Service shared to the public).



Appendix 10.0 (Screenshot showing an alert by the Ghana Police Service on a fake police account).



Appendix 11.0 (Screenshot showing a typical view of the Ghana Police Service post).

