

**INTO THE DIGITAL REALM: EXPLORING SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENTS
BETWEEN THE GHANA POLICE SERVICE AND GHANAIAAN SOCIAL MEDIA
USERS.**



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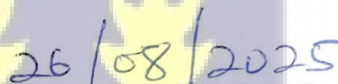
DECLARATION

I, Bernard Kyei Afriyie, do hereby declare that, except for references to other people's works which have been duly acknowledged, this thesis titled "*Into the Digital Realm: Exploring Social Media Engagements between the Ghana Police Service and Ghanaian Social Media Users*" is the product of my own research, conducted under the supervision of Dr. Rabiú Boakye Kwaku Asante and Dr. Mark Kwaku Mensah Obeng at the Department of Sociology, University of Ghana, Legon.

This thesis has never been published or submitted, either in part or in whole, for another degree at this institution or elsewhere.



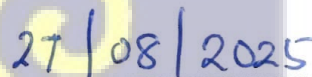
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my lovely mother, Mary Asuamah, beloved sister, Francisca Anima and my late father, John Kyei.



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Firstly, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude and thanks to the Almighty God for His abundant blessings and guidance throughout my research journey, which enabled me to successfully complete this dissertation.

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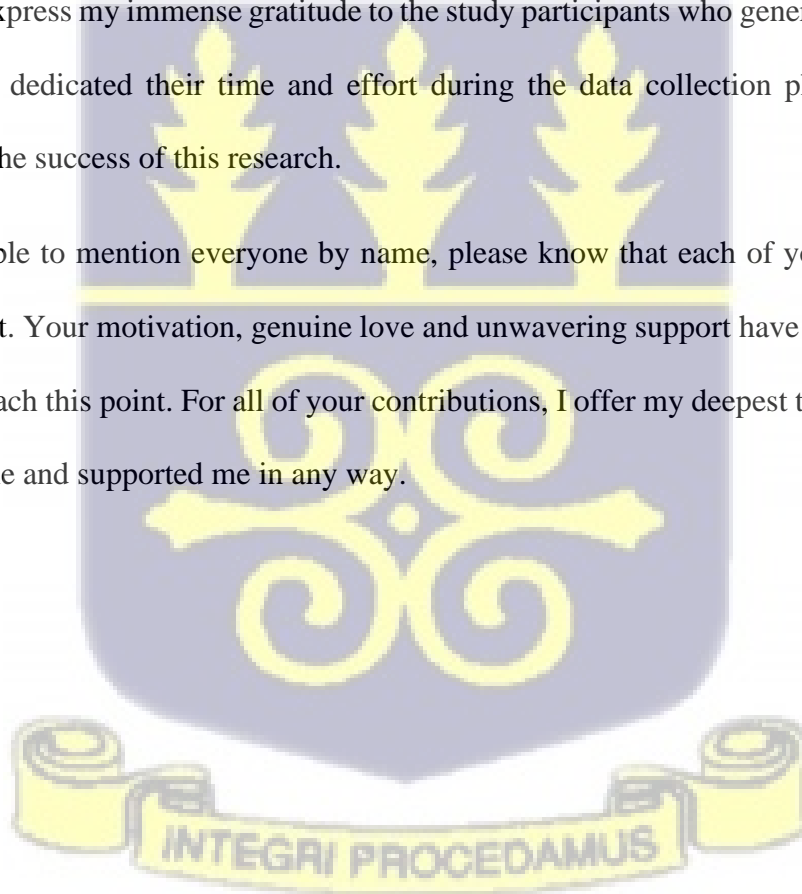


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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the engagement between the Ghana Police Service and Ghanaian social media users from 2018 to 2023, focusing on how platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (now X) are used to support policing practices and influence public perception. Guided by the Public Sphere theory and the framework of Institutionalism in security, the study examines how social media facilitates public discourse, institutional communication, and civic oversight within the context of law enforcement.

The study pursued four objectives: (1) identifying the types of information shared by the Police Service; (2) determining variations in content across different social media platforms; (3) analyzing public feedback on shared content; and (4) exploring the operational role of social media in policing functions.

A qualitative content analysis was employed, involving manual coding and thematic categorization of 1,135 Facebook posts and 941 tweets from the official accounts of the Ghana Police Service. Posts and user responses were categorized into nine themes, including crime updates, public sensitization, and general announcements, to evaluate trends and public sentiment.

Findings indicate that the Ghana Police Service predominantly uses social media to disseminate crime-related updates (28% on Facebook; 32% on Twitter), promote public safety and sensitization (28% and 13%, respectively), and provide real-time clarifications and announcements. Twitter was mainly used for brief, timely updates, while Facebook hosted more elaborate narratives and engagement. Public feedback reflected a gradual shift from skepticism to cautious approval, although concerns regarding professionalism, trust, and operational transparency remain. Social media platforms also served as mechanisms for real-time sentiment tracking, public education, and crisis communication, particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study concludes that social media has become a strategic tool for the Ghana Police Service in enhancing transparency, facilitating public engagement, and managing public trust. It recommends professionalized social media management, decentralized communication structures, and deeper

integration of public feedback into institutional reform efforts.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.0 Background

In the context of technological advancements, the rise of new media tools such as mobile phones, computers and the internet has paved the way for the emergence of social media. This transformative shift has ushered in an era of global information sharing through platforms like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube and various blogging sites (Bonney, 2013; Castells & Cardoso, 2006). Functioning as an online application, social media has become a potent force for global networking, connecting individuals irrespective of geographical boundaries (Hanaki, Peterhans, Dodds & Watts, 2007). This digital communicative shift has redefined the landscape, allowing isolated actors and organizations to mobilize substantial populations, especially during moments of widespread unrest and mass protests (Wang & Caskey, 2016).

In times of crisis, social media has evolved into a vital communication network, providing a platform for individuals to connect, share information, and access crucial updates. This transformative role is particularly evident in various critical scenarios, encompassing natural disasters like earthquakes (Starbird & Palen, 2011), acts of terrorism (Cheong & Lee, 2010), instances of school shootings (Palen & Vieweg, 2008) and revolutionary movements (Lotan et al., 2011). This paradigm shift underscores the multifaceted influence of social media on contemporary communication dynamics, highlighting its role as a catalyst for connectivity, information dissemination and collective mobilization on a global scale.

Scholars and policymakers have increasingly turned to digital tools, particularly social media, to overcome the limitations of traditional participation methods (Lin & Benneker, 2022). This study recognizes the potential of social media platforms to assist in realizing participatory democracy,

building trust, and fostering long-term social capital between the government and citizens (Piccorelli & Stivers, 2019). Different types of social media platforms have been utilized by governments to gain public opinions, distribute information, and support citizen participation in various local contexts (López-Ornelas et al, 2017), with many local governments around the globe actively using social media, particularly, Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) for communication with citizens (Chen & Liu, 2022). Numerous academics have asserted an increasing demand for governments, particularly those in democratic settings, to enhance transparency in their operations and foster greater citizen engagement (Bullock, 2018; Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, 2015).

Additionally, scholars such as Gyampo (2017) for instance delves into the shifting dynamics of political communication in Ghana amidst the emergence of social media platforms. The research explores the strategies employed by Ghanaian political parties in utilizing social media to further their agendas, while also shedding light on the challenges they face in fully leveraging the potential of these platforms. Despite the potential benefits of social media for enhancing participation, transparency, and accountability in political discourse, the study highlights significant barriers that impede its efficacy. Gyampo contends that while social media offers considerable advantages, it cannot entirely supplant traditional media channels within the Ghanaian context. (Gyampo, 2017). According to Mensah (2017) and Gyampo (2017), the advent of social media approximately two decades ago has been associated with a surge in political participation. It is observed that citizens in many democratic countries now actively engage in the governance of their nations on a daily basis, thanks to the widespread use of social media. Particularly during election years, there is a noticeable increase in social media activity in numerous democratic nations, including Ghana.

In the context of policing and social media usage, police departments around the world have increasingly turned to social media platforms as integral tools for communication, engagement, and community outreach. This trend is not limited to specific regions but spans across continents,

reflecting a global recognition of the transformative potential of digital platforms in modern policing practices. From North America (Meijer & Thaens, 2013) to Europe (Leppert et al., 2022; Van der Giessen & Bayerl, 2022), and Asia (Chen & Liu, 2022) to Africa (Nutsugah et al., 2022), law enforcement agencies have embraced social media to disseminate information, address public concerns, and foster positive relationships with the communities they serve. In Africa, where social media penetration continues to grow rapidly, police departments have also recognized the significance of leveraging these digital channels to enhance their public presence and effectiveness. In Ghana, for instance, the Ghana Police Service has been actively utilizing social media platforms to connect with citizens, share updates on crime prevention initiatives and solicit feedback from the public. This proactive approach underscores the evolving nature of policing in the digital age and the importance of harnessing technological advancements to improve police-citizen relations and community safety (Nutsugah et al., 2022).

Enhancing police-citizen engagement undoubtedly holds paramount importance for police departments all the over world, as their efficacy and societal role hinge greatly on public support (i.e., provision of information and intelligence to enhance the fight against crime). The utilization of social media platforms by law enforcement agencies to foster or rekindle connections with the populace has garnered considerable scholarly interest. (Bullock, 2018; Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, 2015). Various studies have delved into understanding the underlying objectives behind police social media communications. Consequently, it is imperative for police-initiated messages not only to serve their primary functions of dissemination or interaction but also to purposefully leverage these platforms for effective engagement with the community. But why is it important to explore the patterns of post made by the Ghana Police Service? And why is it also important to explore the patterns of responses and reactions of citizens to posts made by the Ghana Police Service on X (formerly twitter) and Facebook?

From a functionalist point of view, policing is not just about enforcing laws; it is also about managing social order and addressing community safety concerns. Social media provides a platform for both police and citizens to engage in discussions about crime, safety, and community issues. Analyzing the patterns of police posts and citizen responses can offer valuable insights into emerging social problems, community priorities, and public attitudes towards policing strategies. This knowledge can inform more responsive and effective policing practices that align with community needs and values (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018).

1.1 Institutional Goals and Modern Technology

The emergence of digital tools like social media is theoretically consistent with frameworks that describe how technology mediates public discourse, legitimacy, and power. Accessible communication places are crucial for citizens to discuss public concerns and hold institutions responsible, according to Habermas' (1989) Public Sphere Theory. Social media allows for decentralized communication and citizen monitoring, making it a contemporary extension of this public realm. Additionally, according to Institutionalism and Security Theory, state security institutions adjust to social and technological developments through new forms of engagement and legitimacy in addition to policy changes (Loader & Walker, 2007). A move toward more open, involved, and responsive police methods is reflected in law enforcement organizations' use of social media.

In this situation, technology appears to help law enforcement agencies accomplish goals pertaining to public confidence, visibility, and citizen collaboration. Therefore, the ability of social media sites like Facebook and Twitter to communicate is essential for encouraging proactive policing, handling information in emergency situations, and developing community-focused security plans.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that policing relies heavily on public trust and cooperation to effectively maintain law and order. The way police present themselves and communicate with the

public on social media platforms can significantly influence public perceptions. By studying the patterns of police posts and citizen responses, we can assess how these interactions shape trust, legitimacy, and perceptions of police in Ghana. This understanding is crucial for fostering positive police- citizen relationships and reducing social tensions and conflicts.

It is against this background that the study aims to explore the patterns of content shared by the Ghana Police Service on social media, with a specific focus on X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook. Also, the study seeks to explore the patterns of citizen responses through an examination of the sentiments expressed through comments.

1.2 Problem Statement

Enhancing police-citizen engagement undoubtedly holds paramount importance for police departments all the over world, as their efficacy and societal role hinge greatly on public support (i.e., provision of information and intelligence to enhance the fight against crime). The utilization of social media platforms by law enforcement agencies to foster or rekindle connections with the populace has garnered considerable scholarly interest. (Bullock, 2018; Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, 2015). Various studies have delved into understanding the underlying objectives behind police social media communications.

While previous studies on social media have extensively examined the adoption of social media by law enforcement agencies and the associated challenges (Warren et al., 2014; Van der Giessen & Bayerl, 2022; Leppert, Saliterer, & Korac, 2022; Dekker, van den Brink & Meijer, 2020; Ralph, Jones, Rowe & Millie, 2022; Ralph & Robinson, 2023), there remains a notable gap in understanding the patterns of social media content shared by Police Institutions, on X (formerly known as Twitter), as well as the responses elicited from the public through comments. (Nutsugah et al., 2022).

For instance, a study conducted by Leppert et al. (2022) in Germany examined the impact of

emotions on the engagement between eleven (11) police departments in Germany and citizens on X (formerly Twitter), utilizing quantitative methods. Their findings revealed a positive correlation between emotions and the level of engagement between police and citizens on the platform. However, the study did not delve into the specific patterns of posts made by these police departments or the corresponding patterns of responses by citizens (Leppert et al., 2022). In another study by Dekker et al. (2020), conducted in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, researchers investigated the adoption of social media usage by police departments in these countries, along with the barriers they encountered and the strategies they employed. The findings suggested that police departments primarily faced cultural and structural barriers. While offering insights into understanding engagement on social media between the police and citizens, this study did not analyze the patterns of content created by the police (Dekker et al., 2020).

Additionally, Ralph et al. (2022) conducted a study on how the police in England engaged with citizens during the Covid-19 pandemic, using semi-structured interviews with twenty-two (22) police officers. Their findings indicated a decrease in the posting of Covid-19-related content by police in England. Despite contributing to understanding police engagements on social media, this study did not address the specific patterns of content produced by the police and responses from citizens. Another important point to note is that the prevailing body of literature related to police and social media has primarily focused on developed democracies such as England (Rowe & Millie, 2022), The Netherlands (Dekker et al., 2020), Germany (Leppert et al., 2022), Finland (Van der Giessen & Bayerl, 2022) and the United States (Meijer & Thaens, 2013), characterized by unique and notably advanced digital cultures (Nutsugah et al., 2022).

1.3 Ghana's National Security Strategy and Framework

Ghana has a unified institutional framework that places a high priority on state stability, human security, and the rule of law serves as the foundation for national security and general law

enforcement matters. The National Security Strategy, which was formally unveiled in June 2021 and offers an integrated, multi-sectoral response to new security threats, is the cornerstone of this framework. Ghana's transition away from a militaristic approach to security and toward a more comprehensive one that takes into account social, economic, environmental, and technical factors is reflected in the National Security Strategy (Ministry of National Security, 2021).

As required by Article 83 of the 1992 Constitution, the National Security Council is in charge of directing Ghana's security government. The President, some selected ministers, and the leaders of security and intelligence organizations make up the National Security Council, which is responsible for directing policy, coordinating efforts, and evaluating national threats. (Security and Intelligence Agencies Act, 2020, Act 1030).

As the primary law enforcement agency, the Ghana Police Service is essential to upholding law and order. The Ministry of the Interior oversees the Police Service, which is governed by the Police Service Act of 1970 (Act 350). The Ghana Police Service has implemented modernization initiatives in recent years with the goal of enhancing community involvement, public trust, and operational efficiency. One such initiative is the use of social media in its operations, which was started to improve general policing and safer communities (Yusif, 2018).

1.4 Social Media Usage in Ghana

Due to rising smartphone adoption and expanding internet connectivity, social media use has rapidly expanded in West Africa and throughout Africa. For instance, Facebook is the most widely used social media site in Ghana, where people use it every day for things like reading posts, sharing pictures, and watching videos. Smartphones, particularly those with Android operating systems, are the main way that people access Facebook (Frimpong & Vaccari, 2015). Students can improve their learning and academic performance by using social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube. Information, creativity, and entertainment on these platforms help to

generate knowledge (Moot, 2017; Dzogbenuku et al., 2019).

In Ghana, social media and messaging applications are being used by both patients and healthcare providers for communication. A considerable percentage of students and medical professionals use the internet to obtain health information and consultations (Wynn et al., 2016). Political mobilization is also greatly aided by social media, which frequently outreaches traditional media in West African nations like Ghana and Ivory Coast by enabling citizens to engage in public discourse, organize around political issues, and expose corruption (Kalyango & Adu-Kumi, 2013). Furthermore, social media study has shed light on the worries of particular populations, including Ghanaian pregnant mothers, and shown how important these platforms are for community support and information seeking. Though issues like disinformation and digital divides still exist, social media is generally changing civic engagement, education, communication, and healthcare in West Africa and the larger African continent (Wynn et al., 2016; Kalyango & Adu-Kumi, 2013; Frimpong & Vaccari, 2015; Moot, 2017; Dzogbenuku et al., 2019).

These studies collectively underscore the importance of comprehensively understanding the dynamics of social media engagement by law enforcement agencies, particularly in the context of the Ghana Police Service, to effectively understand the evolving challenges and opportunities presented by digital communication platforms in modern policing practices. Firstly, there is a need to comprehensively examine types and thematic categories of content shared by the Ghana Police Service across their various social media handles, including platforms like Twitter and Facebook. Furthermore, examining the feedback received from followers in response to the Ghana Police Service's online content is essential for gauging public perception and interaction dynamics. Finally, understanding the role played by the Ghana Police Service's social media handles in fulfilling their policing duties is critical for assessing the broader implications of digital communication strategies on law enforcement practices and community relations.

Addressing these research objectives will contribute significantly to bridging existing gaps in knowledge regarding the impact of social media engagement by the Ghana Police Service. This gap forms the basis for the current study, which aims to provide a detailed analysis of police-citizen interactions on social media.

1.5 Research Objectives

The main objective of the study is to explore the social media engagement between the Ghana Police Service and Ghanaian social media users.

1.6 Specific Objectives

The following are the specific objectives of the study:

1. To examine the types and thematic categories of content shared by the Ghana Police Service on their social media handles.
2. To compare and assess the content shared across the different social media platforms (Facebook and X) used by the Ghana Police Service.
3. To examine the nature of public feedback and sentiments expressed in response to posts shared by the Ghana Police Service.
4. To assess the role of the Ghana Police Service's social media presence in supporting its operational and community policing functions.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study holds paramount significance as it delves into how a key government agency in Ghana, namely the Ghana Police Service engage with the public on social media platforms such as Twitter (formerly X). By comprehensively examining the content disseminated by the Ghana Police Service and analyzing the ensuing citizen responses, the research contributes to the enhancement of police-citizen communication strategies. This is vital in ensuring that public engagement efforts are effective, relevant and responsive to the needs and preferences of the citizens.

Additionally, the study addresses a critical aspect of contemporary governance by exploring the

intricate relationship between social media posts and the level of trust expressed by the public. Understanding how comments and sentiment analysis correlate with public trust is instrumental in fostering positive and enduring relationships between government institutions and citizens. In addition to its practical implications for government agencies, the research findings serve as a valuable resource for decision-makers. The insights garnered from citizen responses, preferences and sentiments can inform strategic decision-making processes related to communication strategies, policy development and the design of public engagement initiatives.

From an academic standpoint, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on social media usage by government agencies, particularly within the Ghanaian context. By focusing specifically on Ghana, it addresses a notable gap in existing literature, offering a nuanced understanding of the unique dynamics at play in Ghana. It serves as a foundational piece for further research and offers practical insights that can contribute to the continuous improvement of Police-Citizen engagement.

1.8 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study delineates the boundaries and parameters within which the research will be conducted, specifying the methods and locations involved. The study's focus was narrowed to analyzing the posts made by the Ghana Police Service on social media platforms, specifically X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook, alongside the public's responses and feedbacks on these same platforms. It centered on examining the content disseminated by the Ghana Police Service on social media, with a particular emphasis on X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook, as well as scrutinizing the reactions and interactions of citizens. The researcher relied on existing secondary data, comprising posts, comments, and reactions, available on X and Facebook for analysis.

1.9 Organization of the Study

The study is structured across six (6) main chapters. Chapter One served as the introduction, encompassing the study's background, problem statement, research objectives, research questions and significance. Chapter Two delved into the literature review, exploring existing scholarship relevant to the study's focus. Following this, Chapter Three detailed the methodological approach employed, covering research design, data collection procedures, sampling methods, ethical considerations and data analysis. Moving forward, Chapters Four and Five present and interpret the study's findings, offering insights derived from the data analysis process. Finally, Chapter Six encapsulates the study's entirety, providing a summary of key findings and conclusions drawn from the research and recommendations tailored for policy and future research endeavors.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter embarks on an exploration of the existing literature pertaining to new and digital media platforms, the interactions between law enforcement agencies and citizens, and the dynamics of citizen engagement. The literature review sort to elucidate the role of new and digital media as pivotal platforms for fostering citizen engagement, showcasing how these mediums have evolved into essential channels for communication in the contemporary landscape. Existing studies underscore the importance of these platforms in facilitating a dialogue between law enforcement agencies and the public.

Key questions guide this literature review, addressing critical aspects of the Ghana Police Service's social media presence. Firstly, an exploration of the content of information shared by the Ghana Police Service on their social media handles is very imperative. Secondly, determining the differences in the content shared across the various social media handles used the Ghana Police Service. Moreover, examining the feedback received from followers based on the information shared by the Ghana Police Service is crucial for gauging public perception, identifying areas for improvement, and fostering trust and accountability in law enforcement. Finally, establishing the role of Ghana Police Service's social media handle in carrying out their policing duties is essential for recognizing the potential of digital platforms in enhancing community engagement, disseminating critical information, and promoting public safety initiatives.

Concluding the chapter, the literature review delves into scholarly insights on potential avenues for improving engagement between the police and citizens on social media platforms. The following sections delve into the definitions of social media, offering a comprehensive understanding of these terms in the contemporary context. Moreover, the review provides insights

into the evolving dynamics of citizen engagement, thereby laying the groundwork for a nuanced analysis of the Ghana Police Service's digital interactions on social media.

2.1 Social Media Definition

In the governmental context, Mergel (2016) defines social media applications as online platforms and services created by third-party providers and adopted by government organizations to enhance interaction and communication with citizens. These applications encompass various tools such as social networking sites, blogs, wikis, social tagging, social bookmarking, and other collaborative tools. Social media, as defined by Banjo (2013), refers to web-based tools and services enabling users to create, share, rate, and search for content and information without requiring access to a specific portal or destination. It operates through technologies like the internet and the global system for mobile telephone, facilitating interaction.

Different from traditional media like newspapers and television, social media is characterized by its affordability, accessibility, and capacity for individuals and groups to disseminate information. Mutula (2013) notes the significant influence of social media on the information landscape, with widespread adoption across demographics and sectors including government, business, civil society, and the general public, both in developed and developing nations. Similarly, Nwakanma (2010) emphasizes the pervasive presence and utility of social media and networks in the online sphere, particularly in various societal domains.

2.2 Social media, information sharing and law enforcement

The integration of social media into law enforcement practices has become a prominent focus in contemporary literature, highlighting the significant impact of digital technologies on policing strategies and public engagement (Leppert et al., 2022). Governmental organizations have invested

substantial resources in enhancing their presence on social media platforms, recognizing their importance in facilitating direct communication with citizens within the context of law enforcement (Procter et al., 2013). Notably, police departments worldwide have rapidly adopted X (formerly Twitter), utilizing it as a micro-blogging platform to effectively engage with the public (Kudla & Parnaby, 2018; Walsh, 2020). This widespread adoption of social media platforms by law enforcement agencies signifies a fundamental shift in policing methodologies, with social media serving as a dynamic platform for engaging the public, fostering public trust, and facilitating proactive crime prevention efforts (Ralph et al., 2022).

Bullock's (2018) study delved into the use of English police social media accounts, specifically emphasizing organizational communication rather than individual officers' personal accounts. Grimmelikhuijsen and Meijer's (2015) study also explored the potential of social media, particularly X (formerly Twitter), in contributing to police legitimacy in the Netherlands. Employing a quantitative approach with a substantial sample size of 4,492 respondents, the study identified a positive relationship between Twitter use and police legitimacy. However, it did not delve into the patterns of content police communication on social media, leaving an avenue for my study to contribute insights into specific information with respect to police engagement with the public.

Van der Giessen, & Bayerl (2022) also explored the perception of police officers in six (6) European countries about social media engagement of citizens in relation to community policing. Their findings indicated that police officers were optimistic about the potential of social media engagement to enhance community policing and therefore were willing to adopt its usage. It is important to highlight that the focus of Van der Giessen, & Bayerl 's research was on police

officers and not on the forms of information posted by the police on social media or feedback from the public on social media posts – a phenomenon I sort to study.

Additionally, Previous research has underscored various ways in which social media platforms have been beneficial for law enforcement agencies, with the police utilizing these platforms through either 'push' or 'pull' strategies (Meijer and Thaens, 2013). A 'push strategy' involves one-way communication, where police accounts disseminate information to users, such as sharing guidance and advice to promote public safety or deter criminal activity. For instance, Meijer and Thaens (2013) found in their study of three North American police departments that Twitter was utilized by the Boston police to manage crowds during large-scale events, urging participants to behave responsibly.

Similarly, a study by Heverin and Zach (2010) sheds light on the predominant use of Twitter by police departments in large U.S. cities, defined as those with populations exceeding 300,000. According to their findings, the primary function of police Twitter accounts is to distribute information concerning crimes or incidents, which comprises 45.3% of all tweets. Additionally, police departments utilize Twitter to share departmental updates, event notifications, suspect details and traffic advisories.

Conversely, a 'pull strategy' entails the police seeking information from citizens, aligning with the notion in policing literature that emphasizes the valuable contribution citizens can make to policing efforts through their knowledge of local incidents and communities (Meijer and Thaens, 2013). Police departments have employed this approach to solicit assistance from the public in apprehending suspects or locating missing persons (Fallik et al., 2020; Ferguson and Soave, 2021). While these studies offer general insights into government engagement on social media, there remains a need for context-specific understanding within the Ghanaian context. Therefore, the

proposed study seeks to provide a focused examination of the interactions between the Ghana Police Service and the public on social media, taking into account local dynamics that may influence these engagements. Addressing this gap will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the broader landscape of critical state institutions like the Ghana Police Service and their interactions with citizens on social media platforms.

Another study conducted by Williams et al. (2018) examining the information shared by five police departments in the United States, the findings reveal distinct trends in their social media usage. On Twitter, the most prevalent category of police tweets is Announcements, constituting 23.5% of the total content. Following closely are tweets related to Traffic (18.1%) and Interaction (16.2%). Conversely, Promotion and Events are among the least common categories, collectively accounting for about 2.7% of all tweets.

The existing literature demonstrates that while social media has become a central tool for police communication worldwide, most empirical studies prioritize institutions in the Global North and emphasize content broadcasting over mutual interaction. These studies collectively highlight a gap in understanding the content strategies used by police and how citizens respond, especially in contexts like Ghana. This study contributes to filling that gap by examining the forms of information shared, variations across platforms, and citizen feedback trends in the case of the Ghana Police Service. The findings are expected to offer a context-specific understanding of how digital public spheres shape contemporary law enforcement and trust-building in a West African setting.

2.3 The Ghana Police Service and Social Media

According to data from the Global Digital Report of 2020, Ghana boasts approximately six (6) million active users on social media platforms. This trend mirrors global patterns, where social media has emerged as a pivotal tool for political mobilization. In Ghana, political parties have

increasingly utilized these platforms in conjunction with traditional media channels such as radio, television, and newspapers. The need for governmental transparency in Ghana has prompted various state agencies to establish a digital presence, including websites and social media accounts. The Ghana Police Service followed suit, officially launching its website and social media profiles on platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook in February 2018 (Yusif, 2018).

Asomah (2024), in the study titled “Is social media a helpful communicative tool in combatting corruption in developing countries? Evidence from Ghana” employed in-depth semi-structured interviews alongside secondary data analysis. The research was guided by Habermas’s public sphere theory and the concept of citizen journalism. Focusing on the role of social media in anti-corruption efforts in Ghana, the study found that social media platforms serve as powerful tools for exposing corruption, mobilizing public support, and demanding accountability from authorities. However, the study also highlighted a significant limitation: the widespread circulation of fake news and misinformation, which undermines the credibility and overall effectiveness of these digital platforms in the fight against corruption.

Mensah (2024), in the study titled “Leveraging Social Media as a Marketing Tool to Combat Crime in African Destination Marketing: Ghana in Perspective”, adopted a case study approach that utilized semi-structured interviews. The data were transcribed and analyzed using content analysis. The study focused on examining how social media is used to address crime perceptions and promote safety within the tourism sector in Ghana. The findings revealed that social media plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions of crime and safety.

Nutsugah, Kuupuolo, and Peculiar (2024), in their study titled “A Systematic Review of Social Media Research in Ghana: Gaps and Future Research Avenues”, conducted a systematic review of 29 peer-reviewed articles published between 2013 and 2023. The study aimed to provide an overview of dominant research themes and methodological trends in the Ghanaian social media

landscape. The findings indicated that most of the reviewed studies predominantly employed quantitative methods and centered on political communication.

Inasmuch as the above studies contribute valuable insights into the intersections of social media, policing, corruption, and public safety in Ghana, significant gaps remain in the literature that your thesis seeks to address. None of the reviewed studies deeply analyze the interactive patterns between police institutions and citizens on social media, leaving a gap in empirical investigations that systematically assess the content shared by the police, the nature of citizen feedback, or how different platforms—such as Facebook and X (formerly Twitter)—shape engagement. This study fills this gap by offering a detailed, data-driven account of the Ghana Police Service’s social media usage and public responses over a five-year period (2018–2023). Furthermore, research on police-citizen communication remains underexplored in Ghana, as noted by Nutsugah et al. (2024). This study stands out by addressing this temporal gap, presenting a comprehensive, context-specific analysis of digital policing trends and their implications for trust, transparency, and public engagement.

2.4 Background of X (formerly twitter)

X (formerly Twitter), a microblogging platform introduced in March 2006, has emerged as a significant player in the realm of social media. The fundamental premise of X revolves around sharing short messages, known as posts (formerly tweets), containing up to 280 characters (the character limit was initially 140 but was doubled in 2017). These posts can encompass a wide range of content, including text, images, videos, links, and hashtags, and are intended for rapid dissemination to a broad audience. One of the defining features of X is its brevity, which encourages concise and succinct communication. The structure of X facilitates interactions between users through a system of followers and following. Users can follow other accounts to receive updates from them, and in turn, can be followed by others.

This asymmetrical relationship means that users can curate their feed by selecting accounts to follow based on their interests, without necessarily reciprocating the follow. Additionally, users can engage with posts through actions such as liking, reposting (retweeting), and replying, enabling them to express approval, share content with their own followers or engage in conversations. A distinctive aspect of X's functionality is the use of hashtags (#), which serve as metadata tags to categorize and organize tweets around specific topics or themes. Hashtags allow users to discover relevant content and participate in ongoing conversations by contributing to broader discussions. Moreover, X's real-time nature enables users to stay updated on current events, trends, and conversations as they unfold, fostering a dynamic and interactive online environment. Overall, X's unique combination of brevity, asymmetrical relationships, hashtag categorization and real-time engagement make it a versatile platform for communication, information sharing, and community interaction.

2.5 Background of X account of the Ghana Police Service

The X account of the Ghana Police Service, with the handle name "GhPoliceService," stands out as a verified and highly active platform for engaging with the public. Established in October 2016, this official account boasts a substantial following, with an impressive followership of six hundred and ninety-two thousand, seven hundred (692.7K followers) as of 18th March, 2024. The account was officially launched on February 1, 2018, marking a pivotal step in the Ghana Police Service's digital communication efforts. Notably, the account maintains a functional online presence, regularly posting updates, announcements and safety advisories to keep citizens informed and engaged.

With a website embedded as "police.gov.gh", the account provides a gateway for users to access additional information and resources related to law enforcement in Ghana. Moreover, the account's verification status adds credibility and authenticity to its communication efforts, enhancing trust

and reliability among its followers.

2.6 Background of followers of the Ghana Police Service on X (formerly Twitter)

Followers of the Ghana Police Service on Twitter can be characterized as individuals with a keen interest in law enforcement, public safety, and community affairs. While specific demographic details such as age, sex, or location are not readily available on Twitter, these followers are likely residents of Ghana or have connections to the country, including citizens or individuals with familial ties to Ghana. Their decision to follow the Ghana Police Service suggests a commitment to staying informed about law enforcement activities, crime prevention efforts and updates on public safety issues within the country.

2.7 Background of Facebook Account of the Ghana Police Service

On Facebook, the Ghana Police Service presents a robust profile with a substantial following of over 505,000 followers as of the time of this study. Just like the X account, the Facebook account was officially launched on 1st February, 2018. Their page serves as a dynamic platform for sharing updates on law enforcement activities, community engagement efforts, and public safety advisories. Visitors to the page can easily navigate to the police website, police.gov.gh, for additional resources and information. Contact information is readily available, enabling seamless communication and interaction with the community.

2.8 Background of followers of the Ghana Police Service on Facebook

As pointed out earlier, the Ghana Police Service boast of a substantial following of 505,000 users on Facebook (as of the time of the study) who engage with the page's content. Among these followers, an average of 500 individuals actively comments on posts made by the police, indicating a notable level of interaction and engagement with the content shared. These followers represent a diverse cross-section of the Ghanaian population, including concerned citizens, residents of various communities, advocacy groups, business owners, and other stakeholders with an interest

in law enforcement and community safety. Their active participation in discussions and interactions on the page reflects their commitment to staying informed about police activities, crime updates, and initiatives aimed at promoting public safety and enhancing police-community relations.

2.9 The Police, Social Media and Citizen Engagement.

A key component of policing for a long time has been citizen participation, particularly in community-oriented models that prioritize cooperation between the public and law enforcement in order to address safety concerns (Liederbach et al., 2008). The nature of this interaction has changed significantly with the rise of digital communication platforms, especially social media. Police can now engage with a wide audience instantly and interactively using platforms like X (previously Twitter), which promotes transparency and builds public trust (O'Connor & Zaidi, 2021). While Leppert, Saliterer, and Korac (2022) further emphasize the particular mechanisms through which citizens interact with law enforcement online—such as commenting, liking, or retweeting posts—that constitute quantifiable indicators of public responsiveness and interaction, scholars like Wood (2020) contend that digital engagement has emerged as a primary goal of police social media use.

Although there is widespread consensus about the importance of citizen engagement, the focus of different studies varies. For example, Leppert et al. (2022) concentrate more on the trends and consequences of digital contact, whereas Wood (2020) concentrates on how social media facilitates communication and the co-production of safety. The use of social media by police for public outreach and legitimacy-building is emphasized by O'Connor and Zaidi (2021), who also highlight the institutional reasons for its adoption. The majority of these studies, however, are based in Western contexts and pay little attention to how this kind of involvement takes place in African policing systems, particularly Ghanaian ones.

Additionally, there are not many studies that offer actual evaluations of the content police share and how the public responds to it on various platforms. By providing a contextualized and data-driven analysis of the Ghana Police Service's social media interactions from 2018 to 2023, the current study fills a significant gap in this regard. It looks at how citizen engagement appears in digital spaces as far as Ghana is concern.

2.10 Differences in the content shared by Police Departments across various social media platforms

A review of recent literature reveals significant differences in how police departments employ various social media platforms to communicate with the public. Studies indicate that smaller or rural departments tend to post more community-oriented or humorous content, such as memes, which enhance public perception and interaction, while larger departments emphasize crime-related posts, primarily on Facebook (Jacob, 2021; Livingstone, 2021; Edwards et al., 2021).

Twitter, by contrast, is leveraged for real-time communication, particularly during crises or unfolding events. Departments use it for immediate alerts, crime tips, and emotional engagement, with more interactive content performing better in terms of citizen responses (Boateng & Chenane, 2020; Leppert et al., 2022). Departments also differ thematically—some focus heavily on projecting a “crime fighter” image, while others adopt a “community partner” tone, often depending on platform choice, community context, and institutional priorities (Hu et al., 2018; Mayes, 2020).

Despite these differences, most police departments still rely on one-way communication strategies, prioritizing content dissemination over two-way engagement (Brainard & Edlins, 2015). The use of social media appears to be shaped by contextual factors such as department size, geographic location, and communication goals. Even though these patterns are well-documented in Western contexts, they are underexplored in Ghana. This study fills this gap by providing a multi-year content analysis of the Ghana Police Service’s posts and public responses on Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) from 2018 to 2023 and offers insights into digital policing and citizen interaction in the local context.

2.11 Public feedback to Social Media Posts from Law Enforcement Agencies

The literature reveals that public feedback on law enforcement agencies' social media posts tends to be limited in depth, variable across platforms, and shaped by content tone and situational context. Although social media is often promoted as a tool for enhancing police transparency and citizen participation, empirical studies show that actual dialogic interaction remains minimal. For instance, a study by Wu and Huang (2020) using a mixed-method approach, found that police departments in the United States responded to only 0.1% of comments received on Facebook, with responses largely reserved for neutral or supportive inquiries. This suggests that while the public engages—offering praise, critique, or seeking assistance—the institutional will to reciprocate or sustain dialogue is often lacking.

Other studies that employed sentiment analysis, further shows that public comments are generally neutral or mildly negative, particularly in response to controversial incidents such as officer-involved shootings (Hand & Ching, 2020). Moreover, the emotional tone of law enforcement posts significantly affects their reach: content that elicits sadness or humor is more widely shared, whereas anger-inducing content is less likely to spread (Brunell et al., 2019). This highlights the strategic importance of emotional framing in fostering public interaction.

Platform dynamics also influence the nature of feedback. Facebook generally attracts more diverse and substantive responses from citizens, while Twitter tends to function as a one-way broadcast tool with limited interactive features (Huang et al., 2017). Jeanis et al. (2019) also observed that posts made during crisis events or those requesting public assistance typically generate higher levels of engagement, implying that timing and context significantly shape public responsiveness. A recurring theme in the literature is that, although social media provides a platform for public discourse, law enforcement organizations hardly ever respond with significant engagement—Wu and Huang (2020) estimate that this response rate is only 0.1%. Similar sentiment patterns can be

seen in comments, which typically range from neutral to mildly negative, especially following controversial events (Hand & Ching, 2020). However, there are clear distinctions in how the platforms are used and how responsive the public is: Facebook encourages more varied and content-rich discourse, whereas Twitter is mostly used for broadcasting (Huang et al., 2017).

By focusing on a non-Western context and analyzing the nature of police–citizen engagement on social media, this study adds to the body of research that highlights the limited dialogic engagement between police and the public. Although sentiment and emotional tone have been the subject of previous research, this study fills a crucial knowledge gap regarding digital public involvement in law enforcement as far as the Ghana Police Service is concerned.

2.12 The Role of Social Media in Policing

In order to investigate how police departments use social media to shape public opinion, Cheng (2021) qualitatively analyzed 139 news stories, 778 Twitter replies about a contentious police shooting, and 3,167 tweets by the New York Police Department. According to the findings, police frequently avoid using traditional media outlets by intentionally using sites like X (formerly Twitter) to legitimize their activities and construct narratives, particularly after controversial instances.

In another study, Boateng and Chenane (2020) conducted a mixed-methods study combining qualitative and quantitative analysis of Twitter data and interviews from the Oxford Police Department in the United Kingdom. Their findings identified six primary categories of content shared on Twitter, emphasizing the department's focus on communication, public relations, and information dissemination of how a small-town police department strategically uses Twitter to engage with the public and promote transparency.

Graaf and Meijer (2019) used a case study methodology to investigate value conflicts associated with social media use by combining an actual investigation within the Dutch police force with a

survey of the literature. According to their findings, social media creates conflicts that authorities frequently resolve with conservative rather than flexible tactics. These conflicts are especially between efficiency and participation, as well as between transparency and lawfulness.

Ralph (2021) conducted a study in Scotland involving 40 semi-structured interviews with police personnel, and 22 citizen focus groups to examine how police legitimacy is shaped on social media. The study found that legitimacy is not static but dynamic—constructed through public communication, citizen evaluations based on both digital and real-world interactions, and police responses to online criticism. The existing literature do not adequately address the specific role of social media in policing within the Ghanaian context, particularly with respect to institutions like the Ghana Police Service; hence this study.

2.13 Theoretical framework

The Public Sphere Theory and Institutionalism and Security Theory serve as the two (2) primary theoretical frameworks that inform this study. The need for open communication venues in society is emphasized by Jürgen Habermas' (1989) Public Sphere Theory. This hypothesis aids in the explanation of how social media sites such as Facebook and X (previously Twitter) serve as contemporary public forums where people converse, criticize establishments and call for transparency. Despite its fragmentation and algorithmic nature, the digital public sphere facilitates wider engagement in security debate and shapes public opinions of organizations such as the Ghana Police Service.

This study also employs the Institutionalism and Security Theory. This theory examines how security institutions change and adapt to the demands of society and technology. According to the theory, institutional incentives, external expectations, and norms constantly change policing systems. The Ghana Police Service's adoption of social media is an institutional response to calls for more responsiveness, transparency and community involvement. Digital platforms are used for public

engagement, crisis management, and information dissemination, illustrating how security organizations employ technology to uphold social order and increase credibility. When combined, these theories offer a framework for comprehending the reasons behind, trends in, and ramifications of the Ghana Police Service's public relations efforts on social media (Loader and Walker, 2007).

2.14 Public Sphere Theory in Previous Research

The public sphere theory has been revived and broadened by modern academia to tackle the intricacies of social inequality, globalization, and digital communication. Specifically, digitalization has led to a rethinking of the public sphere as a dynamic, networked constellation of players, platforms, and discourses rather than as a single, centralized area. According to scholars like Friedland et al. (2006) and Friemel and Neuberger (2023), the public sphere in digital societies should be seen as a networked structure where users, algorithms, and platforms interact to shape communicative acts. This method makes it easier to do empirical study on the formation, development and dissemination of public discourse online. It enables researchers to monitor the flow of content and the impact of important players in digital ecosystems.

Other cross-national empirical studies have explored the public sphere's perceived democratic functions, such as enabling criticism of authorities, providing alternative perspectives, and disseminating relevant information (Goenaga, 2021). These studies, which frequently use extensive surveys to gauge citizens' participation in public discourse, highlight differences in how various social groups and nations view the public realm. In recent work, the aspect of access and inequality has also taken center stage. For example, Moe (2023) presents the idea of distribution in the context of public sphere theory, emphasizing how social injustices influence who is heard and who takes part in public discussions. Moe urges the use of ethnographic methods to comprehend how various social contexts—especially those excluded from prevailing media narratives—engage with public concerns.

All the above studies indicate that public sphere theory is still an essential analytical framework for

comprehending contemporary public engagement, especially in light of the social media and society's changing landscape.

2.15 Application of Public Sphere Theory and Institutionalism and Security Theory to this Study

This study applied the Public Sphere Theory as well as the Institutionalism and Security Theory to explore the Ghana Police Service's social media usage. Specifically, it examined the types of information shared by the Ghana Police Service on Twitter and Facebook, differences in content emphasis across platforms, citizen engagement and feedback in response to police content and the role of social media in shaping public discourse on policing duties. By doing so, this study aims to identify patterns in the Ghana Police Service's social media content and citizen engagement, understand how social media influences public perception of policing, and inform policing strategies and effective social media usage.

The Public Sphere theory explains how user comments mirror broader discussions about police legitimacy, professionalism, and transparency, which directly informs the examination of public input (Objective 3) in this study. It also connects to Objective 2, which contrasts platforms, because X appears to encourage quicker, more direct responses, whereas Facebook permits more discursive participation (longer postings and arguments). Therefore, the idea aids in explaining how citizens can influence and negotiate their impressions of law enforcement using digital media.

The Institutionalism and Security Theory on the other hand is helpful for comprehending how social media has been included into the Ghana Police Service's communication strategy. An institutional logic of upholding order and bolstering authority is shown, for instance, in the kinds of posts shared in relation to Objective 1 (crime alerts, crime prevention tips, and public safety announcements). Similarly, this notion is supported by Objective 4, which focuses on the use of social media in policing. This is because the Ghana Police Service uses digital platforms to handle crises, project institutional legitimacy, and distribute information.

The two (2) theories provide a valuable framework for analyzing the Ghana Police Service's social media content and its influence on public feedback. By applying these theories, this study sheds light on how the Ghana Police Service utilizes social media to shape public opinion and inform policing strategies, ultimately contributing to a better understanding of the complex relationships between law enforcement agencies, social media, and public feedback

2.16 Conclusion

In conclusion, the literature reviewed so far covers important topics that are in line with the objectives of this research, such as the kinds of content police post on social media, how these posts are framed thematically, how these different platforms differ, how the public responds to these posts, and the wider ramifications for legitimacy and community involvement. The use of Facebook and X by police agencies for communication, public image management, and critical incident response has been examined in previous research, particularly in Western cultures. However, in the context of developing nations, relatively few studies have looked at how a single police organization uses several social media platforms.

Additionally, while some studies examine police-shared content, very few look at public interaction, differences in content shared, feedback over time, particularly when using secondary data. This study closes this gap by investigating police-citizen interactions using secondary data from the Ghana Police Service's official social media accounts, specifically Facebook and X.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of the research methodology. The chapter features explanations of what research approach and methods were used and what prompted their choice of usage. The research population has also been indicated as well as the procedure undertaken during the research. The data analysis used is also described in this chapter.

3.1 Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative approach to examine tweets and posts from the Ghana Police Service's social media accounts. This approach enables the identification of patterns, themes and meanings within the data, providing valuable insights into the Ghana Police Service's online communication strategies. (Krippendorff, 2004).

3.2 Data Collection

Data collection will be conducted using a data scrapping tool (Instant Data Scraper), which provides access to historical tweets and allows for systematic data extraction. The Instant Data Scraper will be used to collect tweets and posts from the Ghana Police Service's official social media accounts over the specified time period.

3.3 Research Design

This study employed an exploratory research design, a qualitative methodology aimed at gaining new insights and increasing knowledge about the Ghana Police Service's social media communication strategies and citizen engagement. Exploratory research design is particularly suited for studies where there is limited existing research, uncertainty, or ambiguity surrounding the research topic (Burns & Bush, 2006). The primary objective of this exploratory research design is to identify patterns, themes, and relationships within the data, providing a foundation for further

investigation. Specifically, this study examines two key aspects: the Ghana Police Service's social media communication strategies, including their posts, updates, and engagement tactics, and citizen feedback and reactions to the Ghana Police Service's social media content, including comments from the followers.

By examining both the police service's communication strategies and citizen feedback, this study aims to understand the dynamics of policing and social media in Ghana. This provides a comprehensive understanding of how the Ghana Police Service utilizes social media to engage with citizens and how citizens respond to these efforts. To achieve the study's objectives, content analysis was employed as the data analysis technique. Content analysis is a systematic and objective method for analyzing text-based data, enabling the identification of patterns, themes, and meanings within social media posts and citizen feedback (Krippendorff, 2004). This enabled a nuanced understanding of the research phenomenon, shedding light on the complexities of policing and social media.

3.4 Target Population

The target population for this study includes all publicly available posts made by the Ghana Police Service on X and Facebook. A total of 2,076 posts were retrieved from both Facebook (1,135) and X (941), comprising a diverse range of content types, including a combination of text-based posts, pdf formats, videos, images, and infographics. On Facebook, approximately 50% (n=568) of the posts combine text-based content with videos, representing the service's events and activities. Around 25% (n=284) of the posts pair text-based content with photo images, providing visual context to the service's updates and information. About 15% (n=170) of the posts combine text-based content with PDF documents, sharing official press releases and clarifications. The remaining 10% (n=113) of the posts feature text-based content alongside infographics, presenting information in a visually engaging and easily digestible format.

On X, Ghana Police Service's posts (N=941) shows a diverse range of content types, with a significant proportion featuring combinations of text-based and other formats. Approximately 50% (n=471) of the posts combine text-based content with photos. Approximately 40% (n=376) of the posts pair text-based content with PDF documents. The remaining 10% (n=94) of the posts feature text-based content alongside infographics, presenting information in a visually engaging and easily digestible format. These posts constitute the dataset for this study. A web scraping tool, specifically, Instant Data Scraper (a programme extension in Google), was used in the data extraction.

3.5 Sampling Approach and Procedure

This study employed a qualitative and exploratory approach, utilizing a purposive sampling method to intentionally select highly relevant data sources. A comprehensive review of all posts made by the Ghana Police Service from 2018 to 2023 was conducted, and through rigorous data analysis, nine distinct themes emerged. These themes were identified through a systematic content analysis and coding process, which revealed recurring patterns and topics in the police service's social media communication. The themes provide valuable insights into the Ghana Police Service's information-sharing practices and citizen engagement on social media.

This method is particularly suitable for this study as it allows for the intentional selection of data sources that are highly relevant to the research objectives. Patton (2002) suggests that there are no fixed guidelines for determining sample size in qualitative research; instead, it should align with the study's objectives. The goal is to obtain rich, detailed data that can provide deep insights into the Ghana Police Service's social media interactions and the public's responses.

The primary population for this study includes social media posts made by the Ghana Police Service on Facebook and X, along with the comments and reactions from users who engage with these posts. The study focuses on key posts and user feedback from the years 2018 to 2023 to

capture changes and trends over time.

The inclusion criteria for this study are defined to ensure relevance and comprehensiveness. For social media posts, the criteria include posts made by the Ghana Police Service on their official Facebook and X accounts within the selected years (2018 to 2023). The year 2018 was selected as a cut-off year because the Ghana Police Service officially launched its website and social media profiles on platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook in February 2018 (Yusif, 2018) even though these social media accounts had already been in operation since 2016 for Twitter and 2017 for Facebook. The data set encompasses posts over a six-year period (2018 to 2023). For purposes of this study, 2018 and 2019 represents the “Pre-Covid 19 period”, which also signaled the inauguration of the official social media handles (X and Facebook) of the Ghana Police Service. Additionally, 2020 and 2021 represents the “Covid 19 period” and also a period when Ghana held her general elections. This period is also characterised by the unparalleled challenges precipitated by the global pandemic as well as an exponential rise in social media activity. The selection of 2020 and 2021 for this study is underpinned by the profound impact of the Covid-19 crisis, which compelled institutions, including law enforcement agencies like the Ghana Police Service, to intensify their digital engagement efforts. Finally, 2022 and 2023 represents the post-covid 19 era and also the most recent “full year” that captures what the Ghana Police Service have been sharing on both X and Facebook.

On the part of responses from social media users, the inclusion criteria encompass comments and reactions that provide feedback, whether positive or negative. From each theme, a purposive selection of posts is made to highlight differences and similarities between Facebook and Twitter. Additionally, public responses to these selected posts are analyzed to provide a representative sample of public sentiment. This dual focus on posts and responses ensures a holistic understanding of the engagement. Instead, data collection focuses on gathering posts and responses

from the Ghana Police Service's official social media pages, specifically Facebook and X. This data was manually collected and categorized through a systematic review of all relevant posts and public responses within the specified years. The posts are organized into the nine (9) themes to identify patterns and differences in the content shared across the two platforms.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

This study collected empirical data from the Ghana Police Service's verified social media accounts on X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook. To ensure systematic and reliable data collection, specific tools and procedures were employed. The data sources were the Ghana Police Service's verified X account (@GhanaPolice) and Facebook account (@GhanaPoliceService).

To gather relevant data for this study, a systematic approach was employed to extract information from the Ghana Police Service's social media accounts on X and Facebook. On X, "Advanced Twitter Search" was utilized to filter tweets by date, specifically targeting the period between 2018 and 2023. Similarly, on Facebook, the "year filter" was applied to narrow down posts to the same time frame, extracting relevant data from the Ghana Police Service's official Facebook account. Following the filtering process, Instant Data Scraper was employed to extract the filtered data from both platforms. This tool enabled the efficient collection of comprehensive data, laying the groundwork for in-depth analysis.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data analysis for this research is based on secondary data, specifically the posts made by the Ghana Police Service and the feedback from their followers on Facebook and X (formerly Twitter). A comprehensive manual review of all tweets and posts by the police on these platforms was conducted. During the six-year period under exploration, a total of nine hundred and forty one (941) "original" post were made by the Ghana Police Service on X while one thousand, one hundred and thirty five (1,135) "original" posts were shared on Facebook. Each post was

categorized into one of nine identified themes to systematically organize the data. The nine (9) themes are as follows: Crime Prevention and Safety, Crime Updates, Public Sensitization and Engagement, Wanted and Missing Persons, General Announcements, Events, Donations, Covid-19 Related Information, and Clarifications.

Subsequently, a selection of posts from both Facebook and Twitter was analyzed to highlight key differences and similarities in the content shared across these platforms. This comparative analysis provided insights into the nature and focus of the information disseminated by the police on each platform. To gauge public sentiment, responses from followers were carefully selected and analyzed. This analysis involved assessing the tone and content of the feedback to make informed inferences about public perceptions and attitudes towards the police's social media activities.

Finally, the role of social media in policing were identified based on the interactions between the police and their followers. The study, as part of its objectives, aims to assess the role of social media in policing by examining the types of information disseminated, the patterns in communication and the public's response to these posts. By using content analysis, public engagement metrics, and existing literature on digital policing strategies, this research can sufficiently address the role of social media in policing without direct interviews with police personnel. This approach ensures that the study remains objective and focused on observable data, while still providing meaningful insights into how social media contributes to modern policing practices.

In order to ensure a consistent alignment between the goals of the research and the analytical process, the four research objectives directly influenced the coding system that was employed in this study. Topics like Public Sensitization & Engagement, Wanted & Missing Persons, General Announcements, Covid-19 Related Posts, and Crime Prevention & Safety were all directly influenced by Objective 1, which looked at the kinds and thematic categories of content shared by

the Ghana Police Service. These categories, which were produced by inductively coding the text, offered a foundation for categorizing the police's communication tactics. In order to facilitate cross-platform comparisons in frequency, tone, and engagement, thematic codes were consistently applied throughout both datasets, driven by Objective 2, which concentrated on comparing material across platforms (Facebook and X). Under themes like Public Sensitization & Engagement and Crime Updates, where public reactions were most concentrated, comment-level analysis was included based on Objective 3, which looked at public mood and feedback.

Finally, the interpretation of themes like Events, Donations Received, and Crime Updates—all of which represent the Ghana Police Service's public-facing initiatives and legitimacy-building efforts—was influenced by Objective 4, which examined the role of social media in operational and community policing functions. As a result, the coding scheme was theoretically grounded in the study's goals and inductively developed, allowing for a structured but adaptable data analysis.

3.8 Ethical consideration

In light of the growing concern about the ethical use of social media data in research, this study adhered to the privacy policies and guidelines of both Twitter and Facebook to ensure ethical compliance. X's Privacy Policy (2023) states that users consent to the public viewing of their tweets and associated metadata (e.g., timestamp, client application, language, and time zone) by default. This implicit consent is assumed to extend to the reuse of their publicly shared data for research purposes. To maintain anonymity, X posts were anonymized to exclude personally identifiable information.

Similarly, Facebook's Privacy Policy (2022) also indicates that users consent to the public sharing of their posts unless they opt for private settings. Facebook's Statement of Rights and To respect users' privacy, this study only utilized publicly available data from both Twitter and Facebook and anonymized the data to prevent identification of individual users. By doing so, this research

adheres to the ethical principles of respecting users' privacy and maintaining confidentiality.



CHAPTER FOUR

DIFFERENCES, TYPES AND THEMATIC CATEGORIES OF CONTENT SHARED BY THE GHANA POLICE SERVICE ACROSS FACEBOOK AND X

4.0 Introduction

This chapter seeks to explore the differences, types and thematic content shared by the Ghana Police Service across Facebook and X (formerly Twitter). The first objective is to examine the various thematic content disseminated by the Ghana Police Service on these social media platforms. The second objective focuses on understanding the differences in the content shared across these platforms. The Ghana Police Service utilizes Facebook and X as primary channels for public communication, with the intention of fostering engagement and ensuring the effective dissemination of information. By examining the unique features and engagement mechanisms of Facebook and X, this analysis seeks to understand how the nature of content shared on these platforms varies and contributes to the overall communication strategy of the Ghana Police Service.

During the six-year period under review, a total of 941 original posts were made by the Ghana Police Service on X, while 1,135 posts were shared on Facebook. This analysis intentionally excludes retweets and replies, centering only on original content to ensure a precise examination of the proactive communication efforts by the Ghana Police Service, rather than interactions initiated by external users. This approach allows for an accurate assessment of the content generated directly by the police, providing valuable insights into their social media engagement strategies.

The Ghana Police Service's social media content revolves around nine key themes: Crime Prevention and Safety, Crime Updates, Public Sensitization and Engagement, Wanted and Missing

Persons, General Announcements, Events, Donations, Covid-19 Related Information, and Clarifications. This chapter will delve into the forms of information under each of these themes and analyze the differences in how they are presented across Facebook and X. By doing so, it will provide a comprehensive understanding of how the Ghana Police Service leverages these platforms for public communication and the strategic variations in content dissemination across the two social media channels. Below is a table showing the distribution of posts made by the Police on Facebook according to the identified themes:

Table 4.1: Distribution of posts made by the Police on Facebook

S/N	Theme	Frequency	%
1	Clarifications	14	1.2
2	Covid-19 Related	49	4.3
3	Crime Prevention & Safety	196	17
4	Crime Updates	319	28
5	Donations Received	28	2.4
6	Events	53	4.7
7	General Announcement	133	12
8	Public Sensitization & Engagement	314	27.8
9	Wanted & Missing Persons	29	2.6
	Grand Total	1135	100

Source: Secondary Data Collected by Researcher

Below is a table showing the distribution of posts made by the Police on X according to the identified themes:

Table 4.2: Distribution of posts made by the Police on X

S/N	Theme	Frequency	%
1	Clarifications	14	1.4
2	Covid-19 Related	141	15
3	Crime Prevention & Safety	254	27

4	Crime Updates	300	32
5	Donations Received	16	1.7
6	Events	10	1.1
7	General Announcement	61	6.5
8	Public Sensitization & Engagement	123	13
9	Wanted & Missing Persons	22	2.3
	Grand Total	941	100

Source: Secondary Data Collected by Researcher

4.1 Forms of Information shared by the Ghana Police Service on Facebook and X

This section presents an in-depth analysis of the nine (9) dominant themes that emerged from the Ghana Police Service's social media posts on Facebook and Twitter. There are noticeable patterns in the themes and content communicated on Facebook and Twitter, according to a review of 1135 Facebook posts and 941 X (previously Twitter) postings from the Ghana Police Service between 2018 and 2023. A wide variety of educational, promotional, and interactive content is illustrated by the nine inductively generated themes: Crime Updates, Crime Prevention & Safety, Public Sensitization & Engagement, General Announcements, Covid-19 Related, Donations Received, Wanted & Missing Persons, Clarifications, and Events.

4.1.1 Content Types and Frequencies Overview

The most prevalent themes on both platforms were Crime Prevention & Safety (Facebook: 17%; X: 27%) and Crime Updates (Facebook: 28%; X: 32%). This focus is in line with the police's long-standing duties to uphold law and order and inform the public about ongoing investigations, arrests, and safety advice. A more preventive and educational role of policing is reflected in the Public Sensitization & Engagement theme, which is embodied by posts like "Avoid Recruitment Scams," "See Something, Say Something Campaign," and "Fake Social Media Account Alert." By providing information and encouraging civic alertness, these messages aim to engage the public in crime prevention. Since the police aim to increase public knowledge and involvement

in public safety, Public Sphere Theory is somewhat more accurately represented here. However, the interaction is still restricted to top-down orders rather than collaborative conversation, exposing a controlled or limited public space where involvement is permitted but not promoted in a deliberate manner. These findings are consistent with studies by Boateng & Chenane (2020), who found that police use social media to provide real-time safety advice in dangerous situations.

These concepts are further supported by synthesis with literature. According to research by Jacob (2021) and Livingstone (2021), Facebook is frequently used for institutional updates and crime announcements, whereas X (Twitter) is more focused on emotional appeals and real-time involvement. Similar patterns may be seen in this Ghanaian study, where there is little indication of interactive, real-time discourse like in Western contexts and a preponderance of crime-related and educational content on Facebook that supports worldwide trends (Boateng & Chenane, 2020; Leppert et al., 2022). This points to a mixed police communication model in Ghana that is impacted by digital infrastructure, institutional restraints, and sociopolitical priorities. While Public Sphere Theory exposes the limitations of citizen participation in security discourse, Institutionalism and Security Theory emphasize the role of the police as a formal actor responding to operational imperatives and contextual threats.

4.2 Comparisons across the two Platforms

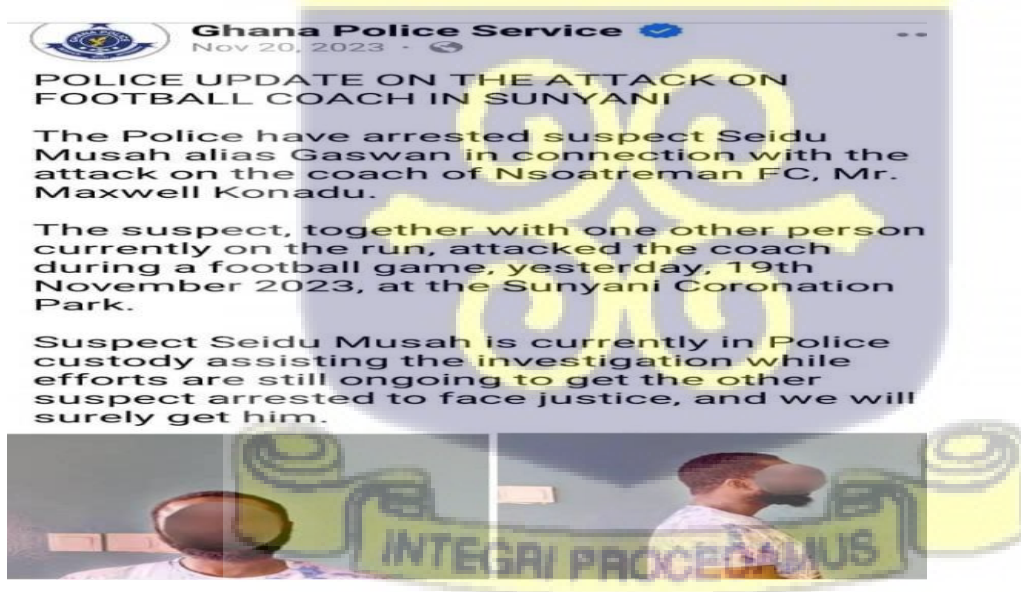
The Ghana Police Service maintains a notable presence on both Twitter and Facebook, with 698K followers on Twitter and 506K followers on Facebook as of the study period. Despite having a larger following on Twitter, the activity and engagement levels appear higher on Facebook. The findings of the Ghana Police Service's social media operations from 2018 to 2023 show notable variations in the way the Ghana Police Service interacts with the public on Facebook and X (previously Twitter). In line with emerging research on social media and police, these variations

extend beyond volume and style to include theme orientation, communicative purpose, and user interaction patterns.

Facebook saw 1135 postings from the Ghana Police Service, compared to 941 posts on X. Facebook gives the police a wider audience and a steady setting for creating institutional narratives because it is still the most popular platform in Ghana, with significant penetration in both urban and rural populations. One notable difference observed between Facebook and Twitter posts by the Ghana Police Service is the variance in posting formats. Facebook posts tend to be more detailed in terms of word count, allowing for comprehensive explanations, updates, and narratives. This preference is consistent with research by Livingstone (2021) and Jacob (2021), which shows that police departments, particularly in larger or centralized systems, prefer Facebook for detailed, structured communication, particularly when textual and visual storytelling works better for public outreach.

Below are examples of same content on both Facebook and X by the Police:

Figure 1: Post made by the Ghana Police Service on Facebook



Source: Official Facebook page of the Ghana Police Service.

Conversely, Twitter posts are constrained by character limits, resulting in shorter, more concise messages. This distinction in posting formats influences the depth of information conveyed and

the level of engagement achieved on each platform.



Figure 2: Post made by the Ghana Police Service on X

Source: Official X (formerly twitter) page of the Ghana Police Service.

Based on figures 1 & 2 , it is clear that the Twitter post is concise and to the point, with a limited number of characters, while the Facebook post provides more detailed information and context.

The Twitter post likely follows Twitter's character limit, making it ideal for quick updates, alerts, or short announcements. On the other hand, the Facebook post provides more in-depth information,

likely due to Facebook's more relaxed character limit. This allows the police department to share more context, details, and even photos or videos, making the post more engaging and informative. A lot of posts made by the Ghana Police Service centered around crimes, general announcements, and event promotion were made on Facebook. According to studies conducted by Brainard and Edlins (2015) and Jacob (2021), police departments worldwide, particularly in the Global South, favor Facebook for sharing high-visibility, low-engagement content that upholds state authority. This reflects an institutional communication style centered on informing and controlling narratives. With poor public trust and persistent issues with political accountability, Ghana's police seem to utilize Facebook as a performance platform, displaying successful operations and supporting the government's national security objective.

A striking example of this disparity is evident in a post regarding the commissioning of a new police station. While Twitter featured a brief text summary accompanied by four images, Facebook provided a comprehensive photo album with over 80 images, offering a more immersive visual experience. These findings suggest that Facebook serves as the primary platform for the Ghana Police Service's public communication and outreach efforts, effectively utilizing visual storytelling to enhance engagement. Conversely, Twitter is employed for concise, text-based updates. For example, "The Police Administration is investigating the video attached to this post and its officers who were assigned to the Toyota Corolla vehicle with registration number GP 5040" is a post by the Ghana Police Service that featured on Facebook but did not feature X.

On the other hand, X posts were more likely to address current events and contained engagement efforts like the "See Something, Say Something" campaign, security alerts, and clarifications. This network was appropriate for dynamic police communications because of its fast-paced conversational culture, hashtag activism, and news commentary, particularly during major events like elections, protests, or high-profile criminal cases. This supports the findings of Leppert et al.

(2022) and Boateng & Chenane (2020), who noted that police utilize X more for emotional involvement and crisis communication. Public Sphere Theory helps to explain why the Ghana Police Service will was mainly one-way on X, with little reaction to public inquiries. This suggests a “symbolic participation” approach rather than true two-way communication.

Social media platforms should ideally serve as democratic forums for discussion between institutions and citizens, according to public sphere theory. However, institutional control over digital discourse is still currently in place in Ghana, and the GPS uses Facebook and X in a way that makes sense from the top down. Although they are present on both platforms, the police seem more interested in sharing content than in engaging with users in return. This trend is also seen in Western contexts (Edwards et al., 2021; Hu et al., 2018), though it may be more noticeable in developing democracies like Ghana. This is an example of a "managed public sphere," in which the government only allows contact as long as it does not interfere with its power.

Facebook is also seen as less combative politically, and its algorithm favors authoritative content, which is perfect for an institution like the GPS that aims to reduce public criticism. On the other hand, X can readily challenge authority and spread dissent due to its viral culture and hashtag trends. This could help to explain why the GPS's X posts are more subdued and often defensive, as evidenced by the use of announcements, denials, and clarifications to correct disinformation. In contrast to the proactive and joyous tone of their Facebook use, it is, in many respects, a reactive site for the police. (reference needed).

These findings are supported by synthesis with earlier literature. According to Mayes (2020), state institutions' communication objectives and political risk tolerance are frequently reflected in the platforms they use. In a similar vein, Livingstone (2021) and Edwards et al. (2021) observed that X is chosen for event-based legitimacy claims, whereas Facebook is preferred for story construction. In Ghana, social media is tentatively accepted rather than fully democratized, and the legacy of state

authority and control over public communication still looms large. This instance fits this model, but it also adds a postcolonial component.

4.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, the Ghana Police Service's use of Facebook and X differs in ways that go beyond simple technical distinctions. They are influenced by audience demographics, platform cultures, institutional goals, and general social and political circumstances. While X permits limited responsiveness during public crises, Facebook permits the Ghana Police Service to exhibit visibility and exercise control. But neither platform delivers on the full deliberative potential that Public Sphere Theory envisions. Rather, what appears is a carefully calibrated online presence across platforms, in line with Institutionalism and Security Theory, where police modify their messaging to preserve institutional credibility while controlling public opinion in a complicated and changing digital environment.



CHAPTER FIVE

FEEDBACK FROM USERS, INFORMATION SHARING AND THE ROLE OF GHANA POLICE SERVICE'S SOCIAL MEDIA HANDLES IN CARRYING OUT IT'S POLICING DUTIES.

5.0 Introduction

Research on social media and policing emphasizes citizen engagement as a two-way communication process between law enforcement agencies and citizens (Brainard & Edlins, 2015; van de Velde, Meijer, & Homburg, 2015; Walsh, 2020; Williams et al., 2018). This study adopts a similar definition, focusing on interactions between the Ghana Police Service and citizens on Facebook and X (formerly Twitter). Citizen engagement encompasses non-verbal and verbal communication behaviors, including comments and retweets (Kudla & Parnaby, 2018; Dai et al., 2017).

Social media platforms have become essential tools for law enforcement agencies to engage with the public, enhance transparency, and facilitate crime prevention efforts. The Ghana Police Service utilizes these platforms to share crime updates, safety tips, and clarifications, fostering community engagement. Analyzing the types of information shared and public feedback provides valuable insights into the relational dynamics between the police and citizens.

This study examines secondary data from the Ghana Police Service's official Facebook and Twitter pages, including comments and reactions from followers, to assess the role of social media in enhancing policing duties. The analysis focuses on the six-year period between 2018 and 2023. By exploring the engagement patterns and information shared, this research aims to identify how social media contributes to the Ghana Police Service's policing efforts, enhancing community policing, public safety awareness, and law enforcement transparency.

5.1 Challenging Authority

The extent of public opinion regarding policing in Ghana's sociopolitical and economic context is demonstrated by the diverse range of responses to the Ghana Police Service's social media posts, which include praise, skepticism, criticism, and concern. The Ghana Police Service's social media presence on Facebook and X (previously Twitter) elicits an emotionally charged and complex response, in contrast to the essentially one-sided engagement outlined in much of the Western-centric literature (Wu & Huang, 2020; Huang et al., 2017).

The public's propensity to doubt the legitimacy, professionalism, and institutional integrity of the police is a recurring theme in comments left on Ghana Police Service's social media posts. With comments like "Do you have professional policemen in this country?" and "Respect is not commanded, it is earned," many users questioned whether the Ghana Police Service operated above the law. These answers demonstrate how digital platforms function as substitute public spaces (Habermas, 1989), providing a forum for citizens to voice their discontent with state institutions and oppose conventional top-down communication.

This dynamic is in line with research by Ralph (2021) and Cheng (2021), who contend that social media has emerged as a crucial medium for individuals in both developed and emerging democracies to contest institutional legitimacy and governmental power.

5.2 Event-driven Feedback

The findings also show a strong event-driven trend in the intensity and tone of public feedback. Posts involving contentious events, like claims of extortion, harassment, or police brutality, tend to receive noticeably harsher comments. For example, a number of people discussed how the Ghana Police Service did not apply the law fairly, asking specific concerns like: "Were police and military personnel among the arrestees? Otherwise, it is quite biased". Other remarks, including "The way the MTTD guys take money by force is some way," brought attention to systemic problems like corruption in the MTTD.

These results align with the body of previous literature. According to Mensah (2024), when police misconduct instances become viral online, they frequently trigger a digital backlash that is marked by public indignation, a decline in trust, and a fresh demand for accountability. Posts that highlight constructive police activities, like contributions or public education initiatives, on the other hand, usually elicit positive feedback and strengthen views of the legitimacy of the police.

5.3 Support and Appreciation

Support, gratitude, and community involvement are important themes in public reactions to Ghana Police Service social media activities, in contrast to the critical comments frequently prompted by contentious occurrences. Some people praise the police for disseminating info about community safety, traffic updates, and crime prevention strategies. This pattern is best illustrated by comments like "Thanks for your advice, we will do our best," "This is helpful information," and " I love the way you guys [police] are serious with the mask campaign. Keep it up."

This supports the findings of Cartwright and Shaw (2020), who contend that citizens increasingly see social media as a useful way to interact with governmental institutions, particularly when it provides pertinent and timely information. In a similar vein, Hu et al. (2018) discovered that even in situations where offline trust may be lower, public trust and involvement rise when police agencies consistently maintain a digital presence with community-centered content.

This theme has a direct connection to Public Sphere Theory, which highlights how communication platforms facilitate civic engagement and influence democratic discourse. People are taking part in a type of digital civic life when they interact favorably with police information, helping to build accountability and public safety. The public sphere in this instance appears to become a place of cooperative trust-building as well as resistance.

5.4 The Role of Social Media in Policing

Social media has emerged as a pivotal component in modern policing, offering a multifaceted platform for law enforcement agencies to interact with the public, disseminate information, foster

trust, promoting effective community policing, crime prevention and public safety. This section examines the diverse roles social media plays in policing, as far as the Ghana Police Service is concerned.

5.4.1 Enhancing Public Engagement and Effective Communication

Public advisories, road safety campaigns, missing person announcements, and crime warnings made up a significant percentage of the posts, which were primarily informative in nature. These align with the findings of Boateng and Chenane (2020), who noted that police departments in the UK use Twitter to foster open communication and transparency with the public. Similar to this, GPS's regular updates on police visibility patrols, security operations, and arrests seem to be intended to convey a sense of operational efficacy, supporting Cheng's (2021) claim that social media is used to circumvent traditional media and fabricate legitimacy, especially following controversial or well-publicized events.

5.4.2 Gathering Public Feedback

The way that policing information is shared with the public has clearly changed as a result of the Ghana Police Service's use of Facebook and X (previously Twitter). The results of Boateng and Chenane (2020), who demonstrated how the Oxford Police Department in the UK strategically employed social media, especially Twitter, to improve transparency, encourage real-time contact, and project a responsive public image, are very consistent with this. In a similar vein, the Ghana Police Service now frequently posts crime bulletins on its channels, including the arrest of suspects in robberies in Tarkwa, instances of firearms being brandished in viral videos, and community-based attacks in the Savannah Region.

Additionally, Boateng and Chenane identified a shift from reactive to proactive policing via social platforms, and the Service's consistent publication of daily crime prevention tips, such as safety guidelines for walking alone at night or teaching kids how to deal with strangers, shows a pivot toward proactive, educational policing. This evolution resonates with the country's mobile-first,

digitally connected youth demographic, which bridges the information gap and reinforces the police's institutional visibility and relevance.

5.4.3 Criminal Investigations

Social media has grown to be a crucial investigative tool for the Ghana Police Service, in line with Nutsugah et al., (2022) conclusions that law enforcement organizations now use digital platforms not only for outreach but also to help ongoing investigations, This can be seen in posts by the Ghana Police Service asking the public to help identify suspects or find victims—for example, requests for help in rescuing a child who was abused in a video that went viral, announcing missing people like Lt. Col. Peter Amoah, or notices with pictures of wanted people.

5.4.4 A tool for Public Education

The Ghana Police Service frequently uses social media as a public education tool, which is consistent with Fielding's (2021) finding that law enforcement bodies are using digital platforms more and more to educate and empower the public. By regularly posting "Daily Security Tips" on social media sites like Facebook and X (formerly Twitter), the Ghana Police Service informs the public about situational awareness, cyber hygiene, and personal safety. Examples include advisories like “Never leave your car windows down whenever you park especially at night,” and “Never respond to emails that ask to verify your identity by providing your username or password.” These frequent tweets show how the police actively use social media to influence public perceptions and safety practices, encouraging a preventative culture and a sense of collective accountability for reducing crime. This “educational” role demonstrates a purposeful use of digital media to increase public resilience, going beyond reactive policing.

5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, social media has undoubtedly become a versatile instrument in contemporary policing, that provides law enforcement bodies such as the Ghana Police Service with alternatives

to interact, educate, communicate and conduct investigations in ways that were previously impossible with conventional techniques. The Ghana Police Service's appearance on platforms like Facebook and X, which provide everything from real-time crime information and safety advice to help requests and public engagement, suggests a deliberate move toward increased openness, responsiveness, and community cooperation.

Findings of this study in relation to the role of social media in policing are consistent with scholarly works by Cheng (2021), Boateng & Chenane (2020) and Fielding (2021) who have documented global patterns that show how social media improves police legitimacy, builds public trust, and closes communication gaps.



CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

The study explored social media engagement between the Ghana Police Service and Ghanaian Social media users. The study was conducted using a qualitative research approach. The study sought to find out the forms of information shared by the Ghana Police Service on social media, specifically, Facebook and X (formerly twitter). The study also sought to explore the responses from Ghanaian social media users as well as the role social media plays in policing. This chapter presents a summary of the findings, conclusions and some recommendations based on the research outcomes.

6.1 Summary of Findings

The study reviewed a total of 2,076 posts that were collected from both Facebook (1,135) and X (941) covering the period between 2018 and 2023. The content types that were qualitatively reviewed include text-based posts, Portable Document Formats (PDFs), videos, images and infographics. The Ghana Police Service's posts on Facebook and X reveals a comprehensive communication strategy that encompasses various facets of policing and public engagement, as far as the forms of information shared is concerned. The dominant themes of Crime Updates and Public Sensitization & Engagement indicate a balanced approach, where the police focus on both informing the public about criminal activities and actively engaging the public in crime prevention-related initiatives. The observation that the Ghana Police Service shared a diverse range of information across nine distinct themes on social media is worthy of mentioning.

Crime Prevention & Safety, Crime Updates, Donations Received, Events, Clarifications, COVID-19 Related, General Announcements, Public Sensitization & Engagement, and Wanted & Missing Persons were the nine main topics identified by the content analysis. Crime Updates and Public

Sensitization were the most popular categories, reflecting the Service's emphasis on public education and controlling law and order narratives. Compared to X, Facebook had a substantially higher volume of posts (1,135), indicating a preference for Facebook's larger user base and multimedia features. Boateng and Chenane's (2020) research, which found comparable content categories in various police scenarios, is supported by this.

With regards to the differences in postings, the Ghana Police Service published 941 posts on X and 1,135 posts on Facebook between 2018 and 2023. The study found that Facebook is a preferred platform for official interaction in Ghana, as evidenced by the greater number of posts, which reflects its wider reach, particularly among urban and rural populations. Facebook posts were noticeably more thorough, frequently including lengthier text and more photographs, enabling the GPS to offer thorough explanations, updates, and tales. Shorter, real-time updates and alarms, on the other hand, were sent via X. According to research by Livingstone (2021) and Jacob (2021), police departments around the world prefer Facebook for organized, text-rich communication that facilitates both textual and visual storytelling.

With regards to the feedback from users, the study found that many users voiced skepticism or demanded accountability—reflecting global trends reported by Ralph (2021) and Cheng (2021). On the other hand, posts about successful arrests, safety advice, and public education frequently elicited gratitude, compliments, and calls for a more regional presence. According to Public Sphere Theory, which holds that social media promotes discussion between institutions and the public, the findings show how police legitimacy is dynamically negotiated in the digital public sphere.

With regards to the role of social media in policing, the study found that the Ghana Police Service uses social media for a number of purposes. First, the Ghana Police Service uses social media platforms to educate the public. This is evidenced by the frequent Daily Security Tips that provide advice on personal safety and security measures. Second, it acts as a tool for investigation, as

evidenced in posts asking for public aid in discovering missing persons, identifying wanted individuals, or responding to viral videos containing suspected. Third, security advice and alerts, which are frequently customized to particular dangers or circumstances, can avoid crime.

6.2 Conclusions

One key conclusion is that Facebook and X have become vital tools for fostering transparency and accountability in law enforcement. By promptly addressing misinformation through clarifications and providing real-time updates on ongoing investigations and high-profile cases, the police are able to build a more open and trustworthy relationship with the public. The use of platforms like Facebook and X to share accurate, timely information also helps mitigate public skepticism and contributes to a more positive perception of the police service. However, the study also points to a trust gap that still persists, as some users remain critical of police professionalism and transparency despite improved communication efforts.

Another conclusion drawn is that social media enhances the police's ability to educate the public and raise awareness on key issues such as crime prevention, safety tips and public health measures. Particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, the police's use of social media to disseminate safety protocols and lockdown guidelines received significant positive feedback, demonstrating the effectiveness of these platforms in emergency communication. This goes without saying that social media has become an indispensable channel for public safety education, allowing the police to reach a large and diverse audience quickly. Furthermore, posts on crime prevention and safety tips not only promote public awareness but also encourage a collaborative approach to crime reduction, as the public becomes more informed and vigilant.

The study reveals that through comments and interactions on Facebook and X, the public actively shares concerns about police conduct, resource management, and other operational issues. This feedback mechanism provides the police service with valuable insights into public perceptions,

enabling them to address gaps in service delivery and work towards improving their image.

Finally, the study concludes that social media plays a critical role in crisis management and information gathering for the Ghana Police Service, to the extent that the police can gauge the sentiments and concerns of the public in real time and address them. Public reactions to posts about crime prevention, police professionalism, and operational updates provide the police with important feedback that can be used to inform policy changes and internal reforms. This underscores the potential of social media not just as a communication tool, but as an asset in enhancing the overall efficiency and responsiveness of the police in Ghana.

In conclusion, the study finds that social media has transformed how the Ghana Police Service communicates, engages with the public and operates in a modern society such as Ghana. Through platforms like Facebook and X, the police have improved transparency, enhanced crime prevention efforts and gathered valuable feedback for improving service delivery. While challenges remain, particularly in bridging the trust gap with certain sections of the public as well as one-way communication that exist between Ghana Police Service and social media users, social media has undoubtedly become a key tool for advancing policing in Ghana.

Additionally, responses from the public to posts made by the Ghana Police Service point to a dynamic and nuanced connection between the public and the police. Some people express mistrust, question the validity of the organization, or voice worries about accountability, while many others show support and gratitude for the visibility and transparency of police activity. Since social media has evolved into a platform where citizens and state institutions participate in real-time negotiations about legitimacy, authority, and trust, these types of involvement are consistent with the ideas of Public Sphere Theory.

6.3 Challenges Identified

Although the use of Facebook and X by the Ghana Police Service in engaging its followers was found to be commendable, the study identified the following challenges:

The “one-way” nature of communication of the Ghana Police Service on Facebook and X is one of the biggest challenges the study revealed. The Police mainly utilizes its accounts to broadcast information, crime updates, crime prevention tips or requests for help find wanted and missing persons. Although the public frequently leaves comments with queries, criticisms, or worries, the police hardly ever address these issues with feedback.

Another challenge identified was the nature of public sentiments expressed by the public through comments to posts made the Ghana Police Service; from public support to harsh condemnation. Users frequently doubt the legitimacy, efficiency, or objectivity of the police, especially when posts feature their own officers, contentious arrests or unsolved murders.

Finally, the study identified that there are security and privacy concerns when the police ask for the public's assistance, such as identifying suspected criminals, reporting crimes, or finding missing people. Some users usually felt reluctant to divulge private information out of fear of reprisals. This is partly due to the absence of safe and anonymous feedback mechanisms on social media sites.

6.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

First of all, to enhance social media engagement between the Ghana Police Service and Ghanaian social media users and also to avoid the “one-way” communication approach, the police should focus on maintaining consistent and a more interactive and dialogic approach on social media.

In order to actively address public comments, inquiries, and concerns in real-time or within a reasonable time frame, trained personnel must be assigned. Doing so can strengthen the feeling of community-police relationship, boost transparency, and promote public trust.

Additionally, establishing a structured feedback mechanism through regular “question and answer sessions” through for instance “X Spaces” would help the police address public concerns about professionalism, corruption, and resource management, while also creating a more open dialogue

between the police and the public.

Furthermore, regular updates on high-profile investigations, arrests and police activities should be shared in clear and detailed formats, helping to reduce suspicion and increase confidence in police efforts.

Also, the Ghana Police Service should decentralize its social media information dissemination to regional levels to enhance community engagement and policing effectiveness. This involves establishing regional social media handles and empowering regional commanders to share localized information. Decentralization will facilitate timely and relevant information sharing, foster community-police cooperation, and increase public trust.

Finally, Public concerns about police professionalism and perceived corruption need to be acknowledged and addressed openly, through social media. The police service can do this by sharing updates on internal reforms, highlighting examples of disciplinary actions against officers involved in misconduct and promoting instances of exemplary behavior within the force.

6.5 Emerging issues for future research.

Future research should explore how Ghanaian citizens' trust in the Ghana Police Service is shaped by their social media interactions with the police. Future research could also assess whether online engagement with the police leads to changes in offline behaviour. While social media provides a platform for interaction, it remains to be seen if it influences the public's actions, such as crime reporting or cooperating with police investigations. As a result, the following questions need to be considered:

Does online engagement with the Ghana Police Service lead to increased crime reporting and cooperation in police investigations among citizens?

To what extent does social media interaction between the police and citizens influence offline

behaviour related to public safety and crime prevention?

To what extent does social media interaction between the police and citizens affect public trust in the police?



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