



**NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY  
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**ASSESSING THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE PUBLIC RELATIONS  
PRACTICES OF THE GOVERNMENT INSTITUTION PENSION FUND (GIPF) OF  
NAMIBIA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Social media have a significant role as a communication tool used by public relations practitioners in disseminating and sharing information as well as obtaining feedback from clients. When used effectively as a communication tool, social media can help address complaints, do market research to identify the needs of the clients and can help any organisation identify new market niches. Despite the essential role of social media, many organisations, including Government Institution Pension Fund (GIPF) Namibia are still not using social media to their maximum and are still opting for traditional methods of communication by the public relations practitioners. This study was conducted using a mixed-method approach. This study assessed the use of social media in public relations practices of the GIPF. The study adopted a quantitative approach, using a case study research design. The study population comprised GIPF staff members and clients. Hence, the sample consisted of 200 participants. A convenient sampling method was used to select a sample. A structured questionnaire with mixed questions collected both qualitative and quantitative data. The major findings of the study were that social media has a great impact on public relations practices and traditional social media platforms, notably Facebook, Instagram and Twitter remained popular. The recommendations were based on the research findings. Hence, the study recommends that various strategies can be used to enhance social media use and visibility. It was also recommended that public relations practitioners should be trained so that their awareness and use of social media is improved.

***Key Words:*** *Social Media; Public Relations; Communication Tool, GIPF.*

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## **ACRONYMS**

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease
DAU	Daily Active Users
GIPF	Government Institution Pension Fund
ICT	Information Communication Technology
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoESC	Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture
NUST	Namibia University of Science and Technology
PR	Public Relations
PRISA	Public Relations Institute of South Africa
RSS	Really Simple Syndication

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to my family, for their support, sacrifice and contributions made during this study.

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Lastly, I dedicate this thesis to my grandfather, Rev. Eino Amaambo and my grandmother, Mrs. Lovisa Kapenda. Thank you for being a great inspiration in my life.

I love you all.

## DECLARATION

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Date

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Dr. H. Mapudzi

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

## 1.1 Introduction

Public Relations is one of the key components in any organisation's functioning and performance. Without a Public Relations element in marketing, advertising, relationship management and corporate image, the organisation is left baseless. This research is meant to assess the use of social media in the Public Relations practices of the Government Institution Pension Fund (GIPF) in Namibia. The thesis will define the key terms identified in the proposed topic, provide a background to the study, outline the statement of the problem, list the research questions and provide a literature review of other scholars from around the world in different fields of study that have done work similar to the proposed research topic.

These days, public relations practitioners are rethinking themselves and the practice, even in government. According to Bhargava (2010), an entity's interests and procedures are stated in Public Relations, according to Bhargava (2010). Then a plan is implemented to win public support. Social networking platforms have made this function easier to play.

It is a deliberate and ongoing effort to build and maintain public trust in an enterprise (Nakra, 2000). Social media is the only rich communication channel that can achieve this.

Decker (1963) defined public relations as "a planned effort to influence public opinion through acceptance, performance and two-way communications." The inclusion of a two-way communication model brings out the very active characteristics of social media. The impacts of technology do not take place at the level of concepts or opinions, but instead, modify the proportions or trends of opinions steadily and with minimal objection. This implies that communication tends to impact our habits of thinking and reasoning (Severin & Tankard, 1997).

In the current digital age, Public Relations in the government must be altered or impacted. With every ministry owning an entire office reserved for the public, Kenyans are normally inundated with one-way created information mainly about a certain public entity spent the whole doing, the services rendered, products launched and not necessarily what is expected of the government

by the public. The one-way means of communication, known as the information model formulated by Grunig & Hunt (1984) entails the revelation of accurate data but taking part in no research that would stimulate two-way means of communication. This nature of communication elicits an illusion of control which James E Grunig (2009) affirms that Public Relations practice in the age of digitalisation, is abandoned.

It is therefore vital to understand how social media has influenced the way Public Relations practitioners at the Government Institutions Pension Fund (GIPF) of Namibia see and think about their organisation.

## **1.2 Definition of Key Terms**

**Public relations** are the management of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders through communication according to the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa's (PRISA) (Skinner, von Essen, and Mersham, 2004).

**Social media** are all virtual spaces where people may communicate and engage with others by just logging on via a computer or mobile device such as blogs, social networking settings, person-to-person broadcasted messaging, and other Web 2.0 technologies (Komodromos, 2014). Websites such as YouTube, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, My Space, and/or Instagram are examples of social media, as they

## **1.3 Background of the Study**

Since the days of chat rooms, social media and social networking have advanced significantly. Developed as a space for individuals and organisations to come together online, interact and share, it has become a highly significant part of today's hyper-connected, internet-dependent world with lots of potential for Public Relations Practitioners to solve business challenges (Robson & James, 2013). Public Relations Practitioners used traditional ways of communication such as press releases and press statements as strategies to maintain the organisation's corporate image.

Salman et al. (2011) highlight that print media dominated the Public Relations profession before the advent of electronic media. As organisations started adopting technological innovation and online communication, there was a need to adjust to new ways of communicating and maintaining the organisation's reputation. Online business has since dominated as organisations have started delivering services through social networks. By using social media, an organisation can disseminate information and communicate with its stakeholders using online platforms instantly. However, traditional ways of business operations have not been entirely abandoned. Salman et al. (2011) argue that traditional and contemporary media complement each other.

According to Putra (2009), the Public Relations Practitioner is a sensitive listener and information broker. Communication facilitators function as interpreters, mediators, and public liaisons. They maintain two-way communication and information exchange by removing obstacles in relationships and keeping communication lines open. The goal is to provide both management and the public with relevant information.

Putra (2009) further pointed out that those performing the role of a communication facilitator end up serving as sources of information and the formal contacts between businesses and their publics. They are involved in assisting participants to determine and rectify conditions that interfere with communication relationships. In addition, they have many roles and act as connections between the public and organisations. They assume that effective two-way communication improves the quality of decisions made by organisations and citizens about procedures, policies, and mutual interests. All these characters are what social media can do.

Two-way communication is a communication principle. With the emergence of social media, public relations professionals must now plan for audience response (Sweetser, 2010). Social media has the capability of this principle. In brief, for example, comments and ratings of the video posted on YouTube, Facebook and Blog comments allow conversations, hence, the voice of your public to be heard. Researchers agree that using social media platforms has become increasingly common in the field of Public Relations (Davies & Hobbs, 2020).



Social media is a web-based software that allows users to create a profile, connect with other users who share similar interests, and view and browse other users' connections (Martin, 2009). Their characteristics and identities fluctuate from one location to the next. Members use social media to communicate. Communication is the key to good business, according to corporate entities, including owners, suppliers, staff, and most crucially, clients (Wheeler & Sillanpa, 1998). With over a billion users globally, some or all stakeholders will inevitably use social media.

As pointed out by Wright & Hinson (2009) and mentioned by the International Association of Business Communicators, a large number of people both in the developed and developing world have access to the internet and thus join the social network. Nowadays, social media acts as a platform where people create and share information and almost three-quarters of people using the internet have accessed a blog at one point (Smith et al., 2015). In addition, Weber (2009) stressed that the world is shifting dramatically into the digital direction and those with a clear understanding of this change will effectively exchange information compared to those without. Public Relations experts are also supposed to embrace this change to communicate properly with the public or clients through social media. Public Relations experts are in constant quest to relay information to their clients and in turn wait to hear from them especially through social media. It is important to review this communication approach to properly use them as a means of communication with others to determine their implications on public relations discipline, particularly, in the public sector.

#### **1.4 Statement of the Problem**

For many years, there has been a challenge of inadequate information and services to the public by the government of Namibia (Mwaniki, 2017). Bhargava (2010) was of the idea that inadequacy or shortage of public information and services was responsible for reducing public trust towards the government and this is pure Public Relations' role. In government, Public Relations Practitioners inform the public rather than promote mutual understanding, hence, an illusion of control. It culminates in ineffective communication which means that citizens are entirely informed of the various activities of the government. Heise (1985) came up with a response or a way of addressing this challenge by including responsive and open communication practices within the public sector. Social media is, therefore, ideal.

The GIPF of Namibia has failed to move with the times, as it still relies more on the traditional ways of communication, yet clients have become more virtual (online oriented). According to (Gayeta, 2021) social media adoption or use by Public Relations Practitioners has not been sufficient to fully enhance corporate image and identity in many organisations. The use of press releases, press statements, news releases and other traditional Public Relations practices is still common at GIPF. The problem at hand is that many African organisations, Namibia included, have failed to adopt and fully develop innovative policies at the operational level yet clients have become more virtual (Sifani, 2019).

Past studies have illustrated that social network sites can bring about reforms or changes in public administration, enhance service delivery and flow of information. The internet has transformed the power balance between the public and organisations (Newsom et al., 2013). Thus, social media has opened unforeseen doors for citizen participation in government. Moreover, the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in the public sector has been termed as e-government. ICT is a vital component of the process of modernising public administration and it is thought to be a form that necessitates social media use (O'Neill, 2009). This innovation is used as a communication tool in relating with internal and external publics, fostering Public Relations practice.

Organisations and state agencies are using social media more. According to Martin (2009), there is at least 70 per cent of businesses and government agencies utilising social media platforms. Eisenhardt & Graebner (2007) pointed out the success of social media use in investor relations. Moreover, Yin (2009) reported how government agencies are improving their public relations goals through social media (Facebook to be precise). In Namibia, studies have proved that social media is indeed used even in government departments. Therefore, the status of social media use in Public Relations practice at GIPF needs to be known in terms of categories used, type of information passed to the public through it, and how the public use it in inquiries and feedback. Equally, this study assessed the use of social media in the Public Relations practices of GIPF in Namibia and thus aimed to answer the following research questions.

## **1.5 Purpose of the Study**

The overall aim of the study was to assess the use of social media in the GIPF's Public Relations practices.

## **1.6 Research Questions**

The following are research questions underpinning the study:

- How are social media platforms used by GIPF Public Relations practitioners in their communication?
- To what extent does the role of social media as a communication tool play in GIPF as an organisation?
- What strategies can be embraced by GIPF Public Relations practitioners to enhance their visibility on social media?

## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

The study will help Public Relations Practitioners to adopt the best social media practices by using suitable and convenient social media platforms in their Public Relations practices. The research will also contribute to the existing body of knowledge on social media use by Public Relations Practitioners. The findings of this study are important to future researchers and academicians as it acts as a source of reference on the application of social media on service delivery among government ministries in Namibia. Furthermore, the outcomes of the research are essential since they recommend areas to improve or further investigations. The results of the research are also important to policy makers on the use of social media within the government offices. Additionally, it can help in the provision of information on the proper application of social network sites to deliver services in Namibia.

## **1.8 Limitations of the Study**

Due to the risk-averse culture that is dominant in government, the researcher's effort to get adequate information might be hampered. Some Public Relations Practitioners and GIPF clients

shun giving information due to its sensitivity. However, Public Relations Practitioners were made to understand that this was purely academic research, and it would not affect their working relationship. Respondents might also have not been honest in answering questions. However, the researcher designed a questionnaire and an interview schedule that elicited responses that would facilitate the meeting of the objectives of the study. Limited time made it impossible to use a reasonable sample size; therefore, only one department was studied intensively.

## **1.9 Delimitations of the Study**

The study limited itself to a case of GIPF's Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement department for more conclusive results. This study did not include the challenges of the use of social media in the department of immigration. But it gauged out the social media tools that are used, whether social media has enhanced service delivery in terms of information passed from the department and factors for preference of social media modes by the public.

## **1.10 Format of the Study**

### **Chapter One: Introduction and background of the study**

Introduces the research study and outlines the content to be covered in detail. The chapter also discusses the background of the study, problem statement, including research objectives.

### **Chapter Two: Literature review**

This chapter outlines the backbone and supports of the argument of the researcher in light of what has been already discovered by other researchers. The keywords of the research study are well discussed in this chapter.

### **Chapter Three: Research Methodology**

This chapter aims to explain the methodology and design of the approach of the study. The researcher used a non-probability sampling method. The research population and sample are discussed in this chapter as well as the data collection tool. Data analysis and presentation are also well explained, including the manner of reporting the findings.

#### **Chapter Four: Data presentation and analysis**

The researcher used the quantitative data analysis method to analyse collected data from the respondents by using text format and narrative with less numerical and statistical approaches.

#### **Chapter Five: Conclusions and recommendations**

The researcher made recommendations to the study material for further research. The recommendations serve as a structure for further studies and the conclusions are presented in this chapter.

### **1.11 Conclusion**

The outline discussed above on the study format aided the researcher to gain insight into the study and used the required sources in the literature, besides background of the study, the significance of the study, the research problem statement, research questions, as well as the hypothesis of the study. Chapter two deals with the theoretical background of relevant sources published in books, electronic journals that are related to the study and have been used to support the study.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This section reviews the literature concept of social media in the Public Relations (PR) practices, the conceptualisation of Public Relations roles, Public Relations and Social Media, the importance of Social Media in Public Relations and a theoretical framework from scholars and researchers in the field of ICT, Social Media, and communication studies.

### **2.2 Background information of GIPF and its Public Relations Functions**

The Government Institutions Pension Fund (GIPF) was established in 1956 under the Pension Fund Act No. 24 of 1956 (Government Institutions Pension Fund, 2013). The GIPF was founded in October 1989 under the Pension Fund Act of 1956 to provide pension benefits to employees of the Namibian public sector and a few other public entities. GIPF is funded primarily by employee and employer contributions. It gives full pension payments at age 60 or 55 for employees who leave the public sector through resignation, dismissal, or retrenchment. The Fund also provides disability, death, and ill-health retirement benefits. For example, the State-owned Enterprise Act (Act No.02 of 2006) mandates the effective control of state-owned firms and the monitoring of their performance (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 2006).

GIPF has an active public relations department which forms part of the key aspect of the business strategy. According to Kurtz (2019), GIPF institution is making use of social media platforms to enhance their interaction with clients and various stakeholders in their public relations department. Kurtz (2019) further stated that the institution makes use of various social media platforms to have a wider coverage such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Website pages. The information that is made available on these media platforms include informing, sensitising, and sharing important information with GIPF members on their rights and responsibilities, the benefits they are entitled to and intensive, interactive communication with their clients for them to gain further information about activities taking place in the fund.

According to Brandt (2018) GIPF public relations department actively make use of various social media platforms to improve stakeholder engagements by making sure that all GIPF members and the general public are informed and well educated about GIPF roles and responsibilities and also that all members are aware of the upcoming events. Stakeholder engagement sessions include members asking questions and seeking clarity and advice from GIPF staff members on various social media platforms. In addition, Brandt (2018) points out that Information shared on these media platforms include time schedules, activities and places which GIPF public relations department will visit in various places to meet and interact with their members and the public in general. Places normally visited include festivals, trade and business exhibition fares and activities on public holidays such as Workers Day.

### **2.3 The Concept of social media and types of social media**

The word "social media" usually refers to any internet site. However, experts claim it is a web-based program that allows users to create a profile and add friends (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Social media can be equated to mean social networking since it is considered a communication channel between members. The social network sites phenomenon is being adopted by people at a very fast rate. The social media explains the various sites where people/users can post and applications such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, which are rated as one of the top social media platforms by Huittinen (n.d.) and top five (5) of the biggest in Namibia by Islam et al. (2020) followed by You Tube and lately WhatsApp, among others.

As of September 2015, Facebook reported that approximately 1.1 billion users log in daily (Daily Active Users or DAU), which is a nearly 17 per cent annual rise. Other sites such as Twitter are not left far behind as well. Research conducted by social media Today (2016) stated that during the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2015, micro-blogging reached approximately 307 million active monthly users. At the start of 2015, Twitter had gone past the 255 million monthly active users for each quarter. From the foregoing, Public Relations Practitioners cannot ignore to benefit from the reach effectiveness this social media provides, fuelled by the fact that most people have mobile phones and most probably, access to the internet. Strikingly, website platforms are the best organisational social media strategy that can be used to engage with the target audience, create two-way interaction, share the organisational mission, vision and/or values, and permits faster

visibility and publicity, that is cost-effective. We are all aware of the trend of social media linkages to websites today.

There are different forms of social media. Collaborative projects are the easiest form of social media. They enable every user to put, eliminate or alter text-based information. A well-defined project is Wikipedia, a free, internet-based encyclopaedia created by volunteers and accessible to anybody with an internet connection. Blogs are online journals that allow users to publish and participate in various conversations (M. Weber, 2009). They are vital for firms since they assist develop a reputation, especially when favourable, and may be damaging when negative. Content communities allow people to share media content. The social media sites examine the sorts of social media by content communities as people send and receive information, photographs, instant messages and videos using these types. Users can also invite others. Due to their popularity, many businesses utilize Twitter and Facebook to reach out to potential customers, display products and advertise. WhatsApp, Snapchat, and Messenger are popular in Kenya. Because of their interactivity, they are classified as social media applications (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media will be used in the study in the sense of networking to share information.

## **2.4 Roles of Public Relations**

For more than three (3) decades, researchers have investigated Public Relations by reviewing specific functions performed by experts (Broom & Smith, 1979). Studies on Public Relations roles started with Broom & Smith (1979) who did exploratory experiments. Clients acted as the focal point of the study whereby their perceptions, attitudes and opinions on the roles/functions of Public Relations Practitioners were gathered (Taylor et al., 2007). The research came up with five (5) main functions: provider of technical services; professional prescriber; communication facilitator; problem solver and acceptant legitimizer as per Broom & Smith (1979).

However, acceptant legitimizer was later dropped after results found it non-essential. In 1982, Broom redefined the remainder of the 4 roles and termed them as an expert prescriber, facilitator of communication, communication technician and facilitator of problem-solving. The expert prescriber was responsible for the identification of communication challenges between an



enterprise and the customers and came up with solutions to the various problems (Broom & Smith, 1979). Here, the practitioner is autonomous and supposed to be very intelligent regarding public relations and communication challenges. An issue synonymous with this role is that the customers may rely on their expert prescriber as they are quite passive when it comes to solving problems (Diaz, 2015; Broom & Smith, 1979).

Since an organisation is just doing as prescribed by the practitioner instead of cooperating with the public, suggested solutions are mainly asymmetrical and not effective in the long run (Diaz, 2015). The communication facilitator links an organisation and its customers with good communication. The job is vital in assisting organisations to engage in two-way communication. (James E Grunig, 1989). The two-way symmetrical communication allows for all those involved to access sufficient information to carry out choices or decisions for mutual benefit (Broom & Smith, 1979). Expert prescribers and problem-solving process facilitators both play comparable roles. They find the source of a problem and work towards getting the solution (Broom & Smith, 1979).

Broom and Smith (1979), and (Dozier, 1992) stated that even though the application of this model can be tiresome, it has a good outcome in the long run for organisations. Ultimately, the communication technician function emphasises the real generation and communication of Public Relations items (Dozier et al., 2013). Some of the functions encompass the articulation of press releases, generation of fliers and upgrading of lists of media (Martens, 2020). The differentiating attribute of technicians is that they can carry out jobs that the customer considers essential (Yang, 2003). Compared to practitioners in other functions, this job is not associated with the identification or elimination of any challenges (Broom & Smith, 1979). A study on the four (4) initial Public Relations roles discovered that the first three (3) were mainly related although that of the communication technician was not (Wright, 1995). As a result, Dozier made simple the functions and integrated with the first three (3) to be regarded as the role of the manager and found that of the technician as different or remained separate. Under the two role typology, technicians are regarded as those involved in the production and communication of materials based on the requirements of the clients or management (Beurer-Züllig et al., 2009).

Managers are simply practitioners involved in the process of making decisions according to (Dozier, 1992). They utilise explorations to be informed of their approaches review their effectiveness or achievement (Judd, 1987). Public Relations renders an organisation highly effective, thus, when it determines the most tactical public as a constituent of strategic management and carries out communication plans to create and preserve successful long-run relations between the public and the management. Even if the initial four (4) roles are used, no single practitioner will lie into a single function all the time (Moss et al., 2005). Nonetheless, practitioners tend towards being dominant in their role (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002). Dozier et al. (2013) stated that the new technologies have the chance of helping the field of Public Relations to make new achievements or cover significant milestones. New technologies can be helpful to the management and technicians based on what it brings forth or aid the Public Relations Practitioner to accomplish (Johnson, 1997). Tools which are entirely essential in enhancing communication are important to technicians whereas those that enhance research abilities are more advantageous towards managers (Sakali, 2017).

This literature clearly shows how public relations role has changed in the social media age. There is even a new job title, termed the social media expert. Given these shifts, public relations professionals should as part of their communication strategy, incorporate social media (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009). As a result, the study is informed by the role of Public Relations Practitioners in today's social media world.

## **2.5 The link between Public Relations and Social Media**

Public relations professionals conducted a longitudinal study on the use of social media at first (Wright & Hinson, 2009a). Every year, they have done online research on the attitudes and behaviours of Public Relations Practitioners regarding the various social media instruments. Initially, the explorations emphasised on blogs, though they have changed to include new elements as they are discovered. Notwithstanding the duration of investigating social media, Wright and Hinson maintained that it is hard to deduce the actual definition of social media. Nonetheless, they acknowledged the hardship or challenge with explaining it. Consequently, they came up with their definition which stated that social media gives the ability to relay internet-based data developed created by users with the aim of communication.

The rapid emergence of social media has made it essential in public relations. Nonetheless, decades ago, the internet was not a priority among most Public Relations Practitioners (Hill & White, 2000). Even though a lot of research has been conducted in the field, the rapidly changing nature of technology renders most of them incomplete (Levenshus, 2010; Hill & White, 2000) conducted research that demonstrates the quick transformation in public relations and the instruments it brought about. They discovered that utilising the internet as a Public Relations strategy was a low priority for Public Relations practitioners in the early 2000s. Nonetheless, they discovered that public relations practitioners knew about the potential benefits of social media in the future. A website was not considered as a substitution for physical contact but as a means of reinforcing relationships that were already present, primarily due to the role of the email (Skeels & Grudin, 2009).

In Kenya, studies have proved that social media is indeed used even in government departments/agencies. Adoyo (2014) carried a case study on the effects of social media on state agencies, Kenya Revenue Authority. His findings were that Facebook and Twitter were used. A negative effect was laziness among Public Relations Practitioners. Indeed, Public Relations Practitioners have embraced social media. This informs the researcher that, as much as social media might be used, the probability of new forms emerging is high. Therefore, the need to investigate trends and that there is no need to keep structured questions only. Also, social media is there to compliment the traditional media for public relations practice.

## **2.6 PR professionals' use of social media platforms..**

Recently, most investigations have focused on public relations practitioners' use of new technology (Eyrich et al., 2008; Sha & Dozier, 2012). Academic study on social media and PR is new and primarily American. and mostly from the United States of America (USA), based on quantitative and large scale corporations (Avery et al., 2010; Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2015).

### **2.6.1 General use of social media by PR Practitioners**

Twitter and Facebook are currently widely embraced as modern technologies. Social networking applications are rapidly growing. Previously, Public Relations professionals used blogs and podcasts to communicate, with approximately 24% using social networking sites (Eyrich et al.,

2008). Modern PR campaigns include social media. According to Smits and Mogos (2013), social media humanises a corporation. People want to engage with other people, argues the author, thus social media helps them do that. So, businesses use social media to humanise their stakeholder interactions. Companies that use social media are more probably to bridge the social divide between their customers and themselves. Most of the Public Relations experts perceive that the application of social network sites has had positive effects on Public Relations and uncovered that around 85% of Public Relations experts are convinced that these tools and the conventional media are complementary and do not rival one another (Brown, 2009).

As shown, many PR professionals believe that social media and blogs influence mainstream media content, as indicated by Wright and Hinson (2008a, 2009b). It implies that even though the advantages of social media are acknowledged by the industry, conventional media is still crucial and reliable. Social media does not necessarily incorporate social networking sites but others such as message boards, blogs, Wikis, podcasts, video sharing, micro-blogging websites and really simple syndication (RSS) (Darwish & Lakhtaria, 2011).

Research is done by Wright and Hinson (2009b) surveyed the application of social media by around 574 Public Relations experts in the USA. Basic questions were asked concerning the overall significance of social media tools in public relations by an organisation and their level of importance to an organisation. Other questions covered which forms of social media the practitioners used to obtain information in the public relations discipline. They considered search engine marketing as the most significant, then blogs, social network sites, video sharing and message boards. Social bookmarking and photo sharing was the least considered. A different study conducted in the USA illustrated that Public Relations Practitioners believe that social media and conventional media collaborate and influence each other in one way or another. Social media is a reliable means of exchanging and relaying information using traditional means (Gordon, 2010).

The impact that social networking sites could have on public relations is enormous. Staff blogs, according to Yin (2009), have a large and limitless power to improve discussion, promote products and services and allow for two-way communication. Oneya's (2010) findings on social

media and public relations in Kenya were similar. Furthermore, he proved that social media is used despite obstacles such as internet accessibility, abilities, and trustworthiness. Social media usage is expanding among Kenyan organizations, spurring the need to use social media to boost government public relations. According to Cardenas (2013), the government must align its mission, goals and activities framework because of the rapid proliferation of new forms of communication for it to be effective.

### **2.6.2 The use of Facebook in communication by PR practitioners**

One free social networking site which allows users to establish accounts, post content, share images, chat with friends, and comment to or link to friends' posts is Facebook. Facebook, the most prominent social media site, has over one billion users globally and allows communicators to send messages fast and effectively (Derani & Naidu, 2016). According to Sttesk & Stránská (2015), Facebook is faster than a hotline for making an issue public and receiving a response. Unlike newspapers and television, Facebook users may read the stuff they want, 'like' and 'share' it quickly, and comment wherever and whenever they choose.

Facebook has the advantage of detecting incorrect reviews that need to be corrected (Wigley & Zhang, 2011). Also, Facebook has a larger user base, allowing public relations professionals to reach a larger audience. Based on the comments and reactions of stakeholder groups, Komodromos (2014) claims that the Facebook page is the key to monitoring crisis management. This helps prevent crises and the emergence of the company's poor image. However, most Facebook users utilize the platform to reconnect with old friends. As a result, public relations specialists may face challenges addressing diverse audiences. Although there are some disadvantages attached to using Facebook by public relations practitioners, Komodromos (2014) still maintains that it is a good base for public relations practitioners for communication because of the variety of ways to post, the speed with which to share, and the necessity of getting comments

### **2.6.3 The use of Twitter in communication by PR practitioners**

As highlighted by Willmott, L. & Wastom (2012) Public Relations Practitioners should make use of Twitter in their communication with various stakeholders due to its ability to provide instant updates. Twitter is also a microblog that allows users to publish short messages called

tweets that provide quick updates, comments, or thoughts (Willmott & Wastom, 2012). Because information transmission and audience sentiments change rapidly, instant messaging is vital to keep track of what's going on and what they're thinking. According to Evans et al. (2011), Twitter has given many people a global voice and allows PR professionals to quickly converse with and better understand the media. Because it allows everyone to retweet, there is no restriction on who can see the information.

#### **2.6.4 The use of YouTube in communication by PR practitioners**

According to Waters & Jones (2011), YouTube is a video-centric site, whereas Facebook and Twitter are text-centric. As a result, Public Relations practitioners should expect a wider range of viewers for their YouTube films. However, according to Seiple (2010), people prefer watching videos rather than reading text on websites, and YouTube videos are typically useful means to boost awareness of news and announcements. Moreover, according to Seiple (2010), YouTube videos can engage and interact with viewers, extending the reach of promotional messages. According to DiStaso & McCorkindale (2013), viral videos can be advantageous or bad to a corporation, depending on the topic. The content and editing of videos should be carefully addressed, but overall, YouTube makes PR practitioners' presentations more entertaining and appealing.

#### **2.7 The role of social media as a communication tool in an organisation**

Langett (2013) defines PR as a strategic communication service that supports and nurtures an organisation's relationship with the public. Using social media, PR professionals can exchange ideas and promote products or campaigns. They can also look at the audience's posts and reviews. Putting real-time news on social media amplifies it and strengthens public relations. According to Mykkänen & Vos (2015), employing social media platforms for communication strengthens and accelerates public-organisation contact. Furthermore, PR professionals can contact both loyal and new audiences via social media, allowing them to express themselves more freely and fearlessly.

A favourable image of the organisation is created via social media (Stříteský & Stránská, 2015). They also underlined the importance of social media in crises due to the rapid transmission of

messages. However, social media can also assist in quickly spreading the information through different people which is a disadvantage if it harms the organisation's reputation. Because social media offer new ways to communicate with customers, Tsimonis & Dimitriadis (2014) claim that brands may successfully develop and enhance client relationships. Social media like Facebook, Twitter, and others were identified as a way for an organisation to mitigate the impact of a disaster (Wendling et al., 2013). However, social media such as Facebook and Twitter may promote an organisation's information sharing with many people at a time and get input from the public's responses. This means an organisation uses social media technology to communicate with the globe.

Every public relations approach relies on a strong relationship. Social media has bonded PR professionals, organisations, and the public. According to Heinze et al. (2016), information can be delivered to the public in numerous ways, making connection building faster and easier. According to Kent & Taylor (2014), social media allows PR professionals to connect with the public in new ways. Previously, they could only create partnerships through talking and interviewing stakeholders which took a lot of time and were tiresome. Adlmaier-Herbst (2014) states that using social media allows PR practitioners to reach out to a diverse range of people, while also benefiting client connections and building wider social interactions. Social media platforms enhance the communication process in the organisation as it allows information gathering, public opinion monitoring, comments, and feedback after posting information by Public Relations Practitioners (Heinze et al., 2016; Gqamane, 2010). By following what people are thinking and saying about organisations or brands on social media, public relations professionals may get a lot of useful information (Phillips & Young, 2009).

Bridgen (2011) agrees social media plays a role in enabling active engagements between PR Practitioners and other departments for the company success. For a firm or organisation, the main message is the patrons' aspirations and attitudes toward their needs (Gilaninia et al., 2013). Thus, to succeed and satisfy customers, corporations place great demands on PR personnel's knowledge, involving them more and more in organisational or corporate activities. Furthermore, solid internal ties assist PR professionals to grasp the company's goals and how their work may help them (Adlmaier-Herbst, 2014). The large user base of social media provides a wealth of

material for PR professionals to analyse, making them more skilled in stakeholder positioning (Navarro et al., 2017). They examine the huge information collected directly or indirectly and make significant contributions to the firm in three ways: connection building, decision-making and strategy enhancement.

Social media is a communication tool because it allows PR professionals to influence company decisions and so improve company strategy. Companies with strong PR teams use stronger reputation management tactics (Doorley & Garcia, 2015). According to Shamsan & Otieno (2015), the PR department decides on branding and communication tactics. PR helps organisations by recognising the subjects and examining the key components of their surroundings through personal or social media communication (Onsongo et al., 2017). According to Mykkänen & Vos (2015), practitioners who assist firms in adapting to changing circumstances actively manage decisions rather than just implement them. Previously, communication was inconvenient, and PR professionals were more likely to do what their companies asked.

## **2.8 Strategies to enhance social media visibility by PR practitioners**

According to Rawat & Divekar (2014), social media platforms can assist Public Relations Practitioners to increase visibility by analyzing visitor overview results and focusing on sources that generate more traffic. Rawat and Divekar (2014) advised companies to use free websites and social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and WordPress to raise awareness instead of paying for services. PR pros may simply promote marketing initiatives via Facebook postings by integrating marketing messages with competitions and enjoyment. This allows businesses to utilize social media to develop the use of their products or services in a more indirect way.

Public relations practitioners might use competitions and guidance on their social media platforms to increase social media awareness (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis 2014). Also, through interactions with customers on social media, relationships are formed between the firm and users. The organisation now talks with its clients daily, strengthening the bond between the two. This communication is more individualised and tailored to suit different clients strengthening this bond. Customers are quick to express their concerns on social media platforms (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Moreover, through social media, Public Relations professionals may rapidly



answer clients' inquiries, demands, or ideas, allowing them to voice their opinions about the company or even their mood (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014).

Rawat & Divekar (2014) highlights that social media can assist a company in gaining brand recognition because this is a great way for new customers to get to know the brand. Social media users quickly become aware of a brand through competitions, giveaways, and most importantly, the viral effect of shared messages. Firms can encourage customers to share a message by using social media tools like Twitter Re-Tweets and Facebook Like Buttons and increase social media awareness. Regular conversation with clients can assist boost social media prominence. Also, businesses can have a cheap channel that is always open where fans may talk to them like friends and get answers in minutes. This direct style of communicating can build trust between people and brands. Brand loyalty increased sales, and new client acquisition is projected benefits in this strategy (Kasemsap, 2018).

## **2.9 Theoretical framework**

### **2.9.1 Theory of Social Presence**

John Short, Bruce Christie and Ederyn Williams developed the Theory of Social Presence (1976). A good communication occurs when the medium has sufficient social presence, says theory. Aspects of physical communication have the largest social presence, while textual communication has the lowest. In the notion, two (2) people interact with each other to fulfill particular roles while maintaining a level of intimacy. Interparty and interpersonal communication are the two (2) components of any interaction (Short et al., 1976).

The social influence model of technology was developed by Dubois & Gadde (2002). It can also affect one's behavior. This hypothesis claims that media attitudes and effects are partially socially created. The socio-psycho methods used to describe communication technology generation and utilization trends include social learning (Gillin, 2007) and social information processing (Eisenhardt, 1989). The theory also states that behavior patterns should develop from observing others, their consequences, and emotional reactions (Eisenhardt, 1989).

A communication displaying others' beliefs, actions, and practices may have this social influence. According to this view, social media has changed how public relations is done in government. Scholars disprove approaches or concepts thought to be useful in government PR. For example, in the age of social media, the public information paradigm must be abandoned due to interactivity, two-way communication, and dialogic elements.

### **2.9.2 The Media Richness Theory**

The media richness theory assumes that all communication is intended to eliminate ambiguity and uncertainty (Schmidt et al., 2017). It claims that the degree of richness in social media is based on the ability to express various verbal and nonverbal messages, immediate response, natural language usage, and personal emphasis. Clarity is better resolved by some social media than others. Not every message requires rich media. Instead, one can use sparse media to convey these messages. The most valuable interactions are in person, followed by phone, email, and print (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 2017). Using the above theories, people can be influenced positively or negatively by social media based on the volume and type of information conveyed perceptions and the required socialisation.

According to the media richness idea, when team members employ richer media for ambiguous tasks, their performance improves (Dennis & Kinney, 1998). If social media can be used in public relations practice, this is true. For academic literature has championed social media as one of the finest ways to open an organisation to the conversation and develop long-term ties with the public (Kelleher, 2009; Kelleher & Miller, 2006). According to Robson & James (2013), social media is a tool for reaching Public Relations practice goals. According to some authors, organizations must be transparent, authentic, relinquish control, engage, collaborate, and communicate promptly (Henderson & Bowley, 2010). This makes it richer media for government Public Relations.

### **2.10 Chapter summary**

This chapter reviewed the literature concerning assessing the use of social media in Public Relations Practices. From the various sources reviewed, the use of social media platforms in organisations plays an important positive role in the work of Public Relations Practices.

Although social media poses many benefits to the Public Relations Practitioners in their line of work and the organisation at large, constant monitoring and active engagement with the public, clients or users is needed to avoid incorrect information being shared, which is likely to harm the firm's image. The literature revealed that the use of social media in Public Relations Practices is beneficial as it enables the sharing of information with a wider base of users, improves active communication between the PR Practitioners, help to build strong relationships with customers through active engagements and everyday dialogues. Also, in this chapter, theories supporting the study were presented. The next chapter investigates the way the study was conducted by addressing the research methods.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Research methodology addresses the reasoning and philosophy behind the procedures utilized in the context of one's research project, as well as the research methods themselves. In other words, research methodology is concerned with the research process and the decisions made by the researcher to complete the project (Brynard et al., 2014). The research approach, research paradigm, research design and research methods research validity, reliability, and trustworthiness, as well as ethical concerns, are all covered in this chapter.

### **3.2 Research design**

A research design is a plan for conducting research. It includes a description of the investigation's main components as well as the reason for the research approach chosen in respect to the research questions (Denscombe, 2010). Similarly, Creswell & Creswell (2017) pointed out that within qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methodologies approaches, there are several forms of inquiry that direct procedures and method selection in a study. As a result, this study employed a cross-sectional survey design. By studying a sample of a population, survey research can provide a quantitative or numeric description of that population's trends, attitudes, or opinions. It includes cross-sectional and longitudinal studies that collect data using questionnaires or structured interviews to extrapolate findings from a sample to the entire population (Connelly, 2016). The research was done with the help of a descriptive rating, Likert-type survey that was used to collect quantitative data from the three sample groups; clients, GIPF workers and stakeholders. Observations and personal interviews would not have provided the same level of honesty as the anonymous survey because of the study's nature and length. Furthermore, adding observations, interviews, or focus groups to the survey instrument administration would increase the risk of bias and inconsistency, and the data collected would not have provided the concrete data needed for analysis. The researcher was able to collect rich and dependable because of the design.

### **3.3 Research paradigm**

Denscombe (2010) claims that all research methodologies and tactics are predicated on assumptions about social reality and how to get knowledge about it (epistemology). Social scientists perform research based on certain theoretical notions and ontological and epistemological assumptions (Blaikie, 2018). This study adopted the positivist research paradigm. A positivist lens develops knowledge through careful observation and measurement of the objective reality that exists "out there" in the world (Cresswell, 2014). According to Aliyu et al. (2014), in positivism only empirical knowledge is reliable. The researcher's role in positivist investigations is confined to data gathering on instruments based on the participants responses to questionnaires or the researcher's objective interpretation (Phillips et al., 2000). According to Ryan (2018), positivism is a subset of empiricism and is related to experiments and quantitative research. Empiricism is one of two rationalist or empiricist views that believes knowledge should be objective and free of any researcher prejudice. Positivists think that reality is the same for everyone and that observation and measurement reveal reality. According to Ormston et al. (2014), positivist philosophy allows the study of social science to be quantified and supported by evidence.

### **3.4 Research Approach**

Research approaches are research plans and procedures that cover everything from broad assumptions to detailed data collection, analysis, and interpretation methods (Cresswell, 2014). This study was conducted using a mixed-method approach. In a single study, mixed methods research is defined as research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and makes inferences utilising both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methodologies (Doyle et al., 2009). According to Bryman (2006), the advantages of the mixed-method approach is that it brings triangulation and completeness to the study. Triangulation seeks to corroborate quantitative and qualitative data to increase the validity of a study whilst completeness refers to a more complete and thorough view of the subject under inquiry from combining research methods (Bryman, 2006).

### **3.5 Population and sampling**

#### **3.5.1 Population**

A population includes individuals who possess specific characteristics in a certain study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). GIPF is controlled by a Board of Trustees selected by the employer (the Government of Namibia) and the employee trade unions (the Namibian National Teachers' Union (NANTU) and the Namibian Public Workers' Union (NAPWU)). The population of this study included all GIPF staff members based at the Head Office and regional office (246), clients (members) of GIPF (110,364) and stakeholders which are the trade unions (54).

#### **3.5.2 Sampling procedure and sample size**

Sampling is one of the most basic processes in conducting surveys (Fink, 2003). A sample is a portion representing a larger population since it is not possible to get a response from everyone in the population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). For this study, two methods of sampling were used to select the respondents to form the sample. These are purposive sampling which is a non-probability sampling method and simple random sampling which is a probability sampling method. Purposive sampling is a method of sampling units based on the researcher's knowledge and professional judgment (Saunders et al., 2012). This is only used when the researcher is certain that the participant is representative of the entire target population (Sincero, 2012). Purposive sampling was used to select GIPF employees who work in the Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement department.

The advantages of purposive sampling are that it reduces the error margin because data is collected directly from the source. The same characteristics identify each person in the same demographic. The members of the sample group all have a sufficient understanding and knowledge of the subject under consideration, which means there will be less downtime. The researcher does not have to process the data to get results because they can ask specific questions that yield the exact answers they need in each situation. The respondents are people who think or act the same in certain situations (Vehovar et al., 2016). When researchers collect data from a specific population sample using surveys or polls, the information they obtain is useful in real-time situations. According to Sincero (2012), the disadvantage of purposive sampling is that it is usually skewed because no randomisation was used to select the sample.

It is also worth noting that not everyone in the population had the same chance of being chosen. As a result, the entire population might be misrepresented, which will limit the generalisability of the study's findings.

With simple random sampling, each member of the population has an equal chance of being chosen as a subject in this method. The entire sampling procedure is completed in a single step, with each subject chosen separately from the rest of the population (Cresswell, 2014). The simple random sampling method was used to select clients from the GIPF database, and they were contacted in a bid to seek their permission to be included in the study. A total sample of 103 participants was randomly selected from the clients, GIPF staff and stakeholders taken from GIPF's list of key stakeholders.

One of the best features of simple random sampling is its simplicity. It is also considered a fair form of sampling because each member has an equal probability of getting chosen (Sharma, 2017). The need for a complete list of all population members is one of the most obvious limitations of simple random sampling. The population list must be current and large populations usually lack this list. Efforts were made to make sure that the list was updated.

The sample size of 103 participants was broken down as follows: fifty five (55) staff members from GIPF's Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement department, thirty two (32) members or clients of GIPF and sixteen (16) stakeholders (trade unions for teachers, nurses and media institutions) that have interest in GIPF but are not members or clients of GIPF.

### **3.6 Data collection**

Primary data was obtained through the use of open-ended and close-ended questionnaires. The researcher created questionnaires that were tailored to the study's goals and distributed them to the participants. According to Creswell (2021), a questionnaire is a written or printed form used in gathering information on some subjects, consisting of a set of questions to be submitted to one or more individuals. The respondents included staff members from GIPF, clients and stakeholders. Pilot testing was done by giving out questionnaires to a small number of respondents before the actual research to improve the success and effectiveness of the

investigation. Pilot testing is explained by Leavy (2017) as a complete run-through of your study to minimise or eliminate bias. Adjustments of the instruments were based on the pilot test feedback. The same research instruments were then used by the participants during the data collection session to enhance reliability. The advantages of the questionnaire are that large volumes of data are collected in a short space of time and at a low cost (Williamson, 2013). Questionnaires can easily and quickly be quantified by the researcher using software packages. The downsides of questionnaires include that people may perceive each question differently and hence respond based on their perception. Also, guided questions do not allow for probing and are restrictive (Jones et al., 2008). Another disadvantage is that not all questionnaires may be returned, reducing the number of respondents. The questionnaires were provided by the researcher to the study participants and then collected for analysis.

Interviews were done over the telephone and some, face to face with GIPF employees who work in the Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement department. When in-depth information on people's opinions, beliefs, experiences, and feelings is required, interviews are an effective strategy (Doody & Noonan, 2013). When the topic of inquiry necessitates a lot of probing and complicated questioning, interviews are a good option. The disadvantages of interviews is that people may be afraid to clearly express their thoughts and they might withhold some valuable information.

Secondary data was also used in this study. Secondary data refers to data that is readily available whether published or unpublished (Hox & Boeije, 2005). Secondary data sources included academic books and journals that provided the study's conceptual framework (Bist, 2014). This study also reviewed and analysed legal documents from GIPF which were accessed at their offices after permission was granted. These documents included policies, strategic documents, protocols, resolutions, and conventions underlying the use of social media in Public Relations practice. These documents contain orders initiated from another body to maintain peace, harmony, orderliness, and effective communication without leakage in the public relations practice. These materials are sought for supplemental research data that can help contextualise one's research within its subject. They can also reveal details that informants have forgotten and track changes and development, all of which can be important in answering research questions.



In respect of document analysis, existing theoretical knowledge was used to validate conclusions from analysed documents (Bowen, 2009).

### **3.7 Validity and reliability testing**

Validity is how well an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure (Sullivan, 2011). On the other hand, Golafshani (2003) defined validity as to whether the methods, approaches and techniques used relate to and measure the issues being explored in the study. The researcher had the responsibility to ensure that measurement validity is maintained in the research (Punch & Oancea, 2014; Bryman, 2004). According to Leedy & Ormrod (2015), validity leads to the accuracy, meaningfulness and credibility of the research project as a whole that should allow one to draw meaningful and justifiable conclusions from the data. In considering the issue of validity, the researcher asked the question of whether the conclusions being drawn are truly warranted by the data as well as whether what has been observed in the research situation can be used to make generalisations about the world beyond the specific situation studied.

There were four different categories of validity used in this investigation. Face validity, content validity, criterion validity, and concurrent validity are the four types of validity. Face validity was improved in this study by conducting a pilot test to ensure that the various items were relevant and representational of the intended environment. The extent to which a measurement instrument is reflective of the sample of the content area being tested is referred to as content validity (Sireci, 1998). It's a metric for how well a topic has been covered. Content validity in this study was ensured by covering content about strategy implementation, linking it to factors affecting strategy implementation on the questionnaires. The study ensured that all major topics and themes relating to the study were covered. Criterion validity is the ability to predict the existence of some current conditions. Criterion validity could not be proven because no alternative standard measure of equivalent constructs or specified criteria were provided. Concurrent validity compares the result of particular research work with other works. The questionnaire items were constructed following the study's theoretical and conceptual underpinnings to achieve construct validity for the current investigation.

A technique's reliability is determined by its ability to produce consistent results, similar observations or conclusions by other researchers, and transparency in how meaning was derived from raw data (Abowitz & Toole, 2010). According to de Vet et al. (2006), research findings are trustworthy if they can be replicated. The degree to which a measuring device is repeatable and consistent is referred to as reliability (Gaberson, 1997). The reliability of the questionnaire was obtained by administering different versions to the same group of individuals in the pilot study. The scores from the two versions were correlated to evaluate the consistency of results across alternate versions. If they are highly correlated (in agreement), then they are known as parallel-form reliability (Mohajan, 2017).

### **3.8 Data analysis and interpretation**

Quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques are used depending on the type of data collected and the methods used in data collection (Sandelowski, 2000). The goal of data analysis is to find, describe, and explain patterns. Data analysis is the process of reducing the volume of data by providing order, structure, and meaning to it (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). Quantitative analysis techniques were employed to analyse data in this study. The simplest level of quantitative analysis, descriptive statistics, was used in this study, which is limited to the analysis of frequencies and averages (Fisher & Marshall, 2009).

The collected data were tallied and recorded into percentages, which were then used to draw up graphs and charts. The presentation of data was in form of tables and a variety of charts to enable an easier understanding of the analysed data. The tables and charts showed the numbers and percentages, reflecting respondents' opinions and attitudes. Descriptive statistics were used so that users could easily analyse and interpret the data.

### **3.9 Ethical considerations**

The researcher obtained permission to collect data from the appropriate authorities at GIPF in the office of the Chief Executive Officer. Permission was also sought from participating employees and clients through consent forms/letters. The informed consent form/letter includes adequate information (including participant's rights).

The researcher sought ethical clearance from the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), before going into the field to collect data. This was done to ensure that the researcher received consent from the institution to conduct research and collect data. The ethical clearance form was prepared by the researcher in consultation with his supervisor and accompanied by the actual research proposal, which was submitted to the NUST Faculty Research Ethics Committee. The researcher sought the consent of the participants to record the interviews and they were assured of their anonymity and told that the interviews were solely for academic purposes only. The obtained data was kept private by being kept in a locked safe in the researcher's office, and all raw data would be destroyed three (3) years after the study is completed.

### **3.10 Chapter summary**

The research design, approach, strategy, methods, sampling procedures, and techniques employed in this study are all described in this chapter. This chapter looked at how data was collected, organised, and analysed. The outcomes of the data analysis conducted using close-ended questionnaires and document analysis are presented and discussed in Chapter 4.

## **CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The primary data from respondents is presented and analysed in this chapter by employing thematic analysis. The chapter linked the data collected with the research objectives. The chapter commences with highlighting the response rate and goes to present, analyse data, and discuss findings. The chapter will be concluded with a chapter summary.

### **4.2 Response rate**

The study participants were given 120 questionnaires by the researcher. From those questionnaires distributed, 103 questionnaires were used for data collection, while 17 were discarded due to a large amount of missing data, and others were not returned to the researcher for analysis. The technique of presenting interview participants used in this study was Bhargava's (2010) method of referring to them as IP1 (Interview Participant 1, IP2 (Interview Participant 2) and so on.

### **4.3 Demographics of respondents and the response rate**

The researcher sought to understand more about the respondents. This resulted in soliciting information regarding respondents' gender, age range, how long respondents were affiliated to GIPF and finally, the highest educational qualifications attained. The results are shown in Table 4.1.

The research accomplished a mean response rate of 83%. According to Creswell (2008), an 80% response rate is favourable for the reliability of results. The high response rates were attained through pre-testing research instruments before carrying out the field research. Also, respondents were guaranteed confidentiality resulting in a willingness to participate in this study.

#### 4.4 Summary data for the sample

**Table 4.1.** Demographic characteristics of the study respondents.

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Response, n (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>	
- <i>Female</i>	45 (44 %)
- <i>Male</i>	58 (56%)
<b>Age in years</b>	
- <i>18-30</i>	18 (18%)
- <i>31-40</i>	37 (36%)
- <i>Over 40</i>	48 (47%)
<b>Group</b>	
- <i>GIPF Staff</i>	55 (53%)
- <i>Clients</i>	32 (31%)
- <i>Stakeholders</i>	16 (16%)
<b>Education level</b>	
- <i>Grade 11/12</i>	10 (10%)
- <i>Diploma</i>	28 (27%)
- <i>Bachelor's degree</i>	49 (48%)
- <i>Master's degree</i>	16 (15%)

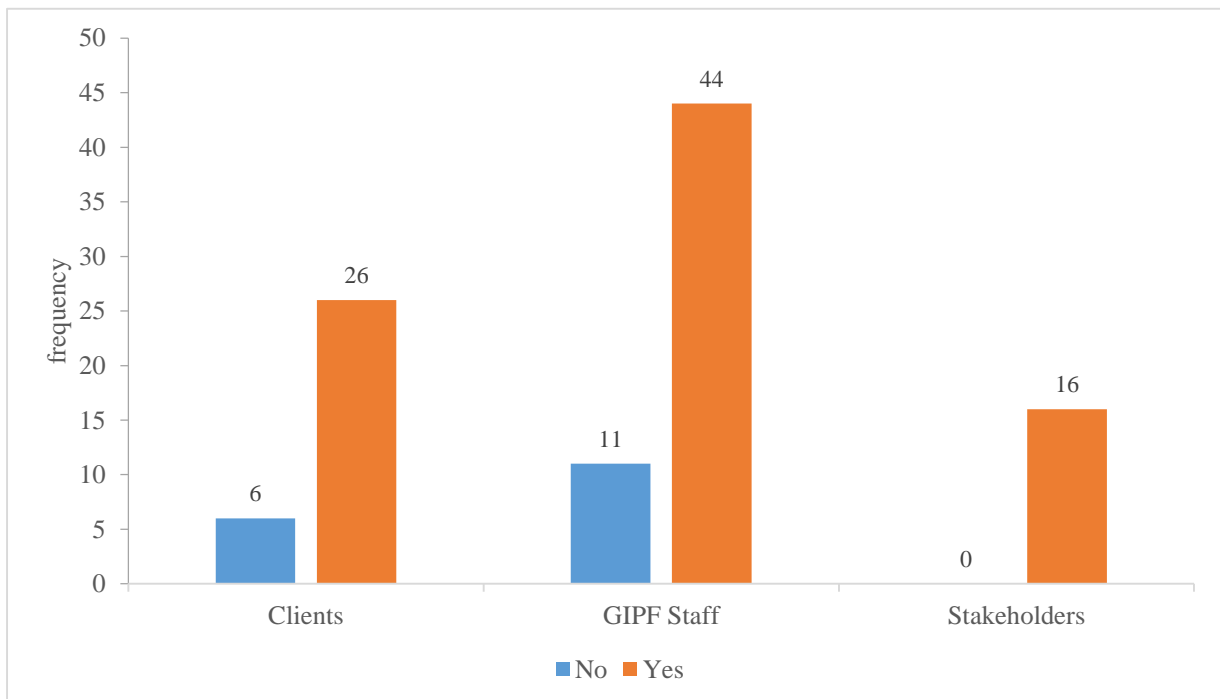
A total of 103 respondent data was collected and used for data analysis. The respondents comprised 58 (56%) males and 45 (44%) females. The gender distribution shows that the affiliation of GIPF is well represented with both gender consisting of almost 1 male to 1 female, hence, the equal employment opportunity is being well observed. The clients and stakeholders are well represented in terms of gender. The GIPF staff constituted 53% of the respondents, followed by the clients (31%) and stakeholders (16%). Respondents were also asked to highlight the age category to which they fall under on the given ranges. 18 (18%) of the respondents were between 18 to 30 years of age while 37 (36%) respondents were between 31 to 40 years. Finally, the category above 40 years comprised of the bigger portion of respondents with 48 (47%) respondents.

The results show that 6 (6%) respondents highlighted that they have been affiliated to the GIPF between 1 to 2 years while 25 (24%) respondents had been affiliated to the GIPF between 3 to 5

years. Respondents who had been affiliated to the GIPF for the period ranging between 6 to 8 years consisted of 42 (41%). Lastly, the category which cited they had been affiliated to the GIPF for more than 9 years were 30 (29%). Consequently, 70% of the respondents were affiliated with the GIPF for more than 6 years. Hence responses given by participants demonstrated such knowledge on the issues surrounding the use of social media in the public relations practices within the GIPF. Respondents were also requested to highlight the highest academic qualifications they had attained by the time of the study. Respondents who held a grade 11 or 12 certificate consisted of 10 (10%), and a national Diploma consisted of 28 (27%). Respondents who hold a bachelor's degree constituted the majority with 49 (48%) respondents while for the master's degree category were 16 (15%).

#### 4.5 Public Relations Practitioners' use of social media platforms in communication

The fifth interview question aimed at probing interviewees the most effective social media platforms to be used in public relations practices and the reasons behind their responses. The number of times each social media platform is mentioned is shown in brackets. The applied social media sites as categorised by the interviewees are shown in Figure 4.1.

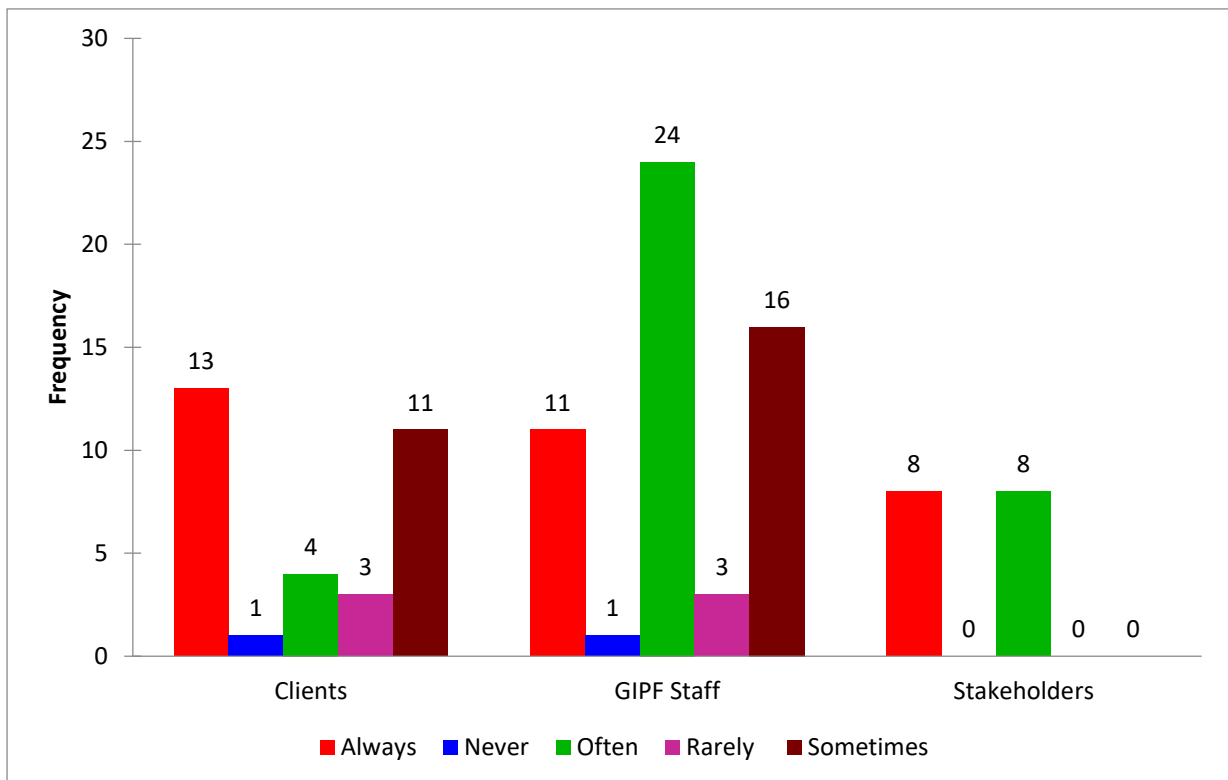


**Figure 4.1.** Respondent's use of social media.

The figure above indicates that 86 (83%) respondents used social media platforms to communicate with GIPF while 17 (17%) of the respondents highlighted that they did not use social media to communicate with GIPF staff members. GIPF staff (44) indicated more than any other group the use of social media, followed by their clients (26) and lastly stakeholders (16).

#### 4.5.1 The rate of using social media for communication

Respondents were asked whether they use social media daily. The responses from respondents are illustrated in the figure below:

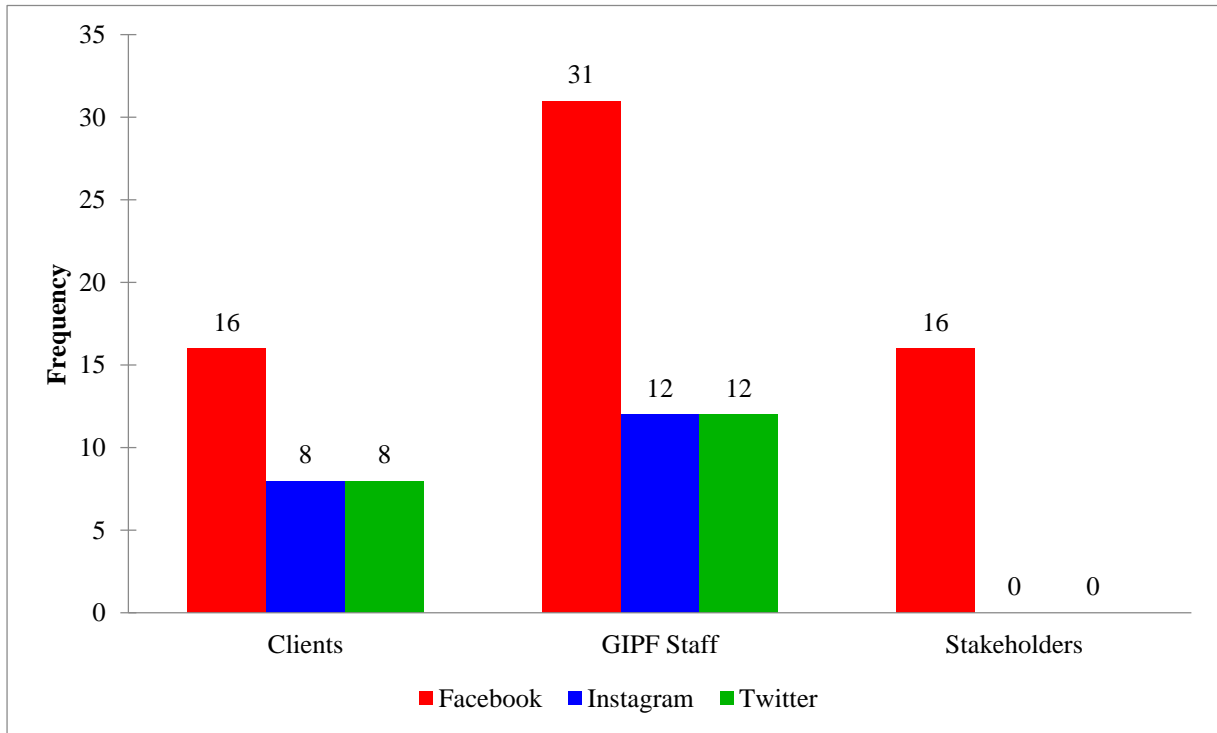


**Figure 4.2.** Rate of using social media daily.

Figure 4.2 above illustrates that 28% (Clients – 13, GIPF Staff – 11, Stakeholders - 8) of the respondents ‘always’ use social media daily and a significant portion (38%) ‘often’ use social media every day. About 27% of the respondents confirmed that they ‘sometimes’ use social media daily. However, only 8% of the surveyed respondents indicated that ‘never’ (2%) or ‘rarely’ (6%) use social media every day.

#### 4.5.2 The most effective social media platform used to engage with stakeholders

The most frequently mentioned platform was Facebook 60% (Clients – 16, GIPF Staff – 31, Stakeholders - 16), followed by Instagram and Twitter equally at 20% (Clients – 16, GIPF Staff – 24, Stakeholders - 0).



**Figure 4.3.** Effective social media platforms.

Twelve respondents indicated that Facebook was their first mainstream social networking site. One respondent called Facebook a "game-changer":

*"I think Facebook has kind of hit a plateau and it is at a scale now where we can't ignore it." (IP4)*

On the contrary, another respondent believed that Facebook's relevance to younger audiences has declined. Also, according to the interviewee, they are of the opinion that Facebook will lose appeal to millennials:



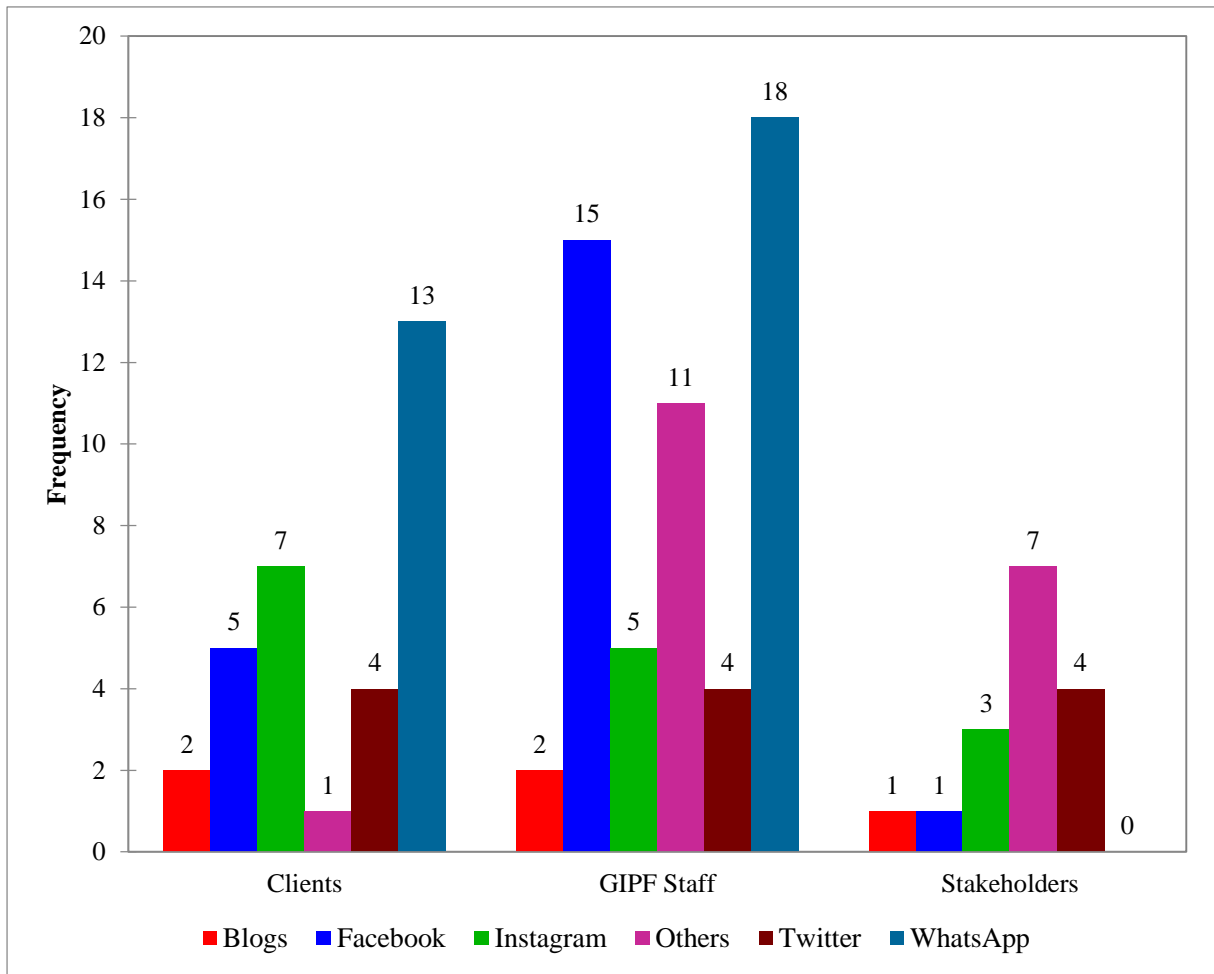
*“I think Facebook as a platform has just become cluttered. There is a lot on there; it is noisy, confusing. It feels more branded and less personal. So, the Millennials we are trying to reach tend to gravitate towards Instagram because it feels more personal.”*

Twitter, according to one of the respondents, has had an impact on public relations. Instagram was regarded as more significant than Facebook. The questionnaire surveys revealed that public relations professionals still rely on traditional social media channels like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Despite the public's involvement, other platforms were only moderately used. This aligns with the discovery made by Bhargava (2010), that public relations professionals choose more “traditional” online technologies.

Facebook was the most effective social media platform mentioned by surveyed respondents. The use of Facebook in PR operations grew over time. Globally, Facebook has 1.65 billion daily active users and seems to be the most popular (Arora et al., 2019). Facebook's user base has grown (Thompson & Vogelstein, 2018). In April 2020, during the Covid-19 shutdown, Facebook set in motion Messenger Rooms, a competitor to group video calling services like Zoom which were in high demand. (Nash, 2020).

#### **4.5.3 Social media platforms used for communication by PR practitioners.**

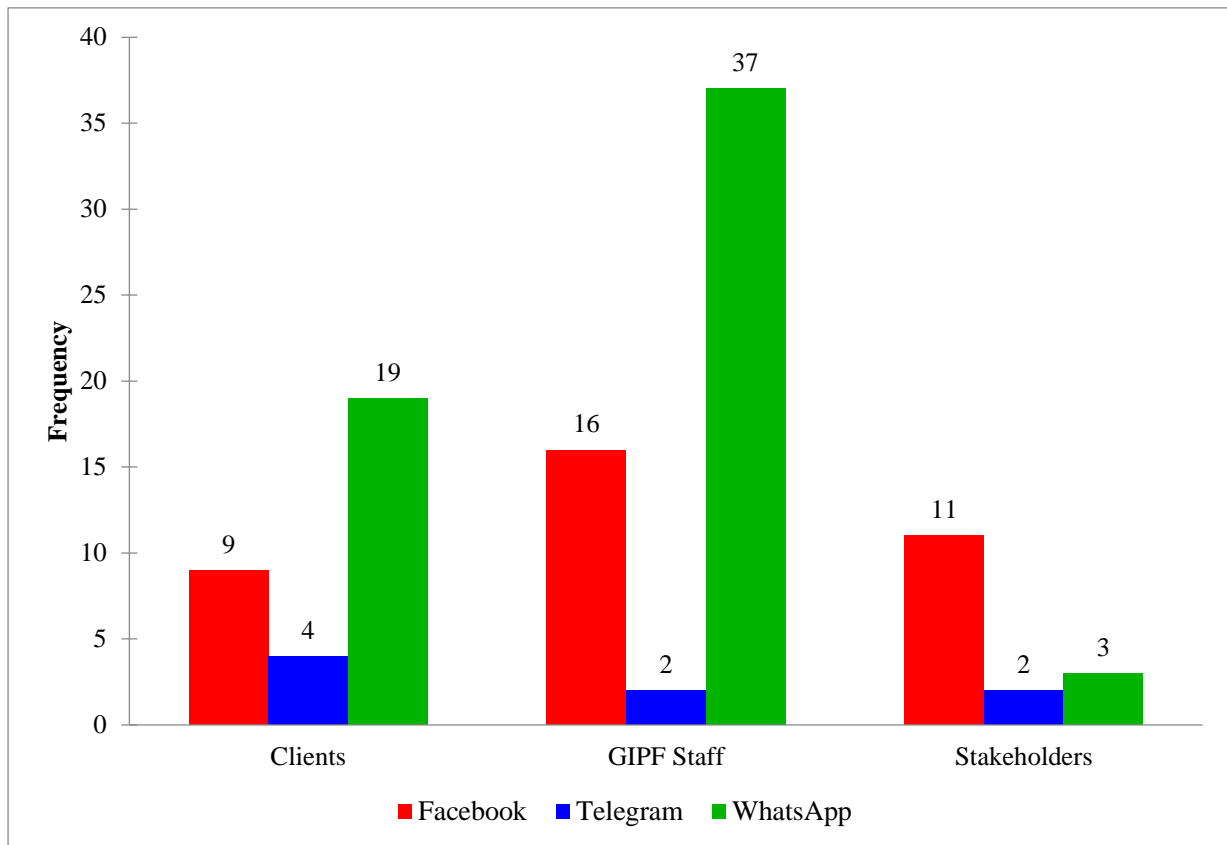
Respondents were also asked the modes of social media platforms they used. To respond to this question the respondents were given a list of social media platforms where they were supposed to highlight with a tick the platforms they used. The responses from the participants are highlighted in the following Figure 4.4:



**Figure 4.4.** Most popular social media platforms used.

The results in figure 4.4 show that the most preferred social media platform by the respondents is WhatsApp 31 (30%), followed by Facebook with 21 (20%), Others e.g., YouTube, Tik Tok etc. 19 (18%), Instagram 15 (15%), Twitter 12 (12%) and blogs 5 (5%). Even though Twitter usage has fallen in recent years, respondents said they still use it, but on a less frequent basis than other platforms. The site was mostly utilised to communicate with journalists, according to participants. This was in line with previous research, which found that Twitter was the most popular social media network among journalists (Vis, 2013; de Ziga et al., 2018).

Respondents were asked to cite the preferred social media platform used by GIPF when responding to complaints or critical comments.

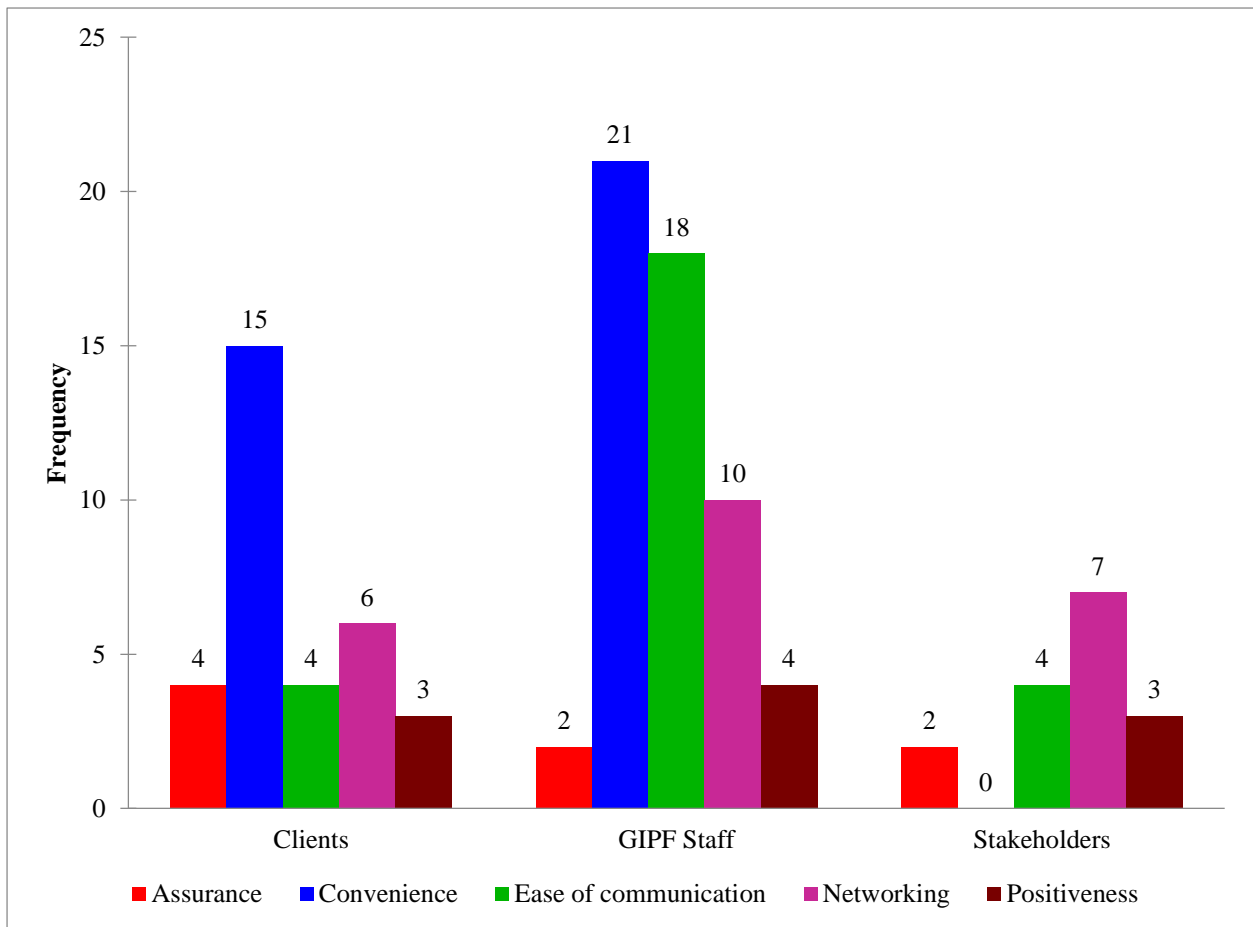


**Figure 4.5.** Preferred social media platform when responding to complaints and critical comments.

Figure 4.5 above showed the responses that the respondents highlighted on the preferred social media platforms by GIPF when responding to complaints or critical comments. Most of the respondents cited WhatsApp as the preferred platform for receiving complaints or critical comments which was selected by 57% (Clients – 19, GIPF Staff – 37, Stakeholders - 3) of the respondents was followed by Facebook 35% (Clients – 9, GIPF Staff – 16, Stakeholders - 11) and others specifically Telegram with 8% (Clients – 4, GIPF Staff – 2, Stakeholders - 2) each of the respondents. None of the participants cited Blogs or Instagram as the preferred social media platform which may be employed by the GIPF in responding to complaints or critical comments.

#### **4.5.4 Attributes of social media affecting the preference of respondents**

Respondents were asked to highlight the attributes of social media that made the platform a preference used in maintaining relationships for GIPF. The respondents' feedback regarding the question is illustrated in the following Figure 4.6.

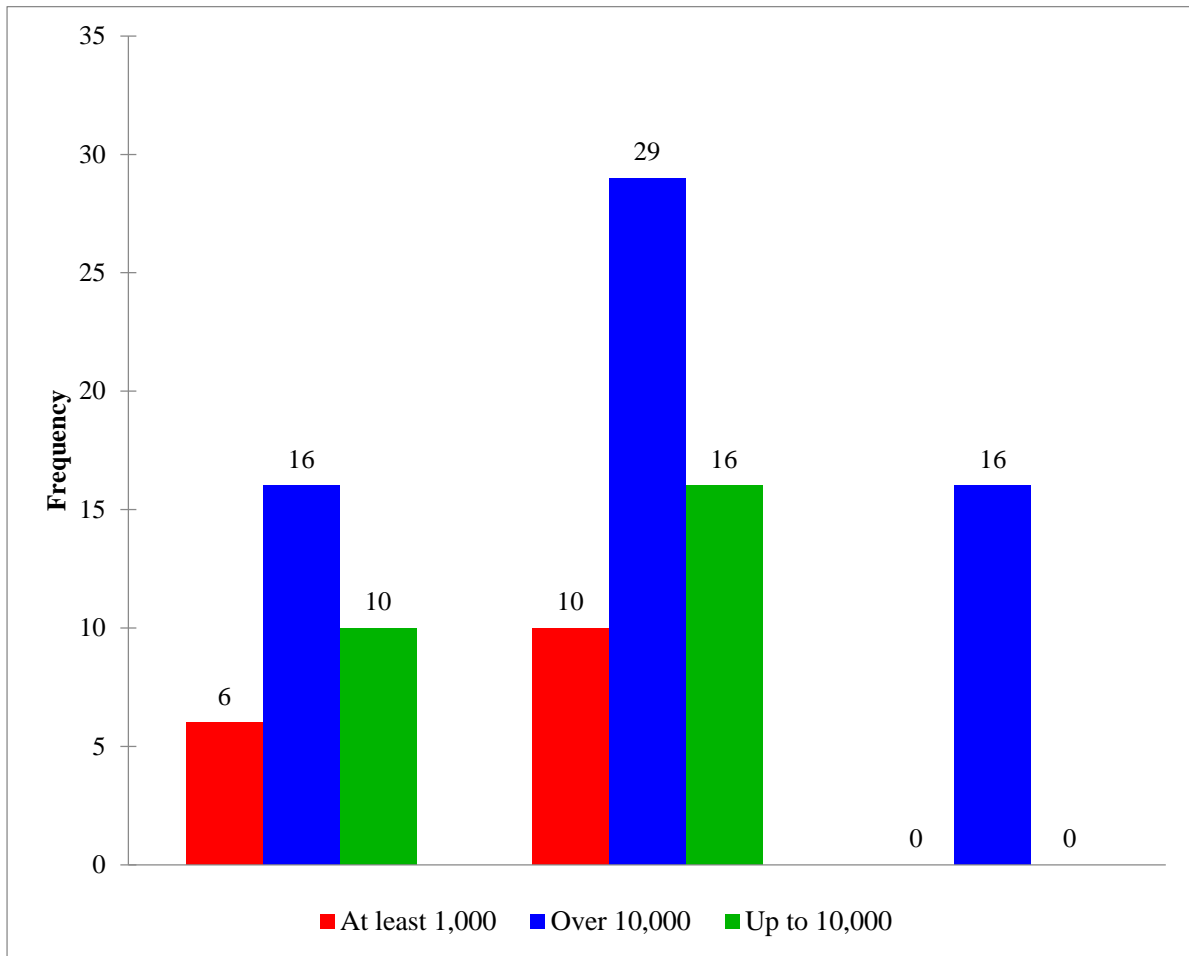


**Figure 4.6.** Social media attributes.

From the above Figure 4.6, the attribute of social media that respondents highlighted mostly was convenience with 35% of the respondents (Clients – 15, GIPF Staff – 21, Stakeholders - 0), followed by ease of communication 25% (Clients – 4, GIPF Staff – 18, Stakeholders - 4), networking 22% (Clients – 19, GIPF Staff – 10, Stakeholders - 7), positiveness 10% (Clients – 3, GIPF Staff – 4, Stakeholders - 3) and openness 8% (Clients – 3, GIPF Staff – 4, Stakeholders - 3). None of the respondents cited Assurance as an attribute to social media.

#### 4.5.5 Number of users who may be reached through a social media platform

Respondents were asked to quantify the number of people who can be reached through social media platforms based on membership in various groups. The responses from the respondents are presented in the Figure below.



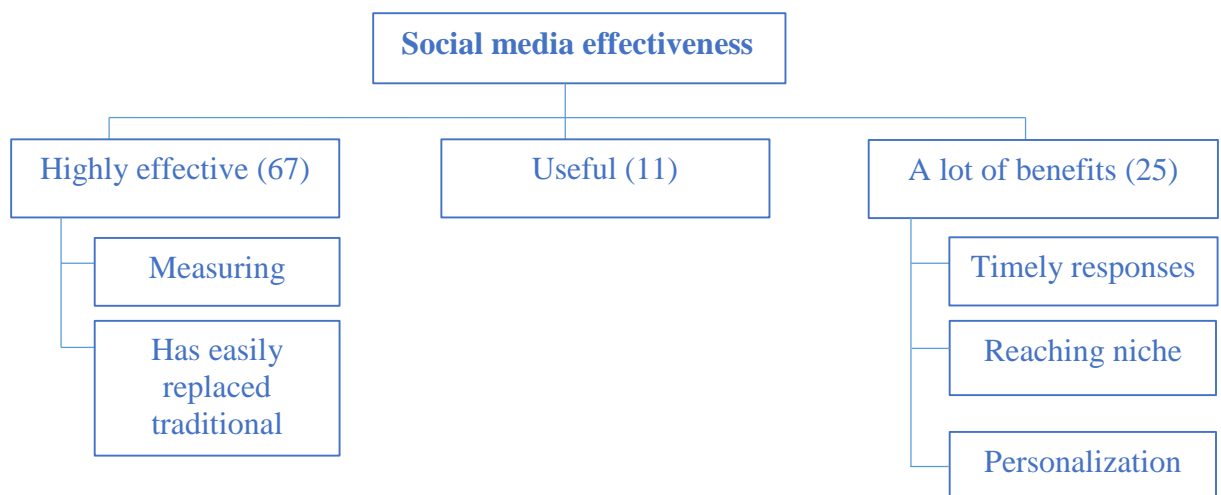
**Figure 4.7.** The number of users reached.

No respondent said social media platforms can only reach 100 users. Even though, most of the respondents highlighted those that can be reached by social media communication can reach 10 000 resembled by 25% (Clients – 10, GIPF Staff – 16, Stakeholders - 0), the greatest number of respondents agreed that it can reach over 10000 users based on membership in various groups 59% (Clients – 16, GIPF Staff – 29, Stakeholders - 16). 16% (Clients – 6, GIPF Staff – 10, Stakeholders - 0) of the respondents said communication on social media can reach at least 1000 users.

## 4.6 Social media as a communication tool by Public Relations Practitioners

### 4.6.1 The role as a cost-effective channel of engaging with the public

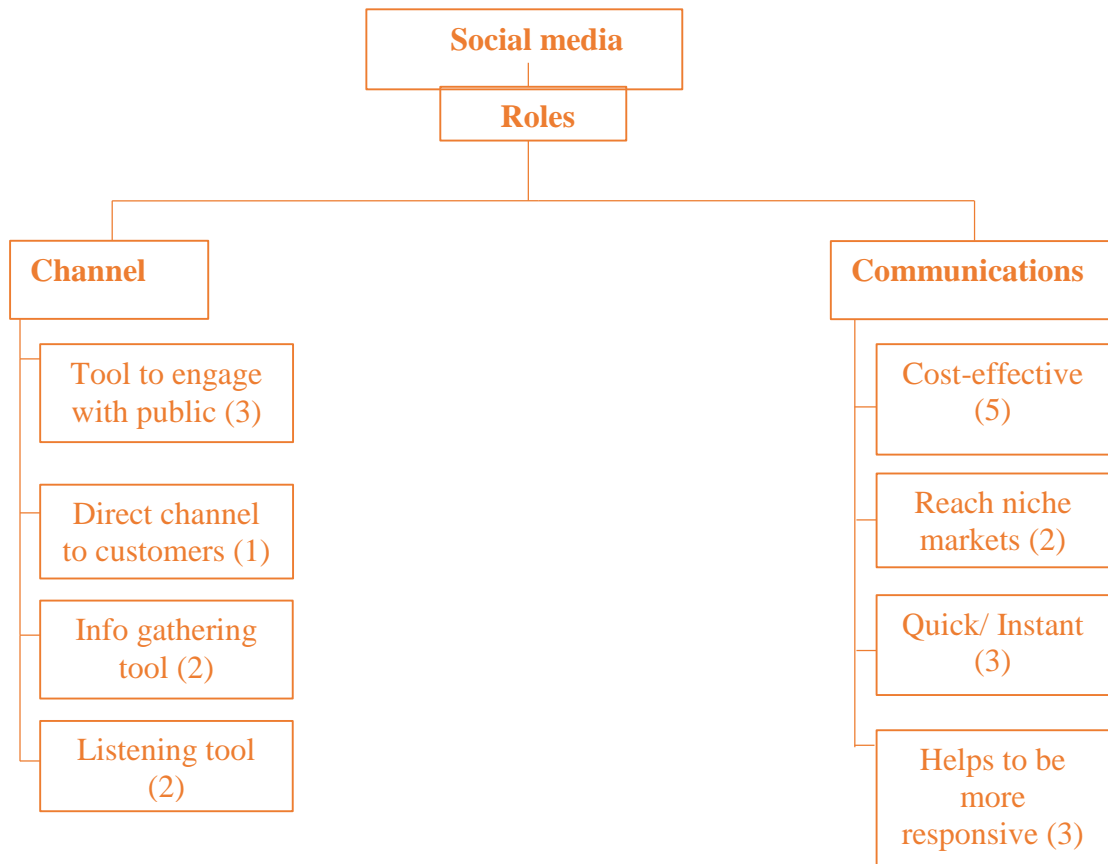
The first interview question aimed at probing interviewees to discuss whether GIPF uses social media platforms in public relations practices and how effective the GIPF adopts social media in public relations. Three themes namely very effective, useful and a lot of benefits were derived from interviewees. Figure 5 illustrates the thematic analysis of the respondents' responses. Social media was deemed a cost-effective and rapid communication tool by all respondents.



**Figure 4.8.** Social media effectiveness.

According to the above graph, 67 interviewees revealed social media was very effective, while 11 indicated it was useful. Twenty-five interviewees also stated that when used properly, social media provides numerous benefits. When asked about the perceived role of social media as a communication tool at GIPF. Social media features and affordances as a communication channel were related to the replies, as was the nature of social media communications.

As a result, the responses were divided into two themes: 'channel' and 'communication.' The number of times each response mentions a sub-theme is indicated in brackets. Thematic analysis of these various responses is depicted in Figure 4.9.



**Figure 4.9.** Role of social media.

Interviewees appreciated social media as a “splendid way of spreading good news” (IP3). Three of them saw social media as a direct communication avenue for GIPF to communicate with the public. However, it was stated that a professional approach is required to successfully use social media.

*“Overall, from a communications perspective, I think social media is great. It has a lot of benefits, but it’s just the challenges of how you manage it, which is the key part”.* (IP2)

All respondents considered social media to be a cost-effective and quick communication tool.

*“Definitely, the roles of social media are around the ability to spread your message quicker and louder.”* (IP1)

*“Also, it’s cheap. When did communications ever become so cheap! I think that’s the benefit for all businesses especially due to economic downturns posed by COVID-19 pandemic.” (IP5)*

*“You don’t need to have a big budget to get really good results on social media, Facebook, for example.” (IP2)*

#### **4.6.2 Targeting different niches and providing quick feedback**

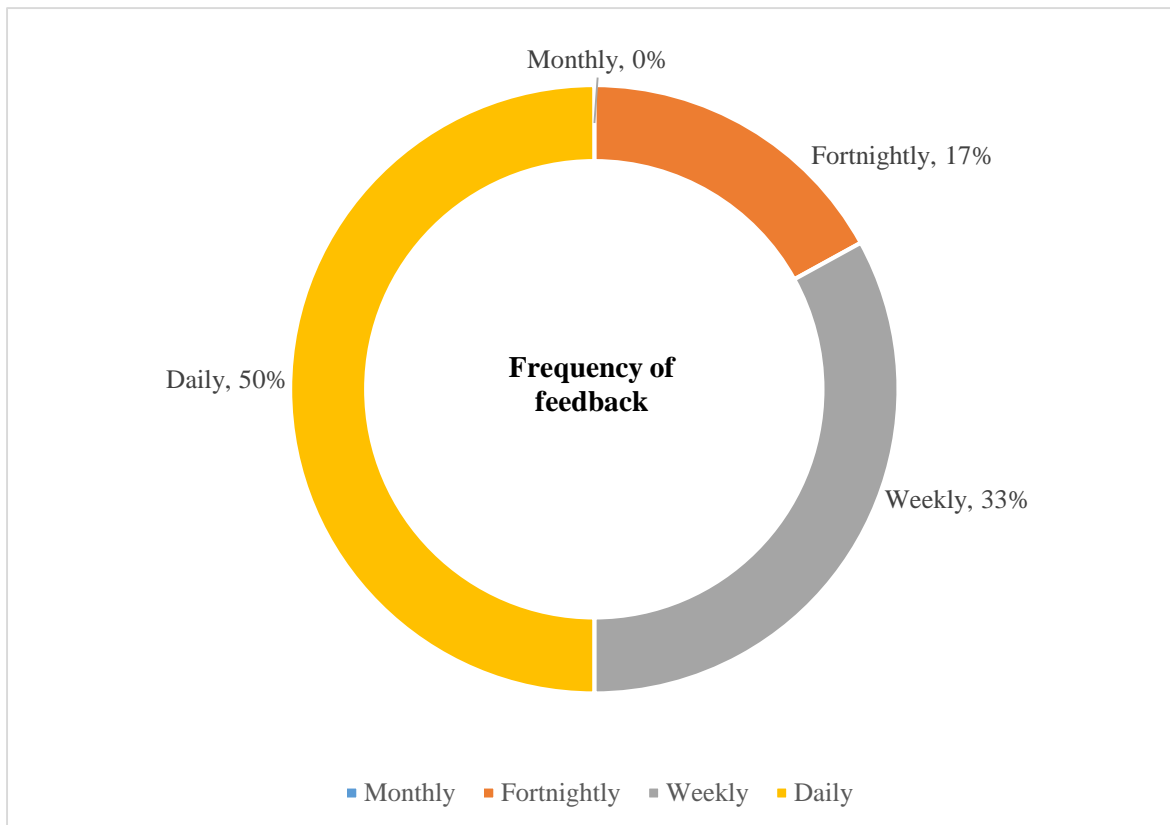
Considering the role of social media for targeting different niches and providing quick feedback, one participant, social media allowed GIPF to reach niche audiences whereas 3 participants highlighted that the role of social media was to offer clients quick/instant feedback.

*“The biggest advantage is that you can communicate to more people on behalf of a brand. You have more choice both in the people, who you can connect the brand to or connect the media to influencers, too, for the brand”. (IP3)*

*“You are able to target particular audiences. So, you can get after young people, older people or whatever demographic you are after”. (IP5)*

Respondents have also solicited information regarding the frequency in which they receive compliments or complaints on the social media platforms at the GIPF. The figure below presents the data from the respondents.





**Figure 4.10.** Frequency of feedback.

From the illustration in the above Figure 4.10, 51 (50%) respondents highlighted that the frequency of getting feedback whether compliments or complaints from stakeholders at the GIPF is daily. 34 respondents represented by 33% highlighted that they receive feedback from stakeholders every week. 17% of the respondents believed they receive feedback after every fortnight. None of the respondents cited that they receive complaints or compliments monthly.

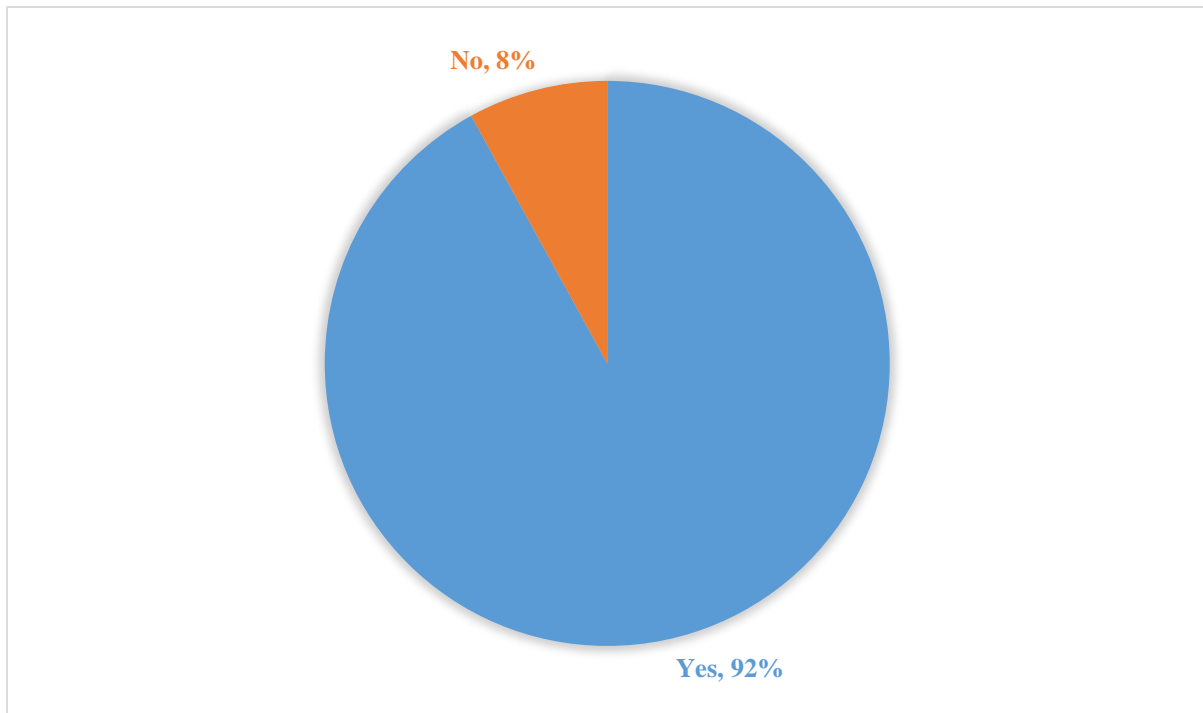
#### **4.6.3 Social media as an information gathering and sharing tool**

Social media was used to obtain as well as spread information. Some participants said they used social media to acquire information before connecting with their audiences.

*“You start by listening, so you can get a sense of where your audience and consumers are at. And then you can engage directly with your audience.” (IP2)*

*“Due to huge audience, once information is shared on social media it can reach the audience within a short period of time.” (IP4)*

Regarding the role of social media as an information gathering and sharing tool respondents were asked whether they receive information from GIPF through social media platforms. Figure 4.11 illustrates the respondents’ feedback.



**Figure 4.11.** Receiving information through social media.

Most of the respondents, 95 (92%) cited that they receive information from the GIPF through social media. Only 9 (8%) of the respondents cited they do not receive any information from the GIPF through social media. Studies by Stránská and Střiteský (2015) found that Public Relations practitioners use social media to develop new messages to establish a positive image of the organisation. Similar to this study the results underlined the importance of social media in crises due to the rapid transmission of messages also picked by Stránská and Sttesk (2015).

Participants used social media to gather information as depicted by the results. Willis (2015) claims that obtaining a public opinion on an organisation or its products is surveillance and not

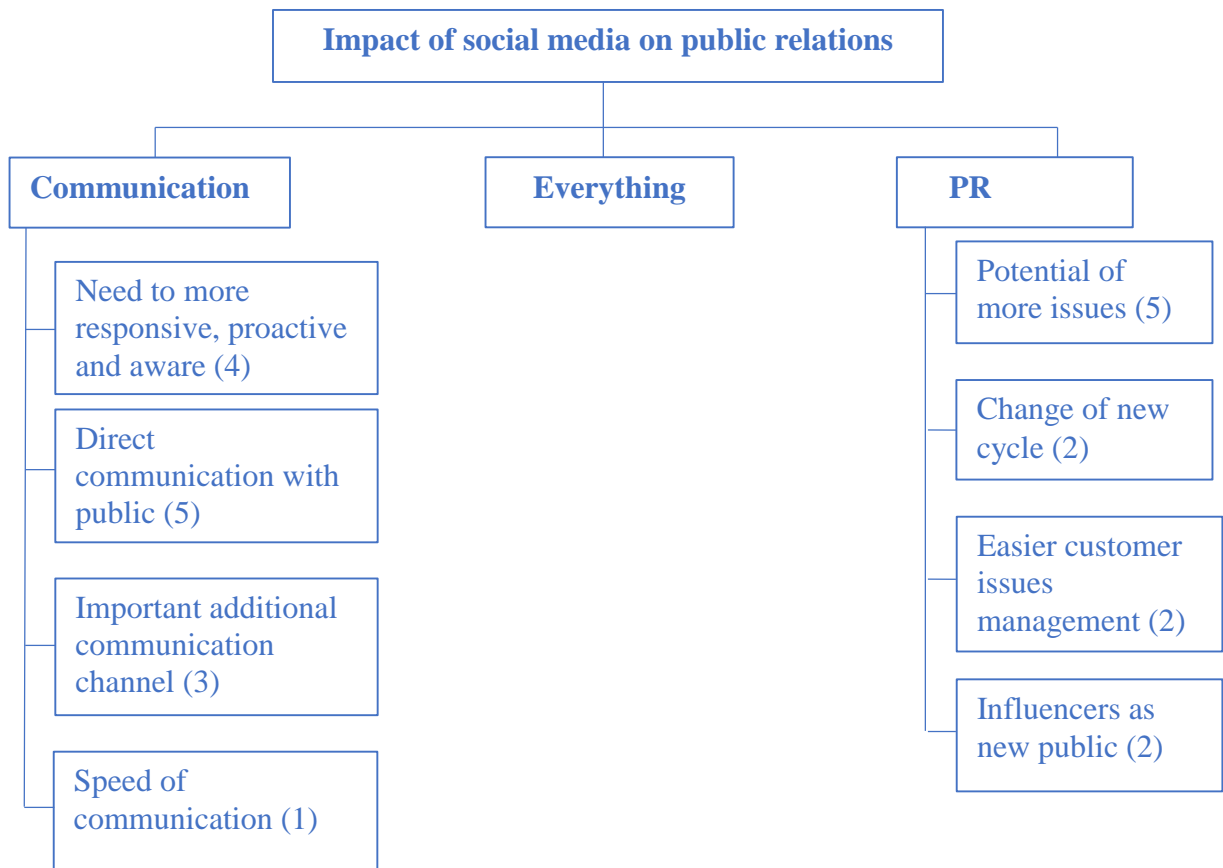
just listening. For this reason, experts like Macnamara (2013) wonder if public relations practitioners truly follow their advice. Rather than serving the public's interests, it appears the GIPF exploited social media to gather information to change their messages with asymmetrical communication.

#### **4.6.4 Social media as a complementary and direct communication channel.**

As a supplemental (3) and direct (5) communication channel between organizations and their audiences, social media was deemed valuable.

*“It has changed completely the landscape for public relations because pre-social media you would engage with the public directly through mainstream media channels, through journalists. You might have had some advertorial. And then suddenly, social media was here, and it shortened the gap between the customers and the CEO from weeks if not months to minutes. Suddenly, they were very aware of what the customers were saying on a case by case basis. And that was quite revolutionary”.* (IP1)

Figure 4.12 “Everything” is one of the three key themes that arose from participants' comments. The responses' sub-themes are presented in brackets.



**Figure 4.12.** Impact of social media on public relations.

All interviewees highlighted that they are active on social media. Also, the respondents said social media had a big impact on PR. Four respondents said social media influenced everything.

*“Hugely, it has really spun everything on its ear. It has changed the media landscape and the communication industry completely”.* (IP4)

All respondents highlighted that they are active on social media, and they said social media had a big impact on PR. Four respondents alleged social media influenced everything.

#### **4.6.5 Social media in ensuring transparency and pro-activeness in communication**

Regarding the role of social media in ensuring transparency and pro-activeness in communication, transparency, reactivity, and proactivity were mentioned by interviewees as important aspects of using social media.

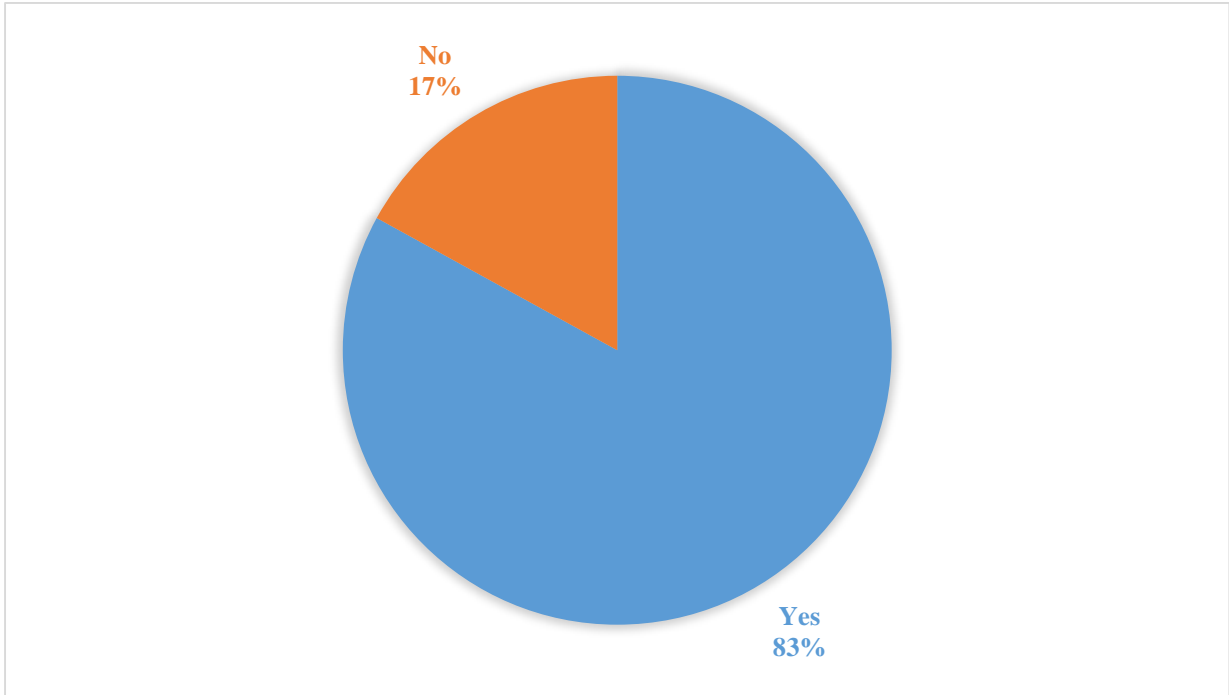
*“Social media had meant that companies have been forced to be more transparent. It just means that executives see the need to be more transparent, to actually talk more with customers”.* (IP2)

Using social media in public relations can promote transparency and authenticity. According to the interviewees, social media forced organisations to be more authentic and responsive. Overall, it appears that social media has a favourable impact on how businesses engage with their customers (Kasemsap, 2018). The results show that public relations professionals expected social media to have a substantial impact on their work. All interviewees agreed that social media has an impact on “everything”. Several academics have shown that social media has a substantial impact on public relations (Lipschultz, 2020). Given how social media has revolutionized one-to-many communication, this result was not surprising (Oyero, 2010).

Public relations experts remained ambivalent regarding the use of social media even though it is widely used, recognising both its benefits and drawbacks. This is in line with the study conducted by Bhargava's (2010) study revealed that public relations professionals had contradictory emotions towards using the internet. This ambivalence regarding social media may prevent practitioners from completely adopting social media, which might cause reputational damage to the firm.

#### **4.6.6 The role of social media in enhancing service delivery**

Respondents were also asked whether social media platforms have enhanced service delivery for GIPF, and their responses are displayed in figure 4.13 below.

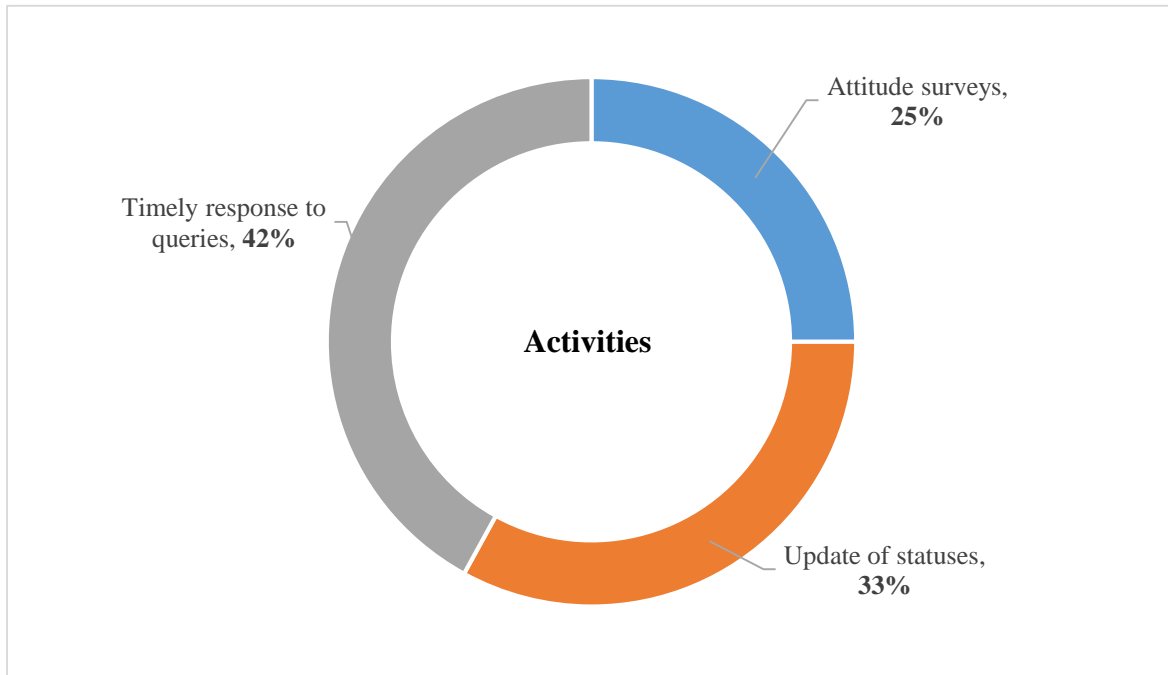


**Figure 4.13.** Effect of social media on service delivery.

On whether social media platforms by the GIPF have enhanced good service delivery 10 respondents that is, 85 (83%) responded affirmatively. Only a mere 18 (17%) of the respondents highlighted that social media platforms had not enhanced good service delivery.

#### **4.6.7 Social media in the achievement of objectives by the Public Relations Department**

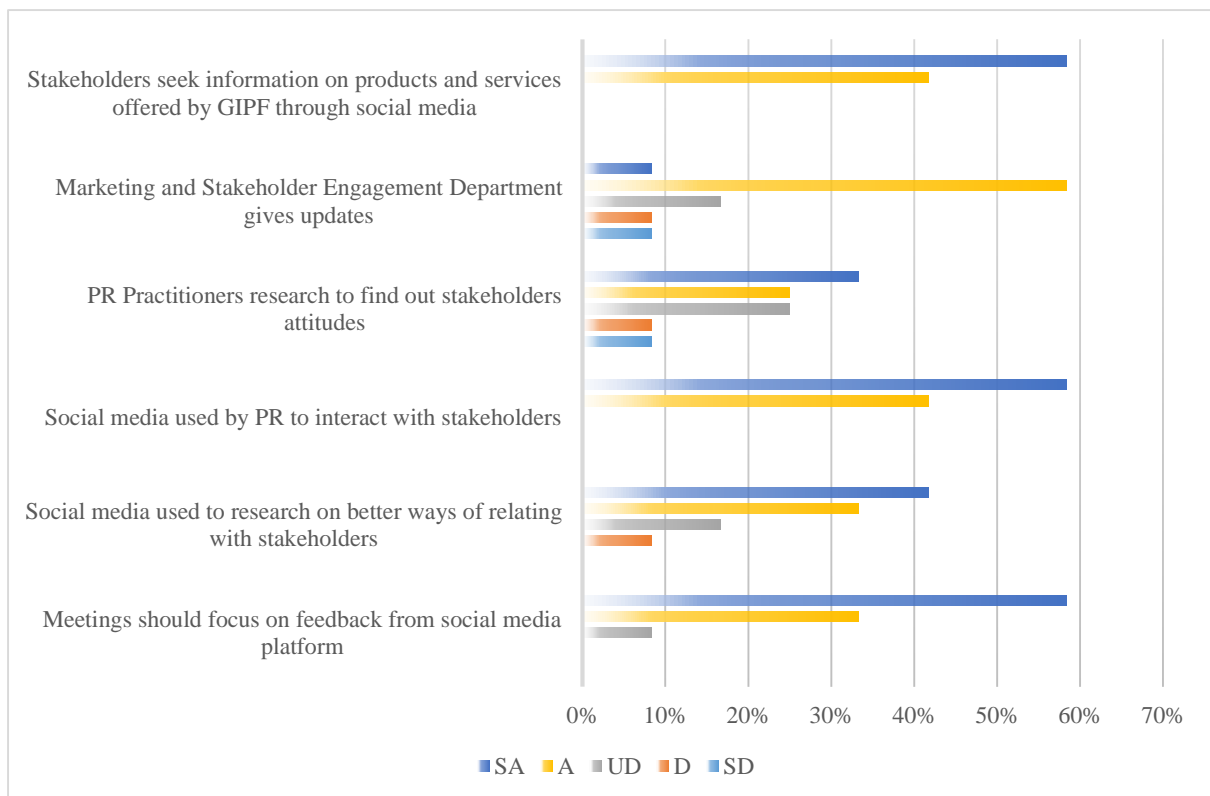
Respondents were asked the activities that are done daily by the Public Relations Practitioners in the GIPF Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement Department to achieve their objectives. The following figure illustrates the responses from the respondents.



**Figure 4.13: Activities by Public Relations practitioners**

43 (42%) of the respondents highlighted those activities done by Public Relations Practitioners in the GIPF Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement Department involve Timely responses to queries whilst 34 (33%) cited that their activities involved Updating statuses. 26 (25%) of the respondents highlighted those activities done by Public Relations Practitioners in the GIPF Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement Department involve undertaking Attitude surveys.

Respondents were also asked how they rate the various uses of social media and their impacts. The diagram below shows their responses.



**Figure 4.14.** Social media role in the achievement of objectives.  
*SA - strongly agree, A – agree, UD – undecided, D – disagree, SD – strongly disagree.*

From the figure above, when respondents were asked whether social media informs and educates stakeholders on the services and products offered, 77 respondents (75%) Strongly Agreed while 18 respondents Agree (17%) to the notion. 8 respondents (8%) cited that they are Undecided with no respondent highlighting Disagree and Strongly Disagree.

Respondents were also asked whether social media promotes goodwill through conversation and interactivity. 50% of the respondents (51) Strongly Agreed with the notion while 33% (34) highlighted that they Agree with the statement. 18 of the respondents representing (17%) of participants disagreed with the statement, hence no respondent cited that they were Undecided and Strongly Disagreed.

When asked whether social media facilitates business communication by allowing two-way contact to improve stakeholder understanding, the respondents also their responses as input to the study. 85 respondents (83%) highlighted that they Strongly Agreed with the notion that social



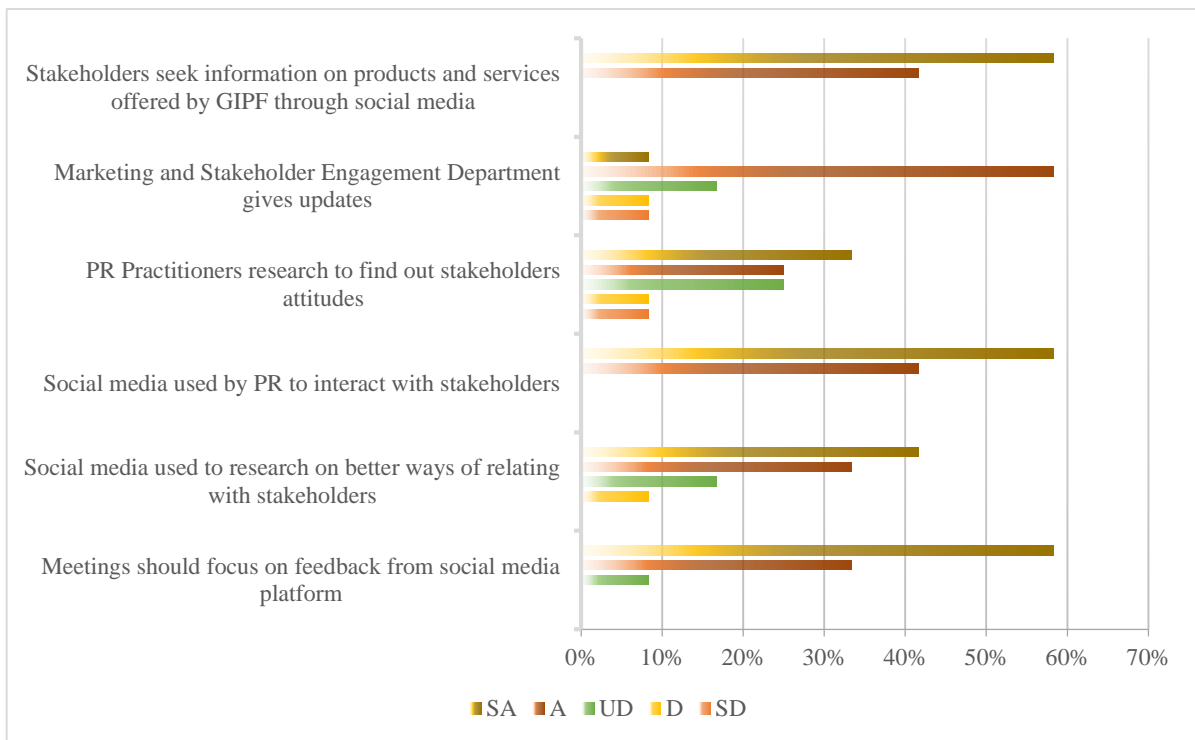
media improves business communication through two-way dialogue to improve stakeholder understanding, while 18 (17%) said they agreed with the statement. Respondents were also asked if social media helps in countering negative publicity. 59 respondents (58%) while 18 respondents (17%) Agreed with the notion. However, 25% represented by 26 respondents were Undecided on the question of whether social media helps in countering negative publicity.

(42%) strongly agreed that social media is a powerful tool for finding and distributing news, while (33%) agreed, and (17%) were Undecided. None of the respondents disagreed with the view with only 9 respondents (8%) highlighting that they strongly disagreed with the statement. Respondents were asked whether social media allows equal access to public information. 43 respondents (42%) strongly agreed with the statement while 26 of the respondents (25%) agreed with the statement. None of the study respondents was Undecided on the question. 9 respondents however highlighted that they disagreed with the statement. Lastly, 26 respondents (25%) cited that they strongly disagreed with the opinion that social media allows equal access to public information.

Respondents were also stated that social media facilitates transparency, accountability, and timely response. 26 respondents (25%) highlighted that they strongly agreed with the view while 18 respondents (17%) highlighted they agreed with the view. 43 respondents (42%) were Undecided on this notion. Also, 9 respondents (8%) disagreed, and another 9 respondents (8%) also strongly disagreed. Lastly, when asked whether social media improves the role of Public Relations Practitioners through experience and research 83% of the participants represented by 84 respondents strongly agreed to this notion. 18 of the respondents (17%) also agreed to this view. None of the respondents cited either of the remaining responses.

#### **4.7 Strategies embraced by PR practitioners to enhance their visibility on social media**

Finally, respondents were also asked questions that were placed on a Likert scale. The responses that the respondents gave are highlighted in the Figure below:



**Figure 4.15.** Extent respondents agree to the statements.  
 SA - strongly agree, A – agree, UD – undecided, D – disagree, SD – strongly disagree.

Respondents were asked whether stakeholders seek information on products and services offered by GIPF through social media. 58% (60) respondents highlighted that they strongly agreed to the statement while the remainder 42% (43) respondents highlighted that they also agreed to the view. None of the participants was undecided or disagreed on this view.

Respondents were also asked whether the Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement Department gives updates on services and products using social media and 66% of respondents highlighted that they agreed. However, some respondents had different perceptions with 17% respondents undecided and the other 16% who disagreed with the perception.

The respondents were also asked whether GIPF’s Public Relations Practitioners research and scan through social media platforms is undertaken to find out about stakeholders’ attitudes/opinions. 7 of the respondents agreed to this notion, 3 were undecided and 2 disagreed with the statement.

Respondents were also asked whether social media platforms are used by Public Relations Practitioners to interact with stakeholders where all participants agreed to this notion. Specifically, 58% of the respondents cited that they strongly agreed with the view and 42% of respondents highlighted they agreed with the view. In the end, none of the respondents had other opinions other than the affirmative.

Respondents were also asked their perception on whether social media platforms are used to research better ways of relating with stakeholders. The study findings showed 33% respondents citing that they strongly agreed with the view, 25% agreed, 25% respondents were undecided and 16% disagreed.

The last question asked respondents on the questionnaire was their opinion relating to whether GIPF's Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement Department meetings should focus on feedback from social media platforms. 58% of the respondents strongly agreed with the viewpoint, 33% agreed, 17% was undecided and only 8% disagreed with the perception.

#### **4.8 Challenges posed by social media in communication by PR practitioners.**

Regardless of these perceived advantages, all five interviewees knew the dangers of social media because of the growing amount of communication issues that could occur such as misinformation.

*"It's horizontal communication, and it's open to anybody. Anybody can become a commentator. So, your company's position is debated very quickly, especially if you have got an issue going on. There is nowhere to hide. You must have a conversation. That's what it is. It's social" (IP4).*

According to two interviewees, social media has changed how news is distributed and received, affecting traditional media formats that are now being disseminated through social media.

*Rather than relying on journalists and the traditional news media, it is now where you can get breaking news. They can now use Twitter to their advantage (IP3).*

Despite the challenges posed by social media, one interviewee was of the notion that social media has increased the communication speed and the other two said social media has made it easier to manage client complaints.

#### **4.9 Chapter Summary**

Some features have changed since Bhargava's (2010) study. This study demonstrated that social media has a substantial effect on public relations practice in Namibia. Despite this, practitioners appeared unsure about using social media. Interestingly, age still seems to have a role in practitioners' confidence in using social media, indicating generational disparities in public relations. Traditional social media networks like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter were still popular. Despite the study's lack of attention on social media ethics, respondents had considerable concerns about paid endorsements by social media influencers, fake news, and data scandals. The following chapter will provide a summary of the findings and make recommendations for practice and future study.

## **CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This study's main goal was to examine the GIPF's usage of social media in PR. This chapter discusses the study's findings. The researcher also summarizes the findings and makes a recommendation. This chapter suggests potential research areas. The discussion of the findings was presented according to the following research questions:

1. How are social media platforms used by GIPF Public Relations practitioners in their communication?
2. To what extent does the role of social media as a communication tool play in GIPF as an organisation?
3. What strategies can be embraced by GIPF public relations practitioners to enhance their visibility on social media?

### **5.2 Summary of the findings**

This section introduces the main findings of the study in themes. The themes of the study are social media platforms are used by GIPF to engage with various stakeholders; social media plays an important role as a communication tool to a larger extend at GIPF and GIPF can use various strategies of enhancing social visibility.

#### **5.2.1 Social media platforms are used by GIPF to engage with various stakeholders**

Results from the study showed GIPF used social media platforms to engage with various stakeholders in different ways. Although the ways of engaging with various stakeholders differ, the main reasons for engaging with various stakeholders by GIPF included information gathering, information dissemination and obtaining timely feedback for the services being rendered by GIPF. 92% of the stakeholders used social media daily and the study's findings also revealed that WhatsApp was the most popular media platform and Facebook was the most effective one in engaging with different stakeholders such as GIPF staff members, GIPF clients

and other organisations which were having interests in the way GIPF was operating and the services it was rendering.

The survey revealed that respondents preferred well-known social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Because of this, some platforms were moderately used, despite the publics' activities on them. For internal stakeholders' engagement, WhatsApp was found to be more suitable and for external stakeholders' engagement and for addressing critical issues and complaints. Facebook was preferred. These findings are backed up by Bhargava's (2010) research, which found that public relations professionals were more inclined to use "conventional" and well-established internet technologies. These figures are also consistent with Facebook's position as the largest social networking site in the world, with 1.65 billion daily users.

The preferred social media platforms were chosen due to their attributes which enabled effective networking. Respondents indicated that their preferred and effective media platform was Facebook and WhatsApp because they could network well and could access the platforms easily. Hence, the researcher can point out that although the most preferred social media platform is WhatsApp, the most effective one which can be used by GIPF for stakeholder's engagement is Facebook. WhatsApp is mainly used to address complaints and critical issues. Therefore, GIPF uses various social media platforms to engage with various stakeholders for information collection, sharing and feedback.

### **5.2.2 Social media as a communication tool at GIPF**

The study showed that at GIPF, social media played a key role as a communication tool to a larger extent. Although challenges of social media were highlighted, it had more advantages than disadvantages making it usable.

Social media was found to be an affordable, quick, and cost-effective channel of communicating with the public. It was also noted that social media has managed to replace the old traditional ways of communicating with stakeholders of an organisation and it plays a role in targeting different niches and providing quick feedback. Social media was also said to play an important

role as a communication tool at GIPF as it enabled information gathering and sharing. The study's findings also revealed that social media plays a role of a complementary and direct communication channel. Social media was viewed as a channel as it helped reach and engage many users, was used as a listening tool and information gathering tool. The benefits of social media as a communication tool were identified as invigorating GIPF's client-centricity, complaints and other critical issues as well as enabling the organisation to reach niche markets. Due to the activeness of social media and the way people engage lively on social media, social media has emerged as an effective communication tool that compelled organisations to be more forthcoming, straightforward, and genuine as also indicated by the study results of Leonard (2014) that social media fosters transparency and authenticity.

Quick feedback and reactions to complaints using social media have enhanced service delivery at GIPF. As a result, it's worth noting that social media as a communication medium aid in improving service delivery and facilitating the public relations department's attainment of stated goals. The researcher can conclude that social media as a communication tool has a direct, notable significant impact on the practice of public relations as shown by the study findings. The study's findings were consistent with those of other researchers who discovered that social media has a substantial impact on public relations (Xie et al., 2018). This was expected given the shift in communication from one-to-one to many-to-many because of social media (Oyero, 2010).

### **5.2.3 GIPF can use various strategies of enhancing social visibility**

GIPF can use various strategies which are available to enhance their visibility on social media as revealed by the results from the study. Stakeholders seek information on products and services offered by the marketing and Stakeholder Engagement Department through social media as shown from the findings of the study. Therefore, GIPF can engage a strategy of frequently updating and giving feedback on the services and products to constantly keep their services and products in the minds of the clients. Another strategy that GIPF might use to improve visibility on social media platforms includes performing research and a scan using social media platforms to find out more about stakeholders' attitudes and opinions on GIPF services and service delivery ratings. The study also showed that Public Relations Practitioners can use social media to improve their social visibility to help satisfy the needs and wants of their clients by using a

strategy of actively interacting with stakeholders to get feedback from them which can help identify areas to be changed, worked on, or improved. Public Relations Practitioners can also spend more time reviewing and writing on social media platforms than other tasks to communicate effectively with stakeholders and one strategy to enhance social visibility is to equip Public Relations Practitioners on how to be effective on social media and how to get through to clients by taking social media management courses. The researcher can thus point out that various strategies can be employed by GIPF to ensure improved social visibility and improved organisational performance due to effective engagements on the social media platforms with various stakeholders.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings stated in the discussion presented above, this study, therefore, recommends the following:

#### **5.3.1 The use of various social media platforms is essential to the organisation**

Social media has an impact on how the information is communicated to the stakeholders, how it reaches them and the way they respond to it. Therefore, an organisation such as GIPF needs to use various social media platforms to engage with stakeholders to improve service delivery and social media presence. Different social media platforms reap different results and target different issues. By incorporating various media platforms, several benefits can be obtained by GIPF in performing its mandate.

#### **5.3.2 Social media as a modern-day communication tool should be emphasised**

The traditional ways of communicating through newspapers and other old channels are fading away. Social media is strongly emerging as a new, preferred way of communicating with stakeholders in the modern era. Thus, GIPF can emphasise the use of social media by the Public Relations Practitioners to engage effectively with its clients. As many people use social media daily, it will be beneficial for GIPF to also engage and communicate with various stakeholders daily to share and collect information, to give timely feedback and address complaints and critical issues.



### **5.3.3 More training and workshops for Public Relations Practitioners are needed**

Training to be given to Public Relations Practitioners at GIPF on an effective way to communicate and manage their organisational social media platforms to enhance their visibility on these platforms. This will go a long way in improving the way GIPF use social media as a direct communication tool and improving the way they render their services to their clients.

## **5.4 Limitations of the study**

### **5.4.1 Areas for further study**

The current study was conducted to assess the use of social media in the public relations practices by GIPF. Future studies could consider doing a similar study in other organisations and focus on how to address and overcome paid endorsements by social media influencers, data breaches and fake news which are just a few examples of ethical issues in social media.

## **5.5 Conclusions**

The study's findings were made from both literature review and primary research. Further, this chapter concluded how the research questions were answered and reveal several significant findings, based on which conclusions have been drawn. The researcher gave recommendations and identified areas for further studies.

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## APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE-GIPF EMPLOYEES



**NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY  
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**FACULTY OF HUMAN SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION**

**MASTER OF JOURNALISM AND MEDIA TECHNOLOGY (MJMT09)**

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE GOVERNMENT INSTITUTION (GIPF) PENSION FUND'S  
MARKETING AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES**

**Research Topic Proposal:**

Assessing the use of Social Media in the Public Relations practices of the Government  
Institution Pension Fund (GIPF) in Namibia

**Name of the Student:** Jairus Julius Japuleni Kapenda

**Student Number:** 219039984

**Date:** November 2020

This questionnaire is for research purpose only for the partial fulfilment in order to obtain an award for the **Master of Journalism and Media Technology (MJMT)** at the **Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST)**. Kindly note that this questionnaire will not be used in any other way whatsoever.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- Please spare a few minutes to complete the questionnaire below
- Kindly tick or answer in full the questions correctly
- Do not write your name on this questionnaire
- Any information given will be treated with utmost confidentiality

## SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Tick in the appropriate box.

**1) What is your gender?**

Male	
Female	

**2) What is your age group?**

Between 18 – 30 Years	
Between 31 – 40 Years	
Above 40 Years	

**3) What is your designation/position in the GIPF Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement Department?**

.....

**4) How long have you been in the Marketing/Public Relations/Communications profession?**

1 – 2 Years	
3 – 5 Years	
6 – 8 Years	
More than 9 Years	

**5) Highest level of educational qualification**

National Diploma	
Bachelor's Degree	
Honour's Degree	

Master's Degree	
Doctorate Degree (PhD)	

**SECTION 2: MEASURING THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES OF GIPF**

**Objective:** To analyse the modes of social media platforms embraced by Public Relations Practitioners at GIPF.

**6) Do you use social media platforms in the Public Relations Practice?**

Yes	
No	

**7) Which social media platforms are installed in your department?**

.....

.....

.....

**8) How long has social media platforms been established in your department?**

1 – 2 Years	
3 – 4 Years	
5 or more Years	

**9) On a scale of 1 – 5 (were 1 is low and 5 is high), rate the following factors for the use of social media platforms by Public Relations Practitioners in your department?**

Social	
Informational	
Dialogic	
Publicity	
Advocacies	

**10) Quantify the number of people who can be reached through social media platforms based on membership in various groups.**

100	
1,000	
10,000	
More than 10,000	

**11) Do you think the use of social media platforms has enhanced service delivery in your department?**

Yes	
No	

**Objective:** To assess whether the use of social media platforms has enhanced achievement of Public Relations practice objectives in GIPF.

**12) Do you send information to internal stakeholders through social media?**

Yes	
No	

**13) On a scale of 1 – 5 (were 1 is low and 5 is high), rate the following roles carried out by Public Relations Practitioners in your department through the use of social media.**

<b>Roles/Statement</b>	<b>Rate Scale</b>
Planning publicity strategies and campaigns.	
Writing and producing presentations and press releases.	
Dealing with enquiries from the public, media and related organisations.	
Organising promotional events such as press conferences, open days, exhibitions, tours and visits.	
Managing social media content through monitoring, moderation and reporting.	

**14) In this section, please tick the appropriate box in response on how you agree or disagree with the statements given.**

**Keys:** SA – Strongly Agree; A – Agree; UD – Undecided; D – Disagree; SD – Strongly Disagree

No	Statement	SA	A	UD	D	SD
1.	Social media informs and educates stakeholders on the services and products offered.					
2.	Social media promotes goodwill through conversation and interactivity.					
3.	Social media facilitates corporate communication through two-way communication to enhance understanding to the stakeholders.					
4.	Social media helps in countering negative publicity.					
5.	Social media is an effective tool in news search and redistribution.					
6.	Social media allows equal access to public information.					
7.	Social media facilitates transparency, accountability and timely response.					
8.	Social media improves the role of Public Relations Practitioners through experience and research.					

**Objective:** To investigate factors for preference of social media tools employed in the public relations practice.

**15) Which is the most preferred social media platform in GIPF for the stakeholders to make inquiries and for GIPF to provide feedback?**

.....

**16) Which is the most preferred social media platform used by Public Relations Practitioners to address the following?**

Internal stakeholders	
External stakeholders	

**17) Which of the following attributes of social media are the reasons for its preference use in maintaining relationships in your department? (Tick more than one if applicable).**

Access	
Positiveness	
Openness	
Assurance	
Networking	
Sharing of tasks	
Other (specify)	

**18) Do you use social media platforms on a daily basis as in your public relations practice?**

Yes	
No	

**19) Which of the following activities are done on a daily basis by the Public Relations Practitioners in your department?**

Timely response to queries	
Update of statuses	
Attitude surveys	
None of the above	

**20) How often/frequently do compliments/complaints appear on social media platforms concerning GIPF or the Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement Department?**

Daily	
Weekly	
Fortnightly	
Monthly	

**21) Which is the preferred social media platform by Public Relations Practitioners when responding to complaints or critical comments on social media?**

.....  
 .....  
 .....

**22) In this section, please tick the appropriate box in response on how you agree or disagree with the statements given.**

**Keys: SA – Strongly Agree; A – Agree; UD – Undecided; D – Disagree; SD – Strongly Disagree**

No	Statement	SA	A	UD	D	SD
1.	Stakeholders seek information on products and services offered by the Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement Department through social media.					
2.	Through the use of social media, the Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement Department gives updates on services and products.					
3.	Public Relations Practitioners research and scan through social media platforms to find out about stakeholders attitudes/opinions about GIPF.					
4.	Social media platforms are used by Public Relations Practitioners to interact with stakeholders.					
5.	Social media platforms are used to research on better ways of relating with stakeholders by Public Relations Practitioners.					
6.	Department meetings focus on feedback from social media platforms.					
7.	Public Relations Practitioners spend more time reviewing and writing on social media platforms than other tasks.					
8.	Public Relations Practitioners in future will need to take social media management courses.					

***Thank you for accepting to be part of this study!!!***



## **APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE GIPF CLIENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS**

**FACULTY OF HUMAN SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION**

**MASTER OF JOURNALISM AND MEDIA TECHNOLOGY (MJMT09)**

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE GOVERNMENT INSTITUTION (GIPF) PENSION FUND'S  
CLIENTS AND AFFILIATED STAKEHOLDERS**

**Research Topic Proposal:**

Assessing the use of Social Media in the Public Relations practices of the Government  
Institution Pension Fund (GIPF) in Namibia

**Name of the Student:** Jairus Julius Japuleni Kapenda  
**Student Number:** 219039984

**Date:** November 2020

This questionnaire is for research purpose only for the partial fulfilment in order to obtain an award for the **Master of Journalism and Media Technology (MJMT)** at the **Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST)**. Kindly note that this questionnaire will not be used in any other way whatsoever.

### **INSTRUCTIONS**

- Please spare a few minutes to complete the questionnaire below
- Kindly tick or answer in full the questions correctly
- Do not write your name on this questionnaire
- Any information given will be treated with utmost confidentiality

## SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Tick in the appropriate box.

**1) What is your gender?**

Male	
Female	

**2) What is your age group?**

Between 18 – 30 Years	
Between 31 – 40 Years	
Above 40 Years	

**3) How long have you been a GIPF client?**

1 – 2 Years	
3 – 5 Years	
6 – 8 Years	
More than 9 Years	

**4) Highest level of educational qualification**

National Diploma	
Bachelor's Degree	
Honour's Degree	
Master's Degree	
Doctorate Degree (PhD)	

## SECTION 2: MEASURING THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES OF GIPF

**Objective:** To analyse the modes of social media platforms embraced by Public Relations Practitioners at GIPF.

**5) Do you use social media platforms to communicate with GIPF staff members?**

Yes	
No	

- 6) Which of the following modes of social media platforms do you use? (Tick more than one if applicable).

Instagram	
Facebook	
WhatsApp	
Twitter	
Blogs	
Others (specify)	

- 7) How long have you been using social media platforms in your communication?

1 – 2 Years	
3 – 4 Years	
5 or more Years	

- 8) On a scale of 1 – 5 (where 1 is low and 5 is high), rate the following factors for the use of social media platforms?

Social	
Informational	
Dialogic	
Publicity	
Advocacies	

- 9) Quantify the number of people who can be reached through social media platforms based on membership in various groups.

100	
1,000	
10,000	
More than 10,000	

- 10) Do you think the use of social media platforms has enhanced service delivery at GIPF?

Yes	
No	

**Objective:** To assess whether the use of social media platforms has enhanced achievement of Public Relations practice objectives in GIPF.

**11) Do you receive information from GIPF through social media platforms?**

Yes	
No	

**12) On a scale of 1 – 5 (were 1 is low and 5 is high), rate the following roles carried out by Public Relations Practitioners in the Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement Department in GIPF through the use of social media.**

<b>Roles/Statement</b>	<b>Rate Scale</b>
Planning publicity strategies and campaigns.	
Writing and producing presentations and press releases.	
Dealing with enquiries from the public, media and related organisations.	
Organising promotional events such as press conferences, open days, exhibitions, tours and visits.	
Managing social media content through monitoring, moderation and reporting.	

**13) In this section, please tick the appropriate box in response on how you agree or disagree with the statements given.**

**Keys:** SA – Strongly Agree; A – Agree; UD – Undecided; D – Disagree; SD – Strongly Disagree

<b>No</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
1.	Social media informs and educates stakeholders on the services and products offered.					
2.	Social media promotes goodwill through conversation and interactivity.					
3.	Social media facilitates corporate communication through two-way communication to enhance understanding to the stakeholders.					
4.	Social media helps in countering negative publicity.					

5.	Social media is an effective tool in news search and redistribution.					
6.	Social media allows equal access to public information.					
7.	Social media facilitates transparency, accountability and timely response.					
8.	Social media improves the role of Public Relations Practitioners through experience and research.					

**Objective:** To investigate factors for preference of social media tools employed in the Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement Department of GIPF.

**14) Which is the most preferred social media platform in GIPF for the stakeholders to make inquiries and for GIPF to provide feedback?**

Instagram	
Facebook	
WhatsApp	
Twitter	
Blogs	
Others (specify)	

**15) What do you think is the most preferred social media platform used by GIPF to address the following?**

Internal stakeholders	
External stakeholders	

**16) Which of the following attributes of social media are the reasons for its preference use in maintaining relationships in GIPF? (Tick more than one if applicable).**

Access	
Positiveness	
Openness	
Assurance	
Networking	

Sharing of tasks	
Other (specify)	

**17) Do you use social media platforms on a daily basis?**

Yes	
No	

**18) Which of the following activities are done on a daily basis by the Public Relations Practitioners in the Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement Department to you?**

Timely response to queries	
Update of statuses	
Attitude surveys	
None of the above	

**19) How often/frequently do your compliments/complaints appear on GIPF social media platforms?**

Daily	
Weekly	
Fortnightly	
Monthly	

**20) Which is the preferred social media platform used by GIPF when responding to your complaints or critical comments?**

Instagram	
Facebook	
WhatsApp	
Twitter	
Blogs	
Others (specify)	

**21) In this section, please tick the appropriate box in response on how you agree or disagree with the statements given.**

**Keys: SA** – Strongly Agree; **A** – Agree; **UD** – Undecided; **D** – Disagree; **SD** – Strongly Disagree

No	Statement	SA	A	UD	D	SD
1.	Stakeholders seek information on products and services offered by GIPF through social media.					
2.	Through the use of social media, the Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement Department gives updates on services and products.					
3.	GIPF’s Public Relations Practitioners research and scan through social media platforms to find out about stakeholders attitudes/opinions.					
4.	Social media platforms are used by Public Relations Practitioners to interact with stakeholders.					
5.	Social media platforms are used to research better ways of relating with stakeholders.					
6.	GIPF’s Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement Department meetings should focus on feedback from social media platforms.					

*Thank you for accepting to be part of this study!!!*

## APPENDIX 3: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Sample	Nbr. of observations	Nbr. of categories	Mode	Mode frequency	Category	Frequency per category	Rel. frequency per category (%)
Gender	103	2	Male	58	Female	45	44
					Male	58	56
Age	103	3	over 40	48	18-30	18	17
					31-40	37	36
					over 40	48	47
Years of affiliation to GIPF	103	4	6-8	42	1-2	6	6
					3-5	25	24
					6-8	42	41
					over 9	30	29
Education	103	4	Bachelor's degree	49	Bachelor's degree	49	48
					Diploma	28	27
					Grade 11/12	10	10
					Master's degree	16	16
Use of social media platforms by PRR	103	2	Yes	86	No	17	17
					Yes	86	83
Rate of using social media daily	103	5	Often	36	Always	32	31
					Never	2	2
					Often	36	35
					Rarely	6	6
					Sometimes	27	26
The most effective social media platform used to engage with stakeholders	103	3	Facebook	63	Facebook	63	61
					Instagram	20	19
					Twitter	20	19
Most popular social media platforms used	103	6	WhatsApp	31	Blogs	5	5
					Facebook	21	20
					Instagram	15	15
					Others	19	18
					Twitter	12	12
					WhatsApp	31	30
Preferred social media platform when responding to	103	3	WhatsApp	59	Facebook	36	35



complaints and critical comments							
					Telegram	8	8
					WhatsApp	59	57
Social media attributes	103	5	Convenience	36	Assurance	8	8
					Convenience	36	35
					Ease of communication	26	25
					Networking	23	22
					Positiveness	10	10
Number of user reach	103	3	Over 10,000	61	At least 1,000	16	16
					Over 10,000	61	59
					Up to 10,000	26	25

## **APPENDIX 4: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT GIPF**

17 February 2020

**Mr. David Nuyoma**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Government Institution Pension Fund (GIPF)**  
**Cnr. Dr. Kenneth Kaunda & Goethe Street**  
**Windhoek**

Dear Mr. Nuyoma

### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT GIPF**

This letter serves to certify that I, Mr. Jairus Julius Japuleni Kapenda, student number 219039984 is a student enrolled for the Master in Journalism and Media Technology at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). As part of my studies, I am working on a proposed research topic entitled "Assessing the use of Social Media in the Public Relations practices of the Government Institution Pension Fund (GIPF) in Namibia".

It is against this background I humbly request your good office to grant me permission in principle, in order to collect data for my research. I am required to submit the permission letter in order to obtain the ethical clearance. Without the ethical clearance, I am not able to proceed with collecting data. The data collected will be used for academic purposes only and will be treated with the utmost confidentiality as guided by NUST code of ethics.

If you require any further clarification/information in this matter, do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor on the contact details given below.

Kindly find attached my research topic proposal for your perusal.

Yours sincerely,  
**Jairus Kapenda**  
**Student/Researcher**  
**Cell: 081 288 8145**  
**Email: [jjkapenda@live.com](mailto:jjkapenda@live.com)**

**Dr. Hatikangwanwi Mapdzi**  
**Supervisor/Senior Lecturer**  
**Faculty of Human Science**  
**Department of Communication**  
**Email: [hmapudzi@nust.na](mailto:hmapudzi@nust.na)**  
**Tel: +264 61 207 9111**

# APPENDIX 5: PROVISIONAL APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT GIPF

## Provisional Approval to conduct research at GIPF

The screenshots show an email thread in Outlook. The first screenshot shows an email from Morna Magnaem Ikosa to David Nuyoma, dated 3/12/2020 9:26 AM. The subject is 'Fwd: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT GIPF'. The email content includes a reference to comments from the CEO and a link to 'Get Outlook for IOS'. The second screenshot shows a reply from David Nuyoma, dated 05 March 2020 12:08 PM. The subject is 'REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT GIPF'. The email content includes 'Dear Team', a reference to a discussion, and contact information for Morna Ikosa (CPRP), Manager: Stakeholder Engagement. The third screenshot shows a reply from Jairus Julius Kapenda, dated 17 February 2020 12:10 PM. The subject is 'REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT GIPF'. The email content includes a warning about a missing attachment, a greeting to Morna, and contact information for Jairus Julius Kapenda, BAMS (Honours) - UNAM, MDP - USB, Cell: +264 81 288 145 / +264 85 288 8145, Email: jkapenda@iye.com.

**From:** Morna Magnaem Ikosa <Mikosa@gipf.com.na>  
**Sent:** Thursday, 12 March 2020 9:26 AM  
**To:** You  
**Subject:** RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT GIPF

See below comments from our CEO  
[Get Outlook for IOS](#)

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**From:** David Nuyoma <dnuyoma@gipf.com.na>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 11, 2020 3:54 PM  
**To:** Morna Magnaem Ikosa; Thandi Hansen; Edwin Tjiramba  
**Cc:** Desmond Nikanor  
**Subject:** RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT GIPF

Dear Morna

Thanks for the email, I have no objection to the request. However, the student must commit to share the completed document with GIPF. I will be happy to engage with the student when he comes. Thanks

**David Nuyoma**  
 Chief Executive Officer/Principal Officer

GIPF HOUSE  
 Cnr of Dr Kenneth David Kaunda & Goethe Street  
 P. O. Box 23500  
 Windhoek, 9000  
 Namibia  
 t: +264 61 205 1201 f: +264 61 205 1272  
 dnuyoma@gipf.com.na

---

**From:** Morna Magnaem Ikosa <Mikosa@gipf.com.na>  
**Sent:** Thursday, 05 March 2020 12:08 PM  
**To:** David Nuyoma <Dnuyoma@gipf.com.na>; Thandi Hansen <Thansen@gipf.com.na>  
**Cc:** Desmond Nikanor <Dnikanor@gipf.com.na>  
**Subject:** REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT GIPF

Dear Team

As per our discussion today, kindly find attached Mr Kapenda's research proposal and request letter to conduct research on GIPF social media platforms regards

**Morna Ikosa (CPRP)**  
 Manager: Stakeholder Engagement

GIPF HOUSE  
 Cnr of Dr Kenneth David Kaunda & Goethe Street  
 P. O. Box 23500  
 Windhoek, 9000  
 Namibia  
 t: +264 61 205 1211 f: +264 61 205 1209 M: +264 855 55 5139  
 mikosa@gipf.com.na  
 www.gipf.com.na

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**From:** Jairus Julius Kapenda <jkapenda@iye.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, 17 February 2020 12:10 PM  
**To:** Morna Magnaem Ikosa <Mikosa@gipf.com.na>  
**Subject:** REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT GIPF

Microsoft Attachment Protection has deemed this file to be safe, but always exercise caution when opening files.

Good afternoon Meme Morna

Kindly find attached letter and research proposal.

Regards

**Jairus Julius J. Kapenda**  
 BAMS (Honours) - UNAM  
 MDP - USB  
 Cell: +264 81 288 145 / +264 85 288 8145  
 Email: jkapenda@iye.com

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