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**ASSESSING THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN POLITICAL
COMMUNICATION**

BY

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OCTOBER, 2020.

STUDENT’S DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the work presented is the result of my own effort, original research and findings and that no part of it has been presented for another degree or diploma in this University or elsewhere. All references to other people’s work have been duly acknowledged. I am therefore to be held responsible for any error that might be detected in this project work.

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I hereby declare that the preparation of this long essay was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for the supervision of long essays as laid down by the Ghana Institute of Journalism.

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DR. LOUISE CAROL SERWAA DONKOR

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to the Almighty God and Fg Offr Arnold F. Anlimah for His direction and His help throughout my life in this Institution and also for inspiring confidence in me to go through with a positive zeal.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the Almighty God for aiding me to complete this study successfully. My sincere appreciation also goes to my supervisor, Dr. Carol Donkor for all the patience and time she had for me throughout my work regardless of her busy schedule. Her guidance and pieces of advice were very helpful and contributed tremendously to the completion of this long essay. I extend profound gratitude to Togbui Gbago II Dutor of Avenorfedo, Mrs Millicent Akuorkor Ocansey-Wordzro and Mr. Caleb Adu your assistance in this journey has been very helpful.

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ABSTRACT

This study set off to assess the role of PR in political communication however specific objectives were set to find out the role(s) of PR in political communication, to ascertain how the role(s) of PR are used in political communication and to investigate the effectiveness of the role(s) of PR in political communication. By adopting a qualitative approach, the study was able to address the research questions raised. The findings of study indicate that PR plays numerous roles in the political communication process and that the functions of PR make it effective in the political cycle. The recommendation was then made that other researchers should envisage carrying on the mantle and exploring other studies from a PR perspective to help bridge the gap identified.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Any discussion of the role of Public Relations (PR) within the political sphere according to Somerville and Ramsey (2013) naturally falls into two areas, the use of PR practices by government and the use of PR and public affairs by non-governmental actors in the political process. Public image makes up 63% of the value of most organization's today. This infers that when there's a mishap or when an organization's reputation breaks down, it affects the organization's entire corporate existence and its affiliates (Pahwa, 2020). It takes around 4 to 7 years to overcome a negative reputation. Hence it has become important for an organization to invest in good PR strategies to maintain a beneficial relationship with the public. In line with the relevance as acclaimed by Pahwa (2020) and other scholars of the discipline, this study is seeks to assess the role of Public Relations (PR) in political communication.

Understanding these two (2) concepts, PR and political communication helps put the discussion in perspective. Grunig and Hunt (2004) define PR as the management process whose goal is to attain and maintain accord and positive behaviours among social groupings on which an organization depends to achieve its mission. Its fundamental responsibility is to build and maintain a hospitable environment for an organization (Grunig and Hunt (2004). Negrine (1994) as cited in Asa-Asante (2015) is of the view that communication is key to the success or failure of every electoral process. It provides the basis for which the electorate receives political information and electoral choices are influenced. So, in a situation where party organisation is weak, the media and the forms of message being communicated are important instruments for facilitating voters' choices. Since independence in 1957, Ghana has held a number of democratic elections, in particular those that gave birth to the First, Second,

Third and Fourth Republics. In all these elections, political communication has contributed significantly towards influencing voter choices (Enninful 2012: Asa-Asante, 2015).

Over a period of time, these two concepts have metamorphosed to become Political Public Relations (PPR). Strömbäck and Kiousis (2011) espouse the view that while political communication and PR have always been closely intertwined, public relations strategies and tactics are probably more ubiquitous in political communication today than ever. Strömbäck and Kiousis (2011) defines political PR as the management process by which an organization or individual actor for political purposes, through purposeful communication and action, seeks to influence and to establish, build, and maintain beneficial relationships and reputations with its key publics to help support its mission and achieve its goals. This therefore goes to that PR and politics cannot be separated because they tend to complement each other.

1.1.1 Overview of Ghanaian Political Elections

Ghana, previously called the Gold Coast, became independent on 6th March 1957 and was proclaimed a Republic on 1 July 1960 with Kwame Nkrumah installed as President. The name Ghana was adopted after the medieval Ghana Empire of West Africa, which was also famed for its wealth and trade in gold (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2019). From independence in 1957 Nkrumah spearheaded the movement for African Unity, laid the foundations for the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), and was a firm supporter of the Commonwealth and the Non-Aligned Movement. On the domestic scene however, his popularity waned. Ghana was transformed into a one-party state, with the Convention People's Party (CPP) being the only recognised party. An increase in the President's powers, through laws such as the Preventive Detention Act (PDA) of 1958, and unpopular economic and social policies contributed to Nkrumah's waning popularity (The Commonwealth Observer Group Report, 2012).

On 24th February 1966, Nkrumah's government was overthrown by the Ghana Armed Forces. The next 25 years were characterised by a series of military coups, and short-lived periods of civilian government. However, in 1992 a new Constitution was approved in a nationwide referendum; the ban on political activity was lifted; and the freedom of the press was restored. Soon after the promulgation of the 1992 Constitution, which was approved by the people of Ghana in a referendum in April and May 1992, Ghana held elections the same year. Since then, civilian rule has not been interrupted and Ghana has held six Presidential and Parliamentary elections (The Commonwealth Observer Group Report, 2012).

Yayoh (2017) indicates that the 1992 and 1996 Presidential elections were held on 3rd November 1992. International stakeholders like the Commonwealth among others were observers for the exercise. Jerry John Rawlings who was the President under a military regime now on the ticket of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) party won the election. Professor Albert Adu Boahen, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) candidate was defeated. Parliamentary elections followed on 29 December 1992, and the Progressive Alliance - made up of the NDC, the National Convention Party (NCP) and the Egle Party - won 198 out of 200 seats (Yayoh, 2017). The NPP and four other political parties boycotted the Parliamentary elections because they were dissatisfied with the election arrangements. The process of transitioning to a multi-party democracy according to the Commonwealth Observer Group was marked by an atmosphere of suspicion of the incumbent's motives and actions (Yayoh, 2017).

The Group highlighted a lack of dialogue between government and opposition, and an 'unsatisfactory' playing field. That Observer Group expressed concerns about a number of aspects of the electoral process, but concluded that their observations were not "to be understood as in any way detracting from the overall freeness and fairness of the process" (The Commonwealth Observer Group Report, 2012, p.5). The opposition NPP severely

criticised the conduct of the elections and the report of the Commonwealth Observer Group (Yayoh, 2017). A Commonwealth Observer Group also observed the elections in 1996, which saw Jerry John Rawlings being re-elected as President. The Observer Group noted a range of concerns about the electoral process, including delays in getting results from some polling stations, the lack of a political parties' code of conduct, and the role and attitude of the media, but concluded that overall the conditions allowed a free expression of the will of the electors (Yayoh, 2017).

1.1.2 Political Transition in Ghana

Boakye (2018) notes that Ghana attained its first alternation in power in 2000 when the losing candidate of the NPP in the 1996 election; John Agyekum Kuffour won the second round of the election with a whooping (56.9%) as opposed to (43.1%) from the incumbent NDC under the leadership of their Vice President John Evans Atta Mills. The NPP also retained the seat when the incumbent president John Agyekum Kuffour won the 2004 general elections (Boakye, 2018).

Ghana attained what Huntington (1991) as cited in Boakye (2018) describes as the “Two-turn-over-Test” in 2008 when there was peaceful alternation of power NDC and NPP. The NDC led by the same candidate from 2004 election, John Evans Atta Mills, won the run-off of the 2008 elections with a slim margin of (50.2%) as opposed to the incumbent's (49.8%) who were presented a new flagbearer in the person of Nana Addo Danquah Akuffo-Addo who served as the Attorney General and Foreign Affairs Minister in the John Agyekum led government between (2000-2008).

President John Atta Mills was installed as President but died suddenly on 24th July 2012 and was succeeded by Vice-President John Dramani Mahama. The Presidential election followed on 7th December 2012 and again a Commonwealth Observer Group was deployed. After the

release of the 2010 census figures in June 2012, the Electoral Commission (EC) announced that 45 new electoral constituencies, and some new Districts, would be created. Some stakeholders criticised the announcement, arguing that it came too close to the election, and challenged it in the Supreme Court (Britannica, 2019). In October 2012, the Supreme Court upheld the EC's decision. The run-up to the elections saw a rise in tension due to the fears that this could lead to electoral violence. In the week preceding the elections, the Presidential candidates signed the 'Kumasi Declaration', publicly denouncing the resort to violence in election campaigning. The Presidential election saw John Dramani Mahama elected with 50.7% of the votes and Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo receiving 47.74%. The NDC won 151 parliamentary seats, while the NPP got 120. The NPP challenged the results in the Supreme Court, alleging rigging and electoral fraud. Eight months after the election, the Supreme Court dismissed the petition and upheld the results as genuine (Britannica, 2019).

The 2016 election was between incumbent President John Dramani Mahama and six other candidates, including former foreign minister Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, who was considered the strongest challenger to the president. In a surprising result, Akufo-Addo defeated Mahama by more than one million votes with Akufo-Addo receiving 53.85% and Mahama 44.40%. The next closest challenger was Paa Kwesi Nduom of the Progressive People's Party (PPP), who only received 1 percent of the votes (Britannica, 2019).

Of greater importance, though, is the fact that Ghana has continued to uphold the tradition of peaceful elections and regime change that emerged in the country in the early-1990s. However, political transitions in Ghana have not always been peaceful—the country suffered a series of military interventions in governance from 1966 until 1981 (Brookings, 2016). Although it is located in a region that has a notorious history of military intervention in politics, Ghana was one of the first countries in West Africa to join the prodemocracy movement that swept the continent in the early 1990s. Since then, the country has led the

continent in peaceful transfers of power and the institutionalization of democratic rule. Indeed, since 2000, Ghanaians have three times incumbent governments out of office in highly contested, but fair, peaceful, and credible elections (Brookings, 2016).

Ghana is a relatively stable democratic country in a region that has, during the last several years, been plagued by significant levels of political instability, most of which is related to sectarian violence. For example, neighbouring countries such as Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, and Liberia are still recovering from brutal civil wars. Islamist militant violence continues to threaten the peace in Mali and Burkina Faso, and *Boko Haram* remains a major threat in Nigeria and several neighbouring countries (Brookings, 2016). In Guinea, the political system remains extremely fragile and vulnerable to collapse. There are also concerns about very recent evolving political events in The Gambia: such as Yahya Jammeh, The Gambia's longest serving president, conceding defeat to opposition leader, Adama Barrow with the former vowing to end his 22-year rule to make way for a new crop of leaders to move the country forward (Brookings, 2016). However, a week later, Jammeh retracted his statement, rejected the results of the election due to what he claimed were "unacceptable abnormalities," and demanded a new election (Yayoh, 2017). This reversal has threatened the peace and thrown the country into a political quagmire. The events in The Gambia and the political fragility that continues to plague the region make a smooth and peaceful transition in Ghana very important and laudable.

On the Ghanaian political scene, when it became clear that he had lost the December 2016 election, incumbent President Mahama quickly accepted his loss and conceded defeat, paving the way for the winner to begin the peaceful transition process. In a nation-wide address to the country, John Mahama announced that he had called Akufo-Addo to congratulate him for his victory (Brookings, 2016). In his concession speech, Mahama emphasized the belief that

“each victory belongs to the people . . . and that the true winner is always Ghana.” He went on to state that despite what he believes were “irregularities associated with the election,” he decided that it was in the best interest of the nation for him to concede and ensure the “sustenance of . . . the country’s democracy.” He noted that “notwithstanding our diversity, religious faiths, ethnic groups and political affiliations, we have always recognized that we are all, ultimately, on the same side—the side of Ghana and its progress” (Brookings, 2016). Unlike what happens in other countries on the African continent, Mahama appealed for tolerance, unity, and peace, and warned fellow Ghanaians of the devastation visited on those that have been pervaded by religious and ethnic intolerance. He said that while he “would have cherished the opportunity to lead the country again, he would respect the will of the Ghanaian people” and help the incoming government guide the country’s development. Hence, a lesson that we can learn from the 2016 Ghanaian election is respect for the “will of the people” when they have spoken through fair, free, and credible elections, as well as fidelity to the rule of law and the country’s democratic institutions (Brookings, 2016).

While his opponent was magnanimous in defeat, Akufo-Addo was humble in victory. The incoming president appealed to *all Ghanaians* to help him “get Ghana working again,” a reference to restoring deteriorating economic conditions that began with falling prices for its main exports, primarily gold, oil, and cocoa, as well as significant increases in the public wage bill (Brookings, 2016). During the 2016 presidential election, the country’s faltering economy emerged as the most important campaign issue and perhaps, the determining factor for the opposition candidate, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, who in his campaign speeches, promised to revamping the economy and create more jobs by significantly increasing the country’s manufacturing capacity. The opposition took effective advantage of the slowdown in the country’s economy and accused the government of mismanagement and

incompetence. Albeit, the incoming NPP government inherited an economy which, until 2014, was considered one of the most progressive in Africa.

However, like most economies that are highly dependent on primary commodities, Ghana's economy had suffered significantly from the sharp decreases in the prices of oil and other commodities (notably gold and cocoa) during the last few years. In Ghana's particular case, the significant increases in public sector workers' wages and salaries worsened the situation (Brookings, 2016). An important lesson to be learnt from this election is that the opposition won the election by appealing not to sectarian interests as is common in elections in many African countries, but to the issues that affect the entire country and its citizens (Brookings, 2016).

While there are many reasons to explain why Ghana managed to avoid sectarian violence in the post-election period, the most important contributing factor to the country's peaceful transition remains the magnanimity of the loser and the humility of the winner: Both leaders' "democratic" behaviour and their unwillingness to exploit ethno-cultural differences to gain political power contributed significantly to the establishment of a political environment that enhanced peaceful transition and effectively pre-empted any efforts by disgruntled followers to engage in violence. In the end, Ghana became the true winner of the election (Brookings, 2016).

It is worthy to note that Ghanaians must be granted credit for having collectively decided, since the early 1990s, to accept and respect their democratic institutions and live under a political system undergirded by the rule of law. In fact, since the end of military rule in 1992, there have been seven peaceful presidential elections (Brookings, 2016).

1.1 STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

Political communication from the point of view of Cruz (2005) has to do with the creation and exchange of ideas and opinions between citizens, public officials, political institutions, and related entities, such as the media. Discourse within the political process in local, state, national, and international political systems, as well as how political information can be leveraged for political gain or to achieve political goals are some of the elements of the political communication. Individuals with an education in political communication might work in political consulting, foreign service, market research, public relations, journalism and digital media, community organization, lobbying, political campaigning, or other related fields (Cruz, 2005).

Graber and Smith (2005) indicate that political communication has played a key role in electoral politics in Ghana since 1951. Aside interpersonal communications, the traditional channels through which political parties have communicated their messages are the press (newspapers and magazines), radio and television. The Fourth Republic has witnessed more changes in the forms of political communication than any other republic. Apart from written and spoken words, political communication has included the use of songs and jingles, pictures and gestures, billboards, balloons, text messages and advertisements on motor vehicles.

As the society continues to grow sophisticated, the advent of information communication technology, other means of communication, including mobile phones and the internet, have been adopted during elections. The political message to be communicated and its intended impact, determine the choice of the channel as well as the form the said message will take.

This has been the reason why the argument has been made that people who are out of reach of the various channels of communication, particularly where relevant political messages are channelled are unable to participate actively in politics (Graber and Smith, 2005).

Rexha (2014) suggests that political communication in modern societies cannot be achieved entirely and successfully without an active role of the media. For this reason, politics needs media to convey its messages and daily activities to the public. In order to attain the goals and missions of politicians, they need the media's support. While the media is propagating the course, it becomes part of the political communication as the sender of the message, the intermediary, and the shaper of public opinion on the political realm. The assertion is made that in this process, the media and the politics influences each other. These findings were made in Rexha's (2014) study on the role of the media in political communication.

With these various arguments in mind, this study seeks to assess the role of PR in political communication. This is necessary because among the literature reviewed, the exploration of this sphere of research is either little or non-existent. There is ample work PR and Political communication respectively however an assessment of the role PR in political communication this therefore creates an avenue to research to fill that gap.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the study was to assess the role of PR in political communication. However, these specific objectives were looked at. The objectives were:

1. To find out the role(s) of PR in political communication
2. To ascertain how the role(s) of PR are used in political communication
3. To investigate how effective the role(s) of PR are in political communication

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In line with the objectives set for the study, the researcher attempted to answer the following research questions.

1. What is/are the role(s) of PR in political communication?
2. How is/are the role(s) of PR used in political communication?
3. What is the effectiveness of the role(s) of PR in political communication?

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

With the study's aim of assessing the role of PR in political communication, this study sought to help understand this phenomenon and how it plays out in the Ghanaian setting especially. Further, the study will help appreciate the converging point where PR compliments politics. Also the study will highlight the need to explore the concept of PPR which seems to be quite mundane especially in Ghanaian research space. This could result in developing a localized form of the concept so that it could even be defined to suit the Ghanaian context. This feat will position Ghana in high standings when discussion on PPR is being had in the sub-Saharan region and in Africa as a whole.

1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This paper was organized into four (4) parts namely Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4. Chapter one was the introductory part. It focused on the background of the study, problem statement, research objectives, research questions and the significance of the study. In the second part, Chapter

Two, the theoretical grounding of the study was given. This comprised of conceptual and theoretical framework and an empirical review. The third Chapter dealt with the research methodology. This chapter indicated that the paper adopted a qualitative approach where content analysis as employed. The fourth part, Chapter Four, covered the summary of findings conclusions and recommendations of the study. This also provided details on how the study would contribute to academic research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter sought to give theoretical backing that underpinned the study. This was done by reviewing literature which will comprised theories and empirical studies. This was done with the expectation that relevant information would be obtained to help shape and enrich the study. The theories discussed were the Hypodermic Needle Theory and Excellence Theory.

2.1HYPODERMIC NEEDLE THEORY

Hypodermic Needle Theory, also known as *Magic Bullet Theory* (hypodermic syringe model or transmission-belt model) was promulgated by Harold Lasswell in the 1920s. It was discussed in the book “Propaganda Technique” in the World War. The theory is a linear model of communication and talks about media’s power on its audience members. The message, in this theory, is said to be like a magic bullet which enters the minds of audience and injects a particular message. The theory explains how media controls what the audience views and listens to and the effects, which can be immediate or later in future (Bajracharya, 2016). The words *bullet* and *needle* are used to depict the powerlessness of the audience as media impacts public opinion and behaviour change. The theory was also influenced by media behaviourism of 1930s (Bajracharya, 2016).

Naveed (2016) posits that early mass communication theorists who saw the media as an external influence which triggered immediate responses frequently used behaviourist notions. This can be seen in how the Nazi propaganda films depiction of Jews triggered negative response in their German audiences. Repeated exposure to these images continuously conditioned them to have negative responses when they came into contact or thought about Jews. Naveed (2016) suggests that, these behavioural notions is what informed theorists to develop the Magic Bullet Theory.

The popularizations of mass media along with the increase in advertising industry or propaganda have affected either positively or negatively, on audience. It is dangerous, as a huge mass is influenced directly and at the same time. Messages ‘injected’ can have the desired response which can cause problems and destruction or rule and uniformity.

This suggests that the audience cannot resist the received message from media which creates a uniform thinking amongst people. Through this means, a fixed mind-set and perception is created. To the extent that even a single piece of information can cause many brain alterations and change opinions subconsciously (Bajracharya, 2016).

In this theory, the public is presented as being vulnerable to message which is always infused and the media is tremendously strong. The theory believes that there are no other sources of media or alternative media to compare the media’s message to. Media is the strongest at the time of crisis and in the time of war people depend on them for all the information. The theory was said to be used in Second World War by Germany and United States of America (USA) (Bajracharya, 2016).

2.1.1 The Present Study and the Hypodermic Needle Theory

The fact that the media is a key channel of communication cannot be underestimated. This information in this sense is one that favours political interests. In electioneering time, political parties make use of this theory by disseminating their various strategies through the media. Carefully crafted messages are released and with time, an agenda is set, masses follow the band-wagon and it becomes more like a public opinion.

Xiao and Teng (2015) are of the view that positioning is a concept that makes efforts to paint a picture in the minds of future potential consumers who was electorates in this case. The objective of advertising positioning is to find the right and accurate location in the minds of these consumers. Therefore, ad positioning is a method for to help the enterprise or brand determine location in the consumers' minds through advertising activities (Xiao and Teng, 2015).

2.2 THE EXCELLENCE THEORY

The Excellence theory is the first general theory of Public Relations (PR) (Littlejohn, 2009). The theory was as a result of a 15-year study of best practices in communication management (Grunig, 2000) known as the Excellence Study. The Excellence Theory is a theory of excellence and effectiveness in PR and communication management. The theory specifies how PR makes organizations more effective, how it should be organized and managed in order for it to contribute to organizational effectiveness, and how to determine the monetary value of PR (Grunig, 2002).

The Excellence Theory first explains the value of PR to an organization and the society in which it operates. This value is based on the quality of Relationships an organization has with

its stakeholder publics (Grunig, 2002). The theory asserts that in order for PR to make a contribution in an organization it must be part of strategic management (Grunig, 2008).

According to the theory, for an organization to be effective, it must solve the problem and satisfy the goals of both the manager and stakeholders. Organizations must identify their various publics who are affected by the decisions taken by the organization or those who want the organization to solve a problem important to them. To identify these publics, the organization must scan the environment. This is PR's contribution to strategic management (Grunig and Grunig, 2008).

The theory also suggests that organizations must communicate symmetrically with their publics. This facilitates the cultivation of quality, long-term Relationships with them. Through symmetrical communication the organization is likely to set and achieve goals desired by both the organization and its publics (Grunig and Grunig, 2008), since a good Relationship is essential and crucial to the survival of the organization. Grunig and Grunig (2008) explained that this is because a good Relationship reduces cost incurred in unfavourable circumstances like litigation, regulation, legislation and negative publicity. It also reduces the risk of making decisions which may have adverse effects on different stakeholders and increase the chances of the organization producing goods or services needed by various stakeholders and ultimately its base.

In addition to explaining the value of communication to an organization, the Excellence Theory provides four broad categories of the characteristics of an Excellent PR function that is how the PR function should be organized to attain maximum value (Grunig and Grunig, 2008). These characteristics are in the broad areas of PR as a management function, roles, models and the organization of the communication function.

2.2.1 The Present Study and the Excellence Theory

Maintaining an excellent PR apparatus as a political party has become relevant over the past years. Almaz as reported by *Everything-PR* (2016) asserts that the use of PR in politics is not a new practice. An example is made of ancient Greece, where public speaking became the staple of political life. In Rome as well, conquerors used rhetoric inspiring men to win wars. During the French revolution, the revolutionists used the power of influencing the public to overthrow the monarchy.

PR has a number of functions which come in handy during electioneering times. In the recent past, where the mass media was not as wide spread, often, what was known in one part of the country, did not reach other areas. However with the evolution of communication, being able to manage information has become very important. A PR function like research, social media management and environmental scanning are activities politicians can harness in their communication efforts.

Though the use of rhetoric and other forms of PR has almost always played a role in politics, it has become more systematically entrenched. Political leaders not only need PR experts now to help manage their reputation, but to help them connect with the common man while they focus on the more important task of running a country.

2.3 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Several researchers have done work on political communication but this research looked at some which are in line with the work.

While investigating citizens' PPR in action Ghana, Krishna, Connaughton and Linabary (2020) noted that few models and examples exist of PR strategies in action in Africa,

particularly West Africa. However, it was found that in order to identify patterns in choices that may indicate emergent, unintended strategies, thus enriching PR scholarship and practice, the focus should not be limited to deliberate strategies as part of their assessment efforts (Krishna, Connaughton and Linabary, 2020). This in a way affirms Çeker's (2019) findings out that PR has affected and continues to affect other disciplines with the justification that value of public relations activities using social media is better understood every day while seeking to evaluate of the use of PR in politics in the context of social media. In another study which attempted to examine the impact that various community features have on local governments' social media use, Avery and Graham (2013) found out that, overall, citizen expectations and perceived social media effectiveness by government officials are strong predictors of social media use in relation to PPR.

Fröhlich (2008) in another study exploring the success and its influence on German media coverage discovered that professional PPR were regarded as being the third force in news making and that PPR was tagged as a public service because it brought issues to the public's attention. Windeck (2010) as well emphasize that there are several difficulties when analyzing political communication and new media in Sub-Saharan Africa. Windeck (2010) further acknowledge that the sheer size of the region and the concomitant political, religious, linguistic and cultural heterogeneity makes it almost impossible to make any kind of generalizations, since these differences necessarily result in political methods and behaviours that can, and do, vary greatly from one country to another.

Drawing inspiration from Negrine's (1994) assertion that communication is crucial to the success or failure of every electoral process Okoe-Mensah's (2020) study found out that voters did not process feedback once politicians interacted with them but rather, they processed and gave their feedback in the choices they made at the polls. Also, even though slogans and gestures were popular in the election process, they did not inform the electorate's

decision on who to vote for (Okoe-Mensah, 2020). These findings appear to be in sync with that of Asa-Asante (2015) which posit that the basis for which the electorate receives political information and electoral choices are influenced differ.

2.4 DISCUSSION OF HOW PREVIOUS LITERATURE INFLUENCES THIS STUDY

This section highlights and expands on how previous studies influence this study. In discussing the point of influence, the works of Strömbäck and Kioussis (2011a, 2011b and 2013) greatly shapes this study even though there are other scholars in the main specialized area of political communication and PPR. Also, the hypothermic theory for instance helps appreciate how political communicators are able to able to influence electorates. Another relevant input from the literature is the essential role PR plays in political communication as a whole. Several researchers (such as Çeker, 2019, Fröhlich, 2008, etc.) have asserted that even before the coinage of the concept of PPR, PR strategies and tactics were being used in the political arena.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the research methodology this paper adopted. The discussion included the research design adopted by the study as well as justifications for the choices.

3.1 RESEARCH METHOD

Research design according to Kothari (2005) is a way to systematically solve the research problem. It comprises the various steps that are adopted in studying the problem. The research design provides a tense for how the research is carried out; it contains an overview of the methods used and the procedures followed and also it contains reasons or justification for choosing specific methods and or procedures. For this study, the research design is based on the method employed in the study.

The research approach may either be quantitative or qualitative in nature and this differentiates both procedures of data collection and data analysis (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007). This study however adopted the qualitative approach to research. Qualitative techniques according to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) involve an interpretive approach to research and include the likes of case studies, interviews, personal experience and observations. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) state that researchers using qualitative

techniques intend to understand the phenomena under study in terms of the meanings people bring to them. This opinion is supported by Grbich (2012) who posits that qualitative researchers question the underlying assumptions of positivism and are instead guided by the paradigms of constructivism and/or interpretivism, whereby, it is assumed that no objective knowledge can be generated that is independent of interpretation, therefore the concepts of truth and reality become subjective.

3.2 CONTENT ANALYSIS

This study employed the content analysis method. Bengtsson (2016) suggests that the purpose of content analysis is to organize and elicit meaning from the data collected and to draw realistic conclusions from it. The researcher must choose whether the analysis should be of a broad surface structure or of a deep structure (Bengtsson, 2016). This method helps researchers quantify and analyse the presence, meanings and relationships of such certain words, themes, or concepts. This then gives researchers the opportunity to make inferences about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of surrounding the text. The study in extension mainly explored the use of secondary data.

3.2.1 Secondary Data

Boslaugh (2007) as cited by Martins and Serra (2018) defines secondary data as every dataset which is not obtained by the author. Secondary data may include data that has been previously gathered and is under consideration to be reused for new questions, for which the data gathered was not originally intended (Vartanian, 2010). Martins and Serra (2018) suggest that the usage of secondary data in research has proved itself a valuable approach to finding suitable data and encourage that this should be used more often in research. By doing

so, research may be done in a quicker pace, without loss of quality (Martins and Serra, 2018). As a result of the methodology adopted, this study relied mainly on secondary data. These secondary data was used span books, journal articles, online/internet materials, among other publications on Politics, Communication and PR as well as its practice generally.

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Due to the nature of the issue that the report aims to examine, this report may take ethical issues into account. Researchers should ensure that respondents are shielded from any physical or psychological damage that may result from research procedures, Bryant, Bell and Harley (2018) advised. The researcher will notify the respondents of the study's intentions and obtain their approval, in accordance with international best practice in education. During the writing of the study, the researcher would also use pseudonyms. The research will work in line with the precautionary steps recommended by the Ghana Health Service and the World Health Organization in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. For this purpose, other technical methods, such as video calls or conferences, would be introduced if it is not possible to meet in person.

3.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the research methodology this paper adopted. This method was limited to employing only secondary data to analyse the phenomenon at hand and for analysis purposes. The next chapter discusses the findings of the study and summarizes the study as well as suggesting recommendation and spelling out limitations among other things.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the findings of the study and summarizes the study as well as suggesting recommendation and spelling out limitations among other things.

4.1 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section attempts to address the specific objectives of the study. The discussion draws on the secondary data reviewed primarily.

4.1.1 The role of PR in political communication

Any discussion of the role of PR within the political sphere naturally falls into two areas, the use of PR practices by government and the use of PR and public affairs by non-governmental actors in the political process (Somerville and Ramsay, 2013). Hailu (2018) in drawing on Miller and Dinan's (2007) work explains of PR as the management function that evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or organization with public interest, and executes a program of actions to earn public understanding and acceptance. Cutlip, Center and Broom (2012) notes that PR roles include communication technician, expert prescriber, communication facilitator and problem-solving facilitator.

The role of communication technician requires executing strategies with the communication tactics of news releases, employee newsletters, position papers, media placements, Web site content, speeches, blogs, and social media messaging and the role of the expert prescriber is

seen as an authority on a particular problems or type of PR function and is given the primary responsibility to handle this function as a consultant or with little input or participation by other senior management (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 2012).

The communication facilitator provides both management and publics the information they need for making decisions of mutual interest while the problem-solving facilitator collaborates with other managers to define and solve problems which requires that the professional is a part of the dominant coalition of the organization and has access to other senior managers (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 2012).

With these roles clearly defined, it is important to note they all come to play in political communication. Strömbäck and Kiouisis (2013a) support this line of argument by noting that the essence of these two concepts has led to the coining of Political Public Relations (PPR). Political Public Relations can be defined as the management process by which an organization or individual actor for political purposes, through purposeful communication and action, seeks to influence and to establish, build, and maintain beneficial relationships and reputations with its key publics to help support its mission and achieve its goals (Strömbäck and Kiouisis, 2011).

Strömbäck and Kiouisis (2011) further explains that what makes Political Public Relations distinctive from Public Relations in general is that the organization or individual actor in question is engaging in Public Relations activities for political purposes. Thus, Political Public Relations includes Public Relations activities by all organizations and individuals trying to influence politics, including political parties and candidates but also governmental and public sector agencies, think tanks, unions, commercial businesses, as well as various interest groups and non-profit organizations that are more or less engaged in efforts to influence political processes or outcomes (Strömbäck and Kiouisis, 2011).

4.1.2 How the role of PR are used in political communication

Strömbäck and Kiouisis (2013b) note that the number and complexity of publics and stakeholders is greater in politics than in virtually other settings. Following the situational theory of publics and depending on the level of problem recognition, constraint recognition and level of involvement, people can be classified into non-publics, latent publics, aware publics and active publics (Grunig and Hunt, 1984; Strömbäck and Kiouisis, 2013a). This holds true in all settings, but what sets politics apart is that the number of latent as well as aware and active publics arguably is larger than in corporate settings, while basically everyone can be defined as a stakeholder in politics (Strömbäck and Kiouisis, 2013a).

In carrying out the role of PR, functions such as social media management, media relations/management, lobbying, environmental scanning, and corporate social responsibility among others come to play. McNair (2003) notes in Somerville and Ramsay (2013) that in the context of political communication media relations/management comprises activities designed to maintain a positive-media relationship, acknowledging the need which each has of the other, while exploiting the institutional characteristics of both sets of actors for maximum advantage.

On the issue of social media management, Davis (2013) asserts that traditional door-to-door, hand-out-flyers-on-the-curb campaigning faces a burgeoning threat. There have been several attempts to adapt to this new medium, such as President Obama's first ever "Twitter Town Hall" in 2011 (Shear, 2011). And with the number of accounts increasing each day, the appeal of tapping into this communication tool is greater than ever (Davis, 2013). In Costa Rica for instance, Bravo (2015) states that the communication strategies and tactics implemented by the Supreme Election Commission (TSE) to interact with potential voters included media relations in carrying out their external voting elections.

4.1.3 The effectiveness of the role(s) of PR are in political communication

Burchell and Leigh (2002) as cited in De Bussy and Kelly (2010) asserts that in leading democracies around the world trust in politicians and public institutions appears to be in decline, leading to a deep sense of citizen disengagement from the political system. In an effort to change the narrative, PR is an essential tool to achieve this feat. Managing stakeholder relationships is or should be the core business of PR, whether in business, politics or other organisational settings (De Bussy and Kelly, 2010).

Glean (2020) is of the view that measuring the effectiveness of PR activity depends on having solid PR objectives and certain key performance indexes (KPIs) agreed to by all stakeholders at the beginning of the campaign. To have the greatest impact, PR measurement must determine its return on efforts and investment (Glean, 2020). Bravo (2015) for instance espouses that view that even in presence of good communication strategies and tactics, independent variables such as problem recognition, internal constraint recognition (i.e., self-efficacy perceptions), external constraint recognition (i.e., real-life constraints), and level of involvement can affect the outcomes of elections.

Sriramesh, Zerfass and Kim (2013) as well assert that the situational theory of publics is a well-accepted theory in PR, and it has been applied to many different communication studies in the last 30 years. In some cases, it has been used to assess the effectiveness of political communication (Strömbäck and Kioussis, 2013a). Glean (2020) further notes that PR effectiveness can be observed through media scanning, market surveys, social media monitoring and measurement, website traffic among others. While none of the metrics mentioned above will give a full picture of the success of a PR endeavour, together they will clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of PR activity.

4.2 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study set off to explore the concepts of PR and political communication. In this regard, this study gave a background to the study in order to put the argument in context. While pursuing this course, works of several researchers drumming home the synergy between PR and political communication which gave flesh to assessing the role of PR in political communication were echoed. This study set off to assess the role of PR in political communication however specific objectives were set to find out the role(s) of PR in political communication, to ascertain how the role(s) of PR are used in political communication and to investigate the effectiveness of the role(s) of PR in political communication. The study found out that even though spin and indeed the whole PR industry has sustained fierce criticism for playing a role which has been to the detriment of journalism and the democratic process, the media, politicians and PR specialists are increasingly bound together in a relationship that the media and politicians find more beneficial than they care to admit (Somerville and Ramsay, 2013).

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

De Bussy and Kelly (2010) notes much of the theoretical development currently taking place is occurring outside the confines of PR with little, if any, regard for the potential role of the discipline. For this reason, other researchers should envisage to carry on the mantle and explore other studies from a PR perspective to help bridge the gap identified. Also, in light of Anani-Bossman's (2018) argument that despite signs of increasing development, very little is known about PR practice in Africa and Ghana, for that matter. Mersham, Skinner and Rensburg (2011) further establish that in fact, most of the scholarly body of knowledge on PR

since the beginning of the 21st century has mainly been in the USA and Western Europe, a view shared by other scholars. For this reason, further studies should be focused on narrowing in on the Ghanaian narrative.

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