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**AN ASSESSMENT OF ETHICAL STANDARDS BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONS AND
PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS**

SUBMITTED BY

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**A LONG ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM IN
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CANDIDATES' DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this long essay is the result of my original study and that no part of it has been presented anywhere. However, all sources of borrowed materials have been duly acknowledged.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Without recourse to any ambiguity, completing this work has been challenging. Switching between work and study was challenging but persistence has seen me through. I was very determined to get it completed and this where I am. First, of it all, I thank God for His strength to sail through all the challenges that came my way. I would like to express our gratitude to my family for the unflinching support all these years and the motivation to pursue education to this level. I say God bless you. I also thank my supervisor, Dr. Esther Darku for her patience, support, and guidance. I am eternally grateful. To all my colleagues especially my course mates, the experience with you people will forever be priceless.

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the preparation and the presentation of this study were in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of research study laid down guideline by the Ghana Institute of Journalism.

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Date:

DEDICATION

We dedicate this work to God Almighty. It has been His continuous grace that has brought me this far. The journey has not been easy but for His mercy, I am making progress steadily. We are grateful to Him

ABSTRACT

This study was an assessment of the ethical standards of Public relations. The objectives of the study are to identify the influences that bound public relations practice in Ghana. It also examines who sets the ethical rules and what the rules seek to achieve in the practice of public relations in Ghana. It further assesses whether or not successful public relations practice equates to good ethical practice and what public relations aims to achieve and why/when ethical public relations matter. The research problem among others includes an interesting question about whether every practitioner irrespective of their location behaves ethically in the same way per standard as compared to their counterparts elsewhere. Because of the COVID-19 restrictions, a literature review was used as a basis for data analysis. The findings show that ethical standards are influenced by public interest. It is set for practitioners to give value to stakeholders and build trust. The findings further suggest that professional associations mostly set ethical standards. However, the organizations that practitioners may be working for also set ethical standards. The study also found out good ethical practice is linked to successful practice and ethics mostly matter when organizations face challenges and tends to build a good image. Based on the finding from the study, the recommendation was that to have much compliance with ethics and hold Public relations as a respectable profession in Ghana, there must be a legal backing to enforce practitioners to join the professional body. It also recommended that organizations must also encourage practitioners to be ethically bound in all their decisions and actions. On recommendation for further research, it was suggested that this study needs primary data to support the already existing literature. This will provide further and better particulars of the research objectives.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background

Public relations have been defined as a management function that creates, builds, and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics. Public relations provide a managerial role within an organization by way of managing the organization's relationships with its stakeholders. This relation can be sustained if it is mutually beneficial. (Grunig et al. (2011). That is the organization's stakeholders are not exploited but the organization also serves the interest of its stakeholders. This requires practitioners to formulate strategies that can help gain public trust and mutual understanding. Public relations professionals add value to an organization when they develop communal relationships with all public. (Center & Broom, 2006) In today's world, almost every organization across the industry has come to understand the importance of public relations. Many Organizations have come to realize how public relations mean to their business and how it influences the growth and development of organizations. What it means by influencing public discourse, creating, and maintaining a relationship that is of mutual benefit. They have come to appreciate the more, the essence of good relations between stakeholders and the organizations. However, public relations to be very successful has to have a positive effect on discourse, and to have a positive impact, practitioners need to act ethically. By stretch, public relations ethics should be the knowledge, understanding, and reasoning to questions of right or wrong behavior in the professional practice of public relations. The most renowned professional organization, Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) developed a code of professional standards that have been accepted globally by other professionals across the world. These ethics have been set to meet three basic goals. It seeks to provide guidelines to check the behavior of

practitioners. Haque & Ahmad, (2016) is of the view that personal ethics determines personal behavior while professional ethics determines the behavior of the practitioners. Another goal seeks to educate management on public relations standards as well as to distinguish public relations professionals from others who are not professionals.

Practitioners have to ensure that since they serve the interest of the public, they have the burden or obligation to look not only their interest but also that of the community. Ethics is an essential imperative on which the relationships public relations seeks to build and maintain depend mutually beneficial relationship with its public. The inception of ethics has contributed to public structural changes that have enhanced the profession's growth and development. It serves as a guide to help determine what behavior is acceptable and otherwise. (Valentine & Fleischman, 2008) Most professional organizations inclusive of Public relations organizations, there are codes of ethics that presume acceptable rules for members and for employees in an organization (Wilcox et al., 2005). Ethically oriented organizations can create and sustain a favorable reputation and sustain the near future of their business. Professional public relations practitioners today are concerned about ethics and how it is formulated (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). These ethics are built on honesty, trustworthiness, confidentiality. Therefore, public relations practitioners must be honest at all times. Practitioners must be able to set the difference between right or wrong, good or evil, and must be committed to doing what is right, good, or proper. This requires action and must be sufficient and continuous. When organizations commit to ethics and follow duly, it enhances the organization's public trust and by extension contributes to the success of the organization.

1.1 Problem Statement

Without a doubt, public relations practitioners by their role in an organization assess public attitudes, identify the policies and procedures of an individual or an organization with the public interest, and plan, and execute a program of action to earn public acceptance. (Watson, 2014)

Public relations seek to explain relationships of mutual benefit between organizations and their major stakeholders. With this role of public relations, it calls for responsible practice and not to entertain unprofessional conduct in the industry, which gives the profession a bad image. Thus differentiating the unprofessional from the ones who perform their work with the highest sense of responsibility towards values and standards. Public relations scholars argue that ethical practice is a core challenge for the profession because of the weighty responsibilities of the function and its ability to influence public interest (Bowen, 2013). This raises an interesting question about whether every practitioner irrespective of their location behaves ethically in the same way per standard as compared to their counterparts elsewhere. Since public relations ethics are influenced by the culture of a particular country, it is important to remember that ethic codes are not globally uniformed. (Brautović & Brkan, 2012) That is, globally, these ethics are not the same across. It is based on the set of values that matters which influences the standards that guide practitioner's behavior in their course of work. It is a misplaced argument to assume that everyone, regardless of the situation and culture, is guided by the same ethical standards. This study tends to understand what it means by ethics in public relations settings in Ghana. It would dig deeper to assess what influences ethics, who sets it, and what ethics seek to achieve. It goes on to find out whether or not successful practice means been ethically bounded and why as well as when ethics matter in public relations as far as Ghana is concerned.

1.2 Research objectives

1. To identify the influences that bound public relations practice in Ghana.
2. To examine who sets the ethical rules and what the rules seek to achieve in the practice of public relations in Ghana.
3. To assess whether or not successful public relations practice equate to good ethical practice
4. To examine what public relations aim to achieve and why/when ethical public relations matter.

1.3 Research Questions

The study seeks to find answers to the following questions, which are linked with the research objectives thereby solving the research problems:

1. What are the influences that bound public relations practice in Ghana?
2. Who sets the ethical rules and what the rules seek to achieve in professional public relations?
3. Does successful public relations practice equate to good ethical practice?
4. What do public relations seek to achieve and why/when ethics matter in public relations?

1.4 Methodology

The research methodology is the specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select, process, and analyze data about a topic. In other words, the methodology shows how the researcher researches by gathering and analyzing data. (Kothari, 2004) This study used a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is an organized method of describing people's

experiences and internal feelings. The purpose of qualitative research is to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon, rather than to generalize the findings. It is said that qualitative research provides a thorough and deep overview of a phenomenon through data collection and presents a rich description using a flexible method of research. In this method, qualitative information, which is gathered in the form of non-numerical data, is presented. (Creswell & Willer, 2000) The study used existing literature as data to make the analysis. By this, only secondary data was extracted and presented and discussion was based on it.

1.5 Significance of the study

The findings from this study will be beneficial in several ways and to some different groups of people. Below states the group of people how beneficial the study can be of importance to them:

Public relations Practitioners: The findings from the study would throw much light on ethics in public relations practice and how the issue of ethics has become imperative. It would provide add up to the current discussions on public relations ethics.

Academia/Students - It would also add to the existing literature on the research problem and provide additional knowledge. This study would be serving as a source of additional study material for people in academia as well as students. Students can refer to it for reading and other academic-related activities as well as people in academia can refer to it for further information.

Researchers: The researchers made recommendations on future areas of study. Recommendations urge specific actions to be taken concerning subsequent research. It provided specific suggestions that future researchers can look at and address some new areas to the study that this study did not focus on.

Professional organizations: Professional organizations such as the Institute of Public Relations and other communications practitioners' professional organizations. This study would serve as a source document for these organizations to study and have a further understanding of ethics and its application and how these organizations can encourage its members to be professionals and encourage others to also join these professional organizations.

1.6 Limitation of the study

The researchers chose a qualitative research design for the study. The methodology used available literature as data for analysis. Initially, this study was structured to be a full five-chapter dissertation but because of the COVID-19, pandemic, and its safety protocols as instructed by Government, the study had to be structured to a four-chapter academic paper. This did not allow the collection of primary data but only used secondary data for discussion. As broad as issues of ethics is, the use of literature review as data for this study cannot be enough, an explorative study approach will help delve into the study and help to provide further and better particulars of the situation. Again, as a student researcher, there was a challenge with time. The researcher struggled with how to manage time and especially when trying to strike a balance in with academic demands, work, and this long essay. The researcher did not have the luxury of time to effectively deliver because this study was to be completed within a period that was not as enough as wanted.

1.7 Organization of the study

The organization of the study deals with how the study has been structured. This study has been structured into five chapters and each chapter has been named. The first chapter that is chapter one

consists of the background of the study, problem statement, and purpose of the study, research questions, and objectives. It further states the delimitation and significance of the study as well as the limitation of the study. In addition, it defines the key terms in the study and how the study has been organized. The next chapter, which is labeled Chapter Two is a Literature review. It recaps what the study is all about. It explains what sanitation is, the various communication strategies in promoting sanitation. It also selects and addresses the theoretical framework of the topic under study. Chapter Three focused on the methodology. It states how data was collected. It would comprise the study area, population, sample size, sampling method, and source of data, data collection tool, and how the data would be analyzed. Chapter Four also focused on data collection and analysis. It presents a discussion of the findings of the study analyzed all of them to simplify it. Chapter four that is the final chapter, focuses on the findings, conclusion, and recommendation of the research problem. It summarizes the findings from the study and concludes it. It also provides recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter includes the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the study. It reviews previous related literature by other researchers. It deals with the definition of public relations, ethics in public relations, and who sets ethics for public relations practitioners. It discusses whether or not successful public relations practice equates good ethical practice. It further looks to find a theoretical framework that underpins the study. It further looks into to find the weaknesses in it as the basis for criticism

2.1 What is Public Relation?

In 1987, the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) provides a definition of public relations, which is still used. They defined public relations as planned and continuous efforts by organizations to establish and maintain goodwill and understanding between an organization and its publics (Skandari, 2004). Public Relations is the art and social science of the link between an organization and its publics. Public Relations affect almost everyone. That is to say that we individually practice public relations in one way or another as we go about our daily activities. During the past few decades, public relations have become very relevant in every facet of our lives particularly in organizational and business settings. While marketing and sales have as their primary objective of selling of an organization's products, public relations aim to sell the organization itself by creating a favorable image in the minds of its stakeholders. (Skinner, Mersham, & Valin, 2003.) Out of this is borne a variety of activities that are basic and practicable to the public relations perspective. Caven & Nomathemba (2014) further maintains that public relations practitioners are involved in

a variety of functions, which include research. As part of the primary steps in conducting a project, information, and intelligence gathering is a prerequisite. Some basic questions require answers. They may include, who are the key publics, their opinions, and attitudes? What is their interest? Which groups or persons are concerned enough to act? This involves putting together information about public opinion, trends, emerging issues, political climate, media coverage, concerns of consumer and environmental special-interest groups, and so forth, and to plan programs responsive to all these situations. According to Cutlip, Center & Broom (2000) research also includes monitoring programmed implementation and assessing programed impact to evaluate programmed effectiveness. It also includes strategic planning. The situation and the data needed to be formed into a strategy. This involves asking; where are we now? How did we get here? Where do we want to be? How do we get there? Cameron, Ault & Agee (2004) reinforces that essentially planning and advising means collaborating with management or clients in the problem-solving process. They may have a role in the implementation and at least, will need to explain it to their staff. People in the organization need to be informed about the plan and their roles in it. The plan must be carried out. Messages or appeals are sent to the various publics involved: activities or actions are staged; feedback must be interpreted, and everyone must be kept informed as the project unfolds. Patel, Xavier, & Broom, 2005) states that public relations practitioners could handle a variety of functions ranging from media conferences, conventions, and exhibitions, to open-house days, anniversary celebrations, fund-raising events, contests, awards programs, and sponsorships. Public relations practitioners should be adept at writing news releases, newsletters, correspondence, reports, booklets, texts, radio and television copy, film scripts, trade papers and magazine articles, corporate advertisements, product information, and technical material. (Seitel 2004). Skinner et al. (2004) postulate that the process of gathering information enables organizations to plan programs

in response to the public and problem situations, to monitor their effectiveness during implementation, and evaluate their overall impact. Patel, Xavier, & Broom (2005) states that public relations in organizations can often be traced back to unintended and humble beginnings. It can begin with someone simply answering letters from customers or members; with someone writing annual reports, handling visitors, conducting tours, or even someone arranging the annual meeting. They reinforce that public relations in organizations are the category that covers the routine of daily exchange of information to manage all corporate communication.

2.2 Public Relations in Ghana

Public relations practice in Ghana is known to be introduced in the pre-colonial days by the British colonial administration. After independence, the Ghana Institute of Journalism has established a journalist. In 1972, a gentleman name Hermann Alah formed the Public Relations Association of Ghana with a group of practicing journalists as public relations officers. (Atawura,2010) The association was re-organized and as part of the reorganization of the association, a new Constitution was introduced. In support of this, the Code of Ethics and Professional Standards were also adopted in 1991. This transformed the association, Public Relations Association Ghana (PRAG) into the Institute of Public Relations, Ghana (IPR) which was registered as a professional body. (IPRGhana, 2015) Despite forming this professional association, Gyan (1991) found out that in Ghana, public relations was not referred to as a profession. In most organizations, public relations practitioners' were not placed in a managerial role. They were mostly limited under a department where they report to the department manager. However, Wu & Baah-Boakye (2008) indicated that in modern times, public relations is moving toward professionalism in Ghana. Most organizations have communication, corporate, public affairs or relations departments and public relations practitioners are taking managerial positions.

2.3 What is ethics?

The study of ethics is a broad area. Ethics is a branch of philosophy that explains people's beliefs and actions and was established as such by Aristotle, in the 3rd century BC. Ethics is referred to as moral philosophy and it is linked to the Greek word 'ethos' which simply means character, habit, customs, values, etc. Ethics may be defined as the study of actions of people whether or not rightful or wrongful, as means to achieve professionalism. It sets the basis for what is good or bad in the conduct of humans as they have obligations. (Lamme, & Russell, 2009) In other words, ethics refers to what is good and what is bad. It further suggests how to get good while working to avoid the bad. It sets clear responsibilities to achieve acceptable and unacceptable. Aristotle established a system of well-defined and interrelated concepts to explain the morality of human action, the accomplishment of good, and the perfection of the human being. Ethics was differently defined throughout history. It considers theories about what people are capable of and what their responsibilities are. It explores and provides understanding to the lineup of values such as honesty, equality, justice, etc. (Jose, 2017) Ethical systems changed through time, gaining more and new concepts to think about new human realities in the world and to communicate them. In recent times, the importance of ethics is has been recognized in every part of people's life. The development of ethics helps people to evaluate situations and make decisions by thinking and reflecting on morality. It can enhance people's thinking on critical issues that may arise whether or not to correct action or make a choice. Ethics helps to train our minds to think reasonably. In making decision or judgment, people have to have a standard of right and wrong to serve as a basis for judgment. (Boss, 1998)

2.4 What is ethics in Public Relations?

Bowen (2016) defines ethics as the study of what constitutes right, wrong, good, or bad behavior. He further suggests that ethics is the study of individuals, which is centered on principles, decisions, consciousness, and problems. Brautović & Brkan (2009) also is of the view that ethics are a set of criteria that are designed or set to help professionals make decisions. Seitel (2001) states that ethics provide a guide that shows the right or wrong values in society. On May 12, 1965, at Athens in Greece, the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) designed a draft of an International Code of Ethics to be used by Public relations practice. The Code had been a source of reference since then. (Watson, 2014) Public relations practitioners have the core responsibility of managing their organization's communication. In this course, they are expected to conduct their activities with the hope of defining what is good or bad. (Bowen, 2016) Ethical standards help public relations professionals to make decisions about what course of action is the right one to take in the interest of the public. (Browning & Sweetser, 2020). Over the years, the need for ethics in public relations has long been recognized and ethical practice frequently has been linked to professionalization. Practitioners who follow ethics and works in line with it are considered as highly professionals. (Browning & Sweetser, 2020) Ki & Kim (2010) highlights some six major issues that are addressed in the development of public relations ethical code. They indicate the work environment, goals, behavior, professionalism, fulfillment, and respect. They further explain the work environment include teamwork, partnerships, and creativity. Goals also include the notions of growth, results, excellence, and social responsibility while behavior includes the notions of honesty, fairness, openness, and honor. Professionalism includes the notions of accountability, responsibility, dedication, and hard work. Fulfillment including the notions of

balance, fun, and recognition and respect, which includes the notions of respect for the firm, coworkers, clients, and society.

2.5 What influences the ethics that bound Public Relations Practice?

Public relations ethics are influenced by public interest. The spirit of the welfare and wellbeing of the public guide it. Public Interest means serving the public fully. It requires listening to what matters to the majority and it must be decided based on standards and values. It is the result of a decision-making process based on reality. (McQuail, 1992) The main goal of public relations should be to encourage and to promote an understanding of its organizational goals through interaction with stakeholders whose sense of active contribution should be recognized by the organization. The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) makes emphasis in article 2 of the Code that says which requires members to conduct their professional work within the spirit of public interest (PRSA, 2016). Public relations practitioners are required to conduct his/her professional life in a manner that does not conflict with matters that are of interests to the public as well as the dignity of the individual. (PRSA, 2016) The purpose of public relations is served best if it serves the interest of the people. This will be accepted as ethical practice when individuals who need it can access public relations services and it ensures public interest. This is the basis and the motivation of setting ethical standards. (Messina, 2007).

Fitzpatrick & Gauthier (2001) is also of the view that public relations are a form of human communication and therefore human dignity must be guaranteed. Human dignity must influence the work of public relations. Public relations is to respect every single individual including the managers, communicators and the audience. Both the members of internal and external public relations should be treated with respect so that decision-making abilities, choices, and actions of public relations practitioners are supported and the consumers are honored. The culture of respecting

everyone is possible when public relations practitioners respect their audience by providing adequate true information. Justice is very important to maintain peace and stability in every society. Public relations can fail in the long run when justice is not maintained properly. Justice in public relations means establishing the rights of everyone involved in the process and whether there are gains or losses it should be shared equally. The principle of justice is based on the value of fairness which requires that benefits and burdens are distributed among the affected parties as fairly as possible (Fitzpatrick & Gauthier, 2001). In a just society, people are treated fairly and the decisions are made reasonably. Justice emphasizes on the impartial distribution of common benefits and the sharing the burdens together (Mackie, 2010). Justice should be guaranteed for the people as they deserve it. (Bivins, 1992). To ensure appropriate ethical public relations, sometimes these principles move and support each other (Fitzpatrick & Gauthier, 2001). As the principles can be different in different situations, responsible public relations must apply the individual ethics of professionalism (Cox, 2006).

2.6 Who sets the ethical rules in Public Relations?

The discussions about who sets ethical rules or standards in public relations are a critical area in this professional practice. Cox (2006) is of the view that ethical rules are set by professional bodies such as the Public Relations Society of America. These bodies develop a code of ethics for members of the organization to follow however non-members of the professional bodies also embrace it as a source document to ensure the practice ethically. The code of ethics serves as a guide for Public relations practitioners to ensure that they work professionally to bring dignity to the profession. One thing needs to be noticed, the content of these codes of ethics varies especially by organizations. The Public relations Society of America (PRSA) code is set to offer practical

professional standards that focuses on consultants and agency practitioners while the International Public Relations code is designed towards certain moral duties that are relevant to the practice. (Bowen, 2008) Apart from these professional bodies, corporate or organizations also set standards for their staff. The organization sets rules of procedure to guide its employees on how to work professionally. As businesses thrive for success, ethics at the workplace or within an organization has become one of the topmost important issues for managers. Organizational ethics are dictated or set by top management and all employees are bound to accept and follow it accordingly. In-house public relations officers of the organization are expected to follow these standards in their course of work. These ethics are set by the organizations that are normally in line with the organization's vision and its value. (Parkinson, 2001).

2.7 What is meant to achieve in terms of PR Standards

In the field of Public relations, ethics include values that emphasis on advocacy, honesty, openness, loyalty, respect, fair, mindedness, respect, integrity, and forthright communication. These values are set to guide public relations practitioners and help them to make good decisions and maintain professional conduct. (Bowen,2007) Setting public relations standards can be of great help and push practitioners on the right course in their careers as well as their clients. This is because standards serve as ethics and dictate to practitioners what is wrong and what is right. Ethics is a set of standards that professionals accept by way of agreement to voluntarily follow and deliver benefits to clients and the public. (Lee & Cheng, 2012) It is an indispensable part of an organization therefore, public relations practitioners must be honest and trustworthy, acting at all times in the public interest (Seitel, 1998). When professionals abide by standards that are set, it gives the public that sort of confidence and this is very essential in the practice of public relations. (Grunig & Toth, 2006) The power of Public Relations to shape opinions is one of the most

compelling reasons to consider the duty to society, and to take care not to abuse that power by dishonest use of manipulation. Public relations protect an organization's reputation and at the same time its conscience. This makes public relations a strategic management component in an organization. Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier (2002) identified ethics as principles of public relations excellence. When ethics and responsibility are grounded in public relations, it offers a significant communication role for organizations. Grunig (1990) stated that successful public relations practiced are linked to professionalism. This can be measured by involvement and that includes membership in professional associations, attending meetings of those groups, and holding offices in them. Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier (2002) state that the characteristics of professional and successful public relations practices based are based on the Excellence Theory. They state that excellent public relations is ethical and for a practitioner to have a successful career, one has to be ethically bounded.

2.8 Does successful PR practice equate to good ethical practice?

There has been a growing discussion as to if successful public relations practice equates to ethical practice. It is important to note that ethical codes exist to protect individual rights and to enhance the greater good for the majority of people and the public relations profession. The existence of the code itself does not guarantee ethical successful public relations practice however, successful public relations can be achieved by good ethical practices. (Baker & Martinson, 2002) Public relations practitioners and organizations that work in-line with good ethical standards give their clients or organizations the best of services are mostly successful. (Parsons, 2004) Ethics are a basic part of public relations, which includes honesty, openness, loyalty, fair-mindedness, respect, and integrity. (Parsons, 2004) The need for ethics in public relations has long been recognized, and ethical practice has been linked to professionalization and good practice success. Professional

ethics determines the behavior of the practitioners in various professions and this has effects on their career. (Haque & Ahmad, 2016) To have a successful career, public relations practitioners are required to make intelligent and analytical decisions ethically that otherwise might damage an organization's reputation. This is very critical in the individual's career success. (Lattimore & Latimore, 2004)

2.9 When does the two work together and when does it come into conflict?

Public relations and good ethical practice is something that professional institutions have been focusing on to ensure that their members work with it diligently. As indicated earlier, this comes together when practitioners have to deliver a good and clean job for their organizations and clients. Public relations professionals are expected to work with the highest professionalism to deliver value at any point in time. However, there are some instances where public relations conflict with standards. Public relations ethics are all about the conflict between values and the choices that must be made. When two elements of values collide, there is the need to refer to ethical principles in decision-making. Makamani, & Zimanyi (2020) is of the view that the code of ethics that public relations practitioners work with are not practically oriented to help the professionals apply their principles with ease. Undue pressure from employers to public relations practitioners represent their organizations is only a positive light that directly influences the way practitioners to make their ethical decisions. This makes practitioners find themselves in ethical dilemmas (Bowen 2007). In some instances, practitioners had to act against their ethical issues rather than losing their jobs and this creates conflict. (Ceylan, 2007)

2.8 What PR aims to achieve and why/when, ethics matter?

The introduction of ethics in public relations has its own set of aims that seeks to achieve. It determines the behavior of the people and it plays different roles in different parts of human life. (Haque & Ahmad, 2016). Ethics aims to bring credibility to the profession and organizations. Cutlip, Center & Broom (2006) posits that making public relations a solid profession and accord the necessary status, it must be specialized educational programs, practitioners' commitment to abide by established professional codes of ethics that protect the public interest and spell out social responsibility. (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2006). It further seeks to establish a faithful relationship between organizations and the public. Haque & Ahmad (2016) outlines three basic goals that ethics seeks to achieve. The first is to prevent clients from being exploited. Clients who consult practitioners for counseling purposes have high expectations and become daring to achieve results. This requires that public relations practitioners work to protect the integrity of the profession. Good ethical practice matters in practice especially when expectations of clients are high and the interest of the public is at stake. Grunig (2016) also posits that ethics aims to provide a framework that can help public relations practitioners to think and decide when they are faced with a complex situation. He further states that ethics cannot be said to be just a set of 'codes'. Ethics certainly deals with moral codes yet one cannot identify ethics to be moral codes. Ethics is not primarily to restrict one's behavior, rather helps one to find what is good and how to get it.

2.9 Criticism of Ethics in Public Relations

As usual, there have been several criticisms about ethics in Public relations. Tench & Yeoman (2006) states that Public relations is about building relationships and trust is the main requirement from the practitioners to be successful in these relationships. When it is broken, it is very difficult to repair it. As mentioned in Parson (2004), Plato the Philosopher thinks ethics are not that relevant

to public relations practice. He states that good people don't need the law to dictate to them to act accordingly. By their conscience, they would act as expected of them but bad people would find ways around the law. Bowen (2007) is also of the view that ethics in public relations are short of ideals stated in the codes. Some practitioners also say they see a code of ethics once and then do not refer to it or read it again unless they find themselves in any dilemma. Kruckeberg (2000) also states that codes of ethics in public relations lack efficient enforcement and compliance systems. What professional bodies do is that the revocation of association membership and suspension. Parkinson (2001) also argues that a simple ethics statement is all that is imperative because the good intention is of regulations guideline other than the code of ethics.

2.10. Ethical Theories

Ethical theories provide represents the views from which individuals look at in their decision-making. There are several theories but each of the theories has a different point of view. This study chose to focus on the three basic ethical theories namely, utilitarianism, deontology, the ethics of care, rights theory, and the theory of justice. Practitioners use a wide range of different ethical criteria to make decisions. (Granitz & Loewy, 2007) Generally, practitioners use at least one of the following three ethical theories to reason their ethical decisions: utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue theories.

2.10.1. Utilitarianism Theory

Utilitarianism theory focuses on results and not on the means required to achieving those ends. It takes into account benefits and harms that accrue or might accrue to anyone who is affected by the action of an organization (Schumann, 2001). According to the utilitarian moral principle, an act is morally acceptable if it produces the greatest overall benefit to society as a whole. (Schumann, 2001) The idea is that ethical decisions are made based on the consequences of the action. It is also

sometimes called consequentialism. Practitioners who choose or make ethical decisions with this theory are required to assess the effect of each alternative on all stakeholders and choose the one that optimizes the satisfaction of the greatest number. (Chonko, 2012) The attraction of this ethical view seems to suggest that it appears to be a way to assess the impact of behavior and determine the greatest good for the majority. Here, the main focus is the majority. As this theory may seem appealing in public relations, it does not provide enough ethical systems or a footprint for decision-making. (Botan, & Hazleton, 2010) Some concerns seem to come up when practitioners rely on utilitarian ethics to make decisions. Decision-makers are required to guess the potential outcomes of their decision to determine what is ethical. This seems to contradict the goal of public relations to build mutually beneficial relationships and it is not always possible to predict the outcome of a decision. (Chonko, 2012) Bowen (2007) is of the firm belief that consequences are not always predictable sometimes the unexpected happens.

2.10.2 Deontological Theory

Deontological ethics is associated with the father of modern deontology, Immanuel Kant. The idea is that every human has his or her rights and should be treated with the utmost respect. The core consideration of this theory is that there are obligations that are required of all people. It is imperative to find one's duty and make the appropriate decision when practitioners find themselves in making the right decision. (Chonko, 2012) Deontology is believed to provide the most appreciable model for public relations ethics. Deontology is based on the moral autonomy of the individual, similar to the autonomy and freedom from encroachment that public relations seek to be considered excellent. That ideological consistency gives the theory posed here a solid theoretical foundation with the practice of public relations as well as a normative theory function.

(Botan, & Hazleton, 2010) Similarly, Fitzpatrick & Gauthier (2001) suggests that practitioners' judgment must be on the rightness of the decision each day.

2.10.3 Virtue Theory

In recent years, a growing area of theories of public relations is known as virtue theory. This theory has gained more attention in public relations research. This theory has its root from Aristotle and it is based on the personal virtues of practitioners making decisions that have to be ethically right. It considers what a public relations practitioner is made of, that is what makes the practitioner a professional. (Chonko,2012)This theory requires that the practitioner must understand what virtues are good and essential for public relations and thereafter, decisions are made. Virtue ethics require the decision-maker to understand what virtues are good for public relations and then decisions are made in light of those particular virtues. For instance, if the virtue of loyalty is of utmost importance to a good public relations professional, then all decisions should be made ethically to ensure loyalty is hold in high esteem. This theory seems to be gaining more attention however, there is criticism. (Botan, & Hazleton, 2010) The industry is not simply about what public relations practitioners think but ultimately the impact on society. Additionally, it also can face the same obstacle as deontological ethics when having conflicting virtues.

The empirical evidence in this literature reviewed is studies and publications that have been done in countries other than Ghana. The situation of Public Relations in the Ghanaian in terms of ethical practice may be different from the west. This may be out of the differences in culture. Again, as many practitioners across the world especially in America and Europe belong to professional bodies, from personal observation many practitioners don't belong to the professional association in Ghana. This study would provide a further and better understanding of the Ghanaian phenomenon.

CHAPTER THREE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings from the literature reviewed. It discusses the findings based on the research questions that were set. The chapter discusses the finding from the literature reviewed by referring to research questions and summarizes the findings. The chapter provides a conclusion based on the findings from the study and some recommendations. This study has provided some sort of insight to the researcher and she shares some reflections and the limitations of the study.

3.1 What influences the ethics that bound Public Relations Practice?

The first objective of this study is to identify the influences that bound public relations practice in Ghana. The study found out that for public relations to be a solid profession and well respected as others, it has to be streamlined properly with certain standards that would help the profession to be credible. To achieve public trust and confidence, it must consider public interest first. The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) in efforts to make the profession most recognized and ethically bound, it stresses in the article 2 of the Code that says members to conduct their professional work within the spirit of public interest. This is borne out of the fact that public relations are a field that has been faced with ethical dilemmas. By this challenge, the image of public relations has been tarnished, the reputation has not been favorable as well as the professionalism of practitioners has been questioned. This has made it imperative to ensure that Public relations place the interest of the public first ahead. This has influenced professional organizations as well as business organizations' to delve into and making setting ethical standards that seek to protect the interest of the public as the interest of their organizations or clients is also

considered. Public interest is the set of actions or steps that result in the welfare of society and people in a greater way. Public interest is the main criteria that should influence decision making by public relations practitioners. By this human dignity is protected is of the view that public relations is a form of human communication and therefore human dignity must be guaranteed. Human dignity influences the work of public relations and requires that they practice ethically. Public relations is to respect every single individual including the managers, communicators, and the audience.

3.2 Who sets the ethical rules of Public Relation?

The second objective of this paper was to examine who sets the ethical rules and what the rules seek to achieve in the practice of public relations in Ghana. It was found out that professional bodies set ethical rules. Public relations have professional bodies across the world. These bodies develop a code of ethics for their members to abide by. Apart from members of these organizations, other practitioners who do not belong to these organizations also use these codes of ethics as a guide to ensure that they work professionally to create value to their clients and organizations that they work with. Apart from these professional bodies, it was found out that corporate or organizations also set standards for their members. These standards become rules of procedure to guide their employees on how to work professionally. It is documented as an organizational policy that all employees including public relations practitioners are to be bound by it. These standards, which are set by top management of the organization, are set to fit the organization's character and vision. In-house public relations officers of the organization are expected to follow these standards in their course of work. Failure to abide by this code of ethics would have its sanctions and by this, practitioners hold it in high esteem as far as they work for the organization.

3.3 What do ethical standards seek to achieve?

From the literature reviewed, it was found that ethical standards are set to guide public relations practitioners and help them to make good decisions and maintain a professional conduct. In addition, ethical standards are set to win public trust. As ethical standards guide to ensure practitioners work diligently, it gives the public confidence and this is very essential in the practice of public relations. Ethics prevent practitioners from dishonesty and manipulation of their clients and other stakeholders.

3.4 Does successful Public relations equate good ethical practice?

Finally, this paper also assesses whether or not successful public relations practice equates to good ethical practice. From the literature reviewed, it establishes that successful public relations can be achieved by good ethical practices Public relations practitioners and organizations that work in-line with ethics give their clients the best of services and these organizations are most successful.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

4.0 Summary

Standards in public relations play a major role in building trust between an organization and its publics. Ethics sets a standard of practice for public relations practitioners and it helps as a guide in their work. Ethics aim at ensuring that practitioners conduct themselves professionally that is acceptable by the public. Ethical practice in Ghana has not been well researched. This motivated the need to conduct this study in this area. The study aimed to assess public relations ethics in Ghana and to specifically what ethical standards seek to achieve and who sets these standards in Ghana. The study further looks to understand whether successful public relations mean good ethical practice. The literature reviewed in this work was used as data for this study.

4.1 Conclusion

Public relation is all about building a mutually beneficial relationship with the public. Public relation practitioners both in-house and consultants work with organizations to create, build, and maintain the relationship with all stakeholders. Every organization needs public relations because the success of every organization partly depends on the professional practice of public relations. Professional practice is known to be ethical practice in public relations practice is one area that is very interesting in the area of public relations and should attract the utmost attention. It plays a vital role in human communication and ensures the welfare of all stakeholders. (Haque & Ahmad, 2016) As this profession is of this nature, Bowen (2004) also states that Public Relations practice

is saddled with ethical dilemmas and therefore more attention must be given to the challenges so this area would be well researched and explored.

4.2 Researchers Reflections

The scope of this study assesses ethics in public relations practice in Ghana. Literature was reviewed and the study uncovered many issues around the subject area. Professional public relations practice is all about ethics. Ethics is very imperative in every sphere of professionalism. This study has provided a fair understanding of the organization of materials, writing, and providing proper acknowledgment by way of providing references. This adds to the authenticity of the study and encourages others to read and refer to it as a source that can be beneficial for use.

4.3 Recommendation

Reflecting on the findings and conclusions drawn from this study, the following recommendations were made:

- Public relations practitioners must be encouraged by joining professional bodies. As Public Relations wants to be seen as a professional, the way to enforce practitioners to practice ethically is enact a law that will enforce all practitioners to join the body. This has been done by other professional bodies such as the Ghana Bar Association and Ghana Medical Association.
- Organizations must understand support practitioners to follow standards and work professionally. As practitioners are faced with an ethical dilemma. They get to the

crossroad to make decisions based on standards. Management must support practitioners to make a decisive decision that is in line with acceptable standards.

- I further suggest that Public relations practitioners must engage themselves in continuous professional development. In the literature review, it was found out that some practitioners do not refer or read the compiled document in which these standards have been written. This continuous professional development will enhance and periodically sharpen the skills of practitioners and enhance them.

4.3.1 Recommendations for future research

- Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, this research could not pick up primary data for the study. Therefore, I recommend that future researchers can explore this area and find out further and better particulars for analysis and comparison.
- In addition, future researchers interested in this area can look into how organizations can support practitioners to practice effectively and professionally.

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