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(SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH)**

**THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR) AS A MANAGEMENT TOOL IN THE
PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY**

BY

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STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Dorcas Inaka Abakli-Zakli, hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own original research and that no part it has been presented for another degree in this Institute or elsewhere nor contains any unacknowledged work from any other source. I also declare that, I take responsibility for any shortcomings associated with this work.

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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation of this dissertation was supervised by me in accordance with the guidelines of supervision of dissertation laid down by the Ghana Institute of Journalism. This research project is submitted for examination with my approval as university supervisor.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the Almighty God for his protection, grace, strength and love shown to me throughout my study in school. I also dedicate this to my Parents Lawyer and Mrs. Agbakli-Zakli for the unconditional love and support, and whose tireless efforts kept me going steadily throughout my stay in school.

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ABSTRACT

Healthcare is a field mostly faced with numerous complex organization-public relationships, and the need to manage the relationships among the various publics has increasingly become complex. The role of public relations is very important especially in sectors where communication is key to a better public outcome like the health sector. Without the right communication tool, stakeholders may not be able to understand some necessary information for their health and well-being. This paper explored the role that public relations as a management function within the health care and pharmaceutical industry. The discussion was based on a series of empirical research literature on public relations and healthcare. The paper argues that, the present and future of health and pharmaceutical care is centered on the central role of the patient looking for new ways of communicating with health providers and this is facilitated by public relations. The study shows that public relations in the pharmaceutical industry has changed in accordance with the change that has evolved in health care. However, it is not entirely different from public relations in other industries since the main aim is to maintain a long-term relationship between health organizations and its publics as well as manage reputation. The author suggests that, it is necessary for the management of health organizations to recognize the important role that the public relations play in creating good internal and external PR and include the public relations department in all decision-making and operations in the organization.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the overview of the study which includes background, problem statement, objectives of the study, and significance of the study.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Public relations is responsible for establishing communications within the heart of an organization and its main shareholders; thus, it is a guiding performance which, at its highest point, relates to the management and applies tactical tools to execute the described guidelines. Some people believe that public relations help an organization and its clients adapt to each other mutually (Coler, 2000).

According to Grunig & Huang (2000), public relations is the strategic management of the relationships between an organization and its publics. The term “relationships” in public relations largely refers to the various publics with which one must interact, sustain, and cultivate as part of the daily work of the public relations professional. Based on this understanding of public relations, one may say, the practice of public relations may be made more complex as the number and variety of publics with whom one must sustain relationships increases.

Public relations practitioners may be found in almost every segment of business and society. From small non-profit organizations to major international corporations and everywhere in between, public relations practitioners are practising their craft, managing relationships between organizations and their publics (Terri Lea, 2015). Every

organization according to Lamb and Mc Kee (2005) is composed of an internal system of social networks, and each exists within a framework of interrelated systems of relationships with key stakeholders such as competitors, consumers, sponsors, regulators, and the media” which form the publics. He further adds that public relation is an important subsystem of an organisation and the effective practice of public relations is integrally bound to the health of an organisation.

It is evident from the above that public relations plays a management role by establishing and maintaining a relationship between an organization and its internal and external publics by using well planned and deliberate efforts of communication. Jethwaney and Sarkar (2000) confirm this by noting that public relations is a deliberate, planned, and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its publics. That is, in serving as a management role, public relations ensures that an organization is understood by its public and also uses continuous activities like campaigns, press releases among others. Seitel (1980), also adds that, public relation plays the role of interpreting the public to management that is letting management know about what the public thinks about the organization as well as can counsel management. Hence it is important to have a public relations department as part of every organizations’ management.

In effect, Public Relations is of great importance to the healthcare sector where communication is key to a better public outcome. Without the right communication tools, the various publics may not be able to understand necessary information for their health and well-being. Unfortunately, the communication practice of the pharmaceutical

industry has been strained by past scandals and its overall reputation and trust by the public has decreased (Olsen & Whalen, 2009). And this could possibly be as a result of organizations not recognizing the role public relation play in the management of the organization.

Public relations today is present in almost all parts of life. One such area is the area of health. Health is one of the most important areas of social activity and so it is exposed to the numerous critics. The image of doctors and health institutions in the public is not even close to what health professionals wanted. Various health institutions are shaken by the affairs associated with corruption and bribes. Doctors are linked to the stereotype that they are people who have extremely low ability for good and effective communication with their public. In addition to this, is also the low awareness of management to recruit communication professionals in their institutions (Tomic, Lasic, Tomic, 2010). In view of this, Public relations is also needed in pharmaceutical industry just like in any other sector, in order to communicate with its stakeholders and agree on mutual interests (Tomic, Lasic, & Tomic, 2009). According to Hetherington and Parkinson (2001), healthcare is a unique industry as it pulls a thin line between life, death and recovery. Healthcare as a sector has seen adjustments, as companies are now communicating directly to stakeholders, and as new innovations drive research and success (Tomic, Lasic, & Tomic, 2009).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Public relations is the process of communicating with its public organizations to

achieve mutual understanding and realization of common interests (Tomic, Lasic, Tomic, 2010). The role of public relations in any organization is to identify the key publics, both internal and external, with whom the organization must operate effectively, and alongside this, to strategically develop and maintain a relationship with these publics for the benefit of both the organization and the identified publics. The role of public relations in an organization is very important and how management positions relationships as a management tool, greatly determine the output generated by public relations.

Health is a field usually faced with numerous complex organization-public relationships. The need to manage the relationships among different types of publics such as health care providers, insurers, patients, and government entities that both provide and regulate health care services grow increasingly more complex as the provision of and access to health care changes (Zezza & Nacinovich, 2011).

Unfortunately, the communication practice of the pharmaceutical industry has been strained and its overall reputation and trust by the public has decreased (Olsen & Whalen, 2009). According to Davis (2004) the public relations industry lacks credibility and people do not take the industry seriously. And this is because public relations which exist as a management function to establish and maintain mutual relationship between organizations and its publics is most times, assigned 'low end' tasks and given roles that invariably underestimate its value. Also, it seems that organisations still battle to define the functions and the role of public relations, let alone positioning the discipline (Gqamane, 2010). This is supported by Gqamane (2010) who notes that, previous

research has confirmed that most organizations have not identified the role of public relations within the management of their organizations. As a result, the home for public relations as a management function is still not clear in most organisations, example of which is the pharmaceutical industry. Thus, there is a need to develop a new paradigm under which public relations can function effectively in the interest of the organization and the public it serves (Grunig et al, 2002).

Hence, the aim of this research is to explore the role of public relations as a management function in the pharmaceutical industry especially in Ghana where there has been no or limited research to investigate the PR as a management function. This is because, although some public relations studies have been conducted elsewhere, such empirical studies are few or none in the Ghanaian pharmaceutical industry. This will therefore be done by examining the role of public relations in organizations in the health care industry and by

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study is to examine the role of public relations in the pharmaceutical industry in Ghana. The specific objectives include;

- 1) To examine whether public relations is a management role in the pharmaceutical industry.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) What is the role of PR as a management tool in the pharmaceutical industry?

2) What direct role do public relations play in healthcare delivery?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In recent times Public relations can be said to be hurriedly being replaced with new digital media as the conventional practice of public relations is in stiff competition with new media for public attention in communication with both internal and external publics as well as the spread of unadulterated and authenticity information which is free from anonymous and impersonators. The general public is constantly in a dilemma as to what to believe most especially when those in authority and with the right information are not forth coming and making use of new and advance means of communicating with the public. Thus, this study will address the importance of public relations within organizations and the pharmaceutical industry. Also, findings from this study may be used by the pharmaceutical industry to review the management role that public relations plays in within the healthcare industry. Health organisations can use this study as a guideline in assessing their in-house public relations departments or any other department under which public relations falls, for the overall interest and success of the organisation.

1.6 CONCLUSION

This section discusses what formed the basis for this paper which is the background of the study and explains the concept of public relations as a management function that establishes and maintains a relationship between an organization and its publics. This

section also highlighted the rationale of this paper which is the problem statement. It also looks at the various objectives which this paper sought to explore and finally the significance of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This section covers the literature review of the study, discusses the theories that serve as theoretical framework for the study, and reviews related studies.

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theory is usually a conceptual representation which offers explanations of what factors bring about some kind of consequence and serves as a guide. The theoretical framework provides a grounding base, or an anchor, for the literature review, and most importantly, the method and analysis. Lysaght (2011) highlighted the necessity of identifying one's theoretical framework for a dissertation study. The theory used for this study is the systems theory.

2.1.1. SYSTEMS THEORY

According to Tench and Yeomans (2006), organizations are not detached bodies unaffected by what is around them. They are affected by the environment and also, in turn affect the environment in which they operate. Systems Theory defines organizations as a set of subsystems that affect each other and jointly interact with the external environment. Lubbe and Puth (2002) describes a system as a set of objects or bodies that relate with one another to form a whole. According to Lubbe and Puth (2002), organizations should adjust and adapt as they change internally and as the environment changes. They form part of a social system that consists of individuals or groups such as suppliers, local communities, employees, customers and government, who interact with each other. Thus, public relations exists to advance and maintain good relationships with these publics, to help the organization achieve its objectives.

The System theory was developed by Hegel in the 19th century to explain historical development as a dynamic process. System theory was used by L. von Bertalanffy, a biologist, as the basis for the field of study known as 'general systems theory', a multidisciplinary field (1968). Ludwing Von Bertalanffy (1968) introduced general systems theory as a universal theory applicable to many fields of study which provides a way of examining interrelationship and deriving principles. General system theory refers to how to break complex things into parts and then understand how the part work together in systems. General system theory can be referred to as systems theory, theory of open system, system model, and family systems theory. The work of Von Bertalanffy (1973) recognized the need of any organization to interact with its external environment. For Bertalanffy (1973), for survival of an organization like the way living organism

survives, should operate in open system and not closed system. This is what made his work to make system concepts become recognized worldwide as approach to be adapted by organization for their efficiency and effectiveness in the dynamic and changing environments.

According to Lubbe and Puth (2002:41), "the systems approach is one of the most fruitful approaches to public relations management. This approach illuminates the part which public relations plays in the effective operation of the organization".

Organizations need to operate as an open system in order to be successful. Gqamane (2010) notes that an organization which has the highest possibility for a continuing success is one that interrelates actively with its environment. Tench and Yeomans (2006) adds that, by taking a systems viewpoint, it can be realized that public relations professionals have a *boundary-spanning* role. That is, they work at the limitations in organizations, working with all the internal subsystems by assisting them with their external communication by providing expert advice on what and how to communicate and by helping them with implementation of objectives. For example, public relations might work closely with marketing (disposal subsystem) on product support and with senior management (management subsystem) on patients or consumer relations.

Seitel (2006) adds that public relations practitioners' function in an organization as links between the company and its internal and external publics. They support their co-workers by assisting them to communicate across organizational lines both within and outside the company. Thus, public relations professionals also become systems managers, who are knowledgeable about and able to deal with any complex relationship intrinsic in the company. Organizations today, are observed as an open-ended process

of coordinating purposeful individuals whose actions stem from applying their unique interpretations to the particular situations confronting them. For instance, currently, an organization which will not be sensitive to its environment and communicate efficiently will hardly survive. Things like technology, health, social and economic phenomena are not static but are always changing, hence organizations need to adopt in order to survive.

Consequently, public relations is vital in building an understanding and knowledge of the contribution to the importance of relationships. Emphasis should as well be placed on the importance of public relations in organizations so that companies may acquire a holistic approach to communication and relationship management (Gqamane, 2010). Lubbe and Puth (2002) emphasize that, in addition to all the public relations functions, the open systems approach gives public relations the role to recognize changes in the organization's social setting and advise clients or employees on how the organization should change itself and respond to establish a "common meeting ground".

2.2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE STUDIES

2.2.1. DEFINING THE CONCEPT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public Relations has seen various definitions, opinions, tools and functions over the past decades resulting in a conflicting perception of the term by both scholars and the public (Topic & Hasenmeyer 2017). Thus, there are several definitions of the term public relations as many institutions, institutes, authors and individuals have their own definitions of public relations. However, irrespective of the number of these definitions, they all have convinced common characteristics.

According to Gqamane (2010), one of the most striving pursuits for a universal

definition was commissioned by the Foundation of Public Relations Research and Education in 1975. About 472 different definitions were analyzed by about 60 Public Relations leaders who participated in the study, and they offered the following definition: Public relations is a distinctive management function which helps to establish and maintain mutual lines of communications, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between the organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound ethical communication techniques as its principal tools (Harlow, 1976).

Wilcox and Cameron (2009) contend that public relations practitioners serve as an intermediary between the organization and all the publics that exist in the organization. Theaker (2004) further adds that public relations, is concerned with the reputation of an organization (or product, services or individuals) with the aim of creating understanding and support. Koekemoer (2004) argues that the differing concepts of public relations reflect the evolution of this maturing function in organizations and society. According to Gqamane (2010), the evolution of the concept and the various descriptions of the practice are important as they indicate the rapid changing roles of public relations.

Grunig and Hunt (1984) define public relations as managing communications between the organization and its publics in the article *Managing Public Relations* (1984). Tomic (2008) also defines public relations as the process of communicating with an organization's internal and external publics in order to achieve mutual understanding,

build social responsibility and achieve common interests. In the same vein, the British Institute of Public Relations defines public relations as a deliberate, planned, and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its publics (Jethwaney & Sarkar, 2000).

Kotler (1982) perceives public relations as a management function, which “evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or organization with the public interest, and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance” and as well goes beyond publicity support for marketing. Similarly, Cutlip *et al.* (2000:4) defines Public relations as “...the management function that identifies, establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and the various publics on whom its success or failure depends”. According to Seitel (2004), public relations is a planned process to impact public opinion, through thorough character and proper performance, grounded on mutual satisfactory two-way communication. On the other hand, Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman and Toth (2004), describe public relations as a leadership and management function that assists achieve organizational objectives, define philosophy, and facilitate organizational change.

The above definitions reveal that, public relation is the process of communicating with its public organizations to achieve common understanding and realization of common interests. The definitions also identify public relations as a management function. This is an essential aspect given that, without the active engagement of the executive management, the program in any organization cannot be developed successfully (Steinberg, 1975). Also, seeing the public relations practitioner as part of the

management allows him to participate at the managerial level of an organization, while carrying out the other public relations responsibilities.

According to (Gqamane, 2010), public relations evolved over several years to become a discipline but received more eminence in the corporate world only recently in the last century. Skinner *et al.* (2004: 19) assert that public relations is inclined to be a 20th century phenomenon, but then, efforts to communicate with others and to deal with the force of opinion goes back to ancient times. For Rensburg and Cant (2009), public relations as practiced today, originated in the United States. To an extent the development of public relations in the rest of the world was influenced by developments in the United States of America. For example, Americans were using Press Agency and other publicity methods for some time. This led others to follow the trend and to produce news and use stunts to gain attention. Public relations was later engaged to defend business interests of the United States (US) against negative journalism and government relations. The emphasis was on 'telling our story' to ensure that the public sees the other side of the story (Gqamane, 2010).

Ravindran (2000) indicates that, the concept of public relations as one-way persuasive communication continuously dominated as the United States entered World War I and created a committee of Public Information. The committee which was headed by George Creel, was responsible for uniting public opinion behind the war efforts through

an extensive nationwide propaganda campaign. Seitel (2001) maintains that during these early years, public relations was seen as a publicity effort to influence others. Moreover, several communication media like films, advertising and exhibitions were used to an extent, that people eventually talked of 'the words that won the war'. Rensburg and Cant (2009: 29) reiterates that public relations as known today is much younger than many other disciplines. The relative newness of this practice means that the field is still evolving and its status is continuously improving.

2.2.2 DEFINING THE PUBLICS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Sasser (2015) notes that, the *public* in public relations may be said to be any group hinged together with a common goal, values, purpose or interests, particularly if they are willing to work towards it. Newsom, Turk, & Kruckberg, (2013) add that while methods of identifying and classifying publics thrive, those considered a priority are those which are most important to an organization in terms of their possible impact on an organization. Sasser (2015) adds that the publics in a recognized relationship with an organization are commonly called stakeholders. The pharmaceutical industry operates at the sensitive intersection between medicine and money. The industry is seen as an extension of health and many consumers raise controversies from safety issues, to opioid addiction all these have raised suspicion over the whole industry. However, identifying publics is only the first step in managing the relationship. In similar view, Black (1976) notes that, in the current time, no industry, government, organization can operate successfully without the cooperation of its publics. The complexity of discussing and explaining science, wealth safety to a wide range of publics with

different level of education there are often a wide range of disinformation in new media by so doing the industry player do not only sell their product but useful information.

The conception of public has its origin from the Latin word *publicus*. According to Lamza-Posavec (1995), "the early use of the word was to recognize the two basic meanings: one is included in the term *res publica*, and its applicable to general availability, openness and accessibility to the people, in terms of public place; in the second case the term is associated with matters of general interest or even more specific with the official and public affairs."

Although the concept of the public is subjected to various interpretations, for Cutlip A. Center and G. Broom (2003), public is "a mosaic made up of different ethical, racial, religious, geographical political, professional, social and other groups, each of which should be taken into account". Dewey (1927) proposes that a public arises when a group of people face a similar indeterminate situation, recognize what is indeterminate-problematic in that situation, and organize to do something about the problem. Grunig (1978) adds that the above framework can be used to describe three stages in the evolution of a public:

- *Latent Publics* - when a group is in an indeterminate situation but does not recognize that it has a problem
- *Aware publics* - when the group recognizes the problem.
- *Active publics* - when the group organizes to do something about the problem.

According to Seitel (1980), publics can also be classified into several overlapping categories:

- 1) **Internal and external:** Internal are in the organization and they include supervisors, staff, managers, stockholders, etc. External publics are not essentially connected with groups and they include the press, community, government, and suppliers.

According to Tomic, Lasic and Tomic (2010), describing internal and external public aids to better understand the concepts of health and public relations, but also to connect them in a “new definition”. In line with this view, public relations in the health communication process of health institutions (hospitals, primary health care centers, etc.) with its internal and external public to achieve mutual respect, understanding and mutual interests.

- 2) **Primary, secondary, and marginal:** Primary publics can most help -or hinder- the organization's efforts. Secondary publics are less important and marginal least important of all.
- 3) **Traditional and future:** Employees and current customers are traditional publics, while students and potential customers are future ones. No organization can afford to become complacent in dealing with its changing publics. Today, a firm's publics range from women to minorities to senior citizens to homosexuals. Each would be important to the future success of the organization.
- 4) **Proponents, opponents and uncommitted:** An institution must deal differently with those who support it and those who oppose it.

It can be noted from the above that, pharmaceutical organizations like Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) and Pharmacy Council (PC) are faced with many publics. It must be sensitive to their needs and concerns, communicating with each other in a timely and effective manner. While management must always speak with one voice, its inflection, its delivery and its emphasis should be sensitive to each public.

2.2.3 THE FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

The functions and roles of public relations are vital as they show the responsibilities of a public relations practitioner. Ravindran (2000) indicates that public relations has a key role in developing understanding and support for a particular cause. Essentially, public relations helps to define relationships of mutual benefit between organizations and their key stakeholders both amongst their employees and their customers or clients. This, thus, implies that public relations can play a managerial role within an organization. Wilcox *et al.* (2009) confirm this by stating that public relations plays a managerial role to develop strategies to maintain relations with public groups in order to gain public trust and mutual understanding. This role is concerned with organizational mission and strategy and is aimed at commercial or other internal and external publics.

Wilcox *et al.* (2009) further argue that aside playing a managerial role, public relations plays operational, reflective and educational roles within an organization. The operational role is responsible for preparing means of communication for the

organization in order to help the organization formulate its communication strategies. This role is also concerned with communication plans developed by others and is aimed at the implementation and evaluation of the communication process. The reflective role helps to analyze changing standards and values in society and discuss these with members of the organization in order to adjust the standards and values of the organization. Tench and Yeomans (2006) suggest that the educational role aims to increase the communication competence of employees.

Grunig *et al.* (2002) notes that public relations' professionals add value to an organization when they develop communal relationships with all publics affected by organizational behaviors, not just those who give the organization something in return. Apart from all the other activities of the public relations function, such as community relations, fund raising, crisis communication, and corporate social responsibility, communal relationships are important if organizations are to be socially responsible and to add value to society as well as to clients. Public relations also plays a societal role in that it helps organizations survive in their social environments by working on relationships with publics in order to bring about social and economic change and development.

Grunig *et al.* (2002: 280) further notes that the public relations' function also supports other organizational functions, such as human resource management (relationships with employees and unions), lobbying (governmental communication), and financial management (investor relations and other financial relationships with stakeholders

such as analysts and shareholders). It is important to stress that public relations performs a much larger role than just being a support system for these functions. This role involves establishing relationships and maintaining them; most importantly to ensure that communication prevails between all subsystems within an organization.

Thomlison (2000) describes a successful relationship as consisting of “awareness, influence, benefit and behavior”. With respect to public relations, relationship management is “the development, maintenance, growth, and nurturing of mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their significant publics”. Furthermore, public relations gives a transactional perspective so that it is a “dynamic, process-orientated, meaning-creating relationship between the two participating parties”. Its purpose, therefore, is to “establish dialogic communication”.

From the above, it is evident that communication, relationship building, involvement in strategic management, and recognition of communication as a critical management function that supports all other management functions, are integral functions of public relations in an organization. Through these roles, organizations define expectations of individuals that make up the organization.

2.2.4 PUBLIC RELATIONS AS A MANAGEMENT FUNCTION

According to Grunig and Hunt (as cited in Jethwaney & Sarkar, 2000), public relations is the management function which assesses public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or an organization with the public interest, and plans and

executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance. From this definition, Grunig and Hunt identify the management function of public relations. Onyiengo (2014) also notes that, as a management function, public relations is involved in anticipating, analyzing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes and issues, which might impact, for good or ill on the operations of the organization.

Black (1972:2), perceives the role of public relations in the management team as “that of innovator, catalyst, conscience and the inward and outward Seeing Eye”. According to Black, it is the public relations function which introduces the human factor into the management. He cautions that unless the important role of public relations is recognized at the top level of management, public relations cannot achieve its full impact in the organization.

According to White and Mazur (1995), in helping the company to think about what to say about itself, public relations can as well aid the company clarify what it is actually about. Thinking about what can be said helps to make sense of how it works in reality. This provides a check on the quality of management decisions and actions of management.

Maddalena who is an expert in communication, especially for non-profit organizations, noted that non-profit making organizations exist in a complex environment and that their leaders must first take an objective look at the internal and external communication needs of their organizations. She adds that the image perceived by the

public must convey the stability of the organization and the professionalism of its leaders while presenting a clear and accurate description of its purpose (Maddalena, 1981).

Seitel (2004) states that as a management function, public relations is in a position to evaluate internal and external opinions, attitudes and needs on an ongoing basis. It is also in a position to advise management regarding their possible effect and to act as an instrument in bringing about policy changes and in directing new courses of action.

2.2.5 PUBLIC RELATIONS IN HEALTH CARE

According to Traynowicz -Hetherington, Ekachai and Parkinson (2001) health is often described as a complex job in an unsafe future. They further add that public relations practice in the health care has changed in accordance with the changes in health care. This is to say, public relations in health care is not on the whole, different from public relations in any other industry since the overall objective of the public relations is to “match long-term relationships” and “manage reputation.”

Tomic, Lasic, and Tomic (2010) argue that, without doubt, health is one of the most important areas of social activity. Just as any other sector, public relations is as well needed in healthcare in order to communicate with its stakeholders and agree on mutual interests. Hetherington et al. (2001) note that healthcare is a unique industry as it draws a thin line between life, death and recovery. In addition, Willis (2014:484) considers healthcare organizations to be surrounded by ‘wicked’ problems, i.e. “those

problems that are unstructured and difficult to define, cut across many stakeholders and are relentless”.

According to Tomic, Lasic, and Tomic (2010), healthcare as a sector has seen a lot of adjustments, as companies are now communicating directly to stakeholders, and as new innovations drive research and success. Herxheimer (2003) mentions that one of the key stakeholders for the healthcare industry is the patient group (PG). Pharmaceutical companies regularly rely on these patient groups (PGs) as they look to expand their market, to sell in their product, lobbying with governments, regulations or health service policies and lastly to be seen as a socially responsible business (Herxheimer, 2003).

However, Traynowicz-Hetherington et al. (2001) indicated that healthcare is a distinctive industry. Some theorists argue that medicine is different than any other industry because of what exists on its disposal (life, death and recovery), rapid and profound changes in the health system and the communication between the client (or patient) and suppliers (supplier of health care within the defined system). Traynowicz-Hetherington et al. (2001), further mentions that, the motivation for improving health care industry is not only focused to the cost reduction—which is a universal principle known in other industries. The desire for progress of health care processes is motivated by the supplier that seeks to improve the quality of care in the best possible way. Therefore, employees of public relations who are responsible for promoting, improving and reversal of the overall system in the health industry must know subtly different

motivation to care for the human being (Tomic, Lasic, and Tomic, 2010).

According to Tomic, Lasic, and Tomic (2010), between 1950 and 1960 in history, public relations in health care was that of a “good time”. During this period, public relations practitioners in the health care sector felt little need to create awareness and preference for health care because health care organizations have always had the support and sympathy of the public. Public relations did not have to be particularly active in order to “maintain and build public confidence.” Rather, the role of public relation was attributed and limited to the communication of the information and positive image. However, in 1970 there was a shift in the expression in health. Marketing department in the health organizations got greater responsibilities thanks to a new emphasis on health income from sources different from the traditional—the individual patients (Traynowicz-Hetherington et al., 2001).

Since health care is prevailing as noted by Cutlip et al. (2003), health institutions are expected to respond to the desires and needs of their market. The traditional role of public relations, promotion of a positive image and the appropriate transfer of news, spread on the implementation of conclusions about how to deal with new levels of consumer criticism and training of internal public on teamwork. Decade from 1970 to 1980 meant in the U.S. the time of financial difficulties for traditional public relations staff. Doctors slowly start to lose control of the health system in relation to the mistakes. Constant pressure forced hospital managers to seek professional public relations and communication professionals to maintain two-way communication

between hospitals or health organizations and their public (Traynowicz-Hetherington et al., 2001). Reasons for this practice were numerous and can be found in everyday medical practice.

Tomic, Lasic, and Tomic (2010) notes that the present and future of health is centered on the central role of the patient looking for new ways of communicating. Traditional approaches to health care public relations did not disappear, but were transformed through the continued changes which occur within the health system. According to Baines, Egan and Jefkins, (2004), communication principles that are described and predicted in health are long-term relationship which is no less important in the PR of health than in any other human relationships. Principles of reciprocity, equality, respect and belief take new meaning in the context of health care business relationships. With the patient in the middle, vendors and suppliers such as doctors, pharmaceutical companies, managing companies and third-person which “paying compensation” are in a unique puzzle of public relations? Experts believe that one of the most important roles of PR is listening to patients, rather than transmitting the message. Proactive methods of promoting medical images, such as educational initiatives, are equal with the emphasis on prevention of health problems (Baines, Egan and Jefkins, 2004).

2.3 CONCLUSION

This section covered the literature review on the concept of public relations, definition of the various publics, function of public relations, public relations as management function and public relations in health care. This section also discussed the theory that

serve as theoretical framework for the study which is the systems theory.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Thus, this chapter discusses the appropriate methodological approach to have been used for this study covering research design, population, sample size, sampling technique and the data collection methods i.e. proposed methodology. Due, to the recent outbreak of Corona virus, it was impossible for the researcher to go to the field to collect data thus the researcher used secondary data and reviews previous works on public relations and health care. And so, this chapter presents a proposed methodology which explains the various process the researcher would have used in collecting data if

there was an opportunity to do a field visit.

3.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

According to Creswell (2007), the research approach refers to the entire process of research, from theorizing a problem to writing the narrative, and not just the methods such as data collection, analysis and report writing. Yin (2003) further maintains that the research approach is the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions.

The study would have used a qualitative research method approach as it wants to explore the role of public relations as a management tool in the pharmaceutical industry. Denzin and Lincoln (1994), cited in Welman *et al.* (2005:8), notes that qualitative research deals with subjective data that is produced by the minds of respondents or interviewees. With this, the researcher tries to understand the significance which respondents attach to their environment. Qualitative research generally examines people's words and actions in narrative or descriptive ways more closely representing the situation as experienced by the participants Bergman (2008)

According to Creswell (2008), qualitative research is exploratory and practical when the researcher does not know the important variables that need to be examined. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) also note that, qualitative studies focuses on meanings and social practices of people in a specific historical or cultural context. Thus qualitative approach enables researchers to explore from varied opinions about certain social event or phenomenon within its natural context. Since the study sought to explore the role of public relations as a management tool in the pharmaceutical industry in Ghana, the

qualitative approach became the most appropriate method to use. This is because, the qualitative research is suitable for the nature, scope, and objectives of the research work as it uses research tools that solicit information in a detailed manner. Also, qualitative research is based on exploratory methods which enable the researcher to change the type of data being collected with time so that a deeper understanding of the phenomenon can be achieved.

3.2 POPULATION

O`Leary (2004) defines population as the total membership of a defined class of people, objects or events. Thus, population is a group of potential participants to whom a researcher wants to generalize the results of a study. Welman (2005) adds that, the population is the study object and consists of individuals, groups, organizations, human products and events, or the conditions to which they are exposed.

However, Nworgu (2006) identifies two groups of population for any research. And they are the target population and accessible population. The target population consists of all the members of a specified group to which the investigation is related and the accessible population is all those elements in the group within the reach of the researcher.

3.3 SAMPLING

According to Swetnam (2000), sample is the subset of a population selected to participate in a research study. Similarly, Sommer and Sommer (2007) mentions that, if the entire group of participants of direct interest to a research investigation is called the

population, the smaller group selected for this population is called the sample. Since it is usually impossible to study the whole population, researchers make use of a sample to select research participants who would represent the entire research population. For this study, a sample size of 10 Public Relations practitioners will be selected. The systematic process of selecting a smaller number of individuals for a study to represent the large group or population from which they are selected is known as sampling (Alvi, 2016).

Polit (2006) mentions that a sampling method is the process of selecting the sample from a population to obtain information regarding a phenomenon that represents the population of interest. The sampling method is devised to select the population eligible for the research study. In simple terms, the Sampling technique is the process where a researcher uses a set of techniques to select a sub-group from a target population. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), sampling technique guide the researcher in choosing whom to observe or to interview.

For the purpose of this study and its objectives, the purposive sampling which is a non-probability sampling method would have been used for the study. Non-probability sampling technique does not allow every element of the population to have an equal chance of being included in the sample (Babbie, 2004). This research is meant to provide an insight and explore the role of public relations in the pharmaceutical industry of Ghana hence the purposive sample method will be the most appropriate method for this research.

According to Maxwell (1997), purposive sampling method allows the researcher to, deliberately select particular settings, persons, or events for important information they

can be provided. Similarly, Sommer and Sommer (2007) note that a purposive sample targets the individuals thought to be most central to the research questions. The advantage is obtaining an insider's unique perspective. This is to say, only experienced and knowledgeable people whose inputs would be beneficial to the research questions will be recruited by the researcher. And so respondents will be sampled based on their experience in the pharmaceutical industry and the year of expertise.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

A research is a viable approach to a problem only when there is data to support it (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). And so, data collection is the systematic approach to gathering and measuring information from a variety of sources to get a complete and accurate picture of an area of interest (Mclaughlin, 2016).

This study would have used a semi-structured interview schedule as the data collection method. According to Neuman (2006) interview is a short-term social interaction between two people with a clear purpose of one person obtaining specific information from the other. A semi-structured interview will be appropriate for this study because as asserted by Lindlof and Taylor (2002), interviews are helpful in qualitative studies because it aids the researcher to understand people's experiences and perspectives in order to obtain answers to a particular research question. It also allows for the observation of respondents' nonverbal responses and permits the researcher to ask follow-up questions where necessary (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

The main data collection tool to have been used for this study is the interview guide. This was constructed by the researcher to guide the interviews. The semi-structured

interview guide will be used to obtain open-ended responses which will make up for the primary data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Open-ended questions will be used in order to probe further and solicit in-depth responses from respondents. In addition, textbooks, journals, and articles will be reviewed and used as secondary data. Nonetheless, it is important to note that, the research questions will form the basis of the questions in the interview guide.

3.5 CONCLUSION

This section discussed the methodological approach that would have been used for the study if the researcher visited the field if not for Covid-19. This chapter looked at proposed research design, population, and sample size, sampling technique and methods to have been used to collect data. The next chapter discusses the findings of previous related literature on the main subjects of this paper.

CHAPTER FOUR

DICUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the findings of previous related literature that was used as a secondary data for this study since the research is based on empirical findings and content analysis. Thus, findings of the research are discussed in accordance with the research objectives that guided the study.

4.1 FINDINGS

4.1a Role of Public Relations as Management Tool in the Pharmaceutical Industry

Public Relations is of great importance to the healthcare sector where communication is key to a better public outcome. Without the right communication tools, the various health publics may not be able to understand necessary information for their health and well-being. However, communication practice in the pharmaceutical industry has been strained by past scandals and its overall reputation and trust by the public has decreased (Olsen & Whalen, 2009). And this was attributed to organizations not recognizing the role public relation play in the management organizations.

For Ravindran (2000) public relations has a key role in developing understanding and support for a particular cause. Essentially, public relations helps to define relationships of mutual benefit between organizations and their key stakeholders both amongst their employees and their customers or clients. This, thus, implies that public relations can play a managerial role within an organization which includes health organizations

Public relations as a management function assess public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an organization with the public interest, and plans and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance (Grunig and Hunt as cited in Jethwaney & Sarkar, 2000). Also, as a management function, public relations is involved in anticipating, analyzing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes and issues, which might impact, for good or ill on the operations of the organization (Onyiengo, 2014)

Public relations plays a management role in health care and the pharmaceutical industry by establishing and maintaining a relationship between health organizations and its internal and external publics by using well planned and deliberate efforts of communication. That is, in serving as a management role, public relations ensures that an organization is understood by its public and also uses continuous activities like health campaigns, community mobilizations, among others

To add, public relation plays the role of interpreting the public to management of health organizations that is letting management know about what the public thinks about the organization as well as can counsel management. Hence it is important to have a public relations department as part of every organizations' management. Wilcox *et al.* (2009) confirm this by stating that public relations plays a managerial role to develop strategies to maintain relations with public groups in order to gain public trust and mutual understanding. This role is concerned with organizational mission and strategy and is aimed at commercial or other internal and external publics.

More so, the public relations' management function supports other organizational functions, such as human resource management (relationships with employees and

unions), lobbying (governmental communication), and financial management (investor relations and other financial relationships with stakeholders such as analysts and shareholders) Grunig *et al.* (2002: 280). It is important to note that public relations performs a much larger role than just being a support system for these functions by ensuring that communication prevails between all subsystems within an organization.

Public relations today is present in almost all parts of life and includes the area of health. Health is one of the most important areas of social activity and so it is exposed to the numerous critics. Health professionals are labelled as people who have extremely low ability for good and effective communication with their public. Also there is low awareness of various management to recruit communication professionals in health institutions as noted by Tomic, Lasic, and Tomic (2010).

In view of this, Public relations is also needed in pharmaceutical industry just like in any other sector, in order to communicate with its stakeholders and agree on mutual interests This is because, healthcare is a unique industry that pulls a thin line between life, death and recovery and has seen adjustments in communicating directly to stakeholders as new innovations drive research and success (Hetherington & Parkinson, 2001; Tomic, Lasic, & Tomic, 2009).

4.1b Direct Role played by Public Relations in Healthcare

Health is a field usually faced with numerous complex organization-public relationships. The need to manage the relationships among different types of publics such as health care providers, insurers, patients, and government entities that both provide and regulate health care services grow increasingly more complex as the provision of and

access to health care changes (Zezza & Nacinovich, 2011).

Conferring to Traynowicz -Hetherington, Ekachai and Parkinson (2001), health is often described as a complex job in an unsafe future. This means that, public relations practice in the health care has changed in accordance with the changes in health care. However, public relations in health care is not on the whole, different from public relations in any other industry since the overall objective of the public relations is to “match long-term relationships” and “manage reputation.”

Health has become one of the most important areas of social activity just as any other sector. That is, public relations is needed in healthcare in order for health organizations to communicate with its stakeholders and agree on mutual interests.

According to Tomic, Lasic, and Tomic (2010), healthcare as a sector has seen a lot of modifications, as companies are now communicating directly to stakeholders, with new innovations driving research and success. Herxheimer (2003) mentions that one of the key stakeholders for the healthcare industry is the patient group (PG). Pharmaceutical companies regularly rely on these patient groups (PGs) as they look to expand their market, to sell in their product, lobbying with governments, regulations or health service policies and lastly to be seen as a socially responsible business.

Since health care is prevailing as noted by Cutlip et al. (2003), health institutions and professionals are expected to respond to the desires and needs of their market seeking professional public relations and communication professionals to maintain two-way communication between hospitals or health organizations and their public.

4.2 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the findings from the previous related studies on public relations and healthcare that was reviewed in this study. And this was done in accordance the objectives of this study. After discussing the findings, the next chapter would focus on summary of findings, conclusion, recommendation and limitations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this study was to explore the role of Public relations as a management tool in the pharmaceutical industry. This chapter presents the summary of major findings of the study, its conclusions and makes recommendations on possible areas for further research as well as the limitations.

5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Public relations is a management function that anticipates, analyzes and interpret public opinion, attitudes and issues, which may have an impact on an organization (Onyiengo, 2014). Public relations define relationships of mutual benefit between organizations and their key stakeholders.

Findings from the study shows that, Public relations is of great significance to the healthcare sector where communication is key to a better public outcome since without the right communication tools, the various health publics may not be able to understand necessary information for their health and well-being.

Also, the study shows that, Public relations plays a management role in health care and

the pharmaceutical industry by establishing and maintaining a relationship between health organizations and its internal and external publics by using well planned and deliberate efforts of communication like health campaigns, community mobilizations, among others. |

It was clear from the study that, though health is one of the most important areas of social activity, it has been exposed to the many critics like the inability of health professionals to have good and effective communication with their public. And this, makes it necessary for Public relations to be incorporated in all activities of health professional.

Finally the study notes that, Public relations is also needed in pharmaceutical industry just like in any other sector, in order to communicate with its stakeholders and agree on mutual interests

5.2 CONCLUSION

The role of public relation is very important especially in sectors where communication is key to a better public outcome like the health sector. Without the right communication tool, stakeholders may not be able to understand some necessary information for their health and well-being. This paper explored the role that public relations as a management function within the health care and pharmaceutical industry. The discussion was based on series of empirical research literature on public relations and healthcare. The paper argues that, the present and future of health and pharmaceutical care is centered on the central role of the patient looking for new ways of communicating with health providers and this is facilitated by public relations. The

study shows that public relations in the pharmaceutical industry has changed in accordance with the change that has evolved in health care. The study suggest that, it is necessary for the management of health organizations to recognize the important role that the public relations plays in creating good internal and external PR and include the public relations department in all decision-making and operations in the organization. Lastly, while this paper is not a complete view of the role of Public relations as a management tool in the pharmaceutical industry, it however provides an opportunity to identify and absorb some of the insights provided by the collection of empirical study.

5.3 AUTHOURS REFLECTIONS

Based on findings, the study health institutions and professionals are expected to respond to the increasing needs of their market seeking professional public relations and communication professionals to maintain two-way communication between hospitals or health organizations and their public. Also, pharmaceutical industries should focus more on the patient's needs and listen to what they need in order to provide value driven content in every health communication process. Again, public relations practitioners in the health sectors should operate at the highest level of organizational management and have access to most high-ranking information and decision-making systems in order to be involved in strategic planning. Finally, further research can be done on new media and public relations in the health care sector.

5.4 LIMITATIONS

A lot of research, including this one encounter various limitations. First, the study was

limited by empirical literature on the area of Public relations role in management function in the pharmaceutical industry, since few similar studies have been conducted and articles have been written by other researchers. Also, the qualitative design of this project required subjective data to be collected and analysed. However, the outbreak of novel coronavirus (COVID 19) during the first quarter of the year and the imposition of restriction orders by the government constrained movement and engagement with the sample population and data collection. Nonetheless, this study was able to obtain valuable data from reviews of previously related works which were analysed in accordance, to answer the research objectives.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the summary of findings, conclusion, recommendation and limitations.

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