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AN EVALUATION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE IN PUBLIC SECTOR
INSTITUTIONS: A CASE OF SELECTED GOVERNMENT AGENCIES IN GHANA

BY

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to my parents, friends and loved ones who have been the source of motivation and support for me in every facet of life

STUDENT'S DECLARATIONS

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work towards the award of Masters of Art in Public Relations and that, to the best of my knowledge it contains no materials previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the institution, except where due acknowledgment has been made in the text.

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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 (GIJ). This research project is submitted for examination with my approval as university's supervisor.

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ABSTRACT

The practice of Public Relations has become increasingly crucial in aiding organizations reach their goals and objectives. The centrality of Public Relations roles is to manage relationships between organizations and their publics through the use of communicative tools and strategies. In more recent times, PR has gained some grounds in public institutions, gradually holding a lot of significance in how public institutions operate. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the practice of public relations in Public institutions and its effectiveness to achieving organizational goals. The study was underpinned by the excellence theory and the systems theory.

Qualitative research approach was employed in this study, semi-structured interview guide based on the objective of the study was used for data collection. Thematic data analysis was done based on prevailing themes during the interview. The findings of the study revealed that PR is considered a crucial part of public institutions and therefore acknowledged as a member of the dominant coalition. In addition, the study also found that the practice of Public Relations was seen as effective in aiding public institutions reach their organizational objectives.

Furthermore, the study pointed out that PR is effective in organizations as they perform diverse functions and activities that manage the reputation and aid public institutions achieve their aims and objectives. Notwithstanding, the study also identified the following as challenges affecting Public Relations Practitioners in most organization: lack of adequate funds in executing their duties, Lack of logistics, negative reportage among others. Based on the findings, the study recommended that policy formulators of public institutions should ensure that Public Relations is a key member of the dominant coalition, also management of public institutions should ensure

funds are made available to equip PR in their organization in order to contribute more effectively to organizational goals achievement.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEO: Chief Executive Office

CSR: Corporate social Responsibilities

GFC: Ghana Forestry Commission

GIJ: Ghana Institute of Journalism

IPR: Institute of Public Relations

PR: Public Relations

OHLS: Office of the head of Local Government

GAF: Ghana Armed Forces

NIC: National Insurance Commission

GP: Ghana Police

SSNIT: Social Security and National Insurance Trust

MYS: Ministry of Youth and Sports

PRO: Public Relations Officer

PRAG: Public Relations Association of Ghana

PRSA: Public Relations Society of America

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This chapter comprise of general introduction to the study and this includes the background and context of the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, rationale of the study, objectives, and research questions significance of the study, scope and delimitations and the order of the study.

1.0 Background & Context of the Study

Communication is an integral part of our day- to- day activities, it is also a tool for human interactions. Communications serve as the most basic function of management which aids in achieving managerial and organizational effectiveness (Kapur, 2018; Adjei, 2015). In ancient societies, human communication was limited by space and time. Majority of the people lived in small settlements where most of their activities was farming. For this reason, the flow of information was personal (Okudo, 2014)

It is believed that if a peace of message is miscommunicated can start a conflict or may jeopardize the cause for a good action (Adjei, 2015). Since the beginning of the 21st century, public relations (PR) has seen immeasurable growth as an industry both in numbers and respect. As an industry and profession PR has matured to the point of becoming an essential part of businesses worldwide. Many authorities have contributed greatly towards the definition of Public relations. Public relation is defined as the management functions that identifies, establishes and maintain mutually beneficial relationship between organization and the various publics (Cutlip, Centre & Broom 1985). In addition, Grunig and Hunts (1984) and Johnston and Zawawi (2009) also defines PR as the management of communication between an organizations and its publics.

The potentials and application of Public Relations increased as societies became more urbanized, civilized and complex. As population increased, so did the need of Public Relations (Okudo, 2014). Public relations can mean the difference between life and death for an organization or the difference between profitability and failure

A study by Mehta and Xavier (2009) highlighted some of the duties of a PR practitioner as ensuring the successful communication between an organization and its publics, monitoring and responding to issues, and maintaining an effective working environment. PR is an intrinsic part of every organization. It provides organizations the opportunity to monitor, dialogue, and respond to issues that affect key publics of the organization (Lamb & McKee, 2010). Currently PR has moved beyond being an industry based in the United States of America (USA) to become a worldwide profession (Yang & Taylor, 2014) . It is worth noting that, PR practice now has extended to countries with diverse cultures, economic and political systems, and differing levels of development (Curtin & Gaither, 2012; Culbertson, 1996). Gregory (2004) describes the nature of PR as “Dynamic, fast-moving, always developing, at the heart of the action.” According to Sriramesh (2009) Public relations has experienced a transformation in developing countries due to their focus on nation building, hence necessitating them to employ PR practitioners for such purposes.

PR practitioners for many years have been battling to establish the position, functions and contribution of Public relations towards the achievement of organizational goals (Adjei, 2015). This in part is due to the fact that most organizations fail to understand and appreciate the purpose of Public relations in the management of the organizations. Although Public Relations has existed for some centuries, it is argued by some studies that, it is yet to gain recognition as a profession (Cameron & Lariscy, 1998; Sallot & Lariscy, 1996; Ault & Wilcox, 1995; Wylie, 1994; Bivins,

1993; Hainsworth, 1993; Agee et al, 1990). However, a study by Asante (2016) found that the profession is gaining much more recognition, due to the introduction of institutional structures which define the position and purpose of Public relations.

The essential role played by PR practitioners in managing information flow, actively engaging key publics, establishing strong relationships, striving to maintain sound reputation at all times and through all circumstances, and through PR measurement, helps the organization achieve strategic organizational goals (Public Relations Society of America – PRSA, 2012). Similarly, the practice of PR in Ghana has taken up changes and plays significant role in most organizations. This is to say that PR is growing, Practitioners are playing strategic managerial roles that are identified as a contribution to organizational effectiveness. The increasing value of PR within organizations has primarily been due to economic, societal, and technological advancement and communication across the globe. Many businesses now transcend national borders to conduct businesses, leading to a competitive environment. This makes the study relevant as it seeks to evaluate PR practice within selected public sector institutions in the country.

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

The body of knowledge on the practice of PR has experienced tremendous growth since the latter part of the 20th century. Evidence suggests that the field will continue to evolve itself into an established discipline (Wilcox, 2006). Scholars have, for several years, been studying how the profession is practiced globally as a way of contributing to the development of global theory and increasing the body of knowledge on the discipline. However, such research has largely been concentrated in western organizations/countries (Gupta & Bartlett, 2007; Cultberson, 1996). This has been largely attributed to the Eurocentric nature of the discipline. In fact, Mersham, Skinner and Rensburg (2011) note that most of the scholarly body of knowledge on PR since the beginning

of the 21st century have mainly been in the USA and Western Europe, which is buttressed by other scholars. Very little research on the practice of PR has been conducted in other parts of the world, especially in African countries. Despite the efforts by scholars such as Djan (1991), Anani-Bossman (2017) in evaluating PR practice in various corporate organizations in Ghana, studies on PR practice in public sector institutions in Ghana remain scarce. This research seeks to fill the gap which has been created by the scarce literature in Ghana in relation to the practice of Public Relations in Ghanaian governmental institutions.

1.2 Rationale for the study

Public relations practice over the years has moved from the era of a profession characterized by information facilitation between organizations and their publics to an era of managing relationships between organizations and their publics. Rawjee, Veerasamy and Gqamme (2012) stress that, “organizations need to recognize the value of public relations at the boardroom table as a strategic business partner and critical part of business planning and operations”. For PR to play its role effectively and significantly contribute to organizational success, there is a need for it to be made part of management and practiced strategically. The relevance of Public Relations practice to all organizations and most especially governmental organizations cannot be understated. Many scholars have argued the relevance of PR in corporate organizations (see for instance Gilaninia & Taleghani, 2013 and Grunig, 2001) and have drawn that the practice of PR must be incorporated into management levels of organizations. Such studies have also drawn the numerous benefits of PR practice to corporate organizations. This study juxtaposes in light of evidence from literature that there is the need to investigate PR practice within government organizations in order to ascertain how the profession is practiced and its levels of effectiveness to

government organizations. This study is thus motivated by the notion that scholarly attention needs to be paid to PR practice in government organizations.

1.3 Research Objectives

The general objective of the study is to evaluate public relations practice in Public sector institution in Ghana.

1.3.1 Specific Objective:

This research would seek to:

1. To explore how PR is practiced in public institutions.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of PR practice in these public institutions.
3. To explore the PR tools employed by PR practitioners in their activities.
4. To identify the challenges encountered by PR practitioners in the discharge of their official duties.

1.4 Research Questions

This research study would seek to find answers to the following questions:

1. How is PR practice explored in public institutions
2. How effective is PR practice in these public institutions?
3. What are the PR tools that are employed by PR practitioners in their activities?
4. What are some of the challenges PR practitioners encounter in the discharge of their official duties?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study makes it worth investigating as it seeks to answer various questions. The global discussion on the practice of PR focuses mostly on the western world (Domm, 2013). It is therefore essential that developing countries also engage in these discussions by evaluating PR practice in our part of the world.

This study will therefore seek to contribute to existing knowledge on PR practice in Africa, especially in Ghana where empirical literature on the practice of Public Relations in government institutions is not so adequate. The findings of this study will therefore seek to add to the seeming inadequate Ghanaian empirical studies within the area under discussion.

In terms of the practice of Public Relations, especially in government organizations, this study will be of immense benefit as it will seek to inform on the best ways of practicing PR, the most effective tools to use and some crucial challenges that are prevalent in the field. The study will hence seek to be one of the key reference points for informing on the best approaches to Public Relations practice among government organizations in Ghana and beyond.

The study will also be of significance to policy making within the fields of organizational communication and Public Relations practice in government institutions. The findings of this study will be of benefit to shaping policies that both on improving the effectiveness of current PR practice in government organizations.

1.6 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The scope of a research deals with the parameters under which a research study operates, that is, the problem to be studied within a certain boundary/domain (Simon & Goes, 2011). This study will involve samples of selected public sector institutions in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

This study would specifically target key government ministries, departments and agencies namely Ghana Police Service, Ghana Army, Office of the head of local Government, Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT), National Insurance Commission, Ministry of youth and sport.

The scope of this study is therefore limited to the above mentioned institutions. Data will be collected from the mentioned institutions only and as such findings made from the collected data will apply primarily to the organizations. Thus, findings made from this study cannot be justifiably extended as characteristics of any other government organization or corporate entity. However, the findings of this study may be used as reference points for studying other similar organizations such as the above mentioned ones.

1.7 Organization of the Study

This study is structured in five chapters. Chapter one of the study focuses on providing a general overview and context of the study while also focusing on the objectives and research questions of the study. Chapter two of the study reviews relevant literature concerning the general practice of Public Relations, practice of the profession in governmental organizations among other crucial themes and concepts that are of relevance to this study. Additionally, chapter two will review some theories to develop a theoretical framework for the study. To this effect, the chapter two will look critically at the Excellence theory among other theories to give theoretic foundation to the research. Chapter three of the study focuses on discussing the research methodology employed in this study. The chapter will discuss the research approach and design, sampling techniques and data collection procedures that the researcher employed in this study.

Chapter four of the study concerns the analysis and presentation of data gathered for the study while chapter five will seek to present a summary, conclusion and furthermore appropriate recommendations the researcher drawn from the findings of the study.

1.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on the background and context of the study, statement of the research problem, research objectives, research questions, rationale of the study provides a brief overview of the research questions, the rationale for undertaking the research, and scope of the stud

The next chapter would focus more on reviewing empirical studies done on the practice of Public relations with a focus on government institutions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the various viewpoints of available literature and related researches that have been conducted in relation to the practice of public relations. The chapter highlighted on the theoretical framework underpinning the current study. Also, the chapter provides a review of the available literature related to the objectives of the study.

2.1 Empirical Evidence of Existing Literature

2.1.1 PR Practice in Public institutions and Government agencies

The practice of Public Relations has become vital to our modern life, and has settled down to making an important contribution to governments, industry, the community, and many other fields (Black, 1976). Government is envisioned to provide services that are not feasible for individuals to provide, such as law enforcement and fire protection, security, wildlife preservation, national defense, public transportation systems, justice systems, social programs, and national museums (Omondi, 2006). The problems and pressures of society increasingly strain the machinery of government (Cutlip et al, 1994). It then behooves on Public Relations practitioners in these public institutions to assist government in defining the achievement of government goals, and to provide the public with sufficient information to permit self-government (Aronoff & Baskin, 1983)

Public relations plays an essential role in building government image. In Britain, the role of the senior Public Relations professional in a government department is an important one (Harrison 2000). The press secretary or chief information officer designated to work in government department advises the minister of state on all Public Relations matters, provides comments and quotes to the media, and sometimes writes speeches for the minister.

A study in Kenya by Omondi (2006) revealed that, the existence of Public relations Practitioners in ministries and departments helps maintain regular relationship between the public and the government, ensuring the fullest possible publicity of any information they wish to communicate through the media. The study found that PR practice has had high impact in government ministries and departments according to majority of the respondents whilst a few said PR has had an average impact on their organizations.

Gyan (1991) who conducted a study on Public relations in some Ghanaian organization interviewed and surveyed 51 participants (including both management and public relations practitioners) in Accra. The results of her study suggested that public relations was not considered as a profession in Ghana at the time of her study in the early 1990s.

However an empirical study conducted by Wu and Baah-Boakye (2009) explored public relations practice in Ghana, it was found that, public relations is moving toward professionalism in Ghana because most of their participants are playing managerial roles in their organizations and have decision-making power in these organizations.

A study in Kenya by Omondi (2006) found that ministries and departments are, expected to maintain regular liaison through Public Relations Officers seconded to them to ensure the fullest possible publicity of any information they wish to communicate to the public through the media.

In the end, it is expected that Public Relations activities in the modern world help individuals and organizations to build prestige, to promote products, and to win elections or legislative battles; in short, to achieve their aims in the public sphere (Encarta Encyclopedia, 2005).

2.1.2 The impact of public relations on building Organizational image.

Olamilekan (2016) identified image as a person's thoughts, beliefs, and impressions about an object. According to him, the image an individual has about an object informs how they react to it.

Most scholars have long debated on the effects of public relations activities on the consumer. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) reported that the organization-public relationship variables of trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment can be used to predict consumer behavior. An investigation done by Bruning and Ledingham (1998) examining these variables in relation to customer satisfaction reveals that, customer satisfaction is achieved on the basis of the relationship that exists between an organization and its key publics and may help carve a good image for the organization.

Roberts and Dowling (2002) in a study conducted in America amongst corporations that are most admired concluded that, companies with better reputation and image enjoy a sustained profitability over a long period of time than their rival company with no good reputation. Thus, a good corporate reputation helps to generate profitability of the organization. Furthermore, companies with good reputation often attract more investor interest than those who do not because investors find it less risky to engage in businesses or companies with good reputation and image.

Practical application of Public Relations practice should entail positive steps to achieve goodwill (Black, 1976). These, he says, involve initiating and maintaining goodwill and public interest in the activities of an organization in order to facilitate the successful operation and expansion of those activities. A practical applications of Public Relations practice should aim at action to safeguard reputation.

2.1.3 Public relations role in corporate social responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to strategies that companies put into action as part of corporate governance that are designed to ensure the company's operations are ethical and beneficial for society (Tuokuu & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2016). Public Relations aims to establish and maintain a positive image, reputation, and popularity for the company over time so that all segments of the public have a clear and transparent picture of the company and its operations. Corporate Social Responsibility on the other hand aims to address various social issues that affect the communities where the company operates in order to improve their quality of life (Sakar 2018). Benn, Todd and Pendleton (2010) see the role of the public relations practitioner in CSR as that of a counselor whose task is to develop the communicative aspects of the organization's activities and not just design external communication activities.

While studying 173 PR practitioners Soo-Yeon and Reber (2008) identified five main roles Public Relations play in Corporate Social Responsibility. These include the following.

2.1.3.1 Significant Management Roles

PR Practitioners identified one of their roles as significant management roles where they clearly stated that PR practitioners advise senior management and contribute towards strategic planning related to CSR. The public relations practitioners must have a direct reporting relationship to the senior managers who belong to the dominant coalition (Grunig & Grunig 2008).

To effectively contribute to organizational effectiveness through the practice of CSR, practitioners should serve in the dominant coalition. Berger & Rebers (2006) in the same direction argues that Public Relations must be empowered to influence the organization for better performance. However, many of the practioners indicated that public relations contributions towards CSR

activities is limited. A number of the practitioners in the research said they feel they lack influence and total authority in the process of CSR programs.

2.1.3.2 Philanthropic Roles

Public relations was central in promoting human welfare such as making decisions about charitable giving, providing assistance to the poor, providing assistance to public and private education and engaging in programs that enhance community quality of life. PR determines what programs are communicated to the public and what health sponsorships organizations participate in. Similarly, Sakar (2018) is of the view that a corporation's public image is at the mercy of its social responsibility programs and how aware consumers are of these programs. Corporations can improve their public image by supporting nonprofits through monetary donations, volunteerism, in-kind donations of products and services, and strong partnerships.

2.1.3.3 Value-driven Roles

PR professionals illustrated these roles by describing their contributions to social responsibility program. Public relations was based on ethical standards, the mission or values of the organization, or serving as a corporate role model. PR roles in CSR involves embracing it as an organization's basic value. PR practice as part of their CSR roles Identify some core values such as accountability, integrity, innovation and commitment to community which all help an institution put people above profits (Soo-Yeon & Reber, 2008, p. 341).

2.1.3.4 Communication Role

In addition, the study asserts that public relations was simply aimed at communicating the organization's CSR activities. As part of building reputation for the company it engages in CSR activities. PR practitioners work to promote the organizations socially responsible behavior to the

general public, our clients and the media. Engaging established and respected CSR influencers, whether they are journalists, bloggers, or key stakeholders, can be critical to communications success. Sakar (2018) further argued that, in recent years social media offers an outlet to subtly express brief and current successes. Each organization's communication preferences varied, guided by their organizational values and cultures.

In recent times, the concept of CSR has seen a new heightened interest where many organizations in Ghana have joined the CSR bandwagon (Agyapomaah, Agyeman & Owusuaa 2012). In the same vein, Sarpong (2017) posited that although CSR is much touted in literature, the extent to which it is followed in practice in Ghana leaves a lot to be desired.

On the other hand, Sakar (2018) opines that Public relations departments should not take sole responsibility for CSR programs but should play a vital supportive role. Organizations can also take advantage of PR practitioners' skills and expertise to bring in enhanced reputation in companies' overall functioning. The study is of the view that CSR can improve the reputation of PR by expanding the perspective of PR professionals to think beyond traditional public relations goals, objectives and tactics.

2.1.4 Boundary Spanning Role of Public Relations.

Boundary spanning enables the organization to link its internal network with external sources of information. PR practitioners acts as intermediary between the organization and its stakeholders (Wilcox and Cameron 2009). Public relations practitioners play a boundary spanning role by linking the edge of an organization, looking within and out of the organization and helping the organization communicate across its boundaries and other subsystems in the organization.(Grunig & Hunt,1984).

PR is highly important for public institutions because it provides the opportunities for communication with its audiences. Opoku, Osei, Ackaah, Nichodemus, Kantanka, Marfo-Gyamfi,(2017) postulate that in recent times, no government, company or institution can function efficiently without the knowledge of their working environment, internal publics, partners and clients. A study conducted by the above authors found that organizations in Ghana play these roles by scanning the environment to be well informed with the day to day happenings.

For organizations to survive, they must maintain a mutually beneficial relationship with their publics (Grunig, 1991). Trust, commitment, ethical practices, fulfilment of promises, emotional bonding, and customer orientation have been reported to be the key elements in the relationship building process (Levitt, 1986; Greenrooms, 1994; Morgan, 1998). Tench and Yeomans (2007) noted that building relationships require the practitioner to have one foot in the organisation and one foot outside the organisation, since environment may impose constraints for the organization. For instance, government can make laws that are inimical for the organization which can affect the operations of the organization. It is the PR practitioner's responsibility to evaluate and respond to the environment in order to reach a consensus and prevent the organization from experiencing crisis of any form.

According to White and Dozier (1992), boundary spanners provide information to the dominant coalition for decision making, In that the dominant coalition needs information from the PR practitioners to help make decisions. The boundary spanners are individuals within the organisation who frequently interact with the organization's environment, hence gather, select and relay information from the environment to decision makers in the dominant coalition. Communication managers and public relations practitioners are among an organization's designated boundary spanners.

2.1.5 Public Relations Tools: Traditional Media and Social Media

Eyrich, Padman and Sweetser, (2008) as cited by Schmitz (2014) surveyed professionals working in public relations positions to gather information about their use of social media and online communication technology. It was found that Public Relations professionals had adopted social media to develop and advance the nonprofit industry in Mississippi.

A study conducted by Curtis, Agyapomaah, Agyeman and Owusuaa (2012), Edwards, Kristen, Frase, Gudelsky, Holm Quist, Thornton, Sweetser (2009) found that the use of social media by public relations practitioners as a method of communicating to the audiences is becoming more helpful in the non-profit sectors. Organizations with well-established PR outfits are likely to adopt social media technologies in their operations to enhance organizational effectiveness. It was also concluded that, recognizing and acknowledging the effectiveness of using social media by practitioners in reaching target audiences, promoting specific cause, will increase its usage by many practitioners.

Briones, Kuch, Liu, and Jin (2011) identified *Twitter* and *Facebook* as the most popular social media sites used by PR Practitioners in the American Red cross society. The study wanted to find out how the Organization is able to stay up to date with digital communication and the role of social media in relationship building. Forty individuals from the American Red Cross were interviewed and it was shown that the use of these outlets ensured a two way symmetrical form of communication that is they receive feedback from followers than the use of traditional outlets.

Juxtaposing this study to the previous studies, a Quantitative research by Ampadu-Boateng (2017) on *The Role of Public Relations in the Delivery of Forestry Services in Ghana*, It affirmed that PR increases consumer awareness and identified radio and television to be the commonest PR tools used by the Ghana Forestry Commission (GFC).The study recommended some media

Instruments to be used in PR campaigns; GFC ought to adopt media vehicles like internet and newspapers as they are progressively getting to be famous particularly with the changing patterns in communication. Media tours, speaking engagements, newsletters and sponsorships are all effective PR tools which could be used by the GFC in order to further improve the image of the commission.

According to Omondi (2012) who researched on the Performance of public relations practice in government ministries in Kenya, the main function of PROs in government institutions is to help articulate the government policy and to publicize the ministries' activities. The role of a PRO is to channel out important information from the ministries to the public through the press and other forums, make the ministries more accessible to the public and the press, handle press queries and churn out publications giving a positive image of ministries. The study found out that the most commonly used PR techniques by PR practitioners in government ministries and departments include exhibitions, interviews, and speeches, fliers, brochures, newsletters, press releases, posters, website, radio and TV.

Lancaster (2005) states that companies that use television as a medium of communication stand the chance of achieving a high level of impact on their customers or public due to its visual nature. The author observed that during a television program, individual's explanation regarding issues relating to their companies could be supported with either products or footage of the company's participation in a sponsored event. This, the author argued, has the ability to erase any erroneous impressions about such companies

2.1.6 The Relationship between Public Relations and Marketing

Grunig and Grunig (1978) state that the role of public relations in management and its value to an organization have been debated for at least 100 years. The debate has centered on the question of whether the role of public relations is to support marketing or whether it serves a broader social and political function.

Grunig & Grunig (1998) in a study indicated that one of the four principles of excellent public relations which specifies the relationship between public relations and other management functions such as marketing states that Public relations should not be subordinated to other departments such as marketing, human resources.

Kotler and Mindak (1978) in their study that focused the relationship between public relations and marketing outlined five alternative arrangements.

(1) Separate but equal functions (marketing and public relations have different functions, perspectives and capabilities).

(2) Equal but overlapping functions (both are important and separate functions but they share some terrain, particularly product publicity and customer relations; in addition, public relations serves as a ‘watchdog’ on the social responsibility of marketing).

(3) Marketing as the dominant function (marketing manages the relationship with all publics in the same way as the relationship with customers – ‘mega marketing’).

(4) Public relations as the dominant function (if public relations builds relationships with all key publics of the organization, then programmes to build relationships with customers, i.e. marketing, would be a subset of public relations).

(5) Marketing and public relations as the same function (public relations and marketing converge in concepts and methodologies and a single department manages the external affairs of the company).

A study conducted by Adotey (2015) established that public relations and marketing are two distinct disciplines and neither of the two is a subset of the other, but that notwithstanding, it was clear that they use similar communication tools in the execution of their functions and depend on each other most often to achieve the best results so there is the need for the two disciplines to should work hand in hand to ensure the effectiveness of both areas. Three of the public relations practitioners interviewed defined marketing being focused on anticipating and identifying the needs of customers and satisfying those needs at a profit.

The interview revealed that both public relations and marketing are communication related disciplines but perform different roles in the organisation. Whiles public relations is more focused of creating trust and goodwill for the organisation, marketing depends on the trust and goodwill created to enhance its activities. Cohen (2012) describes marketing and public relations as that of a love-hate relationship

Advertising is an attempt to persuade consumers to buy their products or services by highlighting the benefits and showcasing the attributes. Public relations, on the other hand, uses several tools and methods such as events or press releases to create awareness and build a positive image of a company or organisation (Belch and Belch, 2009)

2.1.7 Challenges Associated With PR Practice

In as much as every profession has a challenge, so is public relations. Hogg and Doolan (1999) after conducting in-depth interviews and focus groups discussions, identified that CEO of

organizations have clearly definite perceptions about Public relations while the Public relations practitioners themselves also held a limited view of their position in the organizations within which they operate, hence affecting the chances of Public Relations being part of the strategic management planning and dominant coalition. The research suggested that on an organizational level, the decision on whether or not to employ PR practitioners is predominantly influenced by resources, perceived priori

Similarly, according to Jjuuko (2014), who performed research on the subject in an assessment of the Relationship between PR Training and PR Practice in Rwanda, senior managers in many firms do not recognize the role of the PR function. One of the most significant impediments to the practice of public relations is top-level management's lack of awareness of the function of PR practitioners. Consequently, the PROs hardly practice what they studied at school.

Omondi (2012) finds that one of the core challenges PR practice faces concerns that lack a good workable national communication policy frameworks. This, coupled with a lukewarm support of and poor understanding of Public Relations roles and functions by top management members plague the practice of Public Relations in Kenya

On the other hand, Wu and Baah-Boakye (2008) surveyed 120 organizations and PR agencies in a study on the topic the practice of Public relations in Ghana. The study found that most PR practiced in Ghana is positioned at the top management. PR practitioners played managerial roles in organizations. It also found that both male and female practitioners are given equal recognition in their organisation.

In a study conducted by Gezihagne (2018) in Ethiopia on 13 government universities, the researchers found that professional Public Relations practice are in difficult condition as the offices

are not professionally and structurally organized despite the fact that PR's key roles are well recognized. Findings from the study indicated that PR practitioners have limited understanding of the concept of Public Relations specifically regarding its management function of maintaining mutual understanding with the internal and external publics rather they are considered to stage the debate other than mediate. It was revealed in the same study that a lack of professional skilled personnel, having minimal attitudes and lack of empowerment of PR offices, absence of adequate capacity building trainings, lack of infrastructure, and inadequate assistance from the concerned leaders were the core challenges public relations practitioners face.

According to Opoku, Osei, Ackaah, et al (2017) the PR Unit in some organizations in Ghana is confronted with several challenges. Some of the challenges are a lack of proper in-service training for the PR staff the Assembly; inadequate funds to facilitate PR strategies and tactics, lack of cooperation from other department and units within the Assembly.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

According to De Benetti (2009) a theory is defined as the general principles and ideas about a subject. Scientifically, a "theory" is used as a plausible general principle or body of principles offered to explain a phenomenon (Abend, 2008). In a more philosophical context, what is expected from a theory is a model capable of predicting future occurrences or observations, being tested through experiment or otherwise verified through empirical observation (Kawulich, 2009). Public Relations practice is anchored on a number of theories. Some of these include the excellence theory, the systems theory, feminism theory and situational theory. However, the current study will consider the following theories:

2.2.1 The Excellence Theory

The Excellence theory is an essential and defining statement of what constitutes effective PR in an organization. The theory was a result of a 15-year study by Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2008) to determine the features of what they called 'excellent communications' and of the organization that engage in excellent PR. The theory discusses how public relations contributes to organizational effectiveness, management, and its environmental conditions within an institution that has contributed to its successful operation (Grunig, 2008). Grunig, Grunig & Ehling (1992) define excellence as a set of attributes and practices that help to build quality and long term relationships with the publics. The Excellence Theory is an incorporation of a number of theories including the four models of PR identified by Grunig and Hunt in their earlier studies, and is centered on the Systems Theory (Waterman, 2012). The Excellence Theory regards a set of strategic management theories of PR incorporated into a greater whole and seeks to address the question: How, why and to what extent does communication contribute to the achievement of organizational objectives? The excellence theory explains the value of public relations to an organisation and the society in which it operates (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1995).

Again the excellence theory sought to answer what it term the excellent question: that is, how must PR be practiced and the communication function organized for it to contribute most to organizational effectiveness? (Grunig, 1992). The characteristics of an excellent public relations functions can be placed into four categories with each having different characteristics: Empowerment of Public relations functions, communication role, models of public relation and organization of the communication function and it relationship to other management function

These characteristics were explain as follows:

2.2.1.1 Empowerment of Public Relations

2.2.1.1.1 The senior public relations executive must be involved in strategic management processes of the organization and communications programs are developed for strategic publics identified as part of this process.

Excellence theory states that, for PR to contribute to organizational effectiveness, it must be involved in strategic management function (Grunig & Grunig, 2011). The participation of public relations in strategic management is essential. A study by Vercic and Grunig (1996) found that organisations that practice strategic public relation, most often develop programs to communicate with both internal and external publics who may be a threat or an opportunity to these organizations. To identify these publics, the PR practitioner must be strategically engaged in environmental scanning. The careful, analytical, learned, experienced practitioner is comfortable with the environment and knows how to develop strategies to communicate effective organizational policies to the publics (Grunig & Grunig, 2008). These strategies are likely to affect the publics or improve the organization's operation depending on the kind of feedback received from the publics. The PR practitioner will be able to advise the organization on what messages should be and the effects they may have. Again, these PR practitioners will also understand that complex feedback within and between systems and environments can create resonances that cannot be controlled and which may contradict the desired results of the communication (Gregory, 2000). In addition, Dozier (1986, p.36) asserted that if public relations practitioners are to assist organizations in adapting to environmental changes, they must participate in management decision-making rather than merely implement decisions made by others.

2.2.1.1.2 Senior Public relations executive must be part of the dominant coalition.

For PR to contribute to organizational effectiveness, the organization must empower PR as a critical management function by making the senior PR executive a member of the dominant coalition. The theory attempts to explain the role of the communication manager in the dominant coalition. It presupposes that a communication/PR manager can contribute to the overall effectiveness of an organization by being part of the dominant coalition; that is, PR can be part of the planning and decision-making process (a management function) and play a key role in ensuring the organization achieves its set objectives (Heath & Coombs, 2006). The public relations practitioners must have a direct reporting relationship to the senior managers who belongs to the dominant coalition (Grunig & Grunig 2008). Onwunali (2006) noted that the management perspective of public relations is critical to management and should be considered when formulating organizational policy and that public relations should be placed at top management level of an organization. Seitel (2011) pointed out some management function which public relations practitioners can execute to be made a part of the dominant coalition and these include a continuous assess to internal and external opinions, attitudes, and needs, advise management on their potential impact and act as a tool in bringing about policy changes and guiding new courses of action.

2.2.1.1.3 Communication programs organized by excellent department to communicate with strategic publics are also managed strategically.

The participation of PR in management is crucial for any organization (Grunig & Grunig, 2011). This is because the PR functions or programs when organized strategically helps in identifying the publics that can potentially be the greatest opportunity or threat for the organization. Furthermore,

they identify critical publics that affect or are affected by management decisions and who can create issues and crises for the organization (Grunig & Grunig, 2002).

2.2.1.1.4 Excellent Public relations department empower both men and women in all roles

PR roles should simply be embodied with diversity. They empower practitioner with diverse racial, ethnic and cultural differences. This helps in interacting successfully with all strategic element of their environment. It looks at the extent to which the individual practitioners are empowered irrespective their ethnic, racial and cultural background (Grunig & Grunig, 2007)

2.2.1.2 Communicator Roles

The second category is the communicator roles. A study by Grunig and Hunt (1984) suggests that communicators play two major roles in an organization, and these are the manager roles and the technician roles. The study further asserts that the public relations unit should be headed by a manager rather than a technician (Grunig & Grunig, 2008). Communication technicians are essential in carrying out day-to-day communication activities (Adjei, 2015). Many practitioners play both the technician and managerial roles (Hogg & Doolan, 1999). However in less than excellent PR departments, all communication practitioners, not excluding the manager, are technicians. On the other hand, in excellent organizations, PR practitioners are placed in management position. Senior communicators who are placed in managerial positions are able to direct public relations programmes in an organization (Vercic et al, 1996), thereby preventing other members of the dominant coalition with little knowledge on communication management and relationship management from providing this direction (Grunig & Grunig, 2008). The public relations unit should be headed by a manager rather than a technician (Grunig & Grunig, 2007).

The senior PR executive or others in PR units possess knowledge needed for managerial roles. The managerial role should be staffed by professionals who have acquired university education, continuing education or self-educated. The excellence study also differentiated between a strategic manager and an administrative manager who manages day-to-day operations in the PR department; essentially a supervisor to the communication technician (Grunig & Grunig, 2007). Strategic managers however are those who come up with communication strategies that support the organizational goals (Grunig & Grunig, 2007)

The position of the managerial role should be occupied by both males and females. According to Grunig and Grunig (2011) majority of PR professionals are women because they are best educated in the field, therefore excluding women from the managerial role will diminish the communication function and the most knowledgeable practitioners will be excluded from the role.

2.2.1.3 Organization of the Communication function and its relationship with other management function.

Many organizations have a single department devoted for all communication functions while others have a separate department for programmes aimed at different publics such journalists, employees and local community or financial sector, However, others place communicator roles under another managerial function such as Marketing, Human Resource, Legal and Finance. Literature suggests that an excellent PR function should have all communication programs integrated into a single function or have a mechanism to coordinate the departments (Vercic, Grunig & Grunig, 1996). All programs must be integrated into one department or provide a method for coordinating programmes managed by different departments.

Additionally, the function of PR should not be placed in another department, PR should be seen as a management functions and therefore separated from other management functions (Grunig, 1992). According to Grunig (1992), placing Public relations under another management function causes it to lose its unique strategic management role. For instance many organizations see PR as a supporting tool for Marketing and HR departments. In such instances, the core functions of PR are not actualized and are merely restricted to being supplementary functions of Marketing and Human Resource departments.

2.2.1.4 Two Way Symmetrical Model.

Amongst the four models of Public Relations (Press agency, Public information, Two-way asymmetrical model and the Two-way symmetrical model) , Grunig and Grunig (1992) proposed that the two-way symmetrical model be used by organizations that practice excellent public relations. They described this model as the most ethical model which enhances organizational effectiveness (Grunig & Grunig, 2008)

This model seeks to create a mutual beneficial relationship between an organization and its publics. In this model, the main objective of the practitioner is to create understanding rather than persuasion (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). Furthermore, The PR practitioners serve as a liaison between the organization and its publics. Formative research is used to facilitate understanding and dialogue between the organization and its publics (Grunig & Grunig, 1992).

The two-way symmetrical model helps communicators to negotiate with publics, resolve conflict, and promote mutual understanding and respect between the organization and its publics (Matthee, 2011). The two-way symmetrical model is also characterized by unstable, one-sided communication. Petersone (2004, p. 18) observed that this model is the most ethical model and

improves organizational effectiveness. Grunig and Grunig (2008) proposed four characteristics of the model which are:

1. The PR department and the dominant coalition share the worldview that activities and goals of the communication should be focused on the two-way symmetrical need of PR.
2. In building and maintaining relationships, communication programmes developed for specific publics should be based on two-way symmetrical
3. Senior executive PR must be professionals with knowledge to practice two-way symmetrical model.
4. The organization should have symmetrical systems of internal communication.

2.2.1.5 Internal Communication

Internal communication is explained as the exchange of communication (informal and formal) between top hierarchy members and employees within an organization. It looks at the communication pattern that exists between leaders, managers and employees – or peer-to-peer, from leader-to leader or employee-to-employee (Trahan, 2008),

It is based on the principle of employee empowerment and decision making (Grunig & Grunig, 2008). It involves a two-way symmetric model of communication in which employees are provided mechanisms for dialogue with each other and with supervisors and top managers (Welch & Jackson, 2007). Engaging employees in dialogue, gives an opportunity for their voices to be heard. There is also a sense of belonging when involved in decision making (Yue, Men, & Ferguson, 2020). This model helps to improve the morale of employees and is more likely to enhance rather than constrain the organization. Two-way symmetrical model of communication also helps to increase employee satisfaction and organizational effectiveness. The more

communication there is within an organization the more satisfied workers are with their jobs (Yue, Men, & Ferguson, 2020).

After critically examining the theoretical foundations for excellence theory, Critics such as L'Etang (2006) have described the Excellence Theory as a misrepresentation of the reality of the communication process in organizations where the practice of PR is influenced by the interest of the organization. Cheney and Christensen (2001, p. 181) also suggest that the theory be used with caution as it is nothing more than 'self-reports' by managers. They argue that symmetric communication, as postulated by Grunig, does not consider the various systems of power and influence that shape PR practices

Despite this criticism, the Excellence Theory best explains this study as it sheds light on the effectiveness of PR practice within organizational setups. It provides a guide for how public relations should be conducted, structured and implemented. It consists of constructs that spell out what excellence in an organization entails and how excellent practices contributes to the overall effectiveness of the organization.

2.2.2 Systems Theory

Von Betalanffy (1951) established the foundations of general systems theory in the 1960s and 1970s. His original work was in organismic system theory, where he studied the thermodynamic equilibrium of steady state in living organisms as open systems (Adams, Hester, Bradley, 2013). Von Betalanffy (1956) defines a system as complex elements interacting with each other. Grunig, Hunt, Pavlic (1984) were scholars who viewed systems theory as important to PR research. Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (1995) established that the systems perspective holds that organizations and their environments are dependent on each other. While the organization depends

on the environment for resources such as raw materials, customers, suppliers for the services or products they produce, the environment, on the other hand, depends on the organization for its products and services (Grunig & Grunig, 2002). The theory asserts that organizations comprise a number of parts which relate to and work with each other to adjust to changes in the various environment within which the organization operates to achieve organizational goals (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2000). Roach (2006) explains that the system consists of three components which are the organization, its environment and its goals. Therefore, when the environment changes, the systems registers the changes and responds by adjusting to the changes.

Mackey (2014) asserts that the systems theory directs the organization on how to interact internally and externally (that is with the larger society) and the steps needed to maintain mutual relationships between an organization and its publics. Mackey (2014) establishes that knowledge about this theory helps the public relations practitioner in coordinating information disseminating from the organization to the targeted publics, allow for feedback from the publics and also develop strategic response to crisis. Tench &Yeomans (2007) maintain that, systems theory has two main divisions which is the open systems and closed systems

2.2.2.1 Open systems and closed systems

The theory asserts that an organizations could be seen operating either an open system or a closed system (Tench &Yeomans 2007). A closed system does not interact with its environment and it does not take in information from its environment. In this system, the decision makers only operate on past experiences or their personal preferences. Both closed and open system theory are more apprehensive with issues related to the organization. The essence of closed or mechanistic systems is equilibrium; any disturbances are counteracted so that the balance of the original state is restored. Mechanistic systems are designed to meet pre-determined goals and are unadaptable to change

(Gregory, 2000). Also, Buckley (2006) in Gregory (1999) is of the opinion that closed systems force a PR practitioner towards a technical role, implementing the decisions made by the dominant coalition.

In open systems, units within an organisation affect and are affected by other units and the organisation as a whole is responsive to environmental change (Gregory, 2000). Because it assumes that an organization is an organism or living entity with boundaries, inputs, outputs, "throughputs," and enough feedback from both the internal and external environments to make appropriate adjustments in time to keep on living, the "open system" is an important concept for public relations planning (Gregory, 1999, p. 267). An open system gives information to its publics and receives information from its environment, which enables it to ascertain how productive their relationship with client and customers are (Tench & Yeomans, 2007).

That notwithstanding, Bell and Bell (1976) postulates that the open-systems mode enables practitioners to fulfil a functional or management role where they plan and manage communication programmes systematically, counsel and are part of the dominant coalition, making policy decisions. Bell and Bell (1976) as cited by Gregory (1999) further posit that keeping an open system enables the organisation allow free flow of information and resources between the organization and its environment. Information acquired by organizations keep them on track and enables them adapt to environmental changes. In open systems, PR practitioners are gatekeepers of feedback. Feedback is required to make adjustment in order to reach a consensus. The adjustment made to reach a consensus requires feedback. The feedback is used by practitioners to make necessary adjustment to the messages provided on behalf of the organization (Roach, 2006).

2.2.2.1 Systems and Sub-Systems

An organisation is a system and it is made up of several departments that are sub-units or subsystems. The departments (sub units) are interdependent and help in fulfilling the goals and objectives of organisation. Organizations are adaptive systems and make adjustments based on the responses from the environment. They also spend time, resources and effort in monitoring the environment (Lai & Lin, 2017)

2.2.3. Environmental Scanning/boundary spanning

Aside the systems theory, PR practitioners can contribute to the effectiveness of an organisation by playing boundary spanning roles. Through the systems theory, public relations practitioners play a boundary spanning role, linking the edge of an organization, looking within and out of the organization and helping the organization communicate across its boundaries and other subsystems in the organization (Grunig & Hunt,1984). Boundary spanning enables the organization link its internal network with external sources of information. PR practitioners acts as intermediary between the organization and its stakeholders (Wilcox and Cameron, 2009).

It is worth noting that PR practitioners work in societies and environment in which they work. It's therefore necessary to be aware of what is happening in the environment within which the organization operates. This can be achieved by scanning the environments in order to be well abreast with information on occurrences within and outside the environment. In addition to this, scanning the environment easily helps the practitioner to spot emerging trends and issues .Also, Identifying these issues early gives ample time for the organisation to adjust itself, to engage with them and to an extent influences their development (Tench &Yeomans, 2007)

The systems theory serves as a useful heuristic tool in assisting the PR function to conceptualize the complex nature of organizational interdependencies (Omondi, 2006). It also provides a

framework for thinking about aspects of importance in understanding organizational PR decision making and effectiveness. This type of thinking provides individuals with an understanding of the world as an interconnected whole.

The systems theory remains one of the theories underpinning this study. PR is interdependent on other departments in the organizations and its environment. All these sub-divisions work together in achieving the overall Public Relations goal which is developed in relation to the organizational goals. From an organizational perspective, the function of PR and the level at which it is performing will influence the bigger system. Public relations is not practiced in a vacuum. We cannot look at an organization being separate from its environment

2.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed various research works that have been done which is significant to this study as well as the theory which served as a guiding principle to place this study in a proper perspective. This gives a broad overview of the study and how the issue is perceived by other scholars.

The next chapter will focus on the Methodology used in data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This section discusses the methodological approach that has been used for the study. It covers the research design, population, and sample size, sampling methods, unit of analysis, data sources, data analysis and ethical issues of the study.

3.1 Research Design

The research design refers to the overall strategy that one chooses to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way thereby effectively addressing the research problem (Akhtar 2016). According to Bryman (2012, p. 46), a research design provides a framework for the collection of data. The research design helps the researcher to answer the research questions effectively and also serve as a guide to choose the appropriate data required for the study

Qualitative research approach was used in this study. Qualitative research method is defined as an approach to empirical inquiry that collects, analyses, and displays data in narrative rather than in numbers (Creswell, 2014). This approach was used because it helps to explore and understand meanings ascribed to social issues and allows for an in-depth understanding of the issue regarding Public Relations practised. Qualitative approach will not limit the extent to which Public Relations practitioners sampled in this research will answer questions that give a deeper understanding of the Practice of Public relations in these government institutions. Creswell (2014) articulates that the purpose of the qualitative approach is to discover and understand experiences, perspectives, and thoughts of participants. In qualitative research, detailed information on a topic of interest is collected through a number of techniques such as case studies, interviews, and content analysis.

3.2 Population

Population refers to the category of individuals to be sampled. The nature of the research being conducted requires respondents who have particular knowledge in the field of public relations. Mugenda et al (2003) explain that, a population is a group of individuals or objects that have the same form of characteristics.

The study will involve selected public sector institutions in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. It will specifically target key government ministries, departments and agencies namely Ghana Police Service ,Ghana Armed Forces, Office of the head of Local Government , Social Security and National Insurance Trust(SSNIT), National Insurance Commission, Ministry of youth and sport.

3.3 Sampling methods and Sample Size

Wimmer and Dominick (2003) define a sample as a subset of the population that is representative of the entire population. A sample is a subset of a population selected to participate in the study, it is a fraction of the whole, selected to participate in a study.

Sampling, especially in qualitative research, allows researchers to obtain a deeper understanding of a problem under study (Black, 2012: 168-169; Stacks, 2011: 197). Participants would be selected based on their in-depth knowledge and experience of the issue under investigation (Merriam, 2015). Although these organizations have other regional offices, the study would be limited to the Greater Accra regional office because of time and resource constraints.

The study employed the use of the purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling technique also known as the Judgment sampling technique is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities or characteristics the participant possesses (Etikan, Abubakar and Alkassim, 2016). This sampling technique was deemed appropriate because the participant recruited in this study were

willing to give information by virtue of their knowledge and experience in their field of practice (Ma. Dolores C. Tongco, 2007). For the purposes of this research study, a sample size of 10 participants would be recruited from the listed public institutions for the current study. The researcher is convinced that such technique gives more and better information needed in this particular study. This is largely because as authors such (Etikan, Abubakar and Alkassim, 2016) argue, the use of purposive sampling technique allows information rich participant to be sampled for the study. Hence by purposely selecting the name samples, the researcher seeks to have access to the participants who have relevant in-depth knowledge about the phenomenon under study.

3.4 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis refers to a different aspect of a research's content, that is, the element that is counted (Austin & Pinkleton, 2008; Dozier, 2011). Babbie (2010: 86) concurs by describing the unit of analysis as the "what or whom is being studied." In his view, a typical unit of analysis refers to the individuals within a group, especially where the researcher is interested in exploring the behavior of different groups of individuals. The unit of analysis will however be the individual PR practitioners who will be selected for the interview. Since this research is interested in interviewing individual PR practitioners in the above listed public institutions, these will constitute the units of analysis for the research.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

The research instruments for this study include a semi-structured interview guide. The semi-structured interview guides gives the researcher the opportunity to ask follow-up questions based on the responses that are provided.

The defining characteristic of semi-structured interviews is that they have a flexible and fluid structure, unlike structured interviews, which contain a structured sequence of questions to be asked in the same way for all interviewees (Mason, 2002). The aim of this is to ensure flexibility in how and what order questions are posed.

3.6 Sources of data for the study

Sources of data would range from primary data and secondary data gathered from the field. Primary data/source essentially deals with a first hand or main accounts of an issue under investigation and is gathered through data collection methods including surveys, interviews, observations, and experiments, whereas secondary data/sources are supportive data collected to aid the primary data (Oluwatosin, 2017). Secondary sources provide relevant analysis of data found in primary sources including books, journals, dissertations, reports, speeches and so on (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011: 186; du Plooy, 2009: 62). These sources would be used in the data collection process.

3.7 Data Collection

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). Berger (2000) defines interview as a conversation between a researcher (someone who wishes to gain information about a subject) and an informant (someone who presumably has information of interest on the subject). In this study, interviews will be conducted personally from the respondents to obtain information about the topic.

For this study, the researcher employed In-depth interviews to collect data. Wimmer and Dominick (2011, p.139) defined an in-depth interview as an extensive one-on-one personal interaction in

which much more information can be obtained. Interviewing in research is a purposive conversation geared towards accessing some vital information from a source (Bolderston, 2012).

Ten (10) Public Relations experts will be interviewed to examine their point of view on the study. The interviews will be used to explore the views, experiences and opinions of the individual respondents. The questions that will be asked to require them to provide their personal and professional experiences, but will no way violate their privacy per the ethics of research.

In order to ask relevant questions to get the needed information from the interviewees, an interview guide has been designed by the researcher. The researcher will probe for further information where necessary.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis involves categorizing, examining, tabulating and or otherwise recombining the collected data (Yin, 2004).

Data analysis would be undertaken devoid of bias study by reporting what respondents said on the study field. A voice recorder was used to record and transcription was done using thematic analysis. The primary and secondary data sources such as books, journal articles, internet sources and reports would be analyzed contextually. Thematic method of data analysis was done based on the themes and sub themes found. The researcher ensured that all recorded responses of participants were transcribed verbatim in relation to the data collection process.

3.9 Ethical Issues

“We live in an era, where technology is rapidly advancing and societal values and roles are changing dramatically, ethical issues also are increasingly becoming more complex” (Rogers, 1987). As a result, ethical considerations would be taken into account to ensure that no form of

deception in data gathering occurs during this study. This would be done by ensuring that interviewees are informed about the academic nature of the study while seeking their consent to participate in the exercise. The identity of these respondents' that is their names, names of their organizations, their gender, specific titles, affiliations and anything that can be used to identify them will be anonymized in the study.

3.9.1 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the methodological approach that were used for the study. This chapter looked at proposed research design, data sources, data analysis, sample size and sampling methods that would be used to collect data and the ethical issues.

The next chapter focused on analyses of the data gathered and provides discussion on it.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

The core objective of this study is to investigate the practice of Public Relations in governmental institutions. This study has argued that PR practice is essential even within governmental agencies and organizations. This chapter presents the findings made from in-depth interviews carried out with sampled PR personnel from selected government agencies. The chapter also discusses findings made in line with the research objectives of this study. Thus, the chapter presents findings relevant to how PR is practiced in Public institutions, how effective PR is to public institutions, the prevalent PR tools that are employed in PR activities in government institutions as well as the challenges PR practitioners face while discharging their duties as Public Relations personnel.

4.1 RQ1: How is PR Practiced in Public Institutions?

The study sought to investigate how Public Relations is practised in public institutions. To achieve this, the study investigated the nature of Public Relations departments in the selected government institutions as well as the activities undertaken by these PR departments. An understanding of the constitution of PR departments, how they are set up and what they do are crucial to understanding how PR is practiced in public institutions.

4.1.1 Nature of Public Relations Departments

The findings of the study indicate that most of the institutions selected for this study run an almost identical public relations department, in terms of functional nature. Thus, the findings indicate some core similarities in the nature of public relations departments in the sampled institutions.

The study found that majority of the public relations departments were in-house departments and therefore performed PR functions on their own while some few functions and responsibilities were outsourced from other PR agencies external to the institutions. In other words, the study identified that the public institutions sampled for this study had established in-house PR departments that were tasked with the majority of PR responsibilities, except some functions that were outsourced from external PR agencies.

Hence, in-house PR departments were tasked with basic PR functions such as report writing, social media management, media relations, newsletter production, speech and minutes writing amongst others, while other functions that the department deems unable to perform are rendered to external agencies to perform. Responses given by respondents were as follows:

Respondent GP3 indicated that, ... the department is well structured and resourced such that it performs all PR activities on its own, except printing of publications and manufacturing of souvenirs which it contracts to external entities.

One advantage of an independent PR outfit is that they have an expansive number of employees with expertise to handle various PR issues, this allows them to have multiple perspective on how to improve relationship with their publics. Here, although practitioners work together, each is tasked with a role to play based on their expertise. There is a practitioner in charge of general administration of the PR department, social media management team, the Ghana Police press and the production team. It also emerged that, it is cost effective for the organisation to outsource external entities for printing souvenirs rather than owning a print house. Another respondent, MYS1, in his words, explained that:

... It depends on what type of projects you're embarking on. He further explained that majority of the activities are undertaken in-house, however if there's a project that demands that he employs the services of an event organizer, he considers that.

The study also found out that while some PR departments of the sampled institutions were run independently and were fully fledged as indicated above, in the case of one, SSNIT, the Public Affairs Department has been merged with Marketing and Customer Service Departments to form a Corporate Affairs Department, which many regard as a Division. In SSNIT, Divisions are higher in ranking than Departments by virtue of the volume of work, number of units or departments, staffing and budgetary allocations it receives. It must be noted that the Public Affairs Department was responsible for all PR, Marketing and Customer Service activities until 2015 when the Trust introduced a separate Marketing Department and upgraded Customer Service unit into a department. The head of the Public Affairs Department, respondent SSN4 explained the situation as follows:

We have a Corporate Affairs Department that oversees the service delivery. Under the corporate affairs department, we also have the Marketing and the Public Affairs Departments because the Corporate Affairs Department is like a division and all these three departments work to build a very good image for the trust. So the Public Affairs Department Under the office of the Corporate Affairs Department oversees both the internal and external communication engagement with Inter and external stakeholder.” - Respondent SSN4 (Source: Field Interview, 2021).

Management sees the need to have a fully-fledged public relations department because the profession is much appreciated and recognized by management. PR has been elevated to a higher level (Corporate affairs department) handling almost everything about the corporation. The corporate affairs department handles the marketing, customer service and public relations needs of the organization. This explains that management acknowledges the functions of PR in the organization.

Another respondent with a situation different from the other organizations is respondent OHLS7. Here, the outfit has been allocated an office space and labelled it Public Affairs department but the

staff there rarely undertake any PR activities and rather do normal administrative work in their day to day affairs. PR is, therefore, done as and when necessary.

No, we don't have a fully-fledged department here in the office of the head of local government, we don't have a scheme of service for public affairs. Officers playing the role of the Public relations are all officers under the administrative class .PR activities is undertaken when the need arises

4.1.2 PR Activities Undertaken in Public Institutions

The findings of the study indicate that PR departments of the sampled government institutions performed normative Public Relations functions or were engaged in normative PR activities. The findings point that PR departments of the various institutions performed core PR roles that were founded significantly on the communication management between the organizations and their various publics.

To this effect, the study found that crucial PR activities such as writing, preparing for interviews, media contents production, diverse forms of media engagements, events organization, advising top management members on communication related issues amongst other activities were regularly undertaken by these institutions.

The PR unit in agreement with established studies, carry out several functions aimed at managing the external and internal publics of the organisation. Most respondents listed specialized functions of PR. Specifically, respondents mentioned the following as PR activities they undertake regularly; PR writings. By this respondents indicated that they produce newssheet, newsletters, and annual reports.

In-person and media talks. Here they said that they organize face-to-face and media talk shows to educate the public on their organisations, activities of the organisations and receive reactions from their audiences.

Production of video and audio materials on the organisations and their activities for their publics.

Media engagement. Organisations identify media houses, court mutual relations with the media personnel and place materials for publications in the media.

Internal Communications by which PR liaise between management and staff to provide mutual understanding between the two.

Counsel management on issues that affects management.

Production of promotional aids such as calendars, flyers, diaries, brochures, t-shirts, which helps publicize the organization.

Besides the information exchange function, PR undertake Protocol/Events management function. Which includes the Organization of special events such staff fun games, conference, management consultative meetings, anniversary, end of year parties and many others. Respondents SSN4 emphasize that,

We do a lot of writing, scripting of messages, very limited talks, Putting together synopsis for interview, preparing management and other key staffs for media engagement. We largely do video and audio editing (Respondent SSN4)

Similarly respondent GP3 added that, We offer public education, awareness and education by engaging with the citizens to improve their mutual understanding on a range of issues, such as changes in management, official fees to charge for services, the openings and closing times of the police stations (Respondent GP3)

It is worth noting that every respondent in describing the functions of PR mentioned internal communication, stakeholder management, reputation management, and media relations. All these

activities PR undertake ends up in helping the organization meets its goals by creating a mutual understanding between the organization and its publics and creating a favorable image for the organization amongst its publics.

While the activities or functions performed by PR departments of the sampled institutions are vast and varied, they are most significantly tied to the overall function of PR – which is to manage communication relations between organizations and their publics. The findings of this study agree with Cutlip et al. (2000) who underscores that the practice of PR concerns a number of varying tasks that are related, most importantly, enhancing interaction between an organization and its publics. Furthermore the findings of this study corroborate with Lattimore's et al. (2004) view that public relations primarily involves writing, counselling, special events planning and coordination amongst others.

4.2 RQ2: How Effective is PR practice in Public Institutions?

The study sought to investigate the effectiveness of Public Relations to public institutions. To ascertain the effectiveness of PR to public institutions, the study further sought to investigate the managerial positioning of PR departments in the sampled public institutions as well as how effective PR roles are to these institutions. According to Tench and Yoemans (2006) the position of PR departments as part of top management is essential to how effective PR departments will be in performing their functions. Public Relations is therefore supposed to be a top managerial function which contributes to the overall effectiveness of the entire organization. Literature therefore suggest that the effectiveness of PR departments hinge greatly on their incorporation into top management.

4.2.1 Public Relations Positioning

The study found that while some of the PR departments of public institutions sampled for this study were considered parts of top management, a few departments were not considered as such. Thus, the findings indicate that the positioning of Public Relations departments in public institutions differed relative to the institution. Hence, while PR personnel and departments of some institutions played managerial roles, other PR departments were not considered as parts of top management.

Gyan (1991) as well as other researchers such as Wu and Baah-Boakye (2008) have argued based on findings from their respective empirical studies on PR departments' and their positions on management of public institutions that not all government organisations considered PR as a management function and hence positioned it as part of top management. The findings of this study therefore agree holistically with these findings as the data indicates that there is less professional recognition of PR functions at top management level in some government organizations. Specifically, respondents OHLS indicated that, she is not part of the management team of this organization, through the head of public affairs, our concerns are channeled to management.”

The study shows that, although she does join management meetings, she has access to the head of public affairs, therefore most of their concerns are channeled to management. PR deserves to be a part of management for a number of reasons but the two most frequent reasons identified in this organizations are, importance of stakeholder relationships to the organization and because they manage the reputation of the company

The findings of the study point out that respondents who were interviewed for this study perceived Public Relations to play a critical role in public institutions and is highly effective in helping organizations reach their goals. The findings indicate that the core roles of PR are effective in helping public institutions reach set goals, maintain good public image and to manage good relations between the institutions and their stakeholders.

Regardless of this, it is also essential to iterate that majority of the respondents perceived that PR was considered a top management level function and hence, the PR departments of such organizations were considered as part of management with the mandate of contributing to management decision making processes. To confirm this respondents NIC2 explained that:

... management believes in the fact that an effective way of distinguishing the regulator and regulated entities is through public relations activities. Management's perception of PR as a top management function will help create a much more mutual understanding between the national insurance commission and operators in the industry. PR must therefore be appreciated and valued because it plays a role in strategy formulation. PR practitioner should be part of the decision making if not other non-PR personnel will take decisions for the PR department.

Respondent GAF7 also said, ... there are certain top level meetings that he always have to be part which other directors of equal ranks cannot be part. To this it can be said that the position of PR in the Ghana cannot be downplayed, PR is mostly involved in all decision making in the organisation, however PR involvement in decision making is dependent on the issues at stake. This is mainly due to the different level at which decisions are made

To further confirm the above, respondent GP3 added:

... PR directorate is represented on the police management board where policy decisions concerning the police service are made. PR must be held in high esteem and made part of the dominant coalition in public institution in the country, Concerns raised by PR should not be overlooked by management because PR plays a strategic managerial role by monitoring publics and anticipating the consequences of policies and strategies on the organization-stakeholder relationship.

The study's findings in this regard typify the assumptions of the Excellence theory which calls for the elevation of PR to top management level where PR is considered part of the dominant coalition. This way, PR is better positioned to inform and influence management decisions on crucial issues that may affect the public image of the organization (Grunig 1992; Dozier et al. 1995; Grunig et al. 2002).

4.2.2 Effectiveness of Public Relations in Public Institutions

Cutlip et al (1994) argue that Public Relations are crucial in assisting governmental organizations in achieving government program goals and managing public images as well as regulating information flow between the government agencies and its publics. PR functions if performed well, hence, can be an effective means of reaching organizational goals of government institutions. The findings of this study indicate that PR was perceived as a highly effective mechanism through which governmental organizations reached their set goals and objectives. The study found that PR departments of public institutions contributed to organizational effectiveness in two main ways – managing organizational image and reputation and contributing to achieving organizational goals.

4.2.2.1 Image and Reputation Management

The study identified that one core area where PR contributed to organizational effectiveness regarded image and reputation management. The findings indicate that PR departments of the sampled organizations contributed and were effective in aiding their respective organizations maintain good reputable images in the minds of its publics. Furthermore, the findings point that as a result of effectively managing the reputation and image of their respective organizations, PR contributes to making the institutions more attractive and positively placed in the minds of its publics. This assertion is well corroborated by respondent GP3 who indicated that,

The PR unit has put the Ghana police service better in the eyes of the publics, in terms of trust. Worldwide, we rank very well among police services that run democratic policing where rule of law serves as the basis of policing.

This finding is an indication that the efforts of the PR unit helps to enhance the image of the organization as a trustworthy institution both internally and internationally.

According to Harrison (2000), one of the greatest contributions of Public Relations in public organizations is the practice's tendency to be highly effective in managing public perceptions and the image of governmental organizations. This study agrees with Harrison's (2000) assertion that through their communicative functions PR personnel are able to advise top management while also liaising with the appropriate stakeholders in order to achieve favorable images and perceptions in the minds of the organization's publics.

4.2.2.2 Achieving Overall Organizational Goals

The study also found that PR units of the sampled public institutions are pivotal in aiding organizations achieve their organizational goals. The findings therefore point that PR units as well as their functions were considered effective as they contributed immensely to helping organizations attain their overall goals and objectives. This implies that while PR units of organizations performed their functions, they were seen as effectively contributing to the core business of the organization, making the public institution more effective. Hence for whatever core businesses that the sampled public institutions operated in, PR departments were seen as being instrumental and effective in aiding the organization achieve its goals. Regarding this, respondent SSN4 revealed that,

Through various PR efforts, operations of SSNIT has hugely been enhanced as new workers willingly get themselves enrolled under the scheme, employers pay regular contributions of their workers and contributors regularly update their records... These has endeared the organization to Ghanaian workers as a reliable and trustworthy.

Respondent is of the view that public relations is very important in achieving organizational goals because there is the need to have effective communication between the internal and external publics, the stakeholders as well as the media engagement. Public relations also ensures that messages are framed and disseminated through the right channel to reach targeted audience in order to achieve organisational objectives. Similarly respondent MYS1 added that;

... With the media is an added advantage to achieving organisational goals and objectives. I try to always advocate that let's try and always engage the media in whatever we do to get their buy in. Engaging the media enables us effectively undertake our projects and policies without any negative reportage”.

Working closely with the media both print and electronic ensure maximum publicity for the organization especially when a new project is undertaken. . Engaging the media enables the organization to effectively undertake projects and policies without any negative reportage. Strengthening the relations between the organization and the various media gives the organization an opportunity to be well presented on various media platforms in times of crisis or during events with short notice

4.3 RQ: What are the PR Tools that are employed by PR Practitioners in their Activities?

The data gathered illustrates that PR practitioners of the various public institutions sampled for this study employed different PR tools in discharging their duties. The study found that such communication tools such as speeches, memos, notice boards, social media platforms, print and broadcast channels, organizational websites are generic communication tools that PR practitioners

employed while performing PR duties in public institutions. Respondents GAF8 confirmed this and mentioned that, qwr

My outfit usually employs speeches, press releases, durbars, interviews, phone calls, memos, seminars, notice boards, the media - print and electronic as well as social media platforms like *Facebook Twitter* and *WhatsApp* - to communicate with their publics.

Based on this it can be said that the use of traditional and social media platforms have given practitioner a lot of platforms on which to tell their stories. So whereas before practitioners only had a handful of media platforms to tell their story now the practioner has a chain of platforms where they can use to reach their publics.

This finding corroborates that of Omondi (2012) who also found that PR practitioners often engage in the use of diverse communication tools within their practice. Lancaster (2005) particularly mentions that the use of digital websites and television broadcast as communication tools of public relations hold so much benefits to PR practitioners because such platforms are built on visualizations that key publics relate to often during communication. Similarly this study also found that digital platforms and television broadcast platforms are common PR tools respondents use in public institutions.

The findings indicate that while these communication tools are varied and vast, they are employed differently in two broad categories on the basis of the kind of publics being communicated to. Public Relations tools that practitioners employed in communication therefore are categorized into two groups – internal publics communication tools and external publics communication tools.

4.3.1 Internal Publics Communication Tools

The findings indicate that PR practitioners employ the use of some communication tools that enable them to communicate with their internal publics. These communication tools are only used for communicating with internal publics such as employees and top management members. It is essential to also note that internal communication tools were used as a means of intra-branch and inter-branch communications. Thus while internal communication tools were employed to help PR practitioners communicate with internal members of their organizations, these same internal publics communication tools were also used to facilitate information sharing amongst internal publics of different branches of the same public institutions. All respondents attested to the fact that, the organisation have tools for communicating with internal publics.

This statement was confirmed by respondents OHLS who said, we inform our internal publics on policies and programs towards achieving the vision and mission of the service and by so doing we use meetings/staff durbars, social media eg watsapp, Reports (monthly, quarterly and annually. Intranet, internal memos and many others. We also allow for feedbacks from them.

Respondent SSN4 added that, we have an internal communications unit that relate largely to staff where they post information to keep staff informed and get information from staff to management... The trust as an organization has 51 branches and a couple of departments, so staffs have been selected from the various departments and branches unto a corporate WhatsApp platform. So we have a WhatsApp platform where we put all information there for onward dissemination unto the various department. So if you're a rep from the Benefit department and there's an information there, you have to pick the information and descend it to you various colleagues

It is essential to also note that *WhatsApp* emerged as one of the popular internal publics communication tools that PR departments used in communicating with internal publics. The findings indicate that majority of the respondents asserted to developing *WhatsApp* messaging

groups where they shared information with internal publics often. This further goes to stipulate that digital platforms are increasingly becoming a preferred internal communications platform for most organizations so far as intra-organizational communications is concerned.

Other notable internal public communication platforms that PR practitioners employed in discharging their duties include the use of notice boards, newsletters, news sheets, emails, brochures amongst others.

The use of these internal communication tools allows management to get feedbacks from the staff creating a mutual understanding between the organisation and its internal publics

4.3.2 External Publics Communication Tools

The findings of the study indicate that all respondents considered communication with external publics as crucial and hence employed critical tools in enhancing communication with them. The study found that PR practitioners paid crucial attention to employing digital communication tools and social media as tools for communicating with external publics. Participants mentioned tools such as websites, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as communication tools that are often engaged in communication with publics. This is largely due to these tools' tendencies to enhance real time feedback from publics while ensuring effective, easy and far-reaching communication with external publics.

... We also have an active presence on social media as well. We have officers who monitor and manage our social media platforms, this is because we have a host of clients who wouldn't come to the office but will love to be engaged on the social media. We have a public education team that goes round to educate stakeholders.

It was deduced from this response that, PR practitioners practiced the two way symmetrical model through the use of social media channels, where they try as much as possible to interact and relate

with stakeholders, know what they expect from the organization and try to let these opinions shape their policies and strategies – .

The finding therefore agrees with Eyrich, Padman and Sweetser (2008) as well as Schmitz (2014) who found that social media tools have become an increasingly integrated communication tool that PR practitioners employ while communicating with their external publics. They argued that this is largely become beneficial because social media tools advance the information facilitation roles of public relations among other things.

The findings further show that broadcast channels such as television and radio were also popular communication tools used to communicate with external publics. The study found that broadcast platforms were perceived by the respondents as an ideal communication tools because many external publics felt more comfortable with them and the tools did not require publics to read. The broadcast tools were therefore often used by PR practitioners due to their comfortability and relevance to external publics. Similar to the findings of this study, Lancaster (2005) argues that although social media platforms are becoming the bane of external public's communication in PR recently, broadcast platforms are still viable, beneficial and helpful in visualizing communication elements to target external publics. All participants interviewed for this study mentioned that the organisation still uses traditional tools as a form of communication. When asked how they communicate with external publics,

Respondent OHLS7 said, For instance stakeholders such as Labour Unions, Civil society and non-governmental organisation, we communicate with leaders of the organisation through seminars, consultative meetings, workshop, TV & Radio (major tv and radio stations such peace fm, utv, gtv etc.), Newspaper, exhibition & photo, gallery (Source: Field Interview, 2021)

Respondent GP3 added, with our external publics, we use the radio and television talk shows that allow for in- depth discussion on a particular issue such as crime prevention, corruption and how to report it, or new laws and what they mean. Radio in particular has the greatest outreach in Ghana and both radio and television do not require people to read. (Source: Field Interview, 2021)

The findings of this study revealed that Radio in particular has the greatest outreach in Ghana and both radio and television do not require people to read .The two-way symmetrical models appear to be the most important beneficiaries of the current free media atmosphere. Organizations can take advantage of the situation to foster an effective relationship through the numerous communication channels available. This implies that organizations can engage their public through various communication media, and get feedback within the shortest possible time.

Bell and Bell (1976) as cited by Gregory (1999) posit that keeping an open system enables the organisation allow free flow of information and resources between the organization and its environment. Information acquired by organizations keep them on track and enables them adapt to environmental changes.

While digital and social media communication tools were the most used tools used to communicate with external publics, other non-digital tools such as hotlines, newspaper advertisements, billboards, Public Address systems among others were also used in communicating with external publics.

4.4 RQ4: What are some of the Challenges PR Practitioners Encounter in the Discharge Of their Official Duties?

The study sought to identify crucial challenges that PR practitioners face while practicing in public institutions. The study found that four core challenges plagued the practice of PR in public relations. These include media involvement in PR and dealing with the media: lack of cooperation from the media in putting out information, financial challenges including inadequate funds to

facilitate PR strategies and tactics, lack of recognition by top level management members and general logistics problems. The logistical challenges include lack of official designated vehicle (information vans) hampering the movement of the unit, lack of internet, lack of spacious office hampering the activities of the PR

4.4.1 Negative Media Reportage

One crucial challenge that the study found as impediment to the practice of PR in public institutions was negative media reportage. The study found that the media seemed to operate as one of PR personnel's greatest nemesis that consistently seeks to downplay PR activities. The study found that PR personnel were often challenged on how to deal with media organizations and how they reported on organizations. Some respondents asserted that often there seem to be some media agenda to ruin the reputation of some public institutions. This is often challenging because managing reputations of organisations that media organizations have set agenda against is often a herculean task. Media organizations tend to report negatively on issues that concern public institutions and although PR practitioners are aware of such reportage and their impacts, dealing with them poses huge challenges to them. Majority of the respondent raised concerns on negative media reportage.

This challenge was confirmed by Respondent MYS1 when he said:

The main media challenge is negative reportage especially with the social media. For example, recently there have been a lot of negative reportage on Facebook, twitter and Instagram regarding the performance of the national football team, Black Stars on their performance vis-à-vis the expenditure of GH25, 000,000.00 on the team.

The PR (institution)'s challenge is aggravated when they do not see or hear on time false and damaging information published in the media by the "enemy. This situation becomes pronounced

in the social media which is largely uncontrolled by any editorial discretions and where information spreads fast and wide.

4.4.2 Financial Challenges

The study found that another critical challenge that P practitioners deal with while performing their roles in public institutions concerned a lack of adequate financial support. Respondents perceived that PR departments are often not supported enough financially despite being factored in overall organizational budgets. Some respondents asserted that often PR departments are not supported financially because top organizational members do not understand the relevance of Public Relations and thus investing scarce organization budgets in PR activities may be a waste of resources. The implications of this is that PR personnel are unable to perform their roles and functions efficiently making them less effective in contributing to organizational objectives of public institutions.

Respondent GAF8 corroborated the situation thus:

Sometimes the corporate budget for the year is not enough so PR has to make judicious use of the little that it receives. Also, some top personnel do not appreciate the needs of PR as they seem irrelevant to them. In an increasingly difficult economy, budgets are been cut everywhere and one of the first places where managers always cut the budget is the PR budget because management does not appreciate the needs of PR. However it behooves on PR practitioners to demonstrate clearly to management the value of PR.

The finding agrees with that of Wu and Baah-Boakye (2008) as well as Opoku et al. (2017) who also found that majority of challenges PR professionals face in discharging their duties bother greatly on a total lack of finance or inability of top management to allocate enough finances to PR activities.

4.4.3 Lack of Recognition by Top Level Management

According to Grunig et al. (2002) PR should be considered a top management function. In order for PR to be effective in contributing to organizational effectiveness, there is the need for top level managers of organizations or the dominant coalition to recognize and consider the functions of PR as a crucial part of top level management. In the absence of this recognition, PR is likely to face some challenges which will render it ineffective ultimately. The study found that a lack of recognition of PR departments as crucial parts of management was crucial challenge that PR professional faced while performing their duties in public institutions. The findings indicate that in some instance, some PR departments were not considered as part of management while in some other organizations, PR departments were recognized but only treated as peripheral parts of management making them less influential.

This assertion was made by (*OHLS 7*) who emphasized that:

I'm not part of the management team of this organization, but as I stated previously, through the head of public affairs, our concerns are channeled to the management for consideration. Based on this finding it can be said that the respondent here was a subordinate who worked under PR executive.

The study found that top level managers of public institutions did not understand the core functions or PR and its relevance to organizational effectiveness and hence did not acknowledge it as a crucial part of management. The result of this is that PR departments are often unable to fully operate and become efficient as their functions are often downplayed and go unrecognized. The finding was found to be inconsistent with the key suggestions made in the Excellence theory. The theory argues in favor of a complete recognition and acknowledgement of Public Relations in organizations in order to make the practice more efficient.

The study however agrees with Hogg and Doolan (1999) as well as Jjuuko (2014) who found in their respective studies that a lack of awareness and acknowledgement of PR departments and

their functions are a crucial challenge to not only the practice of PR but to the organization as a whole. Wu and Baah-Boakye (2009) however argue that in Ghana most organizations consider PR as top level management function and thus play managerial roles. However, the practicality or reality of their functions are often questioned and downplayed due to an organizational culture that festers a lack of awareness for PR and its functions.

4.4.4 Lack of Logistics

The study found that another crucial challenge that PR personnel deal with in public institutions is logistics. The study identified that, PR personnel were often unable to effectively implement some of the programs due to logistics problems. Most of the respondents identified that the practice of professional public relations is an activity oriented practice involving mobility of personnel and equipment and other resource. Most respondents identified some logistics problem as lack of computers and its accessories, lack of vehicles for transportation, lack of stationery and others.

Respondents OHLS9&SSN3 both stated that, “general logistics to effectively carry out our duties is a challenge”.

PR involves a lot of field work where practitioners needs vehicles for transport, however, most offices did not have dedicated vehicles for their department and had to rely on corporate pool of vehicles .The challenge here was that, there were many at time the vehicles were unable to assist them and were unable to go out to perform their duties.

In addressing these challenges, respondents of the study indicated that their challenges can be dealt with if only their offices are given adequate and right money to effectively take care of all activities captured in their budgets. In addition, PR offices should be provided with the necessary logistics that will make the office very vibrant and active.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the findings made from in-depth interviews carried out with sampled PR personnel from selected government agencies. , the chapter presented findings relevant to how PR is practiced in Public institutions, how effective PR is to public institutions, PR tools that are employed in PR activities and challenges encountered by PR practitioners in government institutions.

After discussing the findings, the next chapter would focus on summary of findings, conclusion, recommendation and limitations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This section of the study summarizes the main findings of the study. The section expresses the core issues that the research found after collecting data through in-depth interviews that were conducted with Public Relations personnel of some sampled public institutions. The section further presents a conclusion to the project and further offers some recommendations based on the core findings made from this study.

5.1 Summary of Major Findings

The core objective of this study was to assess the practice of Public Relations in public institutions in Ghana. The study found that the practice of Public Relations is gradually gaining grounds among public institutions in Ghana. The study made findings that suggest that PR functions are effective in harnessing organizational objectives of public institutions while performing key communication oriented roles in these organizations.

Among other things, the study was interested in investigating how PR is practiced in government organizations. The study found that the practice of Public Relations across the sampled institutions were synonymous with majority of them operating in-house Public Relations departments who performed key PR duties. Thus, the study found that PR departments of public institutions were mainly in-house and performed all functions of PR in line with other departments of their respective organizations. The study however found that while majority of PR functions were performed by these in-house established PR departments, some activities had to be outsourced as the department may not be well equipped to engage in such activities. Hence, while majority of PR duties were performed by personnel of in-house PR departments some few duties were

outsourced from external PR agencies due to some reasons relative to the organization or department in question.

The study further found that PR departments of public institutions engaged in diverse activities. These activities include writing, preparing for interviews, Public education, media contents production, diverse forms of media engagements, events organization, advising top management members on communication related issues amongst other activities.

The study further found that PR personnel perceived their roles in organizations as contributing to the overall effectiveness of the organization. The study was interested in investigating how effective Public Relations practice is to public institutions. To ascertain this, the study dwelt on the core assumptions of the Excellence Theory which posits that to make PR effective, the practice would have to be incorporated into top management. The study therefore investigated how public relations department were positioned in top management in order to draw how effective the practice is.

The study found that majority of PR departments in public institutions were positioned as part of the dominant coalition. This implies based on the core assertions of the Excellence theory that these PR units were well placed to be effective in contributing to the overall effectiveness of public institutions. Consequently, the findings of the study proved that majority of the respondents perceived PR and its roles and activities as effective in reaching organizational effectiveness.

The study found the effectiveness of PR to be evidenced in two core functions of PR – reputation management and contributing to organizational effectiveness. The findings indicate that these core areas marked how effective PR is in public institutions.

In ascertaining how PR is practiced in public institutions, the study also sought to identify the tools PR professionals use in performing Public Relations functions. The study found two forms of communication tools premised on the two forms of public PR personnel engage with often. The study found that there are communication tools employed to communicate with internal publics and other tools used to communicate with external publics. External public communication tools include broadcast platforms (radio and Television), newspaper advertising, newsletters, emails, websites, as well as social media platforms such as *Facebook, Twitter and Instagram*. Internal public communication tools include memos, *WhatsApp, noticeboards, intracomms*, among others.

Also, the study tried to investigate crucial challenges that PR personnel face while performing PR functions in government institutions. The study found that there are four key challenges that marred the practice of PR in public institutions. These include a lack of proper logistics systems in public organizations to aid PR personnel move and performed their duties; lack of financial support for PR departments; lack of recognition and awareness of PR functions and the relevance of PR by top management level members and dealing with the media and negative reportage from the media.

5.2 Recommendations for Policy Makers

The researcher suggest the following recommendations based on the findings of the study

- The researcher recommends that policy formulators of public institutions should ensure that Public Relations is a key member of the dominant coalition making efforts to ensure that PR departments are incorporated into top management in order for them to be more effective in helping the institutions reach their organizational goals.

- The study also suggests that Policy makers of public institutions make cautious efforts to develop crisis communication plans to mitigate negative media reportage. Often, negative media reportage of public institutions are inevitable and can have devastating effects on the public image of governmental organizations. It is therefore essential that in responding to such inevitable crises situations, PR departments act proactively by developing crisis communication plans to mitigate negative media coverage.
- The researcher further recommends that policy makers of public institutions ensure funds are made available to equip PR in their organisation in order to contribute more effectively to organizational goals achievement. Public institutions need to channel more financial resources to improve PR departments while also investing in logistics of PR units in order for them to be mobile enough as PR functions are activity oriented and demand mobility.

5.2.2 Recommendations for further Research

- The study further suggests that future researchers need to look more critically at the challenges that PR departments in public institutions face in order to obtain more empirical evidence on how to make PR more effective for public organizations.
- Also, the researcher recommends that other studies look at employing the use of mixed methods approach in order to access data from a large number of PR personnel while accessing in-depth information from them. This study primarily employed the use of only the qualitative approach and hence was unable to access information from vast number of practitioners. To make up for this while ensuring enough detailed information is accessed, there is the need to employ the mixed methods approach.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

The fact that only 10 public relations practitioners were interviewed limits the generalization potential and conclusions cannot be made based on the findings of this study.

Also, the time schedules of the interviewees as a result of their responsibilities at their respective work places were a major problem which slowed the research process.

In-depth interviews were used as the methodology for this study. The study can be conducted quantitatively to cover a larger sample size and reduce the elements of bias. Furthermore, almost all of the respondents sampled for the interview were PR practitioners who held managerial positions. The study can be conducted amongst PR technicians to reduce any elements of bias.

5.4 Conclusion

The practice of Public Relations has become increasingly crucial in aiding organizations reach their goals and objectives. The centrality of Public Relations roles is to manage relationships between organizations and their publics through the use of communicative tools and strategies. In recent times, PR has gained some grounds in public institutions, gradually holding a lot of significance in how public institutions operate.

Empirical literature have paid a lot of attention to how Public Relations is practiced in profit making entities. Meanwhile empirical literature, especially of Ghanaian origin concerning the practice of PR in public institutions need to receive more focus and attention. As this study has argued, the role and relevance of PR in public institutions cannot be overstated. Owing to this a lot more studies, especially within the Ghanaian space, need to focus on how PR is practiced in government organizations, how effective they are and the challenges they face.

The findings of the study point out that PR is considered a crucial part of public institutions and therefore acknowledged as a member of the dominant coalition. Additionally, much like empirical literature suggests the tools used in PR practice are divided into two main categories – internal public communication tools and external public communication tools. The study further found that the practice of Public Relations was seen as effective in aiding public institutions reach their organizational objectives.

In conclusion, the findings of this study point out that PR is effective in organizations as they perform diverse functions and activities that manage the reputation and aid public institutions achieve their aims and objectives. However, in order for PR's roles and relevance to be actuated, Public Relations departments will have to be highly equipped in terms of logistics, and also considered as a crucial part of the dominant coalition capable of influencing top management decision making processes.

5.5 Chapter Summary

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

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APENDIX

Interview Guide for Respondents (PR Practitioners)

My name is Afua Kwabea Boakye, an M.A. Public Relations Student at the Ghana Institute of Journalism. The goal of the study is to research how Public relations is practised in your organization. Please help me to achieve this goal by answering the following questions. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Your thoughts and experiences are important to the success of this study. Your view will be treated with the strictest confidentiality.

1. Based on your understanding of public relations do you think your organization has a fully fledged PR department or unit?
2. Does the organization have an internal PR outfit or work with a PR agency?
3. What are the educational backgrounds of the PR officers in the organization?
4. As a PR practitioner, what activities do you undertake?
5. Generally what would you say are the contributions of public relations in your organization?
6. How does your department communicate with internal and external publics?
7. What tools do you use in communication?
8. Is the public relations practitioner involved in management decision making?
9. From your point of view, do you think the PR department is recognized by management?
Please give a reason for your answer
10. Would you consider yourself a part of the management team of your organization?
11. What are some of the challenges the public relations practitioner faces?

12. How can these challenges be addressed?

13. What is the relationship of the PR department with the marketing department?

14. Do you have anything else to say?

Thank you for your views and your time.