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**PERCEPTION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE AMONG SELECTED CHIEF
EXECUTIVE OFFICERS (CEO's) IN GHANA**

SUBMITTED BY

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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

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

(Supervisor Signature)




DR. IKE TANDOH

DATE: 31.12.2021

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

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

(Candidate's signature)

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'MARY ASARE', written over a dotted line.

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DATE: 6TH DECEMBER, 2021

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work, first and foremost to God for the guidance and protection he gives me. Also to my family who have been very supportive of my quest to get further my education. I will also want to highlight the contribution of Mr. T.A. Selby in motivating me to still persist despite the challenges. Also to Mr. Emmanuel Osafo Wiredu who made it a personal decision to keep me on my toes and assist me through this course and make sure I excel.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to explore the perceptions held by some selected CEOs on public relations practice in Ghana. The objectives set included finding out from the CEOs knowledge of public relations, ascertain the CEOs' view of public relations contribution to strategic management and to learn the constraints of public relations contribution to corporate strategy. Through a qualitative research approach, the study collected data from five (5) CEOs of selected agencies under the Ministry of Transport of Ghana through an in-depth interviews. This data was then analysed through thematic analysis where it was revealed that the perception held of public relations practice in Ghana is good thereby surmising well of the practice. On strategic management, public relations was found to be a critical function especially if it was part of top management. Also, due to diverse challenges such as budgetary constraints, lack of detailed knowledge of CEOs in public relations among others faced in the selected organizations, it hampered its contribution to corporate strategy. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that CEOs and corporate leadership in Ghana should recognize and support public relations practice. The study also recommends that the Institute of Public Relations Ghana to speed up its efforts to pass a bill that will make public relations a regulated profession.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) must understand the distinction between public relations (PR), the messaging deliverable and PR, the multi-faceted, mission-critical brand stewardship features, whose stewards deserve a seat at the table and recognition for their positions as advisors (Gehrt, 2011). As the CEO of a business, whether large or small, they are inevitably preoccupied with a variety of issues ranging from customer loyalty, sales growth patterns, and resource coordination, to hiring, creativity, setting direction, and external changes, to name a few (Dozier, Grunig and Grunig, 2013). Heath (2013) notes that it is easy to lose sight of PR and its strategic value in assisting the company in achieving its business goals in the midst of all of this.

The CEO is crucial to the success of a company's PR efforts in many organizations (Gehrt, 2011). Some contend, however, that CEOs' misunderstandings stem from a lack of comprehension of the core mandate of PR practice. Regardless, Ngonyo (2018) suggests that in order to better assess the investigation, it is necessary to understand why Sterne (2008) is inclined with the view that the CEO's understanding of PR practice is essential to the company and the practice's overall development.

CEOs are important in PR because the highest-ranking corporate officer in some organizations serves as the company spokesperson (Ofori, S-Darko and Nyuur, 2014). Journalists look to this individual for insight and comments because he or she represents the organization (Chentiba, Faisal and Mumuni, 2017). Obviously, the CEO is not obligated to act as the corporation's

spokesperson. He or she may appoint someone to handle this, but most journalists reporting on a corporate story hope to be able to speak with the CEO for comment.

Again, the principal PR or communications person is normally in charge of designing and recommending the scope of work and budget, but the CEO should be involved in evaluating and approving the budget (Davis, 2013). Since the CEO has a wide view of the organization's situation (Kyeremeh, 2018), from expected sales to the overall operating budget, he or she is better positioned to see how PR fits into the larger picture (Guo and Anderson, 2018).

The CEO should recognize the overall efficacy of the organization's PR activities in addition to authorizing resources and budget for PR (Issah, 2017). He or she thinks about top-level performance indicators and how PR affects revenue for instance. Clearly, Dozier et al. (2013) add that it is difficult to prove that PR plays a direct role in inspiring someone to buy in certain organizations, but there should be some hard evidence demonstrating the positive effect that PR has on his or her company and brand (Gehrt, 2011). There is also an incentive for CEOs to highlight findings from PR initiatives (Kyeremeh, 2018) in order to generate awareness about an organization's activities. In a company meeting, for example, the CEO could highlight a prominent editorial placement to pique staff interest in a specific initiative.

This study is unique among PR studies in that, like White and Park's (2010) work on perception, it drew on public perception rather than relying on PR practitioners' perspectives. The majority of current PR perception studies are focused on PR practitioners (Heyman, 2005; Sele, 2006); senior management executives (Sterne, 2008); students, graduates, and academics (Paskin, 2010); and recruitment managers (Heyman, 2005; Sele, 2006). (Chin, Kho, Tey, Wong and Yew, 2017). Senior executives are key decision makers because supervisors of PR professionals, both in-house and as consultants, and opinion shapers tend to be members of an organizations' dominant

coalitions. With so many roles, it is easy for the CEO to delegate PR to those in the business. However, the CEO's role in PR is always critical to performance. The focus of this study is thus to probe the perception of CEOs in relation to the practice of PR in Ghana.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Organizations are large structures comprised of various departments known as subsystems (Hiscock, 2019). Each department, such as marketing and finance, has a specific role to play in ensuring that the organization's operations run smoothly (Anani-Bossman and Mudzanani, 2020). However, since many companies prefer to combine PR with other divisions, the value of PR has been overlooked. Asante (2016) espouse the view that this can be due to organizational misunderstanding of the functions of public relations activities in organizational efforts. This suggests that these executives are underestimating the value of PR in their organizations. Due to the limited scope of operation of PR in organization, Chin et al. (2017) add that this is often replaced or encroached by other departments.

Again, according to Abdullah (2011), managers' negative perceptions toward PR can be due to the lack of formally recognized PR professionalism within the organization. This is because, as per Tandoh (2020), the managerial position and the principle of professionalism are inextricably linked. Wu and Baah-Boakye (2014) found that, despite both management and practitioners seeing PR as a management feature in their organizations, PR practitioners' positions on the organizational chart are very poor. This is so because Chin et al. (2017) indicates that most of the practitioners are involved in the technician roles instead of the managerial roles.

This demonstrates that, despite the fact that PR practice has developed over time, there is still a lack of formal recognition of the field of PR in some organizations. The profession's quality and expertise are still immature, with practitioners performing tasks based on what they know rather

than really understanding what they are doing (Osswald, 2019). Based on the problems identified, it is the view of the researcher that it would be prudent to gauge the perceptions of CEOs relating to PR practice. This study becomes essential as it peruses this phenomenon from a Ghanaian context. This helps organizations, practitioners, as well as academics in Ghana to make institute reforms and strategies based on the findings of this study. The depth to which this study's outcome become relevant to stakeholders (organizations, practitioners, professional bodies and academia), conducting this study becomes very justified.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The main task of this study was to evaluate CEOs' perception of PR practice in Ghana. For the purpose of achieving the overall purpose of the study, the researcher intended that through the following specific objectives, the study would;

1. To assess the perception of CEOs on the practice of PR
2. To find out the knowledge of CEOs on PR practitioners in the various firms
3. To ascertain the CEOs' view of PR contribution to strategic management
4. To ascertain constraints of PR contribution to corporate strategy in Ghana

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher outlined the following questions to guide the study. The probe would attempt to find out;

1. What is the perception of CEOs on the practice of PR?
2. What is the knowledge of CEOs on PR?
3. What is/are the CEOs' view of the contribution of PR to strategic management?
4. What is/are the constraints of PR contribution to corporate strategy?

1.4 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

This study is of essence because even though there is ample research materials on PR or marketing, there is rather scarce literature on the role CEOs play in how PR works. Further, it important to add that some researchers (Lynn 2006; Ndahinda, 2011; Anani-Bossman, 2018) indicate that there is not much literature rooting from indigenous African sources especially on PR. The researcher is therefore inclined with the view that this study helps bridge the gap identified while adding to the African literature on PR and communications as a whole. This study again supports academics as well as industry to relook how they can synergize efforts to limit the nuances of the perceptions in order to maximize the advantages of having a PR outfit in an organization.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The relevance of this study is seen in how it both adds on to the literature of PR and communication while adding on to the research materials from African origin on the subject. Again, the phenomenon under study helps to appreciate why different organizations treat PR differently. This study again helps suggest ways organizations can rethink or improve their perception of PR and how they can harness the importance of the practice to their advantage. Further, PR professionals will be given insights into how various CEOs perception of PR practice could aid or hamper their efforts so that the negative effects are mitigated while the positives are encouraged. This study is again essential as it helps to inform the Institute of Public Relations Ghana's (IPR) strategic plan which has among its key vision "to promote a forward-looking PR body for enhanced stakeholder value" in order to fulfill its mission "consolidate and establish IPR as a distinctive, respectable and proactive professional body, giving direction to PR practitioners and students in Ghana".

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The overall scope of the study was to probe the phenomenon from a Ghanaian perspective. This study was cordoned off to involve only CEOs of organizations. Again, all the organizations involved in the study had to have had a PR or some sort of communications outfit. The scope of this study was largely government agencies. A peculiar characteristic to note about these agencies is that they all fall under the Ministry of Transport.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This study will be made up of five chapters of which Chapter one is the introductory section of the study. This consists of a background to the study, identification of the research problem, objectives of the study, the research questions and scope of the study as well as significance and justifications for the study.

Chapter two would also consist of the review of literature which will help the researcher come up with relevant information to examine the phenomenon under study. This will also help ground the study in literature by laying a foundation of conceptual and theoretical frameworks.

Chapter three looks at the research methodology. The essence of this chapter is to help explain how the researcher intends to collect data and how the researcher went about it. Here the research design, research population, sample and sampling procedures, sources of data, data gathering instruments among others are discussed.

Chapter four also comprises of the presentation of data, discussion of the results and an analysis of the data. Chapter five presents highlights on the summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations for the study as well as suggestions for further research as well as industry and policy makers.

1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided a summary of the study by providing background information of the phenomenon under study. This was then followed by identifying the gap which constitutes the essence of this study, as well as stating the research objectives and questions, among other things.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter bothers on giving a comprehensive summary of previous research on the topic under study. Here, scholarly articles, books, and other sources relevant to the research be reviewed. The chapter in essence aid in giving a theoretical base for the research by acknowledging the work of previous researchers.

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework is made up of concepts and their definitions, as well as existing theory/theories that are applied to a specific subject (Osanloo and Grant, 2016). As Lederman and Lederman (2015) put it, the theoretical framework must exhibit an understanding of ideas and concepts related to the research issue and that will connect it to broader domains of knowledge.

2.1.1 Cognitive Dissonance Theory

The theory seeks to explain how people reduce psychological discomfort and achieve emotional equilibrium in the face of inconsistent beliefs or behaviors (Anderton, Pender and Asner-Self, 2011). It rests on the premise that people desire to view themselves as rational and uniform in both thought and action; therefore, they consciously choose how they respond to information or behaviors that challenge their way of thinking. It has been used to understand why people give in to con artists, make risky financial decisions and justify unhealthy habits. Though Cognitive Dissonance Theory was controversial at first, Kim (2011) observes that it is now one of the most analyzed and accepted theories in both psychology and communication.

Metin and Camgoz (2011) contends that the theory contains two basic hypotheses. McGrath (2017) adds that the first one states that people who experience psychological discomfort arising from cognitive conflict will attempt to reduce the discomfort and achieve consonance, or inner harmony. Festinger proposed three ways humans do this: minimize the importance of the dissonant thought, outweigh the dissonant thought with consonant thoughts, or incorporate the dissonant thought into one's current belief system (Telci, Maden and Kantur, 2011). For example, consider a college student who regularly drives while intoxicated.

When a person's action contradicts his or her thoughts and beliefs, the theory claims, an underlying psychological tension is formed (Wicklund and Brehm, 2013). This underlying tension then leads a person to adjust their attitude in order to achieve consistency in their thoughts and behaviors. Thompson, Schaefer and Menzel (2012) observes that when a person engages in activities that are contradictory with his or her attitude or belief, a shift in attitude occurs that is congruent with his or her conduct. This mechanism of thought or attitude modification is the same one that causes changes in negative, irrational thoughts that contribute to depression and other mental illnesses.

2.1.1.1 Relevance to the Study

Cognitive dissonance is the reason people react to new cognitions in a certain way, and change their behaviors or attitudes (Foster and Misra, 2013). Individuals enjoy living in stability and when they are exposed to contradicting cognitions of their own preexisting beliefs or actions, they become distressed. This level of discomfort is known as cognitive dissonance, and individuals react to this in several different ways in an attempt to return to consistency. In public relations, the responsibility of the professional is to get a target audience to change their established attitudes or

behaviors. One of the main ways a public relations expert can get an audience to do something is through cognitive dissonance.

Cognitive dissonance has been applied to a variety of fields, but in public relations it is extremely useful and must be understood by any professional in this industry (Harmon-Jones and Mills, 2012). In line with this study, cognitive dissonance here could be visualized in when a CEO has two contradicting beliefs leading them to become distressed and motivated to reach consonance again. In order to reach stability a person will either change their beliefs, behaviors or add new beliefs. Telci (2011) postulates that according to cognitive dissonance, people will avoid anything that increases dissonance for them. People are most comfortable at a stable state and anything that disrupts this causes a great deal of stress, so avoidance or changes are made to get back to consonance.

While public relations experts face challenges with persuading an audience to do or feel things, it is essential for them to have a grasp on cognitive dissonance in order to be successful in this industry. In the case of this study, the as Cooper (2011) argues that people tend to seek consistency in their attitudes and perceptions, so this conflict causes feelings of unease or discomfort. This shows that the inconsistency between what the CEOs believe and how they behave motivates people to engage in actions that will help minimize feelings of discomfort. This is because as the theory suggest, the attempt to relieve this tension in different ways, such as by rejecting, explaining away, or avoiding new information.

2.1.1.2 Researcher's position

As per the theory, our minds have a natural tendency to avoid such confrontations and tensions by employing a variety of strategies to achieve harmony. When it comes to questions of self-image, Hinojosa, Gardner, Walker, Coglisser and Gullifor (2017) espouse the view that the dissonance will be at its peak. According to the hypothesis, people have a strong desire to maintain cognitive stability and reliability, which might become unreasonable at times. The mind will achieve harmony via altering one's attitude or behavior, rationalizing one's action, and altering one's various cognitions. Adding cognitions by reasoning our action by adding new cognition is another way to accomplish this task.

Given that communication's primary purpose is persuasion, it is simple to see why cognitive dissonance is so prevalent in the industry. Kenworthy, Miller, Collins, Read, and Earleywine (2011) further argues that the understanding how cognitive dissonance affects people could help communicators succeed in motivating others to action. Advertisers and marketers employ the influential strategies acquired from a study of the theory, but so do therapists, educators, and environmentalists.

The theory, on the other hand, is unable to predict how people will choose to alleviate their psychological distress when faced with a difficulty. Attempts to persuade individuals to adopt a different viewpoint or action might backfire by reinforcing a negative attitude. However, the benefits of persuading people to modify their habits are frequently well worth the effort. People who must choose between two desirable possibilities have a tendency to see the rejected possibility less favorably and the chosen option more favorably than they did before making their decision, a phenomenon known as the "free-choice paradigm".

Individuals have a tendency to defend themselves for this reason. Based on the theory, when an individual is unable to complete a task, they have a tendency to change their opinions. Because individuals cannot physically perceive cognitive dissonance, this theory is subjective. As a result, no objective assessments can be made. It has a vague quality to it because no one knows if individuals will act or think in accordance with the theory. Individual distinctions will always exist among people.

2.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.2.1 Public Relations

The formal practice of what is now commonly referred to as “public relations” dates to the early 20th century (Public Relations Society of America [PRSA], 2021). Since then, public relations has been defined in a variety of ways, with the definition often shifting in tandem with the changing roles of public relations and technological advancements. Early definitions focused on press agency and publicity, but more recent definitions include notions like “engagement” and “relationship building” (Seitel, 2017). The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) approved the following definition in 1982: “Public relations assists an organization and its publics in mutually adapting to each other.”

A more modern definition of public relations was drafted several decades later, a definition that still stands today:

Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics (PRSA, 2021).

In order to influence and frame the public view of a business, public relations is about influencing, engaging, and creating a connection with important stakeholders across multiple platforms (Smith,

2020). Public relations also includes anticipating, assessing, and interpreting public opinion, attitudes, and issues that could have a positive or negative impact on the organization's operations and strategies.

The position also includes advising management at all levels of the business on policy decisions, courses of action, and communications – including crisis communications – while keeping in mind the public implications and the firm's social and citizenship responsibilities (Botan and Hazleton, 2010). Continuously researching, conducting, and analyzing programs of action and communications in order to reach the informed public awareness required for the accomplishment of an organization's goals.

Marketing, financial, fundraising, employee, community, or government relations, and other initiatives are characteristics of these (Stacks, 2016). Other responsibilities include planning and implementing the organization's efforts to influence or modify public policy, as well as creating objectives, planning, budgeting, recruiting and training employees, and constructing facilities, to name a few.

2.2.2 Perception

Perception is the process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting information (Standifer, Evans, and Dong, 2010). Select stimuli travel through the perceptual filters, are organized into our existing structures and patterns, and are then interpreted depending on previous experiences. Although perception is primarily a cognitive and psychological activity, it has an impact on how we communicate with the people and objects around us. When we see something or someone we like, Hanadi and Aruna (2013) suggests that we react differently than when we see something we do not like. The perception process consists of three stages: selection, organization, and interpretation.

The initial stage of perception is selection, in which humans convert environmental stimuli into meaningful experiences. Çera, Belás and Strnad (2019) indicates that we are continually inundated with such a wide variety of information in our daily lives that we may meet these stimuli in a blink of an eye: the words we are hearing, a witness to an accident, the ticking of a clock, to mention a few. Because our universe encompasses everything, there are a plethora of impulses bombarding our sensory organs at the same time, waiting to be processed (Needle and Burns, 2010).

The organizing step of the perception process is the second stage. Following the collection of data from the outside world, we must arrange it in some way by identifying relevant patterns. This level of organization is completed by categorizing things or individuals, which is why some scholars refer to it as classification (Marfo-Yiadom and Ansong, 2012). The social and physical events or objects we experience at this stage of perception will have shape, color, texture, size, and other characteristics. The ability to organize and give coherence to our general knowledge about individuals and the social world allows us to provide typical patterns of conduct as well as the range of likely variance between categories of people and their distinctive acts and traits (Hinson, Owusu-Frimpong and Dasah, 2011).

The third step of perception is interpretation, which is the process of giving meaning to the stimuli that have been chosen. Standifer et al. (2010) adds that we try to make sense of the selected stimuli by attributing meanings to them after they have been categorized into structured and stable patterns. However, different people may process the same stimulus differently.

Culture provides us with a perceptual lens that profoundly influences how we interpret and assess what we receive from the outside world, resulting in such interpretation variations (Schroll-Machl, 2016). Almost everyone agrees on the objective component of meaning when confronted with a physical object or event, but what it means to each individual depends on their past experiences

and cultural background. People with various experiences and backgrounds will attribute diverse meanings to the same input, resulting in perception diversity.

2.2.2.1 Public Relations Contribution to Strategic Management

Rather than being viewed as strategic management, Grunig (2011) contends that public relations has become institutionalized as a symbolic-interpretive activity that businesses undertake to gain power over the public and hide the repercussions of their actions from the public, governments, and media. As a result, Khodarahmi (2009) makes the point that in some cases considered public relations as a communication role rather than a managerial profession.

“Strategic public relations” is a broad term that has recently gained traction among public relations professionals (Grunig and Grunig, 2000). The majority of debate about “strategic” public relations, on the other hand, revolves around the premise that public relations should be planned, managed by objectives, assessed, and linked to organizational goals (Oliver, 2008). Thus, “strategic” public relations refers to controlled public relations rather than public relations as a collection of communication strategies provided by communication technicians.

In their search for the role of public relations within that overall organizational function, Grunig and Repper (1992) discovered that a strategic approach to public relations is one of 14 characteristics of excellent public relations departments, and involvement in the organization’s overall strategic management is another. This means that strategic management is critical to effective public relations since it outlines how public relations should be conducted in order to contribute the most to an organization’s success.

Grunig (2011) postulates that a long-time proponent of public relations as strategic management, emphasizes that public relations is more than just a “message activity.” This exemplifies the

tension between what some academics and industry leaders feel public relations should be and how it is now practiced. This strategic management critique according to Robson and James (2013) may be skeptical of the value of formative research and planning. Instead, practice should only be concerned with the content generating process, according to the idea (Grunig and Grunig, 2000). This, however, is a misinterpretation of the strategic management process. If strategy is founded on formative research and planning, it is a strategic action (De Bussy, 2013). If they are not linked to well researched communication objectives, firms may be squandering public relations resources on activities that make little difference to the attainment of corporate goals.

2.2.2.2 Knowledge of CEOs on Public Relations Practitioners

A closer look at the distribution of communication tasks in each business helps explain the disparity between the increasing importance of communication for firms and the relatively slow growth of professional communication services. Stakeholder communication requests and media reports typically address a whole entity, such as a single corporation or brand (Zerfass and Viertmann, 2017). Organizations understand markets and stakeholder situations, as well as build visions and business models, to enact their contexts. As a result, the boardroom has primary responsibility for communication as well as all other strategic choices and operations.

CEOs must understand the distinction between public relations as a communications deliverable and public relations as a multi-faceted, mission-critical brand stewardship functionality whose stewards deserve a place at the table and respect for their duties as advisors (Invernizzi and Romenti, 2013). If the CEO does not recognize the vital and varied role of public relations, it is likely that it is not only underutilized, but also misused (Frandsen and Johansen, 2018). CEOs and

public relations professionals alike must coexist amicably as a successful collaborations require mutual respect and a clear knowledge of what public relations can and cannot do.

García (2015) is of the view that CEOs should be the ones in charge of both crafting the overall public relations strategy and delivering consistent messaging to constituents. CEOs connect with key stakeholders and make decisions about basic communication understanding and goals, as well as critical structures and resources. Many senior executives think of corporate communication in the traditional sense of information transmission because of their expertise in business administration (Zerfaß, 2009).

Companies send objective information to important stakeholders via media; this stimulus results in the transfer of meaning and is meant to elicit desirable reactions such as knowledge, attitude modification, and conduct. Zerfass and Sherzada (2015), on the other hand, argue that there are opposing viewpoints that emphasize the construction of reality, arguing that communication is a two-sided process, an interaction in which perceptions and orientations are shaped subjectively, but meaning and reality are socially constructed.

2.2.2.3 Constraints of Public Relations Contribution to Corporate Strategy

Many researchers have recognized the necessity for evaluation and measurement of public relations effectiveness, as many practitioners and academics have agreed that public relations plays a management role (Wright et al., 2009). In order to appreciate the constraints of public relations as it relates to its contribution to the formation of corporate strategy, the need to engage in evaluative activities cannot be left out (Feldman, 2020). Over the last few years, there have been numerous calls for the creation of evaluation methodologies in the general practice of public relations. Evaluation is frequently linked to public relations goals, which are derived from

corporate goals. Because they create relationships with their publics, effective organizations identify and realize acceptable goals (Jerman and Zavrnik, 2009).

The goal of public relations is to assist a company in achieving its business objectives (Austin and Pinkleton, 2015). The public relations operations is to establish quantifiable communication program objectives by gaining a comprehensive grasp of an organization's business goals. Managers of public relations will not be able to attain the company's effectiveness if they do not comprehend the company's aims (Grunig, 2020). The position of public relations managers in firms causes difficulties in tying public relations to corporate strategy because public relations managers do not participate in determining company objectives (Verčič and Grunig, 2000). Another impediment to measuring public relations and, as a result, linking it to a company's corporate strategy is its advantages, which are in most cases intangible. For this reason, it should be viewed as a measurement myth (Delahaye, 2003) and that other factors include a lack of competence in performing sophisticated public relations research (Sriramesh, 2004) and a lack of public relations budget among other things.

Finally, it is critical to connect public relations results to the organization's overall goals, objectives, and outcomes so that effective corporate strategy can be put together. To buttress this point, Coombs and Holladay (2019) indicates that it is critical to link public relations results to targeted business and organizational goals like increased market penetration, market share, sales, and profitability. This is because public relations contributes to organizational effectiveness when it helps reconcile the organization's aims with the expectations of its strategic constituencies (Grunig, 2011).

Even though the value of this contribution to the organization is monetary, building a strong long-term relationships with critical constituencies is how public relations contributes to overall

organization effectiveness rooting from efficient corporate strategies put in place (Leitch and Davenport, 2011). Other public relations performance indicators can be derived from the management of public relations so that senior public relations professionals participate in an organization's strategic decision-making processes and advise other managers on the public-relations implications of certain decisions (Grunig and Grunig, 2008).

2.3 EMPIRICAL REVIEWS

Even as White and Park's (2010) work on perception drew on public perception rather than relying on PR practitioners' perspectives Paskin (2013) indicate that the majority of current PR perception studies are focused on PR practitioners; senior management executives (Sterne, 2008); students, graduates, and academics and recruitment managers (Chin, Kho, Tey, Wong and Yew, 2017). Senior executives are key decision makers because supervisors of PR professionals, both in-house and as consultants, and opinion shapers tend to be members of an organizations' dominant coalitions.

In Perceptions of PR Report Murphy (2003) for instance, the observation was made that the role of PR had changed from being a tool for influencing media coverage to a strategic approach to engaging multiple stakeholders. Murphy (2003) further found that a proliferation of communication channels had created a demand for greater corporate transparency. The findings of the study validate the goal of this study which was to provide the basis for targeting activities to improve the competitiveness and overall performance of PR.

Murray and White's (2005) research on CEOs' views on reputation management used a similar approach where it found that PR had become mission critical for business that CEOs themselves took personal responsibility for the management of corporate reputation and that high caliber people working in PR were highly valued by CEOs. These findings are worthy of examination in

the New Zealand context. This is because organizations are big systems made up of different departments, which are known as subsystem (Hiscock, 2019). Each department such as marketing department, finance department etc. play their own role to ensure the operations of organization runs smoothly (Mehta and Xavier, 2009).

However, the importance of PR has been ignored as many organizations tend to merge it with other departments. DeSanto and Moss (2011) espouse the view that this can be attributed to organizational ignorance of the roles of PR efforts towards organizational efforts. This implies that these managers do not fully recognize the importance of PR in organizations. Due to the limited scope of operation of PR in organization, Chin et al. (2017) add that this is often replaced or encroached by other departments.

Again Abdullah and Antony (2012) points out that negative perceptions of managers towards the practice of PR could be attributed to the lack of formally recognized professionalism of PR within the organization. This is so because Wu and Taylor (2003) indicate that the managerial role and the concept of professionalism are closely related with each other. This is further elaborated by Wu and Baah-Boakye's (2014) findings that PR practitioners' positions on the organizational chart are very low although both management and practitioners viewed PR as a management function in their organizations. This is so because Chin et al. (2017) indicates that most of the practitioners are involved in the technician roles instead of the managerial roles.

2.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter focused on providing a comprehensive overview of prior research on the subject at hand. Scholarly publications, books, and other relevant sources were reviewed in this section. By appreciating the efforts of prior scholars, the chapter contributed in providing a theoretical foundation for the research.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the methodological approach this study adopted. This includes discussing the research design the study employed as well as the study population as well as sample among other salient topics.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design allows the researcher to adequately address the research questions and serves as a guide for choosing the appropriate data needed for the analysis, which is why the descriptive approach would be used to attempt evaluating public relations from the perspective of CEO from selected public sector agencies. Bengtsson (2016) clarifies that descriptive research design is a data collection method to address questions about the current status of subjects in the sample in which Hedman and Gimpel (2010) states that social science researchers are often favoured and have often been used.

The qualitative research process, as defined by Farrelly (2013), is an interpretive approach to research that can take the form of case studies, interviews, personal experience, and observations, and will be used in this study. Researchers that use qualitative methods try to explain phenomena in terms of the meanings that humans assign to them, which, according to Abbaszadeh (2012), proves positivism's essential assumptions by demonstrating that empirical data may be acquired that is not influenced by interpretation.

3.2 RESEARCH POPULATION

The procedure of picking units from a population of interest so that we can generalize our findings back to the population from which they were picked by analyzing the sample is known as sampling (Toloie-Eshlaghy et al., 2011). A population is a group of interest from which the researcher extracts potential study information (Upadhyay and Vikash Kumar, 2014), and sampling is the method of selecting units from a population of interest in order to generalize our findings equally back to the population from which they were selected by studying the sample (Henry, 2015). This implies that a population cannot be fully researched, so a sample is taken to provide the true representation of the population for which CEOs of public sector agencies would be the population of the study.

3.3 SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Gentles et al. (2015) states that sampling is the process used by a researcher to select persons, locations, or items to be tested in which the quality of a sample largely determines the quality of the research findings. Robinson (2014) also note that the sampling and selection of a site would be primarily determined by the research technique used by the researcher, while Guetterman (2015) add that individuals deemed to be most representative of the population as a whole are chosen in this form of sampling. In other terms, based on the researcher's decision, the sample is chosen.

The non-probability sampling approach will be used in this study, where the respondents will be intentionally sampled. In order to come up with the sample of the study, the purposive sampling approach as well will be adopted. The main objective of purposive sampling according to Emmel (2013) is to focus on unique features of an interesting population that will enable the researcher to address their research questions. The study therefore proceeded to collect data from four (4) CEOs of agencies under the Ministry of Transport of Ghana and the Chief Director of the ministry as

well. These included the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA), Metro Mass Transit Limited, Ghana Maritime Authority and Intercity STC Limited.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data acquisition is critical in all studies because no good study can be conducted without it, which is why it is critical to assess the most appropriate data collection methods (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam, 2013). Interviews will be conducted to acquire primary data from study respondents, allowing follow-up questions to be asked in response to the responses provided to the questions. The gathered data will then be analyzed using the thematic analysis technique, in which the researcher will study transcripts of qualitative data to discover common themes, subjects, ideas, and situational tendencies that appear regularly.

3.5 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

First of all, in order to ensure the reliability of the instrument, the researcher incorporated the following steps, and an attempt made to explain the results of this study in detail, as well as to peer review the data and its interpretation. The researcher hopes that in shaping this research as well as its data interpretation, the feedback would be useful. Furthermore, in order to ensure validation with participants, the interview sessions with the respondents were recorded and that the recorded data adequately reflect their accounts, for which purpose audio recorders were used as backup for the researcher revisit when in doubt, as well as working closely with the research supervisor at all stages of the research process for guidance.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

While research is a process of discovery that leads to new ideas that are effectively communicated, Murphy and Sage (2014) opine that this explains why ethics are so important in the research process. Researchers must deal with a variety of ethical dilemmas at various stages of the research

process Bickman and Rog (2008), who believe that ethical considerations might arise at any stage of the research process. The researcher will inform the respondents of the study's goals and get their consent before presenting the data using pseudonyms. Again, precautionary steps recommended by the Health Services in light of the COVID-19 pandemic will be upheld for which reason innovative means of collecting data such as video calls or conferences, would be explored if it is not possible to meet in person. Also, all secondary materials used in this study will be duly acknowledged and cited as well.

3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The methodology to be used in this study was discussed in this chapter. This includes explaining the study's research design, as well as the study's population and sample, among other significant topics.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of the study with an accompanying discussion. The primary purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions held by Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of public relations practice and in Ghana. In light of this, the researcher collected data from CEOs of selected agencies under the Ministry of Transport of Ghana. This is because the sample was considered the most suitable to help address the study's objective.

4.1 ANALYSIS OF DATA

Due to the researcher's keen interest to enforce respondents' anonymity, for the purpose of the analysis, the respondents are represented by pseudonyms: Respondent 1, Respondent 2, Respondent 3, Respondent 4, and Respondent 5. Using the thematic analysis technique, the data obtained was then analyzed, where the researcher reviewed the transcripts of the in-depth data to identify common themes, subjects, ideas and context trends that repeatedly emerge. The themes which emerged for this exploration is seen below in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Interview Themes

THEMES	CODES
1. CEOs Knowledge of PR practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge of PR• Significance of PR• Placement of PR
2. Contribution to strategic management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PR in top management• PR and strategic management

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PR effect on strategic management
3. PR constraints to corporate strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PR and corporate strategy • PR constraints • PR effect on corporate strategy

Source: Researcher's field data 2021

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The information this section sought covered the respondents' gender, educational qualifications and work experience. It was interesting to find that from all the respondents sampled, there was no female CEO. What this finding highlights is the gender disparity gap in the Ghanaian corporate leadership. Again, it was found that in terms of educational qualifications, all the respondents were highly placed as the minimum qualification was a master's degree. This as well suggest that CEOs are continuously shifting towards personal development. On the subject of work experience, it was found that the respondents had either rose through the ranks with an organization or explored several industries over a minimum of 15 years. This therefore has made them well exposed to the market or industry so that they came to the position with a lot of experience. Then again, because of the quality of the respondents academic qualifications and work experience, the positions they held could not be said to be outweighing.

4.3 KNOWLEDGE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

As the study was premised on the respondent's perception of public relations practice, it was more than necessary to ask the respondents of their understanding of public relations. R1 was of the view that

“PR is the mouthpiece of every organization which disseminated information that keeps the organization in a positive light”

This view was also supported by R4’s explanation describing public relations as *“...the department concerned with how the organization deals with stakeholders and information management”*. Though varying in the understanding of public relations, a recurring view pointed to the view that public relations involved communicating on behalf of an organization with and among stakeholders in hopes of maintaining a favorable image for the organization.

4.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

With an overview given on what public relations is about, this query gathered the respondents’ views on the significance of public relations to an organization. While R2 elaborate on the significance as

“PR is significant because it has its tentacles in almost all departments. For instance managing internal and external stakeholders which has something to with the Human Resource outfit among other things. This extends to cover addressing and working on feedback as well crisis.”

R3 was concise in noting that the significance was centered on fact that *“....it helps in the achievement of strategic goals of an organization”*. R1 as well noted that:

“...the initial task is to sell/market the organization to the public properly and this makes it important to every organization. This is because he/she is supposed to be well vested in the operations of the organization in order to move ahead policies.”

These views ultimately contributed to asserting that public relations is an essential function for organizations. This is because so far as communication and information dissemination was involved in any efforts taken, public relations could not be sidelined.

4.5 PLACEMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

On the placement of public relations affecting its practice, the respondents were quite divided in their view as R2 for instance sided with this school of thought,

“...most organizations have it placed at the management level, making it possible to make effective decisions that affect the image and reputation of an organization.”

R1 however shared a divergent opinion that

“...it does not matter because once the management understands the role of the PR, there will not be any clashes. While maintaining functional relationships with other departmental heads, the PR basically has to report to the head of the organization. That gives him/her more power because there is no red-tapes and bureaucracies.”

R5 as well was torn in between as the view was that *“Yes and no, depending on the organization”*.

While the popular sentiment was that public relations should be placed favorably in the organization, a caveat given was that the placement of public relations within the organization is influenced by factors such as the organizational size, type and even industry.

4.6 PUBLIC RELATIONS AND TOP MANAGEMENT

When asked if the respondents shared the view that public relations should be in top management, all the respondents subscribed to the view. R1 elaborated by indicating that:

“I share this view because either than that, how will the PR know what is going on? While organizational structure differs according organizational objectives and industry, the PR should be differentiated from the protocol because the role of the PR goes far beyond that. In the end, it boils down to the understanding of PR by the organizational heads.”

R2 as well noted that:

“...yes, it has to because the only way communication can leave the organization is through the PR. Due to the sophistication of the communication space, it has to be done by a professional. This because the organizational public are different defer requiring that the communication should also be different.”

While R3 was brief in their word of support “Yes, it should” as R5 did “..yes”, R4 indicated that “...in modern times, it is prudent to place it at the management level” however, there superseding view added argued that “...it can be placed under another department, however it should be given an explicit role”.

4.7 EXPECTATIONS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN MANAGEMENT

While the view has been shared and supported that public relations should be in top management, there were some expectations made of the public relations practitioner in the position. As a prerequisite, R1 indicated that:

“...every PR should be skilled in the art of communication, emotional intelligence, good counseling and public speaking skills as well as good persuasive skills. At the bark of all this is academic qualification”

This view was also buttressed by R5 who noted that the practitioner had to have:

“...good understanding of issues discussed and to be communicated, attention to detail, a good listener, must have a balanced view on issues”

Even though succinct, R3 expected that practitioner to be *“...circumspect in speaking, maturity and expertise”*.

4.8 PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFECT ON STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

In relation to strategic management, the respondents indicated that public relations could have an effect as well. R2 justified this assertion by indicating that:

“...because strategic management is about information, getting the right one out is significant. This therefore means that the PR has to be privy to and part of the strategic management because they are at the helm of pushing the organizational objectives to the public”

R1 as well described the effect as:

“...because strategic management involves developing the management of the organization and how well is positioned so that it is able to reach future objectives. This means that because information is relevant to this task, the PR cannot be neglected.”

This view was also emphasized by R3 by explaining that:

“Yes, in any strategic decision/action of the company, the PR plays a vital role in terms of communication. Once the PR understands the purpose of a policy, it is his/her responsibility to communicate accordingly”

What these assertions echo is that outside of the perception held about public relations, the premium place on the practice in relation to strategic management is high. Another side of this argument as points out that based on the expectation of the CEOs, it is possible to suggest that they do not view public relations as a communication technician role much more.

4.9 CONSTRAINTS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

As public relations continually develop within the corporate environment, there still are constraints which persists. When asked of such constraints which hamper public relations practice, R5 asserted that the practitioners “... *are most often than not relegated to the background until there is an issue with the media that needs solving*”. Also, R3 point the hiccups having to do with “...*logistics, lack of continuous training, lack of recognition of their role*”.

R2 also posited that:

“...there is this organizational block where most organizations do not see the PR as an effective tool especially in the public services. There has to be reorientation because there is this notion that PR is all about journalism even though PR has evolved to be more sophisticated.”

R1 as well espoused the view that:

“...PR is seen by some individuals as informant because of a lack of trust and understanding. This therefore results in preventing the PR from management meetings and constantly leaving him/her in the dark. Also, due to organizational culture, some organizations do not see PR as a part of management which is why PR is sometimes deprived of pertinent needs for it to operate effectively.”

Judging from the specificity with which the respondents were able to pinpoint the constraints, it supposes that these are common challenges the practice faces. This therefore means that in the organizations the respondents find themselves, they would have found these roadblocks and worked towards mitigating its effect on public relations practice.

4.10 IMPORTANCE OF CORPORATE STRATEGY

At this stage, corporate strategy was introduced into the discussion. The objective was to find out the importance of corporate strategy to an organization. In light of this, R2 highlighted that:

“...corporate strategy is the basis of the organization. This is because the corporate atmosphere keeps changing which is why corporate strategy is important because directs the future of an organization.”

This then presupposes that an organization which does not have a good corporate strategy is lost because R3 was insistent on the point that *“...it gives a sense of direction to the company. Who the target audience are, what is to be communicated etc”*. As alluded to earlier, R1 came into the argument with the opinion that *“corporate strategy is the heart of strategic management. This makes it a vital concept to underestimate. This is because it is like the roadmap which guides the organization to its future prospects.”*

From the data, the prevalent view is that corporate strategy is at the heart of every organizations existence. Because of this, every organization which did not have one or had an ineffective one cannot thrive in the corporate environment.

4.11 PUBLIC RELATIONS AND CORPORATE STRATEGY

With the establishment that corporate strategy is the lifeline of every organization, this enquiry was focused on ascertaining the role public relations could play in the formulation of corporate strategy. It was found that:

“...because PR has a hold of vast amount of information of the organization, it make it essential to the formulation process. Because of this, the PR has to be in good relations with all facets of the organization so that there is that atmosphere of corporate harmony...”

a view asserted by R1. R3 also explained that:

“...once there is a thorough understanding of the corporate strategy, it is incumbent on the PR to develop communication and other activities to contribute to the realization of the said strategy.”

This view also tied in to R5's position that:

“...it all comes to data because the PR undertakes customer surveys for the organization. PR goes to fish out what the customers want and need so that the organization can put in place objectives that can help satisfy these findings.”

Once again, public relations was given credence for that role it could play in the formulation of corporate strategy. This again catapults the practice into one which is very salient to every organization which operates with corporate sustainability and longevity in mind.

4.12 CONSTRAINTS TO CORPORATE STRATEGY

On the challenges public relations could face in its efforts to aid the formulation of corporate strategy, some of the traditional constraints of the practice were emphasized. R4 for instance indicated that “...*opinions of PR persons are not taken into consideration, rather, in some organizations decision are made and then forced on them to go through with*”. R5 was also of the view that:

“...while there are departments and managers who are of the opinion that, PR is just a communicator and sometimes even tell PR practitioners what to communicate, I do not share that view. This is serious because in some instances, some managers and other departments think of themselves better than PR practitioners which has led to reduction in expected budgetary projects, logistics among other and I think that is not proper...”

R3 as well was of the opinion that:

“...even though I may not fall victim to this, there is the issue of recognition. If the top-level management does not recognize the PR related activities, it becomes a complete failure for PR to be a part of the strategic direction. The other is the absence of the basic resources for the PR to function effectively. And also, the caliber of person functioning as the PR”

While these view were linked to the challenges faced by the practice as a whole, R2 however approached the argument from a different angle arguing that:

“...because data is important, if the PR airs in the data collection, it means that the corporate strategy will be affected as well and this makes it a herculean task.

Also, a failure here affects the overall organizational growth.”

4.13 RESEARCHER’S OPINION

The discussion under this section addresses the objectives set by the study. This discussion is however contrasted with arguments made literature. This therefore implies that some of the findings could affirm or debunk arguments held by other studies.

4.13.1 Perception of CEOs on the Practice of Public Relations

Overall, it was found that the perception held of public relations was in the positive light. Even though there were constraints pointed out which hinders public relations practice, it was found that public relations was an essential part of the organization. In terms of strategic management, it was adjudged that public relations was vital which was the same for corporate strategy formulation. While public relations placement was said to affect its practice with organizations, it is worthy of note that it was suggested that the size, kind and industry of the organization has influence in where it was placed. This gives Zerfaß’s (2009) observation that many senior executives think of corporate communication in the traditional sense of information transmission because of their expertise in business administration. That notwithstanding, the view was championed that public relations be part of top management so that it can be more effective. This is because as part of the dominant coalition, the public relations is involved in every decision as their views sought as well before decision are made. In the ideal situation where this is the case, the organization can work towards attaining its organizational objectives without much push-back for internal and external stakeholders.

4.13.2 Knowledge of CEOs on Public Relations Practitioners in the Various Organizations

The overwhelming view was that public relations had to do with information dissemination and management as well as stakeholder relations. This to an extent ties into PRSA (2021) assertion that public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics. With these views being championed by all respondents, it can be concluded that the respondents had a fair idea of what public relations does. This is because there were certain expectations made of the public relations practitioner for instance if they have to be part of top management of an organization.

Again, these expectations were found to be justifiable because the significance the respondents attributed to public relations for the organization was enormous. This is anchored on the fact that public relations plays vital roles in affecting strategic management as well as the formulation of an organizational corporate strategy. The reason for this is that if the CEO does not realize the critical and diverse role of public relations, it is very probable that it is not only underutilized, but also misunderstood (Frandsen and Johansen, 2018). CEOs and public relations experts must get along because successful collaborations necessitate mutual respect and an understanding of what public relations can and cannot do. It is for this reason that the suggestion that public relations be part of top management makes sense.

4.13.3 CEOs' View of Public Relations Contribution to Strategic Management

On strategic management, public relations was found to be a critical function especially if it was part of top management. Due to this level of premium place on public relations, certain expectations are made of the position holder. A worrying reality however is seen in how instead of being perceived as strategic management, Grunig (2011) intimates that public relations has become institutionalized as a symbolic-interpretive activity that organizations engage in to assert

dominance over the public and hide the consequences of their activities from the public, governments, and media.

That notwithstanding, some of these expectations as alluded to include attention to detail and being circumspect, open-minded as well as harbouring a good amount of emotional intelligence. With these skillsets, public relations practitioners can then contribute effectively to issue relating to strategic management as Oliver (2008) emphasizes, in that public relations should be planned, managed by objectives, assessed, and linked to organizational goals. This is because strategic management is about information, getting the right one out is significant. This therefore means that the public relations has to be privy to and part of the strategic management because they are at the helm of pushing the organizational objectives to the public. This means that because information is relevant to this task, the public relations cannot be neglected.

4.13.4 Constraints of Public Relations Contribution to Corporate Strategy

While it was found that public relations was constrained in diverse ways in organizations, the narration of these constraints painted a gloomy picture for public relations practice as it was perceived to be widespread. This finding was found to be consistent with Wright et al.'s (2009) view that many scholars have acknowledged the need for public relations effectiveness evaluation and measurement, and many practitioners and academics agree that public relations plays a managerial role. This is because most of the constraints such as organizational block or neglect was among the popular opinions on the issue. Aside organizational culture which results in a lack of logistics, lack of recognition of their role, lack of continuous training on the part of the practitioners was also found to be a contributing factor to the challenges face by the practice.

In relation to corporate strategy, it was found that because public relations has a hold of vast amount of information of the organization, it make it essential to the formulation process. Further,

it was observed that once there is a thorough understanding of the corporate strategy, it is incumbent on the public relations to develop communication and other activities to contribute to the realization of the said strategy. Basing on Verčič and Grunig's (2000) argument that the position of public relations managers in firms causes difficulties in tying public relations to corporate strategy because public relations managers do not participate in determining company objectives, it adds to the voice championing the practice to be a part of the dominant coalition.

However, even with these significance, because of the long standing constraints public relations faces in organizations, there are remnants of it affecting the practice when it comes to inputs to corporate strategy as well. If the top-level management does not recognize the public relations related activities, it becomes a complete failure for public relations to be a part of the strategic direction. This is because the goal of public relations is to assist a company in achieving its business objectives as Austin and Pinkleton (2015) points out. Also, due to the critical nature of data, if the public relations airs in the data collection, it means that the corporate strategy will be affected as well and this makes it a staggering task. The critical nature of this scenario is illuminated by Leitch and Davenport's (2011) view that building a strong long-term relationships with critical constituencies is how public relations contributes to overall organization effectiveness rooting from efficient corporate strategies put in place. This is why the absence of the basic resources for the public relations is critical because it is important in order to function effectively. This is because public relations contributes to organizational effectiveness when it helps reconcile the organization's aims with the expectations of its strategic constituencies (Grunig, 2011).

4.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the findings of the study with an accompanying discussion. The primary objective of the study was to explore the perceptions held by CEOs of public relations practice and

in Ghana. The researcher collected data from CEOs of selected agencies under the Ministry of Transport of Ghana. This was because the sample was considered the most suitable to help address the study's objective.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarizes some of the study's significant findings and draws conclusions based on the study's various objectives. It includes some helpful recommendations that can assist organizations as well as corporate leadership improve on their public relations practice.

5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The aim of the study was to explore the perceptions held by CEOs of public relations practice and in Ghana. In doing so, the objectives set included finding out the CEOs knowledge of public relations, ascertain the CEOs' view of public relations contribution to strategic management and to learn the constraints of public relations contribution to corporate strategy. Through a qualitative research approach, the study collect data from five (5) CEOs of selected agencies under the Ministry of Transport of Ghana through in-depth interviews. It was found that the perception held of public relations was in the positive light. Further, the findings suggest that public relations has to do with information dissemination and management as well as stakeholder relations. On strategic management, public relations was found to be a critical function especially if it was part of top management. Also, due to the diverse constraints face by public relations in organizations, it hampered its contribution to corporate strategy.

5.2 CONCLUSION

CEOs must comprehend the difference between public relations as a communications deliverable and public relations as a multi-faceted, mission-critical brand stewardship functionality whose stewards deserve a seat at the table and respect for their obligations as advisors. This is because if

the CEO does not appreciate the critical and diverse role of public relations, it is very probable that it will be neglected and even exploited. Because CEOs interact with key stakeholders and make decisions regarding basic communication understanding and goals, as well as critical structures and resources, the public relations role should be seen as a complement to their efforts. This is because stakeholder relations, for instance, entails some technicalities.

Again, while the goal of public relations is to assist a company in achieving its business objectives, lack of recognition and support hinders its efforts. This means that managers of public relations will not be able to attain the company's effectiveness if they do not comprehend the company's aims. It is for this reason that there has to be some level of rethinking so that public relations is given the necessary support so that it can contribute to salient issues such as strategic management and corporate strategy formulation.

5.3 RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that CEOs and corporate leadership in Ghana should recognize and support public relations practice. With regards to policy, the study recommends that the Institute of Public Relations Ghana to speed up its efforts to pass a bill that will make public relations a regulated profession. This is because, after practitioners have received certification, they will have a solid understanding of the fundamentals of the discipline, making it a win-win situation for both organizations and individuals that engage them. Finally, because the researcher limited the study to only two institutions, it is urged that any future research on this topic broaden the sample size and, if necessary, use additional approaches.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Dear Respondents,

I am a graduate student of the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ) undertaking an academic study on the topic “PERCEPTION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE AMONG SELECTED CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS (CEO’S) IN GHANA”.

The researcher will be grateful if you assist by granting an interview on the following sub-themes. This exercise is strictly for academic purposes hence, the researcher guarantees that every information provided will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Please note that if you feel uncomfortable at any point, you can inform the researcher of your inability to continue.

Section A: Demographic Data

5. What is your gender?
6. What is/are your educational qualification(s)?
7. What is your work experience?

Section B: Knowledge of CEOs on PR practitioners in the various firms

8. In your view, what is PR?
9. What is the significance of PR to organizations?
10. Does the placement of PR affect its practice?

Section C: CEOs' view of PR contribution to strategic management

11. What is your opinion on the view that PR should be part of top management in an organization?
12. What skill-set/capabilities do you expect the PR practitioner to bring to management?
13. How does PR affect to strategic management?

Section D: Constraints of PR contribution to corporate strategy in Ghana

14. What do you suppose are some of the constraints of PR in organizations?
15. How important is corporate strategy to an organization?
16. How can PR contribute to the formulation of corporate strategy?
17. How are some of the constraints of PR's contribution to corporate strategy?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME