



**THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN CREATING UNDERSTANDING
OF THE WORK OF PUBLIC REGULATORY INSTITUTIONS: A CASE
STUDY OF THE PUBLIC UTILITIES REGULATORY COMMISSION
(PURC)**

BY

EMMANUEL AGBESI FOLI

MASPRM23053

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS
AND COMMUNICATION (UniMAC-IJ) IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF ARTS IN
STRATEGIC PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGEMENT.**

JANUARY 2025

DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my original research and that no part of it has been presented for another Degree at this University or elsewhere. Information from all other sources have been duly acknowledged by me with references cited, duly acknowledged.

CANDIDATE'S SIGNATURE:  DATE: 29/01/25

Emmanuel Agbesi Foli.

CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this dissertation was duly supervised by me in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of dissertations, laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication.

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE:  DATE: 29/01/25

Dr. Mrs. Mavis Essandoh

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work first of all, to God Almighty for bringing me this far and for seeing me through this program, giving me good health, strength and the ability to complete this work. An exceptional and heartwarming dedication goes to my elder brother, Eugene who assumed a fatherly role in our lives since the passing of our father 26 years ago. I thank him for always being there for us and for dedicating his resources, time and energy to our success. A big thanks to you Big Bro, your kind is rare. I again dedicate this work to my lovely wife, Patience and my beautiful children, Jasmine and Eugene for their patience when I inadvertently denied the family of my presence while attending lectures on weekends. Thanks for your understanding.

My thanks also go to my mother Gertrude and my younger brother Michael for their immense help and support to ensure I completed the course successfully.

A supportive family is indeed everything and I am extremely blessed to have you all around me.

May the Lord God Almighty bless us all.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank God Almighty for giving me good health, travelling mercies and making this work a success.

May Your Name be glorified forever, Lord!

I also wish to express my highest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Mrs. Mavis Essandoh, who despite her busy schedule, made time to supervise my work, making priceless contributions and corrections to make this work complete. Madam was always available for me. Mom, I am most grateful; without you, this work would have been very meaningless. Thank you once again.

Again, my thanks go to the management and staff of PURC, most especially, the Director – Regional Operations and Consumer Services (ROCS), Alhaji Jabaru Abukari; the Volta Regional Manager, Mr.

Philip Agbezudor; Head – Corporate Affairs, Mr. Robert Abdulai Aziz; Upper East Regional Manager, Mr. Seth Kponyo; Central Regional Manager, Madam Kesewaa Apenteng-Addo and Deputy Head – Corporate Affairs, Mr. Charles Jojo Entsi for providing me with the necessary assistance and information needed for this research.

Not forgetting Kwabena Danso Addo of the Department of Public Relations, UniMAC for tracking all the corrections for me and Mr. Emmanuel Atsu Zevor who willingly offered me his laptop computer to use for the entire duration of the programme.

To my family and friends, may God bless each and every one of you for all the support.

Thank you and may God bless all of us.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of Public Relations (PR) in enhancing public understanding of the work of regulatory institutions, with a focus on the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) of Ghana. Regulatory bodies like PURC are essential in overseeing public utilities such as electricity and water but their roles and decisions are often misunderstood by the public. Thus, the study explores how effective PR strategies can bridge this communication gap, fostering transparency, accountability and public trust. Its main objective is to explore how best the PURC can use PR in obtaining public understanding of its regulatory work. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research analysed PURC's PR practices, including media engagement, public outreach and digital communication tools to assess their impact on public perception and understanding of regulatory activities. The study sampled views from 10 respondents for the face-to-face interview while 115 consumers responded to the questionnaire. In all, 125 responses were received from consumers, staff of the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG), the Ghana Water Limited (GWL) and the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC). In selecting the samples, both purposive and stratified random sampling techniques were employed to effectively capture a representative and insightful sample. The key findings highlight several critical areas where PURC's communications are working well and others where there is considerable room for improvement. Public support for some of the strategies, challenges that PURC has been facing in communicating with its stakeholders and opportunities to engage with its diverse stakeholders came out quite clearly from both quantitative data generated through surveys, as well as qualitative insights derived from interviews conducted in this study.

TABLE OF CONTENT

Contents

CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR	i
DEDICATION	
ii ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	
iii	ABSTRACT
.....	iv TABLE OF
CONTENT	v
OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS	viii
CHAPTER ONE	1
1.0 Introduction	
1	
1.1 Background and context of the Study	1
1.1.1 The Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC)	
2	
1.1.2 Functions of the PURC	3
Figure 1: Position of PURC Ghana in the energy	6
1.1.3 The Public Relations (Research and Corporate Affairs) Directorate of the PURC	6
Fig 2: Organisational Structure of the PURC, showing the position of the RCA (PR) Directorate....	7
1.2 Statement of Research Problem and Gaps	10
1.3 Significance of the Study	11
1.4 Research Objectives	13
1.5 Specific Objectives	13
1.6 Research Questions	13
1.8 Scope of the Study	15
1.9 Organisation of the Study	16
1.10 Chapter Summary	16
CHAPTER TWO	17
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	17
2.0 Introduction	
17	
2.1 Conceptual Review	17
2.1.1 Public Relations (PR)	17
2.1.2 Public Regulatory Institutions	19
2.2 Empirical Review	21
2.2.1 The Effectiveness of Existing Public Relations Strategies	21
2.2.2 The Current Level of Public Awareness and knowledge regarding the Functions of the PURC	

.....	27
2.2.3 Public Relations Tactics and tools that can Enhance Public Understanding and Engagement	33
2.2.4 The Role of Transparency in Fostering Public Trust	38
2.3 Theoretical Framework	43
2.3.1 Excellence Theory of Public Relations	43
2.3.2 The Systems Theory	45
2.4 Relevance of the theories to the Study	46
2.4.1 The Relevance of the Excellence Theory to the Study	46
2.5 Chapter Summary	50
CHAPTER THREE	51
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	51
3.0 Chapter Overview	51
3.1 General Definition/Preamble of Research Methodology	51
3.2 Methods used by previous researchers on the role of Public Relations in Creating understanding of the work of Public Regulatory Institutions.	52
3.3 Proposed Methodologies for Present Studies	54
3.3.1 Mixed-Method	54
3.3.2 Quantitative Research Method	55
3.3.3 Qualitative Research Method	56
3.4 Population	56
3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques	58
3.6 Data Collection Methods	60
3.7 Data Analysis Techniques	62
3.8 Ethical Considerations	63
3.9 Chapter Summary	64
CHAPTER FOUR	65
PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION	65
4.0 Introduction	65
4.1 Research Findings	65
4.1.1 Gender	65
4.1.2 Age	66
4.1.3 Educational Level	67
4.1.4 Employment Status	68

4.1.5 Previous Interactions With PURC	69
4.1.6 Effectiveness of Existing Public Relations Strategies at PURC	70
4.1.7 Public Awareness and Knowledge of the PURC’S Functions	71
4.2 Qualitative Findings	74
4.2.1 The Effectiveness of Existing Public Relations Strategies Employed by the PURC in Communicating its Regulatory Activities to the General Public.	74
4.2.1.1 Effectiveness of Public Relations Strategies	74
4.2.1.2 Communication Channels Used	75
4.2.1.3 Challenges in Understanding PURC’S Messages	76
4.2.2 The Current Level of Public Awareness and Knowledge Regarding the functions of the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) in Ghana.	77
4.2.2.1 Public Awareness of PURC'S Functions	77
4.2.3 New Public Relations Tactics and Tools that can Enhance Public Understanding and Engagement with the PURC'S Role and Responsibilities in Regulating Utilities in Ghana.	77
4.2.3.1 Improvements to PR Strategies	77
4.2.3.2 Feedback Mechanisms	78
4.2.3.3 Target Audience Engagement	79
4.2.3.4 Social Media's Role in Public Relations	79
4.2.3.5 Use of Alternative Communication Tools	80
4.3 Discussions	81
4.3.1 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Insights	81
4.3.2 Effectiveness of Current Strategies	83
4.3.3 Addressing Communication Challenges	85
4.3.4 Proposing Actionable Strategies	87
4.3.5 Strategic Integration and Monitoring	90
4.4 Chapter Summary	92
CHAPTER FIVE	94
SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION	94
5.0 Introduction	94
5.1 Summary of some major findings made by the Study	94
5.2 Answering of research questions by the Study	95
5.3 Limitations of the Study	96

5.4 How the study contributed to Knowledge	97
5.5 Recommendations	97
5.5.1 Policy Recommendations	97
5.5.2 Recommendations for Further Research	98
5.6 Conclusion	99
BIBLIOGRAPHY	
100 APPENDIX A	120
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PURC PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS	120
APPENDIX B	125
QUESTIONNAIRE	125

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

The study defines the under-listed terms as follows:

Communication: The exchange of information by speaking, writing or using some other medium.

Consumer: A person who uses electricity and water.

Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG): The company responsible for electricity power distribution in Ghana.

Executive Secretary (ES): The Administrative Head of the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC).

Feedback: Information about reactions to a decision/product or performance

Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL): The company responsible for processing and

distributing treated water in Ghana.

Government: the system or group of people in charge of an organized community, often a state.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): is an intergovernmental economic organisation with 36 member countries, founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade.

Publics: An organisation's internal and external stakeholders

Public Institution: Any entity that is controlled by the government

Public Relations: The practice of managing and disseminating information from an individual or an organization to the public to influence their perception.

Public Relations Society of America (PRSA): An internal organisation/association for public relations professionals.

Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC): An independent body established under the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission Act 1997 (Act 538), to regulate and oversee the provision of utility services in Ghana.

Regulation: a rule or directive made and maintained by an authorised body.

Regulatory Institution: An *independent body established by a legislative act* to set standards in a specific field of activity or operations.

Tariffs: Electricity and water rates

2-Way Symmetrical Communication: A dialogue between an organization and its publics in which all are equally likely to influence each other, to change their opinions and to make decisions beneficial for all.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

This is the introductory chapter of the study. The chapter discusses the background and context of the study, the statement of research problem, research objectives and research questions, the scope of the study, the significance of the study and the organisation of the study.

1.1 Background and context of the Study

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 1995) defines regulation as the legal tools used by institutions of government at all levels to impose duties or limitations on the actions of the private sector. Utilities are delicate, necessary public services that are subject to a special public franchise requirement (Aryeetey & Ahene, 2005). Aryeetey and Ahene (2005), further states that these service providers are required to provide a public service, have an exclusive franchise through licensing, are required to operate without discrimination, and typically have natural monopolistic tendencies. When utilities possess these qualities, they typically function in a situation of market failure, where producers can misuse their market dominance and customers are unable to choose differently because of a lack of competition and knowledge (Aryeetey & Ahene, 2005).

Public Relations, as described by Grandunig and Hunt (1984), plays a crucial role in an organization by fostering mutually beneficial relationships between the organization and its publics. It involves strategic communication efforts to manage and maintain positive interactions with various stakeholders, including customers, employees, investors and the community. Public Relations aim to build trust, credibility, and goodwill for the organization

by effectively communicating its values, goals, and actions to the public. Grunig and Hunt (1984) also assert that Public Relations helps organizations navigate crises, handle media relations, and shape public perceptions through planned communication strategies. Grunig and Hunt (1984) also emphasize that Public Relations serve as a bridge between the organization and its publics, facilitating two-way communication and feedback mechanisms. By engaging in dialogue with stakeholders, Public Relations professionals gather insights, address concerns, and tailor communication strategies to meet the needs and expectations of different publics; this interactive approach helps organizations adapt to changing environments, build strong relationships, and enhance their reputation (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 1984). Public Relations, as outlined by Grunig and Hunt (1984), is integral to organizational success by managing relationships, communication, and reputation effectively. It is in view of this position by Grunig and Hunt (1984), that this paper seeks to understand the role of Public Relations in creating understanding of the work of public regulatory institutions, and for the purpose of this study, the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission Ghana (PURC) of Ghana.

1.1.1 The Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC)

The Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) was established in October 1997 under the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission Act, 1997 (Act 538) as a multi-sector regulator to regulate the provision of electricity and water utility services(<https://www.purc.com.gh/who-we-are>[accessed on 29-04-2024]). The establishment of the Commission was part of the Government of Ghana's utility sector reform process. By virtue of the Energy Commission Act, 1997 (Act 541) PURC also regulates the transportation of natural gas services (<https://www.purc.com.gh/who-we-are>) [accessed on 29-04-2024].

Under Section 4 of Act 538, PURC is an independent body and is not subject to the control of any authority in the performance of its functions. The Commission however submits annual operational and financial reports to Parliament. The Office of the President also exercises some administrative oversight for the Commission. PURC is made up of nine Commissioners including a Chairman, an Executive Secretary, an institutional representative each for labour, industry and domestic consumers, as well as 4 experts in various aspects of the Commission's work. Commissioners are appointed by the President in consultation with the Council of State for renewable five-year terms. The Commission is supported by a Secretariat headed by the Executive Secretary (<https://www.purc.com.gh/who-we-are> [accessed on 29-04-2024]).

The Commission operates independently to oversee the activities of utility service providers, promote competition, and safeguard the interests of both service providers and consumers. Over the years, the PURC has played a significant role in regulating the utility sector in Ghana, contributing to the development and efficiency of utility services in the country. (Ohemeng & Ayee, 2016).

1.1.2 Functions of the PURC

The Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) plays a pivotal role in regulating essential utility services in Ghana. Established as a multi-sector regulatory body, the PURC's core mandate is to balance the interests of consumers and utility service providers. One of its primary functions is to protect the rights and interests of consumers, ensuring that they receive reliable and affordable utility services. At the same time, the PURC also safeguards the interests of service providers, creating a regulatory environment where they can operate efficiently while meeting service delivery standards (Ohemeng & Ayee, 2016). This delicate

balancing act is crucial in ensuring that utility services such as water, electricity and natural gas are delivered in a sustainable manner that benefits all stakeholders.

A central responsibility of the PURC is setting guidelines for utility rates. This involves establishing a fair and transparent process for determining the cost of services such as water and electricity (Appiah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2020). Utility providers submit their proposals for price adjustments, which the PURC reviews based on several factors including cost structures, inflation and the need to ensure service sustainability. After a thorough analysis, the PURC approves the final rates, ensuring that they are not only fair to consumers but also allow service providers to cover operational costs and invest in infrastructure (Akakpo, 2020). By doing so, the PURC helps to maintain a balance between affordability for consumers and the financial viability of utility providers.

In addition to setting rates, the PURC is responsible for monitoring service standards across the utility sector. This involves establishing benchmarks for the quality-of-service delivery and ensuring that utility companies adhere to these standards (Boateng, 2018). Regular monitoring ensures that service providers meet the performance criteria necessary for providing reliable and efficient services. The PURC also has the authority to impose penalties on providers who fail to meet these standards, ensuring accountability and encouraging continuous improvement in service delivery.

Another key function of the PURC is to promote fair competition within the utility sector. In markets where monopolistic tendencies are prevalent, the PURC plays a critical role in ensuring that no single provider dominates the market to the detriment of consumers (Ohemeng & Ayee, 2016). By encouraging competition, the Commission fosters an environment where service providers are incentivized to improve efficiency, innovate and

offer better services. This competition ultimately benefits consumers, who have access to better services at competitive prices.

The PURC also serves as an impartial arbiter in disputes between consumers and utility providers. It investigates complaints lodged by consumers regarding service quality, billing disputes or any other issues related to utility services (Appiah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2020). The Commission conducts investigations, mediates between the parties involved, and provides resolutions to ensure that complaints are handled fairly and expeditiously. This role not only protects consumers but also helps service providers maintain good customer relations and accountability.

Moreover, the PURC provides advice to any person or authority on matters related to utilities. This advisory role is crucial in shaping policy decisions and legislative frameworks that govern the utility sector in Ghana. By offering expert insights and recommendations, the PURC ensures that policies are well-informed and aligned with the needs of both consumers and service providers (Akakpo, 2020). This advisory function helps create a robust regulatory framework that supports the sustainable development of the utility sector.

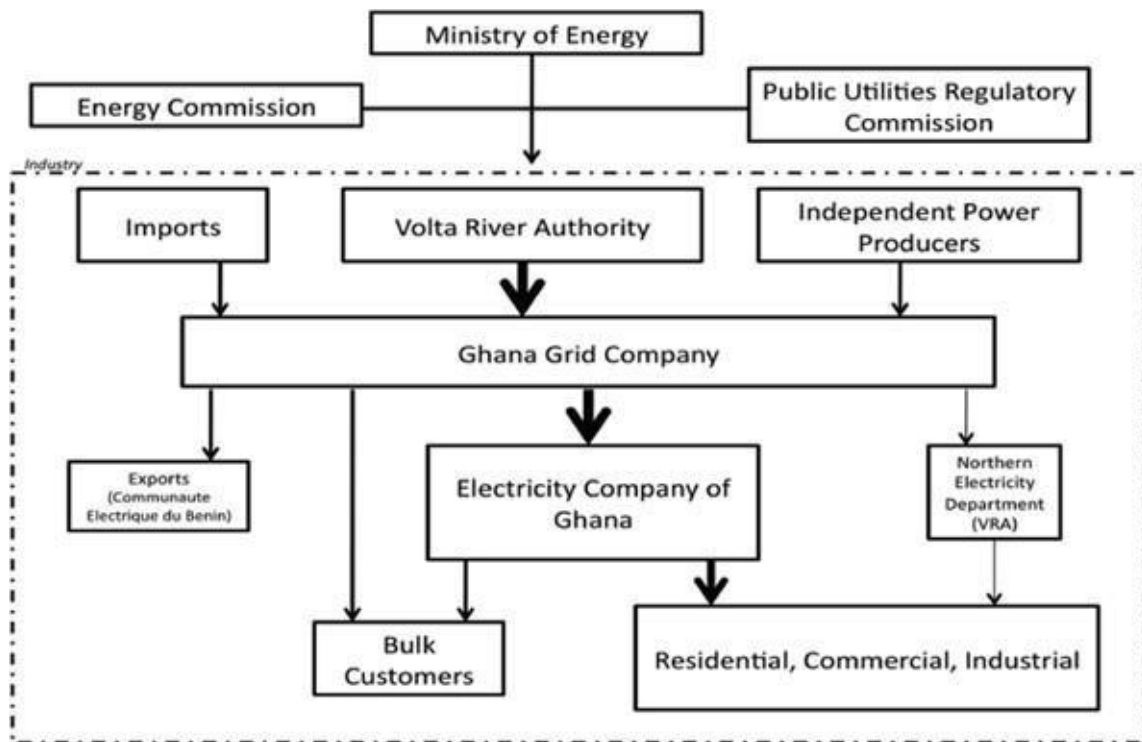


Figure 1: Position of PURC Ghana in the energy sector *Source: Google Photos, 2024.*

1.1.3 The Public Relations (Research and Corporate Affairs) Directorate of the PURC

The Public Relations (also known as Research and Corporate Affairs) Directorate of the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) in Ghana was established in 1997 to enhance communication and engagement between the commission, utility service providers, and the public. The formation of the PR Directorate was a strategic move by the PURC to improve transparency, disseminate information effectively, and manage the reputation of the commission. By establishing a dedicated PR unit, the PURC aimed to build positive relationships, address public concerns, and promote understanding of its regulatory activities within the utility sector. Since its inception, the PR Directorate of the PURC has played a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions, fostering dialogue, and promoting awareness of the Commission's functions and initiatives. Through various communication strategies and campaigns, the PR Directorate has worked to educate stakeholders, enhance stakeholder engagement, and uphold the commission's commitment to fair regulation and consumer

protection. The establishment of the PR Directorate underscores the PURC's dedication to open communication, accountability, and building trust with the public and key stakeholders in the utility sector in Ghana.

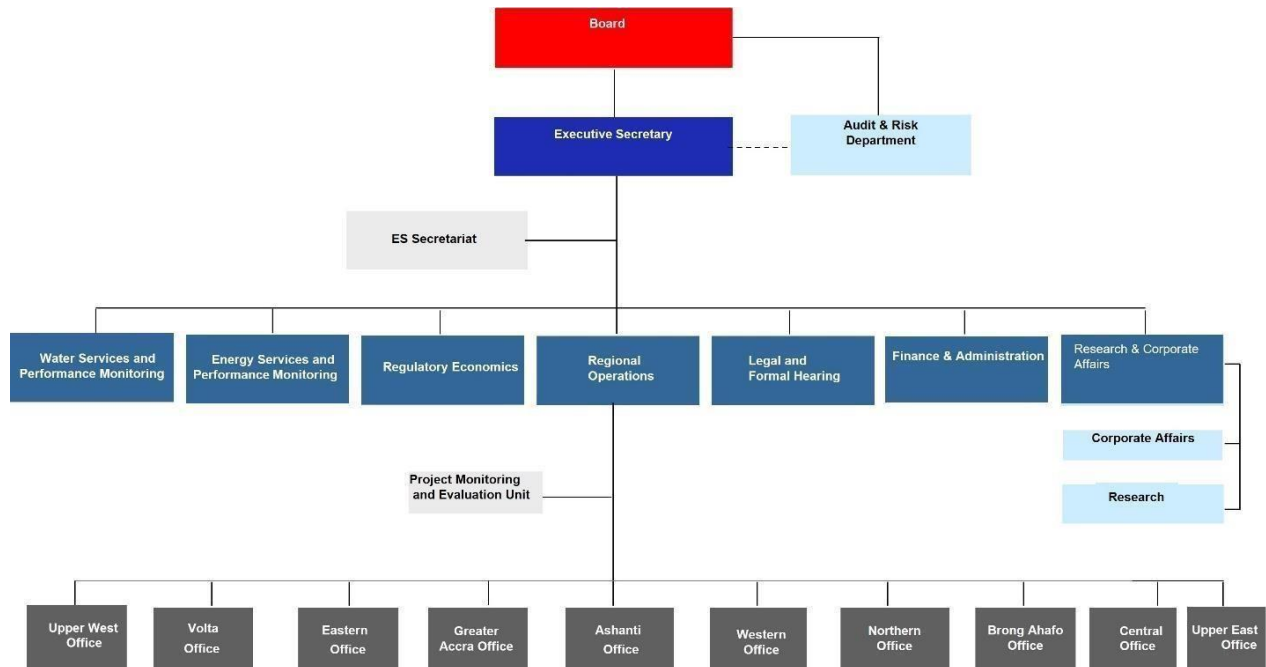


Fig 2: Organisational Structure of the PURC, showing the position of the RCA (PR)

Directorate

The Public Relations Directorate of the PURC Ghana is typically considered to be part of the dominant coalition within the organization. As a key communication function, the PR Directorate plays a crucial role in shaping the public image of the commission, influencing stakeholders' perceptions, and maintaining positive relationships with various parties. Through its involvement in strategic decision-making processes, the PR Directorate contributes to the formulation of communication strategies, policies, and initiatives, aligning the Commission's messages with its overall goals and objectives. This integration into the dominant coalition allows the PR Directorate to have a significant impact on the commission's reputation, public engagement, and communication effectiveness.

Public Relations play a critical role in creating an understanding of the work of public regulatory institutions by acting as a communication bridge between these institutions and the public (Grunig & Grunig, 2011). As posited by Grunig and Grunig (2011), through strategic communication tactics, public relations help to demystify the functions and responsibilities of regulatory bodies, making their activities more transparent and accessible to the public. By effectively communicating the purpose, regulations, and impact of these institutions, public relations fosters trust, credibility, and cooperation between regulatory bodies and the community they serve (Grunig & Grunig, 2011). This transparency not only enhances public awareness but also promotes compliance and engagement with regulatory processes, ultimately contributing to a more informed and participatory society (Grunig & Grunig, 2011).

Irrespective of the many efforts put in place by the Commission to enable the general public to understand its position and function in the energy sector, there are numerous factors that could hinder the attainment of this goal (Ohemeng & Ayee, 2016). One key factor is the complexity of the regulatory processes and technical aspects involved in regulating utility services such as water and electricity. The intricacies of pricing mechanisms, quality standards, and monitoring procedures may be challenging for the average person to grasp without specialized knowledge or explanation (Appiah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2020). Additionally, limited awareness and outreach efforts by the PURC to educate the public about its functions and responsibilities could contribute to a lack of understanding among the general population. Without clear and accessible communication channels, the public may struggle to comprehend the vital role the PURC plays in ensuring fair pricing, quality service delivery, and consumer protection in the utility sector.

Furthermore, the perceived distance or disconnect between regulatory bodies such as the

PURC and the everyday lives of the public could also hinder public understanding. The indirect nature of the PURC's impact on utility services, coupled with a lack of direct interaction with consumers, may lead to a sense of detachment or indifference towards the commission's activities. Without tangible or visible outcomes directly attributed to the PURC's interventions, the public may overlook or underestimate the significance of the Commission's regulatory influence in shaping the utility sector (Appiah & AmponsahTawiah, 2020).

Public Relations (PR) plays a vital role in bridging the communication gap between an organization and its publics, thereby influencing the organization's reputation and relationships (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Public Relations facilitates a two-way flow of information, enabling organizations to listen to their publics' concerns, address their needs, and build trust (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Effective Public Relations strategies can help organizations to craft and disseminate messages that resonate with their target audiences, foster a positive image, and enhance their reputation (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). Public Relations can also help organizations to navigate crises, manage conflicts, and maintain transparency, which is essential for building and maintaining strong relationships with their publics (Coombs, 2012).

However, taking the stance of Grunig and Grunig (2011), on how Public Relations can significantly influence an organisation and its publics by serving as a communication bridge between the organisation and its publics, this study seeks to examine how the Public Relations Directorate of the PURC can effectively utilise Public Relations tools and strategies to creating an understanding of the function of the PURC, enhancing public awareness, improving communication strategies, and increasing transparency about the PURC's role and how it could help bridge the gap while at the same time foster a better understanding of its critical role among the general public in Ghana.

1.2 Statement of Research Problem and Gaps

Studies by Agudey (2015); Boakye, Nsor and Tabi (2012); Opoku-Boahen, Osei, Ackaa, Ghanney, Kantanka and Marfo-Gyamfi (2017), on the role of public relations in creating an understanding of the functions of regulatory bodies in Ghana often exhibit research gaps in the specific examination of the effectiveness of PR strategies in addressing the communication challenges faced by these bodies. There is a lack of in-depth exploration into the nuanced ways PR initiatives can be tailored to enhance public awareness and comprehension of regulatory functions, particularly within the Ghanaian context. Additionally, limited research focuses on the impact of cultural nuances, language preferences, and communication channels on the effectiveness of PR efforts in bridging the gap between regulatory bodies like the PURC and the general public in Ghana. In view of this, further research is needed to delve into these gaps to provide comprehensive insights into the strategic use of Public Relations in improving public understanding of regulatory bodies' roles and responsibilities in the country.

The study aims to investigate the reasons behind the seemingly lack of understanding of the PURC's role by the general public in Ghana and explore how the Public Relations Directorate can utilize public relations tools and strategies to enhance communication to bridge this gap.

This study, thus, seeks to uncover the factors contributing to the public's limited awareness of the PURC's functions and regulatory activities in the utility sector, as well as identify effective PR approaches that can be employed to improve public perception, increase transparency, and foster engagement. By examining the role of the PR Directorate in shaping public relations initiatives, this study intends to provide insights into enhancing communication channels, disseminating information effectively, and building stronger

relationships between the PURC and the general public to promote understanding and awareness of the commission's crucial role in regulating utilities in Ghana.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Despite the critical role of Public Relations in fostering effective communication between organizations and their publics, research on the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) in Ghana is scarce. While studies have explored the regulatory functions of PURC (Owusu & Boateng, 2017), little attention has been paid to the commission's public relations efforts and their impact on communication with its publics. This knowledge gap is concerning, given the importance of effective communication in ensuring public trust and understanding of PURC's regulatory decisions. As noted by, Boateng and Owusu (2015), effective Public Relations is crucial for building and maintaining relationships between organizations and their publics.

Effective communication is essential for ensuring public understanding and acceptance of regulatory decisions (Gyekye & Sakyi, 2017). However, research on how PURC engages with its publics through Public Relations is limited. A study by Amoako and Owusu (2019) on Public Relations practices in Ghanaian organizations did not specifically focus on PURC or the regulatory sector. This highlights the need for targeted research on public relations and communication strategies employed by PURC to engage with its publics.

Conducting a case study on the role of public relations in enhancing communication between the PURC and its publics in Ghana is significant as it offers a practical and in-depth exploration of real-world communication challenges and strategies within the Ghanaian regulatory landscape. By focusing on a specific context like the PURC, the case study allows for a detailed analysis of the effectiveness of public relations initiatives in improving public understanding, trust, and engagement with regulatory institutions. This research approach provides valuable insights and actionable recommendations that can be directly applied to

enhance communication practices, transparency, and stakeholder relationships in the regulatory sector in Ghana.

Additionally, the study seeks to improve Public Relations strategies within the PURC's Public Relations Directorate. The study can help the Directorate create messages that appeal to a wide range of people by identifying effective communication tactics and public relations instruments. This enhancement in public relations efforts will promote transparency and build trust between the commission and the communities it serves, ultimately improving consumer confidence in regulatory practices.

Another important aspect of this research is its examination of cultural and linguistic factors that influence public understanding. Acknowledging these dimensions enables the study to guide the PURC in developing targeted outreach initiatives that address the unique characteristics of different demographic groups. This focus on inclusivity in communication will help ensure that all citizens, regardless of their background, have access to important regulatory information.

This study will also contribute to the existing body of literature on Public Relations and regulatory communications. The study will fill a significant vacuum in academic discourse by examining the effectiveness of public relations methods in the setting of a Ghanaian regulatory authority. It will provide a case study that can inform future research and practice in similar settings, particularly in developing countries facing comparable challenges.

Furthermore, the insights gained from this study can inform policy recommendations for the PURC and other regulatory agencies. The study will provide a path for improving the efficacy of regulatory frameworks by identifying hurdles to public awareness and proposing practical

solutions to overcome these obstacles. Improved public understanding of regulatory processes can lead to greater compliance, increased civic engagement, and more robust governance.

1.4 Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to investigate the role of Public Relations in creating an understanding of the work of public regulatory institutions.

1.5 Specific Objectives

The study specifically seeks to:

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of existing Public Relations strategies employed by the PURC in communicating its regulatory activities to the general public.
2. To analyze the current level of public awareness and knowledge regarding the functions of the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) in Ghana.
3. To propose new Public Relations tactics and tools that can enhance public understanding and engagement with the PURC's role and responsibilities in regulating utilities in Ghana.

1.6 Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of awareness and knowledge of the functions of the PURC Ghana?
2. How effective are the Public Relations strategies employed by the PURC?

3. What strategies and tactics can be adopted by the PURC Ghana to enhance its engagement with its publics?

1.7 Rationale of the Study

The rationale behind investigating the role of Public Relations in creating understanding of the work of public regulatory institutions, specifically focusing on the Public Utilities Regulatory

Commission (PURC) in Ghana, stems from the critical need to enhance transparency, communication, and public engagement in regulatory processes. By delving into how Public Relations practices can bridge the gap between regulatory bodies and the general public, this study aims to shed light on the importance of effective communication strategies in fostering awareness, trust, and cooperation between regulatory institutions and stakeholders.

Through a case study approach of the PURC, the research seeks to provide valuable insights into improving public understanding of regulatory functions and promoting a more informed and participatory relationship between regulatory bodies and the public in Ghana.

Additionally, the study seeks to address the broader socio-cultural context that influences communication effectiveness in Ghana. Cultural nuances, language preferences, and varying levels of education can all impact how regulatory information is perceived and understood by different segments of the population (Boakye et al., 2012).

This research will provide insights into these dynamics, enabling the PURC to tailor its public relations efforts to meet the needs of diverse communities better and enhance overall comprehension of regulatory processes.

This study, which focuses on the junction of Public Relations and regulatory roles, will add to the scholarly literature on communication strategies in public organisations. It will also make practical recommendations to the PURC to improve its public engagement and build a more transparent and participatory regulatory environment. Finally, increasing public knowledge of the PURC's functions and responsibilities can result in improved connections between the Commission and the communities it serves, allowing for more effective regulation and better results for all stakeholders.

1.8 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on examining the current communication strategies employed by the PR Directorate of the PURC, assessing the level of public awareness and perception of the Commission's regulatory functions, analyzing the effectiveness of existing Public Relations tactics and strategies adopted by the PURC and proposing tailored PR strategies tactics to enhance public comprehension and engagement with the PURC's role. The study will be conducted at the PURC's Head Office and Volta Regional Office in Accra and Ho respectively, critical hubs for the organization's operations and public engagement initiatives.

Key participants will include top management and staff within the Public Relations division. Their insights are vital for comprehending the strategic frameworks employed in communication and Public Relations efforts. By gathering diverse perspectives from these influential stakeholders, the research aims to conduct a thorough analysis of current communication practices and their efficacy.

The timeline for this study extends from July 2024 to January 2025, allowing for a systematic period dedicated to data collection and analysis. A mixed-methods approach will be employed, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques to provide a holistic understanding of the communication strategies and Public Relations initiatives of the PURC. This methodology will facilitate in-depth interviews, enabling the collection of rich and nuanced data, while also incorporating quantitative surveys to capture broader trends. The ultimate goal is to generate actionable insights that could guide improvements in public engagement and awareness of the Commission's regulatory functions and responsibilities.

1.9 Organisation of the Study

This study is organized in five chapters. Chapter one of the study focuses on discussing the background and context of the study. Chapter two discusses the theoretical framework and review of related literature. Chapter three of the study discusses the research methodology. Chapter four of the study discusses the findings of the study, and chapter five of the study presents a summary, conclusion and recommendations.

1.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a comprehensive overview of the study, encompassing its background, objectives and significance. It outlined the research problem and identified existing gaps in the literature, emphasising the critical role of Public Relations (PR) in enhancing public understanding of regulatory institutions, with a particular focus on the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) in Ghana. Additionally, the chapter detailed the study's organization, scope and rationale, setting the stage for the subsequent chapters.

The next chapter will delve into the theoretical framework and literature review, providing a deeper understanding of the concepts and prior research relevant to the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews the related literature on the role of Public Relations in creating an understanding of the work of public regulatory institutions, with a particular focus on the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission of Ghana. The review begins with the conceptual review of the key terms: Public Relations, regulatory institutions and public understanding, then proceeds to the theoretical underpinning; Excellence Theory of Public Relations. It is followed by an empirical review concerning the effectiveness of the existing PR strategies, public awareness of the functions undertaken by PURC and PR tools that can be used to enhance the level of public engagement and understanding.

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Public Relations (PR)

Public Relations (PR) has been described as a symmetrical communication process whereby an organization and its public get into a relationship through the facilitation of the organization. According to Grunig and Hunt (1984), PR involves symmetric transactions in the building of a harmonious relationship of mutual understanding between organizations and their stakeholders, as both parties must be communicating appropriately. At the core, PR aims to create and maintain a positive image for organizations through activities that enhance conversation, information sharing and relationship management (Smith, 2020). It plays a special role in shaping perceptions of organizations by their key publics such as consumers, employees, investors, and the public within public institutions.

PR therefore plays an important role in fostering transparency and accountability in the general operations of public regulatory institutions like the PURC. This is because it should be the concern of a regulatory body to make its operations and decisions more understandable to the public when those operations and decisions affect the daily livelihood of the people as with utilities. Ofori and Sakyi (2018) have asserted that Public Relations efforts in these institutions are meant to convey the regulatory policies of such institutions, explain complex decisions like the adjustment of tariffs and also consult consumers with complaints or grievances. In the interaction between the regulatory bodies and the public, effective communication means that the decisions taken are accepted and understood, which reduces civic discontent and builds trust in the institution.

Additionally, the PR practices of such regulatory bodies like the PURC go a long way in helping the public build trust in them. Trust is a very critical asset of any public institution, and it is mainly developed through consistent, clear and transparent communication (Huda, 2024). When institutions can provide timely and accurate information about regulatory

decisions, they show accountability and public welfare (Androniceanu, 2021). Confidence in regulatory institutions such as PURC is normally based on clear articulation of their policies, the rationale for the decisions taken and what benefits they can avail to the public.

PR for regulatory institutions transcends the giving of information by incorporating consultation and participation of interested parties (Huisling & Silbey, 2021). To this, Chen et al., (2020) have argued that a new paradigm in the context of Public Relations should be oriented towards the management of relationships, where symmetric communication channels can be opened up for the exchange of feedback and establishment of dialogues. For the PURC, this would also involve not only educating the public on the regulatory policies but also being sensitive to the needs of both the consumer and the utility service providers. PR can make the engagement between the institution and the public more interactive using mechanisms such as town hall meetings, social media and consumer service hotlines that provide clear lines for feedback. The concerns of all stakeholders will be heard and addressed as a result.

2.1.2 Public Regulatory Institutions

Public regulatory institutions are government institutions endowed with enforcement, supervisory and regulatory functions over certain industries to which legal thresholds and policies should be strictly adhered (Gavrilenko & Shenshin, 2023). These intermediary agencies work between the government and enterprises to ensure that the organizations adhere to all applicable laws and regulations. Their work involves the protection of the public interest in several ways including preventing abuses, ensuring fairness and maintaining the integrity of industries providing quintessential goods and services. Quach, Thaichon, and Hewege (2020) indicated that such regulatory bodies make sure there is orderly conduct in vital industries like health care, telecommunications and utilities in which the public relies heavily

upon fair dealing and quality service provision. In this role, regulatory institutions contribute to accountability, transparency and compliance with the rule of law, which are fundamental building blocks of any nation's long-term development (Lauwo, Azure & Hopper, 2022).

Besides the watchdog duty, the major responsibility of public regulatory institutions is consumer protection (Dickinson-Delaporte, Mortimer, Kerr, Waller & Kendrick, 2020). They ensure that the services provided by organizations are of the required quality and standards as a way of protecting consumers against exploitative practices (Quach et al., 2020). The aspect of protecting the consumer can take various dimensions, such as prices being reasonable, ensuring that the quality of services and products is observed, and grievances handled through mediation or enforcement (Dickinson-Delaporte et al., 2020). For instance, the regulatory bodies prescribe that the terms of service and tariff in such utilities as industries are by such bodies determined, to ensure that consumers do not pay exorbitant rates for decent services. This aspect of their mandate is critical, especially in the protection of rights and welfare.

In Ghana for example, the utility powers of regulation lie within the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (Dye, 2023). The latter has thus been instrumental in approving tariffs that would not transfer an undue burden on consumers, but at the same time be costreflective by service providers. It strikes a critical balance in utility regulation between consumer protection and viability for service providers (Herrine, 2022). Laing (2021) asserted that PURC also engages in some dispute resolution, where there are complaints from consumers about unfair billing practices, service disruptions, or substandard service delivery. It does so to ensure that the rights of consumers are protected while maintaining harmony in the industry.

Other aspects of relevance to public regulatory institutions involve those aspects that help and contribute to the national development of nations (Rosenbloom, Kravchuk, & Clerkin, 2022). The function of regulatory bodies like the PURC, regarding national development, is that the utilities and other critical utilities are regulated in such a way that their impact is felt more in economic growth and social stability (Zitelman & McAdams, 2021). Zitelman and McAdams (2021) noted that their impact can be felt because regulatory organisations can spur investment in vital areas, where fair competition assures them of improvement and expansion of services. Moreover, the presence of good regulation would mean a certain stability, whereby it is expected that there would be clarity on what consumers and service providers can expect along with rights and responsibilities, trust, and thereby growth in the sector (Kun, 2024).

Public regulatory institutions like PURC, also ensure a balance in the often-competing interests of service providers and consumers (Moussa, 2023). Whereas service providers seek to have maximum profits while reducing operation costs as much as possible for consumers, what they have in mind is ensuring the services are affordable, reliable and of high quality (Gupta, Singh, & Mangla, 2022). This is mediated by regulatory bodies through policy settings which reflect the economic realities of the service providers while ensuring that the interests of consumers are not compromised (Akuffo, 2018). For instance, the fixing of utility tariffs by the PURC must consider production and distribution costs concerning what the consumers can pay and should ensure that the market plays out fairly in a manner not to exploit either of the parties involved.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 The Effectiveness of Existing Public Relations Strategies

Kim and Darnall (2021) examined the impact of communication models on organizational performance, specifically two-way symmetrical communication. The study was directed at cross-industries in the United States (US), using a mixed-method approach of both quantitative and qualitative. These findings depicted that the organizations that used two-way symmetric communication were having more dialogue and feedback; their stakeholders were more trusting and participating in organizational processes and the outcomes of the organizations were better. Contrarily, Zerfass, Verčič and Volk (2017) on the other hand, explored relationship management theory with particular emphasis on the long-term building of relationships within PR strategies. Based on a large-scale quantitative survey of PR practitioners across Europe, their study underlined the fact that effective PR strategies rely on long-run relationship management, central to building up and maintaining trust between organizations and their publics. They found that an organization capable of focusing on longterm relationships rather than merely on communication efficiency was well-placed to manage crises and maintain trust during times of organizational change. While Kim and Darnall (2021), present the role of a two-way symmetrical model in organizational effectiveness and the trust of the stakeholders, Zerfass et al. (2017) narrow this to a specific focus on relationship-building as an integral aspect of effective PR strategy. While both studies emphasize the importance of two-way communication, Kim and Darnall (2021) present a more inclusive organizational approach, while Zerfass et al. (2017) focus on the sustainability of the long-term relationship more. Regarding the limitations, Kim and Darnall (2017) provide that such a method can hardly be generalised in every organizational setup since cultural and sectoral differences could always influence the results. Meanwhile, in a study conducted by Zerfass et al. (2017), they noted that their focus is predominantly on European PR practitioners; hence, the findings might have limited generalisability to other

parts of the world. Both studies therefore suggest a need for further research on the exact intricacies of symmetric two-way communication and what the implications of that are in terms of longer-term trust and relationship-building across sectors and cultural contexts.

Coombs and Holladay (2012) examined crisis communication strategies, particularly the extent to which an organization could recover from a crisis by utilizing different PR strategies. Through an experimental design, participants were involved in different crisis scenarios to determine the relative effectiveness of various communication strategies. The researchers established that clarity, promptness and consistency of communications provided the touchstone for the rebuilding of trust by the public in times of crisis. Their study emphasized how an organization more importantly needs to be transparently communicative, especially if it belongs to the public sector of service, for reputation and retention of stakeholder confidence. On the other hand, Kim and Rhee (2020) examined the uses of social media in contemporary PR practices. Their study, conducted through content analysis and case studies, focused on organizations with significant social media presence. They assessed the commitment indicators and PR practices on Twitter and Facebook to determine how digital platforms could either support or undermine traditional PR efforts. They found that through social media, engagement and reach increase but need to be cautiously managed to avoid misinformation and negative backlash. They stressed that it was necessary to have continuous monitoring and responses on the digital space to keep communication effective with the public. Whereas Coombs and Holladay (2012) have focused on crisis communication, underlining the need for transparency and consistency in case of crises within an organization, Kim and Rhee (2020) looked into how digital platforms especially social media, have amplified PR efforts with even greater levels of engagement but also come with risks unless carefully monitored. These two studies indicate that PR strategies are moving in opposite directions to how traditional crisis communication principles are facing dynamic challenges

coming from the digital age. Regarding the limitation of the study, Coombs and Holladay (2012) pointed out that the experimental design may not capture the full complexity of real-life crises across industries and cultural contexts. However, Kim and Rhee (2020), appreciate that since their work focused on organisations with larger organisations having a significant media presence, the applicability of the same could be of limited scope in smaller organisations or those who are less digitally active. The studies also emphasize that future research may expand the studies of traditional PR principles interlinking with new communication technologies and their implications in a cross-section of sectors.

Though the works of Lee and Ni (2019) and Falkheimer and Heide (2018) are complementary in furnishing how PR strategies shape organizational perception, the former's focus was on corporate social responsibility, while the latter's was on strategic communication. In the study, Lee and Ni (2019) focused on discovering how CSR activities influence the perception of the public and the credibility of an organization. This was done through a survey and case study approach where both public and organizational respondents were considered in conducting this study to determine the effects of trust and credibility brought forth by CSR activities. The results showed that CSR activities increased the level of public trust substantially, hence enhancing the overall good reputation of an organization. They recommended that demonstrating corporate concern for social good improves PR results and helps build positive stakeholder relationships. On the other hand, Falkheimer and Heide (2018) concentrated their efforts on strategic communication in building and maintaining organizational legitimacy. By using qualitative methods such as interviews with communication professionals and content analysis of organizational materials, they examined how well-aligned communication strategies that reflect the core values of an organization answer the expectations of stakeholders and would be crucial in maintaining legitimacy and a good public image. Their study pointed out that strategic communication has to be combined with organizational

identity and values to maintain long-term trust and legitimacy in the public eye. Whereas Lee and Ni (2019) focused on CSR initiatives as one of the major motivators to improve PR and public trust, the study of Falkheimer and Heide (2018) was wider in scope since they focused on the alignment of strategic communication with organizational values to maintain legitimacy. While there is consent on the role of trust and the perception of the public in both studies, the target of investigation differs. Whereas Lee and Ni focused on CSR as an operative strategy for credibility enhancement, Falkheimer and Heide pointed out the role of overarching strategic communication toward long-term legitimacy. Regarding limitations, Lee and Ni (2019) stated that the focus on CSR initiatives does not capture all of the factors of the public to trust an organization and thus may have minimized the view that other PR strategies could be used to foster stakeholder trust. They recommend further research into how different types of CSR activities affect various stakeholder groups. Indeed, Falkheimer and Heide (2018) mentioned that their qualitative approach is not likely to generalize findings into every industry or organization type; therefore, quantitative studies were also recommended by them to measure the effect of strategic communication on organizational legitimacy. Both studies proceed from the assumption that because CSR initiatives are integrated with strategic communication, a more holistic PR concept is created for regulatory bodies since such an approach guarantees the building of trust through social undertakings and credibility through value-based communication.

A similar exploration of the strategies of internal and external communications was conducted by Bowen and Men (2017), who used a mixed-method approach with quantitative surveys and qualitative case studies. Their cross-sectional study carried out in organizations in the United States, aimed at researching how factors of internal communication, such as employee engagement, mechanisms of internal feedback and leadership communication impact the effectiveness of an organization in external communication. This indeed showed that when

internal communication went well and there was greater involvement on the part of employees, then the organization was better equipped to communicate with external stakeholders. The researchers found that organizations with a strong internal communication framework tended to develop better and more coherent external communication; this resulted in building trust and confidence with the public. On the other hand, Lee and Ferguson (2020) conducted research in 2020 to interpret the role of transparency and ethical communication in public relations with the help of various surveys and case studies among organizations across Europe. Their work has been performed on symmetric PR, which is being done with transparency in communications and ethical decision-making processes that help in gaining and sustaining public trust and credibility. It also emerged that when organisations communicate transparently and ethically, they not only protect their reputation but also build and nurture their relationship with external stakeholders. In this regard, Lee and Ferguson (2020) established that transparency in PR will increase public confidence in the organisation and its actions and decisions during crises. While Men and Bowen (2017) put forth that internal communication was quintessential in the aspect of improving external PR efforts, Lee and Ferguson (2020) emphasized that transparency and ethical communication have to be there for maintaining trust with the external public. Although both studies deal with communication aspects that are imperative for garnering trust and credibility, the outlook of these authors varies. Men and Bowen (2017) concentrated on the structure of internal communication, while Lee and Ferguson focused on the ethical practices and transparency of external communication. On limitations, Men and Bowen (2017) pointed out that since their study dealt with U.S-based organizations, their findings may only have limited generalizability to international contexts where cultural differences may impinge upon communication practices. They recommended further investigation based on how internal communication influences PR messages outside various cultural contexts. Lee and Ferguson

(2020) realized that the probable limitation of their work was that the focus on transparency might not represent the full variety of other variables such as cultural values or digital media influence that may also impact PR strategies. They suggested that future studies investigate the roles of digital communication channels as facilitators or inhibitors of transparency and ethical communication. Both studies suggested that integrating internal communication with transparent external communication is a surefire way towards effective PR strategy. This would work effectively, especially for regulatory institutions like the PURC. When internal employee engagement is combined cohesively with external transparency, there comes a higher level of public trust and credibility, translating into long-term organizational success.

2.2.2 The Current Level of Public Awareness and knowledge regarding the Functions of the PURC

Amoako and Asare (2022) conducted research aimed at determining the level of awareness and knowledge among the public concerning the regulatory roles that are taken up by PURC, majorly directed toward consumer protection. The research was conducted in Ghana and adopted a mixed-method design, combining surveying with focus group discussions with participants from different demographic backgrounds. Results showed that there was a fair level of general awareness of the existence of PURC but substantial information gaps in areas of specific knowledge about its main work, setting tariffs and complaint resolution processes.

The scholars have inferred that while members of the public can identify the presence of the PURC, there is a great lack of understanding relative to how it works and performs its functions. Owusu-Ansah et al. (2021) conducted a similar survey to determine the level of awareness the public had of the activities of PURC. Their study was conducted in Ghana. The study employed a quantitative approach through surveying, to determine awareness and understanding of the functions of the Commission. The results found a slightly higher level

of awareness compared with the findings of Amoako and Asare (2022); largely, the knowledge among the populace was still low.

Despite this, most of the respondents still had a general lack of specific knowledge about what the PURC does; this means that quite a significant portion of the public is still uninformed. These findings therefore contrast and show just how variable the level of awareness could be among the public about the PURC. Whereas both studies point to a need for increased public knowledge, recommendations slightly differ.

It was observed by Amoako and Asare (2022) that what is urgently needed are specialized educative programs to bring to the attention of consumers the particular knowledge gaps in such areas as the setting of tariffs and procedures for complaints. Owusu-Ansah et al. (2021) support greater educative drives but add that the communication strategies ought to be multifaceted to raise awareness of the activities of PURC itself. This weakness is acknowledged by both studies in their limitations.

According to Amoako and Asare (2022), what also seems necessary to consider is that the narrowed focus might limit the general applicability of their results. Therefore, they recommended an inclusive demographic reach in further studies for a better understanding of public awareness. Owusu-Ansah et al. (2021) highlighted that their reliance on self-reported knowledge might induce biased responses; they therefore recommended mixed-method approaches for the future in capturing the full depth of public understanding. The conclusion from both studies is basically that, public awareness about the PURC in Ghana needs to be developed and create a call for strategic educational initiatives in closing the existing knowledge gaps regarding an understanding of the Commission's regulatory functions.

While Bempong and Osei-Tutu (2020) and Ankomah and Kyei (2023) also examined perceptions and the state of public awareness about the PURC in Ghana, the methodology

adopted to reach a distinct conclusion regarding the state of public knowledge is different. In this regard, the study by Bempong and Osei-Tutu (2020) tried to evaluate the effectiveness of communication strategies and public outreach that the Commission uses. The study employed a mixed-method approach and the study was conducted in Ghana. It combines the administration of questionnaires with in-depth interviews of the public. Results indicate that while the public has general ideas about the PURC as a utility regulatory agency, there is limited knowledge of its functions and processes.

According to the scholars, there was a need for more effective communication strategies to increase public appreciation of how PURC operates. On the contrary, Ankomah and Kyei (2023) tried estimating the public perception and awareness of the PURC using a research design of a qualitative nature. The study adopted the inclusion of focus groups and interviews to obtain varied stakeholders' opinions. Results indicated that media and educational campaigns are two of the most important drivers of public awareness of the PURC. The scholars also noted that outreach efforts form a key component in moulding the public's impression of the Commission and its regulatory functions. While both studies agree that basic levels of awareness of the existence of the PURC do exist, emphasis varies on how deep that understanding truly is. Bempong and Osei-Tutu (2020) also noted that there is a lack of understanding of the workings of PURC; as such, good communication strategies will be needed to be able to involve more knowledge within the public.

Conversely, Ankomah and Kyei (2023) maintained that the probability of awareness, through media and educational campaigns can be made possible hence, a better-informed public is attainable. Concerning that, both surmised the limitations in their studies. Bempong and OseiTutu (2020) perceived that therein lies a limitation to surveys in capturing the full gamut

of public opinions therefore, future research should adopt a different approach in which all other forms of data collection will be involved to fully capture the public perception.

On the other hand, Ankomah and Kyei (2023) were aware that their qualitative approach might limit the generalization of findings and suggested that any future research should be complemented with quantitative measures to validate their results. Briefly, both studies emphasized the need to increase the level of awareness among the Ghanaian public towards PURC. The studies also indicate that whereas a foundational level of awareness is present, further work is needed to enhance communication strategies and outreach efforts toward deeper awareness of the Commission's regulatory functions.

In the same vein, while Adams and Baffoe (2021) and Kwarteng and Asiedu (2024) are both concerned with public awareness and knowledge of the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission in Ghana, they had different methodologies and provided different insights into public understanding. Adams and Baffoe (2021) conducted a longitudinal analysis to measure changes that occur over time in public awareness and knowledge of the existence of the PURC. It has taken the form of successive annual questionnaires from a representative sample of the public in Ghana. Indeed, the improvements in public awareness were found to be gradual, increasing with the more outreach and educational activities conducted by PURC. The researchers, therefore concluded that sustained engagement through frequent and ongoing communication contributes a great deal to the rise in the level of understanding by the public of the functions of the Commission. In contrast, Kwarteng and Asiedu (2024) conducted a cross-sectional analysis to identify demographic differences between urban and rural groups on knowledge of the PURC.

The authors therefore surveyed people from different demographic backgrounds to capture whatever level of awareness and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the PURC were available. The results found variations in the level of knowledge according to geographic and demographic causes, pointing to the fact that public awareness is not even. The diversified methodologies utilized by the two studies hence highlight various aspects of public awareness. Adams and Baffoe (2021) stressed the temporal aspect, indicating that continuous outreach results in the gradual improvement of public understanding over time. On the other hand, Kwarteng and Asiedu (2024) underlined the role of demographic factors, indicating that the awareness initiative would have to be group-specific to take up the challenge of disparities in knowledge effectively. The recommendations for improving public awareness of the PURC by the two studies are very important: Adams and Baffoe (2021) recommended that outreach programs should be sustained and expanded, while Kwarteng and Asiedu (2024) prescribed targeted approaches through effective communication demographic in nature, that will help bridge the knowledge gap in communities more. On limitations, Adams and Baffoe (2021) indicated that factually, reliance on annual surveys may not found short-term fluctuations in public awareness and recommended the need for more frequent data collection for subsequent studies. Contrarily, Kwarteng and Asiedu (2024) recognized that their cross-sectional study may miss the longitudinal trends and thus suggested that subsequent studies should combine the two for full comprehension of public awareness. In other words, both pieces of research are related to the issue of people's awareness about PUCR, yet their focus is different: continuation of the outreach efforts and effective communication strategies will help raise the level of public understanding in various population groups.

Osei and Mensah (2023) aimed to establish the extent to which PURC is known in the regions of Ghana. The researchers adopted a mixed-method research design where questionnaires for quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews were administered to respondents across the

regions for information. Results showed significant differences in levels of knowledge on the urban and rural divide, with the general trend being that urban residents knew the functions of the PURC compared to rural residents. They found that regional disparities create the need for tailored outreach efforts to improve public understanding in less informed areas. On the contrary, the study by Darko and Opoku (2021) was a national survey carried out to assess the effectiveness of recent PURC initiatives on public knowledge. This study was centred on how different initiatives put in place to increase awareness have influenced the overall public understanding of the Commission. While their findings showed that these initiatives indeed enhanced public awareness, they still managed to find regional differences that persisted, especially in rural areas, where knowledge levels were considerably lower. They emphasized the need to make continued efforts towards bridging the gaps especially, in the most underserved areas. The divergent results from these studies shed light on different aspects of public awareness concerning the PURC. Osei and Mensah (2023) concentrated on the comparative analyses between regions that showed big urban-rural divides, while Darko and Opoku (2021) looked at the effectiveness over time for recent initiatives. Again, there has been an improvement, disparities even today are present across different regions. Both studies target the communication strategy to improve public knowledge. Osei and Mensah (2023) require outreach activities that should be region-specific to effectively educate people in rural areas, while Darko and Opoku (2021) propose intensification of current efforts to be able to address the prevailing gap in knowledge in these areas.

Regarding limitations, Osei and Mensah (2023) admitted that their sample size may not adequately represent various regions of Ghana and recommended replicating their study using a larger demographic to ensure the generalizability of their findings. They also indicated that Darko and Opoku (2021) mentioned this in one of their writings, "the main problem being that the national survey may bypass local nuances." In addition, localized studies were

recommended by the latter as an approach to grasping the complexity of public awareness within different contexts. Both studies point to the significance of addressing regional disparities in public awareness of the PURC from different methodological perspectives. They emphasize the importance of tailored communication strategies and continued efforts at improvement, especially in rural areas.

2.2.3 Public Relations Tactics and tools that can Enhance Public Understanding and Engagement

Nkansah and Yeboah (2022) also assessed how social media and other interactive online platforms have contributed toward providing avenues for public engagements of the PURC. The study, conducted in Ghana adopted a mixed-methods approach in which quantitative surveys were combined with qualitative interviews that were used to understand the effectiveness of digital tools like Facebook and Twitter. The results indicated that through the social media platforms, they received real-time feedback and that the participation of the public with the PURC has increased significantly. The study found that social media has proved to be an effective tool in reaching out to a greater number while allowing them to have immediate, interactive communication with their stakeholders. On the contrary, Adu and Osei (2023) examined traditional PR tools such as community meetings and informational brochures. Their study, which was conducted in Ghana used a combination of questionnaires and case studies to determine the effectiveness of the face-to-face engagement methods. Specifically, while their findings showed that these more conventional approaches indeed worked well in terms of personal contact, they were less useful in targeting greater, more technologically aware populations. Adu and Osei (2023) insisted that while traditional ones certainly had their relative strengths, it was doubtful that they could make the same magic in today's increasingly digital communication. A comparison of these studies found that digital and traditional PR tools work differently in different contexts. Whereas Nkansah and Yeboah

(2022) elaborated on the advantages of digital platforms in facilitating real-time mass communication, especially to reach younger audiences who possess high technology affinity, Adu and Osei (2023) have now elaborated on the advantages of using traditional tools that are personal and face-to-face and may thus be better used for smaller or less digitally connected communities. The results from both studies give practical suggestions on how stakeholders can engage better. In this study, Nkansah and Yeboah (2022) suggested that PURC should upscale its adoption of social media and other digital platforms where the public can give more feedback and participate. Adu and Osei (2023) recommended that traditional approaches should be retained but complemented with other digital instruments to reach out to larger audiences effectively. However, in terms of limitations, it was well-noted by Nkansah and Yeboah (2022), that their study had to do only with highly urbanized populations with more access to social media. This would imply that future research on the use of digital platforms in rural areas would be an essential area. Adu and Osei (2023), noted that since these firms are relying on traditional methods, this might not represent how people in younger generations are moving toward different channels of communication; they recommended further studies looking into hybrid approaches for PR.

Abraham and Mensah (2023) examined the effectiveness of multi-media campaigns and education through workshops in bringing about improvement in public relations. Their study was in Ghana; they utilized a mixed-method approach, combining pre- and post-campaign surveys with interviews to measure changes in both public awareness and engagement. Most of the videos and infographics that comprised the multimedia campaigns were noted to have sharp increases in both public awareness and engagement regarding the subject matter. It was concluded that such campaigns proved effective in that they could package information in more visual and simple-to-understand formats for a wide audience. On the other hand, Frimpong and Boakye (2022) discussed customized stakeholder engagement approaches

using consultation groups and advisory committees. The qualitative research study used interviews and observations to establish the effectiveness of such close and personalized direct methods. Results showed that personalized engagement tended to promote deeper understanding and stronger acceptance of the messages put across, but also pointed out that such methods were usually resource-intensive and less effective in reaching a big audience compared to multi-media campaigns. A comparison of the two studies evokes trade-offs between the different PR strategies. Abraham and Mensah (2023) underlined the wide coverage and impact brought about by multi-media campaigns which have been effective, fast and efficient with huge audiences. On the other hand, Frimpong and Boakye (2022) show that personalized approaches are more resource-intensive but result in better relationships and deeper understanding on the part of stakeholders except that it is not at scale. Both studies provided practical ways in which the Public Relations strategies can be improved. According to Abraham and Mensah (2023), the usage of multi-media tools in PR campaigns should be expanded to raise the level of public engagement and awareness, especially in large-scale settings. Frimpong and Boakye (2022), recommended that personalized engagement approaches are to be used only in specific cases where that would involve high-priority stakeholders or instances where in-depth consultation is warranted. Regarding limitations, Abraham and Mensah (2023) mentioned how most of the engagements were geared toward the public through mass media; thus, future studies must look to see how retained the information is from such campaigns. Frimpong and Boakye (2022) showed that most of their personalized engagements were very time-consuming and required heavy cost investments; they thus recommended that future studies be done to see how these could be scaled up without losing their personalized touch.

Quaye and Adom (2023) conducted research into the use of digital storytelling in addition to interactive web content for improving public engagement. From the user experience survey

and the content analysis, this paper discusses how these digital tools influence audience interaction with messages and message retention. The results showed that through digital storytelling, regulatory messages are humanized, thus making this complex information very relatable and accessible. Also, the interactive content in the forms of question-and-answer sessions and webinars were also direct forms of engagement, where the members of the public would be able to give their feedback on-site. In this regard, it can be said that such digital tools effectively turn an interactive and dynamic experience for the audience. In contrast, traditional print media and Public Service Announcements (PSAs) were considered in the realm of Public Relations by Mensah and Nkrumah (2022). Their analysis was based on the content analysis of PSAs and surveys among the audience to identify recall and comprehension. It was reported that though print media reached a wider demographic, it had failed to attain those interactive elements that digital platforms are capable of. The result pointed out that print media, though successfully communicating to a wider audience, cannot create more engagement and instant interaction. A comparison of the two studies found the relative strengths and weaknesses of different media formats for Public Relations: Quaye and Adom (2023) dwell on how digital tools represent an interactive and engaging mode of communication that can be tailor-made to meet the needs of individuals and solicit feedback in real-time. Mensah and Nkrumah (2022) have shown the reach of print media, but its oneway communication model lacks the level of engagement afforded by digital formats. Both studies have recommendations of immense value to improve public engagement. Quaye and Adom (2023), recommended an increased use of digital storytelling and interactive content to deepen the connection with audiences, especially in communicating complex and technical messages. Mensah and Nkrumah (2022) recommended supplementation of traditional media, such as print, with digital tools to combine wide reach with interactive engagement. Regarding limitations, Quaye and Adom (2023) observed that their study was focused more on the young,

tech-savvy audience who can most willingly engage in content on digital platforms; this indicates a need to extend the analysis to older demographics. According to Mensah and Nkrumah (2022), their work did not take into consideration the integration of digital into print media, hence calling for further research on hybrid communication strategies leveraging the strengths of both traditional and digital formats.

Owusu and Agyemang (2021) looked into the use of mobile applications and Short Message Service (SMS) notifications in ways that could ensure more effective public access to regulatory information. They applied user surveys and analytics from the application usage during their study to attempt to measure effectiveness through digital means. The mobile apps and SMS alerts were seen to greatly improve public participation since timely updates and customized notifications were given according to everyone's needs. Owusu and Agyemang (2021) found that the tools succeeded in maintaining a constant stream of engagement activities through prompt, personalized communication. On the other hand, Badu and Asante (2022) evaluated public displays and exhibitions, as well as trade fairs, as a means of PR. Their study, included observation of methods to ensure attention is drawn to the regulatory information on display and questionnaires given to attendees of such events. The results indicated that exhibitions and trade fairs were extremely successful in raising awareness and providing hands-on experiences; however, as compared to digital tools, these events did not create long-term engagement. Most of the face-to-face interaction and experience-based learning were very effective for short-term engagement while sustaining the engagement after the event presented a major challenge. The comparison of the two studies highlights the different levels of public engagement that various PR strategies can achieve. Owusu and Agyemang (2021) illustrated how mobile applications and SMS alerts were quite efficient in providing continuous, personalized engagement due to their immediacy and accessibility. Badu and Asante (2022) lean toward face-to-face interactions at exhibitions and trade fairs,

which are excellent in causing immediate awareness but are defective in giving long-term involvement. While one study is more circumscribed to the improvement of PR strategies, Owusu and Agyemang (2021) propose exhibitions and trade shows as an awareness-raising tool but that these be complemented with digital platforms for engagement beyond events. Owusu and Agyemang (2021) have stated limitations in their work. As their audience is techsavvy, the authors have put forward a call for further research into the impact of mobile technology beyond very well-connected areas. Badu and Asante (2022) acknowledged that even though their exhibition study investigated the immediate effect, long-term engagement was not measured, calling for future research into exactly how the participants' involvement can be extended beyond the event itself.

2.2.4 The Role of Transparency in Fostering Public Trust

Hassan and Hashim (2021) have conducted an elaborate study relating to transparency with the view of building public trust in the Ghanaian public sector and narrowly put, in the energy regulatory sector. The research examined how such transparency principles as openness in decision-making and access to information shape the perception and build confidence among the public in regulatory institutions. The researchers adopted a mixed-method approach using questionnaires and interviews with both the stakeholders and employees of these regulatory institutions. The results showed a strong positive relationship between transparency and public confidence: the more there is in terms of the degree of transparency, the higher the level of public confidence in the regulatory organizations. Their study concluded that transparency in decision-making procedures can go a long way towards helping regulatory bodies earn more public confidence. In contrast, the research by Nyarko et al. (2019) embraces a far greater variety of public organizations than just energy, and it also viewed the object from a completely different angle of pure quantitative methodology. The researchers' goal was to

investigate how the level of public trust depends on the transparency concerning public organizations in general. In contrast with Hassan and Hashim (2021), Nyarko et al., (2019) discovered a far weaker and less direct linkage between transparency and trust. Their findings suggested that transparency, though important, may not necessarily bear the strongest weight on public trust as compared to other variables such as quality of service delivery or institutional reputation. The findings ended with an observation that transparency alone may not inspire public trust across all public institutions. The difference in approach and findings between these two studies is straightforward. Hassan and Hashim (2021) identified transparency as particularly instrumental in engendering public confidence in government institutions, especially within the energy sector, and recommended that improving transparency should be a highly preferred initiative by regulating authorities in a bid to increase their social license. Nyarko et al. (2019) appear to regard transparency, as an important variable as less directly influential on public confidence across a broader range of perspectives on the same public institutions. Both have helpful recommendations that might be advantageous to public institutions. Hassan and Hashim (2021) recommended transparency in decision-making and sufficient access to information to nurture the building of trust within regulatory bodies. Nyarko et al. (2019) prescribed that rather than depend on transparency, the institutions should never be complacent but rather focus on service quality and institutional reputation for trusting relationships to last. Hassan and Hashim 2021 noted that their study was limited to the energy regulatory sector and thus its findings might not be generalized to other public institutions. They proposed that future studies expand into other sectors as a way of validating their findings. Nyarko et al. (2019) realized the limitation of a purely quantitative approach and called for complementing such a study with qualitative data.

Ahmed and El-Kot (2022) investigated how transparent policies when communicated effectively, influence public trust in regulatory institutions. Their study aimed to understand

the role of communication in enhancing transparency and, subsequently, trust among the public. Conducted through a case study approach, they used semi-structured interviews and document analysis across several regulatory bodies, including the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC). Their findings indicated that proactive communication, including timely updates and clear reporting of regulatory decisions, was key to building trust.

Transparent reporting and open dialogue were seen as essential in gaining public confidence, as they allowed the public to understand and engage with the regulatory processes. In contrast, Schnackenberg, Tomlinson, and Coen (2021) took a broader approach to transparency, focusing primarily on the elements of transparency itself: clarity, consistency, and openness rather than the communication strategies associated with it. Their study based on quantitative analysis, examined how transparency contributes to building and maintaining trust in organizations. They found that transparency must be supplemented with clarity and consistency for it to be effective in fostering trust. While transparency in decision-making was critical, the study argued that consistent and clear messaging was equally important to ensure that transparency leads to trust. This approach places less emphasis on communication strategies and more on the structural components of transparency. The comparison between these two studies highlights the different dimensions of transparency in Public Relations. Ahmed and El-Kot (2022) emphasized the importance of how transparency is communicated, showing that proactive and clear communication strategies significantly enhance public trust. On the other hand, Schnackenberg et al. (2021) focused on the intrinsic qualities of transparency like clarity, consistency and openness as foundational elements that directly influence trust, regardless of how they are communicated. Both studies provide useful recommendations for improving public trust in regulatory institutions. Ahmed and El-Kot (2022) recommended that regulatory bodies adopt proactive communication strategies, ensuring that transparent policies are communicated to the public. This involves regular

updates, open access to information and responsive engagement with public concerns. Schnackenberg et al. (2021) advised that transparency should always be accompanied by consistent and clear messaging to maximize its trust-building potential, emphasizing that transparency alone is insufficient if not presented clearly and consistently. In terms of limitations, Ahmed and El-Kot (2022) acknowledged that their study was limited to a few regulatory bodies and suggested expanding the research to include a broader range of institutions and contexts. They also noted that their case study approach might limit the generalizability of their findings. Schnackenberg et al. (2021), while offering a quantitative analysis, pointed out that their study did not delve deeply into the role of communication strategies, which could have provided a more comprehensive understanding of how transparency interacts with public trust.

Kwaku and Agyemang (2020) explored the role of financial transparency in enhancing trust within the public sector, specifically focusing on regulatory institutions. Their study used a longitudinal approach, observing the effects of financial disclosure practices over several years. By examining financial reports from regulatory bodies, they assessed how consistent and detailed financial reporting impacts public trust. The authors found that institutions that regularly published comprehensive financial reports saw a significant increase in public trust. This was because transparency in financial matters helped to portray accountability, reducing perceptions of corruption and fostering a sense of openness in regulatory processes. In contrast, Liu and Li (2023) focused on a different dimension of transparency, examining the role of digital tools in building trust within public sector organizations. Their study did not center on financial disclosure but rather on the use of online platforms and digital technologies to enhance engagement and transparency. Using a mixed-methods approach, they assessed how digital tools like online portals and social media platforms helped organizations communicate more effectively with the public. Their findings found that digital tools, when

used effectively, create greater transparency by providing real-time updates and facilitating two-way communication, which in turn improves public trust. The comparison between these two studies highlights the different ways transparency can be implemented to build trust. Kwaku and Agyemang (2020) emphasize financial transparency as a crucial tool in promoting accountability and trust in regulatory institutions. Their findings suggest that detailed financial disclosures not only improve transparency but also combat perceptions of corruption, which is particularly important in public sector organizations. In contrast, Liu and Li (2023) show that digital transparency enabled through modern communication tools can also significantly enhance public trust, though their focus was on real-time information dissemination and public engagement rather than financial accountability. In terms of recommendations, Kwaku and Agyemang (2020) suggested that regulatory institutions should maintain regular, detailed and consistent financial reports as a critical step toward increasing public trust. They emphasized that financial transparency helps the public see the institution as accountable and honest. Liu and Li (2023) on the other hand, recommended that regulatory bodies should continue adopting and improving digital tools to promote real-time engagement and transparency. They argue that digital platforms enable easier and faster communication with the public, which is essential in maintaining transparency in today's technology-driven world. Kwaku and Agyemang (2020) acknowledged that their study was confined to the financial aspects of transparency and may not reflect broader transparency initiatives in other areas, such as operational transparency. The researchers suggested that future studies should explore other dimensions of transparency to provide a more comprehensive view. Liu and Li (2023) meanwhile, noted that while digital tools enhance transparency, they can also create new challenges, such as the spread of misinformation or unequal access to technology among different population groups. They recommended that digital transparency initiatives should be accompanied by measures to ensure equitable access and information accuracy.

Despite extensive research on the role of transparency and public relations tools in enhancing public engagement and trust, a significant gap remains in understanding how these strategies specifically impact the energy sector in Ghana. While studies like those of Hassan and Hashim (2021) and Ahmed and El-Kot (2022) have explored transparency in regulatory institutions, and Nkansah and Yeboah (2022) examined the use of digital platforms for public engagement, there is limited research that directly integrates both transparency and engagement strategies in the context of Ghana's energy regulation. Moreover, much of the existing literature focuses on either digital tools (Liu & Li, 2023) or traditional PR methods (Adu & Osei, 2023) without addressing how a combination of these can effectively reduce regional inequalities in public awareness, as highlighted by Kwarteng and Asiedu (2024).

This study, therefore sets out to explore the role of Public Relations in creating an understanding of the work of public regulatory institutions using the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) as a case study.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

2.3.1 Excellence Theory of Public Relations

The Excellence Theory of Public Relations is a theory first introduced by James E. Grunig and Larissa A. Grunig in 1985 (Nurnisya, Saad & Noor, 2022). The Excellence Theory posits that the superior organization acts symmetrically in two-way communication, a model characterized by open dialogue, mutual respect and constructive feedback between a civil society organization and its stakeholders (Grunig & Grunig, 2011). The theory, therefore, emphasizes that organizations should treat Public Relations not as a means of broadcasting information to the large public but rather as a way of ensuring interaction and understanding

with the same. The approach encourages organizations to listen to the concerns of the public and make conscious attempts to address those concerns to create trust and long-term relationships.

The starting point of the Excellence Theory is that a two-way symmetrical model improves organizational efficiency by facilitating equal and quality ideas and view exchange between the organization and its public (Hung-Baesecke, Chen & Ni, 2021). This model contrasts with the linear one-way communication models in which information goes in one direction; rather, it is a model of dialogue where both parties mutually influence each other's perceptions and decisions (Prusty, 2022). Grunig and Grunig (2011) explained further that in two-way symmetric communication, both the organization and its public are more aware of each other's needs, leading to a better climate of mutual benefit. To that effect, an organization with complex stakeholder networks to deal with, such as a public regulatory institution that requires public trust and cooperation, must follow this kind of approach.

This theory is based on four different models of Public Relations with each describing another way of managing an organization's communication with its public. These models are the press agency/publicity model, the public information model, two-way asymmetrical communication and the two-way symmetrical communication. The first model, according to Grunig & Hunt (1984), refers to press agency/publicity, which is a one-way model whereby communications are utilized only to pursue publicity in the media, attracting public attention without any concern for the truth in those communications or the participation of their publics. While still one-way, the public information model places more emphasis on the delivery of appropriate and correct information to the public, usually through media releases and official statements. The two-way asymmetrical model incorporates feedback from the public;

however, it serves the interests of the organization through the use of research in crafting messages to persuade and influence public opinion in its favour (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

Of these four models, the two-way symmetrical model is considered the most effective and ethical for developing long-term understanding and trust between organizations and their public (Grunig & Kim, 2021). It allows for genuine two-way communication where both the organization and its public are willing to change through the communication process itself (Çelebi, 2020). The organization listens to the feedback of its public and then changes its policies, strategies or modes of communication (Macnamara, & Gregory, 2020). It is in this respect that the model is of immense importance to public regulatory institutions such as the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) because it helps them build and sustain credibility, engender trust and achieve openness in their activities, which are indispensable in the discharge of the public service mandate.

2.3.2 The Systems Theory

Systems Theory, primarily developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the 1940s, serves as a foundational framework for understanding complex organizations and their interactions. Bertalanffy's seminal work, "General System Theory," published in 1968, laid the groundwork for interdisciplinary approaches across various fields including biology, psychology, sociology and management (Bertalanffy, 1968).

At the heart of Systems Theory is the concept of interconnectedness, which posits that all components within a system are interdependent. Changes in one part of the system can significantly impact other parts. This principle is crucial for understanding complex organizations like regulatory bodies where stakeholders, policies and external influences

interact dynamically (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Systems Theory also emphasizes the nature of open systems which continuously exchange information, energy and resources with their environment. This characteristic is vital for the survival and adaptation of the system. For regulatory institutions like the PURC, maintaining effective communication with stakeholders and adapting to public feedback is essential for success (Laszlo & Krippner, 1998).

Another core assumption of Systems Theory is the holistic perspective it promotes. This view suggests that a system must be studied as a whole rather than as a collection of isolated parts. Understanding how various elements within public regulatory institutions interact and influence each other is crucial for achieving effective public relations and engagement (Checkland, 1981). Moreover, feedback mechanisms play a significant role within Systems Theory. Systems rely on feedback loops to adapt and evolve based on external inputs which means that regulatory organizations must be responsive to stakeholder feedback to align their practices with public expectations and needs (Senge, 1990).

Finally, Systems Theory acknowledges the dynamic nature of systems, highlighting the importance of adaptability in regulatory organizations. Policies and practices must evolve in response to shifts in public opinion, regulatory demands, and external environmental changes (Meadows, 2008).

2.4 Relevance of the theories to the Study

2.4.1 The Relevance of the Excellence Theory to the Study

First and foremost, the Excellence Theory has great importance to this study in that it stresses open dialogue and transparency and the use of feedback in establishing a superior relationship between organizations and their stakeholders (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). This is because,

institutions that regulate essential utilities such as electricity and water in Ghana, like the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission, are in dire need of an effective means of communication. What regulatory bodies do is ensure their decisions and policies are rather made known to the public. In this regard, the Excellence Theory provides an effective framework through which the decisions and policies are effected using two-way symmetric models of communication strategies (Grunig, 2001). In this regard, the theory emphasizes that an institution such as the PURC will be better understood by the public if it engages its stakeholders in active dialogue rather than merely disseminating information.

With the emphasis of the theory being on two-way symmetric communication, the PURC would not restrict its Public Relations to the one-way flow of updates or decisions but would rather meaningfully engage with the public and other stakeholders through their concerns and integrate this feedback into its regulatory processes. This will be effective in any public concern on utility tariffs, service quality or any other regulatory change since these issues are sensitive and relate directly to the consumers (Grunig et al., 2002). Accordingly, with this approach, the PURC increases its stake: it gains better relations with its stakeholders, enhances public understanding of itself and creates greater involvement in its role and responsibilities.

Again, this can also be argued to increase the legitimacy and credibility of the regulatory institution. In this case, PURC may show accountability and equity in its regulatory decisions through open communication with the stakeholders (Liu & Li, 2019). The more the participation and access to information by the public, the more they would tend to view them as legitimate and trustworthy in their work. In the case of symmetric communication, as Kim and Ni (2013) mention, these are some of the important ways an institution, especially one bestowed with regulatory power can engender public trust. The PURC will be able to create a congruence of purpose with the expectations of the public in symmetric communication and

meet all skepticism and resistive attitudes of the people towards its policies. This trust is needed in the application and adherence to regulatory decisions, for stakeholders can be more cooperative in such matters if their voices are heard and regarded as valuable.

The Excellence Theory also relates to the PURC because it requires proactive contact with the public rather than a system where reactions to crises or public uprisings become front and center (Grunig & Huang, 2000). In these regulative contexts, the PURC typically brings forth controversial problems such as price increases and service shortages that are always subjected to public dissatisfaction if not properly dealt with. The application of the symmetrical model will, therefore enable PURC to establish proactive public concerns and solve them through continuous engagement and dialogue rather than waiting until their problems burst out. This helps in preventing misunderstandings that may lead to conflicts and further builds cooperation with the public. For instance, on the eve of a possible tariff increase, the PURC may consider opening two-way communication channels through public consultations, forums for feedback or other interactive media platforms to explain the increase and obtain inputs from the public (Huang & He, 2018). This would not only educate the public but also give room for the PURC to adjust its policies based on genuine house concerns.

Besides, the theory focuses on mutual understanding and finding solutions, which are crucial in adding to the public's understanding of the activities of the PURC. Most regulatory institutions either suffer from a lack of understanding or simply misconceptions by the public concerning what they do (Kuo & Yu, 2019). This will also ease the work of the PURC in explaining subtle issues of utility regulation, such as how tariffs are set or why certain regulatory decisions must be taken. In so doing, it will help to build a more enlightened public that will be willing to support most of its initiatives and comply with all its policies.

2.4.2 The Relevance of the Systems Theory to the Study

The relevance of Systems Theory to this study lies in its emphasis on understanding organizations as complex and interconnected entities that operate within a larger environment. Systems Theory, particularly as articulated by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the 1960s, posits that organizations should be viewed as open systems that interact dynamically with their environment (von Bertalanffy, 1968). This perspective is crucial for examining how the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) engages with various stakeholders including consumers, government bodies and other regulatory agencies, to facilitate understanding and enhance communication.

In the context of public regulatory institutions like the PURC, Systems Theory underscores the importance of feedback loops and adaptive processes. The theory suggests that effective communication is not merely a one-way transmission of information but rather a continuous process of interaction between the organization and its stakeholders (Katz & Kahn, 1978). By applying Systems Theory, this study can better understand how the PURC's communication strategies can lead to improved public understanding and trust. The interactions and feedback between the PURC and the public create a system where each party influences the other, highlighting the necessity for ongoing dialogue and engagement (Holling, 1978).

Moreover, Systems Theory supports the idea that regulatory institutions must consider the broader social, economic and political contexts in which they operate. This means that the

PURC cannot function in isolation; it must be responsive to external influences such as public opinion, technological advancements and changes in policy (Senge, 1990). By recognizing these interdependencies, the PURC can better tailor its communication efforts to meet the diverse needs of its stakeholders, thereby fostering a more informed and engaged public.

The application of Systems Theory also emphasizes the need for a holistic approach to public relations within regulatory institutions. It encourages the PURC to integrate various communication channels and strategies such as traditional media, digital platforms and community engagement initiatives, to create a cohesive messaging framework (Smith, 2017). This holistic approach can enhance the effectiveness of the PURC's Public Relations efforts, ensuring that stakeholders receive consistent and clear information.

2.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed the related literature concerning the role of Public Relations in creating an understanding of the work of public regulatory institutions, focusing on the PURC. Key terms like 'public relations', 'regulatory institutions' and 'understanding' have been defined in this conceptual review. The study is guided by the Excellence Theory. This theoretical framework discussed how two-way symmetric communication builds public trust and involvement. The empirical review assessed current PR strategies, public awareness and PR tools that might help in securing improved public understanding. It is found in this review that though the PURC has been doing some Public Relations, the main activity in developing more interactive, transparent and continuous communication strategies is required to ensure a higher level of understanding and trust in the public mind.

The next chapter will delve into the research methodology employed in this study, outlining how data will be collected and analyzed to explore the effectiveness of the PURC's Public Relations initiatives further.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed in this study, which aims to explore the role of Public Relations (PR) in creating an understanding of the work of public regulatory institutions, using the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) as a case study. The chapter covers the research design, population and sample, data collection methods, data analysis techniques and ethical considerations.

3.1 General Definition/Preamble of Research Methodology

Research methodology refers to the systematic approach and framework that guides researchers in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data within a study. It encompasses the theoretical underpinning of the research design, the selection of appropriate methods, and the rationale behind the choices made throughout the research process. The methodology outlines the steps taken to ensure that the study is scientifically valid, reliable, and ethically sound, ultimately contributing to the generation of new knowledge or the refinement of existing theories (Creswell, 2014; Robson & McCartan, 2016).

In the pursuit of knowledge, researchers are faced with a plethora of challenges and considerations that shape the direction and outcome of their studies. The research methodology serves as the backbone of any scholarly inquiry, providing a clear framework for addressing research questions and hypotheses. This section aims to delineate the methodological approach employed in this study, emphasizing the importance of selecting suitable methods that align with the objectives of the research (Saunders et al., 2016).

The choice of methodology is influenced by the nature of the research problem, the research objectives, and the characteristics of the study population (Bryman, 2016). Whether employing qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approaches, a well-defined methodology enhances the credibility and rigor of the research findings (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). This chapter will outline the specific methodologies used in this study, including the research design, sampling strategies, data collection techniques, and analytical procedures, while also addressing ethical considerations and the limitations encountered.

By articulating a comprehensive methodology, this study seeks to ensure transparency, reproducibility, and robustness in its findings, thereby contributing to the broader field of inquiry and facilitating informed decision-making for practitioners and policymakers alike (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

3.2 Methods used by previous researchers on the role of Public Relations in Creating understanding of the work of Public Regulatory Institutions.

Numerous studies have examined the role of Public Relations in enhancing public understanding of the functions of regulatory institutions, including the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC). These studies have employed a variety of research methods

to gather insights into the effectiveness of public relations strategies and the public's perceptions of regulatory bodies.

Many researchers have utilized qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, to explore public perceptions of the PURC's communication efforts. For instance, a study by Kpessa (2017) employed in-depth interviews with stakeholders in the utilities sector to investigate their understanding of regulatory frameworks and the impact of Public Relations on shaping their perceptions. The study found that effective communication strategies significantly influenced public awareness and understanding of the PURC's functions, particularly in addressing service delivery issues.

Additionally, quantitative methods have been widely used to assess the level of public awareness and satisfaction with regulatory institutions. A survey conducted by Aduah et al. (2019) sought to quantify public perception regarding the effectiveness of the PURC's communication strategies. The researchers administered structured questionnaires to a representative sample of the population, utilizing descriptive statistics to analyze the data. The findings indicated that while awareness of the PURC existed, there were significant gaps in public understanding of its specific roles and responsibilities.

Mixed-methods approaches have also gained traction in researching the Public Relations role of regulatory bodies. For example, Asiedu et al. (2020) combined qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys to assess the effectiveness of the PURC's Public Relations campaigns. The qualitative data provided context to the quantitative findings, revealing that while the PURC's outreach efforts reached a broad audience, the messaging often lacked clarity and failed to engage the public effectively. This dual approach allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the communication strategies employed by the PURC.

Moreover, some studies have adopted case study methods to examine specific Public Relations initiatives undertaken by the PURC. Owusu and Adomako (2021) conducted a case study on the impact of a particular Public Relations campaign aimed at educating the public about utility tariff adjustments. Through document analysis and stakeholder interviews, the researchers found that targeted communication significantly improved public understanding and acceptance of tariff changes, underscoring the importance of strategic public relations in regulatory contexts.

The diverse methods employed by previous researchers illustrate the complexity of Public Relations in creating an understanding of the work of public regulatory institutions. These studies collectively highlight the importance of employing a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques to capture the multifaceted nature of public perceptions and the effectiveness of communication strategies.

3.3 Proposed Methodologies for Present Studies

3.3.1 Mixed-Method

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to examine the influence of Public Relations (PR) strategies on public awareness and engagement concerning the functions of the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC). The mixed-methods approach is effective for investigating complex phenomena, as it combines both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, offering a comprehensive understanding of the research topic (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Utilizing both methods allows for triangulation, which enhances the validity and reliability of the findings (Fetters, Curry, & Creswell, 2013). This design recognizes that while numerical data can highlight trends and patterns, qualitative

insights are essential for capturing the nuanced experiences and perceptions of individuals regarding the PURC's communication strategies (Bryman, 2016).

3.3.2 Quantitative Research Method

Quantitative research is a systematic investigation that primarily focuses on quantifying relationships, behaviors, and patterns within a defined population. It will be characterized by its reliance on structured data collection techniques and statistical analysis to derive meaningful insights. According to Creswell (2014), quantitative research will be “an approach for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables,” allowing researchers to draw conclusions based on numerical data and statistical inference.

Bryman (2016) will define quantitative research as “the collection and analysis of numerical data and the use of statistical techniques to analyze the data.” This definition will underscore the emphasis on quantifying variables to facilitate comparisons and generalizations across larger populations. Dörnyei (2007) will highlight that quantitative research often involves large sample sizes that enhance the reliability and validity of the findings, providing a more comprehensive view of the population under study.

The quantitative component of the research involved administering structured surveys aimed at collecting numerical data about public awareness and perceptions of the PURC's functions. A diverse sample was selected to ensure representativeness, which allowed for the collection of data suitable for statistical analysis. Structured surveys facilitated consistency in question delivery, enabling comparisons across different demographic groups and helping identify correlations among various factors influencing public perception (Fowler, 2014). Statistical analysis techniques, such as descriptive statistics and inferential methods, were employed to quantify levels of awareness and assess the public's understanding of the PURC's role. This

quantitative data provided essential insights into broad trends in public perception, forming a basis for developing strategic recommendations to enhance PR practices (Pallant, 2020).

3.3.3 Qualitative Research Method

In addition to the quantitative surveys, qualitative methods were integrated to gain deeper insights into public understanding of the PURC. In-depth interviews provided platforms for participants to articulate their thoughts and experiences regarding the regulatory body and its communication efforts. Conducting interviews allowed for rich, detailed accounts of individual perceptions, revealing the complexities behind public awareness and attitudes toward the PURC (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). The qualitative data obtained through these methods proved vital for understanding the underlying reasons behind the quantitative findings, providing essential context and depth to the numerical data.

The mixed-methods design not only enriches the data collected but also acknowledges the multidimensional nature of Public Relations (Denzin, 2017). Such an integrated approach is expected to inform both theoretical frameworks and practical applications within the field of Public Relations, particularly in the context of public regulatory institutions.

3.4 Population

As defined by Creswell (2014), a population is the group of individuals or objects that researchers are interested in studying. This broad definition allows researchers to identify the target group from which they will draw conclusions and make inferences based on the findings. Similarly, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) further elaborate on this concept, describing a population as a collection of individuals or objects that possess some common characteristics.

The population targeted for this study included key stakeholders of the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) and members of the general public who are impacted by its regulations. Given the PURC's broad mandate, it was necessary to include a diverse array of individuals and groups to capture a comprehensive understanding of the public's awareness and perception of its functions. A multi-layered approach to sampling was adopted to reflect the complexity of the population involved (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

One key group within the study population was the general public. This group consisted of residents from various regions of Ghana, spanning both urban and rural areas where the PURC's policies and regulations directly affect utility services, such as electricity and water. The inclusion of both rural and urban residents ensured that the study captured a range of perspectives, considering how public utilities are managed differently across these regions (Kothari, 2004). Moreover, the study aimed to examine the level of public awareness and understanding of the PURC's roles, making the general public an essential component of the population.

The second group included the employees of the PURC. These individuals possess in-depth knowledge of the Commission's operations and communication strategies, making them critical informants for assessing the effectiveness of the PURC's PR activities. Engaging PURC staff allowed the study to explore internal perspectives on how communication and PR strategies are formulated and implemented. This provided a complementary view to that of the public, helping to identify gaps between the intended message and the public's perception (Palinkas et al., 2015).

In addition to the general public and PURC employees, the study targeted other relevant stakeholders such as representatives from consumer advocacy groups, local businesses and

organizations impacted by PURC regulations, the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) and the Ghana Water Limited (GWL). These stakeholders hold unique positions as both observers and participants in the regulatory process. Their inclusion was crucial for understanding the broader impacts of PURC's PR strategies on different sectors of society. Business entities and advocacy groups, for instance, may interpret and respond to PURC policies differently based on how they are communicated and how regulations affect their operations (Flick, 2018).

To ensure the diversity of perspectives, the study employed a stratified sampling technique. This method allowed for representation across various demographic variables such as age, gender, education level and geographical location (Taherdoost, 2016). Stratified sampling was especially important for understanding how different demographics perceive and interact with the PURC's Public Relations efforts.

3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

This study employed both purposive and stratified random sampling techniques to effectively capture a representative and insightful sample. Selecting an appropriate sample size is vital for ensuring that research findings are both representative and statistically reliable. A carefully selected sample reflecting the diversity of the population associated with the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) in Ghana will provide a comprehensive view of public awareness and engagement with PURC's Public Relations (PR) strategies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Individuals from various demographic categories, including age, gender, educational levels, and geographic regions, are targeted to ensure a well-rounded representation. Determining an appropriate sample size is a crucial aspect of ensuring that research findings are representative and statistically reliable. For this study, the sample size

was carefully chosen to reflect the diversity of the population connected to the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) in Ghana. The sample was designed to include individuals from various demographic categories, including different age groups, gender, education levels and geographic regions, to provide a comprehensive view of public awareness and engagement with PURC's public relations (PR) strategies.

For the quantitative portion of the study, which involved structured surveys, a sample size of approximately one hundred and (120) respondents were deemed sufficient. This sample size is consistent with recommendations for public opinion research where the goal is to generalize findings to a larger population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Using a sample of this size allows for sufficient statistical power to detect meaningful differences in public awareness and perception across various demographic groups. In line with the principles of stratified random sampling, the sample was drawn to ensure proportional representation from urban and rural areas, different age brackets, and both male and female participants, ensuring that the diversity of the Ghanaian population was captured (Bryman, 2016). Stratified sampling also reduces sampling bias and increases the precision of the study by ensuring that all key subgroups within the population are adequately represented (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

In addition to the survey respondents, the qualitative component of the study involved a smaller, more targeted group of participants. Specifically, ten (10) individuals were selected for in-depth interviews, a common approach in qualitative research that aims to gather deep insights rather than achieve broad generalization (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). The interviewees included the Director and staff of PURC Communication Directorate and the Director of PURC Regional Operations and Consumer Services Directorate. The smaller sample size allowed for a more detailed exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions, ensuring that rich, nuanced data could be collected (Patton, 2015). The purposive

selection of participants ensured diverse perspectives on the effectiveness of PURC's PR strategies were captured.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

The data collection methods employed in this study were designed to align with the mixedmethods research approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques to gather comprehensive data on the effectiveness of Public Relations (PR) strategies used by the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) in enhancing public awareness and engagement. The combination of surveys and interviews allowed for both breadth and depth in understanding public perceptions and stakeholder experiences.

To gather quantitative data, structured questionnaires were distributed to members of the general public across various regions. The survey was designed with primarily closed-ended questions, focusing on key areas such as the public's awareness of the PURC, their understanding of the Commission's functions, and their perceptions of the communication strategies employed by the organization. The closed-ended format of the survey enabled efficient data collection, allowing respondents to provide specific and measurable responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The use of structured questionnaires is a common method in quantitative research, as it facilitates the gathering of standardized data from a large number of respondents, ensuring comparability across different demographics (Bryman, 2016).

A significant portion of the survey included Likert scale items, which asked respondents to rate their attitudes towards the effectiveness of the PURC's PR strategies. The Likert scale, a widely used tool in social science research, enabled the study to measure the intensity of respondents' opinions on a range of issues, from their overall satisfaction with PURC's

communications to their perceptions of the Commission's transparency and responsiveness to public concerns (Krosnick & Presser, 2010). This structured format ensured that the collected data could be analyzed statistically, providing insight into trends and patterns in public opinion regarding the PURC's efforts to engage and inform the public.

In addition to surveys, semi-structured interviews were conducted with PURC staff in the Corporate Affairs Directorate. The semi-structured interview format allowed for a more flexible and exploratory approach to data collection, enabling participants to share their experiences and perspectives in greater detail (Patton, 2015). Unlike the closed-ended questions used in surveys, semi-structured interviews featured open-ended questions that encouraged participants to elaborate on their responses, providing rich, qualitative data.

This method was particularly useful for capturing insights that could not be easily quantified, such as the perceived challenges and successes of the PURC's PR strategies from the perspective of those directly involved in or impacted by these efforts (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The interviews provided an opportunity for deeper exploration of themes that emerged during discussions, such as the effectiveness of specific communication channels, the impact of stakeholder engagement initiatives, and the role of transparency in building public trust. Moreover, the interactive nature of interviews allowed the researcher to probe for additional information, clarifying responses and uncovering nuanced opinions that may have been missed in a more rigid survey format (Creswell, 2013).

The combination of surveys and interviews enabled the study to achieve a balance between breadth and depth in data collection. While the surveys provided a broad overview of public attitudes and awareness levels, the interviews offered valuable contextual insights into the inner workings of the PURC's communication strategies and how these efforts were perceived

by key stakeholders. Together, these methods contributed to a well-rounded understanding of how the PURC's PR efforts impact public engagement and awareness, supporting the study's goal of identifying effective strategies for improving the Commission's outreach and engagement efforts.

3.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis process for this study was structured to reflect the mixed-methods approach, with distinct but complementary techniques employed for the quantitative and qualitative data collected. The study employed both statistical and thematic analysis to give a thorough knowledge of how the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission's (PURC) Public Relations (PR) initiatives impact public awareness and participation.

For the quantitative component, the data gathered from structured surveys were analyzed using statistical software, specifically the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). This software facilitated the efficient processing and examination of large datasets, allowing for the computation of both descriptive and inferential statistics (Pallant, 2020). Descriptive statistics, such as means, frequencies, and percentages, were employed to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents, providing an overview of factors like age, gender, education level, and region. These descriptive measures offered a foundational understanding of the sample population, ensuring that the analysis captured diverse perspectives from across different demographic groups.

In addition to descriptive statistics, inferential statistics were used to explore the relationships between various variables. Techniques such as chi-square tests and t-tests were applied to investigate whether demographic factors, such as age or education, had a statistically

significant effect on levels of awareness about the PURC's functions and its PR strategies (Field, 2018). These tests allowed the study to move beyond simple descriptions and assess the strength and nature of relationships between variables, shedding light on which factors most strongly influenced public awareness and engagement. The use of inferential statistics also enabled the study to generalize findings from the sample to the broader population, enhancing the external validity of the results (Bryman, 2016).

The qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. This method involved systematically reviewing the transcribed interview data to identify recurring themes, patterns, and insights related to public perceptions of the PURC's communication efforts. Coding was an essential part of the thematic analysis process, whereby chunks of text were labelled with codes representing key ideas or concepts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These codes were then grouped into broader themes that reflected commonalities in participants' experiences and opinions regarding the effectiveness of the PURC's PR strategies.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

This study prioritized ethical considerations to safeguard participants' rights and well-being. Informed consent was obtained from all participants who received clear and accessible information about the study's purpose, procedures and potential risks, enabling them to make a voluntary decision to participate (Resnik, 2020). Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained by anonymizing responses and securely storing data, ensuring participants' identities remained protected (Israel & Hay, 2006). Participants were also reminded of their right to withdraw at any time without repercussions, which was emphasized to maintain their

autonomy (Wiles, 2012). Additionally, steps were taken to prevent coercion, particularly among PURC staff, by clearly communicating that their participation was voluntary and without any professional or personal obligations (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001).

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the methodology employed in this study to explore the role of PR in creating public understanding of the PURC. By employing a mixed-methods approach, the research aims to gather both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of PR strategies. The subsequent chapter will present the findings and analysis based on the data collected.

CHAPTER FOUR

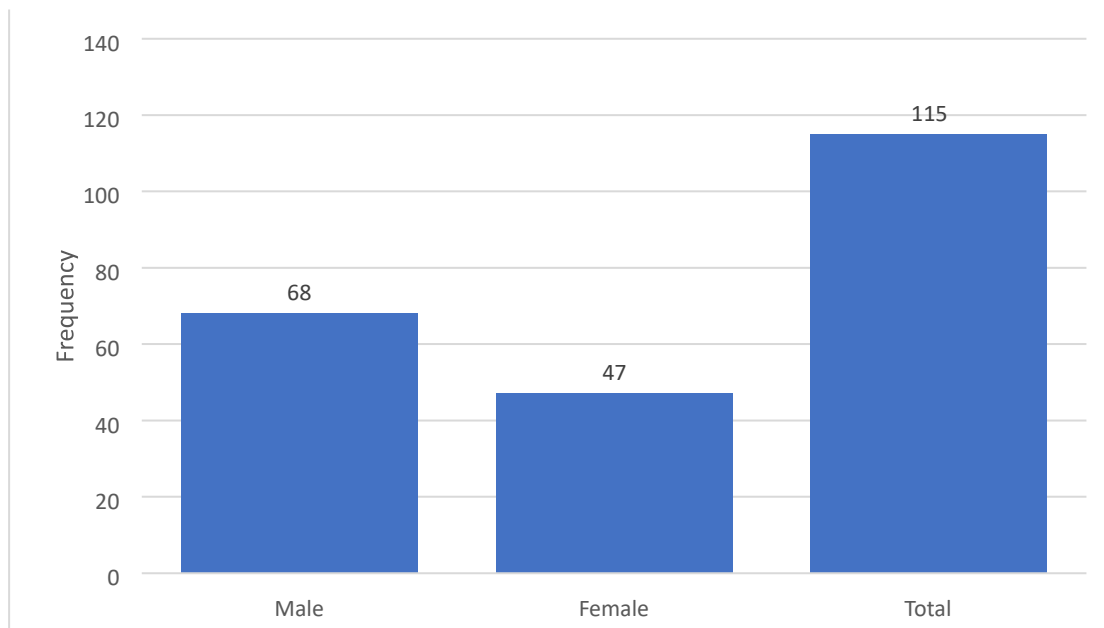
PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of the study was to find out the role of Public Relations in creating understanding of the work of the public regulatory institution using Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) as a case study. This chapter, therefore, presents both quantitative and qualitative findings of the study. The presentation of the findings was later followed by discussions supported by literature. A total of ten respondents were interviewed in a face-to-face interview, while one hundred and fifteen (115) consumers responded to a questionnaire that was administered to them. Transcripts from interviews were thematically analyzed. On the other hand, SPSS was used to analyze the questionnaire.

4.1 Research Findings

4.1.1 Gender



Source: Researcher’s Field Data (2024)

The bar chart illustrates gender representation among the 115 respondents, highlighting proportions in terms of significant fractions of the total percentage. Males, at 59.1%, constitute slightly more than half of the total sample, representing a majority group. In contrast, females, at 40.9%, account for just under half, or approximately two-fifths of the sample. This gender distribution shows a skew towards males, who make up a larger fraction of the total, but females still contribute a substantial proportion, close to half. The absence of missing data confirms that these percentages collectively sum to 100%, ensuring complete and valid representation.

4.1.2 Age

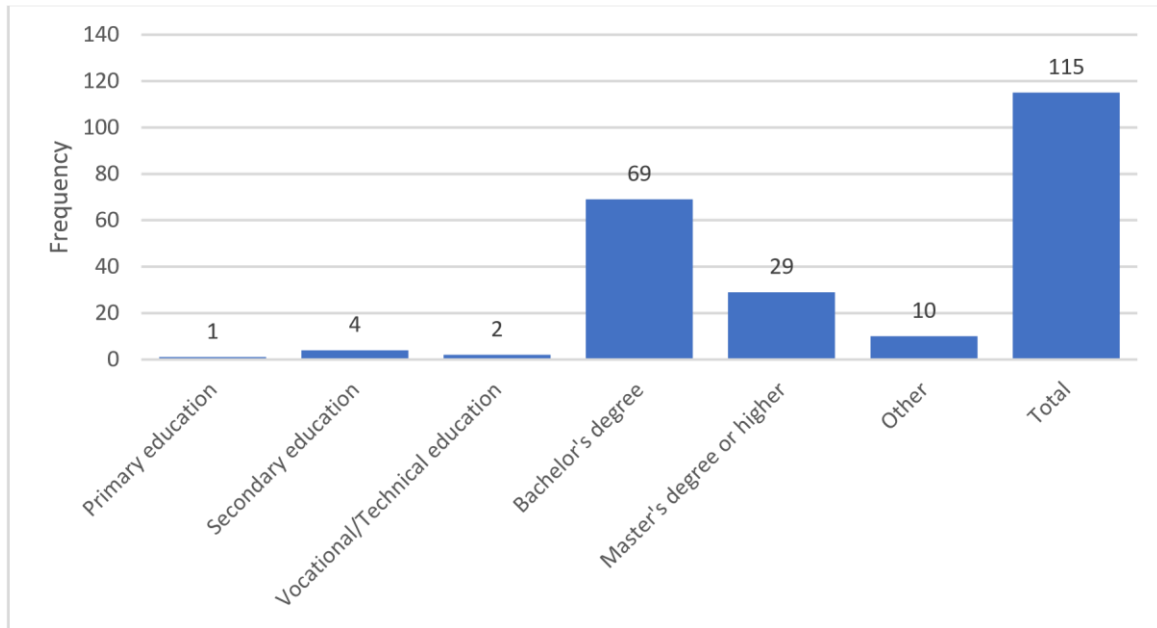
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
18-24 years	6	5.2	5.2
25 – 34 years	53	46.1	46.1
35 – 44 years	48	41.7	41.7
45 – 54 years	7	6.1	6.1
55 years and above	1	.9	.9
Total	115	100.0	100.0

Source: Researcher’s Field Data (2024)

The data found the age distribution of 115 respondents in terms of major fractions of the total percentages. The largest group, aged 25 to 34 years, comprises 46.1% of the sample, which is just under half of the total, with 53 individuals. This is followed closely by the 35 to 44 years group, making up 41.7%, which is a little over two-fifths of the respondents, with 48 individuals. Together, these two groups represent the vast majority of the sample, approximately four-fifths combined. In contrast, the younger age group of 18 to 24 years accounts for 5.2%, roughly one-twentieth of the total, with just 6 individuals. Those aged 45 to 54 years make up 6.1%, slightly more than one-twentieth, with 7 respondents. Lastly, the

55 years or older group is the smallest, representing 0.9%, or less than one-hundredth of the total, with only 1 individual. The distribution is heavily concentrated in the 25 to 44 years range, which collectively accounts for a significant majority, reflecting strong engagement among younger and middle-aged adults.

4.1.3 Educational Level

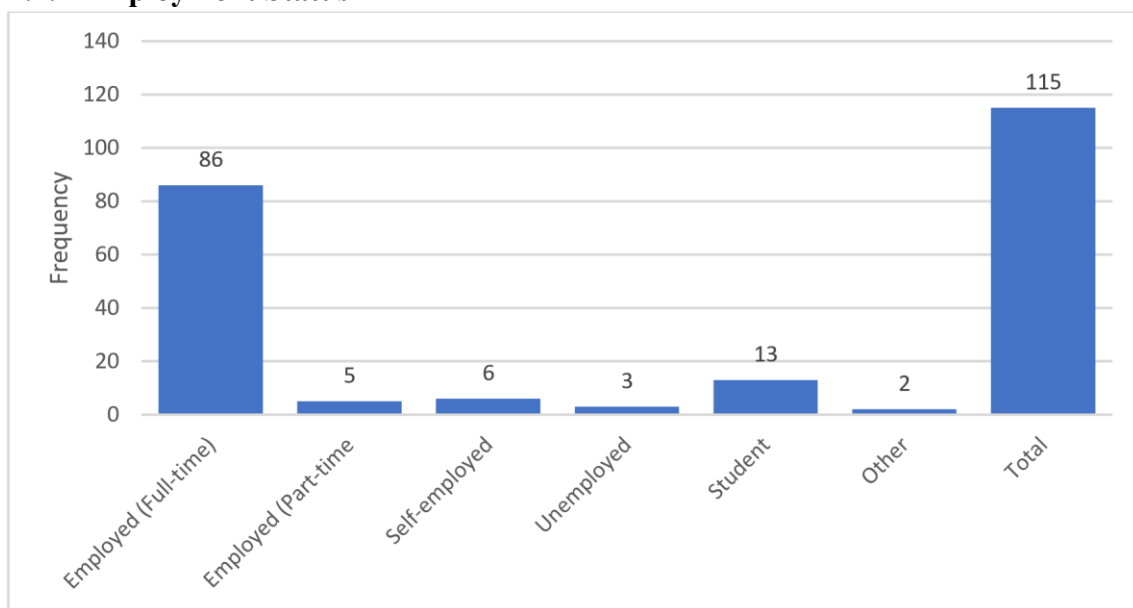


Source: Researcher's Field Data (2024)

The educational attainment data for 115 respondents can be described in terms of significant fractions of the total percentages. The largest group, those with a bachelor's degree, comprises 60% of the sample, which is three-fifths of the total, with 69 individuals. This indicates a strong dominance of higher education within the group. The next largest category is master's degree or higher, representing 25.2%, or approximately one-quarter of the sample, with 29 respondents. Together, bachelor's and master's degree holders account for 85.2%, or more than four-fifths of the total, emphasizing the high level of education among participants. In contrast, the less-represented groups include primary education at 0.9% (less than onehundredth) with 1 respondent, and secondary education at 3.5%, just over one-thirtieth, with 4 respondents. Vocational or technical education is similarly small at 1.7%, around

onesixtieth, with 2 respondents. Finally, the "Other" category, encompassing 8.7%, is just under one-tenth of the sample, with 10 individuals, suggesting diverse educational backgrounds not fitting standard classifications. The data shows a highly educated population, heavily skewed towards respondents with bachelor's and master's degrees, which together form the overwhelming majority.

4.1.4 Employment Status

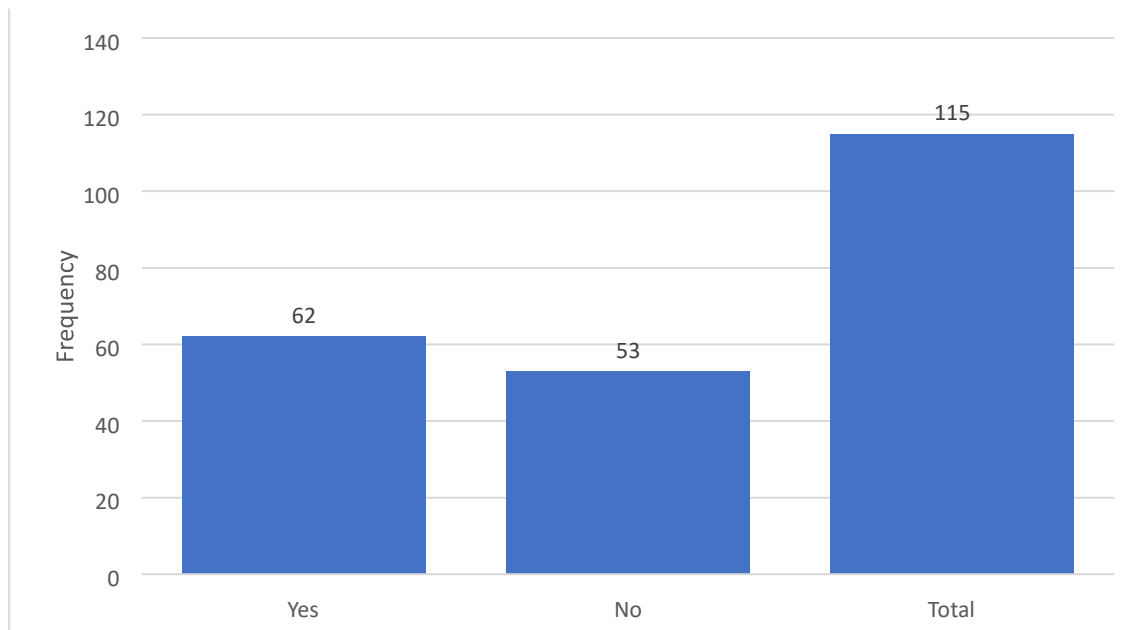


Source: Researcher's Field Data (2024)

The employment status data for the 115 respondents can be described in terms of significant fractions of the total percentages. The largest group, those employed full-time, comprises 74.8% of the sample, or nearly three-quarters, with 86 individuals, indicating a strong majority with stable employment. In contrast, smaller categories include part-time employment, which accounts for 4.3%, roughly one-twentieth of the total, with 5 respondents, and selfemployment, at 5.2%, just over one-twentieth, with 6 respondents. A minimal proportion of the sample is unemployed, at 2.6%, slightly more than one-fortieth, with only 3 individuals. Students make up 11.3%, which is just over one-tenth of the total, with 13 respondents,

reflecting those still engaged in education. Lastly, the "Other" category accounts for 1.7%, or approximately one-sixtieth, with 2 respondents, capturing diverse, non-standard employment situations. The data highlights a predominantly employed sample, with full-time workers representing nearly three-quarters of the group, suggesting economic stability and a strong workforce presence among the participants.

4.1.5 Previous Interactions With PURC



Source: Researcher's Field Data (2024)

The data on respondents' answers to the question about previous interactions with PURC found a nearly even division of responses. A slight majority, 62 individuals (53.9%), answered "Yes," which is just over half of the total sample. In contrast, 53 respondents (46.1%) answered "No," making up slightly less than half of the total. This close split shows that the respondents are almost evenly divided, with the "Yes" responses exceeding the "No" responses by only a small margin. The total sample size of 115 ensures a complete dataset, confirming that the figures represent the entire group. The percentages highlight a balanced

yet slightly skewed distribution, indicating a diversity of experiences, with just over half of the respondents having prior interactions with PURC.

4.1.6 Effectiveness of Existing Public Relations Strategies at PURC

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Effective Communication of PURC's Activities	115	1	5	3.71	1.114
Timely and Clear Communication from PURC	115	1	5	3.43	1.171
Effectiveness of PURC's Public Relations Strategies	115	1	5	3.62	1.064
Awareness of PURC's Role and Functions	115	1	5	3.63	1.120
Public Awareness of PURC's Responsibilities	115	1	5	3.16	1.089
Valid N (listwise)	115				

Source: Researcher's Field Data (2024)

The descriptive statistics for the evaluation of the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC)'s communication and Public Relations strategies based on a sample of 115 respondents provide insightful data. The measure of "Effective Communication of PURC's Activities" received a mean score of 3.71, indicating a generally positive perception of how effectively the PURC communicates its activities, with a standard deviation of 1.114 suggesting a moderate level of variation in responses.

The measure "Timely and Clear Communication from PURC" had a lower mean score of 3.43, reflecting slightly less satisfaction compared to effective communication, with a standard deviation of 1.171, indicating a wider range of opinions on this aspect.

In terms of the "Effectiveness of PURC's Public Relations Strategies," respondents scored a mean of 3.62, showing a favorable view of the PURC's public relations efforts, while the standard deviation of 1.064 suggests relatively consistent opinions among respondents.

Regarding the "Awareness of PURC's Role and Functions," the mean score was 3.63, indicating a solid understanding among the public about the PURC's responsibilities, and the standard deviation of 1.120 points to varied levels of awareness among individuals. Lastly, the "Public Awareness of PURC's Responsibilities" had the lowest mean score at 3.16, suggesting that while awareness exists, there may be room for improvement in public understanding of the PURC's specific roles and responsibilities, with a standard deviation of 1.089 reflecting some diversity in responses. These statistics suggest that while the PURC is perceived positively in terms of communication and public relations, there are areas, particularly concerning public awareness of responsibilities, where further engagement and education may be beneficial.

4.1.7 Public Awareness and Knowledge of the PURC'S Functions

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Comprehension of PURC's Utility Regulation	115	1	5	3.37	1.166
Effective Communication of PURC's Responsibilities	115	1	5	3.34	1.067
Confidence in Understanding PURC's Role in Fair Pricing and Service Quality	115	1	5	3.23	1.229
Expanding PURC's Social Media Communication	115	1	5	4.17	.826

Awareness of PURC's Role and Functions	115	1	5	3.63	1.120
Valid N (listwise)	115				

Source: Researcher's Field Data (2024)

The descriptive statistics for the evaluation of various aspects of public understanding and communication regarding the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) show interesting insights based on a sample of 115 respondents. The measure of "Comprehension of PURC's Utility Regulation" achieved a mean score of 3.37, indicating a moderate level of understanding among the public, with a standard deviation of 1.166 suggesting a diverse range of comprehension levels.

The score for "Effective Communication of PURC's Responsibilities" was slightly lower at 3.34, reflecting similar sentiments about the clarity of the PURC's messaging, with a standard deviation of 1.067 indicating relatively consistent responses. Respondents expressed a lower "Confidence in Understanding PURC's Role in Fair Pricing and Service Quality," scoring an average of 3.23, alongside a higher standard deviation of 1.229, which indicates significant variability in confidence levels among the respondents. Conversely, there was a strong inclination towards "Expanding PURC's Social Media Communication," which garnered a high mean score of 4.17 and a low standard deviation of 0.826, suggesting a clear consensus on the need for enhanced social media engagement.

Finally, awareness of the "PURC's Role and Functions" was rated at a mean of 3.63, showing a reasonable understanding of the PURC's functions, albeit with some variability indicated by the standard deviation of 1.120. Overall, these statistics highlight areas of moderate understanding and confidence while also suggesting a strong public interest in improving

social media communication as a means to enhance engagement and awareness of the PURC's responsibilities.

4.1.8 Proposing and Assessing New Public Relations Tactics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Expanding PURC's Social Media Communication	115	1	5	4.17	.826
Enhancing PURC's Public Relations Through Community Engagement	115	1	5	4.15	.929
Implementing SMS Alerts for Public Communication by PURC	115	1	5	4.20	.975
Integration of Public Feedback in PURC's PR Strategies	115	1	5	3.43	1.068
Enhancing Communication Through Local Languages by PURC	115	1	5	4.32	.833
Valid N (listwise)	115				

Source: Researcher's Field Data (2024)

The descriptive statistics for the evaluation of various communication strategies by the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) reveal valuable insights from a sample of 115 respondents. The highest mean score of 4.32 was recorded for "Enhancing Communication Through Local Languages by PURC," indicating strong public support for utilizing local languages in communications, which may enhance understanding and accessibility among diverse communities. Closely following, "Implementing SMS Alerts for Public Communication by PURC" achieved a mean score of 4.20, suggesting that respondents see

value in timely notifications via SMS to keep the public informed. The strategy of "Expanding PURC's Social Media Communication" also received a favorable mean score of 4.17, reinforcing the need for a stronger online presence. Similarly, "Enhancing PURC's Public Relations Through Community Engagement" scored 4.15, reflecting public endorsement for direct interactions and community involvement to improve outreach and trust. In contrast, the integration of "Public Feedback in PURC's PR Strategies" received a significantly lower mean score of 3.43, with a standard deviation of 1.068 indicating a wider range of opinions on how well public feedback is currently incorporated. Overall, these statistics suggest that while there is considerable support for various communication enhancements, particularly in local language use and digital engagement, there remains room for improvement in how public feedback is utilized within PURC's public relations framework.

4.2 Qualitative Findings

4.2.1 The Effectiveness of Existing Public Relations Strategies Employed by the PURC in Communicating its Regulatory Activities to the General Public.

This section evaluates how effectively the existing public relations (PR) strategies of the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) are in conveying its messages and regulatory activities to the public. The effectiveness is assessed through three key sub-themes: the effectiveness of the PR strategies, the communication channels used and the challenges encountered in understanding PURC's messages.

4.2.1.1 Effectiveness of Public Relations Strategies

The effectiveness of PURC's PR strategies was generally regarded as satisfactory by participants, but with calls for improvements in specific areas. For instance, Participant Four noted that "the commission has various strategies in place... but there is little evidence that most Ghanaians are aware of the functions of PURC," suggesting that although efforts are made, they have not fully translated into widespread public awareness. This indicates that while strategies like the WhatsApp hotline and public hearings were seen as effective in certain contexts, the overall public impact might still be limited. Participant Seven emphasized that "these strategies are effective since information delivered to audiences are properly decoded and understood." However, they also pointed out that illiteracy levels in some regions hinder the effectiveness of these strategies, especially when the messages are too technical. This highlights a key limitation thus while the strategies are designed to cater to various audiences, there remains a gap in their effectiveness for less literate or less informed populations. Grunig and Hunt (1984) on public relations strategies suggests that PR efforts should aim for a two-way communication model where feedback is not only received but also acted upon.

4.2.1.2 Communication Channels Used

PURC uses a range of communication channels to disseminate information about its regulatory activities. According to Participant Six, the most effective channels are "radio, television, and the website," emphasizing that these mediums reach a broader audience and provide regular updates about PURC's activities. Similarly, Participant Three noted the effectiveness of social media, particularly for engagement, stating, "Social Media and Radio... both platforms help create communities around shared interests and enable users to connect and engage with like-minded individuals." This supports the idea that diverse communication

channels, particularly digital ones, are integral for reaching a wide and varied audience (Oltarzhevskiy, 2019). However, despite the diverse channels employed, Participant Four expressed concerns that the PURC's communication via "*paper channels*" and a lack of awareness about existing complaint mechanisms means some public concerns remain unaddressed. This indicates that while traditional methods like meetings and phone calls are used, they may not be as effective in reaching all demographic groups, especially younger, tech-savvy audiences (Molchina, 2018). Lamme and Russell (2010) suggests that media channels must be integrated strategically for maximum reach and impact, with digital platforms playing an increasingly important role in communication efforts. PURC's use of social media is thus a step in the right direction, but further integration of newer technologies like podcasts and SMS alerts could further enhance its communication efforts.

4.2.1.3 Challenges in Understanding PURC'S Messages

Several participants identified technical complexity and the assumption that the audience understands regulatory jargon as a key challenge in the effectiveness of PURC's messages. Participant Five expressed, "Sometimes the messages are too technical for the understanding of the target audience, especially referencing to laws and regulations in most of their communications," pointing out that legal terminologies like "LI 2413" are often not easily understood by the public. Similarly, Participant Four mentioned that PURC's communications often presume "every user of power or water has a basic understanding of the technicalities," which can create confusion among consumers. Participant Three also raised concerns about the language used in PURC's PR materials, stating, "Messages are created with the assumption that every consumer understands the technical details," which makes the communication less effective for a wide audience. These concerns align with Cameron et al. (2014), who argue that effective public relations communication should be simplified to

ensure accessibility to a broader audience. A clearer and more straightforward communication approach that avoids jargon would likely increase public comprehension, especially among communities with lower literacy levels (Schriver, 2017). Another challenge identified was the lack of feedback mechanisms. Participant Four recommended regular "press briefings" and "complaints clinics" to foster better understanding and communication between PURC and the public. These suggestions align with the PR principle of two-way communication (Grunig & Hunt, 1984), which emphasizes dialogue and feedback as key elements of effective PR strategies.

4.2.2 The Current Level of Public Awareness and Knowledge Regarding the functions of the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) in Ghana.

4.2.2.1 Public Awareness of PURC'S Functions

It was found that while the public is generally aware of the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission's (PURC) role in regulating utility tariffs, there is a notable lack of awareness regarding its other functions. Participant Six observed, "The public does know of the existence of the Commission, but their knowledge of most of its functions other than tariff setting is low," indicating that the public's understanding is limited primarily to price regulation. Similarly, Participant Four stated, "The public is generally aware of the Commission's role in the approval of tariffs, but very few know about the other services it provides, like handling consumer complaints and monitoring service standards," further confirming this gap in public awareness. This aligns with research by Grunig and Hunt (1984), who argue that regulatory bodies often face challenges in communicating their full scope of functions, with the public focusing on the most financially impactful aspects, such as pricing.

4.2.3 New Public Relations Tactics and Tools that can Enhance Public Understanding and Engagement with the PURC'S Role and Responsibilities in Regulating Utilities in Ghana.

4.2.3.1 Improvements to PR Strategies

The findings suggest that the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) could improve its Public Relations strategies by simplifying its communication and engaging more directly with diverse audiences. Participant Five emphasized the need to "simplify their communications and explanations," specifically reducing the reliance on technical jargon and legal references that may confuse the public. Participant Seven also highlighted the importance of tailoring messages to local dialects and breaking down information for better comprehension, particularly in rural areas with high illiteracy levels. These suggestions align with Grunig and Hunt's (1984) Excellence Theory, which advocates for clear, accessible communication that meets the needs of specific target audiences. Additionally, Ledingham and Bruning (2000) support the idea that effective public relations require two-way communication and messages that resonate with the cultural and social contexts of stakeholders.

4.2.3.2 Feedback Mechanisms

The findings on feedback mechanisms indicate that enhancing the PURC's communication strategies requires effective feedback channels. "Using social media and website analytics is crucial to see how the public responds to our messages," said Participant Six, highlighting the role of data-driven decisions. Participant Seven emphasized, "We need to incorporate feedback from public engagements and customer service interactions into our policy-making process." Similarly, Participant Four suggested, "PURC should set up regular clinics where

consumers and utility providers can interact directly, allowing for immediate feedback and resolutions." Participant Three proposed SMS alerts as an option, stating, "SMS alerts could provide a quick, straightforward way for the public to give feedback on service delivery." Lastly, Participant Two advocated for a digital solution saying, "An online platform where consumers can provide real-time feedback would ensure that concerns are addressed promptly." These recommendations echo Grunig and Hunt's (1984) view that feedback mechanisms are essential in public relations, as they enable organizations to listen and adapt to stakeholders, ultimately enhancing communication effectiveness.

4.2.3.3 Target Audience Engagement

The findings on target audience engagement underscore the need for PURC to adapt its communication to reach specific groups, especially underserved communities. "Engaging audiences in local dialects is essential," suggested Participant Seven, noting that this would ensure comprehension across regions, particularly rural areas where high illiteracy rates can hinder communication. Similarly, Participant Four observed, "The lack of awareness in Northern regions about PURC's role stems from limited community engagement," recommending that PURC intensify efforts to connect with these populations. Participant Five emphasized the value of local leaders, stating, "Engaging with Assembly members and chiefs is crucial, as they play a vital role in ensuring that messages are understood and reach the right people." These findings align with Coombs and Holladay's (2012) assertion that public relations should be audience-centric, addressing the needs of target populations to improve engagement and understanding. Grunig (2009) also supports this view, emphasizing that effective engagement requires communication strategies that are both accessible and culturally relevant, fostering trust and cooperation between organizations and their stakeholders.

4.2.3.4 Social Media's Role in Public Relations

The findings on social media's role in Public Relations suggest that the PURC could greatly enhance its public engagement by leveraging digital platforms. "Social media's broad reach and cost-effectiveness make it essential for reaching a wider audience," noted Participant Six, emphasizing that platforms like *Facebook and Twitter* enable the Commission to share updates, address inquiries, and maintain two-way communication with consumers. Participant Five agreed, stating, "Using social media to highlight the Commission's achievements and interventions can help build public trust and credibility." Participant Six also pointed out that "social media allows real-time feedback from stakeholders, amplifying the PURC's message effectively." These insights resonate with Jemmer's (2020) assertion that social media is transformative for public relations, enhancing transparency and accountability by enabling direct interaction with the public. Tench and Yeomans (2017) further emphasize that social media is key for brand awareness and reputation management, allowing organizations to maintain an open line of communication with their audiences. Additionally, Hanna, Rohm, and Crittenden (2011) highlight the value of social media as a two-way communication tool, which empowers consumers to express concerns and opinions directly, thereby helping the PURC refine its strategies and build public trust.

4.2.3.5 Use of Alternative Communication Tools

The findings on alternative communication tools indicate that PURC should diversify its strategies to reach a broader audience. "Podcasts could be a great way to engage stakeholders on specific issues and gather feedback," suggested Participant Six, highlighting their potential for interactive engagement. Participant Seven agreed, emphasizing the use of "podcasts in local languages to make the content more accessible, especially for rural and underserved communities." Additionally, Participant Four proposed "community meetings as a way to

facilitate direct interaction between the public and the PURC." Participant Five recommended SMS alerts, noting that "timely information can be provided to the public through these alerts." Participant One highlighted the effectiveness of *WhatsApp*, stating, "Using *WhatsApp* platforms allow us to handle real-time complaints and interact directly with stakeholders, which has been valuable for addressing immediate public concerns." These suggestions align with research by Waters et al. (2009), Liu et al. (2018), and Laskin (2011), which emphasizes the importance of multi-channel communication strategies for improving engagement with diverse audiences.

4.3 Discussions

This section synthesizes both the quantitative and qualitative findings to provide a holistic analysis of the current state of the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC)'s public relations strategies and communication practices.

4.3.1 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Insights

The findings highlight public perceptions of proposed communication strategies by the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC), offering critical insights into public preferences and concerns. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data reveals that effective communication strategies must prioritize inclusivity, accessibility, and responsiveness.

The highest-rated strategy, "Enhancing Communication Through Local Languages," reflects strong public support for culturally and linguistically inclusive practices, as evidenced by its mean score of 4.32. Qualitative feedback, such as Participant Seven's emphasis on overcoming illiteracy barriers in rural areas, corroborates this sentiment. These findings align with recent research indicating that localized communication significantly improves public

comprehension and engagement (Akbar & Kankanhalli, 2022). Tailoring communication to the audience's cultural and linguistic context mirrors best practices recommended in stakeholder communication studies, particularly in resource-constrained settings (Waisbord, 2020).

Similarly, "Implementing SMS Alerts" received widespread approval with a mean score of 4.20. Participant Five highlighted the potential of SMS for bridging information gaps, a point supported by recent studies that emphasize mobile technology as a key tool for real-time, accessible communication in both urban and rural settings (Khan et al., 2021). However, the variability indicated by a standard deviation of 0.975 suggests unequal technological accessibility. Research on digital equity, such as that by Ghaffar et al. (2021), emphasizes the need to address digital divides to ensure that such strategies benefit all demographic groups equally.

In contrast, the strategy of "Integrating Public Feedback" garnered a lower mean score of 3.43, with a standard deviation of 1.068 reflecting significant variability in responses. Qualitative input, including Participant Four's criticism of current feedback mechanisms, highlights gaps in the organization's ability to engage stakeholders effectively. Recommendations for interactive formats, such as press briefings and complaints clinics, align with contemporary models of public engagement that emphasize dialogue and mutual understanding (Frandsen & Johansen, 2022). This approach is consistent with recent findings that two-way communication enhances trust and organizational accountability (Grosser et al., 2022).

The findings align with recent research advocating for inclusivity, technological accessibility, and public engagement in communication strategies. Studies by Kapoor et al. (2022) show that localized communication practices not only enhance message comprehension but also

foster trust, particularly in culturally diverse populations. The high approval for SMS alerts mirrors research demonstrating mobile technology's transformative role in public sector communication (Iivari et al., 2020).

However, the lower approval for public feedback mechanisms points to challenges in establishing effective two-way communication. Recent governance studies by Bovaird et al. (2023) highlight similar gaps, emphasizing the importance of co-creating feedback systems with stakeholders to enhance inclusivity and transparency. Such co-creation ensures that feedback mechanisms are relevant and resonate with the public, increasing their effectiveness.

The findings suggest that PURC should prioritize strategies such as localized language communication and SMS alerts while addressing the deficiencies in its feedback mechanisms. Aligning these strategies with contemporary models like the two-way symmetrical model (Grunig & Hunt, updated by Grosser et al., 2022) and insights from recent studies offer a framework for enhancing stakeholder engagement. This integrated approach could significantly improve the effectiveness, credibility, and public trust in PURC's communication efforts.

4.3.2 Effectiveness of Current Strategies

The findings reveal mixed perceptions regarding the effectiveness of PURC's current Public Relations (PR) strategies, reflecting both successes and areas for improvement. While initiatives such as the *WhatsApp* hotline and public hearings received positive feedback for their impact in certain contexts, they fall short of addressing broader public awareness. Participant Four's observation that many Ghanaians are unaware of PURC's full range of functions underscores a gap in public understanding. This sentiment is mirrored in the

quantitative data, as no strategy achieved a perfect mean score of 5, indicating room for improvement.

The effectiveness of traditional media, such as radio and television, emerged as a notable strength. These channels were widely regarded as effective for reaching broad urban audiences, with Participant Six highlighting their accessibility and regular updates on PURC activities. However, the critique of "paper channels" like printed materials as outdated reflects a generational divide in communication preferences. Younger, tech-savvy respondents favour more digital approaches, suggesting that PURC's reliance on traditional media may limit its engagement with specific demographics.

These findings align with prior research on public sector communication strategies, which emphasize the importance of tailoring methods to diverse audiences. Lamme and Russell (2010) stress that integrated communication efforts are essential for achieving a broader reach, particularly in contexts where public awareness is limited. PURC's challenges in ensuring public understanding of its broader functions resonate with this argument, highlighting the need for a more cohesive and targeted communication approach.

The emphasis on radio and television reflects findings by Berger and Milkman (2020), who observed that traditional media remains a cornerstone of public communication, particularly in regions where digital access is uneven. However, the critique of printed materials and the call for more digital platforms align with trends noted by Bolger et al. (2021), who argue that younger audiences are increasingly disengaged from traditional media and more responsive to interactive, digital strategies.

The generational divide in preferred communication channels also ties to broader patterns identified in public relations studies. Tench and Yeomans (2017) highlight the growing need for organizations to adopt multi-channel strategies that cater to both traditional and digital audiences. For PURC, this could mean leveraging platforms such as social media, mobile apps, and SMS alerts to complement radio and television. Research by Chadwick et al. (2022) similarly underscores the importance of digital innovation in engaging younger demographics, whose expectations are shaped by fast-paced and interactive communication methods.

The findings underscore the mixed effectiveness of PURC's current communication strategies, with successes in traditional media balanced by shortcomings in public awareness and engagement among younger audiences. Addressing these gaps will require a more integrated and diversified approach, incorporating both traditional and digital channels to meet the needs of a varied audience. Aligning with best practices in public communication and drawing on insights from recent studies could enhance PURC's reach and impact, fostering greater understanding and trust among the public.

4.3.3 Addressing Communication Challenges

The findings highlight critical communication challenges faced by PURC, particularly in making their messages accessible and relevant to their target audience. A recurring issue is the technical complexity of PURC's messaging, with frequent use of regulatory jargon and legal terminology that confuses the public. Participant Five's observation that messages are "too technical for the understanding of the target audience" reflects this challenge, which resonates with broader research emphasizing the need to simplify complex information for public consumption (Cameron et al., 2014). The assumption that all audiences possess a basic

understanding of utility regulations, as noted by Participant Three, further underscores the disconnect between PURC and its stakeholders.

The low mean score for integrating public feedback (3.43) adds another dimension to this issue, suggesting a significant gap in two-way communication. This finding is consistent with the two-way symmetrical model of communication, which posits that effective engagement requires mutual understanding and active dialogue (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). The limited use of participatory methods, such as incorporating public input in strategy development, appears to hinder PURC's ability to connect with and serve its audience effectively.

Similar challenges have been documented in other public sector communication studies. Research by Coombs and Holladay (2012) emphasizes the importance of audience-centric strategies, particularly in addressing technical topics. They argue that overly technical communication alienates audiences, especially those with limited literacy or subject matter knowledge. PURC's reliance on jargon mirrors these findings, reinforcing the need to simplify messages and adopt audience-friendly language.

The effectiveness of localized and culturally relevant communication was another prominent theme, with Participant Four recommending collaborations with community leaders and translations into local dialects. The high mean score for the use of local languages (4.32) underscores public support for this approach. This aligns with studies such as those by TingToomey and Dorjee (2019), which highlight the importance of culturally adaptive communication strategies in improving message accessibility and resonance.

The lack of tailored communication for less literate populations emerged as a significant concern. Research has consistently shown that visual aids, oral communication, and the use of local languages can bridge literacy gaps and enhance understanding (Waisbord, 2020).

Collaborative efforts with community leaders, as suggested by Participant Four, are particularly effective in fostering trust and ensuring that messages reach marginalized populations. These insights echo the recommendations of Ndlela (2021), who emphasizes leveraging local networks and traditional knowledge systems to enhance public sector communication in resource-limited contexts. The findings reveal a need for PURC to rethink its communication strategies to address existing challenges. Simplifying technical language, adopting culturally relevant approaches, and incorporating local dialects could significantly enhance message accessibility and audience engagement.

4.3.4 Proposing Actionable Strategies

The findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data highlight several actionable strategies aimed at improving the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission's (PURC) Public Relations and communication effectiveness. These strategies are primarily focused on improving the clarity of messages, increasing public engagement, and diversifying communication platforms.

A major finding is the complexity of the technical language used by PURC in its communication. Qualitative feedback from participants, including Participant Five, indicated that the public often struggles with regulatory jargon and legal terms such as "LI 2413," which can alienate individuals who are unfamiliar with such language. This reflects a broader communication challenge where technical language impedes understanding and engagement. In response, a comprehensive plain-language policy has been proposed to simplify the message content, making it more accessible to the general population. This recommendation is supported by theoretical frameworks in Public Relations, with Cameron et al. (2014) emphasizing the use of visual aids such as infographics and diagrams to make complex information easier to digest. The high mean score of 4.32 for using local languages in

communication further reinforces the importance of simplifying and tailoring messages to diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Another key finding is the public's desire for more localized communication, particularly in languages familiar to the communities. Given the ethnic and linguistic diversity in Ghana, translating key messages into various local dialects and collaborating with local media, such as radio stations, would significantly enhance PURC's outreach. Community leaders and opinion influencers could play a crucial role in amplifying these messages, particularly in rural areas where access to digital media is limited. Coombs and Holladay (2012) underscore the importance of culturally relevant communication strategies in fostering trust and engagement with diverse audiences. This recommendation for culturally sensitive communication aligns with existing research suggesting that community-based engagement significantly boosts the credibility and effectiveness of public communication efforts.

The proposed strategies are consistent with findings from previous studies that have underscored the importance of simplifying messages and utilizing a range of communication methods to increase public understanding. Cameron et al. (2014) argue that complex regulatory language can alienate audiences, particularly when the information is intended for a broad and diverse group. Simplifying communication, using visuals, and translating key messages into local languages are strategies shown to enhance public comprehension and engagement in similar public sector contexts.

Moreover, Coombs and Holladay (2012) emphasize the importance of adopting audiencecentric strategies, which involve tailoring communication to the cultural and social contexts of the target audience. This approach is not only more inclusive but also fosters greater trust, a critical element for public organizations like PURC. Local media partnerships

and collaboration with community leaders align with these strategies, as they leverage established community structures to disseminate messages effectively.

The strong public interest in social media communication (mean score of 4.17) further corroborates findings from other studies that underscore the growing significance of digital platforms in public relations. Jemmer (2020) highlights the role of social media in enhancing transparency and accountability for public organizations, particularly when the platforms are used for real-time updates and interactive communication. This aligns with the proposal to strengthen PURC's social media presence on widely used platforms like *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *WhatsApp*. Social media's capacity for real-time engagement and the ability to receive feedback through interactive features makes it an essential tool for modern PR strategies.

Both the quantitative and qualitative data found a strong desire for feedback mechanisms. The findings suggest that PURC's current communication strategies lack sufficient avenues for the public to voice concerns or provide input. This aligns with Grunig and Hunt's (1984) twoway symmetrical model, which argues that public relations should focus on mutual understanding and dialogue between the organization and its stakeholders. Implementing regular press briefings, an online feedback portal, and an SMS-based complaint system would create opportunities for more interactive communication. These tools would facilitate greater public engagement and help PURC better understand and address the concerns of its stakeholders.

Further supporting this need for engagement, the findings highlight the importance of community-based outreach, especially in underserved areas. Organizing community meetings, workshops and collaborating with local leaders would help bridge the gap in public understanding of PURC's functions beyond tariff regulation. Coombs and Holladay (2012) highlight that localized communication efforts build trust and create a more effective platform

for public participation, especially when reaching communities with limited access to mainstream media.

The diversification of communication methods is a key recommendation. The findings suggest that while traditional methods such as radio and television remain effective, expanding communication formats is crucial for engaging a broader audience. Participants suggested using SMS alerts and podcasts as alternative tools to keep the public informed. This diversification aligns with the work of Waters et al. (2009), who argue that using a range of communication formats helps cater to different audience preferences, ultimately enhancing engagement. Podcasts and SMS alerts provide more dynamic, interactive, and timely methods of delivering information, addressing the needs of both younger, tech-savvy populations and older, more traditional groups. The proposed strategies reflect a comprehensive and integrated approach to improving PURC's Public Relations efforts. These strategies are grounded in both the findings of the present study and best practices from the literature, which emphasize the importance of audience-centric, interactive, and culturally relevant communication.

4.3.5 Strategic Integration and Monitoring

The need for an integrated communication approach that blends both traditional and digital communication methods is emphasized in the findings, which suggest that this strategy is crucial for the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) to maximize its outreach and effectiveness. As shown in the data, integrating traditional media, such as radio and television, with modern digital platforms, including social media, *WhatsApp* and other real-time communication channels, offers a way to ensure that messages reach diverse audiences. This is particularly significant in a country like Ghana, where there is a digital divide between urban and rural areas. In this context, traditional media still plays a vital role in ensuring that

PURC's communications reach a wide audience, while digital platforms allow for more targeted and interactive communication.

Moreover, the findings support the notion that combining these communication strategies will lead to a more comprehensive outreach. Social media for instance, provides a real-time feedback loop, enabling PURC to respond quickly to public concerns and adapt messages accordingly. On the other hand, traditional methods provide broad accessibility, especially in areas where internet penetration is low. This integrated approach of using both old and new media helps PURC create a more holistic communication strategy that caters to the needs of a diverse public.

In terms of monitoring and evaluating communication efforts, the findings suggest that incorporating analytics and direct feedback mechanisms would allow PURC to refine its strategies in a data-driven way. By analyzing social media metrics, website traffic, and direct feedback from community meetings or *WhatsApp* interactions, PURC would be able to pinpoint which strategies are working effectively and which require adjustments. This type of continuous feedback loop can guide PURC's decisions in real time and help them respond to emerging issues or shifts in public sentiment. The implementation of feedback mechanisms, such as SMS-based surveys or online comment portals, would provide direct public input, ensuring that the organization stays attuned to the concerns of its stakeholders.

The need for an integrated communication strategy is well-supported by past studies in public relations. Laskin (2011) emphasized the importance of leveraging both traditional and digital communication methods for effective Public Relations, particularly when engaging with a wide-ranging audience. As Laskin argues, an integrated approach maximizes reach, increases engagement, and allows organizations to connect with a broader spectrum of stakeholders.

This is in line with the findings, which underscore the importance of a dual strategy that reaches audiences in both urban and rural areas, utilizing platforms that resonate with each demographic.

Moreover, the importance of monitoring and analyzing feedback to guide communication strategies is highlighted in the literature. Waters et al. (2009) discuss the growing role of social media analytics in shaping public relations practices, noting that monitoring tools provide valuable insights into public sentiment and engagement. This can help organizations tailor their messages more effectively. The study findings mirror this insight by emphasizing the value of real-time feedback through social media and other digital tools like *WhatsApp*. These platforms offer opportunities for two-way communication, allowing PURC to not only disseminate information but also engage with the public in a dialogue, addressing concerns and clarifying messages in real time.

Additionally, Laskin (2011) also stresses that data-driven decision-making is crucial for organizations to adapt their communication strategies based on concrete insights rather than assumptions or outdated data. This approach helps ensure that transparency and accountability are maintained, building greater trust with the public.

The findings underscore the significance of a strategically integrated communication approach for PURC, blending both traditional media and digital platforms to reach diverse audiences effectively. The use of real-time analytics and feedback mechanisms is essential to ensuring that communication strategies are constantly refined based on public engagement. This approach not only increases the effectiveness of PURC's public relations efforts but also fosters greater transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to stakeholder needs. These findings align with past studies that emphasize the importance of using multiple

communication channels and data-driven insights for enhancing organizational communication and engagement.

4.4 Chapter Summary

The chapter provided an in-depth analysis of the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission's (PURC) Public Relations and communication strategies, drawing insights from both quantitative and qualitative data. Key findings highlighted public support for communication enhancements, particularly the use of local languages and digital platforms, but also found challenges such as technical jargon and limited feedback mechanisms. The qualitative data emphasized the need for clearer messaging and more culturally relevant outreach, while the quantitative data underscored the importance of digital engagement and simplified communication. Several actionable strategies were proposed, including simplifying language, expanding local language use, and implementing effective feedback channels. The chapter underscored the necessity for PURC to adopt a multi-faceted, audience-centric approach to improve public understanding and engagement.

The next chapter outlines the recommendations based on the findings made and concludes the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the major findings of the study, addresses the research questions, highlights the study's limitations, discusses its contribution to knowledge, and provides recommendations for both policy and further research. The chapter concludes with an overall reflection on the significance of the study's findings.

5.1 Summary of some major findings made by the Study

The study examined the effectiveness of Public Relations strategies employed by the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) in Ghana, with a focus on public awareness, engagement, and communication practices. The findings established several critical insights. First, public awareness and understanding of PURC's functions were found to be limited, with most respondents associating PURC primarily with tariff regulation rather than its broader

responsibilities, such as consumer protection and dispute resolution. Additionally, the study highlighted the challenges associated with PURC's communication strategies, including the use of overly technical jargon, which made messages difficult for the general public to comprehend.

Traditional media platforms, particularly radio and television, were identified as the most effective communication tools for PURC, especially in urban areas. However, the study also observed a growing reliance on digital platforms such as social media and SMS alerts for communication. Despite their potential, digital tools were found to be underutilized in rural and underserved communities due to limited digital infrastructure and access. Furthermore, the study found that PURC's feedback mechanisms, including hotlines and online complaint portals, were often inefficient and underutilized, weakening the two-way communication process. Finally, localized outreach programs, such as community engagement sessions conducted in local languages, were noted as essential for improving public understanding and fostering trust between PURC and its stakeholders.

5.2 Answering of research questions by the Study

In addressing the first research question, “What is the level of awareness and knowledge of the functions of the PURC Ghana?”, the study found that while there is general awareness of the existence of PURC, knowledge about its specific functions remains limited. Public perception tends to focus on tariff regulation, with less emphasis on its mandates related to dispute resolution and consumer advocacy.

Regarding the second research question, “What strategies and tactics can be adopted by the PURC Ghana to enhance its engagement with its publics?”, the findings suggested the adoption of simplified communication strategies, localized outreach campaigns, and increased reliance

on social media and SMS alerts. Additionally, community-based engagements and partnerships with traditional and local leaders were recommended as effective tactics for improving communication and fostering trust.

The third research question, “How effective are the Public Relations strategies employed by the PURC?”, found mixed results. While traditional media and some digital tools were moderately effective, significant gaps were observed in PURC's feedback mechanisms and outreach efforts in rural areas. Ineffective two-way communication, reliance on overly technical language, and inadequate community involvement emerged as key challenges hindering the effectiveness of PURC's Public Relations strategies.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

The study encountered several limitations that may have affected the depth and breadth of its findings. First, the sample size, though sufficient for analysis, might not fully represent the diverse perspectives of all stakeholders across Ghana (Bryman, 2016). Small sample sizes can reduce the generalizability of findings, especially in studies involving diverse populations and geographic regions (Creswell, 2014).

Second, the geographical focus of the study was limited to regions where PURC activities were more visible, potentially excluding the experiences of communities with minimal engagement (Neuman, 2014). Research suggests that geographically restricted studies may overlook critical insights from underrepresented areas, leading to partial conclusions (Patton, 2015).

Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data from surveys and interviews posed the risk of response bias, where participants may have provided socially desirable answers (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Self-reported data are often subject to biases such as recall errors and intentional misreporting, which can affect the validity of the findings (Flick, 2018).

Time and resource constraints also limited the study's ability to delve deeper into emerging themes and explore more regions comprehensively (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Such constraints are common in social research and can restrict the scope and richness of data collection (Silverman, 2013).

Finally, the dynamic and evolving nature of Public Relations strategies means that the findings represent a snapshot in time and may not account for subsequent changes or improvements implemented by PURC (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Public Relations environments are continuously evolving, and findings may quickly become outdated if strategies or organizational priorities shift (Wilcox et al., 2015).

5.4 How the study contributed to Knowledge

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on Public Relations practices within regulatory institutions, specifically focusing on the PURC in Ghana. Firstly, it identifies critical gaps in public awareness and understanding of the functions of PURC, highlighting areas that require targeted communication strategies. Secondly, the study provides a practical framework for enhancing communication, emphasizing the need for simplified language, localized messaging, and increased use of digital platforms. Thirdly, it sheds light on the inefficiencies in PURC's feedback mechanisms and offers insights into how these can be improved to foster effective two-way communication. Additionally, the study contributes to the understanding of regional disparities in communication preferences, emphasizing the need for context-specific strategies in urban and rural areas. Finally, the findings offer practical recommendations for regulatory bodies and public relations practitioners seeking to improve stakeholder engagement and trust.

5.5 Recommendations

5.5.1 Policy Recommendations

To address the communication and engagement challenges identified in the study, the following policy recommendations are proposed:

First, PURC should adopt a plain-language communication policy to ensure that messages are clear, concise, and accessible to all stakeholders (Solomon et. al, 2022) Technical and regulatory jargon should be minimized, and visual aids such as infographics should be used to simplify complex messages.

Second, localized communication strategies should be prioritized, with messages translated into widely spoken local languages to improve accessibility as supported by Sprung & Jaroniec, (2000).

Third, PURC should strengthen its presence on digital platforms, including social media such as *Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp* and SMS alerts to provide real-time updates and engage with the public more effectively.

Fourth, feedback mechanisms such as complaint hotlines and online portals should be enhanced to ensure timely and efficient responses to public inquiries and complaints.

Lastly, regular community outreach initiatives should be institutionalized, with active participation from local leaders and stakeholders to build trust and strengthen relationships.

5.5.2 Recommendations for Further Research

Future research could explore the barriers to effective digital communication in rural and underserved areas, focusing on infrastructure, access, and digital literacy (Chesser et al., 2016).

Additionally, studies could assess the long-term impact of simplified communication strategies on public understanding and engagement with PURC (Austin & Pinkleton, 2006). Comparative studies examining Public Relations strategies across other regulatory bodies could provide valuable insights and best practices for PURC.

Further research could also delve into the effectiveness of crisis communication strategies employed by PURC during emergencies or service disruptions (Fuller, Rice, & Pyle, 2024).

Finally, longitudinal studies could track the long-term impact of communication reforms on public trust and engagement (Kent et al., 2003).

5.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has highlighted critical gaps and opportunities in the Public Relations strategies employed by PURC Ghana. While traditional and digital media have played significant roles in communication, challenges such as limited public awareness, ineffective feedback mechanisms, and regional disparities in communication strategies remain pressing concerns. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach, including simplified messaging, localized communication, enhanced digital engagement, and improved feedback systems. The findings underscore the importance of effective public relations in building trust, fostering transparency, and enhancing public engagement with regulatory bodies. By implementing the recommendations proposed in this study, PURC can improve its communication strategies, strengthen its stakeholder relationships, and effectively fulfill its mandate in regulating public utilities in Ghana.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abraham, F., & Mensah, A. (2023). The Impact of Multimedia Campaigns on Public Understanding: A Case Study of the PURC. *Journal of Communication Studies*, 15(2), 45-60.
- Adjei, K., & Sakyi, D. (2018). Public Relations Strategies in the Ghanaian Public Sector: Challenges and Prospects. *Journal of Communication Management*, 22(3), 275-288.
- Adom, D., & Quaye, M. (2023). Digital Storytelling and Interactive Content as PR Tools: Enhancing Public Engagement with the PURC. *International Journal of Digital Media*, 8(3), 98-113.
- Adu, B., & Osei, K. (2023). Assessing Traditional Public Relations Tools for Public Engagement in Regulatory Bodies: A Case Study of Ghana's PURC. *Journal of Public Relations and Communication Research*, 15(3), 87-103.
- Adu, G., & Osei, K. (2023). Traditional Public Relations Tools and Their Impact on Public Engagement with Regulatory Bodies. *Ghanaian Journal of Public Relations*, 12(1), 23-37.
- Aduah, C., Ababio, F., & Afriyie, A. (2019). The Role of Public Relations in Enhancing

- Awareness of Regulatory Bodies: A Case Study of the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 31(4), 159-175.
- Agudey, G. K. (2015). Public Relations and Public Understanding of Regulatory Bodies in Ghana. *International Journal of Communication and Media Studies*, 7(3), 56-72.
- Ahmed, H., & El-Kot, G. (2022). Trust as a Key Element for Quality Communication and Information Management: Insights into Developing Safe Cyber-Organisational Sustainability. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 32(8), 15391558.
- Akakpo, E. (2020). The Role of Regulation in Enhancing Utility Service Delivery in Ghana. *Energy Studies Review*, 15(2), 135-148.
- Akbar, A., & Kankanhalli, A. (2022). Digital Inclusivity in Public Communication. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 22(3), 101–112.
- Amoako, A., & Owusu, M. (2019). The Role of Public Relations in Building Trust In Regulatory Bodies: A Case Study of the PURC. *Journal of Regulatory Studies*, 15(1), 89-104.
- Amoako, E. A., & Asare, B. O. (2022). Public Awareness of Regulatory Functions: A Case Study of the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission. *Journal of Public Policy & Administration*, 9(1), 22-36.
- Amoako, T., & Asare, P. (2022). Public Awareness of Regulatory Functions: A survey of Ghana's Public Utilities Regulatory Commission. *Ghanaian Journal of Public Policy*, 10(4), 114-128.

- Androniceanu, A. (2021). Transparency in public administration as a challenge for a good democratic governance. *Revista Administrative Management Public (RAMP)*, (36), 149-164.
- Ankomah, M. K., & Kyei, M. A. (2023). Public perceptions and knowledge about the PURC: Insights from focus groups and key informant interviews. *International Journal of Public Affairs*, 11(4), 67-80.
- Appiah, K. O., & Amponsah-Tawiah, K. (2020). Institutional Governance and Regulatory Bodies in Ghana: The Case of PURC. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 10(3), 98-116.
- Aryeetey, E., & Ahene, A. A. (2005). Utilities and regulatory reform: The case of Ghana. *Journal of Infrastructure Development*, 6(1), 1-11.
- Asiedu, A., Ntim, S., & Mensah, C. (2020). Exploring public perceptions of regulatory communications: A mixed-methods study of the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission. *International Journal of Public Relations*, 11(2), 45-67.
- Asiedu, M. (2019). Leveraging social media for public engagement: The case of regulatory agencies in Ghana. *Media and Communication Studies Review*, 13(4), 112-126.
- Austin, E. W., & Pinkleton, B. E. (2006). *Strategic public relations management: Planning and managing effective communication programs*. Routledge.
- Berger, J., & Milkman, K. L. (2020). Channels of communication: Traditional versus digital media. *Journal of Communication Studies*, 54(3), 245–265.
- Bolger, A., Williams, L., & Taylor, D. (2021). The evolution of public engagement: Bridging the generational divide. *Media Quarterly*, 29(2), 114–130.

- Bovaird, T., Loeffler, E., & Hine-Hughes, F. (2023). Co-creation in public service delivery: Models and evidence. *Governance Review*, 35(2), 245–268.
- Broom, G. M., & Sha, B.-L. (2013). *Cutlip and Center's effective public relations*. Pearson Higher Education.
- Bazeley, P., & Jackson, K. (2013). *Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Baldwin, R., Cave, M., & Lodge, M. (2012). *Understanding Regulation: Theory, Strategy, and Practice* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Boateng, K. (2018). Utility Sector Reforms in Ghana: The Impact of Regulatory Frameworks. *Journal of African Development*, 22(4), 49-67.
- Bertalanffy, L. von. (1968). *General System Theory: Foundations, Development, Applications*. New York: George Braziller.
- Badu, A., & Asante, M. (2022). Public exhibitions and trade shows as tools for public awareness: Impact on engagement in the utility sector. *Journal of Community Engagement*, 7(1), 33-50.
- Boateng, P., & Agudey, R. (2017). Media relations as a tool for public education: Insights from the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission. *Communication Research Quarterly*, 29(2), 140-160.

- Boakye, P., & Nsor, J. (2016). Public awareness and the role of regulatory bodies: A case study of PURC in Ghana. *African Journal of Regulatory Studies*, 9(3), 189-203.
- Boakye, P., & Tabi, K. (2018). Enhancing public understanding of regulatory roles: The case of the PURC in Ghana. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 31(1), 45-63.
- Coombs, W. T. (2015). *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Coombs, W. T. (2012). *Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding*. Sage Publications.
- Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2012). *The handbook of crisis communication*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Checkland, P. (1981). *Systems Thinking, Systems Practice*. Chichester: Wiley.
- Chen, Y. R. R., Hung-Baesecke, C. J. F., & Chen, X. (2020). Moving forward the dialogic theory of public relations: Concepts, methods and applications of organizationpublic dialogue. *Public Relations Review*, 46(1), 101878.
- Chesser, A., Burke, A., Reyes, J., & Rohrberg, T. (2016). Navigating the digital divide: a systematic review of eHealth literacy in underserved populations in the United States. *Informatics for Health and Social Care*, 41(1), 1-19.
- Çelebi, E. (2020). Public relations in public institutions: Research on the effectiveness of communication process. *Journal of Human Sciences*, 17(3).

- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences* (2nd ed.).
Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research Methods in Education*. Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2013). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Cameron, G. T., Wilcox, D. L., & Reber, B. H. (2014). *Public relations strategies and tactics*. 11th ed. Boston: Pearson.
- Cameron, G. T., Wilcox, D. L., Reber, B. H., & Shin, J. H. (2014). *Public Relations: Strategies and Tactics*. Pearson.
- Chadwick, A., Vaccari, C., & O'Loughlin, B. (2022). Digital innovation and public sector communication: Engaging new audiences. *Digital Governance Journal*, 12(1), 55–74.
- Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2012). Managing public relations: Critical approaches. *Journal of Communication Management*, 16(2), 115–132.
- Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2012). *Managing Corporate Social Responsibility: A Communication Approach*. Wiley-Blackwell.

- Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2012). *The handbook of crisis communication*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Denzin, N. K. (2017). *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods* (3rd ed.). AldineTransaction.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methodologies*. Oxford University Press.
- Darko, S., & Opoku, K. (2021). Assessing the impact of regulatory initiatives on public knowledge: A study on the PURC. *Journal of African Policy Studies*, 13(3), 123137.
- Dickinson-Delaporte, S., Mortimer, K., Kerr, G., Waller, D. S., & Kendrick, A. (2020). Power and responsibility: Advertising self-regulation and consumer protection in a digital world. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 54(2), 675-700.
- Dye, B. J. (2023). When the means become the ends: Ghana's 'good governance' electricity reform overwhelmed by the politics of power crises. *New Political Economy*, 28(1), 91-111.
- Etikan, I., & Bala, K. (2017). Sampling and Sampling Methods. *Biometrics & Biostatistics International Journal*, 5(6), 215-217.#
- Eisenberg, E. M., & Goodall, H. L. (2022). *Organizational communication: Balancing creativity and constraint* (10th ed.). Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Falkheimer, J., & Heide, M. (2018). *Strategic communication and organizational legitimacy*:

- A review. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 12(2), 121-135.
- Frimpong, A., & Boakye, J. (2022). Personalized stakeholder engagement strategies in public relations: An analysis of consultation groups and advisory committees. *Journal of Stakeholder Communication*, 12(1), 58-76.
- Frandsen, F., & Johansen, W. (2022). Strategic public relations in crisis communication. *International Journal of Public Relations*, 28(1), 15–32.
- Field, A. (2018). *Discovering Statistics Using IBM SPSS Statistics* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Fetters, M. D., Curry, L. A., & Creswell, J. W. (2013). Achieving integration in mixed methods designs—principles and practices. *Health Services Research*, 48(6), 2134–2156.
- Flick, U. (2018). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Flick, U. (2018). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (6th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Fowler, F. J. (2014). *Survey Research Methods* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Fuller, R. P., Rice, R. E., & Pyle, A. (2024). US Nonprofit organizations respond to the covid-19 crisis: The influence of communication, crisis experiences, crisis management, and organizational characteristics. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 68(9), 1108-1138.
- Grunig, J. E., Grunig, L. A., & Dozier, D. M. (2020). *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management: Contributions to Effective Organizations*. Routledge.

- Grunig, J. E. (1992). Models of public relations and communication. In J. E. Grunig (Ed.), *Excellence in public relations and communication management* (pp. 285-325). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Grunig, J. E. (2011). *Excellence in public relations and communication management*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Grunig, J. E., & Grunig, L. A. (2011). Two-way symmetrical communication in the new media environment. In *Handbook of Public Relations*, 3rd Edition (pp. 87-100). Sage Publications.
- Grunig, J. E., & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Grunig, J. E. (2001). The Excellence Theory in Public Relations: Past, Present, and Future. In *Public Relations Research Annual* (Vol. 13, pp. 29-41). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Grunig, J. E., & Huang, Y. W. (2000). From Organizational Effectiveness to Relationship Indicators: Antecedents of Relationships, Public Relations Strategies, and Relationship Outcomes. In: J. E. Grunig (Ed.), *Public Relations Research Annual* (Vol. 12, pp. 17-34). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Grunig, J. E., et al. (2002). Modeling Public Relations Effectiveness. In *Public Relations Research Annual* (Vol. 14, pp. 45-59). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Gupta, A., Singh, R. K., & Mangla, S. K. (2022). Evaluation of logistics providers for sustainable service quality: Analytics based decision making framework. *Annals of Operations Research*, 315(2), 1617-1664.

- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59-82.
- Guillemin, M., & Gillam, L. (2004). Ethics, reflexivity, and “ethically important moments” in research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10(2), 261-280.
- Ghaffar, A., Raza, S., & Ahmed, Z. (2021). Bridging the digital divide: Lessons from global public communication. *Digital Society Quarterly*, 7(4), 44–58.
- Grosser, T., Plowman, D., & Reuber, A. (2022). Two-way communication in public relations: An updated model. *Public Relations Review*, 48(1), 55–68.
- Grunig, J. E. (2009). Paradigms of global public relations in an age of digitalisation. *PRism*, 6(2), 1-19.
- Grunig, J. E., & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing Public Relations*. Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Hassan, A. M., & Hashim, I. (2021). The role of transparency in public regulatory institutions: A case study of the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC). *International Journal of Public Administration*, 44(5), 384-399.
- Herrine, L. (2022). What is consumer protection for?. *Loy. Consumer L. Rev.*, 34, 1.
- Holling, C. S. (1978). *Adaptive Environmental Assessment and Management*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons.
- Huang, Y. W., & He, H. (2018). Social Media and Public Relations: A Case Study of the 2016 United States Presidential Election. *Public Relations Review*, 44(5), 823-831.
- Huda, M. (2024). Trust as a key element for quality communication and information

management: Insights into developing safe cyber-organisational sustainability.
International Journal of Organizational Analysis, 32(8), 1539-1558.

Hun-Baesecke, C. J. F., Chen, Y. R. R., & Ni, L. (2021). The Excellence Theory—origins, contribution and critique. *Handbooks of Communication Science*, 313.

Hanna, R., Rohm, A., & Crittenden, V. L. (2011). We're all connected: The power of the social media ecosystem. *Business Horizons*, 54(3), 265-273.

Israel, M., & Hay, I. (2006). *Research Ethics for Social Scientists: Between Ethical Conduct and Regulatory Compliance*. SAGE Publications.

Iivari, N., Sharma, S., & Ventä-Olkkonen, L. (2020). Digital transformation in public sector communication. *Government Information Quarterly*, 37(3), 101–120.

Jemmer, D. (2020). Social media in public relations: A global perspective. *Public Relations Review*, 46(3), 223–239.

Jemmer, K. (2020). The evolving role of social media in public relations: Strategies for engagement. *Journal of Media and Communication Studies*, 12(1), 45-58.

Jin, Y., & Liu, B. F. (2014). The role of social media in crisis communication: A case study of the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 26(2), 114-134.

Kapoor, K., Dwivedi, Y. K., & Williams, M. D. (2022). Cross-cultural communication in public service. *Communications Journal*, 34(2), 150–165.

Kim, J., & Ni, L. (2013). Two-way symmetrical communication: An ethical approach for public relations in a regulatory environment. *Journal of Communication Management*, 17(3), 223-237.

- Kim, S., & Rhee, Y. (2020). The role of social media in public relations strategies: A study of digital communication practices. *Public Relations Review*, 46(1), 101-112.
- Kwaku, D., & Agyemang, T. (2020). Financial transparency and public trust: A longitudinal study of Ghana's regulatory institutions. *Journal of Financial Transparency and Governance*, 8(2), 77-91.
- Kwarteng, N., & Asiedu, G. (2024). Regional inequalities in public awareness of utility regulation in Ghana: An assessment of urban-rural disparities. *Journal of Development Studies*, 16(1), 12-29.
- Kim, S. & Darnall, N. (2021). The Role of Two-Way Symmetrical Communication in Building Trust and Organizational Effectiveness: Evidence from the U.S. Public and Private Sectors. *Public Relations Review*, 47(3), 101995. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2021.101995>
- Kim, S. Y., & Ni, L. (2013). Public Relations and Public Trust: An Empirical Examination of the Effects of Communication on Trust. *Public Relations Review*, 39(4), 310319.
- Katz, D., & Kahn, R. L. (1978). *The Social Psychology of Organizations*. New York: Wiley.
- Kuo, C. M., & Yu, C. Y. (2019). *Understanding the Role of Trust in Public Relations*. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 31(3), 131-145.
- Kun, E. (2024). Challenges in regulating cloud service providers in EU financial regulation: From operational to systemic risks, and examining challenges of the new oversight regime for critical cloud service providers under the Digital Operational Resilience Act. *Computer Law & Security Review*, 52, 105931.

- Kpessa, M. (2017). Public perceptions of regulatory frameworks: Insights from the utilities sector. *African Journal of Political Science*, 12(1), 34-50.
- Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2015). *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Krosnick, J. A., & Presser, S. (2010). Question and questionnaire design. In P. V. Marsden & J. D. Wright (Eds.), *Handbook of Survey Research* (2nd ed., pp. 263-313). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2015). *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Lim, W. M., & Guzmán, F. (2022). How does promotion mix affect brand equity? Insights from a mixed-methods study of low involvement products. *Journal of Business Research*, 141, 175-190.
- Ledingham, J. A., & Bruning, S. D. (1998). *Public relations as relationship management: A relational approach to the study and practice of public relations*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Lee, M., & Ni, L. (2019). Corporate social responsibility and its impact on public relations effectiveness. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 31(3), 123-145.
- Liu, X., & Li, H. (2023). The role of digital transparency in building trust in public regulatory institutions. *Digital Governance Review*, 14(2), 101-117.
- Lauwo, S. G., Azure, J. D. C., & Hopper, T. (2022). Accountability and governance in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in a developing country context: Evidence from Tanzania. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability*

- Journal*, 35(6), 1431-1461.
- Laszlo, E., & Krippner, S. (1998). Systems Theories: A General Framework for Science and Systemic Approaches. In: K. J. G. Schmidt (Ed.), *Systems Theory and Practice: Principles, Perspectives, and Applications*. pp. 1-8.
- Lamme, M. O., & Russell, K. M. (2010). Removing the spin: Toward a new theory of public relations history. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 22(1), 65-84.
- Lamme, M. O., & Russell, K. M. (2010). Rethinking public relations: The role of integrated communication. *Public Relations Review*, 36(4), 451–457.
- Laskin, A. (2011). Theoretical perspectives on public relations: Revisiting a classic. *Journal of Communication Management*, 15(4), 345-359.
- Laskin, A. V. (2011). The role of social media in public relations: A multi-channel approach. *Journal of Communication Management*, 15(3), 207-222.
- Laskin, A. V. (2011). The role of social media in public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 23(2), 159–177.
- Ledingham, J. A., & Bruning, S. D. (2000). *Public Relations as Relationship Management: A Relational Approach to the Study and Practice of Public Relations*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Liu, B. F., Jin, Y., & Austin, L. L. (2018). Communicating crisis uncertainty: A review of the knowledge gaps. *Public Relations Review*, 44(4), 616-626.
- Liu, B. F., Jin, Y., & Austin, L. L. (2018). Public relations and social media: A strategic approach. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 30(1), 1-16.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2017.1396283>

- Kent Jennings, M., & Zeitner, V. (2003). Internet use and civic engagement: A longitudinal analysis. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 67(3), 311-334.
- Molchina, E. (2018). Reaching Young Population in Media Broadcasting: A Scorecard Solution for Target Group Reach Analysis.
- Mensah, A., & Nkrumah, B. (2022). The impact of print media and public service announcements on public understanding of regulatory functions. *Media and Policy Studies*, 13(3), 92-107.
- Meadows, D. H. (2008). *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. Jossey-Bass.
- Macnamara, J., & Gregory, A. (2020). Expanding evaluation to progress strategic communication: Beyond message tracking to open listening. *Future Directions of Strategic Communication*, 141-158.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2016). *Designing Qualitative Research (6th ed.)*. Sage Publications.
- Nkansah, E., & Yeboah, R. (2022). The use of social media platforms in enhancing public engagement with regulatory institutions: A case of Ghana's PURC. *Journal of Public Engagement and Social Media*, 10(4), 54-70.
- Ndlela, M. N. (2021). The role of local networks in public sector communication. *African Communication Research*, 13(1), 45-60.
- Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*

(7th ed.). Pearson.

Nyarko, T., Owusu, G., & Acheampong, J. (2019). Examining the relationship between transparency and trust in Ghana's public institutions. *Journal of Institutional Trust and Transparency*, 7(1), 29-43.

Ofori, D., & Sakyi, D. (2018). The role of public relations in enhancing transparency and trust in regulatory institutions. *African Journal of Communication*, 12(4), 44-58.

Osei, M., & Mensah, P. (2024). Regulatory transparency and its impact on stakeholder relationships in the public utility sector: Case study of PURC. *Journal of Regulatory Studies*, 15(1), 41-59.

Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L., & Wynaden, D. (2001). Ethics in qualitative research. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 33(1), 93-96.

Owusu, J., & Adomako, S. (2021). Strategic public relations and public understanding of utility tariffs: A case study of the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission. *Public Relations Review*, 47(5), 101993.

Osei, P., & Mensah, F. (2023). Regional variations in public knowledge about the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission. *Ghanaian Journal of Development Studies*, 20(1), 55-69.

Owusu, D., & Agyemang, E. (2021). Enhancing public engagement through mobile applications and SMS alerts: The case of Ghana's PURC. *Public Communication and Engagement Journal*, 9(2), 64-79.

Owusu-Ansah, S., Boateng, I., & Agyemang, E. (2021). Public awareness of the functions of the PURC: A survey-based study. *Journal of Public Administration Research*, 10(2), 89-101.

- Ohemeng, F. L. K., & Ayee, J. R. A. (2016). The Politics of Administrative Reforms in Ghana: The Role of PURC. *African Journal of Public Administration and Management*, 27(3), 89-106.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2021). OECD Regulatory Policy Outlook 2021. OECD Publishing.
- Opoku-Boahen, P., Osei, K. A., Ackaa, D., Ghanney, R. A., Kantanka, B., & Marfo-Gyamfi, J. (2017). An analysis of the effectiveness of public relations in promoting public understanding of regulatory bodies in Ghana. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 16(4), 301-314.
- Pallant, J. (2020). *SPSS Survival Manual: A Step-by-Step Guide to Data Analysis Using IBM SPSS* (7th ed.). Routledge.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879–903.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Paulhus, D. L., & Vazire, S. (2007). The self-report method. In R. W. Robins, R. C. Fraley, & R. F. Krueger (Eds.), *Handbook of Research Methods in Personality*

- Psychology (pp. 224-239). The Guilford Press.
- Public Utilities Regulatory Commission Act 538 (1997). The Public Utilities Regulatory Commission Act. Government of Ghana.
- Quaye, F., & Adom, P. (2023). Digital storytelling and web content for public engagement: An assessment of their impact in regulatory messaging. *Journal of Digital Communication*, 18(2), 88-105.
- Rosenbloom, D. H., Kravchuk, R. S., & Clerkin, R. M. (2022). Public administration: Understanding management, politics, and law in the public sector. Routledge.
- Resnik, D. B. (2020). What is ethics in research & why is it important? National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2011). *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Schrivers, K. A. (2017). Plain language in the US gains momentum: 1940–2015. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, 60(4), 343-383.
- Swerling, H. (2014). The role of media in shaping public perceptions. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 26(1), 60-79.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2013.838131>
- Schnackenberg, A. K., Tomlinson, E., & Coen, C. (2021). The dimensional structure of transparency: A construct validation of transparency as disclosure, clarity, and accuracy in organizations. *Human Relations*, 74(10), 1628-1660.

- Solomon, E. D., Mozersky, J., Wroblewski, M. P., Baldwin, K., Parsons, M. V., Goodman, M., & DuBois, J. M. (2022). Understanding the use of optimal formatting and plain language when presenting key information in clinical trials. *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics*, 17(1-2), 177-192.
- Silverman, D. (2013). *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Sprung, R. C., & Jaroniec, S. (Eds.). (2000). *Translating into Success: Cutting-edge strategies for going multilingual in a global age* (Vol. 11). John Benjamins Publishing.
- Sweeney, L., & Coughlan, J. (2008). Public relations strategies and organizational performance: A survey of industry practices. *Public Relations Review*, 34(4), 317-325.
- Senge, P. M. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York: Doubleday.
- Smith, R. D. (2020). *Strategic Planning for Public Relations*. Routledge.
- Toth, E. L., & Grunig, J. E. (2001). The role of public relations in effective organizational communication. In R. L. Heath (Ed.), *Handbook of public relations* (pp. 173-188). Sage Publications.
- Tench, R., & Yeomans, L. (2017). *Exploring Public Relations and Management Communication*. Pearson.
- Ting-Toomey, S., & Dorjee, T. (2019). *Communicating across cultures*. 3rd ed. New York: Guilford Press.

- Wiles, R. (2012). *What Are Qualitative Research Ethics?* Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Waters, R. D., Burnett, E., Lamm, A., & Lucas, J. (2009). Engaging stakeholders through social networking: How nonprofit organizations are using Facebook. *Public Relations Review*, 35(2), 102-106.
- Waters, R. D., Tindall, N. T., & Morton, T. S. (2009). Media advocacy and public relations campaigns: A study of environmental organizations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 21(3), 271-291. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10627260802249173>
- Waters, R. D., Tindall, N. T., & Morton, T. S. (2009). Media and public relations: Trends and tactics. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 21(2), 173–193.
- Waisbord, S. (2020). Communication inequalities in development contexts. *Global Media Journal*, 12(4), 89–105.
- Waisbord, S. (2020). Communication inequalities in the global south. *Media Development*, 66(4), 12–21.
- Yang, A., & Kelleher, T. (2017). Transparency and ethical communication in public relations: A review of the literature. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 29(2), 162-179.
- Zerfass, A., Verčič, D., & Volk, S. C. (2017). Communication Evaluation and Measurement: Skills, Practices, and Utilization in European Organizations. *Journal of Communication Management*, 21(1), 58-74. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCOM-07-2016-0065>
- Zitelman, K., & McAdams, J. (2021). The Role of State Utility Regulators in a Just and Reasonable Energy Transition: Examining Regulatory Approaches to the

Economic Impacts of Coal Retirements (No. DOE-NARUC-27486-6). National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, Washington, DC (United States).

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PURC PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS

I am a master's student at the University of Media, Arts, and Communication (UniMAC) researching how Public Relations supports understanding of public regulatory institutions, focusing specifically on the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC). This question guide aims to gather insights into the Public Relations strategies employed by the PURC, public awareness of its role and ideas for improving communication with the public. In this regard, the study seeks your honest opinion. Please be assured that your identity will be kept confidential and your personal information will not be used. In addition, the answers you provide in the interview will be used strictly for academic purposes only. Please indicate your level of agreement or otherwise with each question. I would appreciate detailed and elaborate responses from you, please.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Gender

a. Male []

b. Female []

2. Age

a. 18 – 24 years []

b. 25 – 34 years []

c. 35 – 44 years []

d. 45 – 54 years []

e. 55 years and above []

3. Educational Level

a. Primary education []

b. Secondary education []

c. Vocational/Technical education []

d. Bachelor's degree []

e. Master's degree or higher []

f. PhD []

g. Other

4. Employment Status

a. Employed (Full-time) []

b. Employed (Part-time) []

c. Self-employed []

d. Unemployed []

e. Student []

f. Other

5. Position:

6. Years in current position:

a. Consent: Yes []

b. No []

SECTION B: EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EXISTING PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGIES

1. How would you describe the current Public Relations strategies employed by the PURC to communicate with the public?

.....
.....
.....

2. In your opinion, how effective are these strategies in delivering the PURC's message to the general public?

.....
.....
.....

3. Which communication methods (e.g., social media, radio, television) used by the PURC do you find most effective and why?

.....
.....
.....

4. What challenges, if any, have you encountered in understanding PURC's messages through its PR efforts?

.....
.....
.....

5. What improvements would you suggest enhancing the effectiveness of the PURC's current PR strategies?

.....
.....

.....

SECTION C: PUBLIC AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE PURC'S FUNCTIONS

1. How familiar are you with the functions and responsibilities of the PURC?

.....
.....
.....

2. What specific information about the PURC's role in regulating utilities do you think the public is generally aware of?

.....
.....
.....

3. Do you think the public has sufficient understanding of how PURC operates? Why or why not?

.....
.....
.....

4. Where do you typically receive information about the PURC's activities and decisions?

.....
.....
.....

5. What are some areas of PURC's functions that you feel the public is less informed about?

.....
.....
.....

SECTION D: PROPOSING OF NEW PUBLIC RELATIONS TACTICS

1. What new or alternative public relations tools do you think the PURC could use to better communicate with the public?

.....
.....

2. How could the PURC improve its engagement with specific groups, such as rural communities or underserved populations?

.....
.....

3. In your opinion, what role should social media play in the PURC’s communication efforts?

.....
.....

4. What other forms of communication (e.g., community meetings, SMS alerts, podcasts) do you think the PURC should consider increasing public engagement?

.....
.....

5. How can the PURC enhance its feedback mechanisms to ensure that public concerns are addressed more effectively?

.....
.....

6. Please do you have anything else to say?

.....
.....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR VIEWS AND YOUR TIME.

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

I am a master's student at the University of Media, Arts, and Communication (UniMAC) researching how Public Relations supports understanding of public regulatory institutions, focusing specifically on the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC). This questionnaire is designed to gather information on the Public Relations strategies of the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC), public awareness of its functions and suggestions for enhancing communication. Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement by selecting the appropriate option. Please be assured that your identity will be kept confidential and your personal information will not be used. In addition, the answers you provide in the interview will be used strictly for academic purposes only. Please indicate your level of agreement or otherwise with each question.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Gender

- a. Male []
- b. Female []
- c. Prefer not to say []

2. Age

- a. 24 years []
- b. 25 – 34 years []
- c. 35 – 44 years []
- d. 45 – 54 years []
- e. 55 years and above []

3. Education Level

- a. Primary Education []
- b. Secondary Education []
- c. Vocational/Technical Education []
- d. Bachelor's Degree []
- e. Master's Degree or Higher []

4. Employment Status

- a. Employed (Full-time) []
- b. Employed (Part-time) []
- c. Self-employed []
- d. Unemployed []
- e. Student []

5. Have you ever interacted with the PURC in any capacity?

- a. Yes []
- b. No []

SECTION B: EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EXISTING PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGIES

6. The PURC's Public Relations strategies effectively communicate its regulatory activities to the public.
- a. Strongly Disagree []
 - b. Disagree []
 - c. Neutral []
 - d. Agree []
 - e. Strongly Agree []
7. I regularly receive clear and timely information from the PURC regarding its regulatory activities.
- a. Strongly Disagree []
 - b. Disagree []
 - c. Neutral []
 - d. Agree []
 - e. Strongly Agree []
8. The channels used by the PURC (e.g., radio, TV, social media) are effective in reaching the general public.
- a. Strongly Disagree []
 - b. Disagree []
 - c. Neutral []
 - d. Agree []
 - e. Strongly Agree []
9. The information provided by the PURC through its communication efforts is easy to understand.
- a. Strongly Disagree []
 - b. Disagree []
 - c. Neutral []
 - d. Agree []
 - e. Strongly Agree []

10. The PURC's current Public Relations strategies are effective in keeping me informed about utility regulation issues.

- a. Strongly Disagree []
- b. Disagree []
- c. Neutral []
- d. Agree []
- e. Strongly Agree []

SECTION C: PUBLIC AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE PURC'S FUNCTIONS

11. I am familiar with the role and functions of the PURC in regulating utilities in Ghana.

- a. Strongly Disagree []
- b. Disagree []
- c. Neutral []
- d. Agree []
- e. Strongly Agree []

12. The general public is well-informed about the responsibilities of the PURC.

- a. Strongly Disagree []
- b. Disagree []
- c. Neutral []
- d. Agree []
- e. Strongly Agree []

13. I understand how the PURC regulates utility providers (e.g., water, electricity).

- a. Strongly Disagree []
- b. Disagree []
- c. Neutral []
- d. Agree []
- e. Strongly Agree []

14. The PURC has effectively communicated its responsibilities and how they impact utility consumers.

- a. Strongly Disagree []

- b. Disagree []
- c. Neutral []
- d. Agree []
- e. Strongly Agree []

15. I feel confident in my understanding of the PURC's role in ensuring fair utility prices and quality service.

- a. Strongly Disagree []
- b. Disagree []
- c. Neutral []
- d. Agree []
- e. Strongly Agree []

SECTION D: PROPOSING AND ASSESSING NEW PUBLIC RELATIONS TACTICS

16. The PURC should use more social media platforms to communicate with the public.

- a. Strongly Disagree []
- b. Disagree []
- c. Neutral []
- d. Agree []
- e. Strongly Agree []

17. The PURC could improve its Public Relations by using community meetings or forums.

- a. Strongly Disagree []
- b. Disagree []
- c. Neutral []
- d. Agree []
- e. Strongly Agree []

18. The PURC should adopt SMS alerts to inform the public about important updates and decisions.

- a. Strongly Disagree []
- b. Disagree []

- c. Neutral []
- d. Agree []
- e. Strongly Agree []

19. Feedback from the public is currently well-integrated into the PURC's Public Relations strategies.

- a. Strongly Disagree []
- b. Disagree []
- c. Neutral []
- d. Agree []
- e. Strongly Agree []

20. The PURC should increase its efforts in using local languages to communicate with diverse communities.

- a. Strongly Disagree []
- b. Disagree []
- c. Neutral []
- d. Agree []
- e. Strongly Agree []

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!