



**ENHANCING PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFECTIVENESS THROUGH
COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES: A CASE STUDY OF THE MINISTRY OF
LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES.**

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research is a result of my own original research and that, no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or any other higher education institute.

I further declare that all the resources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR

This Dissertation has been prepared and presented under my supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting of Dissertation laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication, UniMAC.

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ABSTRACT

The role of the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources especially in land and natural resources management and preservation cannot be overlooked. The ministry indirectly contributes to environmental sustainability, and economic development. In doing so, the ministry utilises public relations to effectively communicate strategies, policies and initiatives to be implemented within this critical sector. However, the role of communication strategies seems ambiguous in the practise of public relations. Therefore, the study explored communication strategies that enhanced public relations within the Ghanaian context using the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources in Ghana as a case study. Utilizing a qualitative method design involving document analysis and interviews, three research questions were answered; (1) what are the current communication practices used by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources in Ghana for engaging with its stakeholders? (2) What are the challenges encountered in the communication process within the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources? (3) What strategies can enhance public relations effectiveness within the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources? The findings showed that the ministry somewhat engages with the stakeholders using both modern (social media, radio and TV) and traditional (quarterly meetings, staff durbar, conferences) approaches. However, these engagement with stakeholders could be improved if structural communication approaches are specified and well understood. Also, it was discovered that the ministry faces challenges with bureaucracy in obtaining finances, managing complex information and miscommunications. Moreover, it was found that the ministry adhering to transparency in communication, engaging in regular communication and feedback, and adopting well-defined communication strategies could effectively enhance public relations within the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources. This study suggested a need for strategic improvement in communication practices to enhance stakeholder engagement and transparency within the ministry of Lands and Natural Resources.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family, a special feeling of gratitude to my husband and daughter whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity rings in my ears.

I also dedicate this dissertation to extended family and work colleagues who supported me throughout the process especially during my data collection. I will always appreciate all they have done, especially my boss Mr. Abraham Otabil for helping me develop and master my Public Relations (PR) thinking and skills.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MMDCE Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives

ISD Information Services Department

IPR Institute of Public Relations

UNIMAC-IJ University of Media, Arts and Communications-Institute of Journalism

HR Human Resource

PRO Public Relations Officer

TV Television

PR Public Relations

NGO Non- Government Organization

CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

The study of Public Relations among Governmental organisations is on upsurge. Knowledge of communication strategies in public administration and the practice of effective communication are essential factors for fostering good relationships with stakeholders, ensuring transparency, and building trust within the public sector (Luoma-aho & Canel, 2020; Ogunyombo & Azeez, 2018).

One crucial government organisation recent study has focused on is the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources. As Farazmand (2023) notes, public relations in governmental organizations involves ensuring the effective transmission of policies, actively managing stakeholder relationships, and safeguarding the reputation of the organization. In an era where government agencies are expected to be transparent and accountable, the role of PR becomes even more critical in ensuring that the objectives and activities of the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources align with national interests and public expectations (Hibbert, 2011). It also informs best practices for organizational effectiveness and promotes transparency (Odoom et al., 2024).

This chapter presents the background of the study, research problem; aim and objectives, research questions; scope of the study, significance of the study, and the organisation of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

The role of the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources cannot be overlooked, especially relating to land and natural resources management and preservation. The ministry plays a

central role in ensuring the sustainable use of the country's natural wealth such as forests, mineral resources, and water bodies (Anani-Bossman & Mudzanani, 2020).

The ministry indirectly contributes to environmental sustainability, and socio-economic development in Ghana (Kazapoe et al., 2023). Also, the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources' crucial position in managing Ghana's land and natural resources suggests that its responsibilities directly affect livelihoods, the environment and the economy (Madzivhandila & Niyimbanira, 2020). Given this context, the ministry's operations are intertwined with administrative, environmental conservation and economic stability.

The significance of effective communication and public relations (PR) strategies within such a vital government body cannot be overstated. Osswald (2019) suggests that effective public relations (PR) and communication strategies are major factors that drive the work of the ministry. Public relations serve as a bridge between the ministry and the public, facilitating communication, understanding, and collaboration. Ehling (2013) argues that in the context of natural resources management, effective communication fosters understanding and engagement with the public.

Effective PR strategies can foster a positive image of the ministry, enhancing public trust and encouraging community involvement in resource management (Fazil et al., 2024). One of the key benefits of a strong PR strategy is the ability to build a positive public image of the ministry. In turn, this can enhance public trust, which is essential for the successful implementation of policies, especially in Ghana, where land management and environmental conservation are complex and often have contentious issues (Dozier, 2013).

Several studies suggest that public relation is dynamic and depends on the context of study (Aljumah et al., 2023; Anani-Bossman, 2022; Tandoh,2020). However, Neef et al. (2023) argue that in a developing nation's context, public relation may involve management practices tasked

with building interest and relationships between organisations, stakeholders and the public through the delivery of information using appropriate communication methods (Neef et al., 2023). This requires the ministry to use appropriate communication methods, such as public outreach campaigns, stakeholder consultations, and social media, to ensure that the public is informed and actively involved in resource management processes (Hodges & Edwards, 2014).

Schlager (2019) contends that both internal and external communications and several public issues could be addressed using communication models. These models, if implemented effectively, can help streamline communication across different levels of government and between different sectors, allowing for a more coordinated and unified approach to environmental management (Kent & Li, 2020). However, in the Ghanaian context, communication models are undefined within government agencies (Anani-Bossman & Tella, 2017). This study seeks to explore the communication strategies that enhances public relations within the Ghanaian context using the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources in Ghana as a case study.

1.2 Problem Statement

Public Relations stand as a cornerstone in the effective functioning of governmental bodies, particularly within the domain of natural resource management (Andersson, 2024). As governments worldwide navigate complex socio-political landscapes, the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources in Ghana faces challenges of maintaining transparent and communicative relationships with its stakeholders (Nutsugah & Anani-Bossman, 2023). Svenbro and Wester (2023) claim effective communication strategies play a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions, promoting trust, and ensuring the successful implementation of policies and initiatives within this critical sector. Despite the pivotal role of public relations in organisational sustainability most studies focus on understanding the role of communication strategies in public relations across various sectors (Anani-Bossman, 2021; Anani-Bossman &

Bruce, 2021). There exists a need for empirical investigation into the communication practices within such ministries to identify gaps and propose targeted interventions for enhancing public relations effectiveness. This study addresses the existing gap by conducting a comprehensive case study of the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources in Ghana to promote sustainable natural resource governance.

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

The study explores the effectiveness of public relations in a government agency using communication strategies and seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the existing communication practices used by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources for engaging with stakeholders.
2. To identify the challenges encountered in the communication process.
3. To explore strategies for enhancing public relations effectiveness within the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What are the current communication practices used by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources in Ghana for engaging with its stakeholders?
2. What are the challenges encountered in the communication process within the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources.
3. What strategies can enhance public relations effectiveness within the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources?

1.5 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study focuses on exploring communication strategies that enhances effective public relations at Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources. It explores the experiences of officers who have worked with the Ministry for more than two years and stakeholders' perception using interviews.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study has theoretical, practical and policy significance.

- Theoretically, the study contributes to the body of knowledge in public relations and communications. That is, it expands knowledge on how public relations can be improved using communication strategies.
- Practically, the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources could reform the existing communication strategies to enhance the effectiveness of public relations.
- Policies: the study informs the development of policies relating to communication strategies and public relations within government organisations.

1.7 Organisation of the Study

This study comprises of five chapters. Chapter One provides an introduction to the study. It provides background information in reference to studying public relations within governmental organisations such as the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources. The specific aim and objectives of the study, research questions; the scope and significance of the study are highlighted. Chapter Two reviews relevant empirical literature related to public relations and communication within governmental organisations. It also highlights some existing gaps in literature and a summary of the chapter. Moreover, Chapter Three describes the research methodology. It explains the research design, method, data collection techniques, population and sampling procedures, data collection, analysis and interpretation. Chapter Four discusses

the major findings of the study whereas Chapter Five presents summary of findings, recommendations from the study and conclusion.

1.8 Chapter Summary

The role of the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources cannot be overlooked, especially in building interest and relationships between stakeholders and the public through information delivery using effective communication approaches. However, there is a gap in communication relay within and outside the Ministry undermining its public relations with stakeholders, and the public. The study explores from the perspectives of officers, stakeholders and the public current communication practices, challenges encountered within the communication process, and strategies that can enhance public relations effectiveness. The theoretical, practical and policy significance of this study are highlighted.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant empirical literature related to public relations and communication within governmental organisations. It expands on theoretical foundations underpinning the study and highlights the existing gaps in literature. This section covers current communication practices.

2.1 Review of Relevant Literature

2.1.1 Public Relations

Review of studies on public relations suggest an incomplete but development in theory building (Ferguson, 2018). However, several studies have explored public relations in areas such as public engagement (Jelen-Sanchez, 2017), internal communication (Lee & Yue, 2020) and organisational-public relationships (Yang & Taylor, 2014). Further review from the work of Alkathiri and Alharbi (2024) suggest that recent research in public relations focused on local governments and systems of governance (Olabanjo et al., 2019; Turistiati et al., 2023) and organisational legitimacy in private-public partnerships (Marschlich & Ingenhoff, 2022). However there has been less attention on exploring public relations in the context of natural resources governmental organisations.

In the context of Ghana, public relations were promoted through the Information Service Department (ISD) to bridge communication gap between the government, and the citizens (Nutsugah & Anani-Bossman, 2023). Recent development in public relations has led to the establishment of institutes that are mandated to professionally train practitioners. For example, the Institute of Public Relations (IPR, Ghana) has trained more than 1500 professionals (Anani-

Bossman, 2020). However, Anani-Bossman (2021) argues that public relations professionals deliberately seek to build organisational reputation and image within the social context. Despite this development over the past years, researchers suggest that public relations in governmental organisations is less effective (Mickson & Anlesinya, 2020). According to Pompper and Adae (2022) the nature of public relations is overly theoretical in nature but less practical in government agencies. This disconnect between theory and practice suggests that there is a need for more research and innovation to bridge the gap and improve the practical application of public relations in government settings (Pompper & Adae, 2022).

2.1.1.1 Challenges and Opportunities for Public Relations in Government Agencies

One of the key challenges faced by public relations in governmental organizations in Ghana is the lack of effective communication strategies (Rodríguez-Salcedo, 2012). However, the public relations field has less explored opportunities that could enhance communication in governmental agencies (Palazzo et al., 2020; Pompper & Adae, 2022). The traditional methods of communication, such as press releases and public service announcements, may no longer be sufficient in addressing the needs and expectations of the public in the digital age. Moreover, the rise of social media and other digital platforms has transformed the way information is disseminated, presenting both challenges and opportunities for public relations professionals working in government agencies (Cismaru, 2018; Watson, 2014).

Therefore, Nuseir et al. (2022) recommends further studies to explore some challenges and opportunities for promoting public relations in government agencies in Ghana. This research could focus on identifying innovative communication strategies, leveraging digital platforms, and enhancing the skills and capacity of public relations professionals in the public sector (Verčič, 2021). There is a need to examine how public relations can be used to foster greater transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement in government activities. Studies could provide valuable insights into how public relations can be used as a tool for strengthening

democratic governance and improving public trust in government institutions (Deters & Falkner, 2021).

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that the challenges faced by public relations in governmental organizations are not unique to Ghana. Many countries face similar issues in terms of public skepticism towards government communication and the need for more effective engagement strategies (Hutter & Kriesi, 2020). Therefore, comparative studies that examine public relations practices in government agencies across different contexts could provide valuable insights into best practices and strategies that can be adapted to suit specific national and organizational settings.

2.1.2 Current Communication Practices

Research into communication practices of governmental bodies responsible for natural resource management intimate diverse range of strategies and channels utilized to engage stakeholders (Cornelissen, 2020). Hilliard and Newsome (2013) emphasize the importance of multi-stakeholder platforms and participatory approaches in facilitating dialogue and knowledge exchange among stakeholders. These approaches play a significant role in ensuring that different groups—ranging from local communities to international organizations—are informed, involved, and able to provide feedback in decision-making processes.

However, despite the recognition of the value of inclusive communication, there is a lack of empirical studies specifically examining the communication practices of ministries overseeing lands and natural resources in the Ghanaian context (Odoom et al.,2021). This gap suggests a need for research that systematically analyses the current communication strategies and channels employed by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, including their reach, accessibility, and effectiveness in engaging diverse stakeholders.

Ghana, like many developing countries, faces numerous challenges in the sustainable management of its land and natural resources. The country's rich natural resources, including minerals, forests, and water bodies, have the potential to drive economic growth (Poku et al., 2023). However, Sorour et al.'s (2021) study on the exploitation of these resources has often led to environmental degradation, social conflicts, and the marginalization of local communities, particularly in mining and forestry sectors. Effective communication is, therefore, essential in ensuring that the Ministry's policies and actions are understood, accepted, and implemented by the stakeholders involved, and that the voices of marginalized groups are not overlooked (Sorour et al., 2021).

The communication strategies employed by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (MLNR) in Ghana have significant implications for policy outcomes (Opoku et al., 2022). These strategies must not only inform the public and stakeholders about government actions but also allow for the exchange of knowledge and the incorporation of stakeholder feedback into the decision-making process. In Ghana's context, Aekah (2023) claims communication strategies employed by the MLNR are expected to address a broad array of stakeholders, ranging from local communities, landowners, and resource users to governmental institutions, international agencies, and civil society organizations. Even though one of the critical factors that influence the effectiveness of communication strategies is the reach and accessibility of the channels used by the Ministry, effective communication practices must ensure that information is accessible to all stakeholders, regardless of their location, education level, or socio-economic status (Asomah, 2020; Mprah et al., 2023). Ampofo (2020) suggests in a country like Ghana, where access to technology may vary across different regions, it is essential to understand how well the Ministry's communication methods reach stakeholders in remote or underserved areas. This includes exploring the Ministry's use of traditional communication methods such as radio broadcasts, town hall meetings, and community

engagement through local leaders, as well as digital platforms such as websites, social media, and mobile applications (Nartey & Ladegaard, 2021).

Another important consideration is the effectiveness of the Ministry's communication strategies in fostering genuine engagement and participation (Arkorful, et al., 2021). It is not enough for the Ministry to merely broadcast information; there must be opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to discussions and influence decisions. Participatory approaches that encourage dialogue and mutual learning between stakeholders are critical in ensuring that the policies developed by the Ministry are responsive to local needs and concerns. The MLNR must, therefore, ensure that its communication channels do not only serve as a one-way flow of information but also facilitate two-way communication, where stakeholders are able to provide feedback, ask questions, and engage in meaningful conversations with policymakers.

According to Ahakwa et al. (2021), the inclusion of diverse stakeholder groups in the decision-making process is particularly crucial in the context of Ghana, where land ownership and resource rights are often complex and contested. Local communities, especially those in rural and resource-rich areas, may have a deep connection to the land and natural resources that the government seeks to manage. Essel et al. (2020) argue that these communities may also be disproportionately affected by the impacts of resource extraction or land use policies. Therefore, it is vital that the Ministry's communication strategies are designed to build trust with these communities, address their concerns, and include their perspectives in the planning and management processes. In this regard, the Ministry must be transparent in its decision-making and ensure that local stakeholders understand how their input will influence policy.

Despite these theoretical and practical considerations, there is a lack of empirical studies specifically examining how the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources in Ghana employs these strategies. Odoom et al. (2021) points out that existing research on communication

practices in Ghana's natural resource sector remains limited. A key gap is the absence of research that systematically analyses the strategies and channels used by the Ministry to engage stakeholders. This research gap is particularly important because it limits the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of current communication practices and identify areas for improvement. An in-depth study of the Ministry's communication practices is necessary to assess the reach, accessibility, and effectiveness of the Ministry's current communication strategies in engaging diverse stakeholders.

2.1.3 Internal Communication Strategies

Internal communication channels within governmental organizations are complex and distinct (Van Ruler, 2020). They address the unique needs of a large and varied workforce (Ophilia & Hidayat, 2021). Ophilia and Hidayat (2021) describe internal communication strategies as comprising of the mode of communication (either face-to-face, electronic or visual media, such as videos or infographics) communication channel (internal communication flow, which is divided into downward, upward, and horizontal communication) and communication climate (the feelings and attitude attached to the delivery of the information). However, Ihm and Kim (2021) argue that intranet systems comprising both traditional communication approaches (such as meetings, document repositories, discussion forums and event calendars) and digital communication approaches (such as emails) could enhance effective dissemination of information within an organisation.

2.1.3.1 Modes of Communication in Internal Strategies

One of the key components of internal communication strategies is the mode of communication employed. Each mode of communication has distinct advantages and is used strategically to serve purposes within the organization.

Face-to-Face Communication

This is often considered the most effective method of communication, particularly when conveying complex information or when there is a need for immediate feedback. It enables a personal connection between the sender and the receiver, fostering trust and reducing misunderstandings. In governmental organizations, face-to-face communication is commonly used for meetings, briefings, or one-on-one discussions between managers and subordinates. Its primary advantage is the ability to read non-verbal cues such as body language and facial expressions, which can help to clarify or reinforce the message. Moreover, it allows for more immediate interaction and the opportunity for clarification, ensuring that both parties are on the same page.

Electronic Communication

Electronic communication has become a cornerstone of modern internal communication strategies. With the rise of email, instant messaging systems, and digital platforms, this mode offers speed, accessibility, and convenience. It is especially useful for communicating large volumes of information or when reaching individuals across different geographical locations. Emails and digital platforms are used for sending official announcements, policy updates, or requests for reports, and they provide a documented record of communication. However, the challenge with electronic communication lies in its potential to be impersonal and sometimes misinterpreted, especially when the tone or intent is not clear.

Visual Media (Videos, Infographics)

Visual media is increasingly becoming an essential tool in internal communication, particularly in large organizations. Videos and infographics condense complex information into easy-to-understand formats. They are particularly effective in conveying data-driven content, such as performance reports, statistics, or policy changes. Infographics, with their combination of text,

visuals, and graphs, make information more digestible and engaging. Videos, on the other hand, add an emotional or human element to the message, which can be useful in delivering motivational content or leadership messages. Visuals can also break the monotony of text-heavy communication and hold employees' attention for longer periods.

Intranet Systems

Madsen (2022) highlights the growing importance of intranet systems in enhancing internal communication within governmental organizations. These systems integrate traditional communication approaches with digital tools, creating a comprehensive platform for information dissemination and collaboration. Traditional tools such as meetings, document repositories, discussion forums, and event calendars are combined with digital communication methods like emails and instant messaging systems. This hybrid approach allows organizations to cater to different communication preferences and needs, offering a more inclusive and efficient communication environment (Yang et al., 2023).

Intranet systems enable the centralization of information, making it easily accessible to employees across different departments and geographical locations (Urquizo et al., 2021). Employees can access key documents, policy updates, or event details at any time, reducing reliance on face-to-face interactions and ensuring that crucial information is readily available. Additionally, intranet systems can provide forums or discussion boards for employees to ask questions, share feedback, or collaborate on projects, further enhancing horizontal communication.

Moreover, Opoku et al.'s (2022) study suggest digital tools such as emails and internal messaging systems allow for quicker, more efficient dissemination of information. These tools support both synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (delayed) communication, giving employees the flexibility to engage with the content according to their schedules. Intranet

systems also enable the use of analytics to track communication effectiveness, allowing managers to identify areas for improvement and optimize the delivery of information.

2.1.4 External Communication Strategies

As Priyowidodo et al. (2021) describes, effective external communication channels are central to government organisations in maintaining transparency, engaging with the public, and building trust. This mode of communication may include the social media, official websites, public meetings, and press releases (Madsen & Verhoeven, 2019). Emeka-Okoli et al. (2024) argue that government organisations use external communication strategies to establish rapport with the wider citizens whereas promoting accountability and public inclusions in dialogues.

2.1.5 Communication Channels

Public relations professionals in Ghana use several communication channels to manage organisation-stakeholders' relationships (Thompson, 2018). Traditional media, such as television, radio, and print, continue to play a crucial role. Radio, due to its extensive reach and ability to broadcast in multiple local languages, remains a primary channel for Public Relations activities. As described by Demuyakor (2023), radio is particularly effective in rural areas where other media penetration is limited. Television is also significant, providing visual content that enhances message retention, as discussed by Thompson (2018). Print media, while facing global decline, still holds importance for detailed reporting and formal announcements, especially among older demographics (Duncan, 2016). Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and X have become major tools for public engagement. Studies by Ocansey et al. (2016) reveal that these platforms are extensively used for real-time communication.

Despite these advancements, there are significant gaps in research on public relation communication channels most especially governmental organisations in Ghana (Anani-

Bossman & Bruce, 2021). The integration of traditional and digital media remains underexplored. While studies recognize the increasing use of social media, there is insufficient analysis of how these platforms can be effectively integrated with traditional media for comprehensive Public Relation strategies. Additionally, the study of Tandoh (2020) notes the gaps in addressing the complexities of media integration, digital divides, and regulatory challenges.

Borchers and Enke (2021) further elaborate on the concept of internal communication channels, which can be categorized into downward, upward, and horizontal communication. These different communication flows are crucial for maintaining clarity, accountability, and transparency within the organization.

2.1.5.1 Downward Communication

Kumari and Kapoor (2020) explain downward communication as a flow of information from higher levels of the hierarchy to lower levels. It typically involves the dissemination of organizational policies, strategic directives, and management decisions. Effective downward communication is crucial in ensuring that employees at all levels understand their roles, expectations, and responsibilities. Han et al. (2022) suggest downward communication helps to align the workforce with the organization's goals and objectives. However, a common challenge in downward communication is ensuring that the message is understood and accurately implemented by lower-level employees. To mitigate this, governments often rely on clear and concise messages, supplemented by follow-up meetings or feedback loops to address any questions or misunderstandings (Han et al., 2022).

2.1.5.2 Upward Communication

Conversely, upward communication involves the flow of information from lower levels to higher levels within the organization (Madsen & Schmeltz, 2022). This includes reports,

feedback, and suggestions from employees to their supervisors or senior management. It allows for a more participatory organizational culture, where employees feel their voices are heard and valued. In governmental organizations, this type of communication is particularly important for identifying issues on the ground, understanding employee needs, and gauging the effectiveness of policies and decisions. However, Kumari and Kapoor (2020) argue that obstacles such as hierarchical barriers, fear of retaliation, or lack of transparency can hinder the effectiveness of upward communication. Hence, it is essential to create an environment where employees feel comfortable sharing their concerns and providing feedback without fear of negative repercussions (Kumari & Kapoor, 2020).

2.1.5.3 Horizontal Communication

Horizontal communication, or peer-to-peer communication, occurs between individuals at the same level within the organization. It fosters collaboration, coordination, and information sharing among colleagues (Kumari & Kapoor, 2020). This type of communication is particularly important in governmental organizations that operate across multiple departments or agencies, where cross-functional teams must work together to achieve common goals. Horizontal communication enables team members to coordinate activities, share resources, and discuss challenges (Madsen & Schmeltz, 2022). However, the lack of clear coordination mechanisms can sometimes lead to silos, where departments or individuals work in isolation without sharing critical information with others.

2.1.6 Communication Climate

In addition to the modes of communication and channels, the communication climate plays a pivotal role in shaping the effectiveness of internal communication strategies. As Borchers and Enke (2021) note, the communication climate refers to the attitudes and emotions associated with how information is shared within the organization. A positive communication climate

promotes open, transparent, and respectful interactions, while a negative climate can lead to misunderstandings, mistrust, and disengagement. Madsen and Schmeltz (2022) contend that a supportive communication climate encourages employees to actively engage with the information being shared, ask questions, and seek clarification when needed. This climate is cultivated through trust-building activities, such as regular feedback sessions, open-door policies, and the promotion of inclusivity and respect in communication. On the other hand, a negative communication climate characterized by fear, mistrust, or a lack of transparency can severely impede the flow of information and damage employee morale.

2.1.7 Communication Challenges

Communication within governmental bodies is often hindered by various challenges. The complexities of transparency have been identified as one of the primary factors impacting trust between governmental bodies and stakeholders (Pillai, 2024). Furthermore, the Ghanaian context, marked by its unique institutional structures and governance frameworks, presents additional communication hurdles that make it difficult for relevant stakeholders, including the public, civil society organizations, and international bodies, to engage meaningfully in governance processes (Arkorful et al., 2021).

2.1.7.1 Transparency and Stakeholder Trust

One major challenge is transparency (Sofyani et al., 2022). Transparency in communication is central to ensuring that governmental processes are open, accountable, and subject to scrutiny. However, a lack of transparency often acts as a significant barrier to effective communication and stakeholder engagement (Reid et al., 2024). As Tandoh (2020) suggests, transparency discrepancies are a key barrier to stakeholder trust and engagement in environmental governance processes. When government entities are not open about their decision-making processes or the factors that influence these decisions, stakeholders may perceive the

government as untrustworthy or corrupt. This perception can lead to disengagement, as stakeholders may feel that their voices are not being heard or that their concerns are not being addressed (Crane, 2020).

Also, within the Ghanaian context, studies show that governance failures and institutional weaknesses are major obstacles to transparency in communication (Walsh, 2020; Sabakpo, 2023). The opacity in decision-making processes, especially in areas like land management and natural resource governance, prevents stakeholders from understanding the rationale behind governmental decisions (Oppong, 2023). Van den Boogaard et al. (2020) argue that public and other relevant parties, such as civil society groups, may struggle to engage effectively, leading to a breakdown in communication and a lack of participation in critical governance processes. The failure to provide accessible and clear information on governmental policies, initiatives, and resource allocation further compounds these challenges. For example, in the context of environmental governance, if the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources is not transparent about its policies regarding forest preservation, land use planning, or mining regulations, stakeholders, including local communities, environmental NGOs, and private sector actors, may find it difficult to make informed decisions or provide input (Sabakpo, 2023). This lack of transparency not only damages trust but also hampers the government's ability to mobilize the support and cooperation needed to address complex environmental issues.

2.1.7.2 Language Barriers and Unequal Power Dynamics

Another significant communication challenge identified in the literature is the role of language barriers. The study of Anani-Bossman (2021) suggests that language barriers, unequal power dynamics, and limited resources are communication challenges that restrains stakeholders' engagement. In Ghana, where there are over 80 distinct languages spoken across different regions, the language gap can prevent meaningful dialogue between government

representatives and local populations (Oppong & Andrews, 2020). For instance, policies and legal documents may be written in English, which is the official language of the country, while many citizens may be more comfortable communicating in their native languages, such as Twi, Ewe, or Ga. Sarpong (2023) claims that linguistic divide can lead to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and a lack of engagement, as local communities may struggle to fully understand the implications of governmental policies that affect their lives.

2.1.7.3 Limited Resources for Effective Communication

Limited resources are another critical communication challenge faced by governmental bodies, particularly in low-resource settings like Ghana. Effective communication requires significant financial investment, human resources, and technical capacity to ensure that information is disseminated in a way that is both clear and accessible to all stakeholders. Unfortunately, many governmental bodies in Ghana, including the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, often face constraints that limit their ability to communicate effectively with the public and other stakeholders.

These resource limitations can manifest in several ways. First, there may be a lack of sufficient personnel who are trained in communication and public relations, which affects the quality of engagement with stakeholders. Second, governmental agencies may lack the financial resources to produce and distribute materials, such as reports, brochures, or public service announcements, that effectively communicate important policies and decisions. Additionally, technological infrastructure may be inadequate, making it difficult to engage with stakeholders through modern communication channels, such as social media, websites, or online platforms. Moreover, the limited capacity to conduct public consultations, town hall meetings, or awareness campaigns further limits opportunities for stakeholders to engage with governmental bodies. Without adequate resources, governmental agencies may not be able to

reach the diverse populations that are affected by their decisions, particularly those in remote or marginalized areas. This lack of outreach can lead to a situation where certain groups are excluded from the decision-making process, further undermining trust in governmental institutions. Despite these, Chentiba et al. (2021) recommend that investigating the communication challenges faced by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources in Ghana could help identify and effectively manage communication barriers.

2.1.8 Impact of Contextual Factors

The effectiveness of communication practices within governmental bodies overseeing natural resource management is significantly influenced by contextual factors such as socio-cultural dynamics, political considerations, and institutional arrangements. Börzel and Risse (2018) emphasise the role of political institutions and policy frameworks in shaping communication processes and outcomes in environmental governance contexts. In the Ghanaian context, factors such as bureaucratic inefficiencies, socio-economic disparities and political interference are critical contextual factors affecting communication within the natural resource sector (Amoako-Gyampah & Acquah, 2008; Amua-Sekyi & Asare, 2016.). However, there is a lack of comprehensive research examining the specific impacts of these contextual factors on communication practices within the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources. Addressing this gap is essential for understanding the broader structural constraints that shape communication dynamics and for informing strategies to enhance public relations effectiveness within the ministry.

2.2 Review of Related Studies/Empirical Literature

This section reviews empirical literature that relates to the study.

Karani's (2012) investigated the role public relations play in enhancing the image of institutions, using the Department of Lands, Ministry of Lands as a case study. The study

adopted a semi structured questionnaire comprising of both open-ended and close-ended questions to collect responses from 651 employees and customers at the head-quarter of the Ministry of Land, Department of Land. The study showed that the ministry lacked financial resources to carry out its operations effectively. This also impacted the Ministry's capacity to make any reforms. The study therefore suggested that the Ministry rebrand its customer services and improve on existing relationships with stakeholders. Also, employees were to undergo developmental training on data protection and management.

Similarly, Chege's (2014) study distinguished between the narrow and broad senses of publicity in communication using a combination of direct communication and public media. While the study focused on the planning, assessment and counselling functions, the research focused on public perception on how public relations shape the image of the National Assembly. Using a random sampling, 16 respondents were interviewed. The analysis showed that public relations played a role in improving trust, long standing relationships, commitment and satisfaction among institutions. The study recommended that the National Assembly strengthens its policies and implementation strategies relating to dissemination of information to the public.

Nabukeera et al. (2018) examined the effect of communication on employee performance at the Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Urban Development. 194 out of 208 staffs were randomly sampled to respond to a survey. It was found that job and organization characteristics had a positive correlation with communication. Also, a positive correlation was seen between employee's performance and the type of relationship that existed in the organisation. This indicated that a favourable relationship between employers and employees is vital to promoting high job performance. It was recommended that the organisation could strengthen the use of other communication channels such as emails/internet to promote openness.

The work of Kaleli et al. (2021) investigated the public sensitisation on Government's projects using public relations as a tool. The study leveraged on media relations and the community with 162 Public Relations Officers from the State Corporation. It was discovered that Government projects were sensitised through public relations and government projects that had sponsorship were advertised to the community through community events. The sensitisation promoted community interest in getting updates about the projects. The study recommended that a stronger communication mechanism should be mounted to ensure a well-integrated system for PR within the communities.

Bimpong and David (2024) explored public relations strategies and stakeholder engagement in shaping effective communication. Most participants were younger than expected and well-educated in communicative skills. This attribute promoted their public relations. Even though the study found a positive correlation between the education level of the participants and their communication skills, it appears that a weak relationship exists between participants engagement with stakeholders, decision making and providing feedback. The study suggested that a more refined strategies could be developed to enhance stakeholder engagement.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Grunig et al. (1995) propounds the Two-Way Symmetrical Model to explain public relations and communication strategies within government organizations. They emphasise the importance of transparency, ethical communication, and mutual understanding between an organization and its stakeholders (Grunig et al.,1995). According to Strömbäck and Kiousis (2019), top-levelled management seek to establish and maintain relationship with stakeholders and the public through public relations to achieve organisational missions and goals. Kelly et al. (2010) suggests the model supports values such as accountability, transparency, and public trust, which are needed for effective governance. For example, the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources in Ghana may adopt this model to enhance communication, promote public

trust, and enhance stakeholders' relationships, ultimately contributing to more effective and responsive governance (Kelly, 2020).

However, some studies criticise the practice of the two-way symmetrical model. Grunig (2020) suggests that government organisations may out of resource constraints and competitive pressure violate the principles of mutual dialogue whereas prioritizing persuasive communication. For example, the study of Makwambeni and Matsika's (2022) noted that poor allocation of resources (such as personnel, time and financial investment) may negatively affect the practice of true two-way communication. However, active listening and conflict resolution skills may be required to mitigate the process. Browning (2015) argues that the model may be superficially adopted by government organisations as a formal process without legitimately engaging with stakeholders. Despite these criticisms, the Two-Way Symmetrical Model remains a valuable framework for promoting transparent, ethical and effective public relations practice within government organizations (Anani-Bossman, 2022).

In contrast, Lee's (1906) Public Information Model highlights one-way communication. This model emphasises on disseminating factual and accurate information from an organization to the public. Gower (2022) argue that the Public Information Model allows the Ministry to maintain control over its information, ensuring that the information shared is consistent and aligned with government goals. This enhances credibility, clarity, and accuracy in communicating the Ministry's actions and intentions with the public, hence minimising the potential for misinformation or misunderstandings (Jamal, 2022). Kapur (2020) contends that this approach is helpful in policy communication. Thus, the Ministry could clearly and precisely explain policy changes and their implications to the public (Kapur, 2020). However, Necić (2021) suggests that Public Information Model could be integrated with other communication approaches for effective engagement, feedback and responsiveness to public concerns. This study leverages on the two-way symmetrical model of communication and

Public Information Model as a framework to explore the effectiveness of public relations using communication strategies at the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources in Ghana.

2.4 Operational Definition of terms and concepts

- Public Relations

A strategic practice of managing and disseminating information from an organisation to the public to enhance a positive relationship with various stakeholders. It seeks to build and maintain effective communication between an organization and the general public.

- Communication

Communication is the process of transmitting information, either verbal or non-verbal, in the form of ideas, thoughts, or feelings from one entity to another through a mutually understood medium. Effective communication entails clarity, understanding, and feedback, warranting that the intended message is precisely received and interpreted.

- Communication strategies

Communication strategies are organised plans that outlines the conveyance of from an organisation to its stakeholders and vice versal. It involves These strategies encompass the selection of appropriate channels, information, timing, and targeted audiences to safeguard effective delivery and reception of information.

- Ministry of Land and Natural Resources

The Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources is a governmental agency that oversees the stewardship and management of land, minerals, and natural resources in Ghana. This ministry formulates policies, regulations, and frameworks that govern land use, mining activities, forest conservation, and environmental protection. The ministry also engages with various

stakeholders, such as the local communities, industry players, and international organizations, to ensure that natural resources are managed responsibly in the country.

2.5 Chapter Summary

Relevant literature related to public relations and communication strategies are reviewed. The Two-Way Symmetrical Model propounded by Grunig et al. (1995) is discussed to understand the milestone of public relation practice in the government organisations in Ghana. Literature suggests both internal and external communication strategies used within an organisation may impact the effectiveness of communication and feedback from stakeholders. In the context of Ghana, the practice of public relations has been overly theoretical with less attention on its practice. Some research also recommends studying the impact of communication strategies on public relations within specific context. Therefore, this chapter provides key gaps in literature that warrants further study into exploring how communication strategies could enhance the effectiveness of public relations in Ghana.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter explains the process used in gathering, analyzing and interpreting data to understand public relations and communication at the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources. A qualitative research method case study was employed for this study. Detailed description of the methodology is provided under sub-sections: research design, population, sampling size, sampling technique, data collection methods, data handling and analysis, and ethical issues.

3.1 Research Design

Roulston and Halpin (2022) describes research design as a framework that shows a logical connection between a study's research questions, data and conclusions. Thus, research questions ought to be addressed using appropriate data collection procedures, analysis, and important conclusions (Roulston & Halpin, 2022). According to the interpretivist, interconnections among individuals and their world can be inductively studied using qualitative methods to construct deeper understanding and thorough report from investigating individual experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

To understand the effectiveness of public relations using communication strategies at the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, a qualitative method design involving two methods; document analysis and interviews were implemented. This approach provides an in-depth description of the phenomenon under study (Ary et al., 2010). Figure 3.1 shows a research design of the study.

Figure 3.1
Research Design



3.2 Research Approach

This study uses a case study approach. Peel (2020) explains that case study enables exploration of social phenomena in their natural setting and make meaning from participants’ experiences. Swanborn (2010) suggests that case study approach provides an in-depth understanding of a ‘case’ being studied. However, Yin (2018) argues that either one or multiple cases can be studied using varied methods. In this study, a single case is studied (understanding the practice of public relations at the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources).

3.3 Population

Population represents a group of people who bear a particular trait or characteristics under study (Lahman, 2018). Bos (2020) argue that well defined characteristics of population could enhance effective sampling. This study targeted employees from the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources responsible for public relations and its stakeholders. It also considered employees who have worked within the Public Relations Unit of the Ministry for more than two years and senior managers who are involved in decision making within the Ministry (a total of 10 people fell in this category). Stakeholders were limited to only close agencies that worked with the Ministry of Land and Natural resources such as the Lands Commission and the Minerals Commission (Roulston & Halpin, 2022). There were 5 people available.

3.4 Sample Size

As Creswell and Poth (2017) describes sample size in qualitative study relates to the research questions and the study's approach. They argue that the final sample size is not determined until the study reaches saturation (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Although specific sample size cannot be determined prior to conducting a qualitative study, it may vary during the study (Taylor et al., 2016). For this study, participants were purposively sampled as follows: Senior Management (1 male, 1 female), Junior level Staff (1 male, 1 female) and Stakeholders (1 male, 1 female). Further description of the sample can be found under sampling technique. Table 3.1 shows the demographics of the participants.

3.5 Sampling Technique

Participants were purposefully sampled from the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources and its stakeholders (Ary et al., 2010). Sharma (2017) suggests sampling participants in by probability or purposively. He explains that probability sampling ensures every participant in the population gets a chance of being selected whereas purposive sampling ensures that participants with specific characteristics are selected (Sharma, 2017). To gain deeper understanding about the practice of public relations at the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, participants from the Public Relations Unit, the Human Resource, Finance and Administration, and Personnel Unit were interviewed. In addition, participants from the Minerals Commission and the Lands Commission were interviewed. Table 3.1 shows a table of the demographic information about participants.

Table 3.1*Demographics of Participants*

Participant's ID	Gender	Institution	Role
Participant 1	Male	Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources	PRO
Participant 2	Female	Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources	Staff
Participant 3	Male	Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources	PRO
Participant 4	Female	Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources	PRO
Participant 5	Male	Green Ghana	Environmental affairs
Participant 6	Female	Ministry of Communications	HR

Note: PRO = Public Relations Officer, HR = Human Resource

3.6 Data Collection Methods

As explained by Creswell and Creswell (2018), the philosophical worldview and the experience of a researcher could influence the choice of research method for a study. However, Leavy (2017) argues that the selection of a particular method is influenced by the research purpose, data analysis strategies, interpretation, and research outcome. The research methods adopted for this study are content analysis and interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.6.1 Secondary Data

Content analysis enables researcher to synthesize reports, documents, reports, and official statement for patterns, themes, and connections with other data (Bailey, 2018). This can be

classified into public records, official statements, and newsletters (Ary et al., 2010). Yin (2018) explains that content analysis provides details and references of events over a long period of time and could be archived. However, content analysis could be subjected to researcher reflexivity and could be problematic where contents are limited (Spry, 2018). This study examined the content of June 2024 newsletters and press release from the Ministry of Land and Natural Resource to understand the organisations' practice of public relations. June 2024 newsletters and press releases were chosen due to its current nature.

3.6.2 Primary Data

Interviews enable participants to express themselves through verbal communication (Roulston & Halpin, 2022). Busetto et al. (2020) suggest that semi-structured interviews are more efficient in generating results for a case study. A semi-structured interview guides were prepared and checked for reliability and validity by using an expert verification (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Participants were interviewed in a well conducive environment which were audio-recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were sent to the participants for further validation and reliability (Ary et al., 2010).

3.7 Data Handling and Analysis

Data collected through the interviews were transcribed and all information identifying the participants were replaced with pseudonyms (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016). Also, any information tracing specific identities within the newsletters and press releases were replaced with pseudonym. However, demographic information about the participants were provided on the transcripts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The transcripts were then analysed thematically by identifying and describing codes, patterns and themes related to the research questions using NVIVO (Creswell & Plano Clerk, 2018).

3.8 Ethical Approaches

Research ethics justify actions of researchers and the impact on participants, research community and other stakeholders Lahman (2018). However, Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggest that research ethics are connected to the practice of data collection, analysis and dissemination. They argue that ethical conducts are contextual, therefore must be addressed before, during and after the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Prior to collecting any data from participants, ethical approval was obtained from my supervisors (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016). Informed consent was observed by providing participants with information sheet about the study and clarifying any ambiguity about the study to participants (Creswell & Plano Clerk, 2018). Confidentiality and anonymity were observed by protecting the identity of participants and restricting data accessibility (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Thus, data were saved securely on a password protected laptop and reported anonymously without any trace to participants' identity.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology adopted for this research. The research design involves two qualitative methods where one is emphasised. Thus, the interview (primary data) is emphasised over content analysis (secondary data). The content analysis involved newsletters and press releases from the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources whereas the interviews were conducted on both stakeholders and public relations unit officers at the Ministry. Several ethical procedures were highlighted such as informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity.

CHAPTER FOUR

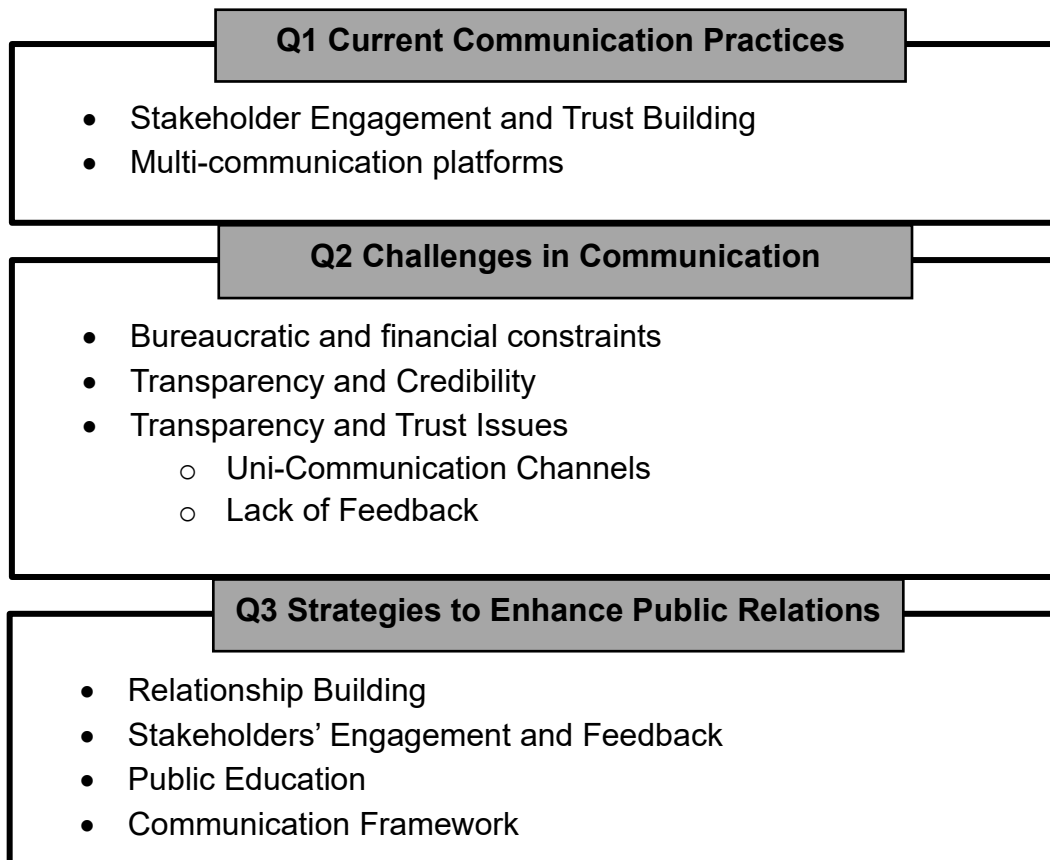
PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

3.0 Introduction

The primary aim of this case study was to explore the effectiveness of public relations in a government agency using communication strategies. This study sought to explore the communication strategies that enhances public relations within the Ghanaian context using the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources in Ghana. This chapter presents data systematically into three overarching themes, each comprising sub-themes that provide a nuanced understanding of the participants' perspectives. The research questions guiding this investigation were: 1. What are the current communication practices used by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources in Ghana for engaging with its stakeholders? 2. What are the challenges encountered in the communication process within the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources. 3. What strategies can enhance public relations effectiveness within the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources? The answers to these questions are integral to propose targeted interventions for enhancing public relations effectiveness in the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources. Figure 4.1 presents a framework for the themes generated in relation to the research questions.

Figure 4.1

Themes derived from the data.



4.1 Analysis of Findings

4.1.1 Research Question 1: What are the current communication practices used by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources in Ghana for engaging with its stakeholders?

To understand the current communication practices of the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources with its stakeholders, two major themes, stakeholder engagement and trust building, and multi-communication platforms, were generated from the data to express participants' perception of the current communication practices and the communication approaches.

Theme: Stakeholder Engagement and Trust Building

Most participants expressed a nuanced perception of the engagement practices employed by the ministry with its stakeholders. Although, participants characterized the ministry's

engagement efforts as both “very important” and “very excellent” with stakeholders, they also indicated a mix of reformative and affirmative views recognising the ministry’s efforts and a call for improvement in the consistency and quality of these efforts. Moreover, the sentiments shared about the current practice of communication in the Ministry reflected a critical perspective of the genuineness in engagement between the ministry and stakeholders.

They do hold regular meetings and forums. But these often feel more like formalities than genuine opportunities for dialogue. There are some efforts to involve stakeholders, but it could be more consistent and inclusive. (Participant 5).

It clarifies that stakeholder engagement could be improved by making meaningful, inclusive, and consistent efforts.

Theme: Multi-Communication Platforms

Closely connected to stakeholder engagement, the ministry employed multiple platforms in communication and utilized various channels such as WhatsApp, social media, websites, press releases, radio, TV, print media, and internal memos. This diversity allowed the ministry to effectively reach the broader stakeholders and the internal employees of the ministry. By integrating these platforms, the ministry can ensure that important announcements and updates are disseminated widely. Participant 6 recommended to the public that “they should be visiting our website very often so that any information they need anything at all, they will get it on our website.” Participant 4 also narrated that “we’ve created WhatsApp page group platform where we have all the staff and then whatever information we have to share; we share with the staff.” This dual approach ensured that while the public received consistent external messaging, staff remained informed about internal developments.

4.1.2 Research Question 2: What are the challenges encountered in the communication process within the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources?

Challenges practitioners of public relations encountered at the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources were broadly grouped into three major themes: bureaucratic and financial constraints, transparency and Credibility; transparency and trust issues, and two subthemes: uni-communication channel, and lack of feedback.

Theme: Bureaucratic and Financial Constraints

One of the major challenges participants expressed was the bureaucratic hurdles in government processes that delayed decision-making and implementation of the Ministry's initiatives. Considering the necessity for clearance and approvals of proposals from various governmental bodies prior to the implementation of any initiative, almost slowed initiative implementation and complicated the overall performance of the ministry.

Closely related to governmental bureaucracy was financial constraint that affected the ministry's ability to execute its mandates effectively. The necessity of obtaining approvals from various levels, including the minister and chief director, created a cumbersome system that hindered timely decision-making. Participant 1 expressed a frustrating scenario stating that "bureaucracy, as administratively maybe a letter will have to go... that makes it challenging." The need for streamlined processes and clearer financial management is critical for the ministry to overcome these challenges and enhance its operational capabilities.

Theme: Transparency and Credibility

Another major challenge with the ministry of Lands and Natural Resources was managing the complexity of information while ensuring that the information was clear and accurate. The ministry had been recognized for its transparency, which boosts its credibility among stakeholders, yet there was a need to maintain this standard. For example, the analysis of press

releases related to the allegation that was published about a mining firm in Ghana highlighted the ministry's efforts in upholding the integrity and trust in resolving the case through the judiciary. It was noted that the Ministry called on all parties to refrain from dealing with the matter in the media or taking such actions that could prejudice the fair adjudication of the matter in court. The Ministry, also, urged the parties to refrain from actions that tended to jeopardise the smooth running of the company, pending the determination of the matter before court. (PR1)

Similarly, the Lands Commission released a statement to debunk the allegation of wrongful sale of concessions to foreigners. With urgency, the Minerals Commission clarified that they “ensured that every application for a mineral right was formally brought to the attention of the paramount chief, Regional Minister and MMDCE for the area and seek their views on the application before any recommendation for the grant of a mineral right.” This highlights the fact that most of the press release contents related to clarification of misinformation and campaigning for a national event.

Theme: Transparency and Trust Issues

Most participants were concerned about the transparency in information dissemination from the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources to stakeholders. Participants believed that being transparent could impact on building public trust. The ministry was bias in sharing both positive and negative information. Participant 3 commented on the importance of transparency, stating that “once you are transparent with them... it's important that the public knows what the ministry is about.”

Subtheme: Uni-communication Channel

Moreover, Participants also noted significant limitations in the Ministry's communication strategy, particularly regarding the predominance of a one-way communication approach. As

noted by Participant 5, “communication tends to be one way, with the ministry pushing out information rather than engaging in dialogue.” This observation underscores a critical gap in the Ministry's communication practices where stakeholder engagement is often limited to information dissemination rather than interactive dialogue.

Subtheme: Lack of Feedback

Furthermore, lack of meaningful feedback mechanisms intensified transparency and trust issues. Participant 5 expressed their frustration over the perceived ineffectiveness of feedback processes, stating that their “input often feels like it goes into a void.”

4.1.3 Research Question 3: What strategies can enhance public relations effectiveness within the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources?

In identifying possible strategies, the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources could use to effectively enhance public relations, five major themes: relationship building, consistent stakeholders’ engagement and feedback, public education, and communication frameworks.

Theme: Relationship Building

Many participants highlighted on regular engagement with external stakeholders as essential for building trust and effectively addressing stakeholders’ concerns.

I think we should be able to have regular meetings, regular conferences, regular workshops and activities with our external stakeholders. I think this will help foster a good relationship between us and help build trust. (Participant 6)

This perspective highlighted the importance of creating structured opportunities for interaction, which could not only enhance relationships but also align stakeholder expectations with organizational goals. Such engagement provided a platform for stakeholders to express their concerns, ensuring that their voices were heard and valued.

THEME: Stakeholders' Engagement and Feedback

Effective stakeholder engagement is paramount in developing a robust public relations strategy. Participant 6's emphasis on regular meetings, beyond formal events, speaks to the necessity of cultivating a culture of open dialogue.

We shouldn't wait till staff durbar, but we should be able to at least have regular meetings, weekly meetings...to bridge the communication gap between top management and the normal staff.

This approach bridges communication gaps and ensures that staff and management are aligned in their objectives and messaging.

Moreover, Participant 3's call for enhanced feedback collection mechanisms highlighted the importance of understanding community perspectives. Engaging with the public not only allows the ministry to gauge the effectiveness of its communication strategies but also empowers citizens by making them feel heard and valued. This two-way communication is essential in a democratic society, where public sentiment can significantly influence governmental policies and initiatives.

By prioritizing stakeholder engagement, the ministry can build a collaborative environment where feedback informs decision-making processes. This ongoing engagement cultivates trust and loyalty among stakeholders, which is crucial for the ministry's long-term success and credibility.

THEME: Public education

Most participants described public education by emphasizing the importance of partnerships with NGOs and media outlets to enhance grassroots engagement and information dissemination. One participant explained,

One key role that we can play as partnerships with NGO's and media outlets that we can do together to enhance the Ministry's public relations efforts, I believe strongly is by providing additional channels for information dissemination. (Participant 6)

By leveraging these collaborations, the ministry can educate the public about its initiatives, build trust, and ensure that key messages reach diverse audiences effectively, promoting awareness and understanding of its policies and efforts.

THEME: Communication framework

Many participants highlighted on strengthening public relations through thoughtful strategic partnerships with NGOs and media outlets to enhance communication effectiveness. These partnerships serve as vital channels for information dissemination and trust building with stakeholders. NGOs, with their grassroots connections and specialized knowledge, complement government efforts by fostering deeper community engagement. Similarly, media outlets played a central role in strengthening positive narratives and ensured that the ministry's stories are not overshadowed in competitive news cycles. Building strong relationships with these entities enhanced transparency through investigative reporting. As noted by Participant 6, "Once we are able to create additional channels for information dissemination, it will help build trust with our key stakeholders."

This collaboration underscores the value of a robust communication framework in advancing public relations objectives.

4.2 Chapter Summary

Several themes generated from the interview data and document analysis were presented in relation to the three guided research questions. Two major themes were discussed under question one, three themes and two subthemes were discussed under question two and four

themes under question three. The findings were also presented in a framework under figure 4.1.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This section discusses the various themes reported in chapter 4 in relation to the literature reviewed. It also provides conclusion to this study and suggests recommendations for further studies.

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

Themes of Current Communication Practices

The sentiments shared by participants about the current practice of communication in the Ministry reflects a critical perspective of the genuineness in engagement between the ministry and stakeholders. This observation aligns with literature that critiques stakeholder engagement where meetings serve as check-box exercises instead of as platforms for meaningful dialogue (Dedding et al., 2023). Also, this insight underscores the importance of being receptive to stakeholder feedback and adapting communication strategies accordingly.

The Ministry of Land and Natural Resources could demonstrate their commitment to understanding stakeholder needs, fostering an environment of collaboration and respect. This finding is consistent with the study of Aakhus and Bzdak (2015) which provided a framework for opening up the black box of stakeholders' engagement to advancement of communication competence in organizational communication and professional practice.

Furthermore, the implementation of structured communication practices could significantly improve the quality of interactions between the Ministry and their stakeholders by fostering an environment where stakeholders could feel heard and valued. Establishing dedicated communication units and providing regular updates and process reports could reflect a

proactive approach to stakeholder engagement, emphasizing the necessity of transparency and consistent communication. The Ministry could cultivate a sense of inclusion and trust, which could be vital for long-term relationships. This reflects the findings from previous studies that highlighted the importance of clarifying stakeholders' engagement frameworks (Hilliard & Newsome, 2013). By establishing a structured engagement approach, the ministry can facilitate better collaboration among its stakeholders for effective communication.

However, the data described a framework that could enhance engagement such that (a) defining stakeholder's role and responsibilities within the framework, (b) defining communication channels and prioritising key stakeholders to improve their engagement. This reflects the need for clarity in stakeholders' engagement efforts indicating that a well-defined structure can lead to better collaboration and communication.

Also, adopting a multi-communication channel allows the ministry to effectively reach the broad audience. For example, social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram caters for the younger people, while traditional media such as radio and newspapers engage older audiences. Additionally, internal communication is streamlined through dedicated platforms like WhatsApp groups, which facilitate quick information sharing among staff. This strategy acknowledged that different groups that accessed information differently from the ministry thereby enhancing the likelihood of reaching all stakeholders (Duncan, 2016). By integrating these platforms, the ministries can ensure that important announcements and updates are disseminated widely.

Themes of Communication Challenges

The repeated emphasis on the necessity for clearance and approvals from various government entities, as revealed by the study, indicated a systemic issue that can hinder agility and responsiveness in addressing pressing needs. This mirrors Tandoh's (2020) findings arguing

that bureaucratic inefficiencies can create significant barriers to effective governance, leading to frustrations both within the ministry and among stakeholders. Studies highlights that bureaucratic barriers can lead to inefficiencies and hinder the execution of communication strategies (Sabakpo, 2023).

This observation also aligns with literature that emphasizes the negative impact of bureaucratic structures on organizational performance. For instance, Kaponda (2024) posits that excessive bureaucratic procedures can stifle innovation and responsiveness, ultimately affecting the ministry's ability to implement policies efficiently and negatively impact on effective communication.

Moreover, the study expresses concerns over the difficulties in communicating intricate details, particularly in high-stakes situations involving allegations or public scrutiny. For instance, press release addressing allegations against a mining firm, where the Ministry sought to reassure the public about the integrity of judicial processes. This scenario illustrates the difficulty in conveying complex legal and procedural information concisely without contributing to public confusion (Floyd et al., 2018).

The complexity of the information can lead to misinterpretations if not handled with care. Studies indicates that effective communication in public administration requires clarity, especially in crises where misinformation can proliferate (Meuleman, 2021). The Ministry's efforts to clarify misunderstandings, as seen in statements regarding the wrongful sale of concessions highlight the critical need for precision in communication. However, the challenge remains in simplifying complex information without losing essential details, which can alienate stakeholders who may not possess the technical expertise to navigate such complexities (McDonald et al., 2022).

The observation of less transparency and trust in stakeholder communication aligns with the literature, which suggests that transparent communication is key to building trust and credibility (Lima et al., 2020). However, the difficulty in disseminating negative information poses a challenge for many organizations. Research by Kitz et al. (2023) indicates that while organizations may be hesitant to share unfavourable news, doing so can foster a culture of openness and accountability. Without transparency, stakeholders may question the integrity of the ministry, potentially leading to a decline in public trust and satisfaction. Establishing clear communication strategies that include both positive outcomes and challenges faced can mitigate these risks and enhance stakeholder relations.

The lack of meaningful feedback mechanisms intensifies this issue. Participants expressed frustration over the perceived ineffectiveness of feedback processes, with one stating that their input often feels like it goes into a void. This disconnect between stakeholder feedback and observable changes is a recognized issue in organizational communication, where the failure to incorporate stakeholder input can lead to disengagement and dissatisfaction (Sheppard & Beck, 2022). Research suggests that two-way communication is vital for fostering trust and collaboration between organizations and their stakeholders (Limani et al., 2024). Therefore, enhancing feedback channels and creating opportunities for stakeholder engagement could significantly improve the Ministry's communication effectiveness.

5.2 Conclusion

The study investigated the effectiveness of using communication strategies in enhancing public relations in government offices in Ghana, specifically using the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources as a case study. It was discovered that the Ministry used two major communication practices to enhance public relations. Engaging with stakeholders was a frequent practice to build trust with stakeholders. This implies that the Ministry's commitment to fostering inclusivity and transparency in their operations is pivotal to promoting public relations.

Also, the Ministry utilised multiple communication channels such as their website, social media and the press to engage with different levels of stakeholders. This ensured a broader accessibility and effective dissemination of information to diverse level of stakeholders.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources faces challenges of bureaucratic and financial constraints, transparency and credibility. It also suffers trust issues while applying uni-communication channels. This consequently affects the feedback received from stakeholders.

5.3 Recommendations

This study provides several recommendations for further studies. The findings on communication practices used by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources resonate with the importance of strategic communication in sustaining positive public relations. However, further research to evaluate the impact of these two communication practices on stakeholders' satisfaction and organisational outcomes using different research approaches. Using another research approach could improve the reliability and validity of the findings. Also, diverse representation of stakeholders in the research could yielded an in-depth perspective of the topic. It is recommended that other studies could use a larger sample to replicate the study.

Further challenges faced by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources suggested that the Ministry could enhance its PR through establishing structured communication frameworks and building relationships with stakeholders, engaging and receiving feedback from stakeholders.

The study reinforces the argument that uni-communication channels, which do not accommodate diverse stakeholder needs, hinder feedback mechanisms and reduces the credibility of organizational messaging. The study suggests a need to refine existing theoretical frameworks to include the impact of structural constraints, such as financial limitations and bureaucracy on communication outcomes. Addressing these issues requires enhancing

transparency, varying communication channels, and streamlining bureaucratic processes to improve stakeholder engagement. Therefore, future study could investigate comparative practices across contexts, stakeholder perceptions, and the impact of innovative communication approaches on organizational effectiveness.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

This interview is to gain deeper understanding of public relations at the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources. This interview is expected to last up to 20-minutes and will be audio-recorded. Information provided will be kept confidential and reported anonymously in my dissertation.

Senior Management & Junior Staff

IP 1. Can you introduce yourself and your role in your organisation?

Communication practices

IP 1. Can you describe the main communication channels and methods used by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources to engage with its stakeholders? Probe: How does the Ministry address misinformation or negative perceptions among the public? Prompt: How does the Ministry gather and incorporate feedback from stakeholders into its communication strategy?

IP 2. What role do you think partnerships with external organizations such as NGOs, and media outlets, could play in enhancing the Ministry's public relations efforts?

Challenges and opportunities

IP 3. What are the main challenges the Ministry faces in ensuring transparency in its communication efforts? Probe: Can you provide examples of situations where communication from the Ministry was misunderstood or not well received by stakeholders?

IP4. In your opinion, what strategies could the Ministry implement to improve transparency in its communications? Probe: How can the Ministry enhance the accessibility of its information to ensure it reaches all relevant stakeholders? Prompt: What approaches could be taken to foster

more effective stakeholder engagement and participation in the Ministry's communication process?

IP5. Do you have any recommendations you would make for the Ministry to improve on its communication practices?

Stakeholders

IP 1. Can you introduce yourself and your role in your organisation?

IP2. How do you describe the Ministry of Lands and Natural resources engagement with stakeholders? Probe: How do you rate the accessibility of information from the Ministry of Lands and Natural? Prompt: How do you rate the transparency of information from the Ministry of Lands?

IP3. What are the main challenges you face in communicating with the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources? Probe: Could you describe how you provide feedback to the Ministry? Prompt: What recommendations you would make for the Ministry to improve on its engagement with stakeholders?

Closing

Thank you for your participation, we have come to the end of the interview. I assure you again that all the information you have given will be kept confidential. For more information about the research or to make complaints, please contact me or my supervisor.