

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

**EMPLOYEE PERCEPTION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN
PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS AND ITS IMPACT ON PR
PRACTICE. A STUDY OF THE FORESTRY COMMISSION
HEADQUARTERS.**

LUISATU FUSEINI

NOVEMBER 2021

**GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH**

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BY:

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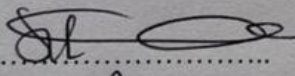
DECLARATION

Candidates Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

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ABSTRACT

Perceptions about Public Relations affect the perceived credibility of the profession and influence whether people see public relations as valuable to society. Credibility is the cornerstone attribute that public relations practitioners must possess if they have any hopes of influencing an audience's perceptions or attitudes (Budd, 2000; Judd, 1989)

In assessing these perceptions of employees, the study was focused on assessing employee perceptions of public relations practice in the Forestry Commission of Ghana. The study also sought to investigate employee perceptions of the influence and impacts of PR to the organization. The study adopted the mixed methods of data collection and triangulated the findings using graphs and Pie Chats. About 87 respondents were sampled and administered questionnaires while 8 other respondents with PR backgrounds were interviewed.

The findings from the study revealed that almost all of the employees were aware of the presence of the existence and operation of the Public Relations unit of the organization. The findings indicate that while a few persons were not aware of the existence of the unit, the greater majority represented by 95 percent of the total respondent were aware there existed a functional PR unit in the organization which performed unique PR functions. The findings therefore indicate that the PR unit was well known amongst employees from other departments.

The study further showed that for respondents who had some awareness of the functions of the PR unit, they considered media relations role as the most essential role performed by the department. This agrees to the hypothesis the researcher formed in the beginning of the research. Other employees also identified internal communication, crisis management and social media management as some of the top functions of the department.

The study further found that employees considered the PR unit as an influential department in the organization. Thus close to all of the respondents believed that indeed, PR was influential in contributing to the overall performance of the organization.

The study also found that factors such as lack of recognition and awareness of the functions of PR by top management members, lack of adequate finances, and consistent negative media reportage were the main challenges that the PR department of the Forestry Commission face.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my Family for all the love and support they gave me during the entire course.

I Love you all.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Public Relations (PR) industry does a terrible job of public relations. Very few people can explain what people in public relations really do. (Wynne, 2016).

It can be considered an irony that public relations profession, which undertakes significant tasks and responsibilities related to the image and reputation of companies and organizations, cannot preserve the image and reputation of their profession accurately (Yıldırım & Akbulut, 2017).

Perceptions about Public Relations affect the perceived credibility of the profession and influence whether people see public relations as valuable to society. Credibility is the cornerstone attribute that public relations practitioners must possess if they have any hopes of influencing an audience's perceptions or attitudes (Budd, 2000; Judd, 1989)

Most public employees have given little or no attention to public relations and do not understand the role that public relations plays within an organization and therefore, have failed to position the discipline. This study, therefore, sets out to seek and analyze the role that public relations plays within organisations. This study focuses on how employees perceive the concept of public relations in public organisations and how those perceptions affects the job performance of PR practice.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

There are continuous efforts by professional PR groups such as the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) and its members to manage how they are perceived. Changing trends in the global business

has necessitated modern day corporate functional Public Relations Departmental role in the areas of issues management, company's reputation management, stakeholder relations and reputation risk Management among others. (Sena Tse, 2015).

According to Dilenschneider (1987), a facility for employing Public Relations and an understanding of the Public Relations mind set is increasingly necessary for the make or break criterion for the top executive management. The management of a firm's image and identity is as fundamental as Chief Executive Officers responsibility as managing the financial performance, strategy and organization of the company, thus should be belittled. (Dilenschneider, 1987).

Jim Haynes (2003) suggests that, a true Public Relations practice mean "the management activity which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the organization's policies, procedures with the public interest. It identifies audiences to be reached by the organisations communications and establishes channels of communication with these groups of people".

Tench and Yeomans (2006: 4) defines public relations as "a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and co-operation between an organization and it's publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinions; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management to keep abreast of and effectively utilize change; serves as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools.

The world Assembly of Public Relations Association (1978) states that Public Relations is an art and science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organizational

leaders and implementing planned programs of action which will serve both the organization and the public interest.

Public Relations is a planned process to influence public opinion, through sound character and proper performance, based on mutually satisfactory two-way communication. (Seitel 2007, p.4).

Cutlip, Center and Broom (1985) in their Book “Effective Public Relations” defined PR as the “Management function that identifies, establishes, and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics upon whom its success depends”.

According to Grunig and Grunig (1990: p. 235) contemporary models of Public Relations theory and practice are built from the perspective by which public relations becomes a management function to help an organization to adapt to its environmental requirement to the establishment of mutually beneficial relationships

Modern PR practice in Ghana has shifted from the predominant role of press Agency, publicity to a more strategic managerial role that has been part of integral management function in the organization. (Ennin, 2016).

Aside media relations and Photography that PR is noted for in my organization (Forestry Commission) Public Relations has various functions it performs. According to Travis (2018), Public relations functions are designed to help build trust and credibility with groups that are important to your organization. They help raise awareness about your organization as well as give it a chance to define, control and distribute its message to those both inside and outside your company.

PR has various functions which are not limited to Media Relations. Media relations mean that you build relations with media through interviews, press releases, notifications, and press conferences. According to Shaw (2020), the functions of PR are;

- **Communal Relations.** Here you establish a relationship with the local community. It's to get public support, launching a new product, customer's feedback, and response to some event.
- **Social Responsibility.** Corporations also have a social responsibility that goes beyond sales and profit-making. It means performing all the operations of the business that is good for society as a whole.
- **Government Relations.** It means building a suitable relationship with the local government to carry out all the operations smoothly and efficiently. It could be legal, monetary, or otherwise. The point is to have the government on your side.
- **Crisis management.** The PR personals must be ready to face all kinds of challenges, and there should be a protocol for every possible scenario.
- **Social Media.** Using social media has also become a part of companies' marketing plan, where they keep the public informed about every little detail and the progress that the company is making.
- **Employees' Relationship.** Employees are a great valuable asset to the company. Therefore, it's important for the PR personals that they should develop to keep employees informed about companies' plans and what their roles be. When employees are satisfied and well informed, the productivity of the company would increase.

Perception is the differentiation of the stimuli or events that are present in the environment and the process of interpreting these stimuli (Mutlu, 1994,p.3). It is possible to say that a profession is interpreted by individuals who form a society by the concept of perception of the profession.

When the public relations profession is examined, it is seen that there are discussions about whether public relations is a profession. In addition to those who think that public relations is not yet a profession; there are those who think that public relations is in the process of professionalization (Öksüz, 2015, p.251).

Davis (2004:202) argues that the public relations industry simply lacks credibility; people just do not take the industry seriously.

Henslowe (2003) claims that the public relations discipline is often either misunderstood or deliberately misinterpreted so that it is used in a pejorative way, associating it with propaganda, ‘economy of the truth’ or evasion.

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In recent times, most large organisations are yet to identify the role, position and contribution of public relations to management as well as the organisation. In this case, large companies do not recognize the function of public relations at management level or in most cases do not give PR prominent recognition in their organisation. However, the public relations department is an integral part and contributor to the success of an organisation. (Rawjee et al, 2012).

According to Wragg (1992), many people in the corporate world still do not really know the importance of PR, but are compelled to create PR outfits for the purpose of “corporate Luxury” or a standby reputation ‘Fire service’. This explains why some corporate bodies like the Forestry

commission does not see the need to elevate the status of PR from a unit to a department and has reduced the PR Unit to just taking pictures and media relations, where when these are not needed, makes the unit redundant.

According to Holm-Graves (2013), reference made to a research conducted by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) revealed that like most industries PR practiced has been transformed over the years, however, people's perceptions has not changed and that PR practitioners are seen as parties' planners, spin doctors, people who lie for a living and coerce journalists.

This motivates the researcher to find out staff perception of the public relations practice at Forestry Commission.

Also, though there are researches conducted on staff perception of PR practice in various organisations, there is scanty research on how those perceptions affect the work of PR in the organisation. It is in light of this that the researcher intends to delve into a study that not only aims at examining the perception of employees about the PR practice, but to also find out how those perceptions affect the work and output of the PR unit/department.

According to Bowen (2010, p40) the functions of PR have lost its recognition over the years. According to him, when functions become simply publicity and media relations, the outcomes may be considered less critical and somewhat disposable as well as budget becoming limited within the organisation (sees it as less important). These factors have made management to ignore some of the important functions of the public relations within the organisation.

The practice of PR has never been given a recognition except in situations where the organisation has experience some form of major crisis or challenges that threaten their position or survival. Moss and DeSanto (2011, P112).

Public Relations function has not gain and sustain greater recognition from senior management hence senior management themselves need to have better understanding and appreciation of the value of communication. Moss and DeSanto (2011, p.112)

There is a variety of perceptions about the Public Relations practice among the staff in the Forestry Commission Head Office. These perceptions influence decisions on whether the unit should be elevated to a directorate or whether opportunities should be opened to the PR unit to grow.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To examine staffs knowledge and understanding of the roles and functions of the PR unit
- To find out staff perception of the usefulness of a PR unit in an organisation
- To determine staff awareness of PR activities of the Forestry Commission
- To explore staff satisfaction of the performance of the PR unit
- To determine how staff perceptions affect the performance of the unit
- To analyze the challenges associated with PR practice in Forestry Commission
- To suggest ways to shape a positive image and perceptions for PR unit among staff

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the functions and roles of the PR unit?.
- How influential is the PR unit to the Forestry Commission?.

- Are you aware of the PR activities in the commission?
- How satisfied are you with the performance of the PR unit?
- What challenges do PR practitioners face in their job performance?
- What is the way forward to improve the image and reputation of the PR unit?
- What are the recommended solutions for a better PR practice?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Predominantly, the study will give insight about how colleagues from other departments of the Forestry Commission Head office view the profession and activities of Public Relations, as findings from this research will assist the unit to work on negative perceptions of the PR unit and to educate staff on the functions and roles of the unit and its importance to the Forestry Commission.

It will also help the Public Relations unit understand the perception of colleagues about the units relevance to FC and position them to improve on their performance.

The results of this study will further serve as a source of information for stakeholders in similar organisations, as it will give them an insight as to how staff see and perceive the professions existence in organisations.

Last but not least, the results of this study would provide useful materials for researchers and academicians who would want to conduct further studies in other public/private organisations.

1.6 SCOPE OF STUDY

The study will be limited to the Forestry Commission (FC), particularly the Head Office in Greater Accra. The Public Relations unit, known as the Corporate Affairs and Media Relations Unit (CAMRU) is housed in the Head office and works directly with the other departments and its staff in the head office. The selection of institution under research was necessitated by the relevance the Forestry Commission places on PR practice.

1.7 FORESTRY COMMISSION

Forestry Commission is a corporate body, directly responsible to the Minister of Lands and Natural Resources. It regulates the utilization of forest and wildlife resources and ensures the conservation and management of those resources as well as the coordination of policies related to them.

MISSION

Sustainably develop and manage Ghana's forest and wildlife resources.

VISION

To leave future generations and their communities with richer, better, more valuable forest and wildlife endowments than we inherited.

RESPONSIBILITY AND FUNCTIONS

1. Regulates the Utilization of forest and timber resources by;

- i. Vetting and the registration of contracts to market timber and such other forest and wildlife products as the commission may determine;

- ii. The establishment of procedures to track the movement of timber, wood and wildlife products;
- iii. Monitoring the harvesting, marketing of forest wildlife products and related contracts;
- iv. Promoting the development and dissemination of appropriate industrial standards and trade guidelines for timber, wood and wildlife products;
- v. The conduct of pre- shipment inspection and examination of timber, wood and wildlife products.

2. Manages the nation's forest reserves and protected areas by;

- vi. Proper planning for the protection, harvesting and development of forest and wildlife resources in a sustainable manner;
- vii. Monitoring the condition and extent of the nation's forest and wildlife resources;
- viii. Controlling the harvesting of forest and wildlife products
- ix. Making recommendations to the Minister on the grant of timber rights and wildlife licenses;
- x. Advising the Minister on forest and wildlife policy with particular regard to management practices that sustain resources and improve productivity.

3. Assist the private sector and other bodies with the implementation of forest and wildlife policies by:

- i. Advising and providing technical services with regard to matters of resource protection, management and development of market intelligence pertaining to the timber and wildlife industries

- ii. Co-operating and liaising with national and international bodies and organisations forestry and wildlife conservation and utilization;
 - iii. Supporting the development of forest plantations for the restoration and degraded forest reserves, the increased production of industrial timber and the expansion of the country's protected forest cover;
 - iv. Advising the appointing authority on matters concerning employment, discipline and training of staff.
4. Undertake the development of the forest plantations for the restoration of degraded forest areas, the expansion of the country's forest cover and the increase of industrial timber.

The forestry commission comprises the main public bodies and agencies performing the functions of protection, development, management and regulation of the utilization of forest and wildlife resources. These bodies and agencies are the Timber Industry Development Division, Forest Services Division, Wildlife Division, Resource Management Support Center and Forestry Commission Training Center. (FC @ A GLANCE, 2013).

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the study of relevant literature reviews that are written by scholars to offer a better understanding of PR relevance within an organisation. Theoretical framework will also be revised to further explain how theories of communication can help the researcher describe the importance of PR in organisations. This chapter will also look at related works in the field of research.

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Darling (1986), literature review is important because it provides information about the work of researchers and whether the idea has been investigated before or not.

2.1.1 HISTORY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

A brief history of Public Relations will provide a better perspective of the importance of PR profession and practice.

Lattimore et al (2004) traced the beginning of PR to the use of persuasive skills of ancient Greek rhetoricians and ancient Egypt.

According to Sage (2021), When America was a British colony in the late 1700s, PR tactics like the Boston Tea Party “event” led by Sam Adams (called by some historians the “father of press Agency”) built support for the American Revolution by encouraging dissent and disagreement with British rules and regulations. Thomas Paine’s Common Sense, an influential pamphlet on American Independence, may have been the first political communications campaign and an early example of PR as activism.

According to Cutlip et al (2000) the term propaganda was established in the 17th century when the Catholic Church set up its congregation de Fides (Congregation for propagating the Faith). Persuasion has been an element of PR, used to direct and influence the public and as well as their opinions for centuries. Lattimore et al (2004).

In the 1800, PR moved into what is often referred to as the “Golden Age of Press Agency.” According to fellow (2012), the rise of press agency was marked by maturation of political campaigns and advertising as well as employment by business and industry of public relations writers where private interest wanted to influence public press.

The period saw the rise of the press agents, whose job it was to “hype” companies, products, entertainment and/or “celebrities” by almost any means necessary. Tactics deployed during this era were noticeably short on ethics and focused on achieving publicity. Exaggeration, lies, and outright fabrication became common practice among many of these “publicists” along with free

tickets, gifts, or other means to get reporters to write positive stories about their clients. Characters like Davy Crockett, Daniel Boone, Annie Oakley, or Buffalo Bill were created or their exploits exaggerated to sell tickets, win votes, or get coverage. Unfortunately, for many people today, this image remains as their principal perception of PR professionals. (Sagepub.com, 2021).

One of the best-known figures from these freewheeling times was P. T. Barnum considered the Great American Showman whose namesake circus and museum continued to operate long after his death.

P. T. Barnum, of circus fame, made his mark by originating and employing many publicity or press agency tactics to generate attention for his shows and attractions. Barnum was famous for coining the phrase, “There’s no such thing as bad publicity.” He was even known to pen letters to the editor under unassumed name outing some of his attractions as hoaxes just to generate publicity and keep a story alive. Unfortunately, Barnum’s ethics left much to be desired.

In the 20th century, public information model enlightened public relations practice which shifted towards truth and accuracy in communications.

The public information model is characterized by the use of press releases and other one-way communication techniques to distribute organizational messages through in-house journalists. The two-way symmetrical model uses research with publics to facilitate understanding and communication, whereas a two-way asymmetrical model uses research to determine the messages most likely to persuade publics (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). The long-standing assertion in the field of public relations posited by Grunig and Grunig (1992) is that

"organizations should practice two-way and symmetrical communication when their environments are complex and turbulent"

The two-way symmetrical model uses research with publics to facilitate understanding and communication, whereas a two-way asymmetrical model uses research to determine the messages most likely to persuade publics (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). "organizations should practice two-way and symmetrical communication when their environments are complex and turbulent" (Grunig and Grunig 1992, p. 298).

2.1.2 WHAT IS PR

The concept of public relations has shown many changes and developments since its first emergence. In every period, public relations have come up to date with different definitions.

The Institute of Public Relations (IPR) Ghana defines Public Relations (PR) as a "planned and sustained distinctive management art and social function based on an understanding of human behavior that identifies issues of critical relevance, analyses future trends and predicts their consequences. Public Relations establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization or group and its publics based on truth, full information and responsible performances".

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) defines Public Relations as "Public relations is concerned with or devoted to creating mutual understanding among groups and institutions".

The British Institute of Public Relations (BIPR) explains Public Relations as a deliberate planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics.

2.1.3 CONCEPT OF PERCEPTION

The perception of a profession with the society can be expressed as the feelings of the individuals who make up the society, attitude behavior and world views.

To Kotler (1994) Perception is the process by which people receive information of stimuli through the five senses, reorganize it and assign meaning to it. How people perceive information depends on the nature of information itself and its context, what's around it and the conditions within themselves.

According to Jain (2000) perception is the general name given to the interpretation of the same data by the brain. It is a process by which sensory input is so interpreted as to make it meaningful.

Professional perception is very important because it is a reference to the perception of individuals by society as well as perceptions of individuals towards their own professions (Macit, 2007, p.37)

According to Elnaga, Individual perceptions shape organizational behavior and consequently individual and organizational success

To Atakapa (2019), it is possible to say that there are some problems with the perception of the public relations profession as a society.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Skyttner (2001: vi) theory provides a model for the practice of Public Relations. All who attempt to solve problems, make recommendations, and predict the future, need theories, models, and as a starting point, concepts.

In order to find the staff perception of Public Relations practice in public sector organisations, this study will look at three theories that provide insights into the public relations practice. The theories are the Systems Theory, excellence theory and

2.3 THE SYSTEMS THEORY

The Systems Theory describes an organization as a set of parts or subsystems which impact on each other and which together interact with the organization's environment.

Cutlip et al (2000, P. 229) describe it as: "A set of interacting units which endures through time within an established boundary by responding and adjusting to change pressures from the environment to achieve and maintain goal states".

The public relations literature defines a system as a 'set of interacting units that endures through time within an established boundary by responding and adjusting to change pressures from the environment to achieve and maintain goal states' (Cutlip, Center & Broom 2006: 176).

Systems theory generally looks at organisations as made up of interrelated parts, adapting and adjusting to changes in the political, economic and social environments in which they operate. There must be communication structures that guide the parts of the organisation to achieve its organizational goals. The leaders of the organisation create and maintain these internal structures.

Organizational systems are not static but rely on a series of exchange of inputs and outputs between environments and organisations. In organizational systems, inputs are likely to come in the form of resources to an organisation. Once received these inputs are transformed via a range of organizational activities such as production lines and even boardroom meetings. The transformation process may be affected by the degree of interaction among the different

departments within the organisation. Systems theory takes a holistic view and encourages one to look outside the organisation or organizational department to see a bigger environment (Madoff, Delvine & Butler 2008).

Organizations are part of a social system which comprises of individual groups or publics such as employees, suppliers, distributors, etc. who are involved in it.

PR works to initiate and maintain relationships with these groups to enable the organization to achieve its goals.

Grunig & Hunt (1984) note that organizations have five sub systems which are all interdependent on one another:

1. Production sub-systems: produce the goods or services of the organization
2. Maintenance system: with human resources department which encourages employees to work hard
3. Disposal system: distribute the goods and services and is the marketing department
4. Adaptive sub-systems: helps the organization to adjust when the working environment changes such as the research and development, strategic planning departments
5. Management sub-systems: control the other sub-systems, manage conflicting demands among them and negotiate with others internal and external to the organization. often the board and senior management perform this function.

There are two main types of the systems theory thus the Open and Closed systems. Organisations with the open systems use Public Relations people to bring back information on how productive their relationships are with clients, customers and stakeholders.

Tench and Yeomans (2007) says that open systems are systems that take their environments into account and try to develop or change their business activities to suit these environments whereas closed systems do not adapt to external environments or conditioning.

However, organisations with closed systems do not seek new information. Open systems view the environment as important to survival. Open systems continuously exchange inputs and outputs with the environment through permeable boundaries (Cutlip, Center & Broom 2006). Organisations actively seek information from the environment, which is received as input into the organizational system. In open systems, PR take on a functional approach that is concerned with two-way communication between the organisation and the environment. This requires resources for organisations not only to monitor their environments and public opinion but also to build and maintain relationships with key organisations and stakeholders within their environment.

The closed system is isolated from the environment and other systems. Its boundaries are considered impermeable, which discourages the exchange of information within the environment. In a closed system organisation, managers operate as if they are autonomous or unconstrained by the environmental forces (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier 2002; Witmer 2006). Closed systems are likely to encounter the systems state of entropy or deterioration (Morgan 1998). In closed system, the PR function has low regard for the environment. Although public relations managers may acknowledge their environment and follow regulatory procedures, they are unlikely to interact with other publics. Instead, public relations departments will adopt a one-way communication perspective without considering environmental input. This type of approach is a functionary one, implemented to preserve the organization's image (Skinner & Shanklin 1978)

2.4 EXCELLENCE THEORY

Grunig and Hunt in conjunction with the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) conducted a long-term study to establish what might be defined as 'excellence' in PR (Grunig 1992; Grunig et al. 2002). The team addressed the question about 'how must public relations and communication function organized for it to contribute most to organizational effectiveness. (Grunig, 1992.p.5) three books were published from the research (J. E. Grunig 1992; Dozier et al 1995; L.A Grunig et al 2002)

The long-term study produced a four-level analysis of excellent PR:

- Programme level - Why, when and how individual communications programs are implemented.
- Departmental level - How the PR department operates and fits in with other departments.
- Organizational level - Understanding and respect given to communication processes and audience feedback by the organisation and its staff.
- Economic level - Tangible value provided by excellent PR to the organisation (happy external and internal audiences)

The general theory incorporates a number of middle range theories of PR including theories of publics, PR and strategic management, models of PR, evaluation of PR, employee communication, PR roles, gender, diversity, power, activism, ethics and social responsibility, and global PR (PR Evaluation). The theory was tested through survey research of heads of PR, CEO's and employees in 327 organisations (corporate, nonprofit organisations, government agencies, and associations) in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom (survey; interview)

The excellence theory explains the value of public relations to organizations and society based on the social responsibility of managerial decisions and the quality of relationships with stakeholder publics. For an organization to be effective, according to the theory, it must behave in ways that solve the problems and satisfy the goals of stakeholders as well as of management

Grunig (1992) argued that, the excellence theory is a general theory of how PR make organisations more effective. The theory defines the effective practice of PR within an organisation, and determines the characteristic of excellent communication and how companies do excellent PR best practices.

The excellence theory posits that the value of PR to organisations and society is based on the social responsibility of managerial decision and quality of relationship with stakeholder publics. According to the theory, organisations must behave in a way that will solve problem and satisfy the goal of stakeholders as well as management, if not, stakeholders will either put pressure on organisation which will cost them or risk its policy and decisions. Based on this theoretical premise about the value of public relations, excellence in PR is best practiced when:

- PR is involved in strategic management.
- PR is differentiated from marketing and other management functions.
- Internal communication is symmetrical in nature.
- Gender balance in managerial positions

Grunig et al categorize organizations into ‘excellent’ and ‘poor’ organizations based on certain attributes, but noted that excellence in communication management is key to attaining a level of excellence on the part of the organizations.

TWELVE ATTRIBUTES OF EXCELLENT ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR PR PRACTICE

HUMAN RESOURCE (HR): Excellent organizations empower people by giving employees autonomy, and allowing them to make strategic decisions. They also pay attention to personnel growth and quality of life of employees.

Grunig et al noted that: “Empowering of people through job autonomy and participation in decision making long has been a critical variable in theories on job satisfaction, morale and communication in organizations”

ORGANIC STRUCTURE

Authorities have categorized organizations into mechanical and organic. Organic organizations have few reporting relationships, less hierarchical, decentralized, less formalized, less stratified and less complex. Employees in organic organizations are more innovative and have greater job satisfaction and morale. They also promote the entrepreneurship drive amongst the employees. Implications for PR practice Organic structure is closely related to the use of human resource in organizations. Although organic structures alone cannot predict that PR practice would be excellent, evidence has proved that PR cannot survive in mechanical organizations. Also, excellent internal communication is so entwined with organic structures that the communication system is actually a structural characteristic of organizations.

INTRAPRENEURSHIP

Authors on organizational excellence have defined an excellent organization as one that is entrepreneurial and that cultivates innovations that develop organic structures and cultivate human resources. Pinchot (1985) coined the term, 'intrapreneur' to describe entrepreneurs who work inside an organization "those who take hands-on responsibility for creating innovation of any kind within an organizations

2.5 SYMMETRIC COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

Two-way communication is characterized by dialogue, negotiations, listening and conflict management rather than through persuasion, manipulation and giving of orders. Writers on organizational communication note that two-way communication is critical in communicating with certain critical groups such as employees and customers through which they stay close to them. Symmetrical communication is also considered a sign of good/effective leadership.

LEADERSHIP : Excellent organizations have leaders who rely on networking and 'management by-walking around' rather than authoritarian systems. Excellent leaders give people but minimize 'power politics'. At the same time, excellent leaders provide a vision and direction for the organization, creating order out of the chaos that empowerment of the people can create. "Leaders are leaders, that is, because they set a vision and then empower everyone in the organization to participate in shaping and implementing that vision" Grunig et al (1992, p. 234).

STRONG PARTICIPATIVE CULTURES: Employees of excellent organizations have a sense of mission. They are integrated by a strong culture that values human resources, organic structures, innovation and symmetrical communication. It is expected that leaders "develop and live an enabling and empowering vision" (p.236). Strategic thinking and culture building are the

essence of excellence. Cultures should stress integration, participation and collaboration as central values of the organization.

Organizational culture determines the extent of the boundary spanning role of the PR practitioner. Whether PR is part of management & the dominant coalition is determined by organizational culture. Externally, both PR practitioners and their managements must know the prevailing cultures in the organizations environment so that they can develop/devise appropriate strategic choices of constituencies as well as communication strategic choices of constituencies as well as communication strategies for interacting with these key constituencies.

STRATEGIC PLANNING: Excellent organizations strive to maximize the bottom line by identifying the most important opportunities and constraint in their environment (p.237). In developing, excellent organizations should always be externally & internally focused, always sensing change and nascent change before it ‘sneaks’ up on them. It is required that everyone in the organization be involved in the strategic planning and management processes. Kanser (1989) talks about strategic partnerships with stakeholders of organization, which suggests organizations & their PR practitioners should develop symmetrical communication system in relating with these stakeholders and publics.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: Social responsibility helps in completing the profile of organizations. Grunig & Hunt (1984) developed a chapter on social responsibility which they called public responsibility. Social responsibility enables organizations to become a positive force in the social and political arena. It has been said that within the last few decades, the concept of social responsibility has earned a place in the practice of corporate management. One of the major purposes of excellent PR is to balance the private interests of the organizations with the interests of publics and of society. Excellent PR does so through strategic planning and

symmetrical communication programs. If excellent organizations are to be socially responsible they need excellent PR to help make them that way.

SUPPORT FOR WOMEN & MINORITIES: Excellent organizations are expected to promote the careers of women and minorities. In particular, excellent organizations in promoting the careers of females must have well-developed policies on the number of women or percentage of female employees, promotion of women, number of women in upper management, how the organization addresses sex discrimination, flexibility of the company on pregnancy and parenting etc. Organizations that value the contributions of women and minorities are more likely to have excellent PR departments. At the same time, empowering women and minorities in PR also will provide requisite variety for organizations.

QUALITY: The extent to which an organization pays attention to quality is a characteristic of excellence. Total Quality Management (TQM) is a new thinking in organizations in recent times. TQM has been related to the Japanese concept of “KAIZEN” which means continuous improvement kaizen means ongoing improvement involving everyone, including both managers and workers. Implementation of KAIZEN in organizations however, requires a change in corporate culture. The excellence at the workplace focuses on customer relations and the quality of that relationship. Excellent customer relations is key to excellent organizations. The quality of this relationship that “organizations should stick to their customers” by striving for quality and sticking to known customers and markets rather than venturing into unknown or unfamiliar customers. Every PR process should be improved constantly in an excellent department. At the organizational level, it is expected that organizations will stress quality through culture and structure to promote attainment of excellence of the PR department.

EFFECTIVE OPERATIONAL SYSTEMS: The operations department of organizations are like the heart to the human body. To be able to function, organizations must develop systems and procedures to implement plans and utilize human resources. The operations department ensures the planning and the use of organizational resources to achieve organizational goals.

COLLABORATIVE SOCIETAL CULTURE: Organizations will succeed in societies whose cultures emphasize collaboration, participation, trust and mutual responsibility. Societal culture is one of the factors necessary for organizational success and excellent PR practice. 'Wa' in Japanese language means harmony. Interdependence is also depicted in Japanese culture which they refer to as 'Wa'. In their use of interdependence, they also emphasize the independence of individuals in societies and groups. Societal culture has implications for organizational culture which also determines how PR is practiced and its focus. "Excellent management and excellent PR, essence, can flourish only in collaborative participative cultures" (Grunig et al, 1992, p.247). Some cultural contexts can help to change organizational culture. On the other hand, collaborative organization can also affect societal cultures done to their effectiveness. PR can promote collaboration as a culture in the organization or can export/influence the development of a participative organizational culture to the rest of the society.

Based on all the attributes outlined, Grunig et al develop the following propositions;

Proposition 1: Excellent PR is an integral part of an excellent organization: organizational excellence provides a hospitable climate for excellent PR.

Propositions 2: Excellent PR can help the rest of the organization be excellent

Grunig identified the characteristics of PR in four major categories

- Empowerment of PR function becomes relevant and effective to organisation when they see the public relations as critical to management function. The involvement of PR in strategic management
- Strategic management communication role; the PR manager plays managerial role in the organisation. The PR practitioner performs the communicator role as well as administrative role
- Organizational communication function; the PR is made part of communication in org and should be integrated into the communication function. The communication function of PR should be separated from other discipline like marketing and other management function. The strategic management function should not be subsumed into marketing and advertising field.
- Appropriate PR model should be used for effective organizational PR best practice. It should be based on internal and external communications approach and using two-way symmetrical model to build relationship with publics.

Some scholars have questioned the possibility of the two way symmetrical model. Van der Meiden (1993) observed that two way symmetrical model is unrealistic since it suggest that organisations should value the interest of publics more than those of the organisation. Murphy (1991) claimed that the concept of symmetrical communication works with continuum from pure conflict to pure corporation, which is based on mixed motives. Leichty (1997) argued that, complete collaborative public relation is not feasible in some situations and pointed out that PR practitioners' lack of power within organisation further increases the limitation of collaboration.

2.6 RELATED STUDIES

Some percentage of work has been done in relation to the perceptions people have about PR practice in Ghana.

A study of ‘Staff Perception of PR practice at the Information Services department (ISD) a study of the ISD head office’ conducted by Gloria Holm – Graves (2013) sought to determine the level of awareness of PR activities amongst staff and also assess the level of concerns, impressions and relationship cultivated by staff about PR practice from 2007 to 2012. The research found out that ISD do not communicate all their activities and events to their staff and also doesn’t pay much attention to feedback which is essential to their practice. The researcher however suggested the need to create several avenues for feedback from staff through training of both management and staff on the ICT to ensure a two way communication between ISD and its staff. The researcher also found that though the ISD is the PR arm of government which provides PR support to all ministries, staff perception of the PR practiced there is not favorable. Graves in her Chapter 2 however did not review literature which I feel is a short fall to the research.

Another study conducted by Sarah Ofori Dei Appiah (2015) on “Perception of Employees on the practice of Public Relations in an organisation. A case of cocoa processing company limited (CPC)”. The study sought to ascertain employees perception of PR practice in CPC and also to explore how the credibility of CPC can be enhanced. In her research, she found that all 50 respondents had an idea of what PR officers do but only 10% were of the view that the PR performance was excellent and 22% responded that the performance was poor. She recommended that IPR help them review their code of ethics to ensure that it is binding on practitioners to conform to it.

Albertina Ennin (2016) also conducted a research on the 'State of PR outfit at Ghana National Fire Service. (GNFS). The objective was to examine the role of PR unit of Ghana National Fire Service. She also sought to find the nature of PR in GNFS, Their functions, managements support for the practice and challenges associated with PR practice at GNFS.

The research findings revealed that though the PR is practiced just like other organisations, and acts as boundary spanners between the public, staff and management, there is a conflict of roles between PR and HR departments. One of the challenges PR faces has to do with management having obscure understanding of PR functions. She recommended that in order for PR to work effectively in GNFS, it's important that they explain their functions to HR and staff in order to work co efficiently with HR and help them understand that they are separate entities and that they are not taking their job. She also recommended that PR department educate management on the importance and function of PR to the organisation.

However in her chapter 2, she did not review related works which I personally feel makes her chapter two incomplete. Related works gives a better understanding of the research and helps you understand what to expect in the research.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the research Methodology for this study. It includes Research Design, the Population for the study, Sample and Sampling Techniques, Data Collection Methods and Instruments for Data Collection, and Data Analysis procedures.

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research Design is a Framework of methods and techniques to be used and applied in the research process (Jovancic, 2020).

Research design can be thought of as the structure of the research that holds all of the elements in a research project. It specifies the methods and procedures for the collection, measurements and analysis of data (Cooper & Schindler, 2003).

According to De Vaus, (2006), Research Design refers to the overall strategy that you choose to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way, thereby, ensuring you will effectively address the research problem; it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data. Note that the research problem determines the type of design you should use, not the other way around.

Research design can be considered as the structure of research it is the “Glue” that holds all of the elements in a research project together, in short it is a plan of the proposed research work. Akhtar (2016)

For the purpose of this research, mixed methods of research techniques and Triangulation was adopted.

The term 'mixed methods' is used here to denote research that combines qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis in one study. Bringing together methods and data through mixed methods research can enhance understanding and explanation of research problem.

Multiple methods are used to generate different datasets and investigate specific themes across them where the findings are interweave during the analyses process (Moran- Ellis et al., 2004)

According to Tashakkori and Creswell, (2007) Mixed methods may be defined as 'research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study'

Some interpretations view mixed methods as the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. More contemporary writings in this area had sought to develop an understanding of the importance of complete integration of the two approaches. (Hanson, et al., 2005; Bryman, 2007; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007)

The study employed a mixed method thus Qualitative (In – Depth Interviews) and Quantitative (Questionnaire) methods. The questionnaires was randomly sampled while the In-depth interviews will use purposive sampling technique for respondents who will be interviewed thus head of PR unit, PR Manager for Wildlife and PR Manager for Forest Services Division with an interview guide, prepared to meet the objectives of the research work and call for recommendations on areas where future research on employee perception of PR could be undertaken.

The researcher is using the mixed methods to reflect participant's point of view as it's useful in understanding contradictions between quantitative results and qualitative findings. Mixed

methods give a voice to study participants and ensure that study findings are grounded in participant's experiences.

Triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Patton, 1999).

According to Joppe (2000), combining theories, methods or observers in a research study, can help ensure that fundamental biases arising from the use of a single method or a single observer are overcome. Triangulation is also an effort to help explore and explain complex human behavior using a variety of methods to offer a more balanced explanation to readers. It is a procedure that enables validation of data and can be used in both quantitative and qualitative studies. (Joppe 2000).

Triangulation is a method used to increase the credibility and validity of research finding sources. Cohen et al (2000)

The researcher is using Triangulation because, it can enrich research as it offers a variety of datasets to explain differing aspects of a phenomenon of interest. It also helps refute where one dataset invalidates a supposition generated by another. It can assist the confirming of a hypothesis where one set of findings confirms another set. Finally, triangulation can help explain the results of a study (Carvalho, 1997).

Though the case to be studied is at forestry commission, the researcher also interviewed other PR practitioners to support or refute the findings from Forestry Commission.

To Rothbauer (2008), Central to triangulation is the notion that methods leading to the same results give more confidence in the research findings.

According to Stake (1995), Case study research is an investigative and analysis of a single or collective case, intended to capture the complexity of the object of study. Yin (1984, p.23) defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon

Case study makes it possible for more than one research instruments to be used. It provided the opportunity for the researcher to use an interview guides to collect data for the study. (Yin, 1984) establishes that another advantage of using the case study method involves using multiple sources and techniques in the data gathering process.

A case study is a research approach that is used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context. It is an established research design that is used extensively in a wide variety of disciplines, particularly in the social sciences.

The case study helps the researcher to exert control over and manipulate the variable(s) of interest. It helps the researcher explore a real life setting such as Forestry Commission to gather the information necessary for the study.

The Researcher chose Forestry Commission for the study because the study is seeking to know the employees perception of PR in public Organisation and its impact on PR practice. Forestry Commission is a public organisation which has a working PR Unit and will enhance the researcher gather all the information necessary for the research.

Sixty (60) respondents were sampled using the simple random sampling technique while Ten (10) Public Relations practitioners were sampled using the purposive sampling techniques.

Questionnaires and in-depth interview were used to acquire in-depth knowledge and understanding of the perception of employees about PR practice within FC headquarters and its effect on the PR units job performance.

However, for the purposes of triangulation, out of the sixty (60) respondents sampled for the study, Forty (40) respondents were sampled from Forestry Commission since it's the case study for the research. The remaining twenty (20) were sampled from Ghana National Petroleum Commission (GNPC) to compare findings.

Out of the 10 PR practitioners interviewed, 6 were selected from Forestry commission's PR Managers. The remaining 4 were interviewed from GNPC PR. The purpose of triangulation was to enrich the research as the responses offered a variety of datasets to explain whether the responses gathered from Forestry Commission was the same in other organisations or if they were peculiar to Forestry Commission.

3.1 POPULATION OF STUDY

According to Babbie (2005) Population is a group about whom conclusions are drawn in research. The population is defined in terms of elements, sampling units, extent and time. (Murthy & Bhojanna, 2007, p. 141)

Population refers to the set or group of all the units on which the findings of the research are to be applied. In other words, population is a set of all the units which possess variable characteristic under study and for which findings of research can be generalized. (Shukla, 2020)

Therefore the defined target population for this study is comprising the entire staff and managers at the FC Head Office (Directors, managers and staff) which comprises of four hundred and eighty (480) people in total from the three divisions of Forestry Commission (Cooperate, Forest

Services Division (FSD) and Wildlife Division with various departments such as the Human Resource, Finance, Operations, Plantations, Public Relations, Audit, Stores, Transport, Registry, ICT, Legal, Climate Change, Estate, Procurement, Timber Industries Development, and Timber Validation Department. .

3.2 SAMPLING AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

A sample is a finite part of a statistical population whose properties are studied to gain information about the whole (Webster, 1985).

According to Shukla (2020) a Sample is a representative part of a population of research thus any sub set of population, which represents all the types of elements of population is called sample.

A part of population that represents it completely is known as sample. It means, the units, selected from the population as a sample, must represent all kind of characteristics of different types of units of population. (Shukla, 2020).

For the purpose of this research seventy (70) respondents were sampled in total from the population of 480 employees.

Out of the 70 population, 60 respondents were sampled and administered questionnaires, using the simple random sampling technique, while 10 PR practitioners were sampled for interviews using the purposive sampling techniques.

The research sought to use questionnaires and in-depth interview to acquire in-depth knowledge and understanding of the perception of employees about PR practice within FC headquarters and its effect on the PR units job performance.

3.2.1 SIMPLE RANDOM SAMPLING

The simple random sample means that every case of the population has an equal probability of inclusion in sample. Disadvantages associated with simple random

Sampling include (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005)

According to Thomas (2020), a Simple Random Sample is a randomly selected subset of a population. In this sampling method, each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected. This method is the most straightforward of all the probability sampling methods, since it only involves a single random selection and requires little advance knowledge about the population. Because it uses randomization, any research performed on this sample should have high [internal](#) and [external](#) validity.

Subjects in the population are sampled by a random process, using either a random number generator or a random number table, so that each person remaining in the population has the same probability of being selected for the sample. (Frerichs, 2008)

3.2.2 PURPOSIVE SAMPLING

Purposive sampling method is done by selecting the sample of the population based on the characteristics of the population based on the characteristics of the population and the objective of the study. The heterogeneous sampling type used to select sample subject based on their wide and diverse range of cases and it's relevant to the phenomenon. Purposive sampling is useful because it consumes less time and less expensive. In relation to the research conducted, purposive sampling will help the researcher to focus on selecting practitioners at the PR department of FC. Engel and Schutt (2009, p.96) argued that, purposive sampling is used for studying limited group of people or subset of a population representing the entire population which may sufficient for understanding human perceptions, problems, needs, behaviors and

contexts, which are the main justification for a qualitative audience research. This is useful because only a small number of PR practitioners and managers will be interviewed.

This sampling technique was used because its useful for conducting exploratory research, it is less rigorous, very descriptive and analytical.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS

The study solely used primary sources of data to examine the problem. Primary data sources are information collected for the first time and used for solving particular problem under investigation. The primary data would be gathered from the Forestry Commission. Primary data would answer specific question that secondary data could not answer. Lamb et al. (2011, p.229)

The research instruments adopted for the study are questionnaires (open ended and close ended) and in-depth interviews.

Questionnaires will help the researcher to elicit enough information from respondents. Standard questions will be set and designed in an interview guide to collect the data for the study. The instrument will help the researcher to collect primary data for the study.

In-depth interview is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interview with small number of respondents to explore their perspective on a particular idea, program or situation. (Boyce and Neale, 2006, p.5)

Indepth interview are carried out face to face with the respondent; where the interviewer directly communicate with the respondent with a standardized interview guide prepared by the researcher. This tool helps the researcher to collet factual information from the public relations department and management of FC. This type of instrument was selected because it is easier for

the respondents to develop a sense of freedom and ease in responding to our questions. During such interview, the researcher can prompt the interviewee in the course of questioning or when responses are inappropriate further explanations can be sought from the interviewee.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

Data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes. The data collection component of research is common to all fields of study including physical and social sciences, humanities, business, etc. While methods vary by discipline, the emphasis on ensuring accurate and honest collection remains the same.

Data collection is defined as the procedure of collecting, measuring and analyzing accurate insights for research using standard validated techniques. A researcher can evaluate their hypothesis on the basis of collected data. In most cases, data collection is the primary and most important step for research, irrespective of the field of research. The approach of data collection is different for different fields of study, depending on the required information.

The most critical objective of data collection is ensuring that information-rich and reliable data is collected for statistical analysis so that data-driven decisions can be made for research. (Question pro, 2021)

Data from in-depth interview was transcribed and reviewed according to patterns or themes to explain the phenomenon under study. The data collected was analyzed and interpreted with conceptual framework.

Data collected from questionnaires were analyzed by generating graphs and piecharts which clearly indicate proportions and the numerical strengths of responses to various questions.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Introduction

The core objective of this study is to critically assess the practice of Public Relations in the Forestry Commission of Ghana. In doing so, the study was interested in examining the functions and roles of the PR department of the institute, how influential the unit is to the organizational activities of the organization, as well as some challenges the PR unit of the Forestry Commission face. Additionally, the study was interested in assessing perceptions of employees in the organization on the functions and relevance of PR to the organization. The researcher was therefore interested in examining the levels awareness of Public Relations functions and significance of employees in the agency. This chapter focuses on analysis and interpretation of data gathered through surveys and interviews. The chapter presents a triangulation of the key issues both data collection techniques the researcher employed found on the field. The findings of the study are presented thematically in line with the core research questions of this study.

4.1 Demographic Data of Respondents

4.1.1 Demography of Survey Respondents

Gender of Respondents

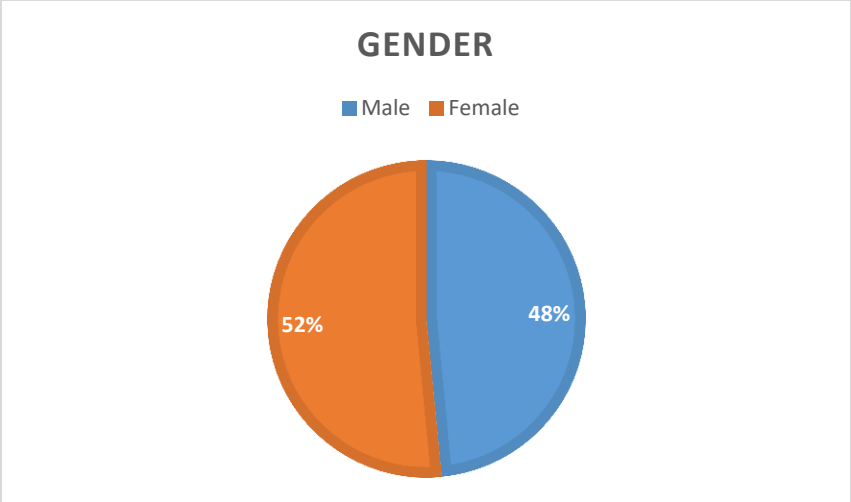


Figure 1: Gender of Respondents (Source: Field Data, 2021)
 The study found that 48 percent of the 87 respondents who responded to the survey were males while 52 percent of them were females.

Age of Respondents

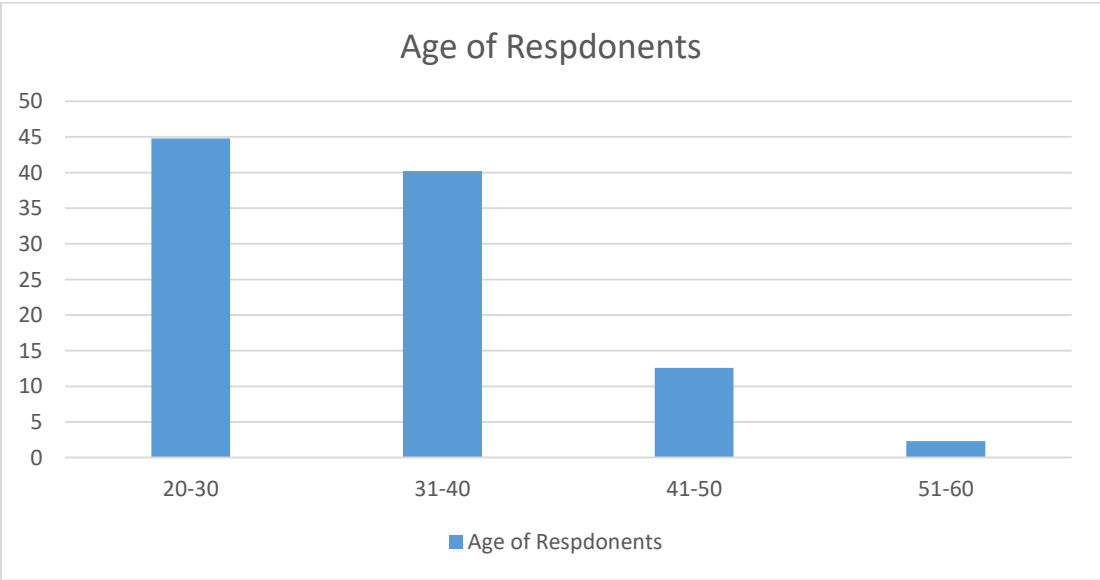


Figure 2: Age Distribution of Respondents (Spurce, Field Data, 2021)

The chart above indicates that most of the respondents sampled for the survey were between the ages of 20 and 30 years. This is followed by employees who between 31 and 40 (40.2%) while

respondents between 41 and 50 years made up 12.6 percent of the total respondents. Respondents who made up the oldest employees i.e. between 51 and 60 years are represented by just 2.3% of the respondents.

Department of Work

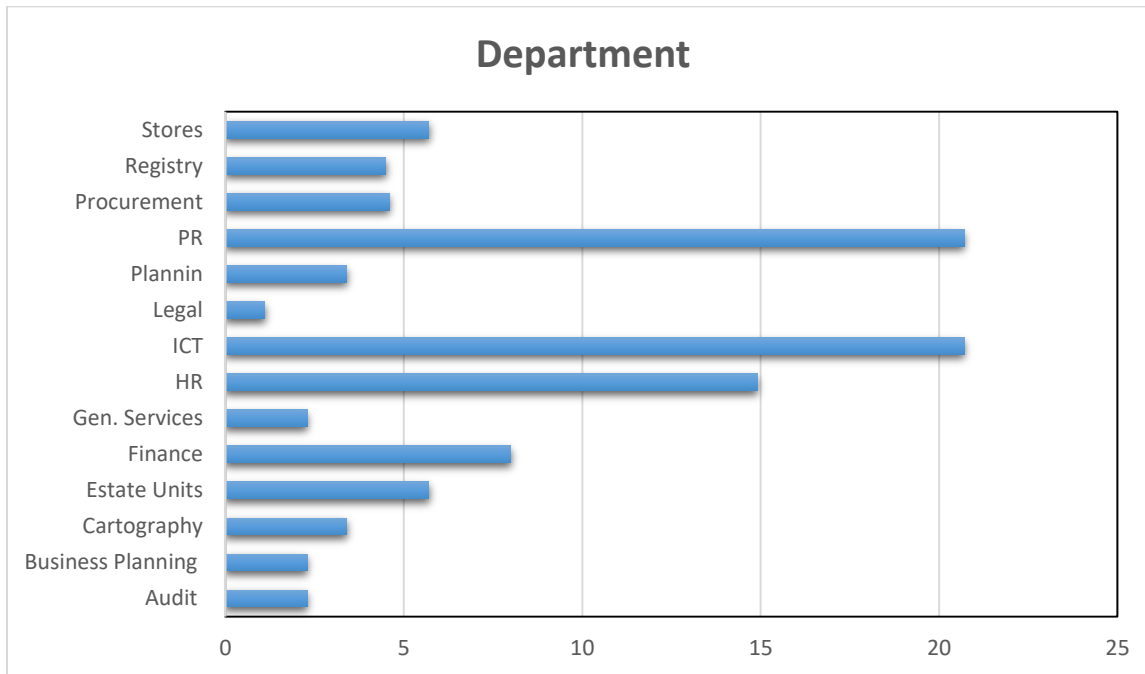


Figure 3: Respondents department of Work (Source: Field Data, 2021)

Figure three illustrates the varying departments from which the researcher sampled respondents from. The findings indicate that respondents emerged from as many as fourteen different departments from the organization under study. The findings indicate that respondents from the legal, registry, Audit Services, Business planning and General Services made up the less represented departments from where respondents worked. It is imperative to note however that employees from the PR department and the ICT department made up the most represented respondents. The implication of sampling from varying departments is to access the perceptions of employees from different employment backgrounds concerning the practice and relevance of

PR in the Forestry Commission. This is essential as the researcher is interested in investigating how employees from different background perceive PR and its relevance in the organization.

Respondents' Years of Employment at the Forestry Commission

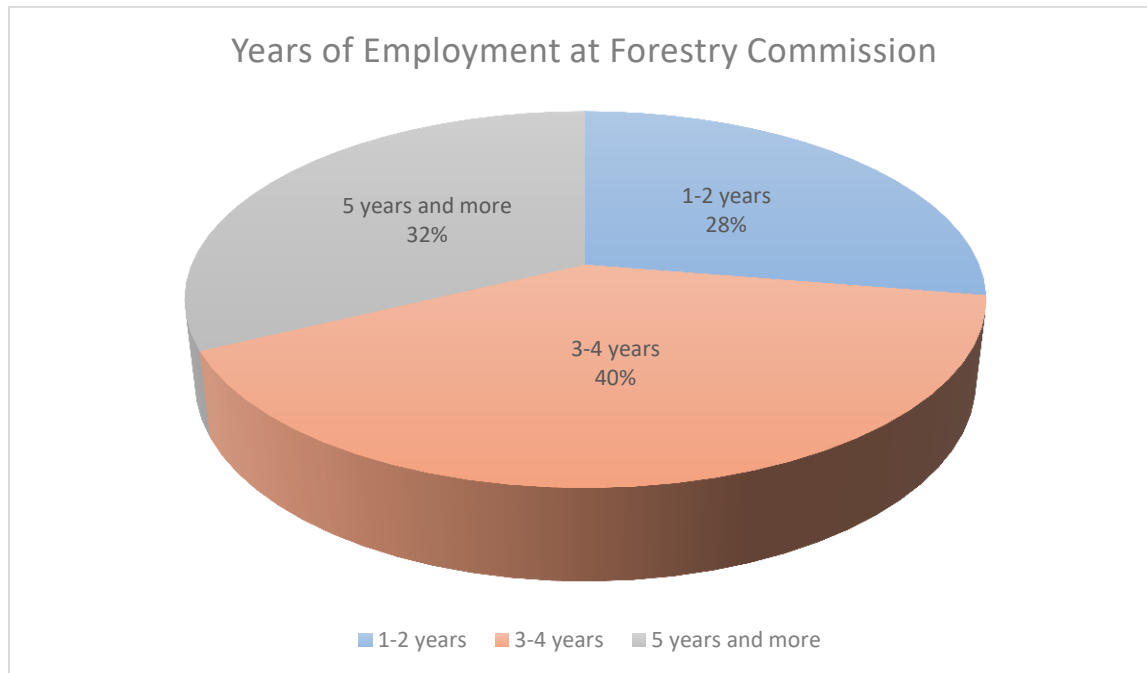


Figure 4: Pie chart indicating how long respondents have worked at Forestry Commission (Source: Field Data, 2021)

The above figure indicates that majority of the respondents (40%) had worked with the Forestry Commission for between 3 to 4 years while 28% of them had been employed at the commission for between 1 to 2 years. Thirty-two percent of the respondents had worked with the commission for five years and over. It is imperative to mention that mean tests run on the data indicates that the average respondent had worked with the Forestry Commission for two years. This implies that respondents sampled for this study had worked with the organization long enough and hence may possess crucial information necessary for this study.

4.2 Analysis of Key Findings

4.2.1 RQ1: What are the Functions and Roles of the PR Unit?

4.2.1.1 Awareness of the Presence of PR unit in Forestry Commission

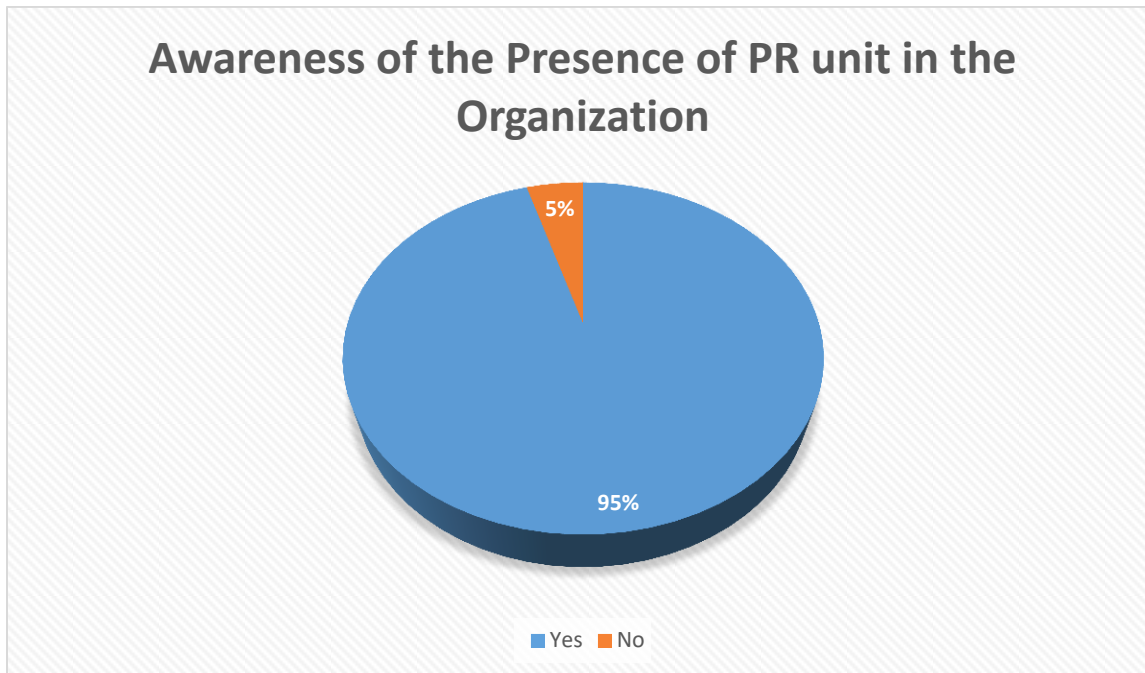


Figure 5: Respondents Awareness of the Presence of PR Unit in Forestry Commission (Source: Field Data, 2021)

The findings indicate that almost all of the respondents (95%) were aware of the presence of Public Relations unit in the organization. This indicates, members of other departments were aware that the organizations had a PR unit performing PR functions.

Qualitative data accessed from the interviews conducted with PR practitioners indicate that participants indicated that other employees of the organization were aware of the presence of the PR unit.

I am sure they are aware. Yes very sure. Because we often go to meetings with employees from other departments and more over we work quite closely with some of them too.

– Respondent FC03 (Source, Field Interview, 2021)

This findings corroborates with that of Appiah (2015) who found in her study that employees of organizations who worked under different departments other than the PR department were aware of the presence of the PR unit. Furthermore, the findings typify the core tenets of the Systems theory. The Systems theory of Public Relations argues that organizations are made up of interrelated parts that interact to ensure the organization works efficiently (Cutlip, Centre & Broom, 2006). The findings of this study therefore sits in line with the theory as it reveals that other departments are aware of the existence of the PR unit. While simply being aware of the existence of the unit is may not be a good indication of interactivity, it is undoubtedly a way forward to synthesizing the PR department with other employees from other departments.

4.2.1.2 Respondents' Awareness of PR Functions

The researcher was interested in understanding the core functions and roles of the PR unit of the Forestry Commission. In doing so, the researcher sought to investigate the awareness levels of respondents on the roles and functions of PR in the organization. The findings indicate that more than half (60%) of the respondent indicated awareness of the functions and roles of PR in the organization. Meanwhile 8% of the respondents perceived they not aware of the functions and roles of PR while 31% indicated that they were not too sure of the functions of the PR department in the organization. Mean test run on the data indicates that the average respondent sampled for this study was aware of the functions and roles of the PR unit in the organization.

N= 87 $\bar{X} = 1.70$

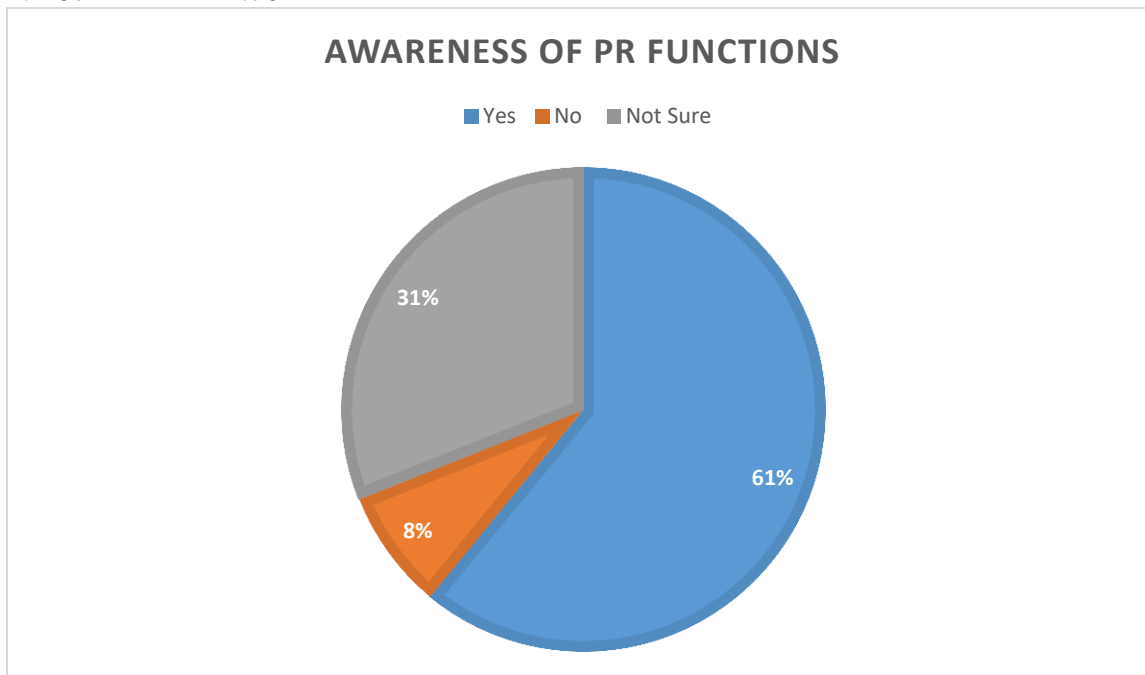


Figure 6: Pie chart showing Respondents awareness of the functions and roles of PR in Forestry Commission (Source: Field Data, 2021)

To further establish the awareness levels of PR functions and roles in the organization amongst majority of the respondents some PR practitioners who were interviewed indicated that indeed some members of other departments were aware of the presence and functions of PR in the organization. The findings indicate that departments who often worked closely with the PR unit of the organization had some awareness of the functions that the PR unit performed within the organization.

“Not all the employees have that awareness. Some of them know that we are part of the organization but I don’t think they really know what we do here. Those who would know are those departments that we often work with or go to meetings with. For them, because sometimes they come to us for information or we go to them for information they have a rough idea of what our roles are. But those departments that we often don’t work with, I don’t think they would really know”

– Respondent FC3 (Source, Field Interview, 2021)

4.2.1.3 Awareness of Some Functions of PR in Forestry Commission

Findings made from interviews conducted with PR practitioners indicate that the functions and roles of PR units are vast varied. The study found that the PR unit of the organization performed including writing, production, media engagements and management, events management and crisis communication. Some activities that the unit engaged in were geared towards social media management, image and reputation management, planning and implementing corporate social responsibility programs amongst other functions.

“We do a lot of things here...mostly they are communication based. You know the communication facilitator and technician roles. Yes, those are our responsibilities. So we manage the media, both broadcast and social media; we do reputation management and crisis communication. We prepare newsletters for internal publics and employees, find sponsorships and organize events. And mostly keep the image of the organization in positive light” - Respondent FC 5 (Source: Field Interview, 2021)

Having identified the core functions of the PR unit of the organization, the study further sought to assess employees' awareness of the different functions of the unit. The study found that majority (52%) of the respondents who expressed awareness in the functions and roles of the PR unit of the organization perceived that main function of the unit was media engagements.

The findings further indicate that just 2% of the respondents perceived research as a function of the PR unit while another 2% each perceived the function of the PR unit was to manage the organizational website and manage stakeholder relations respectively. The study however point out that 15 percent of the respondents believed the PR unit's function was engraved in internal communication activities while 11% mentioned crisis management as the units function. Other respondents believed the functions of the unit bothered on social media management (3%) and community relations (4%).

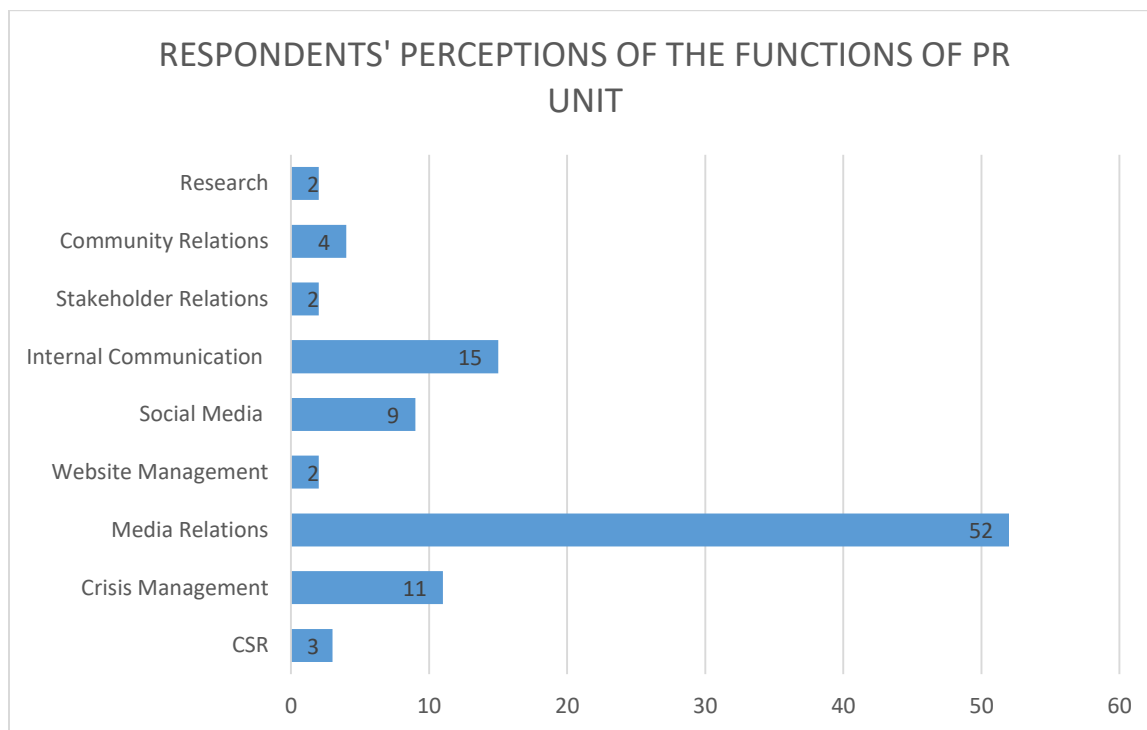


Figure 7: Bar chart showing respondents view of the functions of PR unit (Source: Field Data, 2021)

4.3 RQ2: How Influential is the PR unit to the Forestry Commission?

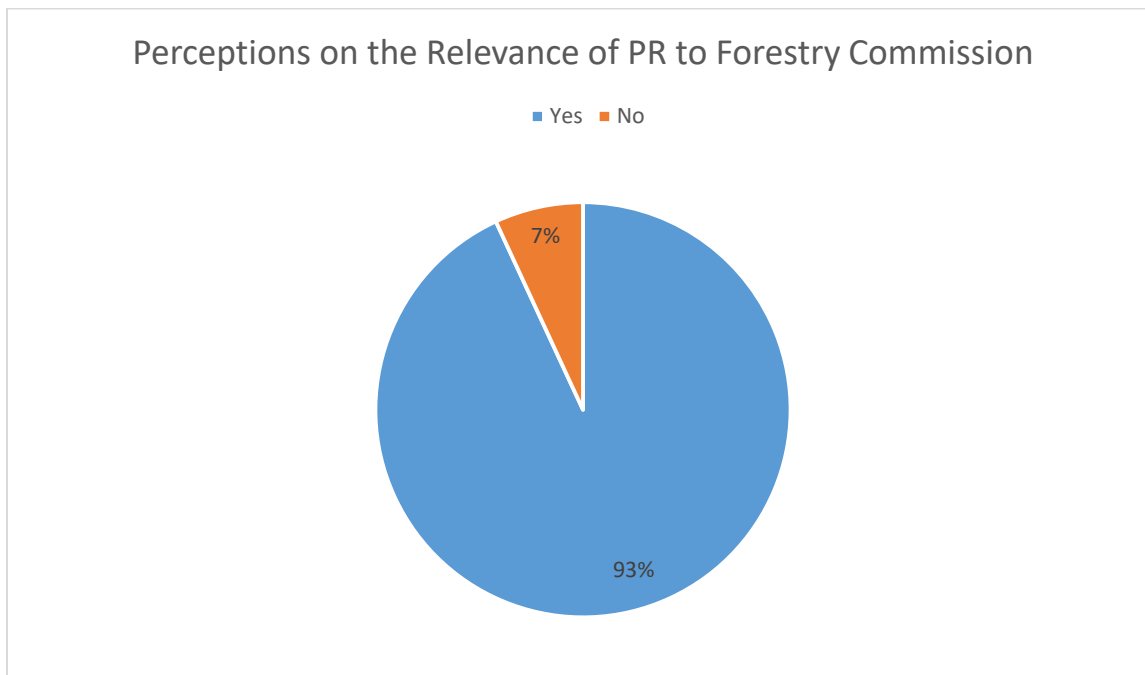


Figure 8: Pie chart showing respondents' perceptions on the relevance of PR to the Forestry Commission (Source: Field Data, 2021)

The findings of the study point out that almost all of the respondents believed that the practice of public relations is relevant to the general activities of the organization. The findings point that just seven percent of the respondents did not perceive the PR unit to be essential in helping the organization reach its objectives.

While the data from the survey indicates that majority of the respondents believed PR as essential to the organization some PR practitioners interviewed for this study however iterated that not all employees will perceive PR as essential. The findings point that PR practitioners sampled for this study believed that since most employees did not know of the key functions of PR in the organization, admitting the unit's relevance to the operations of the organization will be difficult.

“Well...it all comes down to the employees' knowledge of what PR does. If you don't know what something is, you won't know its relevance. The employee may not see our functions as relevant because they don't even know our functions.” – *Respondent FC 03 (Source, Field Interview, 2021)*

4.4 RQ3: What are the Awareness Levels of PR Activities among Employees of the Forestry Commission?

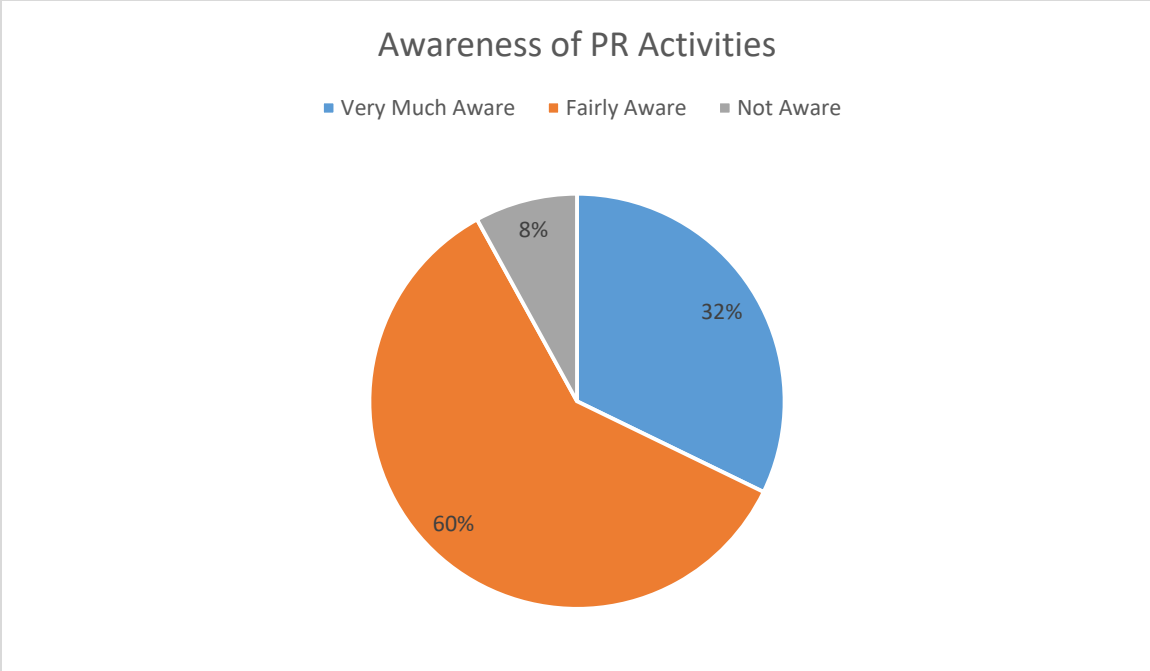


Figure 9: Pie chart illustrating respondents' awareness of PR activities in the Forestry Commission (Source: Field Data, 2021)

The study found that more than half of the respondents (60%) were fairly aware of activities that the PR engaged in. Meanwhile 32% of them expressed high levels of awareness as they asserted to being very much aware of the activities PR personnel engaged in in the organization. Eight percent of the respondents however indicated that they were not aware of the activities that PR persons engaged in in the organization. The data implies that majority of the respondent were aware or at least had some idea of the activities that PR persons engaged in as a department in the Forestry Commission.

To further express it, data found from the interviews indicate that PR practitioners perceive their activities to be well known amongst employees of the organization. Hence, data collected through interviews confirms that indeed, employees of the Forestry Commission had at least a fair idea of what activities the PR unit does as a department in the organization.

Oh yes. As for individual activities they are aware. I think it is because when we are doing something we inform them with newsletters and memos. Or even when we are doing some internal thing often it cuts across different departments so we have to go and talk with them and things. Like when we are conducting some internal research or something, employees are aware of this... maybe they don't know what it means but they see it. So as for individual activities they know we are doing something.

– Respondent FC 03 (Source: Field Interview, 2021)

This finding however is contrary to what Holm-Graves (2013) found while study staff perceptions of PR practice in the Information Service Department. She found that PR activities among were not well communicated to other employees and hence majority of employees from other departments were not aware of the many activities PR personnel engage in within organizations.

The finding seem to suggest that, the PR unit of the organization operates an open system which scholars perceive as the ideal system for PR units to operate. In open systems, the PR department does not work in isolation but in close relation with other departments such that other department are aware of the activities PR units engage in. This is essential because operating an open system enables the PR system accept feedback and operate openly with other departments.

4.5 RQ4: What is the Level of Employee Satisfaction on the Performance of PR in the Forestry Commission?

The study was further interested in investigating how satisfied employees are with the overall performance of the functions and activities of the PR unit of the organization. The findings point

out that 6.9% of the respondents perceived that PR was practiced excellently in the organization while 40.2% believed that the profession was being practiced well. Meanwhile 49.4% representing close to half of the respondents rated PR practice as good to the overall operations of the organization while 3.4% rated the profession as poor.

This indicates that there is a generally high level of satisfaction amongst the respondents concerning the practice and relevance of PR to the Forestry Commission. This however does not negate that fact that some employees believed that PR was poorly practiced in the organization.



Figure 10: Pie chart indicating satisfaction levels of employees on the practice of PR (Source: Field Data, 2021)

4.4 RQ5: What are some of the Challenges PR Practitioners Encounter in the Discharge Of their Official Duties?

The study sought to identify crucial challenges that PR practitioners face while practicing in the institutions.

The study found that three core challenges plagued the practice of PR in public relations. These include media involvement in PR and dealing with the media, financial challenges, and lack of recognition by top level management members.

4.4.1 Media Involvement in Public Relations and Negative Reportage

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

“The media is always on our necks. Especially when there is some little crisis like timber exploitation or something, they treat it as corruption stories and that is not good for the organization's image. Even when you have the truth, the media will turn it to suit their agenda”

– Respondent FC02 (Source: Field Interview, 2021)

4.4.2 Financial Challenges

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

“Financial issues is a human problem so it is everywhere. It comes in varied forms. For us, it is mostly financial. When you ask for money for a project it becomes problematic. We are captured in the organizational budget alright but often once our demands get there our budget is slashed up to like 30%. So often we are not able to operate at full scale. There is always an issue with money. People do not appreciate our needs because it might seem irrelevant at a point in time ”

– Respondent GAF8 (Source: Field Interview, 2021)

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

4.4.3 Lack of Recognition by Top Level Management

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

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

The study however agrees with Hogg and Doolan (1999) as well as Jjuuko (2014) who found in their respective studies that a lack of awareness and acknowledgement of PR departments and their functions are a crucial challenge to not only the practice of PR but to the organization as a whole. Wu and Baah-Boakye (2008) however argue that in Ghana most organizations consider PR as top level management function and thus play managerial roles. However, the practicality

or reality of their functions are often questioned and downplayed due to an organizational culture that festers a lack of awareness for PR and its functions.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the key findings made in this research. The chapter further presents a conclusion to the study while also making recommendations based on the key findings of the study.

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

The study was interested in assessing employee perceptions of public relations practice in the Forestry Commission of Ghana. The study argues that employees of the public institution hold certain perceptions about PR practice within the organization which have some impact on the roles and functions of the department to the organization. In assessing these perceptions of employees of the Forestry Commission, the study was focused on identifying employee perceptions of the functions of the PR unit of the organization. Additionally, the study sought to investigate employee perceptions of the influence and impacts of PR to the organization. The study also sought to understand employees' knowledge of the activities PR personnel in the organization engage in while also investigating how satisfied employees are with the performance of PR functions in the organization. The study further sought to identify the key challenges that the PR department faces.

The study found that almost all of the employees were aware of the presence of the existence and operation of the Public Relations unit of the organization. The findings indicate that while a few persons were not aware of the existence of the unit, the greater majority represented by 95 percent of the total respondent were aware there existed a functional PR unit in the organization

which performed unique PR functions. The findings therefore indicate that the PR unit was well known amongst employees from other departments. The study found that this so because the PR unit is often represented on inter-departmental meetings in the organization.

Furthermore, the study found that while the existence of the PR unit was well known amongst employees of the organization, just a little over half of them were confident of their knowledge in what PR entails and its functions. The study showed that a healthy number of employees were either not sure of the functions of PR or did not know of the functions completely. This indicates simply that although a lot of employees knew about the existence of the Public Relations unit, not all of them were aware of what their functions are consequently what relevance it holds to the organization.

The study further showed that for respondents who had some awareness of the functions of the PR unit, they considered media relations role as the most essential role performed by the department. Other employees also identified internal communication, crisis management and social media management as some of the top functions of the department.

The study further found that employees considered the PR unit as an influential department in the organization. Thus close to all of the respondents believed that indeed, PR was influential in contributing to the overall performance of the organization. Qualitative data from interviews with PR personnel however indicates that it is surprising the levels of confidence in the influence of PR to the organization. This, the respondents believed to be so because not all the employees knew of the real functions and activities of the PR department. Thus unawareness of the functions of the PR unit might transcend into their perceptions of PR's influence and impact on the organization.

The study also sought to investigate the satisfaction levels of employees on the practice of PR in the Forestry Commission. The findings of the study point that generally, employees of the organization were well satisfied with the performance of PR functions in the organization. Just a little over three percent of the respondents identified that the PR department of the organization practiced PR functions poorly in the department.

The study also found that factors such as lack of recognition and awareness of the functions of PR by top management members, lack of adequate finances, and consistent negative media reportage were the main challenges that the PR department of the Forestry Commission face.

5.2 Conclusion

The study sought to investigate employee perceptions of Public Relations unit of the Forestry Commission. Thus, the study was interested in investigating the knowledge levels of the existence and functions of the PR unit as a crucial department within the organization. The findings of the study point that majority of the employees in the organization were aware of the existence of the PR unit, its functions and roles within the organization.

The core argument of this study was premised on the idea that while PR functions and roles have been studied extensively within both private and public institutions, there is the need to also investigate the general perceptions and awareness levels of other departments within organizations where PR is practiced. The researcher argues that due to the fact that the PR department works within a general system of other departments, it is imperative that other departments and employees are aware of the functions and relevance of public relations.

The study concludes in light of the findings made that there is a general consensus of knowledge and awareness levels amongst employees of the Forestry Commission. The findings therefore

indicate that the PR department was well known with their functions and activities they perform duly acknowledged by other employees from other departments.

This further typifies the tenets from the Excellence and Systems theories that PR is not practiced in isolation but as crucial part of system made up interconnected departments and functions that work to the overall efficiency of the organization.

5.3 Recommendations

The researcher proposes the following recommendations based on the core findings of the study

- The researcher suggests that the PR department ensures that most of its activities are well integrated as much as possible with the activities of employees from other departments. This is to ensure that other departments are made well aware of the functions and activities of PR within the organization
- It is imperative for top management of the Forestry Commission to ensure that the PR department does not only receive adequate representation on the management board but also include crucial inputs from the department in making organizational decisions.
- The PR department of the Forestry Commission must be funded adequately in order for the department to realize their full potential and contribute most essentially to the efficiency of the organization.
- Additionally, it is essentially that the PR department develop a carefully planned media relations strategy in order to manage negative media reportage concerning the organization.

5.4 Recommendations for Further Studies

- Other studies should consider employing a qualitative approach to investigating top management perceptions on the practice, functions and significance of public relations in government institutions. This study and as a matter of fact many of such form within literature looks simply at employee perceptions without including top management perceptions. It is essential to include such dynamics in further studies.
- It is imperative that other studies adopt a comparative analysis approach to studying employee perceptions of PR practice in organizations. Other researcher should compare employee perceptions within private organizations and public institutions.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Luisatu Fuseini, a graduate student at Ghana Institute of Journalism. I am conducting a research on “**Employee Perception of Public Relations in Public Organisations and its Impact on PR practice. A study of the Forestry Commission Headquarters**”.

I humbly request your assistance to gather data on the said topic for academic purposes, and information provided will be handled with utmost confidentiality.

Thank You.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Kindly select the appropriate one

1. GENDER

Male [] Female []

2. AGE

20-30 [] 31-40 [] 41-50 [] 51-60 []

3. DEPARTMENT/UNIT

GENERAL QUESTIONS

4. How long have you worked in FC

1-2 Years [] 3-4 Years [] 5Years and above []

5. Are you aware of the PR outfit in FC

Yes [] No []

6. How well do you know the PR outfit at FC

Very well [] Fairly well [] Not so well []

7. What is the PR outfit in FC noted for?

Photography [] Media Engagements [] Crisis Management [] Information agents []

8. Who do you classify as a PR person

-A person with Communications background []

-A person who is fluent in English language []

-A university graduate []

-Anyone who has excellent writing skills []

9. Are you aware of the key functions and roles of PR in FC

Yes [] No [] Not sure []

10. If Yes, which of these functions of PR are you aware of (*select as many as you know*)

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) []

Crisis Management []

Media Relations []

Website Management []

Social Media []

Internal communication []

Stakeholder Relations []

Community Relations []

Research []

11. Which of these Key PR functions do you think are important at FC

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) []

Crisis Management []

Media Relations []

Website Management []

Social Media []

Internal communication []

Stakeholder Relations []

Community Relations []

Research []

12. Are you aware of the PR activities in FC?

Very much aware [] Fairly aware [] Not aware []

13. Do you think FC can function without PR?

Yes [] No [] Maybe []

14. Do you think PR practice is relevant to the operations and performance of the company

Yes [] No []

15. Do you think PR should be a key management function in FC?

Yes [] No []

16. How would you rate the overall performance of PR activities in FC

Excellent [] Very good [] Good [] Poor []

INTERVIEW

My name is Luisatu Fuseini, a Master's degree student at Ghana Institute of Journalism. Am conducting a study on "Employee Perception of Public Relations in Public Organisation and its Impact on PR practice. A study of the Forestry Commission Headquarters" as part of requirement for the award of a degree in master's in Public Relations.

The interview is tape-recorded. I will also take notes during our conversation. I will be glad if you can assist me in answering the following questions.

Your responses are for academic purpose and all confidentiality is assured.

Thank you for your time. Your participation is very much appreciated.

Respondent Consent Signature

.....

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How long have you worked as a PR practitioner in your establishment
2. What is the highest rank a PR head can attain in your establishment
3. Does your organisation have any policy document to guide or regulate the practice in the PR department?
4. What are the primary functions of PR in your place of work
5. Does the PR functions meet the Organisations mission, vision and objectives
6. What are the responsibilities of PR unit/department in achieving organizational goals
7. Is PR part of management
8. Does management support PR practice
9. Do you think management understands and appreciates the work of PR
10. If so, what help does management offer PR to support its function
11. How effective is information flow with regards to the style of PR practice in your organisation
12. How often do you do self-assessment
13. Do you have any idea the general perception staff have about your outfit
14. If yes how do you know? Did you conduct a research?
15. How does staff perception affect or impact your unit or department job performance

16. To what extent has PR improved the image of your organisation
17. What challenges do you face in the course of discharging your duty as a PR practitioner?
18. In your view, how can these challenges be addressed to enhance PR practice in your organisation.

