DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE: AN EXAMINATION OF GENDER ISSUES AMONG FEMALE PR PRACTITIONERS IN GHANA

By

JUSTICE ISSAH ABUDULAI

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SUPERVISOR: Professor Takalani E. Mudzanani

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to develop a current and appropriate framework for Public Relations (PR) practice among female practitioners in Ghana by investigating gender issues in PR among female practitioners in Ghana. Data were collected from the participants through face-to-face interviews, using an unstructured interview guide. After this, the data were thematically analysed using the NVivo software. The gender and feminist theories mainly guided this study. The findings showed that PR was not considered a management function as the majority of the practitioners played technician roles and were therefore not part of the dominant coalition. Moreover, PR was not considered a strategic function because most organisations did not value its contribution and therefore subsumed PR under marketing when it should have been the reverse as recommended by scholars. The educational background of most of the participants dents largely reflected marketing and other backgrounds instead of Public Relations or Communication, which affected professionalism and ethical standards in the PR profession generally. Another key finding that the study revealed was the fact that most of the participants in this study did not conduct empirical research before or after rolling out major programmes and policies of their organisations. Monitoring and evaluation were poorly conducted. Because the practitioners employed informal methods, they often produced unscientific results. The study also confirmed that PR practice in Ghana is fraught with challenges which mostly resulted from the poor understanding of the concept and purposes of PR, as well as its contributions to the achievement of organisational goals. The study further established the lack of proper regulations, which has allowed people with different backgrounds to flood the profession in the country. The development of the framework in this study was made possible as the researcher engaged in an extensive literature review, coupled with the findings from primary data as well as the basic assumptions of the theories employed in this study. The framework in this study identified some of the challenges that affected female PR practitioners resulting in their slow career progression. It also provides practical guidelines to engender excellent or effective PR practice among female practitioners within the Ghanaian context.

Key words:

Public Relations; framework; two-way communication; relationship management; public relations officer (PRO); stakeholders/publics; management function; roles; position; female practitioners.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to God Almighty for seeing me through successfully.

I also dedicate this work to my entire family especially my late father, KULGBEA-RANA Charles Abudulai Kariwoni. Daddy, wherever you are, may God continue to keep you in his safe hands until we meet again. It is unfortunate that you did not live long to see me complete this academic journey. I know you are proud of me. Rest in peace chief.

DECLARATION

Name: Justice Issah Abudulai

Student number: 64100758

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy (Communication)

Thesis title: Developing a framework for public relations practice: An examination of gender issues among female PR practitioners in Ghana.

I declare that the above thesis is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I further declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software. I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

SIGNATURE   DATE

_____   23RD JANUARY, 2023

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigated gender issues in Public Relations (PR) in the Ghanaian context. The study interrogated important but largely under-researched issues related to the lived experiences of female PR practitioners in Ghana. Okorley (2015) for instance argues that gender issues play an important role in PR practice, but studies relating to women in the PR profession in Ghana have scientifically received little attention. This study appears to be unique from earlier ones because it focuses on women in Public Relations in Ghana. Moreover, this study which is an exploratory enquiry aimed at explicating the lived experiences of women in the PR profession in Ghana which have been rare. One credible body that relates to PR practice in Ghana is the Institute of Public Relations, Ghana (IPRG). This body exists to provide a professional structure for PR practice in Ghana. This study, therefore, focused on women in PR in Ghana who are accredited members of IPRG, particularly, those in active service. The study focused on both older and younger female PR practitioners in Ghana. The rationale was to explicate the lived experiences of both sides in order to compare and contrast as well as put the study into a proper perspective. This chapter, therefore, examined several issues that are critical as far as women in the PR profession in Ghana are concerned. The chapter discussed the overall context of the study by tackling the background which highlighted some key definitions of PR and their analysis, a brief country profile of Ghana, and the PR industry in Ghana among others. Other issues discussed in this chapter included the formulation of the research problem, goals and objectives of the study, research questions and significance of the study, the scope of the study, delimitation, operational definition of concepts and finally the organisation of the study.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Public Relations has expanded tremendously over the years, with most organisations effectively using it to engage with their numerous stakeholders. It is no longer sufficient

enough for an organisation to communicate with only the internal publics using internal channels. Communication channels ought to be expanded and tested to be effective in order to engage with both the internal and external publics. As a result of the increasing need for PR communications, diverse channels and strategies ought to be developed to meet the demands of both the external and internal publics (Cutlip & Centre 2013; Gregory 2002).

Arguably, PR serves a variety of institutions in society, including private businesses, trade unions, governments, non-governmental Organisations, health institutions, educational institutions, political parties, celebrities and religious bodies among others. In order for an organisation to achieve its aims, relationships ought to be nurtured, maintained and sustained. The PR practitioner here, therefore, serves as a liaison, interpreter and mediator between the organisation and its publics. PR practice is therefore all-embracing, stretching out to the internal and external publics of the organisation. Thus, management ought to recognise their PR practitioners as part of the top management if organisational goals are to be achieved (Chmielecki 2012; Gregory 2002; Grunig 2009; Grunig 2011; Jourde 2007).

While this is the case, studies have confirmed that women in the PR profession have made enormous contributions to PR practice, teaching and research (Aldoory 2006 2009). This has undoubtedly made the profession what it is today in terms of its purposes and the contributions PR can make in achieving organisational goals. Historical studies of women in the Public Relations profession and their contributions to the field have not been adequately documented by scholars as their achievements appear to have been deliberately masked by researchers. What makes the situation even gloomier is the fact that numerous studies have confirmed women's dominance in the PR profession and yet their male counterparts continue to occupy higher positions and enjoy better working conditions than females in the PR profession (Aldoory & Toth 2002; Barett 2002; Gower 2001; Moss, Warnaby & Newman 2001; Pompper 2007; Scott 2001).

Extensive research studies appear not to confirm why there are more women than men in public relations in most countries globally (Krugler 2017; Thompson 2008). However,

the conventional notion holds that PR is more appealing to a lot of women as a career choice because the practice requires substantial investments in building relationships as well as expanding lines of communication (Krugler 2017; Thompson 2008). Arguably, these are two major areas connected to public relations practice that women have historically excelled as compared to their male counterparts (Aldoory et al 2008; Aldoory & Toth 2002; Dubrowski et al 2019; Moreno et al 2017; Moreno et al 2015; Place 2010; Place & Varderman Winter 2018).

Again, from a sociological perspective, women have often flooded professions such as Human Resources, Public Relations and Management among others because they usually prefer to major in the liberal arts instead of the sciences (Aldoory 2004; Aldoory et al 2008). The tipping point here is that women often comfortably choose professions that have been socially constructed for females, thus the reason why women have flooded the PR profession globally (Aldoory 2004; Fitch, James & Motion 2016; Grunig et al 2001; Horsley 2009; Pompper & Jung 2013; Simorangkir 2010; Topic et al 2019; Wrigley 2002). Yet, even when they occupy the majority in professions that appear to be solely prescribed for women, they are still faced with challenges that make it difficult for them to progress smoothly in their careers.

While the contributions of women have been confirmed in many studies, issues relating to gender appear to have created a divide between men and women in the PR profession globally. For instance, inequalities such as career roles, pay gap, lack of mentorship, advancement opportunities, sexual discrimination and harassment have been extensively documented as negatively affecting women in the PR profession globally (Grunig et al 2001; Thomas 2005; Topic 2017; Wrigley 2002). Most women are often placed in technician roles rather than managerial roles because of the perception that they may not be able to manage affairs well or not being tough enough for the corporate world. These assumptions and stereotypes are explained as mostly the reasons why a good number of women are probably prevented from climbing the corporate ladder rapidly (Aldoory & Toth 2002; Appelbaum et al 2002; Eagly & Karau 2002; Hill et al 2016).

Moreover, factors such as the glass ceiling which basically refers to artificial barriers that have been deliberately put in place to prevent women from progressing to the top of their careers, as well as patriarchal issues among others often prevent most women in the PR profession from progressing to the top of their career (Moreno 2018; Wrigley 2002).

On the African continent, very little has been documented as far as the involvement of women in the PR profession is concerned. This is, in spite of the fact that women have made substantial contributions to PR practice in Africa and yet their achievements appear to have been deliberately masked by researchers (Adottey 2011; Akpabio 2009; Okorley 2015; Thompson 2018). Given that very little has been documented on women's involvement in the PR profession on the African continent, this study investigated gender issues in Public Relations that relate to the career experiences of women in Public Relations (PR) within the Ghanaian context. This will contribute to the empowerment of African PR practitioners and scholars with the requisite knowledge and skills in the PR profession and also help in building PR theories and models that will fit within the Ghanaian or African context. This is so because most of the PR practices within the African continent are largely hinged on the concepts and ideas that have been built from the west even though some of these contexts may not apply to the Ghanaian or African context, as a result of cultural, economic and political differences. Arguably, this current situation about PR practice using western ideas poses a huge challenge to the African PR practitioner. There is therefore the need for African researchers to begin to work towards developing concepts, models and theories on PR practice that fit into the African continent.

Therefore, the main goal of the study was to develop a framework that could guide the practice of PR in general and female PR practitioners in Ghana or Africa in particular. In Ghana, the Institute of Public Relations, Ghana (IPRG) is the only statutory body that regulates the practice of PR. The body constantly organises workshops, seminars and courses in various aspects of PR for its members as a way of sharpening their professional skills and expertise in line with contemporary PR practice. The body also educates its members on current trends in PR from a global and African perspective. Principally, IPRG provides a professional structure for PR practice in Ghana with

encouragement to practitioners to contribute to global discussions on PR practice, teaching and research in Ghana and Africa. Other scholars such as Akpabio (2009); Mersham and Skinner (2009); Ming-Yi and Baah-Boakye (2008); Rensburg (2007); Van Heerden (2005) have expressed similar sentiments in their studies.

Given that IPRG is the only statutory body that regulates the practice of PR in Ghana, this study's population was drawn from female PR practitioners in Accra, Ghana who are accredited members of IPRG and have practised for a substantial number of years. Moreover, this study, which is an exploratory enquiry, aimed at explicating the career experiences of women in the PR profession in Ghana concerning gender issues among the practitioners, which have been scarce in the literature. The current study, therefore, contributes to bridging the gap in literature as far as PR practice in Africa is concerned, through the investigation of how the profession is being practised in Ghana generally, with a specific focus on female PR practitioners in selected corporate organisations in the country. The study will undoubtedly make significant contributions to PR literature, practice and theories that relate to the African continent. Principally, the research sought to examine gender issues that are prevalent among female PR practitioners in Ghana, in terms of the positions they occupy as well as the roles they play in the various organisations where they practise as PR professionals.

Having provided a background to the study, the next sub-section of the chapter focuses on some definitions of PR from academic and professional bodies.

1.2.1 Defining Public Relations (PR)

Public Relations (PR) as an academic discipline and a profession has been given different definitions by scholars and accredited institutions. Although the PR profession has been in existence for several decades, there appear not to be a universally accepted definition of the profession. In other words, not even a single, all-encompassing definition has so far been identified and embraced by all scholars in the PR field.

Perhaps, the fact that there has not been a universally accepted definition for PR by scholars and academics motivated a long-time PR scholar and professional leader, the

late Rex F. Harlow to develop a long-winded definition which obviously will be difficult to memorise. Cutlip and Center's (2013) citing Harlow (1976) indicate that Harlow collected nearly 500 definitions of public relations and identified common elements which he incorporated into the definition below;

> *Public Relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organisation and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinions; defines and emphasises the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; help management to keep abreast of and effectively utilise change; serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound and ethical communication as its principal tools (Harlow 1976, cited in Cutlip & Center's 2013: 29).*

Obviously, hundreds of scholars have attempted to define Public Relations by explaining the core concepts that make up the practice. The obvious task of the PR practitioner is clearly spelt out in the numerous definitions that have been advanced by PR scholars and practitioners. A cursory run through these definitions confirms the fact that PR is crucial to every organisation because it helps to promote mutual understanding and goodwill between an organisation and its numerous stakeholders who are crucial if organisational goals are to be achieved. It must be emphasised that contemporary PR practice demands that practitioners employ two-way communication because it is the best way to nurture and maintain relationships (Grunig et al 2001).

However, Freberg (2021) notes some similarities between academics and practitioners' definitions of public relations regarding its conceptualisation. First, both academics and practitioners recognise that PR has a core focus when it comes to relationship building and management. This is because the PR practitioner is supposed to act as a mediator between the organisation and its stakeholders. As a result, the practitioner should possess the necessary skills and expertise that will enable him or her to operate. The practitioner should have the ability to evaluate and

also interpret the opinions and attitudes of the publics for the top management of the organisation. Freberg (2021) argues further that, a clear distinction also exists in the definitions outlined by academics and practitioners. Academic scholars often focus more on how PR is conceptualised based on theoretical perspectives, while practitioners, on the other hand, see PR as mainly a strategic element and a process that will enable them to achieve mutually beneficial relationships. In other words, creating an enabling environment for a win-win situation for both the organisation and its stakeholders (Freberg 2021).

Professionally, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the largest professional organisation, defines PR as a "strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organisations and their publics" (Public Relations Society of America 2020). Similarly, the Institute of Public Relations, Ghana (IPRG) defines PR as a planned and sustained distinctive management art and social science function based on an understanding of human behaviour that identifies issues of critical relevance, analyses future trends and predicts their consequences. PR establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation or group and its publics based on truth, full information and responsible performance (IPRG 2021).

Additionally, the Public Relations Institute of Australia defines PR as the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation (or individuals) and its (or their) publics. Similarly, the Canadian Public Relations Society explains PR as the strategic management of relationships between an organisation and its diverse publics, through the use of communication, to achieve mutual understanding, realise organisational goals and serve the public interest. Academics in the PR profession have also outlined several definitions of PR. However, a brief highlight of some of them could help in explaining the concept of public relations from the lens of academics in PR.

According to Amoakohene (2002:7), "the essence of Public Relations is to build and maintain a good image through acceptable organisational practices aimed at fostering good neighbourliness, rapport and support for the organisation concerned". Similarly,

Cutlip and Center's (2013:29) define PR as "a management function that establishes and maintains a mutually beneficial relationship between an organisation and the publics on whom its success and failures depend". In what appears to reinforce the views of Amoakohene (2002) and Freberg (2021), Heath (2000) offers a much shorter explanation of the definition of PR. He defines PR as the use of communication to manage relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders. Heath (2000) believes that relationships are best built if two-way communication is employed so that an opportunity will most often arise for both parties to interact and find solutions to problems that may occur.

Again, the ultimate aim of public relations is to ensure that there is harmony and peaceful co-existence at all times within an organisation. Therefore, the communication channels within and outside the organisation must be consistently open so that both parties can express their views at all times. It is gratifying to note that as far back as 1978, the first World Assembly of the PR Association in Mexico defined the profession as the art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organisational leaders and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the organisation and public interest (Newsome, Moore & Dowling 2000:2).

Based on the arguments and observations by the above PR scholars and accredited institutions, there appears to be an ongoing academic debate as to the best and universally accepted definition of PR as a profession and an academic discipline. All the definitions seem to have common grounds. They highlight the fact that PR is important in managing communication in order to build good relationships and also maintain mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics.

From the foregoing discussions, it is evident that the core issues encapsulated in the various definitions outlined by academics and accredited institutions guide practitioners in their work. Further, critical analysis of most of the definitions confirm that PR encompasses the following key elements that appear to be crucial to the profession.

- **Management Function:** PR as a management function has been supported by many scholars in the discipline. For instance, Cutlip, Center and Broom (2009), Seitel (2007), Center and Jackson (2004) all point to the fact that PR as a management function is crucial for the sustenance of the profession. Many of these scholars maintain that PR practitioners play an important role as interpreters of organisations' policies, programmes and philosophies. As stated already, PR practice is all-embracing, stretching out to the publics of the organisation. As a result, there is a need for the practitioner to be recognised as part of the top-ranking membership of the organisation. PR practitioners become more effective when they are part of the top decision-making body of the organisation instead of being relegated to perform the role of technicians, which involves simply relaying information to the publics after decisions have been made by the top management.

- **Two-Way Communication**: Grunig (1992) for instance argues that excellent organisations are those that practice two-way communication because two-way communication is described as the ideal. This is because it allows for feedback, negotiations, conflict resolutions, mutual understanding and respect between an organisation and its publics.

- **Planning**: The PR profession always demands that activities and programmes are well planned and systematically executed rather than engaging in ad-hoc ways of carrying out programmes. What it means is that PR programmes must be deliberately designed to influence public opinion by providing the necessary information in order to obtain feedback from those that the organisation's activities are likely to affect.

- **Positive Image/Reputation**: PR believes that organisations must strive at all times to maintain a positive image and reputation. Therefore, activities that the publics of an organisation undertake that have the propensity to negatively affect the image and reputation of the organisation must be avoided. The counselling role of the PR practitioner becomes even more crucial because the PR department must constantly monitor what goes on in the organisation and advise management accordingly, especially when things are not going too well.

- **Interest**: The rationale for any PR activity is to serve the public interest but not for the sole purpose of the organisation's benefits. It is important to note that at

all times, there must always be some mutual benefits to the organisation as well as its publics.

- **Deliberate**: PR activities are carefully designed to influence, gain understanding, provide information or even obtain feedback from the publics because any activity that an organisation undertakes has a bearing on the internal and external publics.

- **Publics**: These are groups of individuals who have a stake in what goes on in the organisation. They include the internal and external publics. It is often argued by researchers that the successes or failures of an organisation are dependent on the publics (Cutlip, Center & Broom 2000).

In summation, a critical look at the various definitions and arguments put forth by most PR scholars and institutions point to the fact that PR is basically about using communication to manage relationships that should be mutually beneficial to both the organisation and its publics.

It can be observed further that the PR profession appears to be multi-faceted in nature, as a result, its wide range of functions cannot easily be incorporated into a single definition, hence the inability of scholars to arrive at a universally accepted definition for the profession. There is no doubt that these definitions appropriately capture the substance of the PR profession, especially concerning contemporary practice.

Having analysed some definitions of PR from the academic and professional lenses, the next sub-sections will discuss a brief profile of Ghana where the study was conducted as well as a brief literature review on some key areas of the Public Relations profession.

1.2.2   A Brief Profile of Ghana

This study investigated gender issues among female Public Relations (PR) practitioners in Ghana. In order to contextualise the issues identified in this study, and further put them in proper perspective, a brief country profile is given in the ensuing paragraphs.

Ghana, which was formerly known as the Gold Coast in the colonial era, gained independence on 6th March 1957, becoming the first sub-Saharan nation to break free from a hitherto colonial rule. On 1st July 1960, Ghana became a commonwealth republic with Dr. Kwame Nkrumah as the first president (BBC 2020).

Ghana is situated in West Africa (W/A) and shares common borders with Burkina Faso to the North, Togo to the East, Côte d'Ivoire to the West, and the Atlantic Ocean to the South as shown in the map of Ghana in figure 1 of this chapter. Ghana currently has an estimated population of about 30.8 million (Ghana Statistical Service 2021). This recent population estimate represents a fivefold growth of the population since the first post-independence census was conducted in 1960. According to the recent census data released by the Ghana Statistical Service, the population is growing at a declining rate with women making up the greater proportion of the population. Apart from the population growth, Ghana has made remarkable progress towards its democracy under a multi-party system with its independent Electoral Commission and Judiciary winning much global trust and recognition, especially over the past two decades. Ghana is consistently ranked among the first top countries in Africa because of its enviable record in terms of freedom of speech and press freedom (The World Bank 2022). With the repeal of the criminal libel law in Ghana in 2001, the media scene has been greatly enhanced along with growth in other democratic institutions (BBC World Service Trust 2006; Sikanku 2011). With the liberalisation of the airwaves, the Ghanaian media have continued to experience improved levels of freedom which has arguably led to some massive expansion in private participation as well as ownership within the mass media industry in Ghana (BBC World Service Trust 2006).
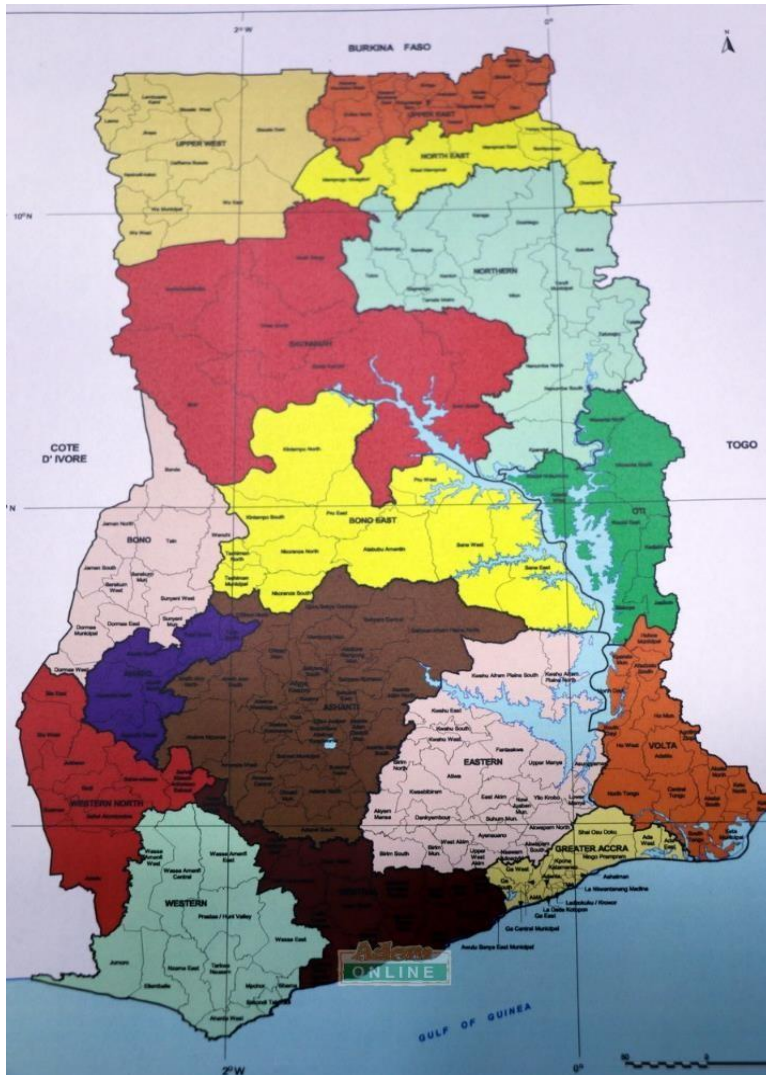
Figure 1: The map of Ghana Source: The Multimedia Group (2020)

Originally, Ghana had ten (10) administrative regions but a recent referendum in 2018 approved the creation of six (6) more regions in 2019 bringing the total number of regions to sixteen (16). The capital city of Ghana is Accra which is believed to be the most urbanised and populous metropolis out of the current sixteen (16) regions.

Historically, Ghana is believed to be the first black African nation in the region to achieve independence from colonial power. Ghana is also the first country in the sub-Saharan Africa where Europeans traded in Gold and later in slaves. The country is also known for its natural resources including Gold, timber, cocoa, bauxite, rubber and

other productive lands for agriculture. Recently, Ghana discovered oil within its shores and this has undoubtedly boosted its economy substantially.

Furthermore, the country has had a very stable political democracy since it returned to civilian rule following the coming into force of the 1992 constitution. As indicated already, Ghana is one of the leading countries in Africa because of its considerable political stability, natural wealth and partly because it was the first black African country south of the Sahara to achieve independence from colonial rule (BBC World Service Trust 2006). The current president of Ghana is Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The field of Public Relations (PR) has evolved from a practice-orientation to a more scientific field. Therefore, its practices have moved from merely generating publicity for an organisation or building its image and focusing on the management of relationships to building confidence, accountability and transparency. Public Relations (PR) is basically a management function that uses communication to facilitate a cordial relationship and understanding between an organisation and its numerous stakeholders. Organisations, therefore, use PR as a means of improving their image, and reputation as well as building relationships to achieve organisational goals and objectives (Center & Broom 2013; Johnson & Zawawi 2009; Van Heerden 2004).

While this is the case, an extensive review of literature from the global, continental and Ghanaian contexts confirms that conceptual literature that focuses on the development and practice of PR is uneven. In fact, the situation is even worse on the African continent, or for that matter Ghana. Although there are growing signs of increasing literature on PR in Africa, it is rather at a slow pace. It is worth noting however that, empirical evidence shows that the PR field has grown tremendously over the years and will continue to evolve into a more established discipline (Mersham, Skinner & Rensburg 2011; Ming-Yi & Baah-Boakye 2009; Roux 2010; Steyn 2009; Thompson 2018; Van Heerden 2004).

Therefore, there is a need for African scholars to begin to look at how the PR profession is practised in other countries as there is much more to be investigated and learnt by

way of country-to-country contexts in Africa. This study, therefore, focuses on investigating gender issues in PR among female practitioners within the Ghanaian context. Bekoe (2012) for instance argues that a good number of women in the PR profession in Ghana have played pioneering roles which have culminated into the shaping of the PR industry in the country today. Although this observation was made over a decade ago, extensive literature search online and in libraries of major institutions of studies in Ghana by this researcher confirm that studies on women in PR in Ghana have been rare. This is further confirmed by Thomson (2008) who notes that there is a paucity of literature on women in PR in Ghana. This is despite the overwhelming growing evidence that a lot of women have flooded the PR profession and have made remarkable contributions to the practice and teaching of PR globally (Creedon 1991; Gower 2001; Hakim 2006; Pompper & Adams 2006; Toth 2001).

On the African continent and for that matter Ghana, few investigations have been carried out on public relations generally, and particularly on women in PR. Although there is a plethora of studies on women in PR globally, most of these studies have been heavily situated to the West (Anderson 2003; Creedon 1991; Poffenberger 2001). As a result, most PR practice in Africa is heavily hinged on concepts, models and theories from the west especially in the United States of America even though a huge difference exists in terms of the African cultural, economic and political situations. Grunig et al (1995) acknowledge that the conditions that prevail in western countries may differ from other countries, hence the practice of PR may not be as effective as it exists in the United States of America. It is worth noting that in Ghana so far, Addotey (2011), Bekoe (2012) and Okorley (2015) appear to be the only studies that have specifically focused on women in PR in Ghana.

Arguably, these were somewhat sporadic attempts to describe or assess the nature of issues affecting female PR practitioners in Ghana. However, these studies did not seem to provide a clearer picture of the issues from a broader perspective. Again, the studies, although focused on women in PR in Ghana, were quite discrete and limited in scope. From the foregoing, it is obvious that studies on women in PR in Ghana is an unexplored terrain. Again, studies that focus on women and gender issues in PR in Ghana are virtually non-existent since such studies have received little empirical

research attention in Africa or for that matter in Ghana (Ferreira 1994; Gyan 1991, Rensburg 2002; Opukah 2003; Steyn 2005; Wu & Baah-Boakye 2009).

Given what may appear to be an ongoing academic debate about the vast differences in PR practice and the resultant application of theories and models globally, the question that will immediately come to mind is "what influences the practice of PR among female PR practitioners in Ghana? Are there some specific models that are unique to Ghanaian female PR practitioners as confirmed in the case of North America where two-way symmetrical communication is employed, the reflective paradigm which is also confirmed in Europe or the strategist model that has been codified and practised in South Africa?" In considering these critical questions and also based on an extensive literature review, the researcher is of the firm conviction that there is a significant gap not only in PR practice in general, but also among female PR practitioners on the African continent or for that matter Ghana.

Therefore, the problem to be addressed in this current study is hinged primarily on the following: to investigate gender issues in PR by employing a qualitative cross-sectional study of gender issues among female PR practitioners in Ghana and also developing a theoretical framework which could guide the practice of PR among female practitioners in Ghana. Furthermore, the study investigated how PR is practised concerning the positions female PR practitioners in Ghana occupy in the organisational hierarchy in most organisations in Ghana, the kind of roles female PR practitioners play as well as the communication strategies they employ to effectively communicate with their various stakeholders.

These areas are considered critical for the study because there are a few or virtually no studies on female PR practice in Ghana currently. Available literature that focuses on PR practice, models, roles, positions and theories mainly emanates from the western perspective, specifically from the United States of America and the United Kingdom (Sriramesh 2009; Vercic et al 2001). Scholars such as Freitag and Stokes (2009) for instance point out that the practice of PR on Sub-Saharan Africa, of which Ghana is part, appears to take a different format as compared to how PR is practised in the western world. Moreover, the few studies that have been focused on PR practice

in Sub-Saharan countries have been sparsely documented and also unfairly evaluated because most often, western standards have most often been used as the benchmark. This is in spite of the fact that most of the conditions that exist in the western world such as the USA and other jurisdictions are completely different in terms of political, economic and socio-cultural ideologies. Therefore, PR practice in some parts of the globe cannot be said to be as effective as in the western world (Blankson 2009; Ferreira 1994; Grunig et al 1995; Gupta & Barlett 2007; Opukah 1992; Opukah 1993; Rensburg 2002; Van Heerden 2004).

This study thus intended to fill that lacuna by comprehensively investigating gender issues among female PR practitioners in Ghana. This was based on their career experiences that relate to the positions they occupy in their various organisations as well as the roles they are assigned to by their bosses. Arguably, this study's scope included gender and feminism studies. The study will thus contribute to the body of knowledge on gender as the participants in this study are women who work alongside male employees in their organisations. Gender studies help people in different social environments to solve gendered-related conflicts through a common understanding regarding gender identities and relationships. Moreover, the study will contribute to knowledge on feminism as issues of gender equality, women empowerment, and gender discrimination among others have been adequately discussed in the study. Recent studies in almost all fields advocate for equal opportunities, freedoms and rights and fair treatment for both males and females in society. As already indicated in the background, studies on PR practice generally on the African continent have been inadequate. This study, therefore, discussed how PR is being practised on the African continent and has made a case for African scholars in the discipline to increase efforts on studies that relate to African societies and cultures by employing the African lens as far as PR practice and other disciplines are concerned. The overall aim of this study was to develop a framework that will guide the practice of PR among female practitioners in Ghana.

1.4 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

According to Bhattacherjee (2012), the main goal of scientific research is to investigate and discover knowledge and a phenomenon in order to suggest the appropriate theories that will help to explain a natural or social phenomenon. Bhattacherjee (2012) argues further that one of the goals of research is to build scientific knowledge. This current study is applied communication research. The main aim of this study is to investigate the issues that relate to public relations practice and its implications on the global front. Again, the study aims to explore the core issues that relate to female PR practice in Africa, or for that matter Ghana. Du Plooy (2001) for instance explains research goals as aims, purposes and the overall outcomes that will emanate from a study. Du Plooy (2001), however, attempts to draw a dichotomy between what she terms two goals of research – "applied communication research" and "basic communication". Du Plooy (2001) explains further that a study is termed basic if the aim is to develop theories that will attempt to explain a particular communication phenomenon. Again, basic communication research expands the understanding of the phenomenon and also expands communication as a science. Applied communication on the other hand refers to when the main purpose of the investigation is to discover practical issues that relate to a phenomenon in order to find solutions to the challenges that may have been identified. Du Plooy (2001) notes a seeming confusion that often occur among scholars regarding the application and use of 'goals', 'aims', 'purpose', 'objectives', or 'outcomes' of research (Du Plooy 2001).

However, Wimmer and Dominick (2011) appear to offer a different view. They categorise research into three types, namely, applied, basic, and introspective. Applied research focuses on the development of theories to solve societal or 'world' problems. In other words, Public Relations practitioners can employ applied research to solve specific communication problems such as communication campaigns, or image and reputational management. Basic research basically aims at developing frameworks for public relations practice. Knowledge is expanded in PR and it is used to solve PR problems. Introspective on the other hand examines the field of PR with more focus on the experiences of practitioners of the profession. These include both males and females (Wimmer & Dominick 2011; Dozier 2010).

It must be noted that the overall objective of this research is exploratory. Researchers who use exploratory objectives aim at discovering new insights into a particular phenomenon that is of interest to them. Invariably, extensive research into a phenomenon will enable the researcher to comprehend the core issues relating to the practice of PR by female practitioners in Ghana. As Sue Rit ter (2012) puts it; the main aim of exploratory research is to enable the researcher to formulate problems, clarify concepts and also form some hypothesis about the phenomenon.

Similar views are shared by Nagy, Biber and Leavy (2011) as far as the discussion on exploratory research is concerned. They contend that exploratory research is normally applied in a situation when the area has not been extensively investigated by previous scholars. Kothan (2004) appears to concur with the views of Nagy, Biber and Leavy (2011). Kothan (2004) insists that exploratory studies often allow a researcher to gain knowledge about an issue and in the process discover new ideas to build on what other researchers have already done.

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The broad objective of the study was to investigate gender issues in PR among female practitioners in Ghana. Women in the PR profession have made tremendous contributions to PR practice, research and teaching. In order to comprehensively investigate and understand the practice of PR among female PR practitioners in Ghana, this study sought to:

- **Establish the position of female PR practitioners in Ghana.**

This objective enabled the researcher to determine the positions that female PR practitioners in Ghana occupy in the organisational hierarchy. In the end, the study determined whether the practitioners were part of the top management or not in their organisations. This objective also helped the researcher to understand the reporting protocols of female PR practitioners in the various organisations they practice. The objective also helped in determining the kind of relationships that exist between female PR practitioners in Ghana and their superiors.

- **Analyse the roles (activities) that female PR practitioners in Ghana play.**

This objective helped the researcher to establish the kind of roles (activities) that female PR practitioners in Ghana play in their various organisations. In other words, this objective aided the researcher to establish whether the practitioners play managerial or technician roles or both. Arguably, the dynamics may not be the same in every organisation where female PR practitioners are employed.

- **Investigate and describe the communication strategies employed by female PR practitioners in Ghana.**

This objective aided the researcher to identify the communication strategies that female PR practitioners in Ghana are employing to communicate with their various stakeholders in the organisations where they are employed. This objective also helped the researcher to elicit the necessary information as to why female practitioners employ such communication strategies. This included the specific channels they employ to communicate with their stakeholders and how effective they are.

- **Develop a current framework to guide the practice of PR in Ghana.**

Based on the primary data that was collected from the participants, coupled with an extensive review of secondary data, as well as the theories that were employed in this study, this objective aided the researcher to develop an appropriate framework in line with contemporary PR practice that could guide the practice of PR among females in Ghana and by extension Africa. Principally, the framework provided some useful guidelines for PR practice in general and for female PR practitioners currently in practice, as well as potential future practitioners to enhance their professional capacities. By extension, the proposed framework provided a structure in a form of practical ideas to address women's issues in the PR profession.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the research objectives, the study sought to answer the following questions:

- What is the position of female PR practitioners in the Ghanaian practice environment?
- What managerial or technician roles are dominant among PR practitioners in Ghana?
- What communication strategies do female PR practitioners in Ghana employ in carrying out their remit?
- What current framework could be used to guide the practice of PR among female practitioners in Ghana?

1.7 THE PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR) INDUSTRY IN GHANA

Public Relations (PR) practice has evolved from the American practice into a global one (Tench & Yeomans 2009). In Ghana, the PR industry has experienced a remarkable transformation over the last three (3) decades. Baidoo (2013) for instance observes that the PR industry in Ghana has evolved from being a mere publicity or one-way communication practice into one that now emphasises two-way stakeholder engagement with much focus on relationship building. Baidoo (2013) notes further that Ghana's PR industry traces its roots back to the colonial era where PR is believed to have been introduced into the country by the British colonial administration. Baidoo (2013) citing Allotey-Papoe (2009) categorises the growth stages of PR in Ghana into four (4) - the independence stage, the post-independence stage, the professionalisation stage and the revival stage.

Thompson (2015) makes similar observations as earlier discussed by Baidoo (2013). Thompson (2015) contends that the PR industry in Ghana has faced several challenges over the years and that Ghana's PR history cannot be written without considering the political history of Ghana. Ghana has been marred by decades of political instability as a result of several military interventions which have affected the political and economic growth of the country, thereby having a ripple effect on PR

growth in Ghana. This situation has undoubtedly stifled the expansion of Public Relations (PR) as a profession and an academic discipline (Thompson 2015).

Blankson (2009) earlier made similar assertions shared by scholars such as Baidoo (2013) and Thompson (2015). Blankson (2009) notes that, unlike South Africa and Kenya, where PR practice appears to have advanced and are well-documented, Ghana does not have a well-documented history of how PR has developed in the country.

Most of the studies on PR in Ghana are students' dissertations that cited the earlier works of scholars like Nartey (1998) and Gyan (1991). Nartey (1998) for instance argues that PR practice started in Ghana long before the country was colonised by the British. Communication activities in Ghana were mainly carried out using traditional channels like the chief linguist at the chief's palace, traditional protocols, the talking drum, and proverbs among others. Although these observations were made over two decades ago, it appears very little has changed in contemporary times.

Amoakohene (2015) adds her voice to the history of Ghana's PR industry. In presenting a somewhat historical study on the PR industry in Ghana, Amoakohene (2015) notes that several attempts by scholars to precisely trace when PR commenced in Ghana have been met with frustrations partly because of the initial lack of knowledge of the PR field in most parts of Africa and for that matter Ghana. Amoakohene (2015) highlights further that most of the pioneers of PR practitioners in Ghana during the colonial era were former journalists and other personnel from varying backgrounds who moved into the PR profession without a formal training in Public Relations. This situation partly led to PR not being recognised as a profession in Ghana. Ansah (1990) earlier made similar assertions already mentioned by Baidoo (2013), Thompson (2015), and Amoakohene (2015). Ansah (1990) argues that the PR industry in Ghana appears to have experienced some improvements, dating back to the colonial era. As already indicated by Amoakohene (2015), Ansah (1990) explains further that the PR industry in Ghana has seen a remarkable move of journalists into the profession without further professional training in Public Relations or communications. This situation according to Ansah (1990) has made the PR Industry in Ghana to be regarded

as a more publicity-oriented industry than one that should be seen to be building relationships and managing the image and reputation of organisations. Moreover, these former journalists who are now PR practitioners are often referred to as protocol officers who run errands for their bosses (Ansah 1990). This situation has undoubtedly created a new phase of PR practice in Ghana from a more traditional form of communication management into a press cutting or event management type (Ansah 1990).

Gyan (1991) shares similar views with Ansah (1990). In an effort to trace the history of PR practice in Ghana, Gyan (1991) asserts that the development of PR as well as its practice in the country has had a chequered history because very little has been documented on PR practice in Ghana as compared to other western countries.

After independence, several journalists moved from mainstream journalism into PR without any formal training in the profession. As a result of this and other factors such as the newness of the PR Profession and the lack of recognition for it, most PR practitioners were referred to as "glorified messengers". Although the observations of Ansah (1990), Nartey (1998) and Gyan (1991) were made several decades ago, it appears there is now a substantial improvement in PR practice in Ghana. As IPRG puts it, 'in recent times, membership of the institute has witnessed significant growth and numerical strength as well as improvements in professional standards' (IPRG 2021). The sentiments expressed by IPRG are reinforced by Thompson (2018). Thompson (2018) in a study on Public Relations education in an emerging democracy in Ghana indicates that more practitioners have registered with IPRG and operate in all parts of Ghana. Thompson (2018) indicates further that a well-established umbrella organisation, the Institute of Public Relations, Ghana (IPRG) is now a more structured professional body. According to Thompson (2018), IPRG regulates PR practice in Ghana and also serves as a networking and refresher training platform for accredited PR practitioners in the country. This development has obviously improved the standards of PR practice in Ghana as well as increased the numerical strength of professional PR practitioners in the country (Thompson 2018).

However, Addotey (2011) appears to disagree with Amoakohene (2015), Ansah, (1990), Gyan (1991) and Gyan (2015). Addotey (2011) provides a current glimpse of the PR industry in Ghana. In a study that focused on the feminisation of Public Relations practice in Ghana, Addotey (2011), points out that PR practice in the country has improved over the years from a colonial era to a more contemporary practice. Addotey (2011) insists that the measures put in place by the Institute of Public Relations, Ghana (IPRG) have prevented a lot of non-professionals from flooding the PR industry in Ghana as was the case in the past. Again, professional standards have improved over the years as a result of several workshops, seminars and other training that the institute continues to organise for its members over the years. The findings in Addotey's (2011) study also confirmed an increase in the number of female PR practitioners in the umbrella body as compared to the immediate past.

Having briefly highlighted some historical antecedents of Ghana's PR industry, the next sub-section will discuss the Institute of Public Relations, Ghana (IPRG) which is the mother body for PR practice in the country.

1.8 THE INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS, GHANA (IPRG) AT A GLANCE

As stated already, the Institute of Public Relations, Ghana (IPRG) is the professional body for Public Relations practitioners in Ghana. The IPRG provides a professional structure for the practice of Public Relations and also to enhance the ability and status of its members as professional practitioners (Institute of Public Relations, Ghana, 2021). The Institute, that has evolved over the years, was established in 1972 as the Public Relations Association of Ghana (PRAG), and witnessed major advancements including the adoption of a code of professional standards and bye-laws in 1991. These developments gave birth to the Institute of Public Relations, Ghana (IPRG), which was consequently registered as a professional body under the Professional Bodies Registration Degree, (NRCD 143) of 1973. The institute, which is run by a governing council is headed by a president and an executive secretary who manages the day-to-day activities of the secretariat (Institute of Public Relations, Ghana 2021). The institute seeks to promote a forward-looking PR body for increased stakeholder value. As its

mission, the institute aspires to consolidate and establish its self as a respectable and proactive, body giving direction to Public Relations practitioners and students in Ghana.

The objective of the professional organisation is to run a respected institution; training Public Relations professionals and strengthening the professional capabilities of members to effectively take on the Public Relations needs of corporate institutions, government and high-profile individuals. It aims to make Public Relations and Communications the most fashionable profession in Ghana by working towards rigid recruitment processes which will employ the right people in the right jobs (Institute of Public Relations, Ghana 2021).

Currently, the professional organisation has six (6) categories of membership. These are Corporate, Fellow/Honorary, Accredited, Associate, Affiliate and Student. Statistically, IPRG has a current membership of 526, comprising 267 males and 259 females. See Figures 2 and 3 for details.

AFFILIATE-249		ACCREDITED-91
CORPORATE-37		STUDENTS-70
	ASSOCIATE-68	
	FELLOWS-11	
	GRAND TOTAL-526	
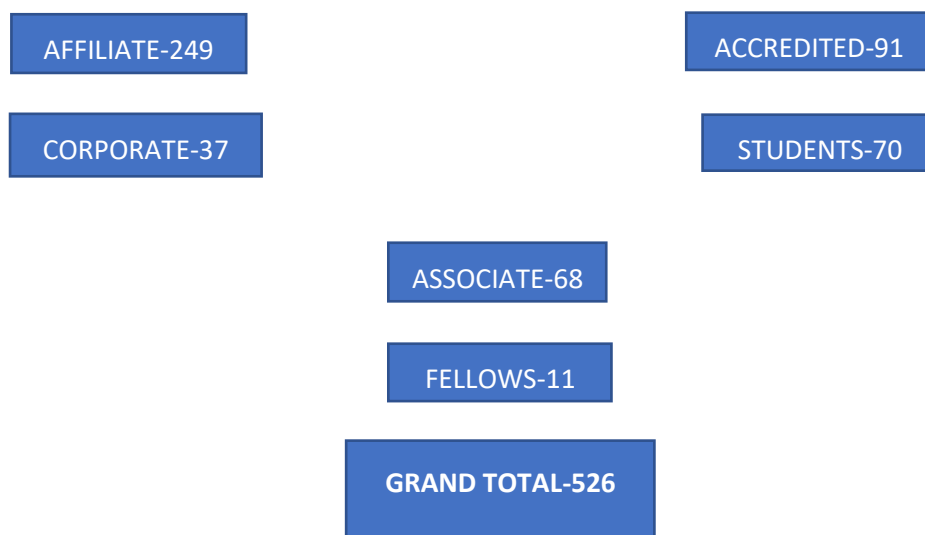
Figure 2: Current membership of IPRG

Categorisation based on the gender of members is as follows:

| Females – 267 (Majority) | Males – 259 (Minority) |
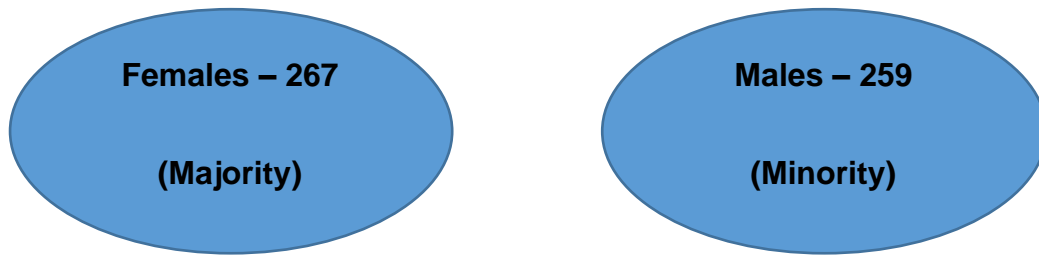
Figure 3: Gender categorisation of members of the IPRG

1.9 BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

This section sought to review available literature that related to the focus of this study.

1.9.1 Pre-Entry Experiences of Female Public Relations (PR) Practitioners

In this study, pre-entry experiences refer to the knowledge that female PR practitioners had which consequently attracted them to the PR profession. Based on their preconceptions about the profession, they were motivated into studying Communications which consequently enabled them to secure a job as PR practitioner. Studies on women in PR that focuses mainly on the pre-experiences of the practitioners in Ghana have been rare. However, the few studies on the pre-entry experiences of women in PR which are mostly situated to the west have been sparsely documented. Fullerton and McKinnon (2015) for instance conducted a study on the U.S.A public relations students' perception of PR as a profession among college and university students. Using an online survey of PR students, the study confirmed that the creative aspects of the PR profession drew a majority of females into it. The study further confirmed that the majority of students who constituted both male and female were generally positive about PR education and that subsequently influenced their decision to practice. Fullerton and McKinnon (2015), however, indicate that most of the students expressed interest in working in different institutions with higher expectations of huge remuneration. But in reality, the expectations of these students are not fully met once they move into the field. It is obvious that most students enter into the PR field without knowing what the job entails. While they may have higher expectations in

terms of salaries and other incentives, a chunk of the students may not have taken note of the huge responsibilities they are likely to shoulder in the field of practice.

Bowen (2002) earlier noted that most PR students got attracted into the profession with less knowledge about it. Bowen examined the preconceptions of potential PR practitioners as they began their studies in the discipline and the misconceptions to which they ascribed once they got into the profession. Bowen (2002) explains further that most students who pick up a major in PR are often unaware of the management focus and are shocked by the level of strategic decision-making requirements, as well as the amount of research work they have to undertake as part of the PR activities.

Khazan (2014) expresses similar views put up by Bowen (2002). Khazan (2014) contends that most women go into PR because it is seen as a glamourous job. Again, most of the women are drawn into the PR profession because they feel it is much easier to set up their own PR agencies. Like many of these scholars, Khazan (2014) argues further that most females are majoring in communication, journalism, English, and advertising with the aim of earning a job in the PR profession. Khazan (2014) makes a strong case that the majority of females offer specialisation into communication or PR because the discipline was not considered to be difficult as compared to Mathematics and Science. Hence, students took to the liberal arts because of the notion that women were better at communication or listening than their male counterparts.

But Grunig, Toth and Hon (2001) hold a contrary view. They maintain that most young women get attracted to the PR profession because the barriers are not difficult and they are also able to achieve professional status. Again, remuneration at the entry level of the PR profession appear to be higher as compared to other professions often chosen by women. Grunig, Toth and Hon (2001) state further that women possess special skills such as empathy, networking, and multi-tasking which favour them, so they are often encouraged and appreciated because of these skills. Similarly, Thompson (2008) posits that a lot of women are attracted to the PR profession because the discipline itself is assumed to be inherently feminine in nature because of its purposes, practices and attributes. Therefore, society itself appears to have socially

constructed the PR profession to be well fit for women. This phenomenon has led to the influx of women into the profession based on their preconceptions and perceptions about PR practice (Thompson 2008).

Wu and Baa-Boakye (2007) support the views of Khazan (2014), Grunig, Toth and Hon (2001) as well as Thompson (2008). They argue that a significant number of employers are convinced into hiring women as PR practitioners because of the assumption that they are more qualified and suited for the PR job because they are sociable, possess excellent communication skills and are best in handling protocol roles as compared to their male counterparts.

1.9.2 Post-Entry Experiences of Female Public Relations (PR) Practitioners

In this study, post-entry experiences refer to the kind of experiences female PR practitioners come across while they are in the field of practice. These encounters, whether positive or negative, consequently validate or dispute the pre-conceptions and post-conceptions the female PR practitioners established prior to their entry into the PR profession. Given that the PR position on the organisational hierarchy is expected to be a management function, the encounters the female PR practitioners face in their line of duty could be a motivation for their continued stay or could force their early exit from the profession. It must be noted that very few studies have focused specifically on the post-entry experiences of female PR practitioners. This situation, therefore, points to a new terrain of enquiry as very little has been empirically documented. Most of the literature that discusses the post-entry experiences of women in PR focus on the glass ceiling phenomenon and gender issues in PR which have had a bearing on their performance (Dubrowski et al 2019; Topic 2017; Yeomans 2014).

Wrigley (2002) for example, opines that the glass-ceiling phenomenon in the PR profession is pervasive although women are the majority in terms of population. Wrigley (2002) conducted a qualitative study on how women view the glass-ceiling phenomenon in PR and communication management. The study employed in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with women in the PR profession for their views on the phenomenon. The study confirmed that a significant number of female

practitioners face the glass-ceiling problem because artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organisational biases prevented most qualified women from advancing upwards in their organisations into management-level positions. Again, even those women who manage to get to the top are paid substantially lower than their male counterparts (Wrigley 2002).

In adding a new dimension to the post-entry experiences of female PR practitioners, Grunig and Toth (1998) point out that studies on sexual harassment in the PR field are important to the female practitioners themselves, the society, as well as the organisation in which they operate. According to Grunig and Toth (1998), many female practitioners often suffer sexual harassment in the field from time to time. Thus, sexual harassment is one occupational hazard they should be conscious of and be prepared to deal with. As PR professionals, they may sometimes be tasked to speak to this issue as and when it occurs within the organisations they operate.

Notwithstanding the negative developments associated with the glass-ceiling phenomenon in PR, Grunig (1995) has a different view. He argues that although several women in the PR profession may be negatively affected by the glass-ceiling phenomenon, he believes that those women who are yet to make it to the boardroom should take comfort from the positive stories of the few women who have managed to get to the top and getting equal opportunities just as their male counterparts. Grunig (1995) states further that the success stories of the few women in the profession that constitute their post-entry experience should inspire female practitioners to aspire to higher positions in the future and also feel better about their status.

Despite the negative experiences that female PR practitioners encounter, a significant number of them still enjoy their positions. Tench and Topic (2017) observe that female PR practitioners enjoy flexible working hours because of family duties and they often get their requests approved more than men in similar situations. Tench and Topic (2017) argue further that female practitioners enjoy the positions of spokespersons for their organisations as they are seen as the face of such organisations. Moreover, most women are often favoured for PR roles because they are naturally believed to have better communication skills and are sociable as compared to their male counterparts.

Regardless of whether the experiences of female PR practitioners are positive or not, the first and foremost consideration for employers may be to hire practitioners who can perform and meet their goals and aspirations irrespective of whichever gender they are. However, there is a need for diverse experiences because both male and female practitioners can bring different perspectives to the table when engaged by employers. Again, no matter the situation the female PR practitioners face within their organisations, they must have easy access to top management because it is the easiest way management can feel their presence and contributions to organisational goals and objectives.

1.9.3 Feminisation of the Public Relations (PR) Profession/Industry

Notwithstanding the developments discussed in this chapter so far on women in public relations, Lozano (2015) contends that women dominate the PR profession in the United States of America (USA). Quoting statistics from the Bureau of Labour in 2015, Lozano argues that after World War II, the American society experienced a great deal of job market expansion and that brought about an increased need for specialisation in the PR industry which attracted a lot of women to the PR profession. The position of Lozano (2015) is corroborated by Simorangkir (2010), who argues that in Indonesia, women predominate in the teaching of PR and many women have even set up their own PR agencies. Simorangkir (2010) notes however that, though women dominate the PR profession in Indonesia, men hold higher positions than women. Simorangkir (2010) further points out that the feminisation of the PR industry in that country has had an impact on female practitioners and the overall industry in Indonesia. According to Simorangkir (2010), there has not been gender discrimination against female PR practitioners although Indonesia is said to be a heavily patriarchal republic. So, women thus appear to have benefited from the industry's feminisation.

Despite these assertions made by earlier scholars on the feminisation of the PR profession, Flumerfelt (2013) contends that, historically, before World War II, men dominated the PR field. However, after World War II, the PR industry began to witness the feminisation of the profession due to the large influx of women. Flumerfelt concludes that although the PR profession is now largely a female-dominated field,

female practitioners still experience a wide variety of gender inequalities in social, professional and economic areas.

Similarly, Poffenberger (2007) provides an interesting perspective on the feminisation of PR. Poffenberger (2007) avers that the feminisation of PR over the last two decades has brought about new dynamics to the field. Although Poffenberger (2007) may appear to corroborate most of the assertions made by earlier scholars on the feminisation of the PR industry, Poffenberger (2007) maintains that a number of researchers have uncovered an unfortunate truth which is that, although women hold a larger population in the PR profession, the few men still benefit more in terms of higher and executive positions than their female counterparts. This development according to Poffenberger (2007) has therefore re-directed PR scholarship to now include feminist theory, diversity, the glass-ceiling phenomenon, as well as leadership studies.

In Geyer's (2009) view, the PR industry, as well as PR educational institutions across the U.S.A. have consistently confirmed an increase in the growth of women entering the PR field. Geyer (2009) citing a study conducted by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), explains that approximately, 70% of its members were women.

Furthermore, Geyer (2009) adds that a detailed report from the Public Relations Students Society of America (PRSSA) made more revelations as its membership is composed of 90% of women while in other cases, students majoring in PR in the schools did not have a single man. Recent scholarship appears to affirm most of the assertions already made by earlier researchers on the feminisation of PR. Decker (2019) for example points out that women outnumber men in the PR profession. Decker (2019) indicates that 60% of graduate women in PR are well-educated, talented and hardworking just like their male counterparts, yet only 11% of these women hold the title of Director or positions of higher authority.

In summation, these developments no doubt reinforce most of the assertions put forward by scholars on the subject matter. A critical review of the various arguments makes it clear that the PR profession has gradually become a woman's world.

However, what may remain a myth is the fact that studies continue to confirm men who may be regarded as the minority in the PR profession to be occupying higher positions than their female counterparts.

The next sub-section highlights on some core issues that relate to gender and power relations in PR, leadership and PR, and PR roles among others.

1.9.4 Gender and Power relations in PR

There is no doubt that gender issues in PR continue to generate interesting debates because of the divergent opinions and views expressed by different scholars on the subject matter. Krugler (2017) for instance, in a study on the influence of gender on women leaders in PR reveals that, although women constitute a larger population in the PR profession than men, they face challenges such as promotional barriers as well as disparities in salary and representation in leadership roles. The study confirms that these challenges stifle the growth of women and therefore prevent them from achieving the same career goals as men in the PR profession. Krugler (2017) further provides an elaboration on how gender has influenced the PR profession as far as women are concerned. Through interviews with ten (10) women working in leadership positions in the PR field, Krugler's (2017) study confirmed the existence of gender stereotypes of women which have somewhat contributed to the reasons why men in the PR profession are placed in higher positions than women.

In what appears to be a prescribed solution to most of the issues Krugler (2017) alluded to as challenges facing women leaders in PR, Gaggioli (2011) earlier suggested that mentoring women in the PR profession could contribute to successful careers of PR entrepreneurial women. Gaggioli (2011) argues further that, mentoring women in the PR profession has helped in their career advancement, entrepreneurialism and work-life balance. This initiative, no doubt, has enabled most women in PR, who otherwise could have failed in their careers, to succeed due to the mentoring they would have received. In the same vein, Aldoory and Toth (2002) focused their study on gender discrepancies in hiring, salary and promotions between men and women in the PR profession. Aldoory and Toth (2002) argue that a number of researchers have in the

past used quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate the discrepancies in the PR profession between men and women. However, in their view, what is missing in all those approaches is the fact that researchers have often not paid much attention to developing a theory that could help explain the discrepancies especially as many studies confirm that women hold a larger population than men in the profession. Aldoory and Toth (2004) contend that transformational and transactional leadership styles are prevalent in the PR profession. A careful analysis of these two leadership styles confirms a strong preference for transformational leadership than transactional. Again, Aldoory and Toth (2004) point to the lack of stronger scholarship discourse on leadership in PR but gender appears to have heavily influenced the type of leadership exhibited by women PR practitioners.

Place (2010) appears to agree with arguments put forth by Krugler (2017), Aldoory and Toth (2002), and Aldoory and Toth (2004) on the PR profession and how gender has impacted women's perception of the field. Place (2010) argues that gender is a complex function that defines the roles of both men and women in society. Place (2010) citing Kanter (1977) describes gendered roles as being located in the differences that exist between men and women as individuals, their training for different worlds and the nature of sexual orientation which has consequently made women unable to compete with men in the profession.

In adding another dimension to the discussion on issues that relate to women in the PR profession, it appears the dominance of males regarding higher positions in the field of Communication is not peculiar to the PR profession alone. Gadzekpo and Akrofi-Quarcoo (2015) in a study on "establishing the presence of women in the Ghanaian media history", provide a more interesting twist to the male dominance in the communication industry in Ghana. Gadzekpo and Akrofi-Quarcoo (2015) give a glimpse of how the role of women in the media space in Ghana has always been masked by researchers in the public sphere, especially in broadcasting. Gadzekpo and Akrofi-Quarcoo (2015) again point to the fact that feminine scholarship has always adopted the position that a lot of women's roles are absent from institutions perceived as male preserves simply because researchers have ignored their presence. In the opinion of Gadzekpo and Akrofi-Quarcoo (2015), this situation has resulted in the

notion that male actors have dominated the media space in Ghana but this did not preclude the presence of females.

The discussion on women in Public Relations cannot be drawn without touching on issues of power in the PR profession. Scholars such as Serini, Toth and Emig (1998) and Grunig (1990) categorise power in the PR profession as personal, organisational and the power of the PR practitioner in an organisation. The scholars argue further that issues of power are closer to the heart of women in the PR profession. Therefore, women need power to be able to excel in the profession. Kanter (1997) also explains the phenomenon of power in PR and indicates that power is crucial to female PR practitioners not because they are greedy for more, but because most female PR practitioners cannot really operate without it. Grunig (2008) adds his voice to power issues in PR. The scholar points out that PR practitioners need power to operate in organisations because of the need to exert influence. Throwing more light on the phenomenon of power in PR practice, Place (2012) insists that power is often not visible in the PR profession but yet it plays a significant role. Place (2012) maintains that PR practitioners need to keep in mind the fact that power relations between their bosses and target audiences remain an important issue for practitioners and therefore they must be mindful of the organisational culture within which they operate.

Neil (2003) shares similar views on power issues in PR by pointing out that the distinction between power and influence in the PR profession appears to be subtle but necessary. The reason is that practitioners need the power to be able to influence decisions in their profession. Given that PR practitioners are most often expected to play a managerial role at the organisational level, they need the power to be able to make a meaningful contribution at the senior management level where final decisions are taken. Neil (2004) provides further dimensions on the issue of power in the PR profession. Neil (2004) notes that PR practitioners function as communication liaisons between employees and the "dominant coalition" that sets the strategic direction and defines the organisational mission. Thus, PR practitioners need more power to influence decisions especially when the counselling role of the practitioner becomes evident. In a study on gender domination in the Nigerian PR industry, Umeogu and Ifeoma (2012) appear to corroborate most of the views expressed by scholars on

gender issues in the Public Relations profession. Umeogu and Ifeoma (2012) argue that in the Nigerian PR industry, women hold the majority population but the few men have more power than their female counterparts. Umeogu and Ifeoma (2012) explain further that gender has directly or indirectly influenced why women are more in the PR profession but yet, men have more power than them.

In the view of Dozier, Grunig and Grunig (1995), excellent organisations are those that support women through clear-cut non-discriminatory policies. Dozier, Dozier, Grunig and Grunig (1995) insist that when women are not discriminated against, it helps them to succeed in their chosen profession. Given that the debate on female PR practitioners and the barriers they face in progressing to the top of organisations has been adequately discussed, it brings to mind the issue of power and how female PR practitioners often navigate through the dominant coalition and the employees of the organisation. When PR practitioners do not have the power to influence decisions within the organisation, it becomes difficult for the practitioners to operate successfully. What appears more significant throughout the discussion is the fact that female PR practitioners are in the minority when it comes to holding managerial positions in their organisations. Again, to the extent that a number of studies have confirmed that most women do not hold much power when it comes to critical decision-making processes in organisations, they need to be empowered to serve as a motivation because this can go a long way to help them progress and also succeed in the PR profession.

1.9.5 Leadership and Public Relations

One critical area in public relations practice has to do with leadership and the different styles that male and female PR practitioners exhibit in the profession. Some scholars have explained leadership as having a vision, being passionate, committed and able to provide positive guidance to others (Aldoory 1998; Appelbaum, Audet & Miller 2002).

While this is the case, the question that may often arise is whether or not the leadership styles of women are different from that of men. Arguably, there might be some variations in the styles of leadership between both genders, but that should not pose a challenge as both male and female PR practitioners can learn and adapt each other's

styles to improve their leadership roles. This can happen either consciously or unconsciously.

Although the body of knowledge in PR may appear to be very broad, as it explains areas such as the feminisation of the field, management skills, gender issues in PR and many more, scholarship on PR that specifically focus on leadership has been rare (Grunig et al 1992; Hickman & Silva 1987; Peters 1987; Waterman 1987). In spite of this, studies on leadership in PR are important because having power and the ability to lead largely depends on the views of top management such as chief executive officers, managing directors and director generals among others who mostly constitute the dominant coalition and are able to assess the value that PR can contribute to their organisations. In that vein, if there is a lower representation of PR in top management, it often leads to poor performance, professionalism and value. Despite this, PR has a strategic role to play and also contributes to the achievement of the goals of organisations.

In expanding the discussion on leadership in the PR profession, Carli (2006) makes a distinct observation on the issue. Carli (2006) points out that a lot of people often judge women's leadership abilities more harshly than that of men. This is because women are often more critically examined as far as their leadership styles are concerned as compared to men. This is probably because of the conventional notion that most men are tough and possess higher standards of competence as compared to women (Aldoory & Toth 2000; Grunig et al 2000; Sha & Dozier 2011; Sha & Dozier 2012; Tong 2009; Toth & Aldoory 2004). Other scholars present a different version as far as issues relating to women in PR and their leadership styles are concerned. Vasavada (2014) for instance argues that some women leaders often leverage on gender as a strategic tool in managing PR. Vasavada (2014) explains further that most female leaders may have a unique leadership style that is different from men. However, both genders can adapt and also emulate either side as a way of improving their leadership style since both male and female leaders can present a positive or negative side to their leadership style. Therefore, if both male and female PR practitioners blend the two styles, it can go a long way to improve how they lead in the PR profession especially if they are offered managerial positions.

Aldoory and Toth (2002) also observe that even though much PR scholarship has focused on management strategy and relationship building which are closely related to leadership, studies that are specifically directed to leadership within PR are rather sparse. This is probably because of the scarcity of female PR leaders in the profession. However, due to the feminisation of the PR field, it is important to explore the intersection of PR and gender leadership in the field (Aldoory & Toth 2002).

In all of this, it is important for scholars to contribute to the body of knowledge on PR and the leadership styles of both men and women because it will provide the basis for scholars to begin to develop leadership theories which is much needed in advancing PR practise. Moreover, these theories, if developed, can help in integrating the leadership styles of both genders to enhance professionalism, relationship-building and management strategies in the PR profession.

1.9.6 Public Relations Roles

Sesen (2015) in her study on the role of theory and its usefulness in PR practice maintains that research in PR roles is essential because it often provides the starting point for planning PR activities, especially for the external publics of an organisation. Sesen (2015) argues further that PR as a profession and an academic discipline has rapidly developed over the years, but there is yet not one single theory to explain all the public relations concepts. Broom (2006) had earlier expressed similar sentiments by observing that the development of theories for PR was still at an early stage but could one day provide a solid foundation for PR as an emerging profession to develop beyond its present stage. Undoubtedly, one of the focuses for PR practice globally has been the idea of developing theories that relate to the roles of practitioners. Sesen (2015) again makes the point that PR practitioners need to quickly respond to organisational, social and environmental demands, so they need theories and models from different fields such as communication, sociology, and organisational behaviour among others to help them understand the PR practitioners' multifunctional roles.

Historically, pioneer scholars like Broom and Smith (1979) are credited for having researched extensively on PR roles. Broom and Smith (1979) systematically studied

the different roles that PR practitioners were likely to perform when engaged by organisations. Their research was based on laboratory experiments that tested the PR practitioners' impact on client perception. These scholars argue that PR practitioners often adopt patterns of behaviour in their work and also accommodate clients' expectations of their daily roles. Consequently, Broom and Smith (1979) came out with four roles (expert prescriber, communication technician, communication facilitator and problem-solving facilitator). Broom and Smith (1979) in their proposed four roles explained that at one time or another, PR practitioners engaged by organisations may be seen playing all four roles and other roles to some varying degree even though a dominant role may emerge. These four roles by Broom and Smith (1979) are briefly highlighted below:

- **Expert Prescriber:** Broom and Smith (1979) explain the expert prescriber role as a PR Practitioner who is recognised as an expert in communication issues. He or she is seen as best qualified to handle Public Relations issues. The practitioner under the expert prescriber role diagnoses and proposes solutions to Public Relations problems. Management usually plays a passive role in Public Relations matters and it is only during crises periods that management collaborates with the public relations practitioner to resolve the crises.

- **Communication Technician:** Most public relations practitioners enter the communication field as technicians. They are mostly employed to undertake the craft side of public relations: writing speeches, editing organisational newsletters, developing website content, engaging in media relations, taking photos, and organising special events amongst others. The PR practitioner here is not part of management and is usually not present when critical decisions about the organisation are being taken. They are usually given the task of explaining management decisions or policies to the stakeholders.

- **Communication Facilitator:** Broom and Smith (1979) describe the communication facilitator role as a person who serves as a boundary between the organisation and its stakeholders by constantly engaging in two-way communication. They serve as liaisons, interpreters, and mediators between an organisation and its stakeholders. They often maintain two-way communication and facilitate the exchange of information by removing barriers in relationships

between the organisation and its publics and also keep channels of communication open. They normally occupy what is known in PR as the "boundary-spanning" roles by serving as a close link between the organisation and its publics.

- **Problem-Solving Facilitator:** They normally become part of the strategic planning team because they have demonstrated skills and expertise in helping management to solve problems within the organisation. Management, therefore, plays an active role by collaborating with the PR practitioner to diagnose PR problems and find solutions to them. The PR practitioner in this role is often given the freedom to diagnose and propose solutions to PR problems. The practitioner, therefore, partners with senior members of the organisation in solving problems that may arise within it.

Depending on whatever role a PR practitioner may be engaged in as outlined by the above scholars, it is imperative to note that the PR practitioner must have easy access to the "dominant coalition" which is the highest decision-making body of any organisation.

Newsom, Turk and Krukeberg (1996) point out that, while the basic duties of PR practitioners have not changed much over the past several decades, the demands on the practitioners and how they perform their duties have changed and will continue to change. This demand, therefore, calls for depth and diversity in knowledge now that Public Relations practice has assumed a global implication. These scholars, therefore, propounded three PR roles – Staff Members, Agency Employees and Independent PR Practitioners. They describe the staff PR practitioners as employees of commercial or non-profit organisations who perform highly specialised duties in their organisations and are paid remuneration just as other employees, while they share the same corporate or institutional identity. Similarly, Turk and Kruckeberg (1996) describe agency employees to mean those hired by firms to perform diverse roles and report directly to the top management of an organisation. Sometimes, the practitioner in these firms may be tasked to perform multiple roles as and when the head of the organisation decides. Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg (1996) explain independent practitioners as those who are usually hired to complete a specific task. Most often such PR

Practitioners are not part of the organisational staff but are brought in from time-to-time to undertake a specific role at an agreed fee. The Independent PR Practitioners sometimes function as PR counsellors by offering independent expert advice and proposing solutions to problems that the organisation may encounter.

Dozier and Broom (1995) later categorised the PR roles into two dominant roles. They explain the technician role to mean PR practitioners engaged by organisations or individuals to implement strategic decisions that management makes by communicating such activities but not being directly involved in the decision-making processes. The scholars explain the manager role to mean practitioners who plan and manage PR programmes, play a counselling role, formulate policies with the management and also see to the successful implementation of such policies and programmes. Grunig (1992) prescribes similar roles proposed by Dozier and Broom (1995). The scholar categorises PR roles into expert prescriber and technician roles. He argues that the expert prescriber role appears to be more strategic where the PR practitioner is recognised and respected as an expert in the field. The practitioner uses communication to resolve conflicts and also manages relationships with the organisation and its numerous stakeholders. Similarly, the technician role is where the PR Practitioner is engaged in performing technical duties such as writing speeches, editing, media relations, and so on, but he or she is not part of the top management.

Verčič et al (2001) insist that as far as PR Practice is concerned, only one role emerges which is the reflective role. The researchers explain the reflective role of PR Practitioners to mean focusing on behaviours that are considered socially accountable in order to cement legitimacy in the eyes of society. Therefore, the activities that an organisation undertakes could affect it negatively or positively depending on how it is carried out and that can have a ripple effect on the image or reputation of the organisation. Steyn (2000) also offers one major role that a PR practitioner performs. The scholar argues that all PR practitioners are strategists and therefore play strategic roles. Steyn (2000) explains further that PR Practitioners must have the ability to always plan depending on whatever situation the organisation finds itself in. Most often, when things are not going well in the organisation, management expects PR Practitioners to come out with strategies to avert any calamity. So, Steyn (2000) is of

the view that the position of a Public Relations officer is to be a strategist for the organisation. Tench and Yeomans (2009) add a new dimension to the PR roles. They insist that the division between PR roles played in the capacity of a manager or Technician has not always been clear. According to Tench and Yeomans (2009), the dichotomy is not always clear-cut because most Public Relations practitioners often play both roles although a dominant role may emerge. They explain further that when Public Relations practitioners are newly recruited by organisations or individuals, they are often made to play the technician role but with time, when they gain experience, they are moved on into the managerial role. The scholars identify four key roles for PR practice.

- **Managerial:** they explain that PR practitioners perform the role of managers when they are part of the "dominant coalition". In other words, the group of people who constitute the highest decision-making body of the organisation.
- **Operational:** Tench and Yeomans (2009) maintain that the managerial and operational roles often overlap. However, PR practitioners operating under the operational role are not directly involved in the organisational decision-making but they are those usually tasked to implement PR programmes.
- **Reflective:** the reflective role of the PR practitioner refers to those who usually analyse changing social values within the organisation that they operate in.
- **Educational:** they are the practitioners who are tasked to communicate the policies and programmes of the organisation.

As stated already, regardless of the role a PR practitioner is tasked to perform (technician/managerial), the practitioner must have direct access to the head or top management of the organisation in order to function effectively. The obvious task of a PR practitioner today is to play the role of a mediator between an organisation and its publics. As a result, the practitioner must be able to identify issues, evaluate and interpret them to management for action. Again, the practitioner must at all-time act as a conveyor of information and ideas from management to the public and vice versa by serving as a bridge between them.

Newson, Turk and Kruckeberg (1996) make a significant contribution to the discussion on PR role theory. They explain that as PR practitioners perform their day-to-day roles, they apply their special skills on the job, depending on the particular role they play in the organisation. Similarly, Lattimore et al (2004) describe roles as a collection of daily activities that people perform. They insist that for PR practitioners, only two major roles emerge: the manager or technician role. There is no doubt that the concepts in the role theory help practitioners to navigate their way through the field of practice. What remains a challenge is the slow pace at which scholars and practitioners are developing theories to explain the roles of practitioners and how these theories can help in interpreting human behaviour as well as developing appropriate communication messages to reach out effectively to their numerous stakeholders.

Steyn and Everett (2009) add another dimension to the discussions on Public Relations role theory. They conducted a study on managerial Public Relations roles in South Africa. With a comparative analysis of PR roles in the United Kingdom (UK), United States of America (USA) and South Africa (SA), replicated in three stages of a study, the scholars found that a lot of differences existed in the roles played by PR practitioners in those three jurisdictions. Steyn and Everett (2009) contend that one of the most discussed areas of PR research in the United States of America is PR roles. The scholars explain further that the most popular and traditional roles globally known, manager and technician conceived by Dozier (1984) and Dozier and Broom (1995) have been heavily criticised as inadequate. This is because the PR industry has grown over the years. Steyn and Everett (2009) also observe a combination of Western PR and indigenous African communication practices in South Africa. This re-affirms the assertion that the PR profession has seen a remarkable growth from the American practice to a global one and that has resulted in differences in practice depending on the worldviews and which part of the globe a practitioner is located. Similar views have been expressed by Van Heerden and Rensburg (2005) and Steyn and Everett (2008). They indicate that the western world has become aware of the fact that many African scholars were working hard on developing theories on PR roles in many parts of Africa. Again, the scholar notes that several differences exist in many countries as far as PR roles are concerned.

1.9.7. Public Relations and communication strategies

Public Relations (PR) helps to build and maintain a positive image and reputation of an organisation, its products or its services. This is usually achieved by engaging in effective communication. In order for organisations to achieve the desired results, effective communication strategies ought to be developed from time to time to gain the necessary publicity and response for maximum effect. At the heart of communication lies effective dialogue as it promotes frequent interaction between an organisation and its numerous stakeholders (Cutlip, Center & Broom 2009; Grunig 1992; Grunig et al 2002).

Most organisations, regardless of the nature or size usually employ PR campaigns to help compete in their businesses. For PR practitioners to be able to excel, they need to constantly sharpen their skills and expertise in communication strategies in order to effectively employ them to achieve desired goals. The key to success in PR over the years and now has always been to develop messages that are more appealing to the audiences by effectively communicating the key message through well-planned and sustained communication strategies to develop a business. As the PR profession continues to evolve, organisations have found the need to constantly develop communication strategies as it is now seen as the backbone of any successful business globally (Benjamin & Michael 2001; Bialystok 1983). Communication strategies help organisations to make giant strides, especially in the area of consumer behaviour and communication. Arguably, communication forms the most prominent skill in the building of rapport with customers, co-workers and management. Therefore, communication strategies that have not been tested to be effective if employed by businesses or groups could pose setbacks to their fortunes.

The use of communication strategies in relationship building is therefore seen as a key area to any organisation or business's long-term and sustainable development. These communication strategies can be viewed in the ways communication takes place internally and externally. For today's PR practitioners to be able to strategically and effectively communicate their business ideas to the audiences, there is the need to develop communication strategies that are scientifically grounded by employing

effective research tools to arrive at logical conclusions as to which strategy to employ at a particular point in time (Duncan 2002; Meakin 2019; Spacey 2015).

1.10 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As already established in the background of this chapter, studies on PR in Africa have not been extensive as compared to the western world (Skinner & Mersham 2009; Blankson 2009). The situation is even worse with regard to studies that specifically target female PR practitioners in Africa or Ghana for that matter. The essence of every research is to trigger some form of action. This action becomes necessary because researchers are seeking to investigate a particular phenomenon to enable them to answer questions like why a study is relevant, what benefits a study makes to some people within a particular community and who are those that a particular study will affect (Thomas 2006).

The overall goal of this study was to develop a framework that could provide a structure in a form of practical guidelines to address issues relating to PR practice among female practitioners in the profession in Ghana. Therefore, this study will make enormous contributions to PR practice on the African continent and for that matter Ghana. Arguably, the findings of this study will add to the existing body of literature on PR as a profession and an academic discipline on the global platform. As confirmed in this study, several studies have established the fact that literature on PR on the African continent has been minimal. So, this study will serve as a blueprint and afford female PR practitioners in Ghana the opportunity to develop new communication strategies for their organisations and clients.

The study will further help female PR practitioners to map up new strategies to deal with image and reputational issues within their organisations. Some scholars have emphasised the need for African scholars to develop their own theories that specifically address African issues (Thomas 2006). This study will contribute to knowledge in that regard as it will serve as a blueprint that will enable scholars to develop several frameworks to explain extensively, the challenges that confront female PR practitioners in Africa. Additionally, the study will contribute to bridging the huge gap between theory

and practice in public relations. Furthermore, the study will widen the frontiers of knowledge on female PR practice and also guide the up-and-coming female PR practitioners on how they can negotiate their entry into the profession and navigate their way up to the ladder in leadership positions. The findings of this study have explored the types of models and communication strategies that female PR practitioners are employing based on what has already been developed in the West. Moreover, the findings also helped to determine how the models could contribute to the development of an appropriate framework for female PR practitioners for the various organisations they work. Finally, the study helped to broadly elucidate the general understanding of Public Relations as a profession and an academic discipline.

1.11 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Simon and Goes (2011) point out that the scope of research basically deals with the parameters under which a research study operates. In other words, the scope encompasses the problem to be studied within a certain boundary. Therefore, the parameters of this study as explained by Simon and Goes (2011) are contained in the research objectives, formulated questions, the target population and the framework that focuses on women in public relations in Ghana. This study includes female PR practitioners in Ghana who have served a considerable number of years and perhaps have risen from the bottom to the pinnacle of their careers by occupying managerial positions. The essence of the study was to investigate gender issues in PR among female PR practitioners in Ghana by exploring their lived experiences. The study focused mainly on those women who have practised PR for some years. The PR practitioners who are only females were drawn from varied corporate organisations in Ghana where they practise the profession and are also either the heads or deputies of the PR units in their various organisations.

1.12 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study was to investigate gender issues among female PR practitioners in Ghana. The study employed theoretical and empirical literature. Primary data gathered from women in PR in Ghana who are heads or deputies of

various organisations were sampled. Although PR practitioners in Ghana emanate from both genders, this study focused on only female PR practitioners accredited by the IPRG. Also, the researcher recognises the fact that, currently, 265 female PR practitioners have officially registered with the IPRG as of September, 2021. Again, the female PR practitioners were drawn from Accra, the national capital although there are PR practitioners scattered in all the sixteen (16) administrative regions in Ghana. The main reason for settling for female PR practitioners in Ghana is the fact that Accra, the capital city of Ghana is the hub of PR practice as the headquarters of most organisations are located in Accra.

1.13 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Public Relations: In this study, Public Relations means employing communication in order to maintain a cordial relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders.

Publics: In this study, publics means individuals or groups who have a stake and interest in the activities of an organisation and can also influence it negatively or positively.

Management: In this study, management means the top decision-making body of an organisation that directs in terms of policy formulation.

Position: In this study, position means the exact location of the PR department on the organisational chart which also indicates the levels in terms of the hierarchy of the organisation.

Practitioner: In this study, practitioner means any communication professional who has been engaged by an organisation or individual to practise public relations.

Communication Strategy: In this study, communication strategy refers to all the available channels employed by a Public Relations practitioner within an organisation to effectively engage with the stakeholders.

Pre-entry experience: In this study, pre-entry experiences means the basic knowledge that PR practitioners acquire about the PR profession which consequently attracts them to the job.

Post-entry experience: In this study, post-entry experiences refer to the kind of experiences female PR practitioners encounter while they are in the field of practice. It could be positive or negative.

Roles: In this study, roles mean all the daily activities PR practitioners undertake as part of their job description.

Public Relations Models: In this study, models refer to the various theoretical concepts that are employed in the practice of PR.

Organisation: In this study, an organisation refers to an organised body of people with a common purpose that encourages professional PR practice in it.

Framework: In this study, a framework is a collection of various ideas, rules or structures that serve as a blueprint to guide PR practitioners.

Two-way communication: In this study, two-way communication means engaging in open communication by PR practitioners and the opportunity to interact for feedback.

1.14 THEORETICAL APPROACH

The major theoretical approach for this study includes gender and feminist theories. In an attempt to adequately conceptualise the study, the excellence and relationship management theories were also discussed. The gender theory helped in investigating and addressing issues relating to power relations and gender stereotypes in PR among the participants, especially with regard to the positions they hold and the roles they play in their various organisations (Creedon 1991; Grunig 2006). The feminist theory on the other hand helped the researcher in unearthing issues of gender inequality and the fight for equal opportunities which appear to be the feminist politics in the PR field (Hartsock 1981; Hon 1995). Again, the excellence theory helped in investigating how

an ideal PR practice should be in order to achieve excellent results for an organisation. The study tested the general principles of the excellence theory as the participants reflected on their years of practice (Grunig et al 2000). Furthermore, the relationship management theory employed in this study helped in determining the types of communication strategies that the female PR practitioners in Ghana can employ in their relationship management approaches.

1.15 THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODS

This section looked at the research design and proposed research methods. The section includes data collection techniques, the population and sampling methods, as well as data analysis and interpretation.

1.15.1 The Research Design: Approach

This study employed the qualitative research approach to investigate gender issues in PR among selected female PR practitioners in Ghana. This approach was adopted because it enabled the researcher to collect data from a natural setting of the participants for the study. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research refers to the type of research that enables the researcher to explore and also make meaning of what individuals or groups assign to a particular social or human problem. This study was also based on the constructivist paradigms. Creswell (2014) argues further that social constructivism is a perspective that is most suited for qualitative research because social constructivists believe that individuals make meaning of the world that they work and live in by developing some form of subjective meaning through their own experiences.

1.15.2 The research methods

Brennen (2013) maintains that in many qualitative studies, researchers often combine two or more methods to enable them to triangulate the data in order to increase the rigour of their analysis and also gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied. In this regard, the researcher used in-depth interviews to collect primary data for analysis. The in-depth data collection approach helped the researcher in

eliciting the necessary information from the participants for the study through a free expression of their views based on their years of practice and experience. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) for instance point out that interviews are key features of qualitative research because they help in the understanding of the social actors' experiences and perspectives through stories, accounts, and explanations. Under the interview technique, the researcher prepared an interview guide with semi-structured questions and engaged the participants in face-to-face in-depth interactions. This allowed the participants to freely express their views on all the issues that relate to female PR practice in Ghana.

1.15.3 Data Collection Techniques

The study purposively sampled accredited female PR practitioners who are members of the professional body that regulates PR practice in Ghana (IPRG). Based on the interview guide prepared to guide the researcher, the participants were encouraged through the interview guide to share their pre-entry and post-entry experiences in the study. The pre-entry experiences of the participants focused on the knowledge they acquired about Public Relations as a profession which subsequently motivated them to enrol at institutions of higher learning to study Public Relations or communication as a discipline. On the other hand, the post-entry experiences highlighted the current experiences of the practitioners based on their long years of practice. The researcher made a formal request to IPRG for a full list of female PR practitioners in Ghana who are accredited by the professional body (IPRG). Those selected from the list were personally contacted by the researcher, who informed them about the purpose of the study and the intention to involve them as participants. Subsequently, the interview schedules were adequately discussed with the participants once a formal request was made. The interviews were audio-taped after a consent was granted. Each interview session lasted between forty-five (45) to sixty (60) minutes. The face-to-face interviews enabled the researcher to collect primary data for the study. Thereafter, the data were transcribed. Furthermore, the data were coded to enable the researcher to develop themes before the analysis. Concerning the validity and reliability of the data, Creswell (2009) points out that validity and reliability are the strengths of qualitative research. This is because, a researcher needs to determine whether the findings are accurate

from the standpoint of the researcher, the participants or the readers. Creswell (2009) therefore suggests eight (8) primary strategies that researchers can use to validate qualitative studies. Four (4) of these strategies which include triangulation of data sources, using member checking, using rich/thick descriptions and clarifying biases on the part of the researcher were adapted in this study.

1.15.4 The population and sampling methods

The population for this study was all female PR practitioners in Ghana. In the view of Baxter and Babbie (2004), a population refers to all the elements from which a researcher can collect data for a study. In that case, the elements must meet the criteria set out by the researcher in order to be included in the study. This study was purely qualitative. The study focused mainly on women in PR in Ghana. However, the purposive sampling was scaled down to only women in PR in Ghana who are accredited by IPRG for the year 2021/2022 and were willing to participate in the study.

1.15.4.1. Target Population

Merrigan and Huston (2004) posit that a target population refers to the total target elements that are of interest to the researcher in a study. In this study, the target population referred to all female PR practitioners who are accredited members of IPRG.

1.15.4.2 Accessible Population

Asiamah, Mensah and Oteng-Abayie (2017) explain that an accessible population is normally reached after a researcher has taken out the participants of the target population who will be able to participate in the study or otherwise. They explain further that the accessible population is normally referred to as the final group of participants from whom data are collected for the study. In this study, the accessible population encompassed all female PR practitioners in Ghana who are active members of IPRG with a substantial number of years of PR professional experience and who were willing to participate in this study. Given that this study revolved around gender issues in PR and the experiences of the participants, it was envisaged that female PR practitioners

who have practised for a substantial number of years have obviously accumulated some sufficient amount of professional experience on which to reflect in their discussions by providing quality data for the study.

1.15.5   Sample method and ethical issues

The sampling method for this study was a non-probability sampling method. According to Kumekpor (2002), researchers adopt the non-probability sampling method whenever the situation makes it practically impossible for the researcher to estimate the chances of each unit of the universe being included in a study. In this study, the purposive sampling technique was employed. Kumekpor (2002) argues further that in purposive sampling, researchers do not select the units of the sample by random procedure, but they deliberately pick the sample because of certain characteristics that are of interest to the study. Therefore, the criteria for this study required participants to be female PR practitioners in Ghana who are accredited members of IPRG. Additionally, the participants were required to have practised for a period of time with the requisite professional experience in the field as a guarantee of providing credible and quality data that will enrich the study. Potential participants were contacted based on information from the database of the IPRG after which the details of the study were then made available to those who were ready and willing to participate in the study. The study had a sample size of thirty-seven (37) female PR practitioners in Ghana who met the criteria above.

With regard to ethical issues, the researcher strictly complied with all ethical matters relating to the study. Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2015) point out that in studies that involve human subjects, ethical issues such as informed consent, level of participant's privacy and debriefing are of utmost importance. Therefore, ethical clearance was sought from the Department of Communication Science, University of South Africa, before the participants were contacted for data collection. The participants were sufficiently briefed on the purpose of the study. The researcher bracketted his biases by remaining objective, fair and impartial in his dealings with the participants. Leading or unfair questions were avoided by the researcher. Data preservation was strictly enforced to ensure that the data were not manipulated or prejudiced. The transcribed

data were sent back to the various participants for validation before they were used for analysis. All the recordings from the face-to-face interviews have been securely stored for a defined period of time before they will be discarded. The ethical clearance policy of the University of South Africa was read, and all instructions therein were strictly adhered to.

1.15.6   *Data Analysis and Interpretation*

Creswell (2009) explains that whenever data are collected from the field, the researcher must first make "sense" of the bulk data that have been collected in a form of images and texts. Creswell (2009) explains further that a researcher needs to also prepare the data further for analysis after which he moves deeper and deeper to comprehend the data. In this study, the researcher undertook a quick reading of the entire dataset to identify the broader issues and the patterns that the participants have discussed on the issues under investigation. Thereafter, codes were assigned and themes were generated. The findings of the analysis have been presented in a thick description of the data. Where necessary, tables and figures were included in the discussions to make the issues clearer. The researcher also complemented the process by using a computer-based qualitative data analysis programme called 'NviVo'. This is a computer-based programme that aid researchers to organise text, audio, video as well as graphic data files for qualitative analysis.

Finally, the data gathered were explained in detail to give a better comprehension of the study. A thematic data analysis method was employed.

1.16 ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

This study has been divided into seven chapters as follows:

Chapter One: Background and Orientation

This chapter deals with the background to the study, statement of the research problem, research objectives and goals of the study, research questions, the

significance of the study, an overview of the PR industry in Ghana, a brief profile of Ghana, the scope of the study and delimitation of the study.

Chapter Two: Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

This chapter discusses the various PR models and theories employed in the study that also underpin PR practice. The main theories of the study were the gender and feminist theories.

Chapter Three: Development and practice of public relations

This chapter focuses mainly on the historical developments of public relations practice globally, continentally and in Ghana. The chapter further examines how public relations has evolved in various countries in Europe, America, Africa and finally Ghana.

Chapter Four: Development and practice of PR by female practitioners

This chapter focuses on literature on women in public relations globally, continentally and in Ghana. It discusses the major achievements of female PR practitioners globally and also identifies the challenges that confront women in the PR profession. The major challenges discussed include those that stifle the progression of women, thereby preventing them from getting to the top in their PR careers.

Chapter Five: Research design and methodology

This chapter presents detailed information on the research methodology that was adopted for the study. The approach for the study was qualitative. This includes the study area, the population, the sampling procedure, the sample size, the data collection instrument, the validity and reliability of data, ethical considerations and finally the procedure for data analysis.

Chapter Six: Presentation and discussion of research results

This chapter extensively analyses the primary data collected from the field in an attempt to present findings to answer four research questions indicated in this study.

The results are presented and discussed with the necessary interpretation to give a focus and meaning to the research findings. In other words, the chapter presents an interpretation of the primary and secondary data collected from the field.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter focuses on the summary of the findings, draws conclusions and recommendations as well as suggests areas for further research opportunities for future studies. The chapter also presents a proposed framework to guide the practice of Public Relations by female practitioners in Ghana.

1.17 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The chapter examined the various components of the study including the statement of the problem, the goals and objectives that underpinned the study, and the general research questions. The chapter also briefly discussed issues relating to women in PR in Ghana by giving a focus in a form of a background to the core issues for a detailed discussion in the subsequent chapters. Furthermore, the study looked at the PR industry in Ghana and how it has evolved from the colonial era to its current status. The significance of the study as well as the scope of the study were discussed. Because the study originates from Ghana, a brief profile of Ghana was discussed in order to put the issues in a proper context. The study identified the issue of paucity of literature on PR in Ghana and more especially women in the PR profession in Ghana. In order to expand the discussion on PR, various definitions of PR by scholars and professional bodies were highlighted. These included the PR Society of America (PRSA) and the Institute of Public Relations Ghana (IPRG), among others. Attempts were made by the researcher to analyse the core issues of the definitions and their implications for general PR practice.

The chapter also expanded on various components of the approved proposal that culminated into this major study. The proposal earlier highlighted a brief literature review which focused on women in PR globally and narrowed it down to Ghana. The major contribution of the study which is the development of a framework to guide women PR practice in Ghana was discussed in the proposal which also included a

proposed methodology for the major study. The chapter concluded by discussing the delimitations of the study and how the chapter was organised.

CHAPTER TWO

INTRODUCTION

The main goal of the study was to investigate gender issues and the experiences of women in Public Relations (PR) in the Ghanaian context. The overall goal was to develop a framework that could provide a structure in a form of practical ideas aimed at addressing women's issues in the Public Relations profession and also provide guidelines on female PR practice in Africa, particularly Ghana. The previous chapter discussed the context and background of the study, the research problem, the goals and objectives of the study, the research questions and significance of the study as well as the scope of the study. The chapter also discussed a brief history of Ghana, the PR industry in Ghana, limitations/delimitations and finally the organisation of the study. This chapter, therefore, focuses mainly on the various theoretical concepts that underpin the Public Relations profession. Additionally, existing models and how they have shaped our understanding of PR practice are discussed and this was aimed at conducting a comparative analysis of the existing models that are mostly situated to the West to that of the African or Ghanaian situation. Moreover, the Chapter is concluded with discussions on selected relational theories namely, the excellence and relationship management theories and how these theories relate to PR practice globally, continentally and locally. Finally, the major theories underpinning the study are also discussed. These include the feminist and gender theories. The aim was to unearth the issues that relate to women generally in the PR profession.

2.3 CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

In this chapter, various studies related to PR practice among female practitioners are reviewed globally and narrowed down to Africa and finally to Ghana. While chapter one provided an introduction and a broad outline of this research, this chapter deals with the conceptualisation of the study and the theoretical framework on which the research is foregrounded. PR theory-building does not seem to have kept pace with its practice. As a practice-based profession, and as discussed in this chapter, four models of PR were proposed in 1984 by James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt for the effective and

efficient performance of PR practice. They became the most useful ways of thinking about public relations and identifying its central ideas and how they are related to each other. The four models are based on communication, research, and ethics. They are the press agentry/publicity model, public information model, two-way asymmetry model, and the two-way symmetry model. The first three models reflect a practice of public relations that attempts through persuasion to achieve the organisation's goals. The fourth model focuses on balancing self-interests and the interests of other groups or publics. In 1995, Dozier, Grunig, and Grunig proposed two new models: the cultural interpreter and the personal influence models after their research on excellence in public relations and communication management which have enriched an understanding of how public relations is practised. PR scholarship started growing with the emergence of PR theories. Knowledge of PR theories can enable the practitioner to take the right decisions for his or her public relations plans and programmes.

There are eight traditionally well-known PR theories grouped under three broad categories: 1. theories of relationships; they include *systems theory*, and *situational theory*, 2. theories of persuasion and social influence: *social exchange theory*, *diffusion theory*, and *social learning theory;* 3. theories of mass communication: *uses and gratifications theory*, *framing theory* and *agenda setting theory*. This study is hinged on theories of relationships as they are considered critical in every PR practice. While these theories have their specific operational and conceptual underpinnings and how they explain the various PR actions, the underlying theoretical framework of this study also consists of the meta-theories of the excellence, relationship management, gender and feminist theories to explain the roles and position of female practitioners relative to their male counterparts in the PR profession. It also attempts to understand the major challenges that women face in the field of practice and how they navigate their way through to succeed.

Given that PR paradigms are usually composed of assumptions, it is not presumptuous to consider that the way people and organisations study and practice PR is greatly influenced by the subjectivity of the human mind. This, therefore, reflects how the general perception of females in an African cultural setting can influence how a female PR practitioner might be treated in a corporate organisation. Grunig and White (1992)

therefore posit that, it is pertinent to address the subjective component of both popular and scientific theories about PR as a means of fostering excellence in communication practice. There is a dearth of literature on African PR practice from the African worldview which has created a gap in the foundation for a body of knowledge on specific PR issues in Africa (Tilson 2014; Van Heerden 2004). Researchers on the African continent have heavily relied on models, concepts and theories from the West. Though of itself not a bad idea, the situation calls for adaptation rather than blind aping that might not be fittingly applicable to the continent's specific needs. Even then, country-specific cultures will have to be taken into consideration, given the wide variation of the continent's cultures. This is not without accepting that there are generic principles for normative PR practice that cut across cultures and can be applied to achieve excellence in professional practice (Grunig 1992).

2.4 CONCEPTUALISATION OF GENDER AND FEMINISM

This section of the chapter focuses on the concept of gender and feminism and how the concepts impact on PR practice in the professional work environments and in traditional through modern societies. Gender is a term that refers to social or cultural distinctions associated with being a male or female (Little 2014). Gender has been described as one of the most salient and influential aspects of an individual's identity. Arguably, gender can influence a person's appearance, interests, activities, friendships, interpersonal styles, romantic relationships and even career decisions. Given that gender appears to be unique and can have some form of influence on a person's life, a number of theories have been developed to attempt to explain gender development and differentiations. These theories can be generally categorised into three (3) families: biological, social and cognitive (Alexander 2003; Buss 2000; Buss et al 1992; Eals & Silverman 1992; Geary 1998).

The extent to which one identifies with being masculine or feminine is referred to as gender identity (Diamond 2002 as cited in Little 2014). However, some individuals might refer to themselves as transgender, non-binary, or gender non-conforming. It is pertinent to point out the difference between gender and sex as established by sociologists. According to Penelope and Sally (2003:1), "sex is a biological

categorisation based primarily on reproductive potential". Sex is biologically determined with physical and physiological distinctions and does not always correspond with a person's gender as found in Diamond's definition of gender identity. In all cultures, persons of the female sex will at menarche menstruate, develop breasts and be capable of lactating when they become mothers. On the other hand, gender characteristics vary greatly according to differences in societies and cultures. However, the gender dichotomy, that is, the notion that one is either male or female is specific to certain cultures and is not universal (Little 2014). Again, gender connotes cultural and attitudinal characteristics and it is embedded in modern institutions as passed down from the home right from infancy when parents reinforce the notion of differences in the male and female child by rewarding the gender role expected of them. West and Zimmerman (1987) citing Penelope and Sally (2003) argue that gender is not something we are born with; neither is it something we have, but something we do. Butler (1990) corroborates the views of West and Zimmerman (1987). The scholar insists that gender is something we perform and not something we are born with.

Concepts generally associated with gender, providing it with its entrenched characteristics of inequalities include gender identity as already mentioned, gender role, and gender expression. In differentiating biological sex from gender, Adams, Bell, and Griffin (1997) shed more light on gender as follows:

- **Gender Identity** refers to the psychological sense of oneself as a male, female, gender transgressive, and so on and so forth.

- **Gender role** refers to the socially constructed and culturally specific behaviour and expectations for women (i.e., femininity) or men (i.e., masculinity) and is based on heteronormativity.

- **Gender expression** refers to the behaviour and/or physical appearance that a person utilises in order to express their own gender.

While gender may focus mainly on the roles that society has socially constructed for both male and female sexes, gender relations on the other hand intersect with all other influences on social relations- age, ethnicity, race, and religion among others to

determine the position and identity on people in a social group. Since gender relations are a social construct, they can be transformed over time to become more equitable (Buss et al 1992; Geary 1998).

Like the previous scholars, the World Health Organisation (WHO) defines gender as "the socially constructed characteristics of women and men such as norms, roles and relationship of and between women and men (WHO 2018). Lorber (1997) shares similar views. Lorber (1997) insists that gender is now understood to be a social status, a personal identity, and a set of relationships between women and men. Sex is no longer seen as a one-way input or basic material for social arrangements, but a complex interplay of genes, hormones, physiology, environment, and behaviour, with an overall effect in the end.

Although the above definitions may be limited in scope, they obviously point to the origins of gender and help in an understanding of the greater attachment to gender stereotyping in many cultures leading to gender inequality which appears to be widespread and pervasive. Hossain, Ahmad and Siraj (2016) for instance argue that gender stereotyping comes in the form of unequal pay, unequal education and opportunities, domestic violence, women's main responsibility for children and domestic work. Hossain et al (2016) observe further that in the Gulf Arab Countries and some South-East Asian societies for instance, women are not allowed to drive cars or go outside their homes unaccompanied by a male relative in certain cultures. Hossain et al (2016) further point out disturbing evidence of widespread corporate apathy towards gender issues, particularly in developing countries. According to these scholars, male dominance appears to still prevail as a legacy of the largely capitalist society that most countries might have inherited. While the assertion by Hossain et al (2016) may be largely valid, there are many non-capitalist societies where gender inequality prevails in almost every aspect of social life. As mentioned already, the Gulf Arab countries and many traditional African and South-East Asian societies are examples of societies where women are socially, culturally and institutionally oppressed. Gender inequality from the perspectives of the worldwide, struggle against it because it is not an individual matter, but it is deeply ingrained in the structure of societies (Lorber 1997).

2.5 FEMINISM AND GENDER INEQUALITY

"Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (Bell Hooks, 2000, cited in Pasque & Wimmer 2011:2). The concept is intertwined with gender as it emerged from the need to address gender inequalities that developed together with related theories. Pasque and Wimmer (2011) insist that the feminist theory is founded on three (3) main principles enumerated:

- Women have something valuable to contribute to every aspect of the world.
- As an oppressed group, most women have been unable to achieve their full potential, receive rewards, or gain full participation in society.
- Feminist research should do more than critique, but should work towards social transformation.

The tipping point here is that several gender and feminist theories have tried to explain the situation of women in relation to the injustices and inequalities that they suffer on account of misconceptions of gender roles and identity. For instance, theories of gender oppression argue that "not only are women different from or unequal to men, but that they are actively oppressed, subordinated, and even abused by men (Crossman 2019:4). The two main theories of gender oppression are psychoanalytic feminism and radical feminism in which power is the key variable (Crossman 2019). The traditional varieties of feminism are *Liberal Feminism, Marxist and Socialist Feminism*, as well as *Development Feminism*.

Liberal feminists argue that women have the same capacity as men for moral reasoning and agency, but that patriarchy, particularly the sexist division of labour, has historically denied women the opportunity to express and practise this reasoning (Lorber 1997). Pasque and Wimmer (2011:4) note that liberal feminism "is often the root of comparison when deconstructing contemporary conceptualisations of feminism". According to Tong (2009), "society has a false belief that women are by nature less intellectually and physically capable than men" (Tong 2009:2 as cited in Pasque & Wimmer 2011:4). Modern liberal feminists also argue "that patriarchal society fuses sex and gender together, making only those jobs that are associated

with the traditionally feminine appropriate for women to pursue" (Pasque & Wimmer 2011:4).

2.5.1 Radical feminism

It grew out of the seeming inadequacies of the liberal feminist perspective to address the individual, institutional and systemic oppression of women. Libertarian radical feminism and cultural feminism are two strands of the radical feminist perspective. "Libertarian radical feminism focuses on personal freedom of expression but also turns to androgyny as an option, while cultural radical feminism expressly argues that the root cause of the problem is not femininity, but the low value that patriarchy assigns to feminine qualities. If society placed a higher value on feminine qualities, then there would be less gender oppression" (Lorber 1997:9).

What appears significant here is that the Marxist and Socialist feminists blame the discrimination, social inequities and inequalities suffered by women on capitalism as it exploits the labour of women without adequate compensation for it. The approach sees the problem of women to be a result of their economic dependence on men. The two perspectives also blame the family for women's predicament, because women do not get rewarded for services they provide to the family such as preparation of meals in peasant societies and raising of children.

2.5.2 Development feminism

Development feminism is the last of the three feminism perspectives generally termed *gender reform feminism*. The importance of its theoretical contribution lies in equating women's status with control of economic resources. In some societies, women control significant economic resources and so have a high status. The lack of control over significant economic resources implies a low status and possible oppression. According to Lorber (1997:13-14), development feminism addresses the political issue of women's rights versus national and cultural traditions. Existential and phenomenological feminists focus on how women have been marginalised and defined as "other" in patriarchal societies.

While acknowledging the arguments put forth by scholars on feminism, it is worth noting that feminist theories keep evolving with continuities and convergence of themes as new ones are always formulated. Radical feminism, lesbian feminism and psychoanalytic feminism, collectively called *gender resistant feminism*, have made inroads for decades. It is worth- noting that contemporary feminist thought tends to dismiss generalisations about sex and gender which were highly prevalent in earlier waves of feminist movements. Therefore, emphasising the importance of intersections within identity cannot be excluded in the discourse.

Most studies on PR that focus on women and the issues affecting them in the profession employed the feminist and gender theories to investigate different phenomena such as PR and gender, leadership and gender issues in PR, the impact of feminisation on PR, mentoring experiences in PR, the glass ceiling phenomenon in PR among others. Moreover, the majority of these studies that investigated PR issues among female practitioners employed qualitative approaches for their investigations (Aldoory 2003; Aldoory & Toth 2004; Gaggioli 2011; Grunig et al 2000; Krugler 2017; Simorangkir 2011; Wrigley 2002). It was, therefore, appropriate to employ the gender and feminist theories as well as qualitative approaches in this current study to investigate gender issues among female PR practitioners in Ghana, which aided the researcher in the development of a proposed framework on women in PR practice in Ghana.

2.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE THEORIES

The gender reform feminisms already discussed have their peculiar limitations and weaknesses. If women and men are essentially similar, and therefore women should be equally represented in public arenas dominated by men as Liberal feminism argues, then it can be assumed that women and men are interchangeable. That being the case, it will not make any difference whether a woman or a man does a particular job. Marxist and socialist feminisms argue that the source of women's oppression is their economic dependence on a husband (Lorber 1997:12). They propose full-time jobs for women, with paid maternity leave and child-care as the solution. But the state can take back

what it gives as a matter of policy. Women are worker-mothers or just mothers, depending on the state's economic needs.

Development feminism's theoretical emphasis is on "universal human rights which are reflected in pressure for the education of girls, maternity and child health care, as well as economic resources for women who contribute heavily to the support of their families. However, when gender politics call for marital rights and sexual autonomy, development feminism will frequently have to confront traditional cultural values and practices that give men power over their daughters and wives" (Lorber 1997:15).

2.7 RELEVANCE OF GENDER AND FEMINIST THEORIES TO THE STUDY

The theoretical underpinnings of gender inequality and the varieties of feminism provide the background within which to seek explanations for most female PR practitioners not being promoted to top management positions in their organisations. The feminist perspective of public relations (Grunig, Toth, & Hon 2000; Hon 1995) primarily focuses on how women and feminist values can benefit the industry, and on claims that feminist values are intrinsic to the public relations profession. Grunig, Toth, and Hon (2000) argue that public relations are an industry founded on feminist values such as honesty, justice, and sensitivity, which will enhance the symmetrical communication patterns of public relations". These views are supported by Andsager and Hust (2005). Most scholarship on women in the PR profession holds the conventional notion that PR is more appealing to women as a career choice because the profession requires substantial commitment to relationship building and expansion of lines of communication. It is obvious from the feminist point of view that women have excelled in these areas more than men, so they are more suited for the PR profession (Thompson 2008). If PR practice is gendered relative to its speciality areas, and women tend toward the feminist value speciality areas, it, therefore, stands to reason that gender-stereotyping will affect them in their chosen specialities, and most likely influence how these female PR practitioners will fare on the promotional mobility scale.

In their survey of PR students, Andsager and Hust (2005:89) found that college students categorised public relations specialities, characteristics of those areas, and

qualities they seek in their own careers based on gender, regardless of whether they are conscious of this tendency. The survey, therefore, upholds Hon's (1995) and Thompson's (2008) assertion that public relations as a profession is inherently feminine in nature because of its purposes, practices, and attributes. Andsager and Hust's (2005) findings reveal further that public relations students do attribute different characteristics to those sectors they deem feminine or masculine. Students also admitted that male-oriented sectors were higher-paying. Their knowledge about this reality of salaries notwithstanding, female students were still more likely to choose female-oriented specialities for career opportunities as confirmed in the study. Students identified female-oriented speciality areas as more ethical and caring about people. The feminist and gender theories, therefore, fit this present study that seeks to understand why many female PR practitioners do not get promoted to very high management positions even though they may hold the same higher qualifications and experience as their male counterparts.

Given the interesting angles clearly articulated by the scholars on feminism and gender issues, the gender theory employed in this study helped in investigating and analysing issues relating to power and gender stereotypes in Public Relations among female PR practitioners, especially with regard to the position they occupy in their organisations and the roles they are assigned. The feminist theory on the other hand helped in unearthing issues of gender inequality and the fight for equal opportunities by female PR practitioners globally, continentally and in Ghana.

2.8 OTHER THEORIES UNDERPINNING THE STUDY

The following are other theories that relate to the current study.

2.8.1 The Excellence Theory

The excellence theory has been described by scholars as a normative model for public relations practitioners to follow because of the detailed guidelines it provides for effective or excellent Public Relations practice globally. The model further outlines practices for effective Public Relations campaigns which can engender the achievement of organisational goals. Grunig (1992) is credited as the one who

developed a series of general theory principles which include the following four levels: programme, departmental, organisational, and economic. Grunig (1992) explains that the programme level points to the fact that for PR to be effective in an organisation, management must see the need to place it at the top so that the practitioner can strategically manage the PR department. In expanding the discussions on the excellence theory, Grunig (1992) proposed ten (10) general principles that can ensure effective or excellent PR practice. These ten principles are briefly highlighted below:

- **Involvement of Public Relations in Strategic Management**

The excellence theory postulates that Public Relations should be deeply involved in the strategic management of every organisation because it will allow for more inclusive decision-making, and better organisational policy from the perspective of the stakeholders of an organisation as it will be a key function of the PR department.

- **Empowerment of Public Relations in the Dominant Coalition**

The theory argues that the Public Relations practitioner should be empowered to report directly to management so that he or she can provide professional counselling to top management on issues relating to the stakeholders, values and general ethical matters that will relate to the organisation concerned.

- **Integrated Public Relations function**

Integrated Public Relations functions will undoubtedly open more access to authority at all levels and functions of an organisation. In other words, PR should not be isolated or pigeonholed. Moreover, the PR department should not be encroached on or subsumed under marketing, advertising, or any other department, but should stand on its own degree of autonomy.

- **Public Relations as a management function, separate from other functions**

Grunig (1992) insists that Public Relations must be a management function and must stand on its own to avoid encroachment from marketing or legal departments into the role and responsibility of a communications manager. When these areas are usurped by other organisational functions, it is common for smaller or less strategic publics to be ignored when decisions are being taken in the organisation.

- **Public Relations Unit must be headed by a manager rather than a technician**

The excellence theory postulates further that the PR unit should always be headed by a professional Public Relations manager, rather than someone who is a technician. Managers have strategic roles to play because of their research knowledge and skills which are necessary tools for information gathering in order to identify conflicts, issues, and crisis management among others. If the PR department is headed by a technician, the practitioner will be too far away from management and it's likely to be pigeonholed as media relations rather than as a true management function.

- **Two-way symmetrical (or mixed-motive) model of public relations**

It is important for an excellent public relations department to employ the two-way symmetrical model of public relations because, it is the ideal method for effective public relations practice. This model has been described as dialogue-based and has been proven to be the best for resolving conflicts, preventing problems, and building and maintaining relationships with the various stakeholders of an organisation.

- **Department with the knowledge needed to practise the managerial role in symmetrical public relations**

An excellent public relations department has the knowledge necessary to manage public relations symmetrically in that it can conduct sophisticated research to understand the publics, and it can also engage in negotiation and collaborative problem-solving.

- **Symmetrical system of internal communication**

One of the tenets of the excellence theory insists that organisations must practice dialogue-based systems of internal communication because it is an important strategy for building teamwork. PR practitioners must therefore conduct regular research to identify issues early in order to advise management on the way forward so that the issues do not escalate.

- **Diversity embodied in all roles**

It is important for public relations professionals to have a diverse professional background in all roles of the PR functions so that decision and communication will be inclusive of varying viewpoints. This can go a long way to contribute to taking the best decisions in the organisation by soliciting the ideas and opinions of not only management or the PR department but from the stakeholders of the organisation who are important.

- **Ethics and integrity**

The excellence theory insists that ethics and integrity are important considerations as far as PR practice is concerned. This was done four years after the excellence theory was published. Vercic, Dozier, Grunig, JE and Grunig, LA (1996) argue that ethics is important in public relations practice because they often guide the practitioner on issues of right or wrong as they engage in their daily activities.

In applying the excellence theory to this study, the researcher acknowledges recent debates about a generic approach that confirms the excellence model of PR about which there is proof of a link between effective organisations and "excellent" (or normative) public relations (Dozier & Lauzen 2000; Grunig 2006; Lim, Goh, & Sriramesh 2005; O'Neil 2003). Grunig (2009:1) asserts that:

> *Our global theory is a normative theory that argues that public relations will be most effective throughout most parts of the world when it follows the generic principles and applies them with appropriate variations for local,*

cultural, political, social, and economic conditions. Its absence in a country, however, does not serve as evidence that it could not be practiced there. The 1992 Excellence Project argues that symmetrical communication is the most effective and ethical practice.

What the above quote means is that PR practice can only be deemed excellent or effective if organisations globally recognise the generic principles that have been adequately espoused in the excellence theory. It is however worth-noting that due to variations in cultural, political, socio and economic factors among others, the ten (10) generic principles that Grunig (1992) discussed cannot be applied in all cases. Although these principles can engender an excellent or effective PR practice globally, it is not possible for all of them to fit in all occasions. It must be indicated that excellent organisations are those that adhere to these principles and therefore can achieve the desired results through effective PR practice if most of the principles are applied in the PR field.

It is true that "the basic assumptions of the excellence Theory are based on a corporate metaphor of what constitutes "excellence" and "success" in public relations, rather than on "relationship building" or some other metaphor" (Kent & Taylor 2007:12) weakening it. However, it offers greater strengths for application in this study due to its broader frames of empowering and integrating all units of the corporate organisation.

The theory "has produced the global theory of generic principles and specific applications. It is much more than a model. It is a general theory that is made up of a number of middle-range theories such as the theory of public relations and strategic management, the situational theory of publics, practitioner roles, the organisation of the public relations function, internal communication, activism, ethics, gender and diversity" (Grunig 2009:5). In the view of Phillips and Young (2009), today's digital world challenges the excellence theory because of the new face of PR in a new media age, a position Grunig does not appear to agree with. Grunig (2009) argues that an organisation and its publics are embedded in internet-mediated social networks although public relations emphasise an organisation's relationship with its numerous publics.

Dozier, Grunig and Grunig (1995) provide a distinct view of the excellence theory. These scholars maintain that excellent PR has global implications as it goes across countries, regardless of the particular industry or type of organisation that a PR practitioner works. The scholars explain further that communication excellence consists of knowledge and expertise that cut across organisations or even nations.

Arguably, the excellence theory is considered to be one critical theory for PR practice and it is also one of the most criticised theories of PR. Some of the scholars who have subjected the excellence theory to critical examination have argued that, though the theory in its general form appears to be a good theory for PR practice and relationship management, the theory also has some shortcomings which cannot be glossed over. Although most of the tenets in the theory seem to support some of the principles in the two-way symmetrical communication model which is also regarded as the ideal for PR practice, critics such as L'Etang (2006) appears to disagree. L'Etang (2006) describes the excellence theory as a misrepresentation of the reality in a communication process of an organisation, especially where the practice of PR is usually influenced by the interest of the organisation. Chenney and Christensen (2001) make similar observations. They suggest that PR practitioners should employ the excellence theory with caution because the theory appears to be more of what they termed 'self-report' by managers. They argue further that symmetric communication as proposed by Grunig (1992) appears not to consider the various systems of power and influence that often shape how PR is practised in most organisations. Pieczka (2006) concluded that the excellence theory is good for PR practice because it has undoubtedly laid a good foundation based on the tenets of the theory. However, Pieczka (2006) is of the view that the excellence theory is filled with many contradictions. For instance, two-way symmetrical communication as postulated in the theory is a good idea as it is ideal for PR practice because it supports open dialogue, interactions and negotiations between management and its stakeholders, but it is not all PR practitioners who are likely to be placed at management and therefore will not be effective if they are not part of the decision–making body of an organisation. Researchers such as Anani-Bossman (2018) and Azutiga (2016) whose studies also focused on PR practice in political parties in Ghana and the financial service sector in Ghana employed the excellence theory in their studies. The findings of these earlier studies did not differ much from

this study as the participants also acknowledged the fact that the excellence theory is a good theory for PR practice, especially the principles that have been discussed in the theory which serve as a guide not only to PR practitioners but to organisations as well.

This study for instance confirmed that the majority of the PR practitioners who participated in the research actually started their PR career at the technician level before graduating to the managerial level. Therefore, if the practitioner is not part of the dominant coalition, he or she cannot achieve what the theory postulates. Moreover, PR practice varies from country-to-country as well as organisations-to-organisations, so most of these principles postulated in the excellence theory cannot be fully applied in all cases because of the differences in sociocultural, political and economic issues in different jurisdictions. Browning (2010) also admits that the excellence theory has several strengths as it is seen as one key theory for PR practice globally, but also casts doubt on its real 'efficacy' and thus rejected the notion that the theory is the best model for PR practice. Laski (2009) also argues that the excellence theory is one of the most dominant theoretical perspectives as far as the field is concerned, but it is also the most critiqued theory. This is because some other scholars describe the theory as one of the largest shares of theory building in PR as well as the most dominant and influential paradigm in PR theory (Browning 2010; Kent & Taylor 2006; Sallot et al 2003).

Most of the arguments put forth by scholars in relation to the excellence theory are centred on the fact that the theory was developed after an extensive investigation which span 15 years before the findings were concluded and described as 'excellent communications', and the need for organisations to attach much importance to the PR department. As already indicated, the excellence theory provides more discussions on how PR can contribute to organisational effectiveness and the achievement of goals (Grunig 2008). The theory explains further the role that the PR practitioner should play by being part of top management. It, therefore, presupposes that organisations must necessarily make the communications manager part of the decision-makers. That is, PR can strategically plan and follow it up because of the key role PR has to play in ensuring that the objectives of an organisation are achieved (Coombs 2006). Bowen

(2013) notes that the main objective of the excellence theory is to provide a general understanding of how PR as a management function can make meaningful contributions to the planning and response practices that are necessary for organisational effectiveness. Thus, these contributions can increase the monetary value of an organisation (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier 2002).

> *Public relations contributes to organisational effectiveness when it helps reconcile the organisation's goals with the expectations of its strategic constituencies. This contribution has monetary value to the organisation. Public relations contributes to effectiveness by building quality, and long-term relationships with strategic constituencies. Public relations is most likely to contribute to effectiveness when the senior public relations manager is a member of the dominant coalition where he or she is able to shape the organisation's goals and help determine which external publics are most strategic (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier 2002:10).*

What the above quote means is that the PR department can make contributions to the financial status of an organisation because PR can contribute to effectiveness by building quality and long-term relations that can motivate or boost the morale of employees to work harder in achieving the goals of the organisation. If the workers are happy with how management handles their welfare issues, they will be motivated to work harder than their normal working periods. Moreover, if the external stakeholders are happy to continue to do business with an organisation, it will add monetary value to it. This will undoubtedly help the organisation to achieve its short, medium or long term goals. The PR practitioner, therefore, has a responsibility to play by ensuring that a cordial relationship is fostered between the organisation and its various stakeholders.

Grunig (1992) developed different series of general theory principles that were segmented into four major levels: programmes, departmental, organisation and economic. At the programme level, for instance, Grunig (1992) argues that for PR to meet its core objectives, it should be managed strategically. Thus, the ideas conceived in the excellence theory should serve as a blue-print for PR practitioners to appreciate how organisations can achieve their goals and also remain effective. Again, the theory

should guide PR practitioners and their organisations on how the PR profession should be practised in order to achieve the desired results. What appears unique and significant about the excellence theory is the fact that Grunig (1992) emphasised the need for diversity to be embodied in all PR roles. In other words, it is important for PR departments to incorporate diverse professionals in all roles that PR practitioners perform so that decisions at the managerial level and communication will include varying viewpoints. By extension, the PR department should endeavour to include women in the functions, so that they can offer divergent views as the organisation incorporates the perspectives of women on board when critical decisions of the organisation are being taken.

In adding another dimension to the discussion on the excellence theory, Grunig, Grunig and Ehling (1992) identified several excellent principles of an excellent communication or PR department which they grouped into four categories- empowerment of PR function, communicator role, integrated function and relationship with other functions and models of PR. Undoubtedly, these categories have over the years provided practical benchmarks for determining whether PR departments or units are indeed excellent or otherwise. Again, based on the theoretical premise about the value of public relations, the excellence theory derived principles of how the function should be organised to maximise its value. Obviously, this cannot be ignored if organisational goals are to be achieved. For instance, the research from Grunig's (1992) study showed that involvement in strategic management decisions was the critical characteristic of excellent PR. This is because PR executives play a strategic managerial role as well as administrative managerial roles so that PR could be empowered to have easy access to key organisational decision-makers (Dominant Coalition) when they are needed. Heath and Coombs (2006) support most of the assertions contained in the excellence theory. Heath and Coombs (2006) insist that if organisations have to achieve their goals, the PR department ought to be part of management so that the department can continue subsequently, to contribute to achieving the overall goals and objectives of the organisation. In other words, the PR department should be visible and be part of planning and making contributions to critical decisions at the managerial level.

Given that this study is about the practice of PR by females in Ghana, the excellence theory is considered appropriate because it lists a set of characteristics that should exist in an organisation in order to ensure excellent and effective PR practice. These characteristics are well explained in the ten principles contained in the excellence theory. The key message that the theory postulates is that, communication has a value to an organisation because it helps to build long-term relationships with the various stakeholders which include the employees. Therefore, if organisations want to achieve the desired goals, there is a need for PR to be given the necessary recognition as part of those who make the final decisions for organisations.

The excellence theory is widely seen as a general theory for PR practice as it resulted from extensive studies in different countries and several organisations where PR was practised (Dozier et al 1995; Grunig 1992; Grunig et al 2002). The excellence theory incorporates a number of middle-range theories of public relations including PR itself, strategic management, models of PR, evaluation of PR, employee communication, PR roles, gender, diversity, power, activism, ethics, social responsibility, and global PR among others. The excellence theory makes a stronger point about the fact that PR has so much value to an organisation and society as a whole, especially on the social responsibility of managerial decisions and the quality of relationships that an organisation is expected to maintain with its stakeholders. Therefore, if an organisation has to be effective, it must conduct its business in such a way that it solves problems and satisfies the goals of stakeholders. In that case, the involvement of PR in strategic management is a critical characteristic for excellent PR to thrive.

Le Roux (2010) adds to the discussion on the excellence theory. Le Roux (2010) postulates that the excellence theory describes the key characteristics of a PR practitioner and the organisational culture within which the PR practitioner will execute his or her role as a professional, so there is the need to practise excellent PR and his or her outfit being able to make meaningful contributions to the organisation to perform and achieve its goals.

2.8.2 Significance of the excellence theory to the current study

As already argued by scholars, the excellence theory has laid a foundation for the development of more theories in the field of PR. Even though some scholars have cast doubts about its real implementation, it stands to reason that the theory can help organisations achieve their goals and be the most effective. The theory has provided a detailed road map on how PR should be practised in an ideal situation in order to achieve maximum results. The theory has identified the various variables that should go into designing what is known as an excellent public relations department in organisations. These variables are clearly spelt out in the ten (10) principles of the theory which have been briefly discussed in this study. One key area that the theory postulates is that there must be a communication team that is allowed to participate in strategic management. This is so because when the communication function contributes strategically to organisational goals that PR can be said to have created value in the organisation. What is meant here is that top management ought to see the need to elevate PR to be part of the decision-making body of the organisation so that the practitioner can make a meaningful contribution towards the achievement of organisational goals. The managerial role that the top PR practitioner plays through the process of shared decision-making with other top management members helps in creating a congenial atmosphere that engenders excellent PR practice.

In this study, the excellence theory provides the necessary blueprints which serve as a guide not only to PR practitioners but to organisations as well. The implication is that in order for the female PR practitioners who took part in this study to be able to achieve excellence in practice, it will take top management of their various organisations to help them achieve such goals. If they do not have the full co-operation from management, it will be very difficult for them to achieve anything that will be near to excellence in PR practice. Moreover, the excellence theory employed in this study has shed more light to establish the specific roles PR practitioners are supposed to play in their organisations and how the placement of the PR function, that is 'strategic', 'operational' and 'communication technician' impacts directly on communication and the PR activities that take place in an organisation. The theory is also relevant as it can be used in assessing orientation and the understanding of PR functions by the

dominant coalition or top management within the organisation. The theory further postulates that PR is a two-way street because it is seen as a conduit through which messages are communicated from management to the numerous stakeholders of an organisation or the reverse. Therefore, the communication should be from both management and the stakeholders alike, with feedback so that it can be acted upon by both parties. The PR practitioner in the organisation should therefore act as a mediator between management and the stakeholders of the organisation.

2.8.3 The relationship management theory

The relationship management theory is considered one key theory for PR practice globally. This is because PR itself is borne out of the recognition that the appropriate domain of PR is relationships. Nurturing, building, and sustaining relationships require not only communication, but positive organisational and public behaviour which is central to relationship management. PR practitioners, therefore, have a responsibility to ensure that the organisation maintains a cordial relationship between it and its numerous stakeholders (Ledingham 2003). Similarly, Ledingham (2011) posits that the primary function of PR is to manage an organisation's Public Relations which can be achieved through symbolic behaviour, communication and actual behaviour in an ongoing exchange between an organisation and its stakeholders. Ledingham (2011) therefore defines relationship management as the ethical and efficient management of an organisation's Public Relations by focusing on common interests, shared goals and values in support of a mutual understanding and mutual benefits to both. Grunig (2015) adds his voice to the relationship management concept. Grunig (2015) argues that relationship building is key for PR practice and theory building globally because, if PR has to be recognised and valued in the organisation, PR practitioners must be able to demonstrate that relationship management is key by reaching out to all those who matter in an organisation through long-term behavioural relationships with the strategic publics of an organisation. Similar sentiments are expressed by Heath and Coombs (2006). They believe that relationship management implies mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders which are usually developed and expanded over a defined period of time.

Most of the sentiments expressed by scholars on relationship management are clear. It reflects in some definitions of PR. Cutlip, Center and Broom (2009) for instance describe PR as "a management function that establishes and maintains a mutually beneficial relationship between an organisation and the publics on whom its success or failures depends". Heath (2013) also describes relationship management as the steps involved in the management of the relationship between an organisation and its publics for mutual benefits.

Zhang (2012) observes that, there appears to be a paradigm shift in Public Relations theory that is heavily concentrated on relationship management in the last two decades. Grunig (2015) supports the views of Zhang (2012). He argues that relationship building is key in Public Relations practice and its theory development. Grunig (2015) explains further that the PR profession is largely hinged on relationship building. Therefore, it is incumbent for PR practitioners to build long-term relationships with strategic publics through their roles as communicators for organisations. Similarly, Ledingham (2011) maintains that the main function of PR is to build and manage relations in organisations. Ledingham (2011) explains further that relationship management is the ethical and efficient management of an organisation's relationship with its publics, focused on common interests and shared goals of mutual understanding and benefit to both the organisation and its publics.

Heath (2013) provides an elaboration on the concept of relationship management. Heath (2013) describes the concept of relationship as all the steps an organisation adopts in order to create a congenial atmosphere between itself and its publics for mutual benefit. What appears significant is that relationship building is key to every organisation because if organisational goals are to be achieved, they must be based on the kind of relationship that is built with its stakeholders. The assertions expressed by various scholars in relationship management reinforce the point that organisations must create an opportunity to always interact with their stakeholders in order to generate feedback. Through such efforts, the organisation will get to understand the concerns of its stakeholders and also build bridges with them. The tipping point here is that communication is employed as a strategic management function and a vehicle through which relationship is built with the publics.

In an attempt to expand the discussion on the relationship management concept, Ledingham (2001) insists that the relationship management theory emanated from four key areas in PR; the realisation that public relationship is key in PR, view of PR as a management function, identification of key dimensions of the organisational public relationship and construction of models of the organisation-public relationship. It must be emphasised that relationship building is an essential component of organisational failures or successes, hence the need for organisations to strive to maintain mutually beneficial relationships with their key stakeholders.

Historically, Ferguson (1984) has been noted as one of the advocates for linking PR to relationship management. Ferguson (1984) insists that the development of PR theories should be firmly grounded on relationships rather than the organisation, publics or communication process. In other words, there should be a balance in organisational interests with that of the publics' interests, and also ensure a mutual understanding and benefits that will support long-term relationships.

The relationship management concept appears to affect almost every aspect of life. There is abundant evidence that various aspects of PR practice including crisis management, employee relations, customer relations, relationship cultivation and maintenance, all characterise relationship building. Coombs (2000) for instance opines that relationship management helps organisations experiencing a crisis situation. This is because, it offers opportunities for the organisation to collaborate with its key stakeholders and also goes a long way in managing a negative image and reputation for an organisation, as a result of unforeseen circumstances that may occur in a form of crisis.

The debate on relationship management and its importance to PR practice appears to have been ongoing for decades as many scholars have advocated and continue to advocate for PR theories to be developed by incorporating relationships rather than the organisations or just its publics. The concept of relationship building is premised on the fact that the exchange must benefit both sides if the relationship is to be maintained (Broom et al 2000; Broom & Dozier 1990; Chandler 2014; Ethin 1992; Grunig 1992; Grunig 2015; Hon & Grunig 1999; Ledingham & Grunig 2000).

The relationship management theory employed in this study helped in establishing the kind of relationship-building strategies that female PR practitioners in Ghana employ to create mutually beneficial relationships between their organisations and stakeholders. The relationship management concept helps in promoting the view that Public Relations provides value to organisations, publics, and societies through relationships. Therefore, Public Relations as relationship management has to take an in-depth look at the organisation's public relationships and develop specific strategies that can be employed to initiate, nurture and sustain a mutually beneficial relationship between the organisation and its numerous publics. Scholars such as Anani-Bossman (2018) and Azutiga (2016) employed the relationship management theory in their studies. Azutiga (2016) for instance established that most political parties in Ghana employed relationship management strategies during their political campaigns to get more votes in their political activities. Anani-Bossman (2018) whose study focussed on PR practice in the financial services sector in Ghana also established that the majority of the PR practitioners interviewed in the study confirmed that relationship management is key as far as PR practice is concerned. So each practitioner usually employs different relationship management strategies especially within the financial sector, in order to maintain and also get more customers to patronise their services. The researcher in employing the relationship management theory in this study believed that the theory was critical to the study because the women in PR practice in Ghana obviously employ different strategies to build mutually beneficial relationships between them and their various stakeholders for mutual benefits.

2.8.4 Relevance of the relationship management theory to the current study

Scholars have often argued that relationship-building is key to PR practice. Indeed, it is one of the best techniques for ensuring peaceful co-existence and boosting the morale of stakeholders, especially the employees. Relationship building is also key because it helps to mitigate conflicts between management and employees. The female PR practitioners who participated in this study represent various corporate organisations in Ghana including the financial services sector, non-governmental organisations and the government sector among others. These practitioners are the ones that have been tasked to communicate the policies and programmes of their

organisations to the general public and those that matter to them. They are supposed to facilitate cordial relationships between management and their various stakeholders. In some organisations, especially financial institutions like the banks and insurance companies, they are supposed to employ professional relationship managers with the sole duty to ensure that clients are happy by managing long-lasting relationships with them. In the case of the PR practitioner, he or she is expected to initiate, nurture and maintain a long-lasting relationship between the organisations they serve and their numerous stakeholders. Relationship management efforts should not be focused on a segment of the stakeholders, but on the entire body by creating a close and constant interaction between management and the stakeholders.

The relationship management theory employed in this study is significant because it enables PR practitioners to demonstrate value for their various organisations by managing and measuring relationships. This could be done by opening up the lines of communication within the organisation to allow for the free flow of information between the organisation and its public. Relationship management is one of the best ways by which organisations can achieve their goals through full co-operation from stakeholders. If the PR practitioner is seen making meaningful contributions to the organisation, management will always see the need to attach importance to PR practice in the organisation.

The foregone conclusion here is that PR is in fact about relationships, so organisations should not only communicate but should create opportunities to always interact with their stakeholders. Therefore, the PR practitioner must manage the relationship linkage in the organisations that they represent by aligning the goals and interests of the organisations they work for with their numerous stakeholders in other to achieve maximum results.

Having adequately discussed the theories employed in this study, the next sub-section of the chapter briefly discusses models of PR propounded by Grunig and Hunt (1984) as well as Dozier, Grunig and Grunig (1995). These models obviously help in elucidating our thinking and understanding of the PR profession from different jurisdictions across the globe.

2.9 MODELS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE

According to Grunig and Hunt (1984), one of the most useful ways of understanding the concept of PR has been through the description of PR Models because they identify the main ideas of Public Relations as a profession and how the models relate to each other. Based on their extensive research, Grunig and Hunt (1984) developed four (4) major models of PR in Communication Research and Ethics. The four models of Grunig and Hunt (1984) are briefly discussed below:

2.9.1 The press-agentry model

This is a model where information is one-way. That is, from the organisation to its publics. This model is described as the oldest form of PR practice because of its association with promotion and publicity. PR practitioners operating under this model do not find the need to conduct research about their publics. Their main aim is to have a positive publicity in the media space. The use of propaganda tactics such as celebrities and attention-gaining devices like giveaways and parades are common practices that PR officers or organisations employ. The louder the noise, the more attention gaining that the organisation obtains, irrespective of whether it is true or false (Grunig & Hunt 1984).

2.9.2 The public information model

This model may appear to be an improvement of the Press Agentry Model because of the emphasis on telling the truth when churning out information. That notwithstanding, the information is still one-way because the organisation often ignores the concerns or needs of the publics. Very little research is conducted except for the purpose of testing the clarity of the information sent out to the publics. This model is aimed at persuasion and more importantly, emphasis is based on honest approach in communicating the philosophy, decisions or stance of the organisation to the various stakeholders (Edwards 2009; Grunig & Hunt 1984; Grunig 2011).

2.9.3 The two-way asymmetrical model

This model is also described as scientific persuasion because practitioners often employ social research methods to increase the persuasiveness of messages. Instruments such as surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions are employed to ascertain information relating to the organisation from the stakeholders which enables the organisation to design public relations programmes that would gain the support of key stakeholders. Most often, the organisation is always looking for an opportunity to persuade the stakeholders to adjust to it rather than the reverse (Edwards 2009; Grunig & Hunt 1984; Grunig 2011).

2.9.4 The two-way symmetrical model

This model is described as the ideal model for contemporary PR practice because of its attributes. Practitioners employing this model believe in democracy because research is conducted using two-way communication rather than one-way persuasion to understand the needs of the stakeholders and build a mutually beneficial relationship between the organisation and its stakeholders. Scholars argue that this model is the most ethical among the rest because of the fact that an opportunity is always created for the organisation to interact with its stakeholders and open up opportunities for conflict resolution mechanisms to be enforced.

The model also dwells on bargaining, negotiations, and strategies for conflict resolutions which is the tenet of contemporary PR practice. However, with the passage of time, Dozier, Grunig, JE and Grunig, LA (1995) presented two (2) more models that came from extensive research on excellence in PR and Communications Management Projects. Out of 321 organisations studied, it was revealed that PR practitioners exhibited the most effective and excellent PR practices because they used a new model called *Symmetry* which was mainly two-way where organisations and their publics would seek to persuade each other as much as possible.

Following the above, Dozier, Grunig, JE and Grunig, LA (1995) developed the *Cultural Interpreter* and *Personal Influence* models which are briefly discussed below:

2.9.5 Cultural interpreter model

This type of model depicts the practice of PR in organisations that engage in commercial activities with other countries where there is a need for the practitioners to understand the language, culture, customs and political systems of the host country. There is no doubt that globalisation has played a significant role in shaping the field of PR through international relations. In this vein, it is imperative for PR practitioners to understand the culture that pertains to various organisations at the international level in order to effectively carry out their mandates. It is important to note that locally, organisational cultures may differ from organisation to organisation. Therefore, the need for PR practitioners to incorporate these diverse cultures cannot be overstated. This socio-cultural dimension brings to the fore the need for PR practitioners to understand the cultural implications in their dealings with other countries or society as a whole (Edwards 2009; Grunig & Hunt 1984; Grunig 2011; Kiambi & Nadler 2012; Ming-Yi & Baah-Boakye 2009; Yudarwati 2008).

2.9.6 Personal influence model

This model also depicts the practice of PR in which practitioners try to establish personal relationships with key individuals or publics. Through such contacts, they are able to nurture and sustain a mutually beneficial relationship. As PR practitioners, they act as the "eyes and ears" of the organisation, so relationship-building is paramount. Therefore, they should have the ability to negotiate, lobby and influence management as well as stakeholders on policies and programmes that the organisation stands to benefit from. These roles become even more important especially when Public Relations practitioners are confronted with crises where there is a need for the organisation to be salvaged (Grunig 1992; Grunig & Hunt 1984; Heath & Coombs 2006).

Arguably, the four models of Public Relations developed by Grunig and Hunt (1984) have contributed to the understanding of PR globally because these models often describe the core concepts in the PR field as well as various management and organisational practices that can engender excellent or effective PR practices.

Moreover, these four models have served as guidance for most PR practitioners in terms of the kind of programmes that they develop and the strategies and tactics that they apply in order to achieve maximum results.

It is worth noting that the press agentry model is a one-way form of communication where the truth is usually not essential to the organisation. This obviously contravenes the ethics of the PR profession. Grunig and Hunt (1984) describe the press-agentry model as the spreading of information that is usually incomplete and most often distorted. The major difference between the press-agentry model and the public information model is the fact that, in the public information model, the information is accurate although it is still one-way and feedback is usually not generated. The PR practitioner or the organisation acts more or less as a journalist-in-residence where information is sent out to the public even though in most cases, the information always tends to favour the organisation rather than the publics.

It is also important to note that the first two models- press-agentry and public information are often described as a one-way form of communication which is not ideal for contemporary PR practice where the emphasis is always on two-way communication for feedback to be generated. Moreover, the organisation or practitioner here does not conduct scientific research to understand the needs of the publics before taking any decision. There could be an attempt by the organisation to promote positive behaviour by disseminating positive information that can project the organisation in a positive light but the main aim is always for the organisation to benefit rather than the reverse.

While the first two models developed by Grunig and Hunt (1984) may be a one-way form of communication, the last two models are usually premised on persuasive communication which is normally based on feedback that emanates from the publics. The two-way form of communication suggests that organisations will always create a congenial atmosphere to constantly interact with their key publics. This helps to identify conflicts and solutions found to them. In other words, there is more democracy and consensus building between the organisation and its publics. What makes it important is that, feedback is often generated through scientific research and the information

forms the bases for policy formulation and the type of communication strategies that the organisation may develop to effectively engage with their publics (Edwards 2009; Grunig 2001). The two-way symmetrical model that most scholars have described as the ideal and effective model is so because the organisation or practitioner relies heavily on scientific research to determine the behaviour of the publics and it is also dialogic in nature. The basis for formulating or implementing a particular policy or programme should always be grounded on the findings of scientific research that has been conducted. Scholars believe that this model is both ethical and strategic because of the fact that it engenders understanding through negotiations and compromises. The two-way symmetric model is also described as more balanced in terms of creating mutual understanding. By so doing, it depicts a PR orientation where the organisation and their numerous stakeholders are able to adjust to each other and find a common ground, especially in a conflict situation. The model assumes what can be described as a give-and-take process where advocacy and collaboration is more pronounced (Grunig 2001; Grunig 1992).

These models present a typical situation where organisations and their publics try to persuade each other as much as possible for mutual benefits. Although most of the time, the organisation would want its publics to go along with what it proposes, there will also be rare instances where the publics on one side will not be in agreement with what the organisation may propose and therefore there can be opposing views. In such a situation, what it means is that both sides must see the need to come to a consensus and agree on the best way to resolve a conflict situation. Although the first four models were developed by Grunig and Hunt in 1984, the models are still relevant in Public Relations practice even in contemporary times because they have provided the foundation for both academics and PR practitioners in the PR field. The ideas espoused in the four models of PR have undoubtedly helped in shaping the PR profession as most practitioners still employ such ideas in their daily roles. For example, some practitioners still use both one-way and two-way forms of communication depending on the situation at hand. In such a case, the discretion here is left to the PR practitioner to decide on which model best helps and should be employed in order to achieve the desired results. The use of news releases for example has been described as a one-way form of communication, but with advancements in

technology, practitioners can do a follow-up by monitoring what is being said in the media or social media through their communication channels to gauge the mood of the publics through their comments, likes, or shares. Based on the information received through the monitoring, the practitioner can then make the necessary amendments as the case may be (Abudulai 2017; Edwards 2009; Grunig 1992; Grunig 2001).

As already indicated in this study, apart from the first models of PR that Grunig and Hunt developed in 1984, press-agentry model, public information model, the two-way asymmetrical model and the two-way symmetrical model, the scholars later developed two more models- the personal influence model and cultural interpreter model. Falconi (2011) argues that the personal influence model is characterised by three schools of thought. Personal influence is based on personal attributes and characteristics of individuals, relationship management is based on relational activities and lastly, the personal influence model of PR is based on cultural values which are manifest in different countries. The understanding here is that, the personal influence mode is hinged on developing personal relationships with the key stakeholders who are supposed to act as contacts especially in situations when the company needs certain favours from such contacts. The personal influence model is also well rooted in the tenets of the relationship management theory which emphasises relationship building and how the practitioners or an organisation will build their personal relationships with individuals within and outside the organisation (Gupta & Bartlett 2007).

It must be noted that the personal influence model was originally proposed by Sriramesh in 1992, but was later developed by Grunig et al in 1995. The rationale was to emphasise the importance of interpersonal or face-to-face communication in PR practice. It can be argued that, when practitioners cultivate personal relationships, it often leads to long-term relationship building between the organisation and its numerous publics. The personal influence model particularly depicts how a relationship-building process is practised by ensuring that the relationship is built on emotions, personal identities, behaviours, cultures and individual characters (Somfai 2009). For example, the female PR practitioners who participated in this study represent various organisations in Ghana. The personal influence model serves as a guide as the practitioners personally initiate, nurture and sustain long-term

relationships with their various publics such as employees and those outside the organisation such as government, media, politicians, and activist groups among others (Grunig et al 1995).

It is important to state that the effectiveness of the relationship-building process by the practitioners largely depends on the position that the PR practitioner holds in the organisation. For instance, in the case of practitioners who are placed in managerial positions, they are most likely going to deal with people in authority as well as top management within the organisation. If on the other hand, the practitioner is placed in a technician role, he or she will have very little influence on the activities of the organisation, and this can limit the practitioner's relationship management processes to probably only those within the organisation.

With regard to the cultural interpreter model, Grunig et al (1995) explain that this model is premised on the fact that organisations sometimes practice PR and operate in other countries outside their home country. Therefore, there is a need to understand the language, culture, customs, traditions and political systems of such countries. For example, the situation will not be the same in countries where democracy is well-rooted as compared to those that are under military regimes. It is therefore important for the PR practitioner to have some knowledge about how things operate in such countries. Multi-national organisations for instance often do business within the international arena and they sometimes hire the services of local practitioners to explain some cultural norms and values to such foreign organisations. Literature confirms that the cultural interpreter model was first conceived by Lyra in 1991 while studying PR in Greece. The model was later developed by Grunig et al in 1995. The foregone assertion here is that the cultural interpreter model is important for effective PR practice, especially in multi-national organisations which have foreign chief executive officers.

Evidence shows that the cultural interpreter and personal influence models have been employed by practitioners extensively in different countries. Sriramesh, Kim and Takasaki (1999) confirm that PR practice has largely been hinged on the personal influence model, cultural interpreter model as well as press-agentry and publicity

models. Similarily, Yudarwati (2008) notes that the personal influence model was widely used to influence relationship management within the Indonesian mining industry. Kiambi and Nadler (2012) also note that the personal influence and cultural interpreter models dominate in PR practice in Kenya while Ming-Yi and Baah-Boakye (2009) assert that the cultural interpreter model is the dominant model being employed by PR practitioners in Ghana, followed by the personal influence model. Other scholars such as Huang (2000), Grunig and Dozier (2009), Chimieleki (2012), Gupta and Barlett (2007) and Sriramesh (2009) all point to the fact that individual relationships are built at the personal levels and that has always had a bearing and influence on how PR is practised globally. Some evidence also suggests that these models have been practised in countries such as the USA and other non-Asian countries (Molleda & Moreno 2008; Sriramesh & Vercic 2009; Tindall & Holthansen 2012). It appears very little research has been conducted on the models on the African continent. Kimbu and Nadler (2012), Ming-Yi and Baah-Boakye (2009) and Holtzhansen, Petersen and Tindall (2003) appear to be the only known studies to have been conducted on these models in Africa. Holtzhausen et al (2003) confirm that South African practitioners have developed their own models based on the social, economic and political realities of their country, and therefore do not religiously follow the symmetric or asymmetric models, the cultural interpreter or the personal influence models. The strategist role of the PR practitioner developed and codified for PR practice could be a classic example of how South Africa appears to have advanced in PR practice more than any other African country. (Anani-Bossman 2018; Blankson 2009; Holtzhausen et al 2003)

2.10 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

The chapter discussed the theories of the study. The researcher reviewed literature extensively and an in-depth analysis of what scholars have discussed about the theories employed in the study. It must be noted that not much literature is available that the chapter discussed the major theories that underpinned the study. The gender, feminist, excellence and relationship management theories were adequately discussed and linked to the study. The researcher believes these four theories were critical to the study if the main goal of the study was to be achieved.

The next chapter examines the historical development and practice of PR and how it has shaped contemporary PR practice. The chapter presents a brief overview of the origins of PR from the American practice to a global one. The chapter also discusses the European and African perspectives of Public Relations practice. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the development of PR practice on the African continent and in Ghana as well.

CHAPTER THREE

DEVELOPMENT AND PRACTICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this research was to investigate gender issues among female Public Relations (PR) practitioners in Ghana. The research sought to determine the position of female PR practitioners in Ghana, the roles they play and the communication strategies that the practitioners employ to engage with their numerous stakeholders. The findings of the study led to the development of a proposed framework that provided guidelines for PR practice among female practitioners in Ghana. In order to develop an effective framework with practical guidelines to help female PR practitioners in Ghana, it was necessary to trace and understand the history and how modern PR developed globally. Details of the framework are captured in chapter seven. The gender, feminist, excellence and relationship management theories were employed in the study to establish the nuances of PR practice with a linkage to the theories. While the previous chapter discussed the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study, this chapter attempts to trace the development and practice of modern Public Relations and how the profession has evolved from an American practice into a global one. The discussion of the history of PR and how it has evolved is partitioned in three (3) phases. The first phase focuses on the historical development of PR from the American perspective where the profession is believed to have originated. The second phase of the discussion on the history of PR is focused on the development and practice of the profession from the European perspective. The third and final phase of the discussion on PR history presents a brief history of how PR has developed in Africa and Ghana for that matter. The section also highlights PR practices in Africa. This is essential for acquiring knowledge about the growth of the profession and the management of that knowledge. In other words, "a history of public relations as a social institution contributes to the broader effort of theory building in the social sciences" (Vos 2011:120). The section, therefore, presents a general overview of public relations histories generally, in North America, identifying the United States of America (USA) as the birthplace of modern PR, Western Europe, the transition

countries of the former Communist Central and Eastern Europe, as well as Nordic countries and Africa.

Moreover, the section also includes a review of the evolution of public relations in specific countries within regional blocs, indicating how ideological, cultural, and political factors, and in some cases, colonialism, have impacted the development and practice of the PR field. This helps to bring about a better understanding of why and how public relations and related professions like corporate communications and communication management are defined and practised in different ways. However, it is of the essence, and for the purposes of this discussion, to define public relations and what qualifies it as such. The chapter is concluded with a brief highlight on feminism in PR.

3.2 BRIEF ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

With an increasing number of hitherto underdeveloped countries now counted among the fastest-growing market economies in the world, the requirements for public relations and communication management are increasing in terms of both demand and professionalism. Public relations has attained a level of internationalisation that makes it imperative that practitioners and academics keep pace with demand and achieve 'international best practice' (Macnamara et al 2018). Public relations development, practice and research cannot be discussed without a worldview of its conceptualisation in different countries, and how culture, social, political, economic and natural environments influence the profession.

As already indicated in the introduction of this chapter, this section of the thesis attempts to trace the histories of the origin of PR and the development of theories and models to guide its practice with regard to international standardisation and professionalisation.

Coombs and Holladay (2010) for instance, define public relations as "the management of mutually influential relationships within a web of constituency relationships". In highlighting the advocacy function of public relations, Coombs and Holladay (2010) observe that:

The idea of management implies a strategic approach that unfolds over time. Public relations is used purposefully to shape relationships; it is not just the occasional use of tactics. Practitioners establish objectives they hope to achieve and manage their resources in pursuit of those objectives. To qualify as public relations, actions must involve sustained strategic attempts to influence relationships with constituents (Coombs & Holladay 2011:5).

The above quotation echoes what many scholars in PR have already said to the effect that PR should be treated as a management function by organisations. Scholars such as Cutlip, Center and Broom (2009) and Grunig (1992) all maintain that Public Relations has a strategic role to play in every organisation and therefore should be placed closer to management. Moreover, relationship building is key in PR practice as the practitioner is expected to play multiple roles as a liaison, mediator and interpreter between the management of an organisation and its stakeholders. To this end, the objective of an organisation could only be achieved if there is much co-operation between the organisation and its stakeholders who are either within or outside. There is therefore the need for the organisation to always maintain a cordial and long-lasting relationship with its constituents if organisational goals are to be met.

 Public Relations is also defined as:

The management function that seeks to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation, commercial or non-commercial, and the audiences or "publics" on which the successes of these entities depend. These publics may include any of several possible constituencies: customers, investors, employees, suppliers, legislators, competitors, government officials and other "influentials" (Bates 2002:45).

The above definition as clearly espoused by Bates (2002) appears to be similar to what Cutlip, Center and Broom (2009) presented. Both definitions emphasise the fact PR is supposed to be a management function and that it seeks to maintain mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and its publics. The tipping point here

is that both the organisation and the publics must stand to benefit in whatever relationship that exists between both sides. Whiles Bate's (2002) definition makes reference to commercial or non-commercial organisations, Cutlip, Center and Broom's (2009) definition make a general reference to organisations without being specific. Again, both the definitions of Bates (2002) and Cutlip, Center and Broom (2009) point to the fact that the success of an organisation as discussed here largely depends on the publics such as customers, investors, employees, and government officials among others.

Although there is a plethora of definitions by different scholars in the field, all of which cannot be presented in this section, some of them have been provided in detail in chapter one of the introduction of this thesis. Cutlip, Center and Broom (2006) for instance also define public relations as "the management function that identifies, establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the various publics on whom its success or failure depends". The problem of establishing the exact date of arrival of public relations makes it difficult in presenting an encompassing single definition and history of the field. Olasky (1984) observes that different definitions can lead to different historical narratives, and as Vos (2011) points out, the definitional difficulty has led to differences among historians in identifying the historical birth of public relations as a social institution.

The next subsection discusses a brief origin of Public Relations practice and the birth of public relations, the publicity era, the information era, the advocacy model and the relationship era. This is an attempt at providing a chronological evolution of public relations as a profession and an academic discipline.

Several controversies exist as far as the origins of PR practice are concerned. Many scholars believe that PR practice originated in the United States of America (USA) and has trickled down to other countries to become a global one. Butterick (2011) for instance points to the lack of a single and well-documented history of PRs development globally which has added to the seeming confusion on the discussion of the origins of PR practice globally. Most of these histories of PR and how it originated appear to be different and unrelated (Butterick 2011). Butterick (2011) argues further that most of

the research on the history and the development of PR have been carried out in the USA where the PR profession is widely believed to have originated. Butterick (2011) believes it is worrying it is obvious from the classification of the history of PR from Cutlip, Center and Broom (2009) that the PR profession has gone through several evolutions to its current state which is now known as contemporary PR practice where the emphasis is on two-way communication and relationship management. Lubbe (in Ferreira 2003) notes that the history of PR can be viewed from two perspectives-systems and structural. Lubbe explains the system perspective of PR history as one that focuses on the socio-economic development of a society while the structural perspective sees the history of PR from the era of professionalism which includes the periods within which PR professional bodies were formed, codes of conduct developed and accreditation processes of PR practices were also completed. Thus, the history of PR can be categorised and viewed from two main perspectives: the system approach which focuses on the antecedent to PR development and the structural approach which also focuses on the practice of PR in contemporary times.

Lattimore et al (2004:26) also note that PR practice began with public speakers (rhetoricians), press agents and other promoters who mainly provided communication services with basic functions such as spokespersons for clients and businesses, writing speeches, training clients in professional persuasive communication skills and also answering challenging questions. Many other scholars have attempted to trace the history of modern PR to the ancient empires of Persia, Egypt, Greece, Rome and India (Cameron & Reber 2015; Edwards 2009; Heath 2013; Sriramesh & Vercic 2009; Wilcox 2006). Other scholars trace the history of PR to the concept of propaganda. Heath (2013) for instance notes that powerful and influential institutions such as governments, monarchs, and religious institutions, particularly the Catholic Church used communication and information dissemination as a means of generating publicity and support for their institutions to attract and keep more faithful ones (Cutlip et al 2000; Grunig & Hunt 1984). Rhetoricians such as Plato and Leontinium are reported to have used persuasive skills and their efforts to influence public opinion. These rhetoricians believed that in using persuasive communication, one main reason was to establish the truth or otherwise of an argument or a claim. Public opinion was very important at that time and it was one of the determining factors on issues, whether

large or small. Moreover, history also has it that many scholars and rulers of ancient civilisation including Sumeria, Babylonia, Assyria and Persia all depended on poems and other publications to promote their achievements on the battlefield as well as the political space (Bates 2002; Wilcox, Cameron & Reber 2015). These scholars further indicate that many people employed specific strategies such as speeches, interpersonal communication, literature, art, stage events and publicity among others to influence public opinion and for the public to accept what was being communicated by those in authority such as government and heads of religious bodies at that time.

Grunig and Hunt (1984) further provide an elaboration of the early history of PR. They indicate that the early apostles of the New Testaments era, for instance, used some of these communication techniques as a form of "Christian messianic communication", and managed to persuade many followers, influenced public opinion to their side ad generally impacted their communities greatly. This assertion is further corroborated by Smith (2014). Smith (2014) indicates that the use of persuasive techniques by different religious leaders especially those that mattered in the Old and New Testament era engendered much public influence and opinion.

From the brief description of the antecedent to what can be described as modern PR history, it is clear that the PR profession has evolved over several decades and the concept of PR is not really something that can be seen as new. However, over the years, a lot seems to have changed especially in contemporary times. Many organisations have now seen the need to move away from the ancient way of PR practice to contemporary practice where emphasise is now being placed on two-way communication instead of one-way communication or the use of half-truths or propaganda. Modern PR practice now emphasises consensus building which can be described as the best for excellent or effective PR practice. As Lee (2009:8) puts it "the practice of using communication to influence the public is hundreds of years old, with its roots in ancient civilisation". This brief presentation on the history of PR further shows that the antecedent of PR is well rooted in history and ancient civilisation. What remains a challenge is the fact that different stories seem to be told by different scholars as to the precise history of how PR as a profession has developed.

Nonetheless, the documented literature on PR history so far has undoubtedly opened it up for discussion and also serves as a guide to scholars and practitioners alike in contemporary PR practice times.

3.2.1 The birth of public relations

It is generally known that public relations had its beginnings in the United States of America. Some historians of public relations identify it as starting in two separate phases: the publicity and press agentry phases of the circuses that provided popular entertainment; and the railroads, oil companies and public utility phase of the 19th Century (Watson 2012). However, others such as Canfield (1968) have made distinctions between a publicity phase, an explanatory phase, and mutual satisfaction phase in the evolution of public relations. These were slightly modified and presented in 1984 as the four models of public relations by James Grunig and Todd Hunt, corresponding to four periods in the modern development of public relations. These models and eras are:

Publicity (or Press-Agentry model, in Grunig and Hunt's terms) era, Information (Public Information model) era, Advocacy (Asymmetrical model) era and Relationship (Symmetrical model) era (Grunig & Hunt 1984).

Amaechi (2011) has provided variants of these models as traditions in the evolution of public relations. They are namely: the rhetorician and press agent tradition, the journalistic and publicity tradition, the persuasive communication campaign tradition and the relationship-building and two-way communication tradition. It is argued that press agentry or publicity-seeking activities do not constitute public relations as a social institution. Scholars such as Gower (2008) and Russel and Bishop (2009) make this claim in the light of questioning the validity of positing publicity-seeking as an evolutionary ancestor of public relations. They believe that the duties of public relations practitioners are more expansive than just creating publicity as public relations-like activities are perceived to be. These duties include mediating between the public and clients. Others have noted that public relations counsel, a term attributed to Edward Louis Bernays (1891-1995), which captures the mediator role as noted by Tye (1998)

was not part of the vernacular until the 1920s. Whatever others thought about the concept of public relations not being new, the coining of the term according to Bloch (1953) "signifies conscious awareness" in the act of naming an activity, and raising the fledgling field to a new level of significance. Within the publicity tradition, practitioners were "primarily concerned with creating awareness and building recognition for the individual or organisation employing public relations" (Turney 2012:1). Publicity was tied to advertising and promotion, ensuring the message got to as wide an audience as possible.

According to Cutlip (1994) and Wright (2011), the term 'public relations' was first used in the USA in the late 19th century, as it applied to publicity and client appeasement activities in the oil and steel industries. In his exploration of the roots of American public relations, Cutlip (1995), casts America's founding fathers as practitioners of PR with wide-ranging public relations bureaus and services. Though there are contested claims about the first use of the term, it has come to be accepted that "public relations was first applied around the turn of the 20th century" (Watson 2012:43). Granted that public relations is a 20th century development in terms of professionalism, it is argued that public relations techniques used in persuading people to accept the authority of governments have been used throughout time (Matheny 2012; Brown 2003) and "in a sense, the profession is as old as human communication itself (Wilcox, Cameron & Reber 2015:26).

Professional public relations in the USA is thought to have started in the late 1800s and early 1900s when "public relations techniques were used to encourage settlement in the American West frontier, and in the oil and railway companies" (Cabot 2012:6). Whichever form or shape public relations appeared in, it was shaped by the larger economic, political and social forces of the time. Cutlip (1995) provides three historical epochs, (17th through 19th centuries), as marking the beginning of public relations, putting uncertainties as to the field's real birth. It is only prudent for purposes of chronological clarity, and within the scope of this study, to begin from early 19th Century public relations activities as antecedents to modern public relations.

While acknowledging the efforts of many scholars in tracing the history of PR, it is important to state that studies that specifically focus on the role of female PR practitioners and scholars in the historical development of Public Relations globally appear to be rare. Topic et al (2019) point out that it was during the 1980s that research on women's involvement in the PR profession began. Most of these earlier studies emanated from American scholars who started researching the position of women in the US Public Relations industry. Topic et al (2019) explain further that it was during that period that several studies on women in the PR profession reported work discrimination against women which resulted in other challenges such as the glass ceiling, pay gap, bias against women and educational differences. There were other challenges such as covert discrimination in promotions and stereotypes against women. The same period also led to the feminisation of the PR industry and its negative consequences. The 1980s also recorded remarkable events where women were alleged to be locked up in so-called pink ghettos (Cline et al 1986) and did not really have much power to influence decisions in the various organisations that they worked for (Broom 1982; Dozier 1988; Toth 1988; Miller 1988; Singh & Smyth 1983; VanSlyke 1983). Moreover, most women in the PR profession found themselves predominantly in technician, rather than managerial positions (Broom 1982). From 1985, more women began to get attracted which increased the field's feminisation but yet most female PR practitioners were still placed in technician roles and were paid substantially lower as compared to their male counterparts (Pratt 1986; Scrimger 1985).

Other scholars have attempted to chronicle some of the contributions of some pioneer female PR practitioners and scholars that span several decades. Henry's (1988) study for instance points out that several female PR practitioners and scholars such as Doris Fleischman, Susan Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Matilda Joslyn Gage and Harriet Beecher Stowe among other women made enormous contributions to the PR profession through research, teaching, the establishment of private PR firms as well as practising the PR profession all contributed to shaping the PR profession as it is seen today (Creedon 2001; Miller 1997). Gower (2000) also adds that between 1945 and 1995, several women became active in the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). This marked a period where several PR practitioners fought in liberation

movements and also established many PR firms whose efforts have contributed to the PR profession greatly.

3.2.2 Publicity era

In the 1820s, Amos Kendall, a Kentucky newspaper editor was employed by President Andrew Jackson to serve as the first-ever presidential press secretary and congressional liaison even though Kendal did not hold the exact title as it is used today (Smith 2012). He served as candidate Jackson's pollster; and when Jackson became president, he continued to serve as a counsellor, ghost-writer, and publicist. According to Smith, President Jackson entrusted the former newspaper editor with duties to convey his ideas and messages to congress and to the American people through the newspapers.

Phineas T. Barnum, an accomplished showman of circuses during the middle and late 1800s, originated and employed many methods for public attention-getting. He is reputed to have compromised the truth to leverage his publicity and press agentry techniques to create wealth for himself. His lack of honesty led to a legacy of mistrust of publicity efforts that exists sometimes as in the work of spin-doctors. Barnum is well remembered for announcing that he would put up an exhibition featuring a 161-year-old woman in his museum. Whether this claim was true or not, Barnum achieved his aim of wide publicity. His press agentry was used to promote circuses, entertainment, and sports. The darker aspect of it as already noted was his use of unscrupulous tactics to gain publicity (Matheny 2012).

Within the Grunig and Hunt (1984) model, the 1800s public relations activities are assigned to the publicity phase of the field's histories narrative. During this era, social activism, including the abolitionist movement against slavery, the temperance movement such as the ban on liquor sales and use, and the regulation of businesses, was vigorously pursued. The focus then was on dissemination and attention-getting. Communication was one-way in nature with little or no research attached to it. The usage of the model was and still is largely entertainment, sports and marketing. In 1896 Bryan-McKinley in his presidential campaign mounted the first all-out effort of public

opinion using posters, pamphlets and news releases. It also "used public meetings and speeches at whistle-stop train visits throughout the country" (Turney 2012:5).

3.2.3 Information era

The early 1900s marked the Information (Public information model) era. It was characterised by the beginnings of what has been argued as true public relations practice with the rise into prominence of the figure generally credited with, and known as the father of modern public relations, Ivy Ledbetter Lee (1877-1934). In this phase, many agencies and departments whose purpose was to provide the public with accurate, timely, honest, and favourable information about an organisation or client were founded. Lee's 1905 *Declaration of Principles,* which called for honest communication with the public on the organisation's clients' actions is among his greatest contribution to the PR field. Within the ambit of Lee's *Principles* "the public was no longer to be ignored, in the traditional manner of business, nor fooled, in the continuing manner of the press agent" (Goldman 1948:21). By 1915, the term had acquired the true character and status of public relations as a profession. Together with Bernays, the two pioneers set professional standards for the new field.

Lee was the first public relations counsellor and was hired by presidents of the nation's oil and railways companies, among them, famous industrialist, John Dolan Rockefeller, to help build their corporate image. Lee successfully managed a serious strike action against Rockefeller's fuel and iron plant and changed the business tycoon's image into one of a man who was concerned about the livelihood of his workers (Bates 2006). As Hiebert (1966) notes, Lee's theory of frankness and truth in relating to clients was "initially disgusting to old-timers in these business organisations, but he proved the point of his principles with good results." Lee defined public relations as the "actual relationship of the company to the people and that relationship involves more than talk. The company must act by performing good deeds" (Litwin 2000:4).

The pioneers of American public relations set up consultancies and agencies to handle the numerous problems of private business companies and government with their varied publics. In 1900, George V. S. Michaelis founded the first public relations agency

in Boston known simply as the Publicity Bureau. He gathered factual information about his clients for distribution to newspapers. According to Cutlip (1994) cited in Wright (2011), by 1906, Michaelis' major clients comprised the nation's railroads whose presidents relied on his services. The Publicity Bureau was subsequently followed by other pioneers in the field, notably: the University of Pennsylvania publicity bureau (1904); YMCA publicity bureau (1905); Penn Railroad and Ivy Lee, and Standard Oil publicist (1906); Marine Corps publicity bureau (1907); Ford employee newsletter; American Red Cross publicity program; and AT&T public relations department (1908). Yet others included Colorado Fuel and Iron Ivy Lee (1914); Creel Committee on Public Information (1917); National Lutheran Council press office (1918); Knights of Columbus press office (1919); and Sears and Roebuck public relations (1921).

Some specialised public relations firms worth mentioning included Edward Bernays, Carl Byoir, Leona Baxter and Clem Whitaker (political public relations), and Henry Rogers (entertainment public relations). Many businesses had sprung up requiring such services to reach out to their various publics. The focus of the information model was accurate dissemination of information to an organisation's publics different from Barnum's publicity methods. The nature of communication was one-way asymmetry with some reliability in research that was also easily understood. The model was applied largely by the government, NGOs and business organisations.

3.2.4 Advocacy model

The middle to the latter part of the 20th Century saw the third phase of public relations, the Advocacy model, when much of public relations activity, both research and practice, was built on the model with organisations trying to modify attitudes and influence the behaviours of their publics. The nature of communication was two-way with deep communication research initiatives on attitude and opinion spurred by interest in war-time propaganda, brainwashing and social manipulation. The American society had, by this period in its development, grown too complex for the average citizen's understanding of issues. For a solution, Walter Lipmann (1922) thought "government should be influenced and run by experts who could interpret the public's will in the light of national needs and concerns" cited in (Amaechi 2011:31). His

interpretation prompted professional persuaders like Edward Louis Bernays known as the leading proponent of modern public relations, to emphasise that the function of public relations was to change images and influence public perception of issues.

By the thrust of his philosophy clearly presented in his *Crystalizing Public Opinion*, "Bernays understood that publics could be persuaded if the message supported their values and interests. He saw public relations as being more or less synonymous with propaganda, which he defined as the conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organised habits and opinions of the masses" (Ewan 1998:18). He expanded what had been a narrow concept of press agentry, or working to influence government policy, into a far more ambitious and controversial realm of seeking to influence and change public opinion and behaviour.

3.3 GROWTH OF PR AFTER WORLD WAR I (WWI)

After the First World War (WWI), researchers continued to explore interests in persuasive communication. Public opinion was used in assessing public acceptance of issues or activist agenda. Academic programmes in public relations started in earnest. Notable landmarks of the advocacy era in respect of public relations research include Walter Lippmann's Public Opinion (1922). In 1923, Bernays started teaching the first college course in public relations at New York University (Wilcox, Cameron & Reber 2015); in 1939, Rex Harlow, a pioneer in the field became the first full-time college professor (lecturer) of public relations in Stanford University and many others. The stage was thus set for advancements in public relations research, development of theories, standardisation and professionalisation. By professionalisation, it meant certain requirements such as specialised theoretical knowledge, university education, professional association, codes of ethical conduct and ability to uphold those codes (Cheney & Ashcraft 2007).

The advocacy model was used in competitive business organisations, causes and movements while social reform continued to be a key impetus for public relations activity. Many techniques were successfully employed in addressing issues such as child labour, prostitution, regulation of big business, food safety and other early

consumer issues. The USA government's use of public relations techniques was reflected in the work of the Committee on Public Information headed by George Creel during WWI, which became known as the Creel Committee. Its efforts profoundly influenced the development of public relations by demonstrating the success of the field's full-blown techniques and creating awareness in Americans of the power of mediated information in changing attitudes and behaviours (Schmitz 2012).

The Creel Committee was replaced during World War II (WWII) by the Office of War Information, the precursor to the United States Information Agency (USIA), which later became the Office of International Information Programs (OIIP) of the State Department (Amaechi 2011). Meanwhile, the Voice of America (VOA) was established to carry out USA's public information at home and abroad. This is how evolved public relations techniques at the time were used in performing federal government services to influence the public for positive change.

There is quite a popular view that USA public relations history (corporate public relations) is corporate-centric as it was, at its birth in the 1900s, a reaction to activists in the Progressive Era (the muckrakers) attempting to create social reform (Stoker and Rawlins 2005). These activists used publicity to push reforms in organisations and government businesses. As Conley (2006) cited in Coombs and Holladay (2011) notes, "the 1970s saw intense activism surrounding environmental causes, civil rights, and the war in Vietnam. USA's public relations had another growth spurt in reaction to the efforts to shape USA's environmental policies". Today, most public relations agencies the world over provide advocacy services for their clients, particularly those with products or services in competitive environments. The advocacy model is prevalent in political public relations, as well as in cause-related promotions of many types, from promoting citizen support for military campaigns to generating public support for health, safety, welfare, and other public issues.

3.3.1   Relationship era (late 1900s and beyond)

Smith (2013) locates this era from the 1950s onwards to the 21st Century. It saw a new approach to public relations with a focus on mutual understanding, conflict resolution;

and the search for mutual benefits for both organisations and their publics. The nature of communication is a two-way symmetry as professional practitioners engage in a constant two-way conversation with the media in order to reach out to their various publics. Public relations research became more intense and more of a management and leadership function in organisations rather than the application of communication techniques for publicity as in the press agentry era. Advancements in communications technologies such as the Internet facilitated direct communication between organisations and their publics. Today, there are many media outlets including social media networking systems and platforms that are creating new opportunities more than ever for public relations practitioners. The economic boom of the post-World War II period led to the springing up of many businesses and public relations firms to address issues between them and their different publics as well as promote consumer interests. In the 1930s and 1940s, several organisations were founded to represent the interests of public relations practitioners. As the profession matured, new and more efficient means of practising it was devised. In 1948, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) was formed. The society wrote its code of ethics to guide the professional conduct of members and to regulate the general professional practice. The codes of ethics were adopted in other parts of the world, particularly in the United Kingdom (UK) and Germany (Smith 2012).

Having discussed the origins and history of PR, the next subsection will shed some light on public relations practice in Europe, PR education, research and professionalism, the evolution of public relations, and public relations in former communist central and Eastern Europe.

3.4 PUBLIC RELATIONS IN EUROPE

As public relations gathered momentum in the late 19th Century in the USA, parallel activities were taking place in Europe with the setting up in Germany of a news bureau in 1893 by the industrial giant, Krupp (Watson 2012:43). Evidently, public relations developed more or less simultaneously on either end of the Atlantic. Watson (2013) asserts that "within the first 30 years of the 20th Century, there were organised businesses and governmental communication activities and operational units in

Germany. In the UK, the first British public relations agency, Editorial Services, was set up in London by its founder, Basil Clarke in 1924, and the first public relations officer was appointed in 1925. However, public relations and corporate communications in both countries did not take off until after the Second World War. Studies on public relations in the UK are relatively recent. Gregory (2010) asserts that: "The UK Institute of Public Relations (IPR)) which is the largest public relations and communication management professional body in Europe, received a Royal Charter from the Queen in 2005" (p. 90) with powers to commission studies to determine the profession's importance to the UK economy.

Finland was the first country in Europe to form an association of public relations professionals, (Tiedotusmiehet) – Finnish Public Relations Association in 1947 (Melgin 2014 cited in Taiminen & Lievonen 2014). Public relations in the country grew in importance in both the private and public sectors between the 1950s and 1970s as "internal communications activities within organisations were developed and laws were established for public sector communications activities" (von Herzen, Melgin, & Åberg 2012 as cited in Taiminen & Lievonen 2014:3). USA support toward the postWorld War II reconstruction effort in Europe through the Marshall Plan expanded, in no small measure, the frontiers of public relations beyond the country of its birth. However, it must be emphasised that the two sides on both ends of the Atlantic mutually influenced the field in different ways even if practitioners in Europe generally, and in the UK particularly, looked up to the USA for guidance.

This fact notwithstanding, public relations in the USA and Europe developed independently of each other with some evidence that "there is a European or even a German tradition, of practical and theoretical public relations (Nessmann 1995:152). The works of Wuttke (1866), Kellen (1908) and Max Weber (1910) are proof that public relations had been a subject of serious scholarly debate and discussion in Germany and Austria in a much earlier epoch (Kunczik 1995). German Carl Hundhausen is believed to be the first to use the term PR in Europe in 1937 when he wrote an article on "Public Relations" with its present-day meaning (Flieger & Ronneberger 1993). Hundhausen, Oecle, Ronnenberger, Habermas and Freud are other notable Germans and Austrians who influenced public relations research in Europe in the 20th Century;

Freud wrote on *"mass psychology"* (Surprenant 2003), Habermas' *Legitimation Crisis (1975)* and *Theory of Communicative Competence (1970)* (Pearson 1990). Culture appears to have equally influenced the way public relations practice in Europe should go. Historical and cultural links between the UK and USA, account for the marked similarities in how the profession is practised in the two areas. In the rest of Europe, it is practised within the context of their specific cultures, relative to prevailing public opinion, laws, codes of ethics and professional conduct.

3.5 PR EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONALISATION

A lot of work went into public relations theorizing and research during the 20th Century, when professional practice assumed a wider dimension as it spread across Europe and the Nordic countries. National associations began to form from 1948 onwards alongside the formation of the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) in 1955. The "concept of international public relations was fostered primarily by Europeans seeking a platform for international understanding and promotion of democracy through public relations strategies and practices." (Smith 2012). The IPRA introduced the Code of Athens (1955), the first code of professional practice and ethics for adoption by all member states from 1960 onwards.

The 20th and 21st centuries saw the dawn of the information and communication services era. While training in the industry was initially through the professional association, academic programmes with well-structured curricula to train professional public relations practitioners started in the 1940s through the 1960s in the USA and much later in Europe. In 1947, Boston University offered the first Master's programme in public relations while many more universities started offering undergraduate and graduate programmes in public relations from the 1960s onwards. It was not until the 1980s through the 1990s that public relations education in universities took firm roots in the UK (Bates 2002). Other European countries were in parallel or followed later. For instance, in Finland, the decade of the 1980s is considered to be the maturation of public relations, when universities started recognising and running study programmes in this field (Lehtonen 2004). Interest in establishing some form of professional associations was evident in countries like the UK, 1948; France, 19491955; Italy, 1952-

1954; Germany, 1958; and Spain, 1961-1965. These European associations belong to the 'Confédéeration Européene des Relations Publiques' (CERP). The first public relations consultancy in Sweden, Svenska PR-byrån (Swedish Public Relations Association), was founded in 1956, but most agencies were founded in 1994 or later (Falkheimer & Heide 2014:125).

According to Falkheimer and Heide (2014), the concept of public relations has not been widely used in Sweden and this is for ideological reasons. The term in the Swedish context as in several other countries is associated with pseudo-events, propaganda techniques and manipulation. The professionalisation of public relations in Sweden occurred during World War II and substantial growth in the sector was seen during the 1960s (Larson 2005 cited in Falkheimer & Heide 2014). The public relations associations of Europe played a crucial role in the training of professionals before university programmes in the field were started. Swedish universities started offering courses in public relations in the early 1970s, but Falkheimer and Heide (2014) note that they were "very national, fragmented, and media-centric" (p. 126).

Grunig and Hunt's models have stimulated research on PR everywhere in the world. In Europe, research has been on an international basis, involving co-operation between many countries, especially the USA, characterised by mutual influences that are reflected in joint publications and conferences (Armbrecht & Zabel 1994; Armbrecht et al 1993 as cited in Nessmann 2000). Most conference papers often "examine specific questions about the theoretical basis of public relations and issues about legitimacy and social responsibility. The works of Habermas form a significant part of the analytical framework adopted in most of the papers, the most featured aspect being his Theory of Communicative Action" (MacManus 1993: 34). Grunig and Hunt's (1984) two-way symmetrical model equally enjoy a lively debate among public relations researchers in Europe. It is treated in both theoretical and empirical studies.

European researchers identified four models of PR. Similarities can be drawn between them and those identified by Grunig and Hunt (1984). From an European perspective, a fifth model, the reflective model for PR, was conceptualised and proposed (Van Ruler & Verčič 2003:2-12). The two scholars suggested that the models should be viewed

as strategies of communication behaviour that can be used in providing solutions to problems. With regards to the reflective model, Van Ruler and Verčič (2003) argued that:

> *A feasible concept of PR needs more indicators than relationships to reflect the plural nature of its service to organisations and society. This model focuses on the legitimation and the creation of a social trust for the organisation. Through reciprocal reflection (a degree of closeness is needed for the system to open) organisations determine their identity, role and responsibility in society" (Van Heerden 2004:66).*

The above quote by Van Heerden (2004) reinforces the fact that organisations do not operate in a vacuum. Organisations are sited within a particular community and there is the need for the organisation to initiate, nurture and sustain relationships in order to create social trust as the model emphasises. Proponents of public relations theory "demand that PR should take place as a symmetrical or dialogical discourse between equal partners" (Nessmann 1995:157). PR theory applies differently according to different environments. Thus, in the USA, Grunig and Hunt referred to it as symmetrical public relations. Burkart and Probst (1991) cited in Nessmann, (1995) analysed the problem theoretically and empirically. In practice, the asymmetrical model predominates in terms of usage by 85%, while public relations research focuses on the two-way symmetrical model, which is considered to be an ambitious one, especially in theoretical and ethical terms. Seen in another way, the model is viewed as utopian, illusory and useless in practice. Rhee (2004) observes that the most fervent discussions on public relations theory have been related to an alleged oversimplification of Grunig and Hunt's (1984) four models and the practicality of the two-way symmetrical model. Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier (2002) cited in Rhee (2004:25) have called for a reconstruction of the public relations models.

The three theorists have developed:

> " *a theoretical framework for the models emphasizing four dimensions: 1) direction of communication—direction could be one-way or two-way; 2)*

purpose of communication—purpose could be symmetrical or asymmetrical; 3) ethical versus unethical communication—according to Grunig, JE and Grunig, LA *(1996), ethical theories based on teleological/utilitarian theories and deontological theories underlie the debate on ethics in public relations; 4) mediated communication—public relations is acknowledged widely as a practice of "mediated" communication, which can be defined as communication behaviour via mass media (Huang 1997)—or interpersonal communication—practitioners try to establish lasting personal relationships with key individuals in media, government, or political or activist groups" (Rhee 2004:25).*

The above quote corroborates the views of most scholars in PR as far as theories and models that have been applied in the PR field are concerned. While some organisations may use one-way communication to engage with their constituents, others see the need to use two-way communication which has been described as the best and ideal for modern PR practice. Relationship building is key in all aspects of life and so with organisations as well. Most organisations deal with different publics including the media, government, regulators, customers, and political or activist groups among others. If organisational goals are to be achieved, there should be the need to establish good relations with these categories of publics. This, therefore, calls for the application of appropriate models and theories to explain the conduct of both the organisation and its constituents.

3.6 EVOLUTION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS: CONCEPTUAL TRADITIONS

Below is a summary of the conceptual traditions of public relations as provided by Amaechi (2011).

1920s: Systematic understanding of the importance and nature of public opinion emerged not only in terms of polling and scientific measurement but also as a social organising process around issues.

1950s: Persuasion and social influence principles, especially those set forth with the Yale Communication Program, provided the strategies for establishing, maintaining, and changing opinions and attitudes.

1960s: The diffusion of innovations research tradition served as a conceptual framework for public relations practitioners, health communicators, and Peace Corps officials on how to combine interpersonal and media communication to change behaviours. Most recently, the diffusion framework has been used to illustrate the use of marketing communication elements, including publicity, advertising, sales promotion, and direct selling.

1970s: Situational theory of publics was put forth. While public relations practitioners used a range of audience segmentation techniques, Grunig's situational theory explains which publics will become most active regarding specific issues. Relational communication, with its roots in interpersonal communication, set forth by Rogers and Millar, accounts for conditions prompting and inhibiting relational development.

1960s –1990s: Social psychological foundations underpinning public relations practice flourished alongside specific public relations theories. Many of these theories are used to study cognitive or knowledge change and information processing in public relations and health communication. These include attitude/action consistency, expectancy-value theory, co-orientation, theory of reasoned action, framing theory, social cognitive theory, and game theory.

1970s–2000: Normative influences on the practice of public relations have underpinned important research on practitioner roles, feminization of the field, and other gender-related effects.

1980s–2000: Grunig's four models of public relations based on one-way/two-way and balanced/ unbalanced communication have prompted the greatest amount of recent research and theory development in public relations. Social and organisational structural influences on the growth and nature of public relations work, including research on public relations in different industry categories, structurally determined

cross-cultural impacts on the practice, and encroachment on the public relations functions by related areas, became evident.

1990s–2010: Critical theory approaches emerged. Scholars in this tradition believe that the practice and study of public relations from a business and organisational standpoint mask power differences in society and ignore non-mainstream groups, including social movements and third-party candidates (Amaechi 2011:43).

The above traditions as clearly chronicled by Amaechi (2011) arguably presents a glimpse of how the PR profession has evolved over decades. In the past, PR was associated with so much propaganda and white-washing, but contemporary PR practice demands that the practitioner employs two-way communication by gauging the aggregate views of all the stakeholders who matter as far as the organisation is concerned. Research in PR is critical in determining not only conflict situations but also measuring results against goals that have been set. Application of theory in the PR profession is also critical because it helps to explain and predict certain actions on the part of the organisation as well as its numerous publics. These traditions have obviously provided practitioners and researchers alike with detailed information as to how the PR profession has developed over the years. Persuaded by the history that Amaechi (2011) has provided, it is important for organisations to always create a congenial atmosphere for both parties to build consensus in the development of the profession.

3.7 PR IN FORMER COMMUNIST CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE (1989-2010S)

Most Eastern European countries tend to favour the view that public relations started there in the period 1989-1991 (Watson 2014 cited in Brunner 2015) after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the demise of Communism in the former Soviet Union. But the concept of PR was relatively well-known in Hungary since the 1960s (Brunner 2015). The various challenges that "the pioneers of Hungarian PR had to face in a socialist state suggests the introduction and development of this new Western idea was anything but a smooth process" (ibid). It is only proper for purposes of consistency to stick with 'the

shift from socialist democracy to a pluralistic political system' in the early 1990s as the beginning of public relations in countries of the former Communist Eastern Europe. Another example of pre-1989/1990 public relations in Central and Eastern Europe is evidence that Poland's first published article on the subject dates back to 1973 (Ławniczak, Rydzak & Trębecki 2008) but it did not really thrive until the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It goes without saying that initial attitudes toward this Western 'capitalist tool' in countries like Hungary and Poland were predominantly negative. Books on public relations were banned (Szondi 2014; Szondi 2004). According to Szondi (2014), in spite of attempts by the communist regime to suppress the emergence of public relations in Hungary, the first-ever Hungarian book on the subject, published in 1968, called for the establishment of PR departments in organisations in the country.

Today, almost all the former Communist Central and Eastern European countries have since 1989 transitioned to multiparty democracy and are engaged in public relations practice to varying degrees with considerable Western (USA) influence. Watson et al (2014) term this as "representing a process of imitation of Western values, practices and doctrine". For example, when Hungarian public relations began in the second half of the 1980s, the founders of the country's PR association, the Hungarian Public Relations Association (HUPRA), turned to IPRA (Western Europe) and the PRSA (America) for assistance to establish the profession. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that "... the basic theory of American public relations entered Hungary through the work of Austrian and German scholars, who adopted and further developed these theories" (Szondi 2004: 192). It is important to note that Coombs et al's (1994) study on the professionalisation of public relations shows that the profession is very different depending on the country where it is practised, regardless of foreign influence.

Owing to how the term PR was frowned upon by the repressive communist government in Hungary, the profession had to go through a lot of rebranding over two decades from the late 1960s to the late 1980s. It was after the concepts of marketing and market research had gained ground in the post-1989 era that the term 'public relations' began to re-emerge in Hungary.

PR was now increasingly viewed within the context of marketing. The inclusion in books on marketing in socialist economies of a chapter dedicated to public relations meant that PR had successfully survived two decades of repression and defended its independence from other simultaneously emerging Western disciplines. Eventually, the drastic political and economic changes in 1989 enabled public relations to gain recognition in Hungary (Brunner 2015).

Hungary was set on the path of streamlining and professionalising public relations in the early 1990s. The first Hungarian-owned public relations agency, Public Press, was founded a month before the fall of the Berlin Wall and a year later, HUPRA was established. The association tasked itself with developing standardised PR terminology (Szondi 2014 cited in Brunner 2015). According to Hiebert (1994), the number of PR agencies in Budapest increased rapidly, with international PR giant Burson-Marsteller joining the scene in 1991. Hungarian PR theory and practice are perhaps haunted by the legacy of its communist era repression to the extent that it has not developed a unique approach in the post-communist years to other Eastern European countries where public relations had been virtually unknown. It came as no surprise when Grunig, Grunig, Huang, Lyra, and Sriramesh, (1995) note that nowhere in communist Europe could PR be practised. Democracy was non-existent there until the demise of the Soviet Union.

It took almost 20 years for the new democracies of Eastern Europe to become critical of the American-style PR practice they had borrowed, with the first criticism of the system appearing in articles (Lawniczak 2009). The articles challenged the basic assumptions and dominant paradigms of mainstream theories, confronting them with the realities of their countries. Universities in Hungary, Russia, Poland, Slovenia and other countries of the former communist bloc have been offering degree programmes up to the highest level since the mid-1990s, modelled in some cases after programmes in USA universities. For instance, Russia's Electro-technical University of St. Petersburg's programme was modelled after the undergraduate degree programme at Towson University in the USA (Il'ia et al 2019).

Moreover, there is a need for some form of discussion on Africa as far as the development of Public Relations is concerned. In this vein, the next subsection will focus mainly on African countries such as South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Uganda.

3.8 PUBLIC RELATIONS EVOLUTION IN AFRICA

Public relations scholarship in Africa is relatively nascent, in spite of claims of its long existence on the continent dating back to pre-colonial times. The concept is mostly understood by many as 'relating well with people' and viewed as a cultural value that is inherent among the Bantu peoples of Africa (Mamdani 2001; Rensburg 2009:261 cited in Natifu & Zikusooka 2011:2015). PR is relatively young in Africa. "Researchers have noted the acute shortage of knowledge and understanding of public relations practice in Africa" (Kiambi & Nadler 2012; Van Heerden & Rensburg 2004; Wu & Baah-Boakye 2009 cited in Ngondo 2019:1). In spite of this shortage, Kiambi and Nadler (2012) observe that the continent has a lot of potential and growth of international public relations through increased global trade.

In retracing the history of the evolution of the profession on the continent, it is reasonable to start from the pre-colonial, through colonial and post-independence eras and how events within these historical periods influenced the public relations practice in many African countries. The peculiar colonial legacy of African countries (with the exception of Ethiopia and Liberia), which were never colonised, has had an impact on the growth, nature, image and professional understanding of the public relations profession. The experiences of colonialism on the continent are not the same everywhere. British indirect rule in Anglophone Africa is not the same as assimilation in the French colonies, or '*assimilado*' in Portuguese colonies, which were comparatively few. Up for discussion are the histories and development of public relations in South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya with mentions of Zimbabwe and Uganda for the reason that these are countries on which there is some research information and well-grounded professional practice. The apparent lack of balance in the linguistic representation of countries brings to the fore the challenges of language barriers in joint research and collaboration in publications on the continent. This

observation is not without factoring in the cost of translation and conference interpretation, themselves a disincentive.

3.8.1 PR history and evolution in South Africa

The following section discusses the history of PR and its evolution in South Africa.

3.8.1.1 The Apartheid era

South Africa's unflattering history of racial segregation (the *Apartheid* system) has influenced and will continue to influence developments in the country (Taiminen & Lievonen 2014). In 1994, South Africa attained independence and Black majority rule that saw the end of 48 years of apartheid which started in 1948 (Editors 2021). The new democratic dispensation in post-apartheid South Africa created and provided greater economic opportunities and protected the rights of every South African as stipulated by the 1995 Constitution. The Constitution also "provides public relations scholars with a unique context in which to study and practice" their profession (Taiminen & Lievonen 2014).

Between 1957 and 1994, a lot was done to develop public relations in South Africa; it included education, research and the establishment of a professional body, the Public Relations Institute of South Africa, (PRISA), founded in 1957. The association's membership of 23 was predominantly White and its first Black members joined in 1976, reflecting the influence of the socio-political environment of the time. PRISA started some of the first formal educational training programmes in public relations. Diplomas and degrees in public relations and communication were introduced in universities to train PR practitioners for positions in government and businesses. In 1968, the Technikon Witwatersrand, which merged with the 'Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit' (RAU) in 2005 to form the University of Johannesburg (UJ) started diploma and degrees programmes (Skinner & Benecke 2014).

Malan and L'Estrange, (1965) assert that "during the earlier years of public relations history, the South African government was instrumental in establishing the first public relations departments with the aim to spread government messages". By the 1980s,

most government departments and industries had public relations departments to take care of their publics' information needs. Even though public relations was meant to develop harmonious relationships among all groups and ensure cooperation, peace and prosperity, apartheid policies resulted in White sections of the country being better developed on the lines of modernity than the homelands and townships where Black South Africans lived (Taiminen & Lievonen 2014).

The apartheid era saw two different types of public relations in the country – "White public relations practitioners who approached their roles from a Westernised (USA and UK)" perspective, and Black practitioners, who followed a development communication approach (Holtzhausen 2005:408). Public relations in South Africa developed in different phases; they "started with fundraising, publicity and press agentry, and moved to a more sophisticated information dissemination, and counsel to management structures" (Rensburg 2007:332). During the 1957 to 1994 period, research in public relations was "limited to and mostly focused on the improvement of communication processes and public relations practices" (ibid: 332) to benefit organisations and government. Over time the name PRISA was modified to Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa to include the wider region as membership was extended to practitioners from Namibia and Botswana.

3.8.1.2 The early years of democracy (Immediate post-apartheid era)

After the first democratic elections held in April 1994, South Africa made a peaceful transition into a new free nation popularly called the "Rainbow country" with a blend of Western and African cultures. The new changes in the socio-political environment brought about by the dismantling of apartheid played a significant role in the country's public relations industry. PRISA assumed greater global responsibilities when it represented South Africa in Canada at the World Congress, "followed by an international Institute of Public Relations (IPRA) conference hosted for the first time in Cape Town, South Africa" (Taiminen & Lievonen 2014:27). PRISA was "a founding member of the Global Alliance of Public Relations and Communication Management in 2000 and hosted the 2007 Global Alliance World Public Relations Forum, symbolising a new era for public relations in South Africa" (ibid).

Public relations in South Africa is regarded as the most mature on the continent, with the potential to influence its environment in development for the benefit of all citizens and in the rest of the continent (Roodt 2011). This maturity is partly owed to PRISA's more than 50-year history. The majority of public relations organisations in the country have offices in other countries, mainly in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region (GAP study report 2014:2), which is evidence of how poised PRISA is to influence the growth of PR in the region.

3.8.1.3 PR in the late post-apartheid era and beyond.

South Africa has the second largest economy and one of the largest telecommunications markets on the African continent with MTN as a typical example of a telecommunications service provider that is well established in Sub-Saharan Africa. Subsequently, there has been a rise in the use of digital technology in South Africa that "has led to a shift in communication patterns and a move from two-way conversations to many-to-many, collaborative communications that usually take place via open platforms" (Van den Dam, Nelson & Lozinski 2008:1). This shift has implications for public relations practice as the emergence of many-to-many forms of communication will have to be applied for improved strategic communication with various publics.

According to Obasanjo (2007), Dmochowska (2008), and Mullins (2011), the new communication models have transformed recipients into active participants, content consumers into content generators, and recipients into producers. "Consumers are no longer passive users, but have become active influencers through the use of social media platforms" (Brito, Vanzin, Ferasso, & Saldanha 2010:114). Story-telling and the concept of Ubuntu have become an integral part of public relations practice in South Africa strengthening the two-way symmetric model recommended by Grunig and Hunt (1984) in considering the excellence question as to what value public relations should contribute to organisational effectiveness.

Ubuntu philosophy, which posits that "people exist because of and with other people"; "a person is a person through other persons" or "I am because you are" (Battle

2009:16), is expressive of the integrative way of communal life in Africa. It takes effective public relations to achieve the tenets of *Ubuntu* by holding together the different strands of society. Even if this appears to be an experiment in transforming an old concept of public relations into a modern one, it adds an African cultural perspective to modern PR practice with the potential to be adopted in similar cultures.

South Africa may have come a long way in developing public relations practice, research and theory more than any other country in Africa, but going into the future much needs to be done as the country is experiencing some social, economic, environmental and cultural challenges. The predominance of women in public relations in the country is quite remarkable due to the new era of democracy that afforded women opportunities to acquire higher education (Taiminen & Lievonen 2014). It is significant to note that in South Africa, there is more management appreciation of the function of public relations, and as a corollary there come demands for more research and measurement (Holtzhausen 2005).

3.8.2 History of PR practice in Ghana

Public relations practice in Ghana was known to the indigenous people of the Gold Coast long before the British colonised it in 1872. Allotey-Pappoe (2009) divides the evolution of public relations practice in Ghana into four historical epochs. The first is the pre-colonial, traditional society to 1472 when European traders and later Christian missionaries started arriving in the country. During this period the people applied a communication culture that made use of proverbs, drum language, dance forms, spokespersons and people skilled in negotiation for conflict resolution. The second epoch is from 1472 to 1956, called the colonial, pre-independence period. It was "dominated by nationalist protest movements; the setting up of the Information Services Department, the emergence of indigenous private newspapers and the establishment of public relations units by multinationals operating in the country such as CFAO and Unilever," (Allotey-Pappoe 2009:1). From 1957-1990 marks the post-independence era, which is the third historical phase of PR development and practice in Ghana. The fourth is from 1991 to the present, and that has been described as the growth of public relations practice in the country. In 1991, the Public Relations

Association of Ghana (PRAG) was re-organised and transformed into a recognised professional body (ibid).

Public relations was initially practiced in big multinational companies by expatriates who were predominantly information officers (Gyan 1991, cited in Adjei 2013:16). Their duty was to carry information to various publics about their businesses or relay the colonial administration's policies to the masses as they were working in that sector. The kind of communication was one-way asymmetric without any opportunity for audience feedback. It was based on Grunig and Hunt's (1984) public information model. At independence, the Information Services Department created under the Ministry of Information had to act as the mouthpiece of the government, carrying messages to the people. There was clearly a need for a well-trained body of professionals to work for the government of the newly independent state. This prompted Ghana's first President, Kwame Nkrumah, to set up the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ) in Accra in 1959 to train journalists and public relations practitioners. Before the first batch could graduate from the institute, officers were needed to fill vacancies for the work of public relations officers. "Many of the beginners learnt on the job and took correspondence courses with international schools like the British Institute of Public Relations" (Gyan 1991:31). Two years after its establishment, the GIJ introduced public relations to its curriculum in 1961 to train journalists and PR practitioners.

After running the diploma programmes for four decades, the institute introduced a four year bachelor's degree programme in communication studies in September 2001. The degree programme was composed of two tracks: the journalism track and the public relations track, giving students the opportunity to choose one of them for specialisation at Level 300. In September 2015, the institute introduced a number of master's programmes including a Master of Public Relations. Until 1972, when a Graduate Diploma programme in journalism and public relations was introduced at the University of Ghana, GIJ was the only journalism and public relations training institution in the country. It had been the main producer of journalists and public relations practitioners for various media houses, businesses and corporate organisations as well as government ministries, departments and agencies.

The Institute of Journalism and Mass Communication which started offering a one year graduate diploma programme in 1972, focused on training professionals from varied backgrounds in undergraduate studies. It provided the opportunity for students to specialise in either journalism or public relations. A master's degree component was introduced in 1974 and students were admitted only after the graduate diploma from the institute, and subject to excellent performance. In 1985, the Institute of Journalism and Mass Communication was renamed the School of Communication Studies. In the mid-1990s, it abolished the graduate diploma programmes and introduced a one-year coursework master's degree and a two-year Master of Philosophy (MPhil) programme, with options in each of these programmes to major in public relations or journalism. The University of Ghana, in the 2000s, adopted the collegiate system as part of new measures to ensure both high academic performance and administrative efficiency. The School of Communication was renamed the Department of Communications in the College of Continuing Education.

Until 2007, the Department of Communication Studies was the only institution in Ghana that taught public relations at the post-graduate level. Currently, the National Accreditation Board (NAB) has accredited 13 tertiary institutions in the country to teach public relations at the undergraduate level, and three institutions to teach public relations at the graduate level. With this picture of the kind of training offered to people wishing to pursue a public relations career, it can be said that public relations practice in Ghana is on a path to expand in the near future.

3.8.2.1 Professionalisation and research

Professional and ethical standards of public relations practitioners in Ghana is regulated by the Institute of Public Relations, Ghana (IPRG). The IPRG was born out of the original body, Public Relations Association of Ghana which was established in 1971. Out of the need for a stronger regulatory framework to direct the affairs of practitioners, and regulate and enhance professional standards, the PRAG was transformed into the IPRG in 1991. It has a Code of Ethics which is registered under the laws of Ghana and recognised by law. The Institute is a strong professional body of which membership is by licensure and examination. The long years of military rule

in Ghana stagnated the growth of the PRAG and public relations in general. The transition to multiparty democracy in 1992 saw an expansion of many businesses and new ones being established in an enabling environment of free speech, rights protection and rule of law. Public relations like media can only thrive in a democracy and in an environment of fair competition (Gyan 1991).

With standard professionalism, public relations in corporate and financial institutions as well as some public institutions in Ghana have considerable weight as they apply strategic communication techniques in their work. Those in the security sector such as the armed forces, the police and prisons have professional training in that sector. They, therefore, apply their skills in public relations in their specific units. There are public relations consultancies that are either local or foreign and execute the highest professional standards. The profession has evolved from the era of practitioners being treated like errand boys or protocol officers who meet visitors at the airport and escort them to their hotel rooms, to one that is respected as a profession with a management function. Things used to be so because public and civil service organisation executives themselves did not understand the functions of public relations.

Practically, public relations practitioners apply almost all four influential PR models of Grunig and Hunt (1984), but to varying degrees. In their ranking of public relations roles in Ghana, Wu and Baah-Boakye (2007) identified the cultural interpreter role as first, followed by the personal influence model. They assert that two-way symmetric and two-way asymmetric communication are frequently practised; the press agentry model is moderately practised while the public information model is the least practised in the country. With the availability of wide-ranging social media platforms and the Internet, public relations practitioners achieve a good measure of the practice of the two-way symmetric model. It is significant to note that according to Wu and Baah-Boakye (2007), the cultural interpreter model continues to influence Ghanaian public relations practitioners; they are hired by multinational organisations to conduct research, assist with media relations and serve as the intermediary between international companies and local publics. These PR practitioners also help multinational companies to navigate cultural barriers.

3.8.3 Development of public relations in Nigeria from 1859 to 2000s

Modern public relations practice in Nigeria is said to have started in 1859 when the Christian Missionary Society (CMS) published Nigeria's paper the "*Iwe Irohin*" (news journal), in Abeokuta (Salawu 2004). The newspaper was created to inform parishioners of weekly Christian activities within the church. It provided up-to-date information concerning missionary activities as well as socio-economic and political activities affecting parishioners, indigenes of Abeokuta, settlers (Creoles from Sierra Leone who had traced their origins to Abeokuta) and Europeans at large. According to Salawu (2004), the newspaper included news about colonial administration, some foreign affairs, advertisements and public announcements. The "*Iwe Irohin*" laid the foundation of modern classified publicity, public advocacy and public announcements on births and deaths (Oduntan 2005). It was the forerunner of modern financial PR in Nigeria, providing timely business news and trade information to its readers. The *"Iwe Irohin"* succeeded in moulding the opinions and worldviews of the populace with its readers becoming opinion leaders in their communities, leading enlightened socio-political debates, discussions and arguments on prevailing local and international issues.

Between 1859 and the late 1930s, several newspapers offering similar services in other parts of the country sprang up (Malaolu 2004). Public relations practice during this era focused mainly on the use of the press to educate and enlighten the public. The public relations efforts of the newspapers of the era including the *"Iwe Irohin"* fit well into Grunig and Hunt's (1984) press agentry and public information models (Otubanjo, Amujo & Melawar 2010).

3.8.3.1 Broadcasting public relations era, the late 1930s:

In the 1930s, anti-European sentiments in Nigeria started growing. In order to counter these negative sentiments, the British government, in 1932 chartered the Radio Distribution Services in England to relay specific BBC programmes to Nigerians through the Radio Rediffusion System (RDS) (Blankson & Murphy 2007). The aim of this broadcasting public relations approach was to redeem the battered image of the

British government and promote the British imperialist cause (Alhassan 2005; Swanzy 1949). The RDS served two purposes: heading off the propaganda campaign of the then German-controlled French West African countries during World War II (Head, 1979) and stemming "the growing agitation and protests by the Nigerian educated elites who questioned the rationale of British colonialism" (Coleman & Coleman 1958 cited in Otubanjo & Amujo 2013). The colonial administration in the 1940s set up several wartime information centres in selected towns in Nigeria, tasked to distribute leaflets and flyers inciting Nigerians against the Axis powers (Ibhawoh 2007). The British colonial government's use of broadcasting public relations practice conforms to Grunig and Hunt's (1984) press agentry and two-way asymmetric model. The whole aim was to change the attitudes of Nigerians.

The 1940s marked the beginning of private-sector participation in the development of public relations practices in the country. In 1949, the United African Company (UAC) International, set up its first PR department at its headquarters in Lagos (Ajala 1993; Decker 2011) with liaison offices in Ibadan, Benin, Enugu and Kaduna to coordinate its business activities throughout the country. The period from 1945 to the early 1960s was dominated by a rise in the use of PR in the public and private sectors. Public Relations was used predominantly to disseminate information to the public with the intention to change public attitudes. Theoretically, in operation was Grunig and Hunt's (1984) two-way symmetric model, which allows senders and receivers of specific information to be persuaded to modify attitudes and behaviours. World War II is thought to have given impetus to the growth of PR (Orraca-Tetteh 1986; NIPR 1988; Adebola 1992). It was an era that facilitated the mushrooming of the PR industry in the USA, UK and Europe (Bates 2006; Morris 2000).

3.8.3.2 Public relations in the public sector, 1945 to the early 1960s

The Richards Constitution of 1944, setting out how Nigeria was to be governed prior to independence gave rise to the use of public relations in the public and private sectors. The Special Information Centre in Lagos later redesigned and renamed the PR Department (Shuaib 2006) was established "to present a picture of Nigeria to the outside world. The aim was also to assist the government in all activities requiring

propaganda – for a better term – in one form or another" (Abodunrin 1995:9). According to Otubanjo, Amujo, and Melawar (2010), PR departments were established in other towns with functions including interpreting social, political and economic trends to Nigerians. Effective use was made of press releases, press conferences, posters, films and radio programmes to educate, inform and enlighten the masses. During this period, PR units in government ministries and corporations were created (NIPR 1988). The role of PR practice was given recognition, necessitating the creation in 1963, of a public relations professional association, the Public Relations Association of Nigeria (PRAN).

3.8.3.3 PR in the private sector, 1945 to the early 1960s

Private sector organisations like Smart Car of America (SCOA), Corporation for Africa and Oversees (CFAO), Shell-British Petroleum (Shell-BP), Cadbury, the banking industry and many other multinational corporations sustained the momentum of PR practice from the mid-1940s through the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. These multinational corporations set up PR departments to carry out the work of sustained good relationships with their clients and publics, relying on professional Public Relations Officers (PROs). Where language (French) was a barrier, the French companies sent their PROs to acquire language proficiency for their work back in Nigeria. Public relations practice in Nigeria was hardly ever conceived or deployed as a proactive function. It assumed a reactive function throughout the 1950s and the late 1970s. The explanation lies in the fact that PR activities were undertaken in-house by PR executives mostly issuing press releases, and organising press conferences as well as sponsorship.

3.8.3.4 Wartime Public Relations, 1966-1970

During the Nigerian Civil War of 1966-1970 period, there was an increase in the demand for public relations. The directorate of the Army Public Relations appreciating the enormity of public relations and communication in wartime, massively recruited civilian experts in these fields. The PR experts were mainly broadcasters and journalists whose duty was to counter Biafra's (the secessionist side) vile war

propaganda which was done with dexterity (Achuzia 1986). The directorate sponsored men and officers to higher institutions in Nigeria to study public relations and mass communication. The Nigerian Army which was established in 1963, has a full-fledged public relations directorate with its professional staff being members of the NIPR (Ajai 2007). The same applied to other public relations departments among Nigerian security agencies. The Nigeria Armed Forces suffered a damaged image and reputation during the civil war with accusations of vandalizing properties, looting and rape but they successfully repaired their reputational damage through effective public relations strategies (Uwechue 1971; Achuzia 1986). In spite of this remarkable feat, the Navy and Air Force were yet to appreciate PR practice within the political and economic dynamics of the country (Ajai 2007). The Nigerian Police also suffered a similar damaged image and had to enlist PR officers into the Police PR Department in 1971, but its image and reputation remained unenviable among Nigerians (Alemika 1993).

3.8.3.5 Professionalisation and training: 1970s-2000s

Political and economic forces have been the drivers of PR practice in Nigeria. The economic boom of the 1970s brought in its wake an urgent need for professional public relations counselling in business and commerce. Many PR consultancy firms were established between the 1970s and 1980s to meet this demand. A number of the firms are affiliated with top multinational PR agencies. For instance, JSP corporate communications are affiliated to Hill and Knowlton (UK). Similarly, Sesema PR is affiliated with Edelman PR, a world-class PR agency. The affiliation drive is hinged on "the need for training and manpower development, professionalism, access to a global network of companies and the development of insights into new approaches to PR management" (Ufot 2004) The Public Relations Association of Nigeria (PRAN) was renamed as Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) in 1969 and repositioned to offer high-quality professional services and training programmes to meet the growing demand for such services. In 1984, the Public Relations Consultancy Association of Nigeria (PRCAN) was inaugurated. It aimed to "bring together all image-making firms, standardise public relations counselling services and encourage the provision of value-

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adding services to corporate organisations (Shuaib 2006). The association, according to Shuaib, promoted its goals through workshops, seminars and conferences.

The economic liberalisation of 1986 and the ensuing free market economy that it created, led to the emergence of high-profile business organisations to challenge existing corporations in the system. The new companies caused an increase in the demand for highly skilled PR consulting firms. Quadrant Company, JSP Corporate Communications and CMC Connect Lagos, among others, are the firms that emerged to offer professional services in all aspects of PR processes (Otubanjo, Amujo, & Melawar 2010). This situation gave rise to the demand for PR practitioners and a resultant massive influx of non-qualified practitioners. To deal with the problem of poor professional standards, the Federal Military Government promulgated decree No. 16 of 1990 empowering the NIPR to regulate public relations practices in Nigeria (Molleda & Alhassan 2006; NIPR 2008). The decree makes it illegal for non-NIPR-registered individuals to engage in public relations practices in the country but the NIPR doubts if this goal has been well achieved. However, it acknowledges how difficult it is gradually becoming for non-registered public relations practitioners to occupy public relations positions or service public relations accounts.

The NIPR established a national secretariat in Lagos, designed to promote and drive "professionalism and excellence", in the industry. Its lack of a holistic and structured public relations body of knowledge and professional training programmes for students and prospective practitioners in the early 1990s was deemed as one of NIPR's biggest challenges. In the view of many PR scholars including Hainsworth (1993); Wylie (1994); McElreath and Blamphin (1994); and Saunders and Perrigo (1998), this was a critical criterion for recognition of PR as a profession. According to the NIPR, its national secretariat managed the problem "by designing professional PR certificates and diploma programmes for students and quality training programmes for practitioners". These efforts provided the needed push for promoting public relations education in Nigeria about which Otubanjo, Amujo and Melawar note:

> *Many marketing and mass communications faculties of universities in the*
> *country responded to the demand and clamour for skilful public relations*

executive by offering full and part-time public relations degrees and
modules in their undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, while some
polytechnics offered PR diplomas and modules in the National Diploma and
Higher National Diploma programmes (Otubanjo, Amujo & Melawar
2010:15-16).

Though the public relations industry in Nigeria is developing at a fast pace, it is yet to reach the maturity stage. This may be sooner than later as opportunities for growth in public relations services are on the rise. There is greater recognition in the subject now than in the past which makes training and professionalism competitive. With many tertiary institutions offering undergraduate through graduate and research degree programmes and the regulatory mechanisms of the NIPR, PRCAN and consultancy firms, public relations is being refined to a greater degree of professionalism. PR practices in Nigeria are seen to be conforming to Grunig and Hunt's (1984) public relations models. Research may not be as rigorous as in the USA or Europe, but the huge market of Nigeria favours the growth of big businesses and multinational corporations which are always in need of public relations services. There is an appreciable amount of documentation of the discipline in the country, but as Molleda and Alhassan (2006) note, there is a need for an increase in documentation of public relations in under-represented regions such as Africa.

3.8.4 Evolution of PR in Kenya: From conceptualisation to modern practice

Public relations practices in Kenya date far back to the era before colonisation and took the forms of social interactions and socialisation. People dialogued and even differed but later compromised by engaging mediators who were people of influence, repute and integrity (Ngonyo 2018). Indigenous Kenyans used public relations-like techniques such as dance performances like the "kibaata either to assemble the people to hear some important pronouncement or as a preliminary to a raid on an enemy tribe" (Leakey 1977:392). Kiambi (2014) likens "the use of song and dance to assemble people to a contemporary PR presentation action of employing dancers to entertain guests before the official start of a ceremony". According to Kiambi, every local community had their spokesperson, adviser and master of ceremony, who acted on

their behalf by carrying messages to others. For instance, at the local chief's court, the linguist (spokesperson) who is usually an eloquent and intelligent person, would relay information from the chief to his people and vice versa.

In Bantu communities, they had guidelines for resolving conflicts related to cattle raids or thefts. They had a way of compensating someone whose cattle had been stolen (Wagner 1956). Elaborating, Wagner (1956:104) asserts that: "the payment of cattle in restitution aims primarily at restoring equilibrium in the 'assets' of the two persons involved. It is, that is to say, a compensation rather than a fine". Coombs (2015) views this form of compensation as an accommodative crisis response strategy as would be the situation in modern-day image restoration efforts. Modern public relations in Kenya may be divided into more or less two historical phases: pre-independence (colonial) and post-independence through the 21st century after the above brief description of pre-colonial PR practice. Major historical events including social, cultural and political forces helped shape and determine the direction of PR practice in the country as it evolved over the years.

3.8.4.1 PR practice in pre-independence (colonial) Kenya

The British declared Kenya a protectorate in 1895 and made it a colonial state in 1920 till Kenya's independence in 1963 (Ochieng & Atieno-Odhiambo 1995). Institutionalised public relations is said to have started with the construction of the Kenya – Uganda Railway by the Imperial British East African Company (IBEAC) in 1894, to reduce the challenges of transportation between the Kenyan Coast and Uganda. The construction of the railway became a formal employer and an institution that formalised the practice of public relations by compelling the British to employ effective communication strategies that could get their messages across for easy administration of the colony (Ngonyo 2018). They established a community awareness programme unit to contain the hostilities of locals who were opposed to the construction of the railway line. Then they introduced a public information office to cater for its information needs. In 1942, the colonial government created the substantive position of 'Principal Information Officer' (PIO) for the Kenya Information

Office (KIO) under the Ministry of Information on the East African Command (ibid). The key responsibility was to keep the public informed about government activities.

According to Kenya Information Annual Report (1942) "a specialised post of public relations was created within the KIO in 1944 to foster favourable public opinion towards the war effort". Later, it became the technical department with the responsibility of producing and supplying publicity materials. This mode of running public relations fits well into the press agentry and public information models of Grunig and Hunt's (1984) PR models.

For purposes of understanding colonial policies, the British issued a Memorandum dubbed *Public Relations work in the Colonies.* It defined the objectives of public relations work in the British colonies of East Africa and outlined the duties of public relations departments and the Information Department in the Colonial Office (Kiambi & Nadler 2012).

In 1954, real public relations practice in Kenya began. The Department of Information was to communicate to both internal and external publics with further responsibility to ensure that the people of Kenya of all races were kept fully informed of the government's plans, policies and achievements (Government of Kenya, Annual Report 1955). PR officers were to have access to the police and local chiefs in order to be effective in their roles. Public relations practitioners were all expatriates and were not recognised as competent enough. The few Kenyans in the field had had no training as training facilities were unavailable. As a result, public relations practice by indigenous Kenyans remained a mirage till the late 1960s and early 1970s when some of them were sponsored to go abroad by their employers for short training courses. Nevertheless, in spite of the non-availability of training centres, some of them were proactive and rose through to become pioneers and leaders of Kenya's PR practice and development. They included Muthoni Likimani, who started first as a broadcaster before going into public relations and setting up her own consultancy; John Luseno, who worked with British American Tobacco (BAT) as director of Public Affairs, and Isaac Lugonzo who served as a Public Relations Manager with the then Power and Lighting Company; and Jesse Eshikati Opembe, who after joining the Nyanza

Province Management Board, rose through the ranks as the first African to become an Assistant Public Relations Officer of the board in 1958.

Kenya's public relations practice is largely associated with the emergence of consultancy firms started by settlers during the Second World War. Most consultancies basically carried out publicity and events management roles to satisfy the immediate needs of organisations (Oriare 2009). The first such consultancy to practice in preindependence Kenya and the East African region was Dunford Hall and Partnership Limited in 1954 (Church & Nguru 1988, cited in Ngonyo 2018). The company had branches in East, Central and West Africa producing farming and agricultural magazines namely, *Ukulima was Kisasa* and *Kenya Farmer*.

In 1970, Bob Dewar after working as an individual public relations practitioner, set up Bob Dewar Publicity. Its activities like other consultancies were publicity and events management-based (ibid). In 1973, Muthoni Likimani, a prominent media personality established Nonis Publicity, Public Relations, General Consultancy and Publishing firm. It was the first fully African-owned public relations consultancy in Kenya and also the first to be established in the region by a woman. This, according to Ngonyo (2018), was a unique achievement considering that the field was male-dominated in the 1970s. Other consultancies included Church Orr Associates founded in the mid-1960s by a former reputable local newspaper managing director; Opembe Enterprises Ltd, established in 1979, to provide public relations and management advisory services; Ogilvy and Mather, Sealpoint Publicity, Aussie Walker Public Relations, Yolanda Tavares Public Relations, founded in 1986, Corporate Reflections Consultancy firm in 1994, Strategic Public Relations in 1996, and Gina Din Corporate Communications (GDCC) started in 1997 and many others including those owned by Kenyans.

Some of these consultancies have their areas of specialisation: investor relations, employee relations, corporate social responsibilities or crisis management. Others are general public relations consultancies offering services across a broad range of public relations activities. Indigenous pioneering public relations practitioners and public relations consultancies of this period applied the press agentry model and public information models through advertisements and advocacy.

3.8.4.2 Post-independence PR practice in Kenya.

From independence in 1963 through the 2000s, public relations practice in Kenya has seen varied phases. The colonial administration had laid a good foundation for the profession and President Jomo Kenyatta built on it recognising the role of communication and information as a tool for corporate Kenya's image-building with PR units in all government ministries (Oriare 2009:307). State use of public relations under Jomo Kenyatta was more inclined toward explaining government policies to the masses. Gachathi (1966:1) observes that for the new government to maintain its public support, "continuous attention must be paid to public relations. It is not enough for our policies to be correct. They must be seen to be correct". Gachathi (1968) asserts that public institutions like the Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and Tourism were at the forefront of government image-building, promotion and crisis management when the government appeared to be losing credibility. The repressive regime of President Daniel arap Moi in 1978 witnessed public relations practice slide down in the public sector. Public information censorship emerged during the Kenyatta presidency (Ogolla, 2011) and public relations in the country suffered. Kenya saw little socioeconomic and political progress during Moi's 24 years in power because of "the increase in tribalism, nepotism, stifling of political dissent, official corruption and an unattractive environment for businesses" (Steeves 2006:212). He used the coercive machinery of the state to repress dissent and opposition. The kind of control that characterised the political arena "extended to organisations within civil society such as mass media, women's organisations and ethnic welfare associations" (Wanyande 1995:57).

The transition from one-party to multiparty democracy in Kenya in 1992, brought about an enabling environment for the growth of PR in the country as the media became vibrant and big businesses sprang back to life and the society was characterised by a more aggressive consumer culture (Luvonga 2008). When President Mwai Kibaki assumed office in 2003, the significance of public relations came into play with the government once again fully utilizing its services. President Kibaki's government, conscious about the strategic role the profession plays in the management of public opinion, established the office of the Public Communications Secretary and Government Spokesman in 2004. It was to package and disseminate government

information to the media so as to minimise distortions, contradictions and information gaps, and ensure the projection of a proper public image of the government (Government of Kenya Report 2006). Kibaki did not muzzle public information and was not suspicious of international companies wanting to do business in Kenya. During his presidency, several international PR firms including Hill and Knowlton, and Burson Marsteller opened offices in Nairobi. His government restructured the Ministry of Information and Communication to make it more responsive to a changing public service. It initiated an ambitious capacity-building programme for information officers, many of whom were being sponsored to study for masters' degrees in communication at public universities (Tikolo 2011:18).

3.8.4.3 Professionalisation and training in PR

In 1971, the Public Relations Association of Kenya (PRSK) was launched out of a need to guide and bring together PR practitioners in Kenya (PRSK, 2013). Public and private sector organisations embraced public relations as a strategic tool in reaching out to their publics. The PRSK sought to enhance public relations standards and professionalism in Kenya by regulating, through its code of ethics, the conduct of members with sanctions for erring ones. Naom (2013) describes PR in Kenya as having "grown by leaps and bounds", a fact evidenced by the "increased number of job opportunities, consultancies and academic institutions offering PR" as a course. According to Naom (2013), PRSK registered all public relations officers of government ministries and continually creates PR dockets for parastatals and private organisations. There are a total of 47 registered PR firms with about 600 practitioners that operate at different levels of capacity and offer a diverse range of services to clients within Kenya and the East African region.

Until the 1980s, there were no institutions offering training in public relations locally, and so for a long-time, training eluded most Kenyan practitioners who could not get sponsorship to go for courses abroad. Though the colonial government had started the Kenya Institute of Mass Communication (KIMC) in Nairobi in 1961 to train engineers, training did not commence until 1969. And it was much later that an expansion in intake included public relations and communication related-training courses to take care of

the rising needs of information officers, who were needed in the Civil Service alongside others in the 1980s. Today, there are better locally trained PR practitioners from Kenyan universities and institutions of higher learning. Before the 21st century, "the University of School of Journalism, Daystar University and a few commercial colleges were the only institutions" offering programmes in public relations (Luvonga 2008:4).

3.8.5 Development of PR in Uganda and Zimbabwe

Public relations is understood and practised in Uganda in the context of its sociocultural, political and economic historical environment. "The concept of public relations in Uganda is good relationships with others" (Ngondo 2019:1) and is reflective of the philosophy of '*ubuntuism'* which Rensburg (2009) proposes as a new paradigm for Africa that is relevant to understanding the specific context in which PR is understood and practised in many African nations. Like in Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria, public relations evolved in three specific historical periods: 1) Pre-colonial, 2) Colonial and 3) post-independence eras. Apart from the colonial period, the rest were characterised by authoritarian regimes and relatively 'democratic' and semi-democratic autocratic regimes in what Ronning (2010:2) cited in Natifu and Zikusooka (2011) posits as having affected the development and growth of Ugandan public relations. Zikusooka (2011), observes that:

> *The professional term, public relations, in Uganda is one that has been misconceived at three levels: (i) the individual practitioner, who often has limited knowledge and understanding of what constitutes public relations; (ii) the general public who view public relations as the ability to 'relate well with people'; and thirdly (iii) at the organisational management level, with the inappropriate placement of practitioners on the organisational chart limiting their roles to publicity and media relations, which are only part of the multi-faceted management function of public relations (Zikusooka 2002 cited in Natifu & Zikusooka 2011).*

Many Ugandan practitioners and business executives interpret public relations as either playing a marketing or sales function or a department under the human resource

manager (Musoke 2000 cited in Natifu & Zkusooka 2011). The unstable civilian regimes and the military dictatorships of the early1970s through the 1980s had serious implications for the economy and by extension public relations practice. The economy started picking up in the early 1990s after the introduction of multiparty democracy and the liberalisation of the economy in early 1990.

Zimbabwe: There is not much on the indigenous concept of public relations in Zimbabwe in the literature, but the philosophy of '*ubuntuism*' is pervasive among many African societies including Zimbabwe with mostly large Bantu groupings. Modern public relations in Zimbabwe started in colonial times when the country was called Rhodesia, through independence in 1980 to the present era. The historical legacy of White colonial rule in Zimbabwe has influenced public relations practices in the country. Though the Rhodesia Public Relations Institute was founded in 1966, the origins of public relations in Zimbabwe can be traced to the mid-1950s (Mawarera 2014). Oksiutycz and Nhedzi, (2019) assert that public relations and marketing in Zimbabwe followed separate development paths. Between 1997 and 2008, the country experienced deep socio-economic and political crises (Mawoyo 2012:115) that required measures for changes.

Although political and economic changes introduced after 2008 brought some prospects of political and economic stability (Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index 2016; Mawoyo 2012), "the Zimbabwean economy remained weak, its civil society repressed, and the media largely under the control of the ruling elites – all of which has negative consequences for the communication industry" (Mawoyo 2012:117). The recent political crisis in 2018 has generally affected the Zimbabwean political space. But in spite of the economic and political challenges facing the country, the communication industry is vibrant (Oksiutycz & Nhedzi 2019). "Owing to economic challenges and stiff competition, most agencies are multipurpose in nature and provide a wide variety of communication and creative services to their client" (ibid: 95).

Finally, the study presents a summary of the chapter by elucidating more on feminism and how it relates to the PR profession. This is done by making special references to

several scholars who have researched extensively on Public Relations in relation to gender and feminism.

3.9 FEMINISM IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

Given that the topic of this thesis has to do with women in public relations in Ghana, it is essential to present a brief worldview of feminism in PR practice. The apparent dominance of females in the public relations industry in most parts of the Western world and some developing areas like Africa –for example, South Africa and Ghana – has attracted unflattering comments about the profession.

Parker (2013), in an article, "Is "feminism" a dirty word in PR?" expresses the uncomfortable relationship between feminism and public relations. Other scholars draw attention to how media stories often express concern about "the gangs of women" that dominate the industry and refer to public relations as a "pink ghetto" and "too feminised" (Salzman 2013; Shepherd 2012). Salzman views the American PR industry as so feminised and politically correct that he worries about where the edge has gone. In contrast, he describes the Australian PR industry as "ballsy" (Fitch 2015). This "coding of public relations as feminine, suggesting fundamentally gendered assumptions around public relations activity" (ibid) highlights anxiety about the situation. Shein cited in McIntyre (2012) explains that it is so because PR and corporate affairs are seen as a softer skillset" (Shein, cited in McIntyre 2012). Salt cited in Shepherd (2012) argues that the "gender imbalance" in the industry, that is, the "pink ghetto," led to the failure for public relations to be taken seriously. In the opinion of Nick Turner, formerly Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA) president, "the idea that women might not be taken seriously in the industry was highly offensive to both men and women" (Shepherd 2012).

It is worrying that certain jobs would be listed as more suitable or offering great career prospects for women. There cannot be any satisfactory explanation without putting the gender stamp on it. It may be acceptable that in certain countries such as the USA, when professional norms were constructed with reference to the experiences of the White, middle-class men, closure regimes inevitably tended to have gender, class, and

ethnic dimensions" (Muzio & Tomlinson 2012:459). This may not hold true for countries where they do not operate the USA kind of industry norms. It is difficult to explain the case of Betsy Ann Plank (1924–2010) who was "the first lady of public relations" at a time when women did not enter the PR field for a career, but as taking up a job. Betsy Plank, is credited as one of the pioneer and leading female PR practitioners because she was the only person to have served as president of four Chicago communication organisations, namely Publicity Club (1963), Welfare Public Relations Forum (1966–67), Chicago Chapter of PRSA (1969) and Public Relations Forum (1979), has undoubtedly made remarkable contributions to the PR profession as far as the involvement of women in Public Relations is concerned (Sussan Gonders, cited in Amaechi 2011:40). It was a plain meritorious achievement and not because there was no competition. Therefore, if organisations and the larger society have an inbuilt culture that endorses and reinforces gender inequality and discrimination, female PR practitioners will presumably not rise, even if they are considered to be part of management. They might also be under-utilised as far as their expert views within the PR profession in relation to their functions and roles are concerned. These presumptions are best explained in the gender and feminist theories which underpin this study's theoretical framework.

Public perception of the roles and mobility of women in PR practice in Ghana should provide an answer to the problem of the present thesis in the light of submissions made by scholars on worldviews in PR and of the history and evolution of the PR industry from global, continental and local perspective.

3.10 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The chapter discussed the development of PR by reviewing relevant literature on the subject. The review was done in three phases. The first phase looked at the historical development of PR from the American perspective which was presented in a form of a summary of how PR originated in the USA. The second phase focused mainly on how PR developed in Europe while the third and final phase of the historical review centred on the African continent. With regards to the history of PR and its developments on the African continent, the chapter discussed how the PR profession has evolved in

countries such as South Africa where PR practice is believed to be more advanced as compared to other African countries. Apart from South Africa, the chapter also discussed how the PR profession has evolved in other African countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, Zimbabwe and finally Ghana where the study was conducted. It must be indicated that not much of PR practice and its evolution has been documented on the African continent as compared to western countries such as USA, Canada and Europe among others. Again, PR education, research and professionalism are key to effective PR practice, so the chapter discussed them briefly. Some key conceptual traditions provided by Amaechi (2011) were also outlined and briefly discussed in the chapter. The chapter concluded by touching on a brief worldview of feminism in Public Relations practice. The main rationale for this particular chapter was to provide a glimpse of how PR has evolved over the years globally, and the way forward in terms of improvement in its practice from different jurisdictions as discussed in the chapter.

Having discussed the history of Public Relations and how the profession has evolved over the years in the previous chapter, the next chapter focuses on the development and practice of PR among female practitioners. The chapter presents some historical antecedents of the involvement of women in the PR profession. The chapter further discusses gender issues in the PR profession that affect female PR practitioners globally. The chapter is concluded with a discussion of the contributions that female PR practitioners have made to the profession as well as a brief discussion on women in the Public Relations profession in Ghana.

CHAPTER FOUR

DEVELOPMENT AND PRACTICE OF PR BY FEMALE PRACTITIONERS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The goal of this study was to investigate the practice of Public Relations (PR) among female PR practitioners in Ghana. The overall goal was to develop a conceptual framework that could guide the practice of PR among female practitioners. The previous chapters focused on the background of the study, theories that underpinned the study as well as the development of PR globally. This chapter focuses mainly on a review of literature on women in PR globally, continentally and in Ghana. The chapter discusses some historical antecedence of women's involvement in PR practice, research and teaching. The literature review on women in PR is partitioned into two sections. The first section focuses on literature on women in PR that spans a decade or over. The rationale was to attempt to trace the history of how women have been involved in PR practice for decades. The second aspect of the review focuses on recent scholarship on PR and an attempt is made to draw a dichotomy in terms of PR practice among female practitioners in the past, to contemporary practice as documented in literature. The study adopts portions of strategies employed by Topic et al (2019). The scholars undertook a longitudinal study on women in PR from 1982 – 2019. The team of researchers reviewed literature on women in PR globally, but largely, the findings reflected a western perspective because the team could not locate much literature on women in PR in other jurisdictions upon extensive search. The goal of the study was to compare and contrast the position of women in PR in Europe, by conducting a comparative analysis among European countries and elsewhere in the world. Again, the study focused mainly on the issues that women PR practitioners were concerned with and the disparities between male and female PR practitioners. The overall findings of Topic et al (2019) confirmed that most of the issues reported about women in the PR profession were virtually the same in most recent scholarship. Although this current study is not longitudinal research, it deploys aspects of the strategies employed by (Topic et al 2019). In this vein, literature on women in PR that can be traced back to a decade or more was reviewed extensively. This was aimed at

attaining a comprehensive picture of the situation and also identify trends in literature from the past and compare with recent scholarship. In other words, the approach was an extensive review of literature in the PR industry globally, continentally and in Ghana. The chapter also highlights some contributions women in the profession have made. The chapter is concluded by discussing some of the major challenges that affect female PR practitioners in the field as well as the strategies employed to mitigate such challenges. It was envisaged that this strategy of reviewing of literature on women in PR could help situate the study in a proper context and enable the researcher to develop a proposed conceptual framework to guide female PR practice in Ghana, or Africa for that matter.

Historically, studies have confirmed that a good number of women have been part of PR practice for decades and have made substantial contributions to PR practice and teaching globally (Aldoory & Toth 2002; Gower 2001; Grunig 2006). Gower (2001) for instance undertook a longitudinal study of female PR practitioners' involvement in PR practice especially in the United States of America (USA) from 1945-1972 and her study confirmed that there was a paucity of literature on women PR practitioners globally. Gower (2001) suggests that two main reasons might account for why information on women's involvement in PR practice has been masked, thus, very few women were involved in formal PR work in the early beginnings of the profession because most of the PR practitioners were men who held executive positions. Again, historical records of the PR profession itself in general, and the involvement of women, in particular, have been sparsely documented or non-existent. Most PR work in the early days was probably behind the scenes, thus making it difficult for scholars to trace not only the results of practitioners' efforts but also what those efforts were in the first place (Gower 2001). Gower (2001) concludes that the contributions of women to PR practice globally have been lost in many cases, and yet it is important to document these contributions because of the overwhelming evidence that women now dominate the PR field in most parts of the world.

In a similar study, Grunig and Toth (2002) note that women make up approximately 70 per cent of the PR practitioners in the USA. Grunig and Toth (2002) further undertook an exploratory study to understand female PR professionals' experiences in the Asian

workplace namely; Japan, Korea and Singapore. The focus of their study was to investigate how female PR practitioners perceive gender discrimination and gender role expectations of their colleagues, clients and journalists. In Japan for instance, the study confirmed that women were actively involved in PR practice and predicted that there was going to be an increase in the number of women entering the PR field in Japan. The study further confirmed that women in PR practice in Japan experienced few obstacles that would have prevented them from advancing in their careers because the PR profession was not really considered a traditional career in Japan. In other words, the study confirmed that there was no competition between female PR practitioners and their male counterparts in Japan. It was noted in the study that women outnumbered men in the PR field in Japan and most parts of Asia. Grunig and Toth's (2002) study further discovered a finding which showed that younger women who got attracted to the PR profession in Japan will immediately leave once they got married or pregnant. Those female practitioners who fell in that category were referred to as 'stay-at-home wives and mothers. Similar observations were confirmed in Korea and Singapore. It is gratifying to note that the study confirmed that gender discrimination was prevalent in the Korean corporate world as well as in Singapore. In Singapore for instance, a lot of female PR practitioners were struggling to overcome discrimination and inequality in the PR profession of that country (Grunig & Toth 2002).

While acknowledging the findings of Grunig and Toth's (2002) study, it is important to point out that some other studies reported varied findings on issues that relate to women in the PR profession. Addotey (2011) for instance focused her study on the feminisation of the PR profession in Ghana and reported in her findings that there was no disparity in remuneration between male and female practitioners in Ghana. Surprisingly, other studies reported disparities in income between men and women in the PR profession (Sha & Dozier 2011). Furthermore, similar studies found that women in the PR profession globally are now advocating for fairness and justice. In other words, most female PR practitioners are now advocating for equal rights, and equal pay for equal work done. Some scholars are of the view that a universal pay structure for PR practitioners globally should be based on previous years of professional experience and academic qualification, and not based on the gender of the practitioner (Dozier & Sha 2010; Sha & Dozier 2011).

With regard to issues of discrimination that often exist between male and female PR practitioners, some past studies also reported differences in their findings. Grunig et al (2001) and Adu-Oppong and Arthur (2015) confirmed in their studies that no discrimination existed in Ghana as far as male and female PR practitioners were concerned. The scholars note further that the salary of PR practitioners in Ghana is usually determined by the entry qualification, rank, years of experience, and negotiation skills among others irrespective of the gender of the PR practitioner. The findings appear to be in sharp contrast to the findings of scholars such as Grunig and Hon (2001) and Aldoory and Toth (2002) who confirmed in their studies that gender discrimination existed between male and female PR practitioners in most jurisdictions globally.

Hon, Grunig and Dozier (1992) point out that both PR educators and practitioners recognise the fact that the PR industry has experienced an influx of women. Referring to Broom's (1982) study on PR roles, the scholars indicate that in the initial stage of PR practice, men outnumbered women in managerial roles because a lot of women were clustered into technical roles. They indicate also that gender played a significant role in why a lot of women were playing technician roles as compared to their male counterparts. Scringer (1985) makes similar arguments already espoused by Hon, Grunig and Dozier. Scringer (1985) profiled female PR practitioners in the Canadian PR industry and concluded that the status of female PR practitioners was inferior to that of men. This was in spite of evidence that women outnumbered men in PR practice in Canada, yet, men occupied higher positions and obviously earned higher salaries than their female colleagues. Hon, Grunig and Dozier (1992) further confirmed in their findings that discrimination against female PR practitioners often keeps a lot of women out of the managerial role. The researchers insist that organisations must work to empower women to rise to higher positions because excellent organisations, in their opinion, are those that foster the careers of women including those in the Public Relations profession. Horsley (2009) notes that major advancements in PR took place between the 1940s and 1970s, such as the establishment of the Public Relations Society of America, the creation of the PR code of ethics as well as the implementation of an accreditation process of professionals. Horsley (2009) argues that it was during this period that a lot of women started to enter the PR field in large numbers. The

situation occurred mostly in World War II when a lot of women got the opportunity to work while men were at war. The situation, according to Horsley (2009) saw a remarkable growth in the number of women in PR. In other words, as a lot of men left their positions during the war, more women got motivated to enter into many fields including PR. Horsley's (2009) study further found that women in the PR profession at that time faced little pushback and few restrictions. However, after the war ended and men began to return to the USA, the conditions for women changed drastically as they began to face competition and gender stereotypes among others (Horsley 2009).

While acknowledging the efforts of earlier scholars such as Hon et al (1992), Scringer (1985) and Horsley (2009) among other scholars on the involvement of women in the PR profession for several decades, as well as their contributions and the challenges they have faced and continue to face in the PR profession, it must be noted that this current study is unique from other studies in several aspects. The study is qualitative in nature, so the researcher relied on the personal accounts of how female PR practitioners in Ghana conceptualised and practised PR in Ghana of which such studies are scarce. The study took place in a natural setting by engaging the participants in one-on-one in-depth interviews. Most of the studies in PR that have focused mainly on issues that affect women in the PR profession emanate from the west (Anderson 2003; Berger 2005; Creedon 1991; Poffenberger 2001). Some of these earlier studies employed quantitative approaches by relying on numerical or measurable data to draw conclusions. Other scholars employed mixed-method approaches to investigate issues among women in the PR profession (Aldoory & Toth 2004; Umeogu & Ifeoma 2012; Wu Ming-Yi & Baah-Boakye 2014). This is in sharp contrast to the tenets espoused in qualitative studies which were employed in this study. In terms of the population of a study, most qualitative studies that focused on women in the PR profession employed a smaller sample size. This current study employed a sample size of 37 female PR practitioners in Ghana by investigating gender issues among them. Arguably, this relatively larger size of 37 participants aided the researcher to explore the issues in a much broader scope. Moreover, the study strictly relied on female PR practitioners who are accredited by IPRG to investigate gender issues among female PR practitioners in Ghana. The rationale for using only practitioners who are accredited by IPRG in this study was premised on the fact that

PR practice in Ghana is being regulated by IPRG as the only professional body that ensures the highest professional and ethical standards in the profession are adhered to. As a result, female PR practitioners who were not accredited by IPRG did not meet the basic criteria for the study and were therefore not included.

From the foregoing, it is clear that women have been at the forefront of PR practice for decades. It is also confirmed that women dominate in most parts of the world as far as PR practice is concerned, and yet the men who appear to hold the minority position are those who occupy managerial positions and also enjoy better conditions of service. What may appear to be a myth is the fact that women are the majority in the PR profession but are unable to compete with men in terms of leadership or managerial positions. Krider and Ross (1997) provide a distinct explanation of women's involvement in the PR profession. Krider and Ross (1997) note that the PR profession has undergone a significant demographic change in the last two decades and nearly 60% of more of PR workforce constitutes women. Krider and Ross (1997) citing Lukovitz (1989) and Toth and Grunig (1993) insist that more women got into the PR profession because the vast majority of women got enrolled in PR courses, hence the increase in women in the profession. Persuaded by the arguments clearly made by Hon, Grunig and Dozier (1992), Scringer (1985) and Horsley (2009), Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000) appear to re-echo their views as far as the involvement of women in the PR profession is concerned. The researchers maintain that women make up more than half of the USA population and form the majority of the workforce in PR but yet their representation in management positions in Public Relations and many other fields is a much smaller percentage. Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000) therefore conclude that the situation has limited opportunities for most women to make meaningful contributions to their organisations.

Arguably, the tipping point here is that women have been part of the early beginnings of the PR profession but still, they have faced difficulties being treated equally in terms of their career advancement. Toth (2001) adds to the discussion on women's involvement in the PR profession. Toth (2001) notes that, historically, males were the majority in PR but the situation has changed over the last two decades as more women have entered the profession in droves and currently comprise about 70% of the PR

field. Place (2011) believes that women have made substantial contributions to PR practice and that the PR story cannot be complete without the inclusion of women. However, women continue to suffer several forms of discrimination simply because of their gender. Place (2011) citing Grunig et al (2001) argues further that, as a result of discrimination and socialisation, it has compelled a lot of women in the PR career to work harder and longer hours to enable them to achieve success. Prayitno (2001) observes that in Indonesia, PR as a profession has lagged behind because of the Indonesian people's lack of understanding about the concept of PR and how the profession helps support an organisation's communication objectives. Apart from the people's lack of understanding of the concept of PR, many organisations in Indonesia tend to hire women as PR practitioners because they believe PR involves hiring attractive women to represent them by saying pleasant things about their organisations (Prayitno 2001). However, PR goes far more than just saying nice things about organisations. Despite the worrying observation made by Prayitno (2001), Ardianto (2004) maintains that PR as an educational and professional field has evolved significantly over the years as many organisations continue to hire women into the profession and many educational institutions have also expanded especially at the undergraduate level courses in PR in Indonesia (Ardianto 2004). Leisch (2002) concur with most of the assertions made by Prayitno (2001) and Ardianto (2004) on PR practices and issues relating to Indonesia. Leisch (2002) points to the fact that, traditionally, Indonesians have always valued large joint families. The cultural norm called 'gotong royong' in which everyone is responsible for completing what he or she has agreed to do has undoubtedly influenced the political, social and economic development of Indonesia. Because of this popular norm in Indonesia, decision-making is often relatively slow and this has somewhat negatively impacted PR practice in general in that country. Ardianto (2004) concludes that the Indonesian culture has been dominated by authoritarianism which has caused Indonesian PR to lag behind even though women have dominated the teaching and practice of PR in that country. In an attempt to expand the discussion on issues relating to women in PR in Indonesia, Simorangkir (2011) conducted an extensive study on the impact of feminisation of the industry in Indonesia. Her study confirmed that women dominated PR practice. This was because most universities that offer courses in PR employed a lot of women to teach the discipline and more female students enrolled to study PR as compared to

men. The study further confirmed that Indonesia is a heavily patriarchal Republic so women often suffer all forms of discrimination including female PR practitioners. As already discussed in this chapter, Simorangkir's (2011) study further confirmed that even though women are the majority, men, however, dominate PR at a higher level. Thus, gender inequity has not been achieved in the Indonesian PR industry. Simorangkir (2011) conducted in-depth interviews with both male and female practitioners in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta because it is the capital city where PR is heavily practised. Her study covered more than 600 PR practitioners and educators listed in a directory published by the PR professional Association in Indonesia. The participants were drawn from varying backgrounds with the majority of them being women. The study concluded that the majority of women were attracted to the PR profession in Indonesia because of its social and networking aspects where the practitioners get to meet a lot of people and build relationships.

Similar observations have been made on PR practice in Russia. Tsetsura (2011) for instance conducted a study on how female PR practitioners in Russia construct the PR profession in that country. Tsetsura's (2011) study confirmed that there was no solid demographic and psychographic data on female and male practitioners working in the Russian public relations industry. However, anecdotal evidence suggested that women form the majority in the Russian PR. Tsetsura (2011) explains further that the PR profession appears to be a growing and an emerging field in Russia, so much of PR work has been sparsely documented. Tsetsura (2011) focused the study on how identities are manifested in the workplace and how this discourse about new or emerging professions like PR contributes to the construction of the profession. Using a grounded theory, the study confirmed that most women in the PR profession in Russia perceived PR as a real job that is suited for women. This was grounded on the general notion that PR is often socially constructed. Citing the earlier studies of scholars such as Berger and Luckman (1996) and McLaren (1993), Tsetsura (2011) concluded that the way female practitioners in the profession talked and perceived PR influenced why and how they practice the profession. Aldoory and Toth (2002), Creedon (1991) and Ghiloni (1984) all confirm in their studies that a lot of women often see and perceive PR as a real job that has been socially constructed and fit for women as compared to men. Despite all these developments, women continue to suffer

several forms of discrimination from their male counterparts even though in reality this should not have been the case. This is grounded on the basis that the profession itself appears to be designed for women and yet the few males in it have taken over the leadership positions and are now enjoying better working conditions than the females (Aldoory & Toth 2002). In an effort to expand the discussion on issues relating to women and PR practice globally, Geyer (2009) appears to corroborate most of the assertions made by Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000), Toth (2001) and Place (2011) among others, as far as women in the PR profession is concerned. Geyer (2009) points to a Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) report that confirmed that 70% of its members are women. What makes the situation even more drastic is the fact that a report from the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) also reveals that its membership comprises 90% of women. This situation obviously points to the fact that both the PR industry and PR majors in universities across the USA would consistently experience an influx and growth of more women wanting to enter the PR field. Geyer's (2009) study perhaps re-affirm most studies on women in PR that confirm the alluring impression that the PR profession has been socially designed and constructed for women. Yet, a good number of women in PR continue to suffer from gender disparity and other existing stereotypes that make it difficult for these women to progress to the top (Geyer 2009).

What may appear significant throughout the discourse on women in PR globally is the fact that the same issues continue to recur. Studies conducted as far back as two decades ago recorded the very issues that are being discussed in contemporary PR practices among women. Bui (1999) for instance conducted a study on how mothers in the PR profession were balancing their career and family roles. Bui (1999) citing Toth et al (1987) points to a study that was described by the researchers as a 'velvet ghetto' due to the increasing numbers of women entering the PR field. Bui (1999) explains further that until the late 1980s, most of the research that was conducted on gender issues in PR was undertaken by men. As a result of this, the women's perspective of the challenges faced by women was either deliberately overlooked or simply ignored. Over the past two decades, women have flooded and continue to flood the PR profession globally but surprisingly, women still face disparities in the marketplace. Bui (1999) concludes that the issues facing women in PR are becoming

pronounced in spite of the fact that women are the majority as far as PR practice is concerned. Brunner (2006) provides a distinct view of women's involvement in PR practice for decades. Brunner (2006) maintains that women have been part of PR from the early days and have always held majority numbers in the field but yet the majority of management positions in PR are occupied by men. Female practitioners continue to occupy technician positions, earning lower salaries, while the few male practitioners are favoured when it comes to hiring, salary and promotions. According to Brunner (2006), the situation has led to most researchers concluding that the feminisation of PR has led not only to the devaluation of women in PR but also to the marginalisation of the field itself (Aldoory & Toth 2002; Grunig 1993; Hon 1995). Based on the assertions of scholars such as Brunner (2006), Choi and Hon (2002) suggest that a small increase in the number of women in powerful positions could help to change the stereotypes that exist in the PR profession. Moreover, it is evident that women have yet to attain fair representation within the PR workforce.

In what might appear to be an elaboration on the discourse on women in PR globally, the International Association of Business Communicators Research Foundation commissioned two professional research reports in 1986 and 1989. The main objective of the study was to assess the impact of feminisation on communication. As it has been well documented, the first report that was released, "The Velvet Ghetto" report focused mainly on why women were not occupying managerial positions in their various organisations as PR practitioners. The study confirmed that women were relegated to playing the technician roles because of social expectations that most women were poor managers. Cline et al (1986) maintain that women themselves self-select and agree to play the technician role in the PR profession. In the second report commissioned by the International Association of Business Communication Research Foundation, "Beyond the Velvet Ghetto" (1989), the results indicate that women in the PR profession accept the reality of the velvet ghetto and adjust to its existence in order to succeed in their chosen profession (Toth & Cline 1989). Toth and Aldoory (2004) later carried out a further probe into the findings of "The Velvet Ghetto" and "Beyond the Velvet Ghetto" studies and made further revelations. Toth and Aldoory (2004) examined some socialisation and structuralism theories and their study concluded that socialisation skills dictate one's leadership style. The researchers, therefore, conclude

that most women lack the negotiation skills and knowledge necessary to request higher salaries and other incentives to propel them to move up the professional ladder.

Again, Toth and Aldoory's (2004) review of socialisation and structuralism theories specifically focused their analysis on transformation and transactional leadership styles and their study confirmed that most women communicate in leadership positions in a more transformational manner. In addition, the transformational style adopted by women often hinders them from effectively moving up the corporate ladder, thus remaining in the technician position while their male counterparts in the PR profession continue to occupy managerial positions. Rojahn and Willemsen (1994) make similar observations already indicated by Toth and Alddory (2004). Rojahn and Willemsen (1994) believe that men are more assertive and motivated to master their environment while women are believed to be more selfless and concerned about others. Similarly, Harper and Hirokawa (1988) note that men usually show clear traits of assertiveness and power while women tend to display traits of nurturance and open-mindedness. This, therefore, accounts for the sharp differences between men and women which extends to their leadership styles at the professional level (Harper & Hirokawa 1998).

Bates (1984) makes another interesting observation as far as women in the PR profession are concerned. Bates (1984) notes that most women are clustered in the PR technician role because the skills required by the technician role attract them to do it. In other words, a lot of women are attracted to the PR career primarily because they want to write and to be creative, hence, their preferences are a result of socialisation patterns.

Having adequately discussed the background of the chapter, the next sub-section looks at contemporary practices and issues that affect female public relations practitioners in the profession.

4.2 CONTEMPORARY PRACTICES AND SOCIETAL ISSUES OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

From studies reviewed so far in its chapter, it appears not much has changed as far as the issues relating to women in the PR profession are concerned. Studies to studies

and interviews to interviews that span over a decade which have been reviewed and compared to most recent studies analysed so far in this chapter confirms virtually the same issues already reviewed in the past almost in a chronological order. Daugherty et al (2019), for instance, in a most recent study on women in PR in the United States of America (USA) confirms the fact that women still lead in terms of numbers in PR practice in the USA which has led to a feminisation of the field. According to Daugherty et al (2019), women's enrolment in PR courses in the United States of America has skyrocketed and now exceeds 80% in undergraduate programmes. Daugherty et al (2019) employed a phenomenological approach to investigate the pathways of women entrepreneurs in PR, particularly women who founded their own PR firms. The study concentrated on those women who have managed to break the challenges in PR practice by constructing their own reality. Thirty (30) women drawn from Los Angeles, New York City and ten (10) from London fully participated in the study. The women were heads of their own PR firms which they personally founded. In-depth interviews were conducted on the challenges they faced as female PR practitioners and how they dealt with them. The study concluded that the participants faced several challenges such as discrimination and the glass ceiling but they managed to bypass these challenges by becoming their own bosses in their private PR firms. Similarly, Decker (2019) conducted a study on why more women were not making it to the top leadership positions in the Public Relations profession in the USA.

Quoting a study sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation, the study confirmed that women in PR who held leadership positions were only 4% of fortune 500 companies. This finding is consistent with most studies conducted on women in PR in most parts of the globe (Aldoory 2001; Aldoory et al 2008; Choi & Hon 2002). Decker (2019) believes that women in PR are hardworking and well-educated just like their male counterparts but yet they often struggle to make it to the top of their PR career. Decker (2019) argues further that women do not usually face barriers when entering the PR profession, but they often face multiple obstacles when it comes to advancement. In other words, most women meet more resistance and isolation in their attempt to move to the top as they face barriers such as subtle and implicit biases from their male counterparts (Decker 2019).

While acknowledging the assertions of scholars such as Daugherty et al (2019) and Decker (2019), Topic (2017) appears to provide an interesting perspective on the discussion on issues relating to women in PR. Topic (2017) explains that there is enough evidence to prove that the PR profession has been gendered. Topic (2017) adds that while most studies on women in PR have heavily concentrated on issues relating to discrimination, stereotypes, glass ceiling, pay gap, and inequality among others, a new terrain that most researchers have missed is the issue of networking and mentoring among female PR practitioners that have been ignored. Employing the approach of liberal feminism while embracing the view of radical feminism of patriarchy, the study focused on gender issues in PR. Topic (2017) insists that liberal feminism has been arguing for decades that women face inequality in almost all aspects of society and that there is a need to change the social system that will motivate women to compete for the same positions as men and be treated equally. Again, radical feminism on the other hand also believes that arguments have been made for decades that women have been systematically oppressed by men. This is because the laws of patriarchy still exist in almost all social systems and this has obviously affected the fortunes of most women including those in the PR profession. Topic (2017) makes a firm assertion that apart from the USA where the majority of the PR practitioners are women, which has made the PR profession gendered, the same situation also exists in other countries such as Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Australia, UK among other countries. Quoting a report from the House of Commons in 2014 and State of the profession reports in 2016 in the United Kingdom, it was confirmed that women were still significantly paid less than their male colleagues even if they managed to achieve senior managerial positions.

Topic et al (2019) further provide a glimpse of how women's issues in the PR profession have been drawing attention as far back as 1986 when the most published velvet ghetto study confirmed that women saw themselves as playing the role of technicians, thus expecting to be paid less than men (Cline et al 1986; Grunig 1993; Grunig 1999). Topic et al (2019) further discovered in their study that most studies on women in PR have been heavily concentrated in the USA, but recent scholarship on women in PR has extended to countries such as UK and Australia. The European communication monitor project for instance has also been monitoring the position of women in PR in

Europe in its annual research. In all these studies, it has been confirmed that the position of women has seen some improvement in comparison to the situation as was reported several decades ago when the velvet ghetto study was conducted. However, there are still several challenges that affect women in the PR profession such as the pay gap, glass ceiling and lack of mentoring among others (Dubrowski et al 2019; Place & Vanderman Winter 2018). Tench et al (2017) appear to reinforce most of the assertions made by Topic et al (2019), Dubrowski et al (2019) and Place and Vanderman Winter (2018). Tench et al (2017) explain that women have undoubtedly made a significant contribution to the PR profession. Although several studies have been conducted on women in the PR profession, very little has been done to bridge the gap between men and women as far as the PR profession is concerned. Tench et al (2017) note that several studies conducted by the European communication monitor have established that when one issue relating to women in the PR gets resolved, another one emerges. It thus appears that there has not been a lasting and concrete solution to resolving the male-female controversies in the PR profession. This is grounded on the conviction that, challenges reported about women in the PR profession have not been resolved for decades. It does not appear even as of today, that there is a clear path-way to bringing a closure to these issues (Tench et al 2017).

The issues of women in PR are re-echoed by Yeomans (2019). In a reflective study, Yeomans (2019) admits that she and other women in PR have had to adopt a masculine leadership characteristic while practising the PR profession several years back as far as the 1980s because of patriarchal issues as already mentioned in this study. This was because the business environment benefited men and disadvantaged women. This case adds to the already worrying situation that women in PR are confronted with. Although this observation was made several decades ago, not much has changed. As a result, women in the profession now have to assume and behave like men in order to progress to the top. This notion is already echoed in several studies (Fitch & Third 2010; Yeomans 2019; Yeomans 2014). The firm conclusion from these recent studies is that women in the PR profession are still underrepresented in leadership positions and subordinate to men regardless of their qualifications or experience in the profession. Yeomans (2014) in a study on women in PR in the UK maintains that female practitioners dominate in the PR profession but male

practitioners still occupy senior positions. Yeomans (2014) observes further that, a good number of female practitioners are the ones that occupy junior and middle-level positions which clearly depicts a gender gap situation in the PR profession in the UK.

While acknowledging the concerns expressed by Yeomans (2019), Yeomans (2014) and Fitch and Third (2010), it appears that the dominance of men in most professions is not only peculiar to the PR profession alone. Mills (2014) for instance notes that in the journalism profession, a similar situation is prevalent. This is because several studies on journalism have recognised the issue of 'bloke-ification' which is a situation in which women have to appear and also communicate in a style that is more masculine than what is usually perceived to be feminine in order to progress faster in their career (Mills 2014).

Lee et al (2018) present a different angle to the debate on women in PR. Lee et al (2018) insist that recent studies have confirmed that men are believed to possess more organisational power while women are generally perceived to have strong media and communication skills. This, therefore, partly explains why male practitioners are dominating in terms of occupying higher positions in the PR profession (Lee et al 2018). However, Fitch (2015) disagrees. Fitch (2015) citing Johnson (2010) is of the view that media and popular culture has contributed to the female-male PR practitioners' problems. Fitch (2015) maintains that media and popular culture has always portrayed male practitioners as important people in an organisation, while women are portrayed as trivial. This has obviously contributed to the huge disparity in terms of opportunities for female PR practitioners in the profession globally.

The next sub-section focuses mainly on gender issues in PR and the core challenges of female PR practitioners as documented in literature. These include the glass ceiling, gender disparity/discrimination, sexual harassment, pay gap and lack of mentorship for female practitioners.

4.3 GENDER ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF FEMALE PR PRACTITIONERS: A GLOBAL GLANCE

Issues affecting women in PR appear to be more pronounced and they vary from one issue to the other. As evidenced in studies already cited in this chapter, it is obvious that a good number of women have been part of PR practice for decades but yet, most of their contributions to PR as a profession and an academic discipline have been deliberately masked by researchers as very little has been documented. Despite these contributions, several challenges continue to affect their smooth progression to the top of their career. This sub-section, therefore, highlights some of the most recurring gender issues and challenges women face in the PR profession. These challenges have been catalogued in *Figure 4* and briefly discussed below:
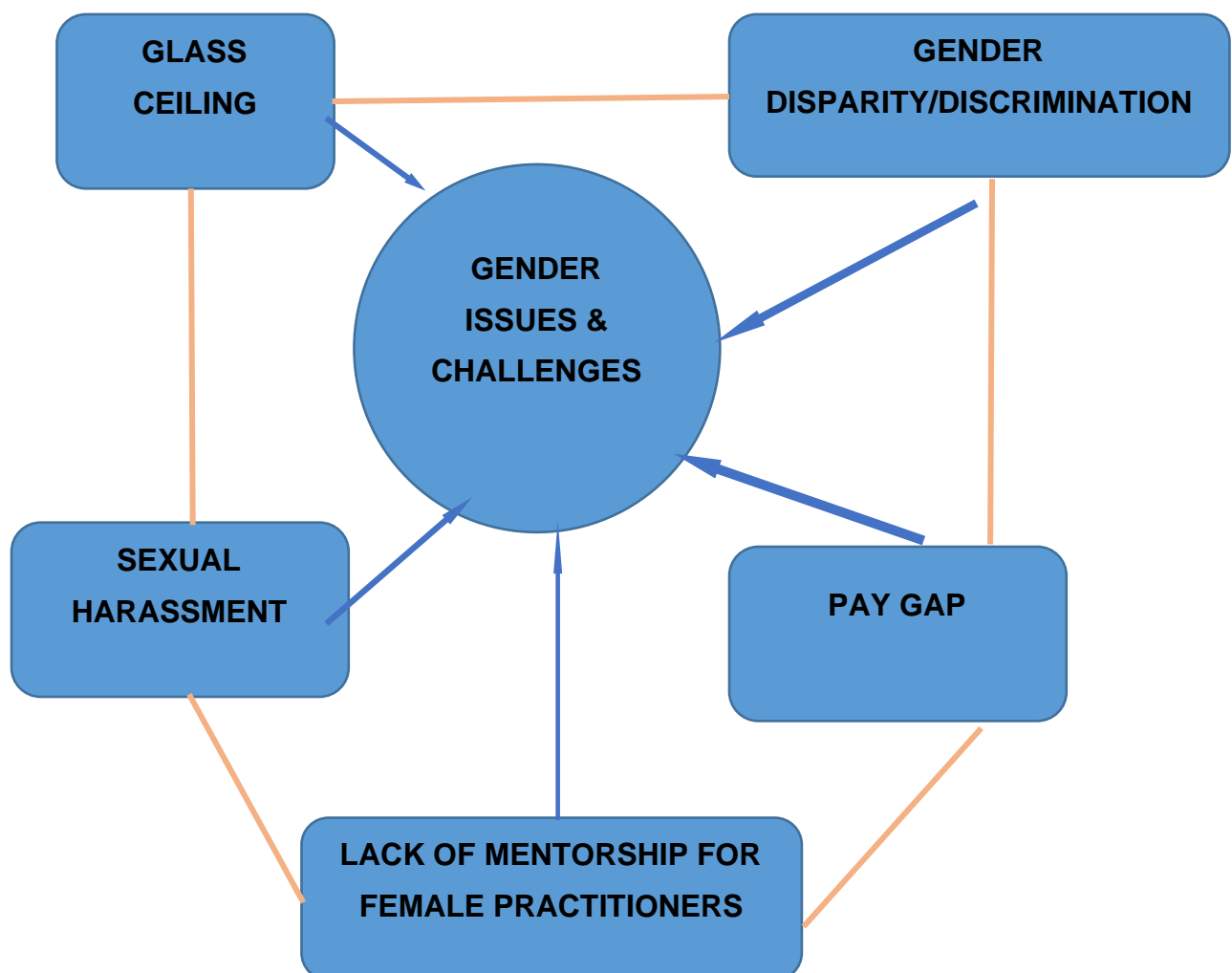
Figure 4: PR Challenges

4.3.1 Glass ceiling

Topic (2017) notes that glass ceiling has been cited as one major challenge that female PR practitioners face in the profession. Topic (2017) explains further that glass ceiling is basically artificial barriers that have been put in place to prevent most women in the PR profession from progressing to managerial positions. Topic (2017) adds that glass ceiling situation varies from country to country but insists that the situation is still very pervasive in most parts of the globe. Yeomans (2014) for instance points out that the glass ceiling is prevalent in the UK PR industry and a lot of women have suffered from the phenomenon. Yeomans (2014) indicates further that some female PR practitioners in the UK have managed to achieve success and have now progressed to the top by playing managerial roles despite the glass ceiling syndrome.

Wrigley (2002) makes similar observations already made by Topic (2017) and Yeomans (2014). Wrigley (2002) is of the view that the glass ceiling concept persists for female PR practitioners as well as communication managers in spite of the fact that the PR profession has been feminised for decades. Given that women form the majority of the PR profession, the assumption is that they should be the ones occupying higher positions but the current situation is the reverse. Aldoory (2003) describes the term glass ceiling as invisible barrier women face while attempting to be promoted. In other words, although women comprise about 70% of the PR profession, the story is completely different in terms of their composition for the percentage of higher positions in the PR profession. As far back as 1997, Wootton (1997) conducted a study on women in PR and found that only 35.7% of females were managers in PR, advertising and marketing in their respective organisations. Although this study was conducted over two decades ago, it appears not much has changed as far as the glass ceiling phenomenon in PR is concerned. Recent studies for instance sustain the claim that the glass ceiling phenomenon is still prevalent in most countries (Topic et al 2019; Dubrowski et al 2019). Babic and Hansez (2021) provide another interesting perspective on the glass ceiling phenomenon in PR. Babic and Hansez (2021) believe that there is a political twist to the concept of the glass ceiling which Babic and Hansez (2021) explain as the unseen, yet unreachable barriers that keep minorities and

women from rising to the top of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications, experience or achievements.

Thomas (2005) notes that many barriers hinder the progression of a lot of female PR practitioners despite their growing numbers. Thomas (2005) believes that the lack of presence in prestigious white-collar jobs and their progression is a result of the glass ceiling phenomenon. Thomas (2005) adds a very interesting twist to the glass ceiling phenomenon in the PR profession. Thomas (2005) insists that women create the glass ceiling themselves. This is because many male chief executive officers (CEOs) often fault women as having created the glass ceiling phenomenon themselves, thus, women's lack of interest, family responsibilities and low numeric representation in leadership positions is what is keeping a lot of women outside of the core of the corporate ladder (Thomas 2005). Murphy (2005) appears to support the views expressed by Thomas (2005). Murphy (2005) describes glass ceiling as a hidden barrier that stifles the growth of women into top positions in the PR profession. Bose and Whaley (2001) provide some historical perspectives on the glass ceiling phenomenon. Bose and Whaley (2001) insist that the glass ceiling situation as it has been discussed extensively in the past, and now is a result of sex segregation in the workforce. According to Bose and Whaley (2001), the presence of sex segregation in the workforce has undoubtedly influenced gendered social expectations for both men and women. Thus, men were always seen as the breadwinners, so women were not required to work. Therefore, as women began to find their presence in most industries, including PR, certain barriers have been deliberately put in place by men to prevent them from progressing to the top of their careers (Bose & Whaley 2001).

Despite all the debates on the glass ceiling phenomenon in the PR profession, some scholars appear to present opposing views. Gallagher (1990) for instance argues that women in the PR profession are simply complaining when it should not be the case. According to Gallagher (1990), a lot of female practitioners have deliberately chosen to stay in technician positions. This is because many women do not want to reach the top. After all, they just do not want to, in the sense that women themselves make a conscious decision to enter professions and also choose career paths that often allow them to spend more time with their families and children. Therefore, this situation partly

accounts for women's inability to compete favourably with their male colleagues in the PR profession. However, Jacobson and Tortorello (1990) appear to disagree with the assertions made by Gallagher (1990). Jacobson and Tortorello (1990) believe that numerous studies have confirmed the presence of the glass ceiling phenomenon among women and that the few women who manage to progress to the managerial levels by breaking the glass ceiling are still paid lower salaries and face several forms of discrimination. This, therefore, appears to confirm how pervasive the glass ceiling phenomenon may be affecting the smooth progression of female PR practitioners globally. Recent scholarship on women in PR that discuss the effect of the glass ceiling phenomenon in the PR profession appears to confirm this claim (Place & Vandeman 2018; Tench et al 2017).

What appears very significant as far as the glass ceiling discourse is concerned is the fact that a lot of women have been heavily represented in the PR profession, but their smooth advancement into managerial positions has become a mirage. Gaggioli (2011) makes some contributions to the debate. Gaggioli (2011) notes that the majority of PR practitioners are women, but yet there is inequality between men and women in the PR profession because of inadequate growth opportunities offered to female PR practitioners. Gaggioli (2011), quoting the U.S Department of Labour explains glass ceiling as any artificial barrier based on a deliberate organisational bias that prevents qualified individuals from advancing upwards in their organisations into management-level positions - a situation that women in the PR profession have suffered for several decades (Gaggioli 2011).

4.3.2 Gender disparity/discrimination

Grunig, Toth and Hon (2000) citing Wood (2005) argue that sex is a designation that is based on biology, while gender is socially and psychologically constructed. In other words, sex is the condition of being biologically male or female, whiles gender is the acting out or displaying of male or female traits. There is no doubt that gender issues continue to play a crucial role in PR practice globally. Toth and Cline (1989) for instance reveal in their study that during the 20th century, PR evolved from an originally male-dominated profession to an increasingly female-dominated industry. In the light of this

evolution, the PR profession has undoubtedly experienced a somewhat unique set of gender-based phenomena which has created a disparity between male and female PR practitioners (Toth & Cline 1989). Many studies have confirmed that, as a result of the evolution of the PR profession with its accompanying change in the environment, a lot of female PR practitioners have experienced and continue to experience systematic gender discrimination in terms of pay, less power and very little influence (Grunig & Hon 2001). Aldoory and Toth (2002) note that issues related to gender in the PR profession have often created a divide between male and female PR practitioners. This is because, women in the PR profession have suffered all forms of gender discrimination including the pay gap, lack of advancement opportunities and sexual discrimination among others. The scholars indicate further that career roles for instance have been a major source of inequality as women have often been disadvantaged by being placed into technician roles rather than managerial roles. This is because of the perception that they are perceived as not being good managers or not tough enough for corporate life. Therefore, they may not be fit to play their managerial roles well (Aldoory & Toth 2002). These perceptions and stereotypes could be a contributory factor to why a lot of women may be prevented from getting placed into managerial positions.

While this is the case, Toth and Grunig (1993) earlier observed that even when female PR practitioners are placed in managerial positions, they still perform technician roles, whereas men in managerial roles are found to mostly perform managerial tasks and continue to take on more advanced positions. Reskin and Roos (1990) suggest that sex segregation has been partly attributed as one of the causes of gender discrimination among female PR practitioners globally. The authors note that some women move into different occupations including PR at different rates, rather than in all occupations generally. This means that employers who are mostly men unconsciously permit women to enter into fields that are of no interest to men or because those jobs may be socially constructed to be fit for women. Perhaps, it is because women may possess certain specific characteristics that may make them better to perform such roles. For example, women may appear to be best in PR than in other professions because they possess certain skills and expertise that are well fit for the PR profession than they would have found in other jobs (Reskin & Roos 1990).

Wood (2003) supports most of the views already expressed by Grunig, Toth and Hon (2000), Toth and Cline (1989), Aldoory and Toth (2002) and Reskin and Roos (1990). Wood (2003) insists that gender roles and stereotypes work in conjunction with each other as well as perpetuate each other in society and at workplaces. Unlike a person's sex which is biological and genetic, gender is often acquired through social interactions and most of the time will change over some time. In other words, gender is a social construction which often relates to the roles men and women perform. Wood (2003) is of the firm conviction that gender issues have had a lot of influence on PR practice to the extent that it limits women from filling higher positions for which they may be qualified.

Toth (1989) believes that there is a need for measures to be put in place to achieve gender balance in PR. Toth (1989) notes further that the increasing feminisation of PR and the need to achieve gender balance will pave way for younger female PR practitioners to achieve their goals in the PR profession by progressing higher to managerial positions.

O'Neill (2003) presents a distinct view on the issue of gender discrimination against women in the PR profession. O'Neill points out that a lot of women have been discriminated against in the PR profession to the extent that even when women are placed in higher positions in their organisations, they are given less power as compared to their male counterparts who are also managers. As a result, women are often excluded from higher decision-making processes so they usually have less influence on issues relating to their organisation (O'Neill 2003). Lee et al (2018) make similar arguments espoused by O'Neill (2003). These scholars believe that women have always been discriminated against as a result of their gender. This is because there is a growing conventional notion that men are believed to possess more organisational power while women are seen as people who possess strong media communication skills. This situation has undoubtedly affected how women have been treated in the PR profession as a result of gender discrimination.

While acknowledging the assertions of scholars such as O'Neill (2003), Toth (1989), Reskin and Roos (1990) and Aldoory and Toth (2002), Choi and Hon (2002) appear to

corroborate most of the assertions made by these scholars on gender and how women in the PR profession have always been disadvantaged. Choi and Hon (2002) note that women have outnumbered men in the PR profession for decades, but yet several studies have confirmed the fact that women who achieve management status in the PR field do not benefit much from their positions as compared to their male colleagues simply because of their gender. Choi and Hon (2002) citing the works of Toth et al (1989) insist that gender-based inequities exist in most aspects of PR and women have always been discriminated against. Choi and Hon (2002) conclude that considering the female majority in PR and the fact that several barriers stifle the smooth progression of women in the PR profession, there is a need for researchers to continue to look into issues affecting women in PR as a major focus in the research field. Choi and Hon (2002) are of the firm conviction that if these efforts are carried through, they will go a long way to help in eliminating gender discrimination in the PR profession. In the same vein, Krugler (2017) posits that one major factor that contributes to women's struggle to advance into higher positions in the PR profession is gender stereotypes. Krugler (2017) maintains that women have made significant contributions to the PR profession and must be given equal opportunities to progress in their careers just like their male counterparts in the PR profession.

4.3.3 Sexual harassment

Many studies have confirmed sexual harassment as one major obstacle that most female PR practitioners face in the workforce (Borgar 1993; Bovet 1993; Grunig & Dozier 1992, Segrave 1994). Bovet (1993) for instance notes that sexual harassment has been pervasive in the PR profession for years and that one out of three women has often reported being sexually harassed on the job. Bovet (1993) citing a survey by Women Executives in PR found sexual harassment of female PR practitioners to be widespread. In what appears to be an elaboration of Bovet's (1993) arguments on sexual harassment of females in the PR profession, Fitzpatrick and Rubin (1995) insist that studies on sexual harassment in the field of PR are crucial because Public Relations practitioners, as well as their organisations and the societies they serve, can be confronted head-on on issues relating to sexual harassment. In other words, female PR practitioners could be sexually harassed or may be called upon to speak to issues

of sexual harassment in their organisations internally or externally. Therefore, there is a need for more research to be carried out on sexual harassment in the PR field (Fitzpatrick & Rubin 1995). Toth and Aldoory (2001) also found that sexual harassment is prevalent in the PR profession and in most cases female PR practitioners are the main victims. Grunig et al (2001) note similar issues already echoed by Bovet (1993) and Fitzpatrick and Rubin (1995). Grunig et al (2001) insist that a lot of women in the PR profession have reported being harassed in the workplace and as a result, the situation has limited their career opportunities.

There is no doubt that women have made significant contributions to PR as a profession and an academic discipline. As women increasingly take their positions as PR practitioners in various organisations, their ability to succeed in their careers will be to work in an environment that is free of sexual harassment because it can impact negatively on their overall performance. Jones's (1996) study on strategies to employ in responding to, or avoiding and eliminating sexual harassment in PR cannot escape mention. Jones (1996) explains that the first strategy is to establish ways for preventing sexual harassment at the organisational level. The second strategy according to Jones (1996) is to provide strategies for potential harassers to be identified and made to stop their harassing behaviours, and finally, provide strategies for victims to handle those who harass them (Jones 1996). Given Jones's (1996) solution to sexual harassment, these are important solutions organisations can adopt to prevent all forms of harassment in the workplace against female PR practitioners.

Whether or not sexual harassment is reported, its existence in the work environment obviously leads to several debilitating personal, professional and social effects on women in the PR profession. Jones (1996) concludes that sexual harassment in the workplace often leads to embarrassment, disgust, anger, shame, humiliation, depression, and loss of trust, among others. Therefore, organisations must take pragmatic steps to stop all forms of harassment in their workplace, regardless of whether it affects women or men in the PR profession. Research on gender in the PR profession often seeks to uncover the visible and invisible forms of sexual harassment female PR practitioners face. Serini et al (1998) for instance found that sexual harassment in the PR career included men's ignorance of the role of women in a board

meeting, questioning women about their plans for marriage and children, the making of jokes about women in the workplace and the assumption that women who receive promotions do so by sleeping with those in decision-making positions are worrying observations (Serini et al 1998). These factors negatively affect the performance of women in the PR profession. Hon (1995) earlier described one aspect of sexual harassment as 'lookism'. Hon (1995) explains lookism as a form of sexual harassment that focuses either positively or negatively on women's appearance rather than their performance on the job. But Grunig, Toth and Hon (2001) appear to disagree with the findings of Hon (1995). These scholars are of the view that the concept of 'lookism' in PR is not peculiar to men alone. They argue that female PR practitioners also engage in lookism too as an attempt to captivate men and get their attention in the profession.

4.3.4 Pay gap

Like many of the challenges women face in the PR profession, pay gap has been extensively reported as major challenge women in PR face and this situation has affected their overall performance in their chosen career. Murphy (2005) argues that women who have taken up full-time employment in the PR industry earn less than their male counterparts even if they possess the same qualification and experience. Grunig et al (2001) appear to support the argument of Murphy (2005). Grunig et al (2001) note that the salaries of women in PR have always been much lower than those of men, regardless of age, experience or the type of organisation women found themselves in (Grunig et al 2001). Chabria (2005) makes similar observations. Chabria (2005) maintains that several studies have confirmed that women in the PR profession earn about 30% less as compared to their male colleagues. Grunig et al (2001) argue further that three main reasons may account for why women are paid less than men- women are generally perceived to have less experience and tend to be younger than men who are already in the field because of the recent influx of women in PR, women typically seek jobs in lower-paying organisations and finally women often seek jobs in lower-paying positions. Although Grunig et al (2001) may have presented valid arguments, it stands to reason that these arguments may not be sustained in contemporary PR practice because a lot of women now appear to rub shoulders with men in almost every sphere of life. Invariably, these arguments could fuel the

perception that women in PR may not be good managers and therefore, are reportedly being unfairly treated in the PR profession.

However, Hutton (2005) appears to disagree with Grunig et al (2001). Hutton (2005) insists that past studies dispute the claim of salary discrimination in PR because the arguments have not been well-grounded or comprehensive enough. In other words, the evidence as represented statistically does not appear to support the claim of a pay gap among women in the PR profession. It is worth noting that, Hutton's (2005) study found that the most important factor contributing to salary variation in PR among women was rather years of professional experience and not gender or other factors.

It can be observed that Hutton's (2005) study correlates with Broom and Dozier's (1995) earlier study which confirmed that men in managerial roles earn higher than women based on experience but not their gender. The tipping point here is that experience and hard work may help one to earn more and gain career success than merely because of the person's gender.

Leyland (2000) offers an interesting perspective on the pay gap debate between men and women in the PR profession. Leyland (2000) maintains that several studies examining salaries in the PR profession have found a significant difference in the mean and median between men and women, where men earn more salaries than women. Leyland's (2000) study confirmed that women were still paid less when their years of experience, age, job interruptions and level of education were taken into consideration. Cline et al (1986) earlier confirmed the same claims indicated by Leyland (2000). Persuaded by the findings of Cline et al (1986) and Leyland (2000), Toth and Aldoory (2001) confirm the same findings where women in the PR profession appeared to be paid substantially lower as compared to their male counterparts with the same experience and qualification. Seideman and Leyland (2000) sustain the assertions of Cline et al (1986). They opine that there exists a sharp discrimination in salary based on gender because men earn higher than women in the PR profession but insist that years of experience account for much of the variance in the relationship between gender and salary. However, gender accounted for part of the difference (Seideman & Leyland 2000). In what appears to be an elaboration of Seideman and

Leyland's (2005) assertion on pay gap in PR between men and women, Aldoory and Toth (2002) further identified some factors that explain the salary differential in the PR profession. They insist that women's lack of negotiation skills, socialisation of men and women, gender discrimination, sexism, women's attempt to balance work and family, recruitment and retention efforts for men and historical parity are the main causes for the pay gap phenomenon in the PR profession.

Anderson (2003) believes that the concept of unequal pay between men and women is not peculiar to the PR profession alone, but cuts across all business contexts. Anderson (2003) found that several barriers that inhibit women from earning equal pay include work-life balance challenges and the lack of awareness among senior executives as well as inadequate networking, mentoring and visibility opportunities. To this extent, these challenges affect the progression of women in PR once they occur and thus prevent female PR practitioners from excelling and achieving equality in the workplace.

In a similar study, Sha and Dozier (2011) posit that the issue of pay gap between female practitioners and their male counterparts is an old age issue that spans several decades, but it appears very little has changed over the years as confirmed in recent scholarship about the continued existence of the gender pay gap that has undoubtedly stifled the progression of a lot of women in PR (Blau & Khan 2017). It can be argued that the gendered pay gap has the propensity to harm not only individual women who are underpaid but their families and professional life as a whole. Adding their voice to the debate on why women earn lower pay as compared to their male counterparts in PR, Dozier et al (2007) argue that career interruptions among female PR practitioners account for why they are paid below men in the same career or position. The scholars believe that the situation whereby women take time off from their careers to have children partly accounts for the reason why they are paid lower as compared to their male counterparts in the PR profession.

Hutton (2005) makes similar arguments brought forth by Dozier et al (2007). Hutton insists that women in PR often work fewer hours per day as compared to men, thus it

partly explains why women earn less as compared to their male counterparts who may possess the same professional experience and academic qualifications.

4.3.5 Lack of mentorship for most female practitioners

An American author, Peggy Anderson, once said:

> *"Great women are not considered so because of personal achievements, but for the effect, their efforts have had on the lives of countless others. From daring feats of bravery to the understated ways of a compassionate heart, great women possess a common strength of character. Through their passion and persistence, they have advanced womanhood and the world"* (Gaggioli 2011:1).

The above statement is a profound quote from a renowned author, Peggy Anderson. It is obvious that women of virtue do not set out mainly to achieve things for themselves but they seek to positively impact society and the world as a whole. Studies have confirmed that the contributions of women to PR in terms of its teaching and practice have been enormous (Aldoory 2005; Aldoory 2009). There is no doubt that mentorship is essential for female PR practitioners especially the younger ones who may need a lot of guidance in the profession to mature. Female PR practitioners also need mentors for special and professional development counsel to guide them through real-life challenges and preparedness for their future ambitions. To this end, female PR practitioners need seasoned industry professionals or senior practitioners to inspire and coach them to help shape their professional lives and build their careers. Mentors can drive immediate impact on junior female practitioners by giving them the needed professional guidance to address gaps in their personal and professional lives (Aldoory 2005; Aldoory 2009; Burke & McKeen 1990; Schor 1997).

It is worth noting that most recent studies on mentoring that focus mainly on women in PR appear to be scarce. Schor (1997) points out that mentoring female PR practitioners can help women to achieve success. Martin (1990) observes that one major obstacle that has hindered the advancement of women in PR in their organisations is that some male practitioners feel uncomfortable relating to women as

equals to mentor them. Burke and McKeen (1990) maintain that mentoring is crucial to career success for women because, women may not be given the same opportunity to be mentored as often as their male counterparts in the PR profession. Burke and McKeen (1990) citing Bahniuk and Hill (1998) observe further that there is a shortage of women mentors and those who are available are often viewed as less powerful as compared to male mentors. Noe (1985) maintains that a good number of female PR practitioners believe they cannot receive equal opportunities in the workforce without mentoring. In other words, climbing the corporate ladder may continue to be a challenge if mentoring does not exist in their organisations.

Notwithstanding all these assertions made by scholars on the mentorship of female PR practitioners, some scholars believe that only female PR practitioners should be the ones to mentor their own instead of men (Kalbfleish & Keyton 1995). This is because female practitioners being mentored by men may be disadvantaged due to sex differences. In contrast, Burke and McKeen (1995) earlier found that professional women were just as comfortable with male mentors as they would have been with female mentors. Therefore, a female PR practitioner mentored by a male counterpart will not be disadvantaged in any way. Tam et al (1995) add their voice to the discussion on mentorship for female PR practitioners. The scholars argue that the empowerment of women practitioners is necessary. They further make the point that female managers need to possess more power in their organisations to enable them to mentor their subordinate female practitioners through training courses so that they can get involved in strategic decision-making activities in their organisations. Tam et al (1995) further found in their study that women in PR can employ a variety of strategies to empower themselves including mentoring relationships, entrepreneurship and work-life balance. By so doing, the mentor could create an opportunity for career growth and advancement opportunities for female PR practitioners (Tam et al 1995).

The next sub-section briefly addresses the position and role of women in the public relations profession generally.

4.4 THE POSITION AND ROLE OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

Numerous studies have confirmed the fact that public relations has become a gendered profession (Daymon & Demetrious 2010; Fitch & Third 2010; Verhoeven & Aarts, 2010). This is grounded on the evidence that the majority of PR practitioners are now females. However, one of the major questions that will usually come to mind will be the position and role of women in the PR profession. Such considerations are vital because, one is often interested in the exact position that the female PR practitioner will occupy in their organisation. In short, where is her location in the organisational hierarchy? The assumption is that no matter the role or position of the female PR practitioner in the organisation, she should have direct and easy access to the top management of the organisation and also be allowed to contribute to higher decisions in the organisation. In other words, a female PR practitioner should be accorded the appropriate status to function well in the organisation. Therefore, the positions that female PR practitioners have to occupy ought to be looked into by management, so that they can make a meaningful contribution to help achieve organisational goals. One can therefore make a firm argument that female PR practitioners can make a visible impact in the field by working hard if management allows them to operate without impediments. Additionally, there should be greater opportunities for a lot of women in PR to be the driving force and also take up leadership positions in the organisations they serve.

There is no doubt that women often fall short when it comes to their presence in leadership roles, executive or top levels. Therefore, organisations need to constantly identify and invest in women practitioners to lead in top positions and boardroom roles to enable them to realise their potential and also compete with their male counterparts in the PR profession. By extension, one can also make a reasonable argument that the person who has the power in the organisation obviously determines the position and the kind of roles women play in the organisation. Women in the PR profession mostly play the technician role because they occupy lower positions in the organisation's hierarchy. Perhaps, it is a result of the lack of equality between men and women that has always created that as void in terms of the positions men and women occupy on the organisational ladder.

The structuralist for instance believes that the structure of the organisational environment is widely assumed to be the primary determinant of career success and a practitioner's ability to influence decisions in the organisation (Kanter 1977). In that vein, women's position in the organisation has obviously hindered their ability to play influential roles and take part in higher decision-making processes. Kanter (1976) notes that women often have less power or influence than men, in part, due to their exclusion from formal power structures. Smirth and Grenier (1982) believe that the inequality between men and women is not peculiar to the PR profession alone. This is because women in several professions are mostly channelled into roles that are more routine in nature and this often offers them very limited relevance to solving organisational problems. So, their access to higher decision-making processes in the organisation is usually limited.

Grunig (1995) insists that female PR practitioners occupy lower positions because of invisible barriers that limit their promotion into powerful positions. While this could be the case, Grunig, Toth and Hon (2001) observe that women who manage to achieve management status in the PR field do not benefit in their positions fully as compared to their male counterparts. This is because female managers are not offered the same opportunities as their male colleagues enjoy in similar positions. Selnow and Wilson (1985) appear to concur with most of the views already expressed by Grunig (1995) and Grunig, Toth and Hon (2001). The scholars make the point that the majority of women in the PR profession cluster in the technician role because the skills required by their role attract them to do it. This situation often explains why they do not occupy top or managerial positions in the PR profession.

Arenstein (2019) offers another perspective on women in PR and the positions they occupy. Arenstein (2019) notes that women dominate the PR industry globally. The scholar points to the fact that in the USA, women represent about sixty to eighty per cent of the industry's workforce, yet, women occupy just one in five senior positions. Arenstein's (2019) study reinforces most of the assertions already espoused by Grunig (1995), Grunig, Toth and Hon (2001), Selnow and Wilson (1985) and Smirth and Grenier (1982) on the position and the roles that the female PR practitioners play or occupy. Women have made enormous contributions to PR practice and teaching. The

next sub-section, therefore, sheds light on the contributions of women to the PR profession.

4.5 THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF WOMEN TO THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSION

As already highlighted in this chapter, women in the PR profession have made enormous contributions to PR as a profession and an academic discipline (Creedon 2001; Grunig 1989). Henry (1988) for instance notes that a good number of women in the PR profession have contributed to its teaching and practice which has culminated in shaping the profession. Citing the great works of Doris Fleischman Bernays who was the wife and partner of Edward Bernays for 58 years, she made great contributions to Public Relations research and teaching. Yet, she was unnoticed until Henry's (1988) study which brought out her stories into the public domain. Doris wrote a book titled, *"Careers for women: A practical guide to opportunity for women in America business"*. Arguably, her work made a significant advancement in the PR industry. Similarly, Miller (1997) points out that Jane Stewart who served as a vice president and later president of a private PR firm, Group Attitudes Corporation, developed a collaborative management style that was used to mitigate PR or communication problems. This effort by Jane Stewart undoubtedly helped in the shaping of the PR profession.

Creedon (2001) in her study listed several women who have made a lot of contributions to PR practice and teaching, including Susan Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Matilda Joslyn Gage and Harriet Beecher Stowe, among others, who have received little mention in PR textbooks despite their enormous contributions to the PR profession through their works as activists and promoters. Gower (2000) makes similar observations already made by Creedon (2001) and Henry (1988). Gower (2000) examined the images and roles of women as they were published in a Public Relations Journal from 1945-1972. Gower (2000) noted in the study that between 1945 -1955, a lot of women were established and very active in the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). This was a period when several women fought in liberation movements in the PR profession which confirmed the contributions of women to PR.

Notwithstanding the views of scholars such as Creedon (2001) and Gower (2000), Lamme (2007) is of the view that the impact of women in the PR industry has been very positive in the sense that women who worked in the early mainstream Public Relations have helped to create a blueprint for women who are going to seek to enter the PR profession and also make a similar impact. Therefore, an understanding of the role of women in the PR profession as well as the history of PR and women's involvement will contribute to reconstructing issues in the PR profession. It is clear from the assertions of scholars that a good number of women have obviously made remarkable contributions to PR in terms of its teaching and practice. Several women have researched and published on PR. Others have doubled as PR educators while some others have even founded their own private PR firms. All these efforts of women, no doubt have contributed to shaping the profession and making it what it is today (Creedon 2001; Gower 2000; Grunig 1989; Henry 1988; Lamme 1999). Based on the assertions of these scholars, one can reasonably conclude that a good number of women appear to be advancing in the corporate world. Admittedly, the progression of women in the PR profession has been at a snail's pace. In other words, women have made great strides as PR practitioners in terms of how much effort they have made in researching on issues that do not only affect women in the PR profession, but the PR discipline in general. A good number of these women have doubled as practitioners and publishers. Some of them have taught and practised PR for decades while others have established their own PR firms and are making enormous contributions to the profession. The formation of the female PR practitioner's movement in most parts of the globe has undoubtedly advanced how the PR profession has been shaped and the untold stories of women being part of PR practice for decades (Creedon 1989; Miller 1997).

The focus of this chapter was to review the literature on women in PR globally, continentally and in Ghana. Having adequately discussed PR and the issues affecting women globally, the next sub-section will take a look at women in public relations on the African continent. It must be noted, however, that studies on women in PR on the Ghanaian or African continent have been scarce.

4.6 WOMEN IN PR: THE AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

As already noted in this study, scholarship on PR in Africa generally has been sparsely documented (Blankson 2009; Mersham, Skinner & Rensburg 2011; Van Heerden 2004). The situation is even worse when it comes to studies that specifically focus on women in PR. It must be emphasised, however, that Africa is gradually becoming influential in the contribution of knowledge in PR and hopefully, will expand to research on women in PR on the African continent. Given the dearth of information on PR in Africa generally, very little can be traced as many scholarly works have not been documented. Except for countries such as South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria and other few African countries, very little has been documented as far as PR practice is concerned (Skinner 2013; Skinner & Mershan 2009; Tilson 2014; Van Heerden 2004). The lack of studies on PR on the African continent has also been re-echoed by many scholars as several attempts have been made to address the research gap in Africa (Oksiutyez & Enombo 2011; Thompson 2018; Wu & Baah-Boakye 2014). Most recent scholarship continues to confirm the lack of studies on PR in Africa. Anani-Bossman (2020) for instance contends that despite the remarkable growth of the PR profession on the African continent since the early 2000s, there is still a paucity of scholarly works on Public Relations within the continent except for South Africa which appears to have contributed immensely to a global discussion on PR. In Ghana, for instance, the country has enjoyed a stable economic growth for more than two decades, but very little has been documented on PR pedagogy (Anani-Bossman, 2020). In other words, the African continent is still a greenfield as far as research or scholarship on PR is concerned. An electronic literature search on the subject of women in PR in Africa by this researcher has resulted in virtually no information. Apart from the limited electronic database information, no textbooks on women in PR in Africa could be traced although there is a plethora of publications on women in PR in Europe, America and other parts of the globe.

This situation has been re-echoed by Van Heerden (2004) in a study on PR practice in Africa as the scholar laments about the lack of scholarship on PR on the African continent. It thus appears as though very little has changed over the years. Given that very little has been documented about African PR, African PR scholars need to

contribute a body of knowledge in PR as evidenced in the western world. It must be noted that Africa has an umbrella body in the Federation of African Public Relations Association (FAPRA), which has been in existence since 1975. Obviously, the association is better placed to make valuable contributions in terms of research in PR and the development of the profession. Mersham and Skinner (2009) for instance note that scholars on the African continent are making frantic efforts to contribute to the body of knowledge on PR through publications on the practice in Africa. Skinner and Rensburg (2011) maintain that the growing nature of PR practice and scholarship on the African continent should help researchers to build a body of knowledge of PR and even go ahead to develop theories based on African perspectives.

As already established in this sub-section, scholarship on women in PR on the African continent has been rare. The next sub-section will therefore focus on issues relating to women in the PR profession in the Ghanaian context.

4.6.1 Women in Public Relations in Ghana

As already echoed in most aspects of this study, particularly in chapter one, major studies on women in PR have been rare. Studies on Public Relations as a profession and an academic discipline appear to have improved as African scholars are now vigorously researching the PR field. Others have even called on African scholars to attempt to develop theories on PR that can fit the African context (Blankson 2009; Kiambi 2014; Kiambi & Nadler 2012, Mersham, Rensburg & Skinner 1995; Ming-Yi & Baah-Boakye 2009; Steyn 2005).

In Ghana so far, only three studies have been found on women in Public Relations (Addotey 2011; Bekoe 2012 & Okorley 2015). Bekoe's (2012) published book concentrated heavily on the profiles of selected top-notch female PR practitioners both in Ghana and a few at the international level. Bekoe (2012) catalogued their contributions to PR based on their years of experience and how they managed to rise to the top of their careers as female PR practitioners. Addotey (2011) and Okorley (2015) on the other hand are the only other two works found in Ghana that focused on women in PR. These are dissertations from two universities in Ghana that offer

communication-related courses (Ghana Institute of Journalism and the University of Ghana). From the foregoing, there appears to be a paucity of information on major studies that particularly focus on women in PR in Ghana. In the case of Okorley (2015), the scholar focused her study on gender issues in PR among female PR practitioners in Ghana. She employed a qualitative approach and purposively sampled her participants using in-depth interviews of female PR practitioners in three (3) corporate organisations in Ghana. The findings of her study confirmed that female PR practitioners were affected by gender discrimination. This was a result of the fact that there was a pay gap issue where male practitioners in Ghana were paid substantially higher than female PR practitioners even if they possessed the same qualifications and years of experience. Thus, the position of most female practitioners was low on the organisational ladder. In other words, most female PR practitioners were placed into technician instead of managerial positions, regardless of their enormous experience in the PR field. The findings of Addotey (2011) which was conducted three years earlier, gives a sharp contradiction of what was found in Okorley (2015).

Employing an almost similar approach adopted by Okorley (2015), Addotey's (2011) study was aimed at replicating studies on women in PR that have been mostly situated to the West. She compared studies already done in that area from the West to the Ghanaian or African context. The study confirmed that the Ghanaian PR field has been feminised as evidenced in most parts of the globe (Aldoory & Toth 2002; Aldoory 2003; Russell-Loretz 2007; Toth 2001; Wrigley 2002). Again, the study investigated gender inequities against women in terms of their position and roles played as well as remuneration. She conducted in-depth interviews with ten (10) female PR practitioners in Ghana. The participants were drawn from accredited members of the Institute of Public Relations, Ghana (IPRG) using their database. The study concluded that as of 2011, the PR industry in Ghana was not feminised and that female PR practitioners were not discriminated against concerning their roles, position or pay. In other words, there were no discrepancies in salary between men and women PR practitioners in Ghana. The study concluded that a good number of female PR practitioners played managerial roles just like their male counterparts once they possessed the same qualification and experience. Based on the findings of Addotey (2011), it can be argued that female PR practitioners in Ghana can make a positive and visible impact in the

PR field if impediments are not put in place to stifle their progression in the PR field. Persuaded by the assertions and findings of Okorley (2015) and Addotey (2011), the next sub-section will briefly highlight women in PR Ghana movement.

4.6.2 Women in Public Relations Ghana (WIPRG) movement

The Women in PR Ghana (WIPRG) movement was founded by Ms. Faith Senam Ocloo and was registered in May 2017 as a non-profit organisation (www.globalwpr.com/groups). The main aim of the organisation is to empower and mentor younger and budding female PR and communication practitioners to be able to network and also advance in their careers. The founder in collaboration with other stakeholders has organised several successful annual Women in PR Ghana summits as well as other workshops and conferences in the country.

Mission Statement

Women in PR Ghana has its mission statement: *"To become the leading organisation in Ghana that advocates for women and professionalism in PR practice while providing opportunities for career advancements, mentorship, networking and leadership"*. Just like it has been reported in other countries, women in PR movements have been at the forefront of fighting for equal rights and better conditions of service for female practitioners in the profession. This movement is one of the other efforts being made by female PR practitioners globally to bridge the disparity between men and women in the profession in Ghana and other parts of the globe. Arguably, these movements continue to shape how PR is practised globally and also draw attention to women's issues in the PR profession and how they can be mitigated. These women's movements have always served as fertile grounds for organisers to share some new perspectives in contemporary PR practices and also sharpen the skills as well as expertise of their members to be able to position themselves and rise to the top of the corporate ladder (www.globalwpr.com/groups).

4.7 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The chapter discussed issues relating to women in Public Relations by reviewing literature globally, continentally and in Ghana. The literature review was partitioned into two sections. The first section focused on literature on women in PR that spanned a decade or more. The second section on the other hand concentrated on the most recent scholarship on women in PR globally. It was noted in the literature that most of the issues that affected women several decades ago, are almost the same issues that are being reported in recent scholarship. Therefore, it appears very little has changed over the years as it can be reasonably concluded that when one issue on women in PR is solved, a new one emerges. The literature reviewed in this chapter confirmed that glass ceiling, gender disparity, pay gap, sexual harassment and lack of mentorship for most female PR practitioners were the main issues affecting the smooth progression of female PR practitioners and these issues reflect a global perspective. The main reason for partitioning the literature on women in PR was to compare and contrast the core issues in order to deconstruct the main trends in past and most current scholarship on women in PR globally. This undoubtedly has given a good grasp of issues in the PR industry even as the academic debate on women in PR continues to present interesting perspectives from both male and female scholars. Apart from the challenges women face in the PR profession, the chapter also discussed the position and role of female PR practitioners. Additionally, the chapter discussed the contributions of female PR practitioners to the PR profession in terms of its teaching and practice. It was confirmed in the literature that, although a good number of women have made substantial contributions to the PR field, very little has been documented about their efforts. This has undoubtedly partly contributed to their inability to progress up the corporate ladder at a faster pace. Concerning literature on PR within the African and local contexts, it was confirmed that very little has been documented on PR as far as the continent is concerned. However, many African scholars are working assiduously to bridge the research gap and even develop theories to fit the African context. The chapter concluded by highlighting on issues relating to women in PR in Ghana which has received very little scholarship, except for a few students' dissertations and a Women in PR movement which was formed in Ghana in 2017 to

mentor and empower young female PR and communication practitioners in the country.

The next chapter of the study discusses in detail the methodology. Specifically, the chapter discusses the research paradigm, approach, population, data collection methods, and data analysis among others. The chapter is concluded by discussing the validity and reliability as well as ethical issues in qualitative studies which are critical to the current study.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study employed a general qualitative methodology to investigate gender issues among female PR practitioners in Ghana. The main focus of this study was applied communication research which sought to comprehensively examine issues practically concerning women in public relations in Ghana. Furthermore, the study sought to explore how public relations has been practised from the past to contemporary times and the type of factors that influence such practices. It must be emphasised that the overall goal of the study was to develop a framework that could guide the practice of PR among female practitioners in Ghana. This chapter, therefore, discusses all the various methods and techniques that were used to collect data for the study. The chapter discusses in-depth interviews which was the main instrument for data collection employed in the study. Furthermore, the chapter discusses in detail the research paradigm, approach, data analysis, population, and sampling techniques among others. The chapter is concluded by discussing ethical issues in research, especially those that are related to the study. In order to put the issues into proper context, the objectives that underpinned the study are re-stated below:

- To establish the position of female PR practitioners in Ghana.
- To analyse the roles (activities) that female PR practitioners in Ghana play.
- To investigate and describe the communication strategies employed by female PR practitioners in Ghana.
- To develop a framework to guide the practice of PR among female PR practitioners in Ghana.

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011:117), a research method encompasses the various research techniques that a researcher employs in a data-gathering process. These are the methods used in gathering, analysing and interpreting the data in line with the research questions that guided the study (Wimmer & Dominick 2011:117).

Similarly, Powell and Connaway (2004) note that research methods are the strategies surrounding the use and application of multiple methods of conducting a research study in an attempt to achieve a reliable high degree of validity. Aina (2004) provides a much shorter explanation of research methods. Aina (2004) indicates that research methods provide a general framework that guides the researcher in an appropriate data collection manner.

This study was applied research and it was aimed at identifying the challenges associated with PR practice in general and specific to women in PR in Ghana. Thus, the study aimed at developing a solution for the problems identified in the investigation and how the methods employed in collecting and interpreting the issues in the data were analysed.

Moreover, there is a detailed discussion on a semi-structured interview guide which was the main instrument for data collection in the study. Again, the sampling technique which included the sampling population, sampling method, and sample size among others have been discussed in this chapter. Further discussions have been done on how the population was drawn and the criteria for selecting the participants. The procedure for data collection as well as the techniques for data analysis have also been discussed in this chapter. The study also discussed the reliability and validity of qualitative data which was the approach for this study. Finally, issues relating to ethics in the research were discussed to serve as a guide to both the researcher and the participants.

5.1.1 Research philosophy /paradigm

Bryman (2016) points out that research paradigms basically refer to a collection of various principles that usually relate to the background of the concept of investigation in a study. These concepts normally include the beliefs, values and worldviews of a researcher which most often influence the choice of his or her research perspectives. In other words, it is the researcher who chooses such perspectives or worldviews to conceptualise and also aid the researcher in conducting his or her study. Moreover, how ideas are generated and facilitated by the researcher most often provides a road

map and direction as to how the study would be carried out (Ngulube et al 2015; Flick 2011). It is worth noting that some worldviews may vary depending on the aims of the study, and the most suitable approach that the researcher can employ to achieve the objectives that the study originally set out to investigate (Goldkuhi 2012; Lohse 2017; Maarouf 2019; Ngulube 2015; Ngulube 2019; Ngulube 2020). Scholars such as Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) for instance explain further that philosophical worldviews which are usually the broadest level of research are often described as epistemological issues that support the study or the notions that relate to how researchers build knowledge on what they already know.

Arguably, such worldviews or philosophies can always go a long way to guide a researcher on his or her choice of the appropriate theories as well as the methods to employ in a particular study. This study was exploratory in nature and it investigated gender issues among female practitioners in Ghana. The study further investigated the position of female PR practitioners in Ghana, the roles that the practitioners play as well as the communication strategies that the practitioners employ to engage their numerous stakeholders. The objectives and methods adopted for this study undoubtedly influenced the researcher in the selection of the appropriate methods and theories that were considered suitable for the study. The study adopted the constructivism paradigm. This is because the study aimed to explore from the perspective of social constructivism which is a key feature of qualitative research. Kuhn (1962) for instance defines research paradigms as a group of shared ideas and observations that usually exist among scientists about their understanding and discussion of issues. Kvale (1996) also points out that researchers who have a keen interest in understanding how people comprehend their world and lives must seek to ask them about it so that they can voice out their thoughts and experiences. The emphasis here is on exploring the social constructivism process among individuals. Therefore, the female PR practitioners in Ghana who voluntarily participated in the study were asked questions based on the objectives of the study, to which they shared their opinions on the issues under investigation and the practitioners' socially constructed issues relating to PR practice in their everyday life.

5.1.1.1 The constructivist paradigm

Constructivists believe that every research project has to strive for evidence, but most often, the evidence may come in different forms. This is an approach that is mostly employed by researchers in qualitative studies. As already indicated in this study, scholars such as a Berger and Luekmann (1996) as well as Lincoln and Guba (1985) see themselves as social constructivists and they opine that individuals seek understanding of the world that they live and also work. Therefore, people develop subjective meanings of their experiences in the world and these meanings often vary among individuals. As a result, researchers employing this approach mostly look for multiple views to make meaning of data. Researchers frequently rely on the participant's views of the situation being investigated. The basic assumptions of the constructivist paradigm are that knowledge is often constructed and every learning is part of that knowledge construction. For instance, individuals in a particular community will construct knowledge but each person may have a different view about a phenomenon that will occur in that community. Therefore, learning becomes a social process and individuals can express divergent views based on their own knowledge or perception. Public Relations practice may vary from country to country based on several factors such as social, cultural, economic and political differences. The views expressed by female PR practitioners in Ghana or Africa on issues relating to the PR profession globally may differ from others based on their world views. Arguably, the study on women in PR in Ghana investigated several issues that relate to the profession, but the participants most likely agreed or disagreed on issues that were discussed in the study based on their individual worldviews about the phenomenon. The basic assumptions of the constructivist paradigm were therefore employed in the current study as this study which is qualitative in nature is aligned with the constructivist worldview. According to Kreuger and Neuman (2006), qualitative data are in the form of text, written words, phrases or symbols describing or representing people, actions and events in a social life. As Creswell (2014) points out, a qualitative research approach helps researchers to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human phenomenon. Again, a qualitative research approach will enable a researcher to identify, explore and explain the attitudes, actions and perceptions of people within a particular social setting. The meanings they make

of their actions are done without subjecting them to rigorous mathematical computations (Lindlof & Taylor 2002). This current study relied heavily on the career experiences of women in Public Relations in Ghana. It explored their career experiences and how they make meaning of the Public Relations profession in the field of practice. The study reviewed literature on women in Public Relations from a global, continental and local perspectives.

5.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

The current study is exploratory in nature. As a result, a qualitative approach was deemed fit to enable the researcher to collect data from women in the PR profession in Ghana. This enabled the researcher to observe behaviours in a natural setting and that went a long way to increase the researcher's depth of understanding of the phenomenon which was being investigated. Scholars such as Wimmer and Dominick (2011) as well as Miles and Huberman (1994) all point out that the purpose of employing a qualitative approach in a study is to attempt to investigate and describe complicated issues in their natural state. Based on the assertions of scholars, the study employed the qualitative approach to engage female PR practitioners in Ghana who were accredited by the Institute of Public Relations, Ghana (IPRG) for the year 2021-2022. The female PR practitioners who voluntarily participated in the study shared their lived experiences with the researcher through in-depth interviews in their natural settings. The researcher observed the interviewees throughout the interview periods and also audio-taped their voices for transcription. Based on the transcription, the analysis was carried out and the findings presented aided the researcher in the development of a framework for female PR practitioners in Ghana.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), the art of deciding on a particular strategy for a study based on its broader perspective to a more specific approach often help a researcher to make a critical choice as to which theories and specific design to employ in a particular study. Johnson and Christensen (2014) as well as Saunders et al (2019) also add that deciding on a particular strategy helps researchers to understand the issues raised in a study and adapt a particular design that could mitigate any challenge that may occur in the entire research study. Saunders et al (2019) further point out that

two main approaches exist- deductive and inductive and these are usually employed in studies to plan the research process.

The inductive approach espoused by Saunders et al (2019) was employed in this study because it is exploratory in nature, so it helped the researcher in exploring the core issues that related to the study where much had not been documented as PR practice among female practitioners in Ghana is described as an unexplored terrain. It is worth noting that virtually no major studies existed on women in PR in Ghana or for that matter Africa. The inductive approach which relates more to qualitative studies also aided the researcher in primary data collection. The appropriate questions which were deemed critical to the study were asked and the necessary information was elicited from the female PR practitioners in Ghana who voluntarily participated in this study. The inductive approach was deemed appropriate for the study because the researcher had virtually nothing to rely on as far as previous studies on the focus area was concerned. Moreover, this approach was employed in this study because it aided in the understanding of human behaviours and the casual procedures that often predict such behaviours. This approach is mostly employed in qualitative studies to understand a particular phenomenon based on the partial experiences or worldviews of the research participants (Bryman & Bell 2015; Creswell & Creswell 2018; Flick 2011; Johnson & Christensen 2014; Nili, Tate & Johnson 2017; Young et al 2020).

This study is purely qualitative in nature. This is because the study sought to comprehensively investigate the career experiences of female PR practitioners in Ghana as they reflected on their long years of professional practice. In this study, the female practitioners in Ghana shared their professional experiences based on the interviews that the researcher conducted. Issues related to PR practice in general and specific to gender issues in the PR profession were posed to the participants for them to share their candid views. A semi-structured interview guide was adopted to elicit the necessary information from the participants. The interview guide was constructed based on ideas gathered from an extensive literature review on Public Relations generally as well as those that related to women in the PR profession globally. The main aim was to establish the views of Ghanaian female PR practitioners and compare them to what pertains in Africa and other jurisdictions. This was a real-life event that

took place in a natural setting. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews. Themes were built from the data collected and that helped the researcher to explore and also understand the meaning that female PR practitioners in Ghana ascribe to PR practice. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) provide an elaboration on the meaning ascribed to the qualitative research approach. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) argue that the main goal that researchers normally want to achieve in a qualitative research approach is to identify, explore and explain the attitudes, actions and perceptions of people within a social setting and the meanings they make of the actions. These actions are normally not subjected to rigorous mathematical computation. Merriam (2009) adds to the discussion on the qualitative approach. Merriam (2009) explains that qualitative researchers are normally interested in the meaning that people have constructed about a phenomenon.

In other words, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have formed in the world. Thus, a qualitative research approach is basically about mapping meaningful relations and also the understanding that reality is often socially constructed. In this vein, the researcher built rapport with the participants through interactions during the face-to-face interviews in a natural setting which resulted in a flexible environment to motivate the participants to express their views or opinions on how the PR profession has been practised by them in Ghana, as well as the gender issues they experience in the profession. The entire interview was based on the objectives that underpinned the study. All necessary information was elicited from the participants of the study and the phenomenon was analysed accordingly. This enabled the researcher to understand the core issues related to PR practice among female practitioners in Ghana.

Thus, the inductive approach was used to generate data and the data were analysed to understand the findings from the perspective of the research participants. Moreover, the inductive approach enabled the researcher in bracketing his biases as the context of the study could influence the research results. The approach also aided the researcher to develop an appropriate framework to guide PR practice among female practitioners in Ghana.

5.4 STUDY SETTING

The study was conducted in Accra, the capital city of Ghana. Ghana has a vibrant Public Relations industry which has been in existence since 1972. The IPRG has evolved in different phases over the years after it adopted a new constitution on December 6th, 1991, which has transformed the institute to its current status (IPRG 2021). Various corporate organisations in Ghana have employed PROs or Communication Managers to communicate on their behalf. The majority of these PROs are accredited members of the IPRG which is the only statutory body that regulates professional PR practice in Ghana. These members comprise both male and female practitioners. Given that this current study focused on women in PR in Ghana, male practitioners did not meet the criteria for the study and were therefore excluded. A review of literature on IPRG confirms that the majority of the organisations located in Accra are represented by female practitioners. The study was therefore conducted in Accra in the various offices of the practitioners or any other location agreed upon by both parties.

5.5 DEFINING THE RESEARCH POPULATION

The population of a study basically refers to all the units of interest that a researcher sets out to make definite deductions on. In other words, a population can be explained as the entire group of homogeneous entities that a researcher intends to use for a study. These entities could be a group or class of objects, subjects, or units that a researcher is interested in studying (Creswell & Creswell 2018; Creswell and Piano Clark 2018; Johnson & Christensen 2014; Neuman 2014; Wimmer & Dominick 2000). The population for this study comprised all female PR practitioners in Accra, Ghana, who are accredited members of the Institute of Public Relations, Ghana (IPRG). According to the IPRG (2021), female PR practitioners who are currently the majority of its members are about two hundred and sixty-seven (267) accredited members of the professional organisation while male PR practitioners are 259. In the view of Daymon and Holloway (2011), the term 'population' basically refers to the totality of units such as people, organisations, communication departments, brands, media reports or advertisements. Parahoo (1997) also defines population as the total number

of units from which data can be collected. Therefore, the participants in this study were females who have practised PR for substantial number of years. For any female practitioner selected to participate in this study, the person met the criteria for the study. Burns and Grove (2003) for instance explain that a criterion in a study basically refers to a list of characteristics that are required for one to qualify in order to be included in a study. Invariably, the main eligibility criterion for the population of this study was that the practitioner needed to be a female who was accredited by IPRG for the year 2021/2022. Moreover, the practitioner should have fallen within the age bracket of between twenty (20) to fifty-nine (59) years, which represents the active age group for both older and younger practitioners. Again, the practitioner should have been based in Accra, the capital city of Ghana. This is because most of the headquarters of the organisations in Ghana are based in Accra so the researcher purposively sampled female PR practitioners who were in their various organisations in Accra, which is the hub of PR practice in Ghana. A review of data from the IPRG in terms of its current membership for the year 2021 confirms the fact that the majority of women in the PR profession are currently working in various organisations in the capital city, Accra. Due to the difficulty in accessing all the institutions in Ghana, thirty-seven (37) organisations that have female PR practitioners were purposefully sampled for the study. Thus, the researcher focused on those organisations and female practitioners who accepted and were willing to partake in the study.

Asiamah, Mensah and Oteng-Abayie (2017) insist that the general population for a study must be refined if the goals of a study have to be achieved. They explain that the part of the general population that is left after its refinement is known as the target population. Thus, they define the target population as the group of individuals or participants with specific attributes of interest and relevance to a particular study. The target population for this study constituted female PR practitioners in Ghana who were based in Accra and were accredited by the IPRG for the year 2021/2022.

5.6 SAMPLING AND SAMPLE SIZE

Purposive and convenience sampling techniques were employed in this study. Purposive sampling, which is a non-probability sampling, involves using established

criteria as a guide in the selection of individuals or units to be considered for the study (Dankwah 2021:90). These criteria may include the purpose of the study, the willingness of the individuals to participate in the study, and the specialist knowledge of the individuals regarding the objectives of the study (Dankwah 2021 citing Bhardwaj 2019).

A convenience sampling technique was also employed in this study alongside purposive sampling techniques to choose 37 organisations to allow their heads of PR/communication or deputies to voluntarily participate in the study. The convenience sampling method aided the researcher to select prospective participants who were willing and available based on the researcher's request to participate in the study (Bhardwaj 2019). The convenience sampling method was employed because it was practically impossible for the researcher to study all the organisations in Ghana. Again, not all the female practitioners in Ghana would have agreed to participate in the study. Therefore, the researcher resorted to prospective participants who were ready and available to participate in the study. The researcher however tried to create a balance by studying different organisations where female PR practitioners were employed. This arguably helped in ensuring a blend of ideas and experiences from varying organisations which brought new perspectives and also enriched the study.

A sample on the other hand basically refers to a selected group to represent the population from which it is drawn. In other words, it refers to the particular group that a researcher will want to draw some conclusions from after the study has been successfully conducted. In qualitative studies, sampling aids researchers to get a deeper understanding of a problem that is being studied. Sampling is necessary because of the inherent constraints relating to time and resources if the entire population has to be studied (Black 2012; Stacks 2011; Wimmer & Dominick 2011).

This study, therefore, adopted the purposive sampling technique because it allowed the researcher to specifically select the organisations and the female PR practitioners who are based in Accra due to their ability to provide detailed information about the issues under investigation. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews for individual participants were conducted with thirty-seven (37) female PR practitioners in Accra

who were accredited members of IPRG for the year 2021/2022. The interviews lasted for about 45-60 minutes. The interviews were conducted in the offices of the participants at the various organisations that they represent or any other location that was preferred and agreed upon by the researcher and the participants. All necessary protocols and information that had to be given to the participants before the commencement of the interviews were strictly adhered to. A consent form was signed by both the researcher and the participants. Thereafter, permission was sought from the participants before the interviews were audio-tapped for transcription and presentation of results.

A sample for a study basically refers to all the individuals chosen from the entire population of accepted criteria (Dankwah 2021: 91). The total number of individuals that a researcher considers for a study is what is known as the sample size (Berndt 2020). Scholars such as Daymon and Holloway (2011) and Ritchie et al (2003) for instance point out that, generally, researchers conducting qualitative studies, particularly those involving individual interviews in a single study should not go beyond 50 participants. This is because managing the data becomes difficult which could sometimes compromise the quality and analysis of the data. In what appears to be a reinforcement of the argument put forward by Daymon and Holloway (2011) and Richie et al (2003), Mason (2010) after a review of several PhD dissertations that employed qualitative approaches observed that most of the sample sizes used were between 20 to 40 participants. Furthermore, scholars such as Crouch and Mckenzie (2006) insist that a sample size that is less than 20 is sufficient enough to achieve validity in a qualitative study especially when interviews are used particularly to penetrate the social life, based on the meaning the participant ascribe to a certain phenomenon. Latham (2013) maintains that researchers must ensure that saturation occurs when the sample size has been determined. In order to elicit enough information for this study, the researcher successfully employed a sample size of thirty-seven (37) female PR practitioners in Ghana who were accredited by IPRG. It was envisaged that this sample size was appropriate to enable the researcher to achieve the goal and purpose of the study which was also consistent with the views expressed by scholars concerning the adoption of a sample size in qualitative studies.

The study was conducted in the era of Covid-19 when restrictions were eased in Ghana. This, therefore, made it possible for the researcher to conduct face-to-face interviews with the participants. The interviews were conducted strictly under Covid19 protocols which included the wearing of face masks, washing of hands and adhering to social distancing protocols between the interviewee and the researcher. Tissues and hand sanitisers were also provided for use by the participants before the interviews were conducted. A thermometer was provided to check the temperature of each participant before the interview commenced. A small bag was provided to deposit used tissues and masks into it. The female PR practitioners were drawn from corporate organisations which included financial institutions, educational institutions, government Public Relations Officers as well as female practitioners who were engaged with non-profit organisations in Ghana. The researcher envisioned that drawing participants from varying backgrounds will bring different perspectives to the study. As already discussed, the study employed the purposive sampling strategy to purposively sample female PR practitioners in Ghana who met the criteria for the study to be interviewed. Employing the purposive sampling technique allowed the researcher to sample participants because they possessed certain special characteristics that were of interest to the study. Again, researchers normally engage in purposive sampling because of the ability of the participants to provide detailed information about the issues to be discussed that are important to the study. Merriam (2009) for instance argues that in qualitative studies, particularly those involving individual interviews, the participants are selected because they have the ability to provide deep knowledge and also possess the necessary experience on the issue that is under investigation. Therefore, it was appropriate for the researcher to employ the purposive sampling technique.

5.7 DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND PROCEDURE

Data for this study was gathered through semi-structured interviews. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), interviews are key features of qualitative research. This is because, interviews help to understand the social actor's experiences and perspective through stories, accounts and explanations. Daymon and Holloway (2011) also state that in-depth interviews are a major source of data in qualitative studies and they are

also a way of exploring informant perspectives and perceptions. Rubin HJ and Rubin IS (2012) explain that an interview is a detailed conversation that reflects a participant's thoughts and feelings about a particular phenomenon. The current study employed in depth interviews with female PR practitioners in Ghana to investigate gender issues in the profession. Additionally, the study investigated the position of female PR practitioners as well as the roles they play in their various organisations. Arguably, the one-on-one interviews with the participants helped to explain, verify, validate and clarify issues that arose out of the study. A qualitative interview was deemed appropriate for this study because the main purpose of interviews is to understand someone else's meaning and experiences.

5.7.1 The interview guide

An interview guide enables a researcher to gather data systematically. An interview guide containing a series of questions relevant to the study was prepared. These included both open and close-ended questions. The close-ended questions mostly centred on the demographic profiles of the participants. The open-ended questions on the other hand were drafted in such a way that they motivated the participants to openly express their views in their own words, so a wealth of information was gathered to enrich the study.

5.7.2 The data gathering procedure

Semi-structured interviews for individual participants were conducted with thirty-seven (37) female PR practitioners who were accredited members of IPRG. Based on the information provided by the IPRG with regards to female PR practitioners accredited for the year 2021/2022, the heads of organisations of the prospective participants were contacted after approval had been given by the Ethics committee of UNISA for data collection. Official letters were written and sent to the heads of the organisations that were purposively sampled to seek permission for their female PROs/communication managers to participate in the study. Once approval was given by the heads of organisations, the researcher purposefully sampled individual female PR practitioners by contacting them and explaining the purpose of the study to them. Once an

appointment for the interview was confirmed, the researcher ensured that all information about the study was made available on the day of the interview to the participants. For instance, the participants were given information sheets for them to read and satisfy themselves before the researcher and the participant signed a consent form for the interview to commence. Permission was sought by the researcher to audio-tape the interviews in order to transcribe and analyse the data at a convenient time. The interviews were conducted in the various offices of the participants or any other location that was agreed upon by both parties.

5.8 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Creswell (2009:183) explains that the process of data analysis involves making sense of the text and image data. The process involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting the analysis and moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data (Creswell 2009:183). According to Basit (2003), qualitative data analysis is often described as rigorous, gruelling, demanding and repetitive. Analysing qualitative data often requires the researcher to employ some form of dynamism, intuitiveness and creativity to adequately analyse the data. Additionally, the researcher must have the ability to think, reason and also theorise if the goal of the research will be achieved (Basit, 2003).

Jones (2007) expresses similar views brought forward by Basit (2003). Jones contends that researchers analysing data qualitatively often focus on it through fragmentation and then merge the data into various categories that have a conceptual and theoretical relationship. This process, according to Jones (2007), enables the researcher to make reasonable assumptions concerning the phenomenon under study. Jones explains further that the entire process is referred to as 'decontextualising' and 'recontextualising'. The decontextualising process basically begins with the removal of the text from the source through transcription and ensuring that the meaning is intact while recontextualising refers to drawing meaning through a robust, context and independent process (Jones 2007). Frankel and Wallen (2003) appear to agree with most of the explanations made by Creswell (2009), Basit (2003) and Jones (2007). Frankel and Wallen (2003) point out that data analysis is basically the art of analysing

and synthesising the information that a researcher obtains from various sources into a logical description of what was observed or otherwise discovered from the field. Like many scholars in qualitative approaches will do, Adams et al (2007:155) categorise qualitative data analysis into five (5) phases: the exploration phase, classification phase, drawing conclusion phase, representation phase and testing phase. A brief explanation of these categorisations by Adams et al (2007) should help shed more light on qualitative data analysis which has been employed in this study.

- Exploration phase: here, the researcher detects patterns and identifies deviant ones and oddities. It helps the researcher to make valid decisions on the data.

- Classification phase: at this stage, the researcher makes a comparison between the theories and identifies groups in the bulk data.

- Drawing conclusion phase: over here, the researcher again compares theory and compares the contrast groups. This helps the researcher to make a deeper sense of the data.

- Representation phase: the researcher at this stage will attempt to construct a model based on the information from the data.

- Testing phase: the testing phase is the final stage proposed by Adams et al (2007) in qualitative data analysis. Over here, the researcher then tests the model developed and attempts to draw some validations on the model.

Daymon and Holloway (2011:304) provide another interesting angle as far as data analysis and interpretation are concerned. Daymon and Holloway (2011) categorise qualitative data analysis into three main steps.

- Data management and organisation: This is the first stage and it entails the carving up of the bulk data into meaningful ones by assigning codes, memoing and summarising the data into patterns and configuration.

- Asking questions of the data: The second stage involves the asking of important questions such as, what is going on? Who says? Where and when is it happening?

- Interpretation: This is the final stage of qualitative data analysis as outlined by Daymon and Holloway (2011). This stage includes a researcher making

meaning and insight into the words or text and what the participants have said by generating concepts and theories which throw more light on the findings.

Some key questions that will arise at this point are; "so what do these findings mean in the light of the literature and main research questions that the study set out to investigate?". The researcher then has to communicate the meaning of the findings to others through a written report.

Creswell (2009) on the other hand insists that every qualitative research analysis must necessarily go through four steps if a thematic analysis is to be adopted by the researcher. This study employed thematic data analysis to make sense of the primary data. A brief highlight of Creswell's (2009) thematic analysis steps should help in expanding knowledge on qualitative research analysis and also enable the researcher to achieve the goal of the study. Creswell (2009) explains that data collected from the field must be categorised into coherent units of information otherwise known as themes and codes in research circles. Creswell (2009) therefore proposes four steps which researchers must follow when undertaking a thematic analysis of data.

- Step One: The bulk data collected from the interview must first be transcribed from voice audio into written text to enable the researcher to make meaning of the issues discussed with the interviewee.
- Step Two: The next step involves carefully reading through the transcribed data to make more sense and appreciate the pertinent issues under investigation. Over here, the researcher must also note and identify certain key points, especially in areas where the interviewees agreed or disagreed on certain issues.
- Step Three: The third step involves a researcher assigning codes and also generating themes. At this stage, the researcher has to meticulously segment the text before bringing out the clear meaning of the information before him or her.
- Step Four: This is the final stage. This stage mainly deals with interpreting the meaning of the various themes that were gathered from the refined data. The researcher then has to interpret the themes generated by engaging in a thick

description of the data and also compare the findings with the information gathered from the literature and the theories employed in the study. As explained by Frankel and Wallen (2003), data analysis basically involves synthesising the bulk information that a researcher has gathered from multiple sources into a logical description of what the researcher set out to investigate.

In expanding our understanding of qualitative data analysis, Miles and Huberman (1994) observe that researchers employing qualitative data analysis must pay attention to the issues in the data by identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) in the data. Miles and Huberman (1994) explain further that a researcher can do so by coding and categorising the data into themes by noting specific patterns in order to provide a relationship between the variables and factors. This will enable the researcher to create a reasonable and logical chain of evidence. Marks and Yardley (2004) express similar views already made by Creswell (2009), Frankel and Wallen (2003) and Miles and Heberman (1994). Marks and Yardley (2004) contend that thematic analysis is mostly considered the most appropriate for a qualitative study, especially where the focus is to discover concepts and ideas and also describe human behaviour by using interpretations. This current study adopted Creswell's (2009) approach for thematic analysis. Additionally, the study was guided by the steps outlined by scholars like Adams et al (2007) and Daymon and Holloway (2011).

Moreover, the study adapted excerpts of Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps for thematic analysis in qualitative data which have been briefly highlighted below;

- **Familiarising yourself with the data:** simply reading and re-reading the data, making notes of ideas that spring to mind.
- **Generating initial codes:** systematically coding the entire dataset and collating data that is relevant to each code. Codes are basically labels that identify a feature of the data (semantic content or latent) that appears interesting to the analyst/researcher.
- **Searching for themes:** gathering codes (and related data) into candidate themes for further analysis.

- **Reviewing themes:** checking whether the themes work with the data and creating a thematic map of analysis.
- **Defining and naming themes:** refining the themes and the overall narrative iteratively.
- **Producing the report:** this will, in turn, require a further level of reflection on the themes, the narrative and the examples used to illustrate themes (Braun & Clarke 2006: 57).

The main instrument for primary data collection in this study was in-depth interviews. The interviews were audio-tapped and transcribed. The researcher then followed the steps outlined by the above scholars in analysing the data on women in PR in Ghana.

Notwithstanding the assertions made by scholars on how to analyse qualitative data, several scholars have also made some suggestions on how to analyse and interpret qualitative data through manual transcription or by the use of computer software. The current study applied both manual transcription and computer software to aid the analysis and interpretation of the data on women in PR in Ghana. A computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) package was employed alongside manual transcription for analysis and interpretation. It must be emphasised that the computer-assisted software only helped the researcher to manage the data for easy analysis but the actual analysis of the data was done manually by the researcher. Babbie (2010) for instance argues that qualitative data analysis enables a researcher to critically examine and also interpret observations in order to make meaning as well as draw underlying patterns of relationship in a non-numerical way. In adding their voice on the use of computer software for qualitative analysis, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) contend that computer software serves as an organising or a categorising tool

for the researcher but does not analyse the data for the researcher and also makes it easier, flexible, accurate and more comprehensive in a data management process. Gill et al (2008) believe that such computer-assisted software programmes do not confirm or deny the scientific value or quality of qualitative data, so such programmes should merely be seen as instruments that could be described as either good or bad just as in the case of the researcher employing them. Seal (2013) makes similar assertions already made by scholars such as Babbie (2010), Bogdan and Biklen (2007) and Gill et al (2008). Seal (2013) postulates that computer-assisted software only supports a researcher in searching through data for a particular feature such as words or phrases, code segments of data, as well as assists in the writing of analytic notes or memorandums which ensures that emerging ideas gathered from the data are recorded in the right places.

Significantly, software programmes in general allow qualitative data to be handled with speed especially when the data is very bulky. However, the advanced analysis of the data should be rigorous through coding and detecting patterns. There is no doubt that recent researchers continue to use computer-assisted softwares especially in qualitative data analysis. There exist a number of computer programmes such as NVivo, Atlas.ti and so many others which researchers conducting qualitative studies use. With advancement in technology, there is no doubt that these computer-assisted programmes could be useful tools in assisting researchers, especially those employing qualitative studies to adequately interpret data with speed and dexterity.

It was envisaged that this modern computer software could assist the researcher in the quality management of the primary data collected from women in PR in Ghana. Rodlick and Primorac (2015) for instance believe that using multiple software alongside manual data management should be highly recommended because the process aids in quality data analysis, especially when dealing with qualitative data. Rodlick and Primorac (2015), however, point to the fact that employing such modern computer software may be very cumbersome because the researcher will have to spend some time familiarising him or herself with the software which is also time-consuming. In what appears to be a corroboration of what scholars have indicated about softwares in qualitative studies, the researcher in this study had to undertake tutorials to familiarise himself with the NVivo software and how to use the programme. As already indicated

by scholars, these software programmes are usually complicated and also expensive, thereby making it difficult for every researcher to access them. Rodlick and Primorac (2015) conclude that such softwares are, however, effective as they can aid in the reduction of human errors as well as potential biases on the part of the researcher (Babbie 2010; Bogdan & Biklen 2007; Gill et al 2008; Lichtman 2013; Rodlick & Primorac 2015; Seale 2013). The tipping point here is that computer software may contribute substantially in helping a researcher to analyse qualitative data but it is the researcher who must ascribe meaning to the data by explaining and interpreting what the data entails. Daymon and Holloway (2011) refer to this process as the originality of a qualitative study. In this vein, the researcher engaged in a thick description of the data.

The next sub-section will shed light on validity and reliability, especially in relation to qualitative studies.

5.9 ENSURING RIGOUR

Data verification, especially, in qualitative studies is extremely important. This is aimed at ensuring that the data is not only accurate but also rational, logical and acceptable (Kuzel & Engel 2001). Arguably, every researcher must strive to obtain as much accurate data as possible in a study. Verification of data is, therefore, necessary to reduce errors to the barest minimum as data entered into the system should be equal to the data from the original source. In this study, the researcher verified data by employing the following methods of verification:

- **Verbatim Transcription**: In this process, the researcher ensured that each spoken word, emotion, laughter, and shout, were carefully captured in the transcription and coded for the study. This ensured the accuracy of data from the participant's point of view.

- **Proofreading data:** The researcher ensured that an expert was assigned to check the transcribed data against the original data source from the recorded audio.

- **Use of coder guide:** To boost the validity of the study, the researcher prepared a coder guide to guide the coding of the transcribed data. Where it became necessary for the researcher to employ an expert in coding, the coder guide was given to the coder as part of the training processes related to the study before the coding was done. This ensured that the goal of the study was achieved.

It is worth noting that, the purpose of every scientific research is to generate results that are credible, trustworthy and ethical. This is because the researcher must be able to measure what he or she set out to investigate. In qualitative studies, a researcher must ensure that there is consistency in how the study is carried out. To ensure rigour for this study, transferability, credibility, dependability and conformity were strictly adhered to. They are briefly discussed below:

Credibility: In conducting any scientific study, credibility is one extremely important area. There must be the trustworthiness of the data that is being used for the study so that the conclusions drawn from the study could correspond with the views of the participants. In other words, under no circumstance should the data be manipulated or padded by the researcher in order to skew the findings in a particular direction.

Transferability: Given that studies are normally conducted in different jurisdictions, the transferability of data enables researchers to apply the study findings in other contexts other than the original research setting. Therefore, conclusions drawn from the study should be valid for the reader, participants as well as other researchers. In some cases, the study results can be replicated in other settings.

Dependability: With regard to dependability, the study must measure the degree to which the results can be deemed consistent. In that vein, the techniques that the researcher employs must demonstrate that if the study is repeated using the same methods within the same context, the final results should not differ from the first study.

Conformity: Conformity in research is basically about ensuring objectivity in the study. Therefore, the findings and conclusions that are drawn from a study must be based on the ideas that were espoused by the participants and not based on the preconceptions or assumptions of the researcher. The data collected should be linked to each source so that readers can establish some form of connection between the findings that have

been established in the study and the participants who supplied the primary data. The researcher ensured that these processes were strictly adhered to when conducting the study. Moreover, the researcher also employed the use of rich and thick descriptions to interpret findings during data analysis. Bryman (2008) argues that a thick description provides a database for making a judgement about the possibility of transferring the findings of a study to other settings. The thick description, therefore, involves the art of detailed portrayals of participants' experiences and the meaning of their actions. Additionally, the researcher ensured that biases were bracketed by relying solely on the results in the data without any form of manipulation. Apart from that, the researcher spent prolonged time in the field collecting rich and adequate data, while checking the transcript for accuracy. As already stated in this study, the use of a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) known as NVivo aided the researcher to organise, analyse and find insights when the primary data was presented. This study focused on women in PR in Ghana. Specifically, the study investigated gender issues prevalent in PR practices among females in the Ghanaian PR industry. Currently, female PR practitioners in Ghana constitute the majority as compared with their male counterparts (IPRG 2021). In order to ensure rigour for this study, the primary data collected from these female practitioners using face-to-face interviews were subjected to the various principles of trustworthiness discussed in this study. This ensured credibility, transferability, dependability and conformity which are crucial as far as qualitative studies are concerned and were strictly adhered to. It was envisaged that the final results from the study would be compared and contrasted with other jurisdictions in Africa and the West in order to understand the similarities and differences as far as the practice of PR among females from the global, continental or local perspectives are concerned.

5.10 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Gibbs (2007) defines qualitative validity as the ability of the researcher to check for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain empirical procedures. Concerning reliability, Gibbs (2007) explains that a researcher's approach must be consistent across different researchers and different projects. Gibbs (2007) goes further to recommend eight (8) reliability techniques that qualitative researchers can employ as well as four validation tools for any qualitative inquiry. The reliability techniques

proposed by Gibbs (2007) include triangulation or the use of multiple data sources; the use of member checking; the use of rich and thick descriptions to convey findings; clarification of biases the researcher brings to the study; presentation of negative evidence; spending prolonged time in the field and the use of peer briefing to enhance the accuracy of the account, as well as the use of an external auditor to review the entire project. Similarly, the validation techniques outlined by Gibbs (2007) include checking transcripts for accuracy, avoiding redefinition of codes, coordination among coders in the case of team research or in instances where the researcher is assisted by another person during the coding process and employing inter-coder reliability or agreement. From the assertions made by Gibbs (2007), it is obvious that the main rationale for every research project is to generate results that are credible, reliable, trustworthy and ethical. Undoubtedly, the ability of the researcher to measure what he or she set out to measure by showing consistency is critical in a study. Thus, consistency and reliability are very important in research. In other words, the findings emanating from any study must withstand some form of rigorous scrutiny to achieve reliability (Patton 2002). Therefore, the conclusions drawn must be true to readers, practitioners and other researchers alike. Lincoln and Guba (2000) for instance emphasise the credibility of any research project and ask critical questions such as whether the findings of a study are sufficiently authentic that someone can believe in them and act on their implications. Moreover, would you the researcher or others feel sufficiently secure to rely on the findings from a study and make major policy decisions, or legislation based on them?

The validity, therefore, deals with an element of truth while reliability looks at the perceived credibility of interpretation or meaning ascribed to the data. Yin (2003) suggests that qualitative researchers must consistently document the procedures of their studies by following a step-by-step process as possible. Yin (2003) explains further that the strengths of qualitative research are based on its validity and whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participants or the readers. Following the assertions made by Gibbs (2007), Patton (2002) and Yin (2003), the researcher was guided by their suggestions to ensure the validity and reliability of the study. In the area of reliability, first, the researcher used in-depth interviews that were collected from 37 participants to understand the core issues relating to the practice of PR by female PR practitioners in Ghana. Moreover, the transcribed data

from the individual interviews was sent back to some of the participants who confirmed that the transcript was a true reflection of the interviews. This process helped to validate the data before the analysis and interpretation of the results were carried out. Again, the researcher employed a rich and thick description of the data during the data analysis stage. Furthermore, the researcher employed the peer briefing technique, especially, towards the end of the study. Two senior research assistants with vast experience in research were engaged by the researcher to review the transcripts and they made valid suggestions on how the data was thematically analysed. They further independently reviewed the methodology employed in the study as well as the findings and critiqued portions of the analysis which the researcher incorporated into the study. By following all these steps and being guided by the guidelines outlined by scholars, it was envisaged that possible errors would be identified and corrected to ensure accuracy. In the area of reliability, the researcher re-checked the interview scripts from the individual interviews to correct all possible errors that otherwise could have slipped through unknowingly.

5.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Ethics are practices that enact or support a good, central value or a set of values associated with human life and conduct. Ethics can also be explained as the actions, thoughts, values, principles and communicative practices a person enacts in determining how to interact with and also treat others (Arnette 2009; Croucher & Cronn-mills 2015). Adherence to high ethical values when conducting research is crucial especially if the research involves human subjects. Croucher and Cronn-mills (2015) propose three principles that researchers must observe especially in a qualitative study. These principles are informed consent, level of participants' privacy and debriefing. Based on the assertions of Croucher and Cronn-mills (2015), as well as Arnett et al (2009), the participants in this study were adequately informed of the purpose of the study for them to grant their consent before the study was carried out. Additionally, the participants were assured of utmost confidentiality as the researcher adhered strictly to all ethical issues especially those that relate to qualitative studies. The researcher developed trust with the participants and also promoted the integrity of the study. Arguably, one of the most controversial issues which often occur among social science researchers is ethics, especially those that relate to qualitative studies.

This is because qualitative researchers often undertake personal or close interaction with the participants in the study. So, issues concerning the protection and privacy of the participants are usually critical. Moreover, because data collection in qualitative studies is normally done in a natural setting, issues of confidentiality and how researchers can protect the participants' identity and their ability to strictly adhere to all ethical issues in the study are often raised (Brennen 2013; Flick 2009; Hammersley & Traianou 2012; Lichtma 2013). Brennen (2013) points out that in qualitative research, the researcher plays an active role in the whole study and that most qualitative studies are normally seen as fundamentally subjective in nature. Therefore, researchers need to use a variety of strategies to develop ethical ways of dealing with the people they interact with during the entire research process. Brennen (2013) adds that the fundamental principle especially in qualitative research is that, all the individuals who participate in a qualitative research project must voluntarily agree to take part in the study without any psychological or physical pressure, manipulation or coercion. Again, qualitative researchers must provide potential participants in a study with accurate information on the intention of their studies devoid of deception regarding the motives of the research (Brennen 2013).

Given that this current study was purely qualitative in nature, the researcher adhered strictly to the assertions made by scholars on ethics in qualitative studies. As indicated already, this study employed a face-to-face interview with the participants for them to freely narrate their career experiences in PR practice by reflecting on their long years of practice. Thus, issues of informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and protection of participants from any possible harm remained critical in this study (Lewis 2003). Broadly, about five major principles of research ethics apply to qualitative studies: minimising the risk of harm, obtaining informed consent, protecting anonymity and confidentiality, avoiding misleading practices and providing an opportunity of a right to withdraw. It is important to note that this current study involved female PR practitioners in Ghana and principally, the study investigated gender issues in PR as they applied to these women in person. As part of the ethical principles applicable to this study, the researcher ensured that the participants who agreed on their free will to participate in this study did not suffer any form of harm or embarrassment in an emotional, physical or reputational form. As a general rule in research, consent must be sought from the participant before the study is carried out. In that vein, the participants in this study

were given a written statement to read and sign, indicating their free willingness to participate in the study. The written consent contained all ethical issues including permission to record, voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity. Scholars such as Daymond and Halloway (2011) insist that a written consent is vital to a researcher when conducting a study. Ethically, it will be wrong for a researcher to engage in deceptive or misleading practices with the participants when conducting a study. For instance, the purpose of the study must be well communicated to the participants in advance to enable them to decide whether to participate in the study or not. Moreover, the participants should not be forced, coerced or manipulated in any way for them to participate in the study. Participation in the study should be done of their free will and not under any duress. An opportunity or option to withdraw from the study should be made known to the participants right from the onset. Given that this study involved a one-on-one interview with female PR practitioners in Ghana, the participants were informed about their right to withdraw from the study at any point in time. The researcher was mindful of the fact that one-on-one interviews could trigger some emotions in the course of the interview, so such a participant could decide to withdraw from the study if she so wished and some support would have been rendered to her in the form of counselling from an expert. It must be noted that the participants were adequately assured that utmost confidentiality would be strictly adhered to. Finally, the participants were informed about the fact that the interviews could last for about forty-five to one hour to enable them to adjust their schedules on the interview days. Additionally, the participants were given a prepared statement to read and sign as an indication of their willingness to freely participate in the study. The informed consent form explicitly spelt out all the necessary ethical issues to be considered in the study and these included permission to audio-record the interviews, voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity among others. Daymond and Halloway (2011) for instance make the point that researchers must possess a written consent form which encapsulates all the basic components such as the name and credentials of the researcher. Again, the research strategies, aims and goals of the study, the expected duration of the interview and individual's participation, potential risks as well as benefits to the organisation or the individual must be clearly spelt out. Daymond and Halloway (2011) believe that this can build trust with the participants from the beginning to the end of the entire data collection. Again, all issues relating to a researcher's promise to protect anonymity and confidentiality, as well as all the steps that the

researcher employed to complete the study were adhered to. It was envisaged that, since the researcher in this study adhered strictly to these ethical principles, it would motivate the participants to engage in an open and honest discussion on the issues under investigation. Data collected from the participants were treated with utmost care and all information that was regarded as either sensitive or private was protected in order not to expose the identity of the participants. To this end, no information relating to either the participants or their various organisations were exposed. To achieve this, the names and nature of the organisations as well as the practitioners were protected in the discussion without necessarily divulging their identity. Finally, the researcher ensured that the final work truly reflected the views and assertions of the participants without any attempt to twist the facts or manipulate the data provided by the participants in the study.

Ashley, Takyi and Obeng (2016) for instance maintain that one of the main purposes of a study, whether it is a qualitative, quantitative or mixed method, is to churn out research results devoid of any negative ethical implications. They argue further that a researcher ought to always take pragmatic steps to address ethical problems that may arise during and after the study. Challenges such as difficulty in gaining the approval of participants for the study, the inability to gain access to participants during data collection, the inability to reach a meaningful agreement with participants concerning identity disclosure or concealment, the confidentiality of research information and finally the biases the researchers may bring to the study could all negatively impact the study. Therefore, Ashley, Takyi and Obeng (2016) insist that it is important for researchers to minimise the ethical dilemmas on the overall outcome of the study by adhering strictly to all ethical issues in the study.

Notwithstanding all the assertions explicitly made by scholars such as Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2015), Arnett et al (2009), Lichtman (2013), Hammersley and Traianou (2012), Flick (2009), Brennen (2013) and Daymond and Holloway (2011) as cited in this study, Halai (2006) avers that qualitative research is a moral and ethical responsibility and the researcher must pay special attention to ensure that the interests of a study's participants are not compromised in any way. In other words, researchers, especially in qualitative studies must ensure that ethical principles are strictly adhered to in any type of study in order to minimise or avoid any possible harm to the

participants in the study. Thus, the protection of human subjects or participants in any research is imperative (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden 2001). They insist that ethical consideration is very important in qualitative studies because:

> *Qualitative researchers focus their research on exploring, examining and describing people and their natural environments. Embedded in qualitative research are concepts of relationships and power between researchers and participants. The desire to participate in a research study depends on a participant's willingness to share his or her experience…' (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden 2001:93).*

Halai (2006) argues further that three ethical issues researchers must adhere to in the course of their study should include informed consent, voluntary consent and confidentiality of information shared by participants. Again, anonymity of research participants as well as the avoidance of any harm to them should be strictly adhered to. The current study complied with all the ethical principles outlined by scholars cited in this study in order to ensure high standards and accuracy. Given that this study hinged heavily on the career experiences of female PR practitioners in Ghana, the researcher did not envisage that issues such as psychological, emotional or physical experiences that may be deemed traumatic will occur in the course of data collection. In other words, the researcher did not envisage that any form of distress or discomfort would be experienced by any of the participants in the study. However, as an interim measure, in the event that such issues occurred, an expert, preferably a clinical psychologist or a professional counsellor would have been contacted to provide any support that could have been deemed fit to such a participant. If such a situation occurred while the interview was ongoing, the researcher would have immediately truncated the interview and contacted the expert to provide the necessary support to the participant before a determination would be made as to whether to continue with the interview or to cancel it entirely.

Furthermore, the researcher wishes to clarify that the proposed title which was used to apply for ethical clearance changed slightly from "A phenomenological study of female Public Relations (PR) practitioners in Ghana" to "Developing a framework for public relations practice: An examination of gender issues among female pr practitioners in

Ghana". This slight change became necessary as the researcher's encounter with the participants and observations on the field demanded a change to reflect the current practice of PR by females in Ghana.

5.12 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter discussed the detailed processes and procedures for data collection and analysis. Principally, all the methodological approaches to ensure that the study was fully carried out were adequately discussed. The study was qualitative in nature, so the research design and methodology including the data collection techniques, sampling procedure, sample size and proposed population have all been discussed in detail. The chapter concluded with a discussion on ethical issues considered in data collection, analysing and interpretation of the final work.

Having adequately discussed the methodological approaches for the study, the next chapter presents the findings of the primary data which was collected for the study. This comes in a form of a presentation and an interpretation of the research results. The chapter also presents an overview of the research participants which comes in a form of a demographic profile. The broad and specific objectives of the study are discussed in detail and related to the findings. The theories that underpinned the study are also linked to the findings and adequately discussed.

CHAPTER SIX

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter of this study, the researcher discussed the development and practice of PR by female practitioners. This chapter, therefore, presents and interprets the research results and findings that emanated from the study. In order to answer objectives 1 to 4 of this study, face-to-face interviews were conducted among female PR practitioners from various corporate organisations (including the financial services sector, governmental organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations and educational institutions of higher learning) in Ghana. This was done to investigate the career experiences of female PR practitioners in Ghana as they reflected over their years of professional practice. The interviews covered all the objectives of the study which included the positions that female PR practitioners in Ghana occupy, the roles they play, the communication strategies they employ to engage with their numerous stakeholders, as well as general questions on PR and its conceptualisation by the practitioners.

As already extensively discussed in the previous chapters, particularly chapters one (1) and four (4), numerous studies have confirmed that women have made significant strides in the PR industry globally. This is based on their contributions to PR practice, teaching and research. Although women currently form the majority workforce in the PR profession, they are mostly seen or placed in lower echelons. Most often, women's position in the profession is highly skewed towards the technician roles, rather than managerial. This assertion, as recorded in literature appears to have sparked a lot of controversies over the years. It is worth noting that most women are normally not part of the decision-making processes of their organisations. Therefore, they make less impact as their contributions have always not been recognised and mostly seen as insignificant. While admitting that over the years there has been a significant improvement through increased participation of women in the PR profession, it is also true that a lot of women are still affected by hindrances in terms of their rapid

progression on the professional ladder (Aldoory et al 2008; Aldoory & Toth 2002; Berger 2007; Choi & Hon 2002).

The current chapter, therefore, presents and interprets the results from the interviews. The discussion was done in line with how the interview guide was structured. The researcher first posed general questions which included the practitioners' personal understanding of PR as a profession and an academic discipline, the demographic profiles of the participants, the positions they held, roles they played, communication strategies they employed as well as general questions on PR which was aimed at shedding light on how an appropriate framework could be developed to guide the practice of PR by female practitioners in Ghana. It also included the views of the participants on the PR industry in Ghana. The chapter concludes with a summary of the analysis.

6.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

This section of the chapter briefly discusses the profile of the participants. This includes their designations, educational backgrounds, the category of membership with the Institute of Public Relations, Ghana (IPRG), the number of years in the PR practice, as well as their ages among others. The researcher was also interested in knowing if the participants possessed a background in PR or communication as they were the practitioners who represented their organisations and played core PR roles.

A total of thirty-seven (37) female PR practitioners in Ghana voluntarily took part in the study. These were members of IPRG who were accredited by the professional association to practise PR for the years 2021-2022 and were recognised by the regulatory body. As clearly indicated in the table (see Table 1), the designations of all the participants differed depending on the nature of the organisation. The participants consisted of twenty-five (25) managers who were heads of their PR departments and twelve (12) deputy communication managers. In some cases, both the head of PR and the deputy were females whiles in other cases, the head of PR could be a male but was assisted by a female who was interviewed by the researcher. In other cases, too, the head of PR was a female being assisted by two or three deputies who were both male and female. Given that the study was about women in PR in Ghana, the

researcher was more focused on female practitioners who were also accredited members of IPRG. One unique finding on the participants was the fact that in some cases, the PR unit was subsumed under marketing or human resource management even though the PR practitioner was still the head of her unit. While some of the practitioners reported directly to management, others had to report to other heads of departments in the organisation but were given dotted lines to top management. It was also confirmed that the majority of the participants possessed higher academic qualifications with a few holding a first degree or Higher National Diploma (HND). It is worth noting that one of the principles in the excellence theory states that the PR unit should not be subsumed under any other department but must stand on its own and should be headed by a manager. Moreover, the arguments by most scholars in PR has always been that, PR or communication is a specialised area and that the practitioner requires some form of formal training in order to be recognised as a professional. This is what will enhance excellence PR practice, but a critical look at the background of the participants in this study confirmed that some of them did not possess academic or professional qualifications in communications or PR, and yet were employed by organisations as PR practitioners. This is in sharp contrast to what most PR scholars have prescribed as the ideal situation for PR practice. The background of majority of the participants in this study therefore confirms most of the concerns that have been raised by scholars and some of the participants in this study.

Anani-Bossman (2018) for instance conducted a study on public relations practice in the financial services sector in Ghana and the findings confirmed that a majority of organisations in Ghana had varied designations for their PR departments. Anani-Bossman's (2018) study appears similar to this study as 22 organisations that were studied gave different designations to their PR departments. Another significant finding that Anani-Bossman's (2018) found was the fact that in most organisations in Ghana, marketing appeared to have a stronger influence than PR because a majority of the practitioners possessed higher qualifications in Marketing while just a few possessed communication or PR background. As a result, PR was mostly subsumed under Marketing in most organisations although it is not the ideal situation as far as excellent or effective PR practice is concerned. It is worth noting that another significant finding that distinguishes the current study from Anani-Bossman's (2018) study was the fact that, a few years after his study, most PR practitioners in most of the organisations who

participated in this study probably found it expedient to upgrade themselves in PR or communication if they earlier possessed Marketing or other backgrounds. This came as a form of capacity building for the practitioners.

Although Anani-Bossman's (2018) study sampled the views of both male and female PR practitioners in Ghana, this study appears different and unique from other studies because it focused mainly on women in PR in Ghana who were accredited by the Institute of Public Relations, Ghana (IPRG) for the years 2021-2022 to practise public relations.

Table 1: Demographic profile of participants

DESIGNATION	EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND	FORMAL EDUCATION IN PR/COMMUNICATION	CATEGORY IN IPRG MEMBERSHIP	LENGTH OF PR PRACTICE
Communication & Brands Manager	• MBA, Marketing; • Postgraduate Diploma, Communication	Yes	Affiliate	11
Corporate & Investor Relations	• BA, Information Studies; • MA, Communication Studies	Yes	Associate	12
Head of Communications	• Diploma, Journalism; • MA, Communication and Media Studies; • Postgraduate Diploma, Communication	Yes	Affiliate	11
Communication & Marketing Officer	• MBA, Marketing	No	Affiliate	9
University Relations Officer	• BA, Sociology & Social Work;	Yes	Accredited	9

	• MA, Corporate Communication			
Director-General, Public Relations	• BA, Communication Studies; • MBA, Corporate Communication; • Postgraduate Diploma, Communication	Yes	Accredited	11
Corporate Affairs Manager	• BA, Journalism; • MA, Development Communication	Yes	Associate	14
Media Relations & Marketing	• BA, Strategic Communication & Marketing; • MA, Media Management	Yes	Associate	25
Public Relations & Events Manager	• BA, English & Politics; • Certificate, Events Management & Branding;	Yes	Associate	12

	• MA, Development Communication			
Employee Relations Officer	• BA, Human Resource Management; • MA, Corporate Communication & Brands; • Diploma, Communication Studies	Yes	Accredited	28
Government Relations Officer	• BA, Information Studies & Psychology; • Msc, Educational Psychology & Leadership; • Certificate, ICT Management	No	Associate	11
Director of Communications	• BA, Political Science; • MA, Public Administration;	Yes	Associate	8

	• Diploma, Communication Studies; • IPRG Courses			
Head of International Relations & Diplomacy	• BA, Information Studies; • MA, International Relations; • IPRG Courses	Yes	Accredited	30
Principal Corporate Affairs Manager	• MBA, Marketing; • Diploma, Communication Studies	Yes	Associate	12
Communication & Marketing Officer	• BA, Communication Studies; • MA, Corporate Communication & Brand Management; • Diploma, Communication Studies	Yes	Associate	21

6.3 FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS

This section of the chapter presents findings from the face-to-face interviews that were conducted among the participants. The qualitative nature of the study required that the interviews were conducted in a natural setting based on the venue agreed upon by both the participant and the researcher. The majority of the interviews were conducted in the offices of these female practitioners.

In a few instances, some of the participants preferred a different venue far from their organisations and this was agreed upon by both parties before the interviews were conducted. It must be noted that the study was conducted at a time when the coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) had subsided and most protocols were eased, thus, allowing for face-to-face interactions in Ghana. However, all the necessary protocols recommended by the World Health Organisation (2020) were followed. The researcher also ensured that all the interviews were conducted in well-ventilated offices as the researcher encouraged the participants to open up windows and doors in their offices to allow for the free flow of natural air. The participants and the researcher also wore face/nose masks. Research assistants were not allowed during the interview sessions. The researcher made an audio recording of the interviews using his smartphone and a recorder, in addition to taking notes manually, especially when follow-up questions were put to the participants. The audio recordings were done based on prior permission granted by the interviewees. The researcher then transcribed the various interviews verbatim before analysing them thematically. The thematic analysis was done based on similar ideas espoused by the interviewees and grouped as the same construct. Xu and Zammit (2020) for instance observe that, thematic analysis is a technique employed by most social scientists to analyse data. Herzog, Handke and Hitters (2019) point out that thematic analysis is one of the best ways social science studies employ to understand different phenomena.

It is worth noting that the thematic analysis technique was electronically done with NVivo qualitative analysis software. After reading through the data (transcript) to familiarise himself with it, the researcher then imported the transcribed data into the NVivo software. The software helped to highlight the interview responses and further coded them into nodes. The nodes that bore similarities were then categorised into

themes after an extensive review. The themes were subsequently segmented into main and sub-themes. This process aided the researcher in the analysis of the data.

It must be emphasised that in analysing the primary data, the researcher took particular notice of patterns, repetition of issues in the form of sentences and phrases, connecting points as well as nuances that bore relation to the study. Moreover, the researcher paid attention to certain variables in the transcribed data such as similarities, differences, frequency, sequence, correspondence and causation among others. This technique aided the researcher in systematically analysing the data into themes. Again, the researcher adopted the technique of thematic analysis prescribed by Braun and Clarke (2006) by familiarising himself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and finally producing the report.

As indicated already, a total of 37 face-to-face interviews were conducted among female PR practitioners in Ghana, based on the current list of members of IPRG, who were accredited by the professional organisation for the years 2021-2022. It must be indicated that the sample size for qualitative studies is normally hinged on the principle of saturation. This is usually determined when the interviewees are virtually repeating most of the ideas that had been said by earlier participants, hence the need to discontinue the interviews. These views are reinforced by scholars such as Vasileiou et al (2018). They insist that saturation and pragmatic considerations are paramount in qualitative studies, and so, researchers need to consider these factors in order not to affect the quality of the data analysis. Based on the arguments put forth by these scholars, the researcher found it expedient to end the interviews and rather concentrate on the analysis. The interviewees were a blend of older and younger practitioners. While some of them were heads of their units, others were either deputies or heads of other units under PR such as Media Relations, Corporate Social Responsibility and Community Relations among others. Almost all the participants possessed a first degree, while others had obtained their master's degrees or were in the process of completing their studies for a master's degree. No participant possessed a terminal degree. Most of the practitioners had practised for about eight (8) years and had their ages ranging from 25-54 years.

The previous sub-section discussed into detail the demographic profile of the research participants. The next sub-section focuses on the findings of the one-on-one interviews conducted with the participants. In doing so, it is important to restate the objectives that underpinned the study of which primary data were collected and analysed with the resultant findings which are discussed in detail in this sub-section.

The broad objective of the study was to investigate gender issues in public relations among female PR practitioners in Ghana. Specifically, the study sought to investigate the following;

- To establish the position of female PR practitioners in Ghana.
- To analyse the roles (activities) that female PR practitioners in Ghana play.
- To investigate and describe the communication strategies employed by female PR practitioners in Ghana.
- To develop a framework that guides the practice of PR among female practitioners in Ghana.

6.4 FINDINGS OF ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

This section discusses in detail the findings of the one-on-one interviews that were conducted with the participants. The findings of the interviews are outlined based on how the interview guide was structured bearing in mind the main objectives that underpinned the study. These include the position of women in PR in Ghana, PR roles, communication channels and strategies as well as concluding questions that related to PR in general, and specifically to the development of a proposed framework on women in PR relative to Africa or Ghana.

Given that the broad objective of the study was to investigate gender issues among female PR practitioners in Ghana, the researcher found it expedient to first gauge the views of the female PR practitioners in Ghana about their conceptualisation of the profession concerning its practice in Ghana. Thereafter, the practitioner's views were sought on gender issues in PR before moving to the specific objectives that underpinned the study.

Based on extensive literature that has been reviewed on PR practice generally, as well as specific to women in PR from a global, continental and local perspectives, several scholars offered different definitions of PR. Arguably, there appears to be no single definition of PR currently because the profession itself has different meanings to people. Even the practitioners themselves do not appear to agree on one universally accepted definition of PR. This is hinged on the fact that each person explains PR based on what they do as practitioners. Some of the key definitions of PR are highlighted as follows: a distinctive management function (Cutlip & Center 2013), a planned process to influence public opinion (Seitel, 2007), reputation management (Franklin et al 2009), mutually beneficial relationship management (Butterick 2011; Heath & Coombs 2006), the use of communication in managing relationships (Heath 2000), applied social science that influences behaviour and policy (Burson 2011), leadership and management (Lattimore et al 2004), building and maintaining good image (Amoakohene 2002) and the development and management of ethical strategies to build relationships (Johnson et al 2009). From the definitions cited in this study, it is obvious that PR has been practised for several decades, but yet, there is currently no universally accepted definition of PR. What is clear in these definitions is the fact that scholars appear to agree on the fact that PR is basically about building mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation as well as its stakeholders who are key if organisational goals are to be achieved. Moreover, PR is supposed to act as a mediator between an organisation and its numerous stakeholders. In view of this, the researcher asked for the views of the participants about their understanding of PR as a profession as well as its main purposes. The rationale was to compare and contrast what the views of the participants were to what was documented in literature globally. Consequently, a question was asked: "what in your view is PR and what are its main purposes?" Obviously, the participants freely expressed their views on what PR meant to them, as well as the main purposes of PR. Some of their definitions are: PR is about information dissemination, relationship building, image and reputation management, storytelling, advocacy, influencing public opinion, publicity, and effective communication, among others. These definitions are briefly discussed below:

PR for relationship management: Many of the participants in the study were of the view that PR is basically about building relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders. This was affirmed by one of the participants:

For me, I believe that PR is all about managing relationships between my organisation and all the people we work with. In fact, my relationship-building approaches always start from within before I go outside. I try to be nice to everyone and I advise management to be nice to all the people we work with. This is how I think we can make progress. If the workers are happy with you, they will work without any complaints. Even if the complaints come, they will be minimal.

Another participant said:

PR is about building bridges with your stakeholders. I know as a human institution, sometimes things can go wrong. However, if you have good relations with your Publics, the situation will not go out of control. Managing people is not easy but that is my job as a PR practitioner, so I have to make sure that we are all at peace otherwise my job will become difficult for me.

The participant further said:

For me, relationship building is number one in this organisation. I am saying so because, way back in my university days when I was training as a P.R.O., my lecturers in PR used to emphasise the point that relationship building was key. So everyone in the organisation must know you, and you must know everyone as well. Any organisation that does not build a stronger relationship with its public does so at its own peril. In fact, I try to interact with all my stakeholders and I always encourage management to do so. We organise durbars all the time for management to interact with employees and we open our doors to everyone. I think it is working for me.

The above responses on PR as a relationship management tool confirm the earlier findings of Azutiga (2016). Azutiga's (2016) study which focused on PR practice among some political parties in Ghana established that relationship building was key as far as the establishment of political parties and campaigning were concerned. Most of the relationship-building strategies that Azutiga's (2016) study identified among political parties in Ghana were also confirmed in this study. For example, dialogue-based communication, face-to-face interactions, ensuring feedback, consensus building, and

networking, among others which were identified in Azutiga's (2016) study were also confirmed in this current study. Most of the findings confirmed in this study and that of Azutiga's (2016) study are in tandem with the relationship management theory which was propounded by Ledingham (2011) and has been employed in this study. One of the key tenets of the relationship management theory states that organisations should make frantic efforts to employ both symbolic and actual behaviour in order to cultivate and maintain relationships.

Another participant said:

> *As far as I am concerned, PR is about storytelling. If you don't tell your story, who will know about it? In fact, I try to engage a lot in the media as well as face-to-face with our stakeholders. PR is also about publicity. The more you tell your story, the more people get to know about you. If you have a good product or you render good service and people do not know about it, then you are not helping yourself. Sometimes, people think, we P.R.Os are just interested in fame. Far from that. If you are not visible then your story will be left out. Remember that we are in a competitive world.*

The above view of the participant is corroborated by another participant. The participant is of the view that PR practitioners must be known both within their organisations as well as outside. This is because the PR practitioner is the face of the organisation, and therefore whatever he or she does can have a ripple effect on the profit of the organisation, so the practitioner must ensure that negative tendencies are avoided in the organisation.

Another participant also believes that PR is about effective communication. The participant was of the view that PR practitioners must choose channels that are tested to be effective in order to communicate their policies and programmes to them.

> *What is the point if you communicate information to your publics and they do not get to hear it?"* the participant asked.

Another participant believes that the main role that a PR practitioner plays is to tell a good story about an organisation so that a positive image can be created in order to

build the confidence of the publics in the organisation and its activities. One more participant was of the view that PR is all about advocacy. In other words, an organisation must engage in advocacy in order to get public support for any policy or programme that an organisation intends to unveil. The participant believes that a PR practitioner must be outspoken to be able to carry the message across to the stakeholders of the organisation. Moreover, the participant believes that the role of PR practitioners is all-embracing and multi-faceted as he or she is involved in so many responsibilities within and outside the organisation. Based on the above explanations outlined by the participants, it can be observed that the conceptualisation of PR as a publicity tool and information dissemination is in sync with the views earlier expressed by Grunig and Hunt (1984). Grunig and Hunt (1984) categorised the ancient practice of PR based on one-way communication (Press agentry/ publicity and public information). Other scholars such as Wilcox et al (2015), Cutlip, Center and Broom (2006), Freberg (2001) and Grunig et al (2001) all make the point that publicity or information dissemination is key as far as PR practice is concerned. This is so because it offers an opportunity for the PR practitioner to widely disseminate information to his or her numerous stakeholders. It is gratifying to note from the analysis that constant engagement with stakeholders of an organisation is crucial, so practitioners must ensure that the information flows through effective channels as it is one of the surest ways organisations can succeed. Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000), Guth and Marsh (2006), Heath and Coombs (2006) and Lattimore et al (2004) all argue that the information that an organisation sends out to its publics ought to be timely, accurate, and relevant, as it will solve the needs of the publics.

PR as a management function: A cursory look at various definitions of PR by scholars and professional bodies show that almost all the definitions talk about the fact that "PR is a management function that seeks to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and its publics" (Cutlip, Center & Broom 2006). As part of the research on the conceptualisation of PR by female PR practitioners in Ghana, the researcher sought to gauge the views of the practitioners on whether they considered PR as a management function or not. They were asked to give reasons for their answers. The majority of the participants were of the view that PR as a management function was merely existing in books, but in practice, PR was not. Some of their views are captured below:

I do not consider myself to be in management. The reason is this. When management goes for meetings and take decisions for this organisation, I am not part. In fact, my views are not sought in the decisions that management take. If you examine our structure, you will realise that PR is located in management but I can tell you that exists on paper. There are only four people here who take decisions and I am not part. The painful part is, when these decisions are rolled out and issues come up, I am the one who is now called upon to do the damage control. Sometimes, management feels we P.R.O.s are magicians.

This response is consistent with the assertions of scholars such as Cutlip, Center and Broom (2006) and Grunig (1992). These scholars argue that PR is supposed to be playing a managerial role by being part of the dominant coalition. However, in most organisations, the managerial role of the practitioner is always non-existent. Meanwhile, one of the cardinal roles of PR is to provide support to an organisation through relationship building with all its key stakeholders by effectively communicating with these groups. Communication is crucial because it helps to sustain satisfactory long-term trusting relationships with stakeholders. Moreover, the PR practitioner in the organisation is expected to counsel management on various issues, including its policies and programmes. So, in situations where the PR practitioner is not part of the highest decision-making body of the organisation, it becomes challenging for the practitioner.

Other scholars such as Seitel (2007), Center and Jackson (2004), and Skinner et al (2001), among others support the assertion that PR is a management function. This is because effective PR practice is crucial for the survival of every organisation, regardless of its nature or size. The PR practitioner plays an important role by effectively communicating the policies and programs of the organisation to its internal and external stakeholders. Therefore, organisations ought to recognise the fact that PR practitioners must be part of top management which is usually the decision-making body of every organisation. Moreover, if an organisation's mission has to be accomplished, its stakeholders must behave in a socially responsible manner because the image and reputation of the organisation could always be negatively affected. In order to achieve positive results, management needs to recognise the contributions

that the PR department can make as far as its short, medium or long-term goals are concerned.

Another participant said:

> *If everything is going on well in this organisation, management doesn't see the relevance of PR at all. Let me tell you something. How will you feel, that with all your degrees and years of practice, a "small boy" will come to you as the P.R.O and tell you management has taken this or that decision at a meeting held today and you are supposed to do a.b.c.d? Do you see how painful it is? Don't you think if I were part of the meeting, I could have made an input in whatever was being discussed? This is what I have been going through for the past 10 years. It is not easy at all.*

The above response goes further to corroborate most of the views already expressed by scholars in literature, and even among some of the participants. It confirms the fact that most PR practitioners are denied the managerial role although they may possess the requisite qualification and experience to play the role of a manager.

The participant commented further:

> *For me, PR being a management function probably exist in other organisations, but not here. When I was appointed, I was told the position was a senior management position. So, I thought I was going to be part of the top decision-making body of this organisation, but it turned out to be completely different. In fact, if I am lucky, they sometimes seek my views on one issue or the other, but whatever I say is not really binding on management. You are made to suggest something, so they may take it or leave it. Whenever I advise and they ignore, I simply document it and leave it like that.*

Another participant said: "PR is not a management function, period". The participant further stated below:

When I hear people say PR is a management function or plays a management role, I always laugh. Do you consider what we do as practitioners as being part of management? Let me tell you. I don't even remember the last time I set my eyes on the head of this organisation. I am not sure they even think I exist.

The above comment reinforces the unpleasant situations that most PR practitioners go through in their various organisations. Most often, PR is not recognised as a unit that has relevance in the organisation. Grunig (1992) for instance insists that if organisational goals are to be achieved, then PR must be part of the top management. This is because PR has a strategic role to play in the organisation. Therefore, the PR practitioner ought to be empowered to be in management and must report directly to management so that the practitioner can counsel them on matters relating to the publics and ethical decisions. Moreover, the PR practitioner is more qualified to develop communication strategies that will be effective in constantly engaging the numerous stakeholders of the organisation. Again, the comment reinforces one of the basic assumptions of the excellence theory. The theory postulates that excellent organisations are those that involve public relations in strategic management functions, by empowering the practitioner to work closely with top management which is the decision-making body of the organisation. The theory further postulates that PR has a strategic role to play and should not be subordinated to any other department within the organisation. Sometimes, the PR practitioner is made to report to the head of another unit instead of top management. In all cases, the PR practitioner should have easy access to the head of the organisation and all those who take the top decisions in the organisation. Although the majority of the participants did not believe that PR was a management function, a few expressed dissenting views on the issue.

One participant said:

I believe PR is a management function and it must be the case. I am saying so because, if you are in an organisation and you are not part of management, you will never be effective as a PRO. Why am I saying this? I believe that PR has a very strategic role to play as far as the organisation is concerned. I am fully represented in management and I take part in the

decisions of this organisation. In fact, when we go to management meetings, my views on policies are sought and fully incorporated into management. Don't forget that it is my office that will communicate these policies to the public. So, if I am not part of management, then what am I doing?

The above comment lends credence to the fact that the views of scholars that PR is a management function do not exist in the literature alone, but also in practice. Although most PR practitioners are not given full recognition to be part of management, others enjoy the recognition and are allowed to make significant contributions to policies and their implementation.

Another participant said:

For me, I am part of management. If there is a meeting and I am late, my boss will insist that I get to the meeting before they start. My boss recognises me as the PRO as an important part of the organisation so if I am not in the meeting, she always tells me she doesn't feel safe because if issues come up about the organisation, it is me the PRO who will manage the information with the media.

The participant explained her statement further by stating:

I recall a few years ago when this organisation went into a serious crisis, I was the one jumping from one media house to the other to explain our position. It was not easy at all. In the end, I managed to "quench" the fire. I had to report to management almost on an hourly basis and top management was watching to see what will come out of the situation. In the end, I was able to salvage the organisation. I recommended certain things to management and they accepted them with alacrity. Assuming I was not part of management, do you think we could have gotten back to our feet again? A PRO being part of management helps the organisation because when wrong decisions are being taken, I speak against them and I explain to management their negative implications. That is what has saved this

organisation over the years. So, boss, I can assure you that I am fully represented in management.

The above response goes further to confirm that though a chunk of the female PR practitioners may not see PR as playing a managerial role, some of the practitioners think otherwise. This could largely be based on the structure of the organisation and the kind of roles the practitioners play. For example, scholars such as Butterick (2011), Cutlip, Center and Broom (2009), Center and Jackson (1995) and Center et al (2014) explain that PR is supposed to be placed in management all the time but certain factors such as the educational background of the practitioner, the years of career experience, the contributions that the PR department is making to enable the organisation to achieve its goals, as well as the general understanding and perception that top management has about the PR profession itself can go a long way in influencing the role that the practitioner plays as a manager or a technician.

Another participant chose a middle way when the question as to whether PR was a management function or not was posed to her. The participant stated as follows:

> *As for me, I believe PR playing a managerial role or not depends on the organisational structure and also because in most cases, the PR practitioner has to start from the scratch before climbing to the top. When I was appointed here as the PRO, I didn't go to management straight. It took me several years to practice before I finally found a "seat at the management table". In fact, I was employed with my first degree in communication from GIJ, but as we speak, I hold an M.Phil. What it means is that you need to develop yourself more before you will be given that recognition to sit in management. So, being in management or not depends on you the practitioner. Again, if management sees the contributions your PR unit is making to the organisation, you will be elevated to management. Therefore, the issue of PR playing a managerial role largely depends on you the practitioner and not what the books tell us.*

One practitioner in an educational institution in Ghana expressed divergent views as to whether PR was a management function or not. She stated as follows:

I am the head of PR at this university. My designation is Director of PR. It is very difficult for me to state straight away whether PR is in management or not. I am saying this because as director of PR, I am supposed to be in management, but I am not fully there.

The participant explained further as follows:

In this university, it is only the VC, Pro-VC, Registrar and the Director of Finance who take decisions for us. Sometimes my views are sought, and sometimes too, I am not consulted. Now, per the structure of this university, I am supposed to report to the registrar, which in my view is wrong. Ideally, PR should report directly to the head of the organisation which in this case is the VC. But it is not the case here. However, I have dotted lines to the VC. I have access to him all the time, but I am not supposed to report to him directly.

The participant stated further as follows:

What baffles my mind is, sometimes I can send memos or any other correspondence to the VC's office directly from my office and there won't be any problem. Sometimes too, I am told I have to pass the document through the Registrar's Office before it will be forwarded to the VC. The whole thing looks confusing but that is what I have been going through all this while. Sometimes I feel very sad about it. So, in my case, PR is playing both managerial and technician roles at the same time, depending on the situation at hand. So, what exists in books is partly correct but it is not in all organisations that PR plays a straightforward management function.

From the above response, it can be argued that many PR practitioners go through such situations at their various organisations. In the first place, there is so much confusion about the PR profession itself. It is not surprising that for several decades the profession has been practised, but scholars have still not been able to come up with one definition of PR that can be universally accepted (Center & Jackson 2003; Seitel 2007; Tench & Yeomans 2006). Moreover, the extent to which management understands and values the contributions that the PR department makes to the

organisation has also been identified as one major cause of the confusion that exists about the profession, as well as those who practice it. To this end, PR being seen or perceived to be playing a managerial role largely depends on the organisation the practitioner finds herself in and how the structure of the organisation places the PR unit (Cutlip, Center & Broom 2009; Guth & Marsh 2005; Grunig 1992; Grunig 2011; Heath 2001).

PR for image and reputational management: As part of the conceptualisation of PR by female PR practitioners in Ghana, the researcher posed a related question to participants to gauge their understanding of that aspect of PR which talks about image and reputation management. Image is basically the immediate impression or mental picture that is formed about an organisation or object when one comes into contact with it. Three types of images exist; positive, negative and neutral. Reputation on the other hand is the perception people create about an organisation that is normally built over a defined period of time. In other words, it is a social memory or history of the activities of an organisation (Broom & Sha 2012; Burson 2011; Coombs & Heath 2006; Dozier, Grunig & Grunig 2013). Almost all the participants in this study made a strong case that one of the purposes of PR was to manage a positive image and reputation for an organisation. As PR practitioners, it is their responsibility to do so as clearly stated in most definitions of PR. One of the participants insisted that PR is about placing your organisation in a very positive light so that your stakeholders will have confidence in you. She gave an interesting remark to buttress her view on image and reputational management as a function of PR.

> *People have all sorts of misconceptions about your organisation, product, or service. Most of the time, your activities are misconstrued by your stakeholders. If you look at what is happening on social media, for instance, a so-called social media influencer can post something nasty about your organisation and people will believe it. Therefore, I need to change people's negative perceptions of my organisation. I do so by constantly communicating the policies and programmes of my organisation to the general public and I try to keep the records straight. Everyone wants to be seen in a positive light, so I try my best to maintain that for my organisation.*

Another participant said:

For me, PR must always focus on things that will enhance the image and reputation of your organisation. If you don't have a positive corporate image, nobody will patronise what you sell. I work in the bank, so every time I try to maintain a positive image for my bank. I do so by explaining our services to our customers and I also receive complaints and draw management's attention to them. I make sure I follow up on these complaints so that they are addressed with speed. This is the best way I can create a positive image and reputation for my bank.

The above comment confirms most of the views of PR scholars that organisations must strive at all times to maintain a positive image and reputation. This is based on the actions and inactions of the employees of their organisations. If the media continue to report negatively about your product, organisation or service, it can have a negative implication for its future survival (Center & Jackson 2008; Grunig 1993; Kitchen 2006; Tench & Yeomans 2006; Tench & Yeomans 2009).

However, Heath and Coombs (2006) disagree. They are of the view that the concept of image and reputation management should not be misconstrued to mean an attempt to clean up what they describe as a "mess" that is often created by organisations due to unacceptable behaviours. Heath and Coombs (2006) describe the cleaning-up efforts by practitioners as "myopic" because it more or less opens the door for employees or organisations to engage in acts that contravene the very purpose of PR. Heath and Coombs (2006) observe further that managing and creating a positive image and reputation for an organisation is a laudable idea. However, if there is so much emphasis on PR solely focusing on image and reputational management, it can create an erroneous impression that PR is about the distortion of truth or propaganda as an attempt to polish bad organisations to look good when it is not the case. The views of Heath and Coombs (2006) appear to be limited and isolated because a cursory look at PR literature confirms the views of most scholars that image and reputational management is crucial for organisations because their successes or failures depend on how their activities are perceived by their numerous stakeholders.

This assertion is confirmed by one of the participants who stated as follows:

As far as I am concerned, creating a positive image and reputation is non-negotiable. Why am I saying this? You need to get the general public to see you in a very positive light so that whatever product or service you want to showcase to the public will be attractive to them.

This statement appears to be supported by another participant who stated as follows:

As a PR practitioner for my organisation, it is my responsibility to ensure that my bank is projected in a positive image because it will reinforce the brand and create positive pictures in the minds of our cherished customers. It is also one of the best ways our bank connects with other customers emotionally. There is an emotional appeal. Do you see what I mean? If my brand is portrayed positively, it keeps me in business. Don't forget we are now in a competitive world. I can't take chances at all.

These responses from the participants based on their personal experiences and understanding of PR show that there is so much confusion as far as their understanding of the concept of public relations is concerned. For instance, while some organisations or individuals may see the PR department as important and place it at top management, others may not see the need to do so, probably because they do not see the value and the contribution that the PR department brings as far as the achievement of the goals or objectives of the organisation is concerned. While some of the participants believe PR must be in management, others think it is not the case. The overall effect is that PR has different meanings to people and organisations. Depending on the structure of the organisation, PR may be placed in management but in some instances, it may not. The responses of these participants also confirm most of the views of scholars that PR as a profession appears to be young as compared to professions such as Medicine, Teaching, Law, Engineering and others. As a result, the concept of public relations is most often misconstrued by some individuals and organisations as far as its purposes are concerned. This seeming confusion is most likely going to take a much longer time as there is currently an academic debate as far as the purposes of PR are concerned. The fact that PR scholars have still not been

able to agree on a single definition of PR that can be universally accepted reaffirms the confusion that has plagued the PR profession for several decades. In other words, organisations understand PR and its purposes differently based on their core activities. However, regardless of whether the practitioner is placed in management or not, the core functions of PR ought to be well executed by practitioners. In that vein, the PR practitioner should have open and easy access to the "Dominant coalition" and opportunities should always be extended to the PR practitioner to make meaningful contributions as far as the policies and programmes of the organisation are concerned.

In situating the above findings within the context of the basic assumptions of the excellence theory by Grunig and other scholars, it is emphasised that excellent organisations are those who involve the PR practitioner in strategic management functions by giving opportunities to them to make a lot of input into what goes on in the organisation. This can be achieved if the PR practitioner is placed in management and reports directly to the head of the organisation. It is often noted that in some organisations, PR is subordinated under other departments such as Human Resources, Marketing, Operations, and Registrar's office among others, instead of standing on its own. Again, while some organisations may place PR on the top of their organogram, such efforts sometimes appear merely cosmetic. This is because, the practitioners are not often given managerial responsibilities. In effect, such actions by management merely exist on paper but in practice, the managerial role of the PR practitioner is normally non-existent. Arguably, some of the practitioners, though a few, are lucky to be placed in management and function as managers. Therefore, PR as a management function is either existent or non-existent depending on the organisation that the practitioner finds herself in.

6.5 GENDER ISSUES IN PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR)

As already indicated, the broad objective of this study was to investigate gender issues among female PR practitioners in Ghana. Numerous studies have confirmed the enormous contributions women have made in the PR profession globally (Aldoory & Toth 2002; Gower 2001; Grunig 2006). As part of the core issues that the researcher was interested in investigating in this study, the participants' views were elicited on gender issues that affected their smooth progression on the corporate ladder in Ghana.

The rationale was to compare and contrast what was cited in literature and contextualise the issues to the Ghanaian perspective. Studies upon studies have catalogued several gender issues that often prevent most women in the PR profession globally from rapidly climbing to top positions (Aldoory 2003; Aldoory 2005; Aldoory & Toth 2002; Aldoory & Toth 2004; Aldoory et al 2008). Some of the most recurring gender issues identified in the literature include – sexual harassment, glass ceiling, pay gap, lack of mentorship for female practitioners, and gender disparity/discrimination among others. The researcher, therefore, gauged the views of practitioners as to which gender issues they had experienced in line of PR practice in Ghana.

The first comment on sexual harassment was offered by one participant and vividly captured below:

> *Yes... Yes... Yes. As for this issue, I have experienced it severally in my line of practice. Sometimes men will compliment you in a very negative way. Comments like you have a very huge backyard, you are naturally endowed, what a beautiful babe, can we go out for dinner when we close etc. You know as a married lady, I should not expect this from men who are equally married, but it happens all the time. If you are a beautiful lady and you find yourself in the PR profession, then you are in serious trouble. But let me tell you, I have overcome such inappropriate behaviours based on my experiences over the years. I know a couple of my colleague ladies have also experienced this harassment as we have always discussed them in camera during A.G.M. It is quite worrying, to say the least.*

This finding confirms the assertions of scholars such as Toth and Aldoory (2001) and Grunig et al (2001). These scholars observe that a lot of women in the PR profession have suffered from some form of sexual harassment and as a result, the situation has affected them to the extent that it has limited the career opportunities of a good number of them.

Another participant stated as follows:

> *It is a serious problem. I don't even like talking about it. I have been harassed on several occasions but I have always been resistant. The*

problem is most organisations in Ghana do not really have sexual harassment laws to serve as a deterrent to others. Most often, it is we the women who normally suffer this phenomenon the most. How many times have men been sexually harassed? Do you know that sometimes when you are asking for what is due you as a practitioner, some bosses or senior members of the organisation will like to "sleep" with you before they give it to you? Let me tell you, even when you are due to be promoted, some bosses will like to "sleep" with you before they do so. You will have to resist the pressure and focus on your job. I can confirm to you that some of my colleagues have been denied promotions because of things like that. So, you either stay, suffer or leave.

In expanding the discussion on gender issues in PR, the researcher probed the participants further. One participant who pointed to issues of gender discrimination stated her opinion and was captured below:

Let me tell you a very interesting story. The day I attended an interview for my current position, I felt this gender discrimination concept that very day. Can you believe that when I got into the interview room, one of the panellists said "this organisation is a male-dominated one and I don't think a woman will thrive here. Fortunately for me, one-panel member intervened immediately and told his colleagues that my job as a PR practitioner did not necessarily require me to be a man as long as I had the training and qualification for it. In fact, that man really saved me. Since I got into the job, I have experienced it several times. Sometimes issues come up and management will go into a secret meeting and I will not be called. There have been instances where I have complained about it and was told that the meeting was meant for only men. Why should that be the case? I always feel I am being deliberately discriminated against because of my gender. It has occurred several times but I do not allow it to worry me much.

This quotation is in sync with most of the key tenets posited in the gender theory. Proponents of the gender theory insist that gender is what one does but not what one is born with. Therefore, regardless of the gender of the PR practitioner, he/she has the

capacity to practise the profession if offered the necessary support by top management. Most female PR practitioners are often discriminated against based on their gender. This unjust or prejudicial treatment against women in the PR profession on the grounds of their gender has undoubtedly stifled the progression of most female practitioners, thereby leading to their inability to compete favourably with their male counterparts in the PR profession for top positions. Little (2014), for instance, argues that gender is a term that refers to the social or cultural distinctions associated with being male or female. The public relations profession is a specialised area that requires some skills and training, so regardless of your gender, your role should not be associated with your gender. In instances where women in the PR profession are discriminated against, it will obviously have a ripple effect on their performance. Arguably, the overall effect will be a slow pace in terms of their progression to top management positions. Moreover, such practitioners will often not feel valued or respected which can affect their contributions and morale in their organisations.

The study confirmed that the pay gap was not a challenge for female PR practitioners in Ghana. This is in contrast to what several studies have confirmed in some jurisdictions such as the USA, Canada Australia, and Germany among others, where women in the PR profession are sometimes paid less as compared to men in the same position, qualification and experience (Chabria 2005; Grunig et al 200; Murphy 2005).

 One of the participants who commented on pay gap in the PR profession in Ghana stated below:

> No...No...No. I do not think so at all. It is equal work for equal pay. I do not think men who hold the same positions as mine are paid higher than me. Equal pay is given. I believe that your competence and experience determine your pay. If you are able to work hard and deliver results as the company expects, you are given what is due you.

The above response is in sharp contrast with what has been widely documented in the literature. The majority of the participants confirmed that they were not paid less as compared to their male counterparts in the PR profession. In fact, a practitioner is paid based on the organisational pay structure for all employees, especially at the entry

level. Those in managerial positions are paid higher than those in middle-level or lower-level positions. Moreover, the higher or lower a practitioner is paid is determined to a large extent by one's negotiation skills. Some of the practitioners confirmed that one needed to negotiate well at the time of entry in order to be placed at a level that will be deemed satisfactory to the practitioner. For instance, some practitioners who had years of experience from other organisations negotiated their salary above their previous pay level before accepting the new job.

Another participant stated below:

> *When I was being interviewed for this current job, I was asked about my salary expectations. I told them that based on what I was receiving previously, I needed to be paid a salary that was above my previous pay at that time. We had a back-and-forth negotiation before both parties finally accepted. In Ghana, I am not aware that any PR practitioner who is a woman is paid less as compared to their male counterparts. Moreover, there is no pay structure for all public relations officers in Ghana. I think it all depends on the organisation and the position you are being employed for. Some organisations are able to pay their workers higher salaries, but others are not. So, it largely depends on where you find yourself.*

Glass ceiling has also been identified as a major challenge that affects female PR practitioners globally (Krugler 2017; Wrigley 2002; Topic et al 2019; Yeomans 2014). Most scholars in PR believe that a lot of artificial barriers are usually put in place by some men in the PR profession to prevent several female practitioners from progressing to managerial positions. However, the situation varies from country to country. Given that the glass ceiling phenomenon appears to be a global issue in the PR profession, the researcher gauged the opinions of the participants on the phenomenon. The main rationale was for the practitioners to confirm or otherwise if the glass ceiling phenomenon in PR existed in Ghana.

One participant put it this way when another question was posed to her, and it has been captured below:

You know that women have always been disadvantaged and discriminated against in many aspects. PR is not an exception. I have been a victim several times and my experiences from other organisations over the years are sad to tell. Some individuals in the organisation think a woman is not good enough to occupy certain positions or be a leader. Sometimes, they will deliberately put measures in place to discourage you as a woman to aspire to certain higher positions. In Ghana, we have a PR women's association and we have been discussing this during our meetings. In fact, it is actually a "movement" which is known as women in PR in Ghana. Let me add that it is a professional networking organisation that is pushing for the empowerment of women in the PR profession in Ghana. Our movement is also fighting all forms of discrimination that affect women in the PR industry in Ghana. We also educate, mentor and empower female practitioners in Ghana to overcome some of these barriers. It is a way of boosting their confidence and morale. We encourage them to compete favourably with men for senior positions in their various organisations. We believe this will help our women in the PR profession to climb the corporate ladder rapidly and also hold higher positions just like their male counterparts in the PR profession. I am one of the top leaders of the PR movement in Ghana. We often allow our members to share their experiences during our meetings.

This response is situated within the feminist theory which has been employed in this study. The theory stipulates that women in every endeavour should be given equal opportunities like men in every sphere of life. The theory posits further that several women have been discriminated against and denied opportunities that would have been due to them because certain societies have deliberately masked the contributions of women. In other words, the contributions of women in most jurisdictions have always not been recognised even though they also have the potential to compete in every position in society. With regard to mentorship for practitioners in the PR profession, the study confirmed that mentorship among female PR practitioners in Ghana was not a challenge. Almost all the participants confirmed that they had received some form of mentorship from senior practitioners in line of practice. These senior practitioners included both genders depending on the relationship that existed between them.

After gauging the views of the participants on the conceptualisation of PR as well as gender issues among female PR practitioners in Ghana, the researcher then moved into the specific objectives underpinning the study. These included the position of women in the PR profession in Ghana, the specific roles they played, the communication strategies and channels they employed as well as general issues that related to the PR industry in Ghana. Moreover, the researcher also posed questions to the practitioners as far as the development of a proposed framework for PR practice in Ghana was concerned.

Having adequately discussed the general issues that relate to public relations as a profession and an academic discipline, as well as gender issues in PR among female practitioners in Ghana, the next sub-section focuses on the specific objectives that underpinned the study. These include the position of female PR practitioners in Ghana, the roles those female practitioners in Ghana play, the communication strategies the practitioners employ at their various organisations, as well as general issues that relate to the development of a framework on women in the PR profession in Ghana.

6.5.1 Research objective: To establish the position of female PR practitioners in Ghana

This is the first objective of the study and it enabled the researcher to establish the position of female PR practitioners in Ghana. Details of the findings that relate to this objective are discussed below:

In most organisations, an organogram which is basically a visual representation of the structure of the organisation normally indicates the various departments and units as well as how they are arranged in terms of hierarchy. The hierarchy also shows the arrangement in terms of positions of the corresponding officers who occupy these departments and units, based on seniority which relates generally to top, middle and lower-level management positions. In Ghana for instance, most organisations that have well established Public Relations units are normally given different designations such as Public Affairs, Public Relations, Corporate Communications, Media Relations, Investor Relations, Brand Management and Communications, Marketing and Communications, Corporate Affairs, Marketing and Corporate Affairs, Community

Relations Officer among others. Other designations are Director-General Public Affairs, Director of Public Relations, Head of Public Relations, Public Relations Manager, Head of Corporate Communications and Brands Manager, Public Relations and Media Manager, Public Relations Executive, Senior Vice President among others (Abudulai 2017; Cutlip, Center & Broom 2009).

While this is the case, one of the questions that often comes to mind as far as organisations and PR practice is concerned is the importance such organisations attach to PR practice. In other words, where is the location of Public Relations on the organisational hierarchy? While some organisations may recognise PR as important and place it at management, others may not see the need to do so, and will therefore place PR either in the middle or at the bottom. Scholars such as Cutlip, Center and Broom (2009) for instance argue that not all PR practitioners will enjoy an automatic elevation to top management and consequently take part in decision-making processes. Sometimes, they will have to work their way through from the bottom to the top before they can enjoy such top-management positions. This could be as a result of their experience, educational background, and the contributions the PR department makes to the organisation among other factors.

Although this might be a general situation that affects the PR profession, most of the studies on the position of women in PR appear to emanate from the west, particularly U.S.A, Canada, U.K and Australia. The European communication monitor project for instance, has also been monitoring the position of women in PR in Europe. It is worth noting that most of the data confirm that the position of women in PR has recorded some significant improvement, although at a snail's pace, as compared to the period when the Velvet Ghetto study was carried out (CIPR 2018; Dubroski et al 2019; Place & Vanderman Winter 2018). This question was put to the participants in order to establish the current position of women in PR in Ghana based on the organisations they practice PR in. Moreover, the objective enabled the researcher to establish whether the female practitioners were placed at top, middle or lower-level positions in their various organisations. Again, the objective aided the researcher to understand the reporting protocols and relationships that existed between top management of their organisations and the female PR practitioners themselves.

As already established in literature, women in PR is a topical area that has drawn attention since 1986 when the Velvet Ghetto report was published and the findings confirmed that female PR practitioners at that time deliberately chose lower positions (technician staff) and were thus, expected to be paid less than their male counterparts. Several research on women in PR have been conducted over the years to establish the position of women and their leaderships styles in the PR profession (Aldoory & Toth 2002; Beurer-Zuellig et al 2009; Creedon 2009; Cline et al 1986; Dozier et al 2007; Grunig 1999; Toth & Grunig 1993, Grunig 2006; Pulido Polo 2012; Tench et al 2017).

The study confirmed that just a few female PR practitioners enjoyed top-level management positions in their organisations. The majority of them fell under middle and lower levels as far as their position was concerned. Several factors accounted for the situation identified and they are briefly highlighted below:

Work Experience: The work experience and the number of years served as a PR practitioner was a consideration for placement of a practitioner at top management. It was confirmed that most of the practitioners during their interviews for appointment were asked to confirm the number of years they had practised PR and the positions they previously held if any. These factors were considered as far as their placement in the organisations was concerned. With regard to experience, one of the participants stated below:

> *Oh yes! My work experience has brought me this far. You see, I have practised PR for over a decade. I started as a technician from two organisations before coming here. I remember during my interview for this job, the panel asked me several questions regarding the number of years I have served in the previous organisations and the positions I held. I was even asked by the panel to indicate some specific successes I had chalked before I was given the opportunity to now explain to them what my vision was for my current organisation. When I was appointed for this job, I knew it was because of my experience. I am saying this because six of us attended the interview, but I was the one who was picked. One management member confirmed to me a few months later that management considered my experience from the previous organisations that is why I was picked for*

the job. I think most organisations will prefer to appoint PR practitioners who have substantial number of years of experience when appointing.

Educational Level: The academic or professional qualifications that the female PR practitioners possessed, partly determined the positions they were placed in their various organisations. It was confirmed in this study that practitioners who possessed master's degrees in communication or related disciplines were placed on top management positions and were part of management in their organisations. However, those with first degrees were mostly in the middle or lower positions, except two participants who confirmed that they were placed at top management positions although they possessed a first degree. Scholars such as Cutlip, Center and Broom (2009) earlier argued that most PR practitioners usually begin their career from the technician level before progressing to top management. Moreover, the skills and competences of the practitioner as well as his or her educational qualification are normally the determining factors as far as their placement is concerned. Capacity building is key to every PR practitioner because undertaking such courses always help in sharpening their skills as far as the PR field is concerned. In other words, striving for a higher educational qualification in communication and other related fields can enhance the professional capabilities of the PR practitioner which can help in their rapid progression to top management positions.

One of the participants shared her experience, which is captured below:

You see, I came here straight as a manager when the vacancy was advertised. When the employer advertised the job, they indicated they needed someone who possessed a Master's Degree in Communication or, at least, a First Degree in Communication plus Master's in a related field. The employer was very clear in the advertisement that the advertised position was a management position and applicants MUST hold a master's Degree. So, if you did not possess a master's degree, you couldn't have applied for the job. What I am trying to say is that you cannot occupy certain positions if your educational qualification is low. In this organisation, all heads of departments hold, at least, a master's degree and it is a requirement before you can occupy such a position. PR is no exception.

The Original Structure (Organogram) of the organisation: The structure of the organisation that existed since its inception partly accounted for the placement of the PR unit in the organisation. Within various organisations in Ghana, there exists a structure which clearly indicates the positions and placement of every unit or department in the organisation. The structure determines the units that are placed at the top, middle or lower positions. Therefore, the practitioner may be more qualified to be placed at management, but because the original organisational structure did not place the PR unit at management level, the practitioner will not enjoy a managerial position unless the organogram is restructured by the top management of the organisation.

One of the participants shed light on the issue which has been captured below:

> *If you examine our organogram, you will realise that PR has not been placed at top management. The reason may probably be that, management at that time did not think PR should be placed among top management. But I think the organisation has expanded over the years and there is a need for some form of organisational re-structuring. In that case, it is possible for the PR department to be upgraded to the top. Until that is done, it will continue to be a challenge. Do you get what I mean?*

PR's contributions to organisational goals and objectives: The contributions that the PR unit which is headed by the PR practitioner makes has an impact as far as the placement is concerned. The study confirmed that, although the original organisational structure of an organisation may recognise the practitioner or the PR unit to be placed at management level, the contributions that the unit makes to the organisation which are recognised and appreciated by top management can influence their decision to push the Public Relations Officer to management level or not, regardless of where the PR unit was originally placed on the organogram. In other words, if the PR department is seen to be making enormous contributions to organisational goals, management can decide to send the practitioner to the top in order to take part in decision-making processes.

Discrimination against female PR practitioners: The study confirmed that some female PR practitioners were discriminated against on the basis of their gender. It was found that, some of the female PR practitioners were discriminated against merely because they were females. Some organisational cultures did not promote the cause of women by recognising them to be part of management. Therefore, regardless of their career experiences and professional qualification, they were still placed at middle or lower-level position instead of top management simply because of the fact that they were females.

The relationship that exists between the practitioner and top management: The study confirmed that female PR practitioners who nurtured and maintained a cordial relationship with their bosses at career levels got promoted to managerial positions coupled with other factors such as loyalty to the organisation as a result of long service, hard work and relationship management with the dominant coalition. As already cited in literature (Abudulai 2017; Cutlip, Center & Broom 2009), the study further confirmed that a majority of the practitioners who are now at management levels actually started from the bottom and progressed steadily to the top. However, other practitioners went straight into management because they had occupied similar positions in the past as they practised PR.

One of the participants said as follows:

> *If you take a critical look at our organogram, you will notice that PR has been placed in the office of the MD. What it means is that I am supposed to report directly to MD but surprisingly, it is not the case. To be frank, I have to report everything I do to "operations" first before it gets to MD. Sometimes, I bypass "operations" to see MD if I feel the issue at hand is urgent. In fact, this is very frustrating but what can I do? This is the situation I came to meet here. I believe my predecessor also went through this so I cannot complain. I make sure I do my work to the best of my ability but I have to admit to you that I sometimes feel very sad about the situation.*

This response is consistent with the assertions of Cutlip, Center and Broom (2006) that PR has expanded over the years and most organisations are now using it as a tool to

reach out to their various publics. However, organisational culture has always had an influence on the position or placement of the PR practitioner. This is normally based on the historical antecedents related to the organisation. As a result, the PR practitioner may experience unpleasant occurrences which can affect her professional capacity. One participant admitted having gone through such experiences in the past at two organisations, but had to resign because she was always not happy at work. "Why should I continue to work in an environment where I don't feel happy?" This response confirms what earlier scholars found as far as the placement of PR practitioners in organisations are concerned. Grunig (1992) for instance in his second principle of the excellence theory insists that the communication manager should be placed at the top and work with the decision-makers of the organisation, but in contrast, most organisations do not see the need to place PR at the top. This situation where the PR practitioner finds herself makes it difficult for her to feel happy and contribute immensely to organisational goals.

It must be emphasised that other participants in this study expressed dissenting views on how PR as a profession has expanded over the years and more organisations in Ghana now see the need to establish PR departments to communicate their policies and programmes to their numerous stakeholders. A few participants were of the view that the PR profession has evolved from an American practice into a global one, but on the African continent, the concept of PR is not very well grounded in terms of its core purposes. Some of the practitioners attributed the challenge to the fact that the PR profession itself is relatively new in Africa and most parts of the globe, so it will take some time for such countries to understand its rudiments as compared to the developed economies where the PR profession has been practised for several decades.

One of the participants expressed her opinion as far as PR practice in Ghana is concerned, and it has been captured below:

> *I think not much is known about the PR profession in Ghana or Africa for that matter. Let me give you an example. If you go out now and ask about ten people what they know about PR, all of them will give you different funny answers as to what PR is. Some might even tell you they simply don't know.*

This is because many people don't know much about what the PR profession entails or, for that matter, what it does. But ask anyone about a teacher, a nurse or a doctor, etc., and even a young person will give you a straightforward answer as to what they do. But the situation is different when it comes to PR. All I am saying is that PR as a profession is not well-known in most parts of Africa, and for that matter, Ghana. Do you get what I mean?

In an attempt to expand the discussion, the researcher then asked a follow-up question as to what could be done to reverse the negative trend. The participant further stated as follows:

More education or sensitisation." She added, "I think in Ghana, for instance, IPRG can do more advocacy as far as the PR profession is concerned so that individuals and organisations can be educated on what the PR profession entails. That will go a long way to improve PR practice in Ghana.

While it was established that some female PR practitioners did not enjoy top management positions, there were others who were placed at top management. The response below by one participant provides a glimpse of how some female PR practitioners are well treated in their organisations in Ghana.

In this organisation, PR sits very comfortably at management. I take part in management meetings. In fact, communication department always make presentations to management during meetings. I have to state further that my counselling role as a PR practitioner is well recognised by management. Let me give you one example. There have been instances where management attempted to take certain decisions and I advised against it and they listened. We recently experienced a small crisis and management wanted me to issue a release to deny it, but I advised against it and it was accepted. Management values my contributions, so I can confirm to you that I am a full embodiment of top management.

The response above clearly confirms most of the arguments that have been made in the excellence theory. The theory postulates that the PR practitioner must be empowered so that he/she can be at management level and also report directly to top

management without any hindrance. This will enable him/her to provide advice to management on several issues that concern the organisation including communication. The theory postulates further that the PRO/communications person should be in strategic management in order to contribute to organisational policies especially from the perspectives of the stakeholders of the organisation. Again, the theory insists that the PR unit must be headed by a manager and not a technician. This is because, if the PR practitioner is not a manager, he/she might just end up performing the technical skills like writing and editing, or is likely to be pigeon-holed as media relations rather than a true management function.

In a follow-up question, the researcher sought to find out from the interviewees about their reporting protocols as well as their relationship with top management. One of the participants stated as follows:

> *In this organisation, PR reports directly to management. I don't have to pass through any other officer before I get to my boss. In fact, I can go to my group MD any time I want and discuss issues. Where it becomes necessary, he also calls me to come over to his office to discuss. I must say my relationship with management is cordial and excellent.*

This response is supported by most of the basic assumptions in the excellence theory. The response can be described as the ideal situation for PR practice. It is important to note however that, it is not in all cases that the PR practitioner enjoys such working relationships. In fact, this study confirmed that it was just a few female PR practitioners who enjoyed such opportunities. Based on the preponderance of evidence adduced here by some of the participants, one can therefore argue that a lot of female practitioners in Ghana do not seem to find their feet at management. This is in spite of the fact that the PR profession has been described as a gendered profession with a majority of the workforce being women. Yet, the few men in the profession occupy higher positions while a majority of the women are relegated to the background. Studies have confirmed that only a few women often manage to get into senior managerial positions in the PR profession (Daymond & Demetroius 2010; Fitch & Third 2010; Verhoeven & Aarts 2012). One major issue that has attracted attention is the issue of power in the public relations profession with regard to managerial positions

(Grunig et al 2001; Aldoory & Toth 2001). Studies have confirmed that in most organisations, it is the men who often have the power when it comes to management while women seem to be powerless (Place 2012; Grunig et al 2001). The above finding where women have less power contravenes most of the tenets of the excellence theory. To this extent, studies in women in PR have often argued that women must be given equal opportunities to compete for the same positions and other conditions in the PR profession with men without any form of discrimination (Toth & Grunig 1993; Grunig 1988; Rakow & Nastasia 2009). In a more recent study, Yeomans (2019) points out that a majority of the workforce in the PR industry globally is occupied by women but there are still more men in senior managerial positions as compared to women. Yeomans (2019) indicates further that a lot of women in the PR profession are subordinating to men.

While acknowledging the fact that some female PR practitioners may be enjoying the best treatment in their organisations, the majority of these women still experience difficulties in one way or the other. In contrast to what a few of the participants said that they were okay with happenings in their organisations, others had horrifying stories to tell. One participant for instance described her position in her organisation as just being better than an ordinary labourer. She lamented about her situation as captured below:

> *As for me, the situation here is very terrible. I have contemplated on leaving on several occasions but I have always been persuaded by one or two persons not to go. All I do is media relations and writing. Apart from the normal office work, I virtually sit here and people go for meetings and come and instruct me as to what to do. Sometimes, when management take these decisions and they backfire, they come back to me thinking I have the magic to quench the fire. It is not fair at all. I don't think I am being treated well in this organisation. Sometimes I am tempted to believe that it is because I am a female. You know that in some organisations or families in Ghana, women are not often included in decision-making processes. I can tell you that it affects the PR profession as well. I am saying this because I experience it all the time.*

The revelation made in the above response is consistent with the assertions made by scholars such as Aldoory (2001), Aldoory (2005), Aldoory (2009) and Aldoory and Toth (2002). They point out that several female PR practitioners have been discriminated against in one way or the other due to their gender. Moreover, most organisations do not value the importance of the PR unit until when issues begin to emerge and the media is reporting negatively on it. The extent to which top management in an organisation values PR or not, automatically determines where the PR unit is placed. This assertion is further explained in the organograms in this study (figures 5, 6 and 7) which depict how PR practitioners are handled in different organisations in Ghana. The diagrams depict three (3) instances where a PR practitioner is placed at the top of an organisation with management, middle or lower-level positions respectively in the organisational hierarchy.
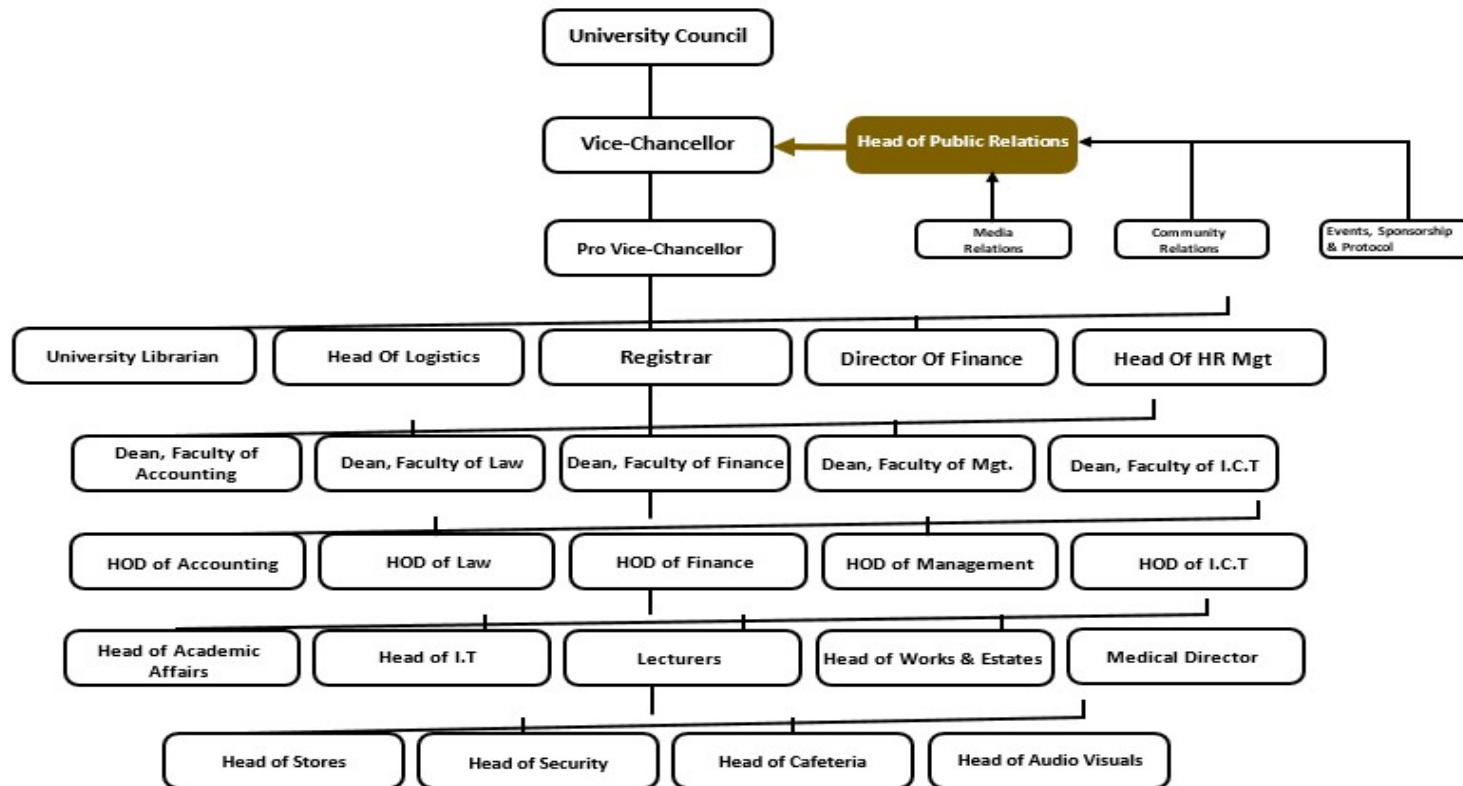
Figure 6.1.
Source: Excepts Adapted from KNUST Organisational structure

Figure 5: Sample organisational hierarchy

On the extreme right of the organogram in figure 6.1, the arrow which is bold shows the exact location of the PR unit on the organogram of a typical public university structure in Ghana. As clearly seen on the organogram, the PR unit is located right at the office of the vice chancellor who is the administrative head of the university. This is described as the ideal situation for PR practice because the practitioner in this organisation reports directly to the vice chancellor who is the head of the organisation. Over here, the PR practitioner sits at management level and takes part in policy formulation as well as decision-making processes. Grunig (1992) and Heath and Coombs (2006) describe this situation as ideal for PR practice. This is because the practitioner is recognised as an expert in her area and is best qualified to handle PR problems. She is allowed to freely diagnose and prescribe solutions to PR problems in the organisation. Moreover, the counselling role of the PR practitioner is manifest in this situation as the practitioner has the opportunity to counsel management on a wide range of issues that bother on the organisation and management will normally heed to the advice. Management often plays a passive role as far as the activities of the PR unit are concerned. It is mostly in crises situations that management will normally find the need to collaborate with the PR practitioner in solving the problem. To confirm what is described as the best and ideal situation for PR practice by Grunig (1992) and Heath and Coombs (2006), one of the practitioners who enjoys a top management position in her organisation stated below:

> *In this organisation, PR sits at management. In fact, I attend all management meetings and I contribute during meetings. Most often, I do presentations to management at meetings especially those that relate to communicating with internal and external stakeholders. Moreover, I advise management on all issues that affect the organisation. Management takes my advice. For instance, one of our senior members recently created a big problem for this organisation and management wanted me to organise a big press conference and debunk the issue but I advised against it and they accepted. I advanced several reasons to management and they were convinced. I can assure you I am respected here so if I say something to management, they take it in good faith. In fact, it is a listening organisation and I have every platform to contribute on issues. In a serious crisis situation, I advise*

management on how to approach it and when it becomes necessary, we
collaborate to get the issue solved quickly.

This response is in line with most of the tenets espoused in the excellence theory. The theory postulates that PR practitioners should be involved in strategic management functions because it allows for more inclusive decision making, better organisational policy from the stakeholders' perspectives, as well as making room for more endearing decisions in the organisations. The theory further states that the PR practitioner should be given the opportunity to report directly to management in order to advise on matters that affect the image and reputation of the organisation (Center & Jackson 2003; Grunig 1992; Grunig et al 2002; Grunig 2011; Tench & Yeomans 2006).
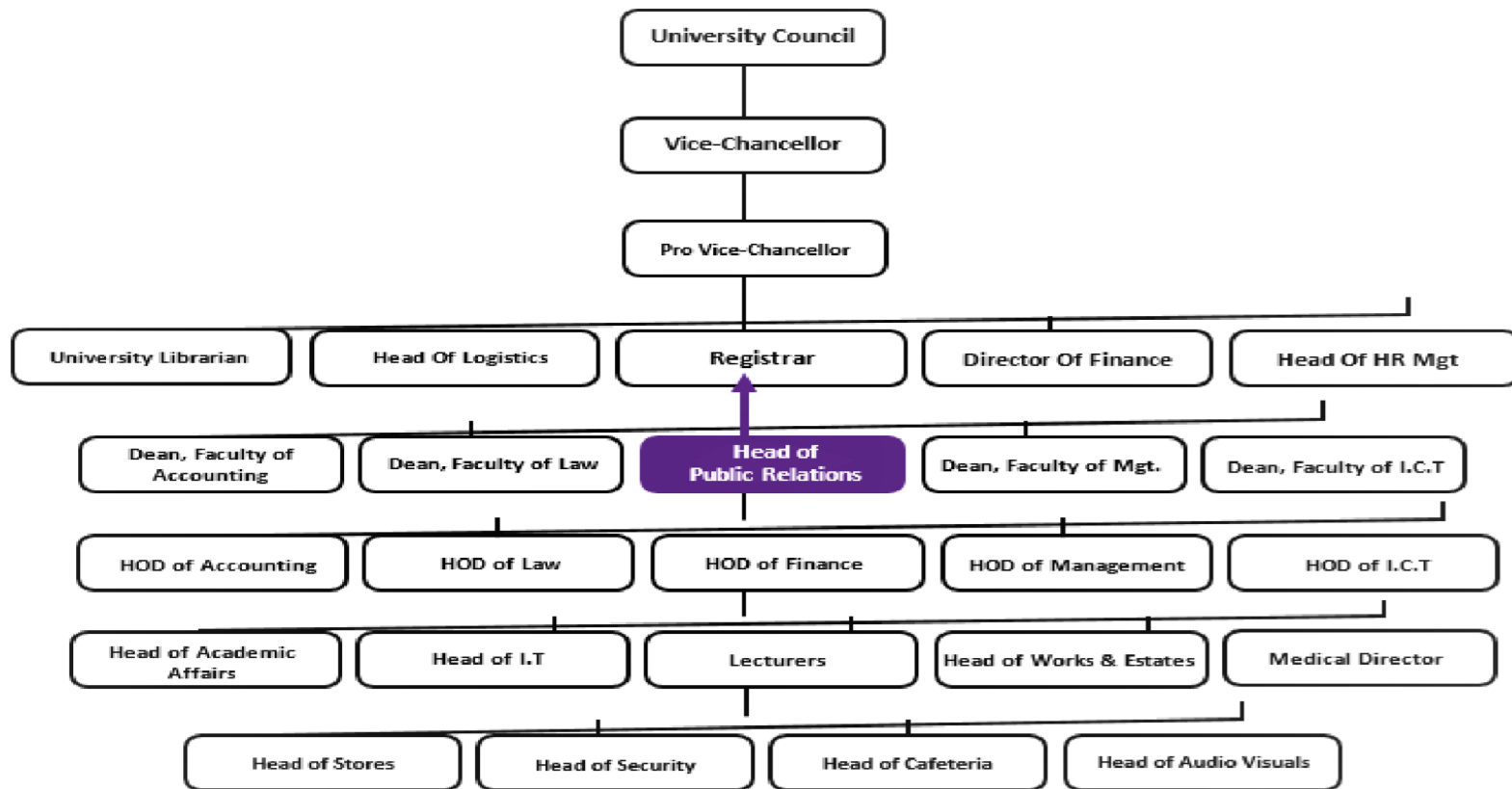
Figure 6.2.

Source: Excepts Adapted from KNUST Organisational Structure

Figure 6: Sample organisational structure

In the above organogram, figure 6.2 depicts a situation where the PR unit is located in a middle-management position on the organisational hierarchy. Most often, middle-level managers act as an intermediary between top-level and lower-level managers. The organogram again depicts a typical university structure in Ghana where the PR unit is not located at management level. As seen in figure 6, the PR unit is located in the office of the registrar so the PR practitioner in this organisation is supposed to report to the registrar and not the vice chancellor as it was in the case in figure 6.1. In situations like this, the PR practitioner is not part of management. She may or may not sit at management meetings. Even if she is invited to sit at management meetings sometimes, she may not be accorded the opportunity to play a managerial role and thus, may not make any meaningful contributions to the organisation. It can be argued that the PR practitioner here is more or less a communication facilitator as she is acting as a liaison, interpreter or a mediator between management and the stakeholders. She occupies what is known as the boundary-spanning duty by linking the organisation to its numerous stakeholders. In a few instances where it becomes necessary, management may call her to meetings because they want her to perform a specific task. In such instances, the practitioner does not have much influence on what goes on in the organisation especially some key decision-making processes. Their main responsibility is usually dealing with issues concerning their unit. It is worth noting that the practitioner in this category may have easy access to management, but the managerial role is normally missing. Moreover, the location of the PR unit on the organisational hierarchy normally has a ripple effect on the position of the PR practitioner (Cutlip, Center & Broom 2006; Cutlip, Center & Broom 2000; Dozier & Broom 2006; Grunig 2001; Grunig 2011; Grunig et al 2002).

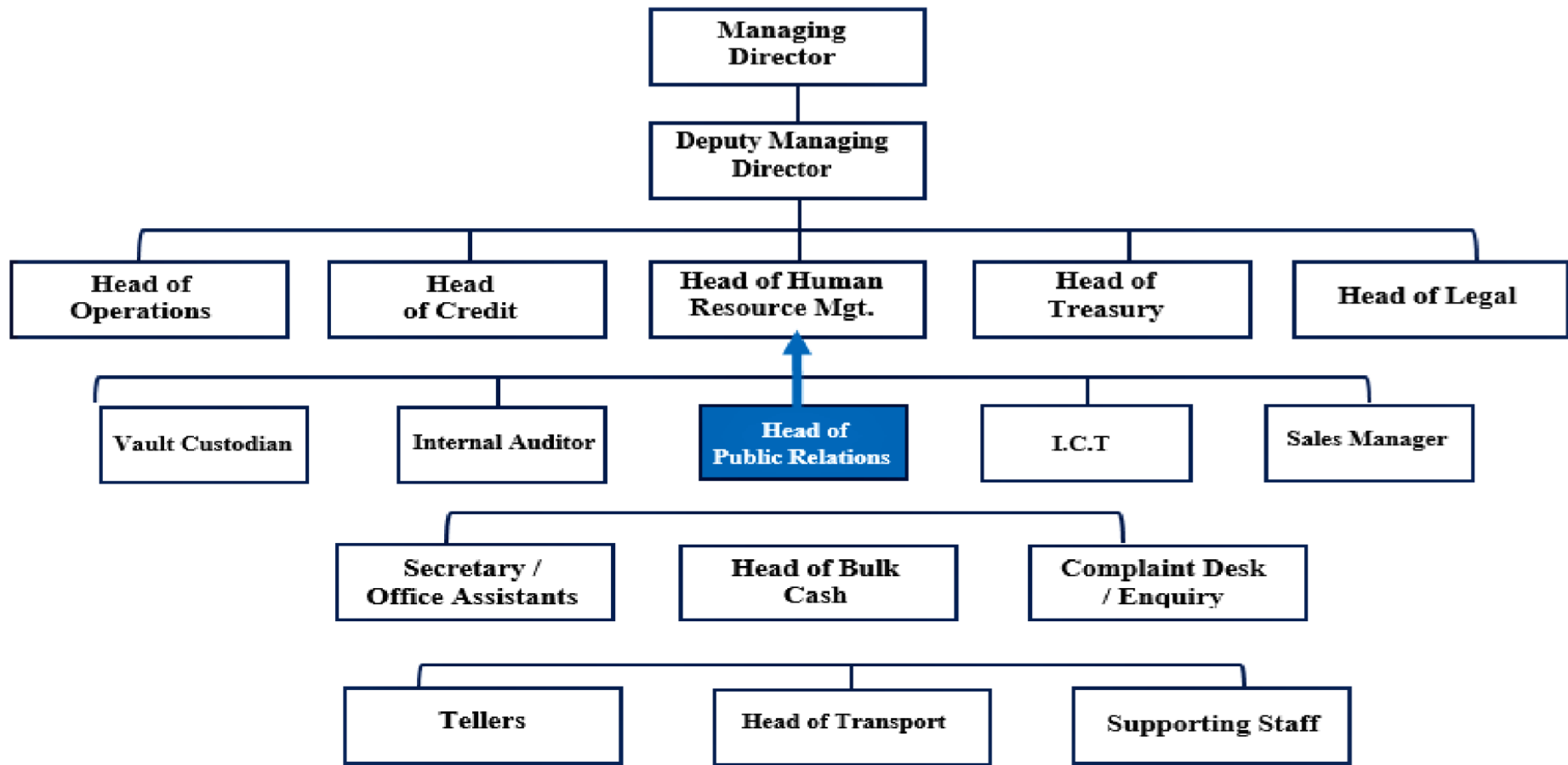*Figure 6.3.*

Source: Excepts Adapted from Bank of Ghana

Figure 7: Sampled organisation structure

In figure 6.3 above, the organogram depicts how a PR unit is neither placed in management nor a middle-level position. As seen in the arrow, the PR unit is placed in the lower-level position where the practitioner is nowhere closer to management. The majority of PR practitioners often fall into this situation as confirmed in this study. There were situations where even when the organogram of the organisation clearly showed the PR unit to be at top management level and yet that merely existed on paper because, practically, PR was not at management level. In this particular situation, management does not see PR as important to the organisation. In most instances, the PR practitioner simply plays the normal PR functions such as writing, media relations, organising press conferences, monitoring the organisation's website, conducting research, issuing news releases, and granting media interviews among others (Heath & Coombs 2006; Seitel 2007).

Over here, the position the PR practitioner is placed in makes it extremely difficult for her to be close to management. In fact, she does not participate in management meetings. The practitioner is not allowed to contribute to policies and decision-making processes which include her PR unit. As the PR practitioner for the organisation, she will normally not be deprived access to the dominant coalition, but what is worrying is the fact that the practitioner is most often not regarded as an important person as far as critical issues of the organisation are concerned. Most of the practitioners in this category possess very low educational qualifications such as a diploma with few years of working experience. As a result, management does not appear to treat them with respect as their views are often not sought when critical decisions are taken. In most instances, a senior officer is instructed to give a task to the practitioner to perform. This situation does not engender excellent PR practice and that always affects the professional capacity of the practitioner, thereby lowering her morale (Kitchen 2006).

The response below from one of the participants summarised the situation in the lower management position of a PR practitioner in Ghana.

> *I am not considered when decisions are taken in this organisation. Most of the time, they go for meetings and take decisions and I am later briefed by a senior person in the organisation to communicate these decisions either internally or externally. Sometimes I am called by my boss himself and given*

clear instructions as to what to do. So anytime my boss calls me, I go with
a notepad to write down instructions given to me so that I don't make a
mistake. I have to state that I am a pure technician.

From the foregoing, it can be reasonably concluded that the position that a PR practitioner is placed in an organisational hierarchy depends largely on several factors as already indicated by the participants in this study. Although these factors stated by the participants may not be exhaustive, one can conclude that the factors may differ from one organisation to the other. Therefore, depending on the organisation where the practitioners find themselves, the prevailing factors that may be unique to that particular organisation will determine the exact location of the PR department in the organisational hierarchy. Moreover, it will depend largely on the importance that top management will attach to the PR department as far as the position of the practitioner is concerned.

The next sub-section focuses on the roles that female PR practitioners in Ghana play. The practitioners shared with the researcher the activities they undertake in their various organisations.

6.5.2 Research objective: To analyse the roles (activities) that female PR practitioners in Ghana play

This section discusses the specific roles (activities) that female PR practitioners in Ghana play in their various organisations. Broom and Smith (1979) systematically researched on the different types of roles that PR practitioners were likely to perform if they were engaged by organisations. Broom and Smith's (1979) research was based on a laboratory experiment which was conducted with the aim of testing practitioners' impact on client perception. They came up with four main roles (Expert Prescriber, Communication Technician, Communication-Facilitator and Problem-Solving Facilitator).

As part of the scope of the study, the researcher sought to find out the type of roles that female PR practitioners play in Ghana. One critical area of research in PR is the concept of PR roles (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier 2006; Steyn 2009). This is because, the PR roles concept is hinged on the fact that PR practitioners execute assignments given

to them by their bosses which are performed on a day-to-day basis and these activities often determine the status of the practitioners within the organisation. For example, those that are recognised by their organisations as managers play managerial roles while those that are not accorded managerial status are offered technician roles. A number of factors may account for this which have already been established in this study under the position that female PR practitioners hold in Ghana. In the course of the interview, the researcher asked the female PR practitioners to describe the specific roles that they played in their organisations. This was after the researcher had earlier established their position in their organisations.

One of the participants stated below:

> *Over here in my organisation, I play managerial roles only. My department is fully represented at management. I can confirm to you I have a voice and when I speak, management listens. I report directly to management. In fact, I deal directly with the head of this organisation. At the local level, we do our management meetings and, in these meetings, communication plays a critical role. I will normally present to management an outlook of my communication deliverables for the next one month. If there are any issues, we are all given the platform to discuss and every head is given an equal opportunity to contribute before decisions are arrived at. In a critical crises situation, communication plays a key and strategic role. We counsel management on how to approach crises. Even though this is a business focused organisation, management appreciates the role of communication.*

The above response confirms a typical scenario where a PR practitioner enjoys a managerial position and the counselling role of the practitioner is manifest. The practitioner is recognised as an expert prescriber and is allowed to sit at management/board meetings where critical decisions of the organisation are taken. In this case, the practitioner is given the platform to make meaningful contributions to management and even in a typical crisis situation, the PR practitioner counsels management on what to do and what not to do, and the advice is accepted. This response is therefore in sync with the arguments that Grunig (1992) makes as far as the roles that PR practitioners are supposed to play are concerned. Regardless of

whether the PR practitioner is a male or a female, the practitioner must have easy access to management and should report directly to management without any hindrance. Again, in the excellence theory, Grunig (1992) argued that the PR practitioner should be empowered to be part of the "dominant coalition" which is also the highest decision-making body of any organisation. Moreover, Grunig (1992) insist that the PR department must be headed by a manager and not a technician.

Although the above response confirms the ideal situation under which PR should be practiced, the study confirmed that, the few female PR practitioners who were truly placed at the management level were assisted by deputies who either possessed communication background or in other disciplines. In most multi-national organisations in Ghana where PR departments are well established, the head of PR/Communication could have other deputies in charge of media relations, community relations, and corporate social responsibility among others. These deputies then reported directly to the head of PR as their immediate boss. With this arrangement, it gives the head of PR ample time to focus more on the managerial responsibilities by working closely with management. The deputies who are assigned specific roles report directly to the head of PR and briefs her on their assignments which are now compiled for the head of PR to go and present to management during meetings where critical decisions are considered.

Another participant stated as follows:

> *For me, I enjoy my role as the head of PR. I don't know of other practitioners. I am aware that some of my colleagues are qualified just like me to be placed at management but that has not always been the case. When we meet at AGM, you will often hear a lot of complaints and frustrations from some of our members, especially my colleague female practitioners. They do not feel happy that they are made to play technician roles even though they are more than qualified to be managers.*

Another participant buttressed the point:

> *The bitter truth is that, most organisations do not want to place PR at the top. Some of us fought very hard to get to the top. You need to work hard*

and also push for recognition if possible. Even though I am the head of PR in this organisation, I sometimes play other roles. That makes my job quite challenging because, you will be there and management will tell you to do this or that. Sometimes, these roles emerge from management meetings of which I am part. I remember one time, we had to do a training workshop for some departments and management suggested to me at a meeting that I should be one of the facilitators for the workshop. I had no option than to comply. Sometimes, we go to the communities to engage with the chiefs and elders to discuss our organisation and its activities with the community. After doing all these, I come back to office and I have to send news releases, emails or even prepare a large press conference for management the next day. I have a team that helps me to work but not all of them are trained practitioners. So, you can imagine what I go through on a daily, weekly or monthly basis.

This response is consistent with what Cutlip, Center and Broom (2009) opined. The scholars opined that with time, PR practitioners will sometimes adopt certain patterns of behaviour to deal with situations or activities that may occur in their various organisations.

As a result, the practitioner may play several roles although a dominant role is most likely to always emerge as they perform their day-to-day responsibilities. The implication from this response is that, the PR practitioner in this scenario has been recognised by management and assigned managerial roles. However, because the PR roles are all-encompassing, the practitioner may not stick to just one role, but can be assigned several other roles depending on the situation that the organisation finds itself in. For a typical PR practitioner who plays a managerial role, she should not be the one to be seen organising press conferences, writing news releases, updating websites among others. At most, she should be the one supervising her subordinates to do so and report to her. However, in a situation where the PR practitioner does not have a deputy who is also a trained practitioner, she will be compelled by the situation at hand to play a technician role although she is not supposed to do that. It can be argued that the PR practitioner plays multiple roles and therefore, the practitioner, regardless of whether she is placed at the top, middle or lower-level could be playing varying degree

of roles as and when it is necessary to do so. Even though the practitioner appears to be recognised as an expert in her area of specialisation, she does not play the expert prescriber role exclusively, but adds other roles alongside depending on what comes up for the attention of her department.

It is gratifying to note that, though some of the female practitioners played the expert prescriber role as outlined by scholars, other practitioners had a contrasting story to tell.

One of the participants who has a different view stated as follows:

I do not consider myself playing a senior or managerial role. I personally believe I have the capacity and the necessary experience to be placed at management but that is not the case here. To give you a straight forward answer, I am a technician. Unfortunately, that is what it is. It should not be so but that is the situation I find myself in here. I do not take part in management meetings. After the meetings are held, I am then given instructions by someone to act on one thing or the other. For example, if I have to issue a release, someone will come from the meeting and tell me to write this or that. So after writing, I will send it to that person to go through and give a feedback before I push to the media. Sometimes if our group manager is around, I will send it to him to peruse for his comments so that I effect the corrections before I send it out to the media. Apart from that, I perform my normal roles like media relations, monitoring and updating our website, writing and editing, organising press conferences etc. That is what I do here. Do you consider this as a managerial function? If I were a manager, someone else who will be under me will be assigned for those roles so that I will supervise him or her and then participate at management meetings where the decisions are taken. Do you get what I mean?

The above response confirms a typical scenario of a PR practitioner in a technician role. Grunig (1992) for instance argues that two broad roles consistently emerge as far as PR practice is concerned. These are technician or manager roles. In other words, no matter where the practitioner finds herself, she is most likely going to play either a

technician, managerial or both roles as the case may be. The managerial role helps in critical decision-making processes by researching to inform communication policies. Their decisions are normally based on strategic thinking and systematic planning which is done in close collaboration with top management. The technician role practitioner on the other hand is found in the lower-level position and therefore her roles are reduced to what is generally known as production activities (writing and editing, issuing news releases, monitoring and designing organisational websites, producing annual reports, developing brochures, writing feature stories and organising press conferences among others). The practitioner under the technician role usually has very little influence on the organisation in terms of policy formulation and decision making. The technician PR practitioner is mostly accountable to the dominant coalition whom she takes instructions from almost daily (Berger & Reber 2013). On a few occasions, the technician practitioner may be given the opportunity to suggest certain issues but such suggestions are normally not binding on management because the technician practitioner does not have much influence or a voice as far as top management is concerned. The study confirmed that the majority of the practitioners were technicians with just a few playing managerial roles. However, the study confirmed other roles outlined by Broom and Smith (1979). These other roles are briefly discussed below:

In their study on PR roles, Broom and Smith (1979) pointed out that PR practitioners were likely to also play a communication facilitator and problem-solving facilitator roles. In expanding the scope of the discussion on PR roles, the researcher tested the practitioner's knowledge on these two other roles developed by Broom and Smith (1979). The study confirmed that the expert prescriber and technician roles were dominant among the practitioners.

One participant made this remark below when a question was posed to her as to whether she played the communication facilitator or problem-solving role:

> *As for me, I will say I perform both roles. It is the situation at hand that often dictates what to do at a particular point in time. For example, when problems emerge in the organisation, the media will put a lot of pressure on us by coming to my office and always wanting me to talk to management for an interview or something like that. Sometimes management does not want to*

comment on it so I am usually directed to brief the media on the incident and what management is doing about it. So in one way or the other, I am a communication facilitator practitioner here. In some other instances, when the problems emerge, you will see me very active, going up and down with management to try and solve the problem. You will agree with me that in such instances there is media pressure so management wants you to be present all the time. But once the problem dies down, I go back to my normal duties as a technician. Do you get what I mean?

The above response confirms the communication facilitator and problem-solving roles of the PR practitioners. What it means is that, depending on the situation at hand, the practitioner could be seen playing one particular role or almost all the roles at the same time. For instance, the practitioner could be arranging media interviews between management and the media. Most often, she will guide management on how to approach the media interviews because of her communication background or experience. At the same time, the practitioner could be the person also briefing both internal and external stakeholders on the incident using the media or any other communication channel available to the organisation to reach out to their publics. In another vein, the practitioner is seen here as a problem-solving facilitator because, all the efforts that she is making alongside with management is aimed at mitigating the problem at hand. Arguably, the practitioner is playing multiple roles here which could even incorporate a bit of expert prescriber role because in a typical crisis situation, management sees her as the one who is best qualified to address issues in the media space that is why even when it becomes necessary for management to address the media publicly, it will still be done with some consultations and guidance behind the scenes with the practitioner. Therefore, the PR practitioner here is playing an all-encompassing role as an expert prescriber, communication facilitator and a regular technician role. This finding is also consistent with Cutlip, Center and Broom's (2009) assertion that a PR practitioner could be playing one or all the roles at the same time depending on the situation at hand, although a dominant role may emerge. It must be noted however that these roles are distinct, yet the practitioners tend to perform them interchangeably in an almost unconscious state (Broom & Sha 2012; Fieseler, Lutz & Meckel 2015; Lattimore et al 2004).

The researcher went further to investigate from the practitioners if there were other roles that they played that were different from the roles that scholars had prescribed which are cited in literature (Broom & Smith 1979; Cutlip, Center and Broom 2009; Grunig & Hunt 1984). Moreover, the researcher was interested in knowing whether the PR roles that female PR practitioners in Ghana performed were codified or not. As already discussed in this study, PR means differently to people and organisations. Therefore, how the PR profession is practiced in countries like the United States of America (U.S.A) and Europe may differ in several ways with regards to the approach. Van Ruler et al (2002) for instance note that PR practice in U.S.A is different from what exist in Europe. Van Ruler et al (2002) suggest the need to codify the existing body of literature on PR to what exists in Europe so that it could clearly delineate it from what exist in the U.S.A.

Arguably, minimal studies exist on specific roles that can be linked to the African context or for that matter Ghana. The study confirmed that female PR practitioners in this study performed roles that were already existing in the literature and these roles had not been codified. Most of these roles that PR practitioners in Africa practice have been situated in the West particularly the USA and Europe, but the same cannot be said about Africa. On the African continent, only South Africa appears to have played a lead role in developing the strategist role which defines the activities of PR practitioners in that country (Anani-Bossman 2018; NabuKeera 2006; Van Heerden & Rensburg 2005). When a question was posed to all the practitioners as to whether there were other roles that they performed which were different from what was known from the literature, one participant summarised the issue which has been captured below:

> I am not sure we have different roles in Ghana except those we have learnt from books which is what we practice in our organisations. I personally think that most of these roles that we read in literature are mere paper work. This is because, when you go into the field, it becomes a different story all together. For instance, in my organisation here, the roles that I play are many. Sometimes I even perform certain roles that I think I should not do because they are not related to PR. So how will you describe such roles? I think that my role as a PR practitioner is largely determined by what my boss

will ask me to do. Some are PR or communication related, but others are not. I am not aware that in Ghana the PR profession has some specific codified roles that have been laid down for us to follow.

The above response corroborates what has also been discussed and confirmed in literature. In Ghana for example, there are currently no specific roles that have been codified by the Institute of Public Relations, Ghana (IPRG) to guide the practitioners in the PR profession, unlike in South Africa were the strategist role is linked to the country's PR practice. Ming-Yi and Baah-Boakye (2006) on their study in Ghana which related to PR roles found that most of the roles performed by the practitioners were a mixture of technician and managerial roles. Their study confirmed further that, in the case of those practitioners who were placed at the top of their organisations, most of them were still not part of the dominant coalition, which is the body that takes the highest decisions in the organisation (Boakye, Nso & Tabi 2012; Narteh, Akuensive & Agyapong 2013).

The implication from this finding is that, currently, there are no PR roles that have been specifically developed for Ghanaian practitioners to perform. Moreover, the PR roles that the practitioners currently perform have not been codified to a Ghanaian identity as confirmed in the case of South Africa. This study confirmed that the major roles performed by the practitioners in Ghana were either technician or managerial roles and in some cases a combination of both. While some of the practitioners who were placed in managerial positions in their organisations were assigned roles that permitted them to work closely with management and contributed to decisions, others were denied that opportunity even though they were still placed at management level. Again, the roles played by practitioners, regardless of their gender did not differ.

Organisations that hired a male or female practitioner will normally assign the related PR role to the person without any special consideration to their gender (Gyan 2014).

Another participant also commented on the roles played by female PR practitioners in Ghana:

Let me go straight to the point. In Ghana, we do not have specific roles that IPRG has developed for we the practitioners. Let me tell you, we always

attend refresher courses which are organised by our professional body. I don't remember the last time we were ever told that in Ghana, this or that are the specific roles that PR practitioners are expected to perform. We work in different organisations so depending on where you will find yourself that is where your roles are determined. However, I must state that what we have learnt in school has also been guiding us.

It can be argued from these responses that a lot of differences and similarities exist in how PR is practiced globally which also reflects in the roles from the American, European or African perspectives. It can be argued further that the PR roles appear to be similar and at the same time different depending on the jurisdiction. Moreover, there is no clear-cut distinction sometimes between the managerial and technician roles because, while some practitioners may be placed at managerial level roles, they are often not part of the decision-making processes. Apart from that, practitioners are also seen to be playing all-encompassing roles. So, whether the practitioner is placed at management level or not, she may end up playing other roles which are sometimes not related to PR. It can be argued further that most of these numerous designations that are placed in the PR roles are merely semantics or cosmetic. For example, the reflective and managerial roles that are identified to Europe are related to the managerial role in America, while the operational role is seen as a technician role. Another similarity is also seen in the European roles where the reflective, managerial and operational roles are also similar to the South African Strategist role which largely reflects either a managerial or a technician role as the case may be (Steyn 2003; Van Heerden & Rensburg 2005). The major difference in the PR roles is the approach to PR practice based on different jurisdictions. The political, cultural and economic environment can largely dictate the way PR is practised which also reflects the roles that the practitioners are assigned to play. For example, in a country where democracy is not being practised and the country is ruled under a military regime, PR practice can be affected because practitioners working in certain organisations may not have the freedom to express themselves. In war-torn countries where economic conditions often become unbearable, every aspect of life is affected which usually has a ripple effect on how PR is practised in such countries.

Although extensive research has been carried out in the area of PR roles globally, very little has been documented in Africa or for that matter Ghana. Nabukeera (2006) for instance compared the roles played by practitioners in Uganda to other jurisdictions and found that PR practice was largely hinged on the strategist, technician and manger roles. The study confirmed further that the managerial role was dominant in Uganda but what remains unclear is whether these roles were played by both female and male practitioners and whether any variations existed. Moreover, for a practitioner to truly play a managerial role, she has to be elevated to the top and must be clearly linked to those who matter as far as the organisation is concerned. In other words, the practitioner has to work hand-in-hand with the decision-makers so that she can contribute in the decisions of her organisation which includes her department.

Again, roles that the PR practitioners play should help to produce the programmes within the organisation that can influence strategic planning which relates to short, medium and long-term plans of the organisation.

Given that the study involved only female PR practitioners in Ghana who are accredited members of IPRG, male PR practitioners were not included in the study. However, the study found that some of the female PR practitioners in Ghana who headed the PR units were sometimes deputised by male practitioners. In a few cases too, male practitioners were actually the heads and a female was a deputy.

In concluding the discussions on the roles played by female PR practitioners in Ghana, the researcher sought to find out other information about the practitioners' roles. For instance, the researcher wanted to understand from female practitioners who deputised under male PR bosses whether the roles they were assigned were different from their male bosses. One of the participants intimated below:

> *Not necessarily. So far, I have not experienced or felt in any day that the roles that I play here or will continue to play differ because of my gender as a female. I think we both play the same roles. Over here, my boss who is the head of PR is a male and as far as I am concerned, we work together as professionals and the roles we play do not differ because of our gender. I do not see any situation where my CEO will say I should play this role and*

my boss should play the other simply because I am a woman. I think the difference will rather be the fact that he is my boss and will normally assign the roles to me but in the end, it is the PR work that we do together, regardless of our gender. In this PR department, we know our core roles which we play on a daily basis. Most often, my boss will just share the roles to us and we report the results to him for onward transmission to management. I can assure you that we work closely and we evaluate our performance to guide future activities. Roles are not shared based on gender. Not at all.

The above response confirms the claim of Gyan (2014). In her study on gender roles in Public Relations practice in Ghana, Gyan (2014) confirmed that female PR practitioners in Ghana played the same roles as their male counterparts in their PR departments, so female PR practitioners were not stereotyped because of their gender. The study further confirmed that both male and female PR practitioners in Ghana played either the managerial or technician roles assigned to them by their bosses (Gyan 2014).

Another participant corroborated the above response as to whether there were variations in terms of the roles played by female or male PR practitioners in Ghana:

No, we play the same roles. In fact, my immediate boss in the PR department is a man. I do not remember in any particular day over the years that I have practiced PR that I have been assigned a specific role simply because of my gender as a female. We are both trained professionals so we work based on what comes to the table.

Based on the findings on PR roles confirmed in this study, it can be observed that certain tasks or activities are common to all the PR practitioners no matter the organisation they found themselves in. However, there are other activities undertaken by some of the PR practitioners which may be unique to the organisations they happen to work with. It is not surprising that many scholars who have researched on PR roles have different perspectives with regards to PR roles.

The first two sub-sections discussed the position and roles of female PR practitioners in Ghana. The next sub-section discusses the communication strategies that female PR practitioners in Ghana employ at their various organisations.

6.5.3 Research objective: To investigate and describe the communication strategies employed by female PR practitioners in Ghana

This section of the study discusses the specific communication strategies that female PR practitioners in Ghana employ in their organisations. Moreover, the section discusses the channels that the practitioners employ and how effective those channels are to the organisations that they work for. In most organisations, PR practitioners have different channels that they use to communicate with their internal or external publics. As a result, communication strategies are usually developed to achieve the goals and objectives of the organisations.

Grunig (1992) insist that PR practitioners must employ two-way communication because it is the best way an organisation can obtain feedback from its publics in order to address their needs. Kitchen (2006) corroborates the assertion of Grunig (1992). Kitchen (2006) points out that PR practitioners must communicate effectively with the various publics of an organisation because it is the best way an organisation can nurture and maintain a cordial relationship with its numerous publics.

As part of the analysis in the study, the researcher investigated from the participants their communication strategies as well as the specific channels that they employed to communicate with their stakeholders both internally and externally. In general, the study found that female PR practitioners in Ghana employed both traditional and new media channels to communicate with their stakeholders either internally or externally.

The channels are discussed below:

6.5.3.1 Traditional/conventional channels

The study confirmed the following traditional channels that female PR practitioners in Ghana used to communicate with their publics internally and externally. Internally, they used intranet, memorandum, telephone, virtual and face-to-face meetings, durbars,

letters, notice boards, WhatsApp, and newsletters among others. The use of these internal channels is normally based on the situation at hand in the organisation. The study confirmed that a majority of the practitioners employed durbars as a strategy to interact with their internal publics. In such a strategy, the PR practitioner will organise a durbar based on approval from management so that top management can speak to issues that affect the employees directly. The employees are normally given the opportunity to ask questions and management will respond almost immediately. The study confirmed further that most of the practitioners normally use this strategy whenever they had picked intelligence that the workers were agitating over their welfare issues. In most organisations in Ghana, workers go on strike from time to time to put pressure on management to address their welfare needs.

One of the participants remarked as below:

In my organisation, I employ a number of channels to communicate with our internal publics. To name them, we use memos, email, intranet, letters, circulars, face-to-face meetings which include management meetings. Sometimes I use focus group discussions which I normally call "small meetings". Our major communication strategy for employees is durbars. I have realised that it has been very effective so over the years, I have used that one extensively. Sometimes, you will hear from the grapevine that the workers are planning to do this or that. I do not sit down for things to get worse. So I will quickly alert management and recommend an immediate durbar. Once that is arranged, we speak directly to our employees within the organisation. Most often, I am the one who moderates the programme so I will normally allow the employees who have issues to ask management questions directly and the responses are given almost on the spot. So far, I must say durbars have worked for me in this organisation. I cannot speak for others. I believe it is always an opportunity for management to address the concerns of workers and offer assurances that their issues will be addressed. When we have these durbars, management will normally use this opportunity to also thank the employees for their dedication and impress on them to continue to show commitment and loyalty to the organisation.

This response again is consistent with the assertion of Grunig (1992) and Kitchen (2006). The scholars insist that organisations must always employ two-way communication to communicate with their stakeholders. This is because, two-way communication enables management to obtain instant feedback from the employees in order to address their concerns. Again, two-way communication helps organisations to nurture and maintain a very cordial relationship with their stakeholders. An excellent organisation is that type which makes room for regular communication and interactions with employees because they will always feel valued and appreciated by management. This is one of the best ways in which organisations can retain employees and also attract top-notch talents among them. Moreover, such interactions between management and employees can make them happy and more productive in their work.

Another participant said:

> *Over here, I employ several channels to communicate internally. As a PR practitioner, I have to first know the goal of management before coming out with a communication strategy. Internally, we use face-face meetings a lot. We also have a WhatsApp platform which has over a hundred participants. We have christened it "what is up". What is up is a platform which we use internally alongside other regular meetings. On a daily basis, I will contact management for briefing and issues that are to be discussed are put on the platform for the attention of every member. If we have to hold a face-face meeting, the agenda and time is communicated on the platform ahead of the meeting. If there are no meetings, we discuss the issues on the platform. Sometimes information is put there for other heads of departments and units to act on. If there are specific activities that the organisation is undertaking for the week, the information is communicated on the platform for all members to act. I can tell you that it has been very effective. Can you imagine the stress one could go through if I had to go from one office to the other to give information about the activities for the week? With just a press of a button, I am able to send out information quickly and members will immediately receive it once they go unto the platform. In fact, we encourage all members to always check messages regularly on the platform.*

The study confirmed that, most of the practitioners used durbars, WhatsApp, emails, memorandum, and bulk text messages among others to communicate regularly with their internal publics. The other channels such as intranet, notice boards, and newsletters among others were also used from time to time but not on a regular basis. News releases and press conferences were used as and when it became necessary to employ such strategies. Some of the internal channels were used when communication was to be done with a smaller number of employees in the organisation. For example, one head of department could send a letter or memorandum to another departmental head without it going to every member of the organisation.

6.5.3.2 New channels of communication

The researcher sought to establish from the participants the new channels they employed to communicate with their publics. The study confirmed that, apart from the use of smart phones, particularly for WhatsApp platforms and online meetings, the new channels that were mostly employed by the practitioners were targeted at the external publics. These included websites, social media channels such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Telegram, and WhatsApp among others. External communication is important because organisations have stakeholders who are outside it. These include *customers, businesses, suppliers, partners, investors, students, government agencies, regulators, law enforcement agencies and the general public as a whole.* As an organisation, the practitioner needs to employ channels that can capture the attention of the public. This is more so because organisations need to communicate with the outside world almost on a daily basis. Therefore, external communication is extremely important for organisational growth.

Arguably, both traditional and new media allow for external and internal communication which can help organisations to convey rich information to their stakeholders, regardless of where they may be based. A critical assessment of the communication channels of these organisations revealed that most of the practitioners employed them based on the situation at hand. Particularly, these channels were employed to convince their stakeholders to continue to build confidence in their organisation's product or service which ultimately, makes up the brand.

One of the participants further remarked as follows:

As a PR practitioner for this organisation, I decide which channel to use to communicate to the stakeholders. Internally, we do not really have problems getting in touch with employees. I think our headache is the external publics. You know these days, almost everyone is a stakeholder which makes it complex. It is very difficult to satisfy every individual who has a stake in this organisation but one needs to try as much as possible to get the information out there at the right time. So depending on the situation at hand, I decide which channel will be more effective to use. Remember that if our customers are happy with us, we will be in business. Otherwise, we are out of business. That is the more reason why we must stay in touch with our cherished customers.

Grunig and Hunt (1984) developed four models of public relations. These are Press Agentry, Public Information, Two-Way Asymmetrical and Two-Way Symmetrical Models.

The first three models often offer very little or no room for dialogue with the stakeholders, and where such an opportunity exist, it is mostly intended to enhance the information that has been sent out to the publics. The main goal here is to persuade the stakeholders to support the organisation by patronising its product or service. In contrast however, one of the principles in the excellence theory states that an excellent PR department or organisation is the one that employs the two-way symmetrical model of communication. This is because, a dialogue-based approach has been proven to be more effective than any other in resolving conflicts, preventing disputes and maintaining cordial relationships with stakeholders. The study confirmed that a majority of the practitioners employed both one-way and two-way methods of communication to engage with their stakeholders. In a few instances, some of the practitioners conducted research using surveys to test the clarity of information sent out or ascertain if there was an increase in patronage of a product or service which was in the public domain. Again, they rated the effectiveness of their information sometimes based on feedback that the stakeholders gave on an issue. Beyond that, not much research was conducted on their communication strategies or channels.

6.5.3.3 Dialogic-based approach to communication

As indicated already, the study confirmed that female PR practitioners in Ghana strategically employed both one-way and two-way methods of communication depending on the situation they were dealing with at a particular point in time. However, the general understanding from the participants was that, there was now a shift from one-way communication to more of two-way communication because it was identified as the best strategy that allowed for constant interactions and feedback from both sides. The participants confirmed further that the two-way approach enabled their stakeholders to appreciate and understand their messages better. Again, it helped their organisations to identify the core concerns of their stakeholders to find solutions to them as quickly as possible.

One participant captured the phenomenon this way:

> *The world has changed as far as communicating with the media and stakeholders are concerned. We have also changed our communication approaches. Now we make sure we are very interactive because that is the best way we can build bridges with our stakeholders. We often give them the opportunity to share their concerns and frustrations with us so that management can also meet them halfway or fully. Sometimes the demands are very huge but if there is an opportunity for us to meet and dialogue, we always end up satisfying both sides. That is, management is satisfied and the employees are also happy. In fact, it is a two-way affair as far as my organisation is concerned.*

The above response shows that communication in most organisations is changing from one-way to two-way because the emphasis is now on the need to constantly interact with those that matter in your organisation. That is the best way organisations can achieve the desired goals and objectives.

6.5.3.4 New media and contemporary PR practices

The advent of social media has significantly improved the ways in which organisations now interact and communicate with their stakeholders. Social media has impacted a

lot of businesses and it is now a daily practice in the life of users (Edosomwan et al 2011). Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tik-tok, YouTube, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Telegram among others have brought about a new face of revolution and development of a new media in a globalised world (Adegbilerolwari & Ikemwe 2014). Other social media platforms such as blogs, micro blogs and videos/image files sharing platforms have all improved the way organisations now interact and communicate with their stakeholders (Fuchs 2014). The interactive and democratic nature of social media has undoubtedly attracted growing numbers of organisations globally. In other words, social media has now assumed a global phenomenon, so almost all organisations are leveraging on it to reach out to their numerous stakeholders.

The study confirmed that social media was being massively used by almost all the practitioners to constantly engage with their publics. Although the practitioners did not shift away completely from the use of conventional media, they employed both as and when it became prudent to use either. It was further confirmed that the practitioners employed integrated digital communication tools because those tools aided in making the communication process more interactive and personal. This was aimed at building mutually and satisfying relationships with their publics. The commonest social media tools used by the majority of the practitioners were: WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. Among these platforms, the study confirmed that, the most popular and used ones were Facebook and WhatsApp. WhatsApp was mostly used for internal communication whiles Facebook was mainly used for external or global communication.

One participant puts it as below:

> If you recall, some few weeks ago, my company was adjudged the most interactive and active company with social media presence in Ghana and you know how the award went viral on social media. This should confirm to you that our company is not joking as far as social media is concerned. In fact, we take advantage of social media and we have benefited immensely from it. We have created pages and accounts for our company. This helps us to constantly interact with our publics and I can assure you it is working

for us. We have made a lot of gains since we joined the social media space. Let me tell you something. Even our news releases get more impact on social media than when we send them to local media houses. The kind of shares, views, likes etc. that our company gets alone gives us an indication that we are very interactive with our publics and this interaction is helping us positively. In fact, our image has improved over the years and there is an obvious increase in our market share and customer base. The more we interact with our publics, the more we build our relationships and it is also the best way to identify their problems and address them. Sometimes you will be surprised at how someone can hit your organisation's product or service so hard on social media and it will go viral. Do you get my point?

This confirms the fact that social media, particularly Facebook has gained some prominence globally and many organisations and individuals are now taking advantage of it to engage with their wider audiences. This response is also well grounded in the tenets of the relationship management theory. The theory holds that PR practitioners should balance their relationship by taking into consideration the interests of the organisation and its publics in the management of organisational relationships. Relationships are better built if there is an opportunity for both sides to constantly interact. By so doing, problems can be identified and solutions offered as quickly as possible. If both parties are happy, it helps to foster long term relationships.

 As already espoused in numerous definitions of PR, the discipline or profession is supposed to be a management function that establishes and maintains a mutually beneficial relationship between the organisation and its publics in whom its successes or failures depend (Cutlip, Center & Broom 2009).

6.5.3.5 Public Relations and the use of blogs and websites (World Wide Web)

The use of blogs and websites has become very common in our present day lives and most organisations are leveraging on such platforms to reach out to their audiences. Websites have been particularly useful over the years because they can help organisations and individuals to create brand awareness and also showcase their brands to prospective customers or consumers of their products or services. Websites

normally contain and display information about the business organisations in photos, videos, texts as well as the contact details of an organisation or an individual. Arguably, websites have become credible platforms for organisations and individuals to disseminate information to their customers and at the same time set their businesses apart from possible competitors.

The study confirms that all the participants interviewed indicated that their various organisations had developed websites and most of these websites were being managed by the PR practitioners as part of their routine roles. Being present online, helps in exchanging information with less cost. As part of the research on the types of communication strategies that female PR practitioners employed, the researcher sought to find out the reasons why the practitioner used websites in their organisations.

One participant indicated as below:

> *Over here, we sell a wide range of products and we even offer other services. We have recently introduced new products from other countries. If we didn't have a vibrant or active website, we wouldn't be where we are today. There is always traffic on our website because a lot of people visit for different reasons. Our advertising and marketing departments make sure they display all our products on the websites and people simply visit there and make their choices. In the past, we had to spend so much on advertisements. These days, we personally advertise our products on our websites and it has had a positive impact. To put it straight, we have made a lot of profit over the last years because of our websites which is constantly being updated by my department.*

As part of the research on the types of communication strategies that female PR practitioners in Ghana employed, the researcher sought further information particularly on why most of their organisations found it expedient enough to develop a website.

Another participant said:

> *Website? I can tell you we are not joking with it at all. You know the general public and our students visits our website to get a lot of information about*

us. We have even mounted all our old and new programmes as well as admission requirements for this academic year on our website. Apart from that, we have also provided a profile of our university and our lecturers on the website. In fact, every information that a parent, guardian or any member of the public needs has been provided on our website. People believe that information on websites are more credible so we make sure our content is well developed and rich as far as our website is concerned.

The above response confirms that most organisations are now using online presence as one key strategy that they can use to stay in touch with their audiences. To the extent that news releases are being strategically placed on social media including websites reinforces the point that the autonomy and authority that traditional media once had some years back has seen a significant drop because of the advent of new media. In the past, organisations and individuals had no option than to send their news releases to media houses for publication but the trend has changed as a result of the internet and technological advancement. In this present day and age, technological advancement and the use of the internet has opened wider opportunities for most organisations to be seen globally without necessarily having to rely heavily on traditional media to get their story told. Again, most organisations are now able to advertise on their own through their website and other social media platforms which hitherto was virtually impossible.

One can therefore argue that new media has helped most organisations and PR practitioners to keep abreast with issues that relate to their organisations. By monitoring their social media platforms almost on a daily or hourly basis they are able to provide instantaneous information to their numerous audiences.

Concerning the communication strategies that female PR practitioners in Ghana utilised, the study confirmed that different strategies were employed by the practitioners depending on the situation at hand. No specific communication strategies were codified for the practitioners' use. The foregoing conclusion here is that PR practitioners have the discretionary powers to decide which strategy could best work depending on the situation at hand. Whatever the case, management expects the practitioners to be able

to develop appropriate communication strategies and utilise tried-and-tested channels to consistently engage their numerous stakeholders, especially during crises periods.

6.5.4 Participants' views on Ghana's PR industry

As part of the interview, the participants were questioned on the PR industry in Ghana in general and were also asked to suggest ways by which PR practice could be improved in the country generally and specifically for women in the PR profession.

As already extensively discussed in chapter one, the PR industry in Ghana has gone through several phases and has experienced a remarkable transformation over the last three decades (Amoakohene 2015; Baidoo 2013; Thompson 2015; Thompson 2018). The Institute of Public Relations Ghana (IPRG) is the only professional body that regulates PR practice in Ghana. As part of the criteria for inclusion in this study, the participants were supposed to be only female practitioners who are accredited members of IPRG. Extensive review of literature confirms the fact that not much information has been documented as far as PR practice in Ghana is concerned. A few scholars have argued that the PR industry in Ghana appears to have grown over the years due to several favourable factors such as Ghana's return to multi-party democracy, media plurality, the liberalisation of the media landscape in Ghana among others. These factors have undoubtedly helped in increased PR professionalism and the growth of the professional body which has recorded a remarkable increase in membership including the participants in this study (Kudzodzi 2017; Ming-Yi & BaahBoakye 2008; Ming-Yi & Baah-Boakye 2009).

The participants were therefore asked to explain their opinion on the PR industry in Ghana. Some of the responses are recorded below:

> *I think that the PR profession in Ghana is more focused now than before. In the past, it was more about propaganda and lobbying. I think more organisations now appreciate the role of PR or communication because PR helps management to achieve strategic objectives. The PR profession has evolved with time and more organisations are now engaging the services of PR practitioners than we saw in the past. I must also commend IPRG for the role it plays in this regard. For instance, the continuous professional*

*development programmes as well as the professional accreditation
programmes that it has rolled out over the years. You just don't go to the
classroom and think you are now a PR professional. But you meet the older
practitioners to take you through what the industry is expected of you. That
is what makes you a PR professional.*

Another participant made the following comments:

*Well, I think it is still growing. We have come a long way from the days when
PR was not recognised as a profession. So, a PR professional's views were
not sought before policies were rolled out. Meanwhile when there is a
problem, they come back and fall on you for prescription for the issue that
has occurred. I can assure you that over the years, in all the organisations
that I have worked for, my views were often sought before a major policy
intervention was rolled out. I think the PR industry in Ghana has grown over
the years but there is more room for expansion and improvement. You
remember IPRG has collapsed several times and has been revived but I
think in the last two decades or so, it has been much stronger and more
practitioners have joined the umbrella organisation.*

The above response confirms the fact that the PR industry in Ghana has expanded
over the years in terms of numbers and has perhaps seen some remarkable
improvement in the professional development of its members as well. The issue of
professionalism is crucial in this regard. Members ought to constantly upgrade
themselves by attending refresher courses in a form of workshops, seminars, and
symposia among others to upgrade themselves professionally. In other words, the
practitioners must take advantage of every learning opportunity to build their
professional capacities as far as PR practice is concerned. Those with very low
educational backgrounds ought to take up courses and obtain higher degrees such as
masters or even complete doctoral studies. The study found that none of the
participants had completed doctoral studies although some of them indicated to the
researcher they had plans to advance their academic qualifications up to the doctoral
level. The highest in terms of academic qualification was Master of philosophy (M.Phil.)
and Master of Arts in different discipline such as Marketing, Public Relations or

Communication. Others possessed a Higher National Diploma (HND) or post graduate diploma in communication among others.

It can be argued that, if the practitioners possess higher educational qualifications, it will go a long way to boost their morale and they will also earn more respect from their employers as well as other management members in the organisations that they are employed in. Moreover, PR status in the organisation will be elevated to a managerial position and be part of the decision-making body of the organisation (Abudulai 2017; Amoakohene 2002; Center & Jackson 2003; Center & Jackson 2008; Cutlip, Center & Broom 2009).

Another participant buttressed the point on the issues relating to the PR industry in Ghana. She stated as below:

> *If you ask me about the PR industry in Ghana, I will tell you that so far, so good. You see, let's be frank, we know PR practice has improved in this country. I understand they started with just seventy (70) members but look at how huge we are now. I see this manifest all the time when we go for AGM either in Accra or outside Accra. Sometimes the place is too full to capacity so we always have to get a much bigger hall because membership has increased substantially over the years. Let me even add that there are a lot of PR practitioners in Ghana, both male and female who are qualified to join the association but they are probably reluctant to do so. I believe if all of them join, the membership will even balloon than the current number that we have.*

In expanding the discussion on the PR industry in Ghana, the researcher sought the views of the participants on how PR is practiced in Ghana as compared to the developed countries. There was a general consensus among the participants. Almost all the participants were of the view that PR practice in the west such U.S.A, UK, Canada, Australia and Germany among others was more advanced and professional standards were higher than in Ghana. Professionalism was a core issue that almost all the participants emphasised. The participants insisted that professionalism was more pronounced in the western world than what we see in Ghana.

One of the participants expressed her view below:

In our part of the world, anyone who holds a degree and can speak fluent English is good enough to be a PRO. It is not surprising to find organisations recruiting such people as Public Relations practitioners. It tells you that the concept of PR itself has not been well understood by individuals or organisations that is why we are having these challenges. My brother, permit me ask you a simple question. Can you just get up on day and say you are a doctor, nurse, engineer or a teacher? How will that happen if you have not gone through the training to qualify as one? That is the problem with the PR profession. Anyone who can speak fluently is a PR person and that is very wrong. Something ought to be done about it. Otherwise, we are heading into some serious trouble for the future. A decade from now, the PR profession will be overtaken by people of different backgrounds and where will you now place the "real" PRO?

This response is consistent with the views of scholars such as (Cutlip, Center & Broom 2009; Grunig 1992; Heath 2001; Heath & Coombs 2006; Latimore et al 2004). They insist that PR is a specialised area that demands professional training to qualify as one. In that vein, a PR practitioner must have a background in PR or communication by training in a recognised institution of higher learning. But often times, most organisations do not understand the concept of PR and will therefore end up employing people who do not have the background as public relations practitioners for their organisations. It is not surprising that sometimes, PR is subsumed under departments such as Human resource, Operations, Administration, Legal among others.

Ideally, PR must stand on its own and departments such as marketing and advertising should report to the head of PR and not any other department. In that case, the head of PR will then be reporting to management as the case should be. If the situation is the reverse, it makes it difficult for the PR practitioner to function well in the organisation. Moreover, the counselling role of the PR practitioner will be missing since the practitioner in such a situation will not be recognised as a manager and will therefore not be assigned managerial roles. Some of the participants attributed this challenge as already intimated by their colleagues to the lack of proper regulation to

guide the profession in Ghana. Currently, there are no clear regulations in the entry for PR practice in Ghana, so anyone at all can claim to be a PR practitioner as long as the person has obtained some appreciable level of education and has been lucky to be employed by an organisation as a PR practitioner. Some participants were of the view that PR has not been valued and given the necessary recognition in Ghana or for that matter Africa as compared to the developed countries. Perhaps, some organisations or individuals are under the impression that PR is just for publicity but PR goes beyond that. PR is supposed to play a strategic role by managing the organisation as a whole and not just one segment. Some of the participants equally blamed the umbrella association (IPRG) for the lack of value and proper recognition of the PR profession in Ghana. This is reflected in what one of the participants said as captured below:

> *In most countries, is it the professional bodies that often regulate PR practice and also enhance the way the profession is practiced in the first place. It is my considered view that this phenomenon is lacking in IPRG. For instance, the clear standards for PR practices are not really available in Ghana. One doesn't really know what is accepted and what is not. IPRG needs to position our association very well in the country. PR ought to be well positioned as a management or strategic function as we often read in books. The umbrella association needs to do more in terms of publicity so that individuals and organisations in Ghana will get to know more of PR practice and what it entails. As it stands now, I can tell you that a lot of people do not even know much about PR let alone how it should be practiced. I think the entry point is so porous and too widely open so anyone can just walk in and say I am a Public Relations practitioner. We see it all the time in the country and sometimes you wonder where such people have trained to become PR practitioners. Do you get what I mean?*

This response reinforces the views of (Yang & Taylor 2014). The scholars argue that national associations all over the world play a crucial role as far as professionalism and discipline are concerned. These national associations are therefore supposed to act as gate-keepers by creating and setting standards for practice. They are also supposed to safeguard their members from all forms of victimisation by coming to their aid anytime the need arises so that they can function effectively. In Ghana for instance,

IPRG is the only statutory body that supervises and regulates PR practice by ensuring that highest standards are adhered to.

Based on the assertion of Yang and Taylor (2014), one can make a valid argument that the professional body is supposed to set standards for PR practice in Ghana and perhaps sanction or advise organisations and individuals who employ non-professional PR practitioners to desist from such acts. Again, the entry point into the PR profession should be streamlined so that only practitioners who possess the necessary qualification and training are recruited to practise. The association is also expected to protect its members from all forms of challenges and victimisation so that they can feel safe to practise. For instance, if a PR practitioner is facing challenges in his or her organisation, the association should be able to intervene on his or her behalf. Moreover, the association is supposed to undertake wider publicity about their activities in the media so that more organisations and individuals will get to know much about them and thereby recruit the right persons as PR practitioners to represent their organisations. This should come in a form of constant education and sensitisation in media outlets.

Most of these frustrations and sentiments expressed by the participants in this study have been adequately discussed in literature. Joseph (2017) for instance catalogued some of the challenges of PR practice in Africa as poor understanding of PR concepts, lack of specialisation in PR, lack of ethics among PR professionals, language barrier, and lack of technological know-how, negative cultural habits, attitudes and taboos among others. All these challenges have negatively affected the PR profession in Africa or for that matter Ghana. This does not engender proper PR practice. Some cultural practices in Africa for instance can prevent PR practitioners from developing effective PR campaigns for their organisations. It is however evidenced that PR education in Africa has improved over the years (Amoakohene 2015; Blankson 2009) but a lot still need to be done. This is because, related disciplines such as marketing, advertising and perhaps development communication are still being confused with PR. Although much progress has been made in PR education and practice within the African continent, the ability of the practitioners to rise to the core and compete closely to what pertains in the western countries is key. This is because these practitioners

can draw on the global influence and make prospects of PR in Africa more promising (Skinner 2013).

Some of the participants were of the firm conviction that if PR practice has to be improved in Africa or Ghana, there will be the need for regulatory bodies to "narrow the gate of entry" and ensure that only those who possess communication or PR backgrounds with the required training are allowed to practice PR in Ghana. Some participants expressed strong sentiments that, there should be the need for IPRG to consider giving a license to PR practitioners in Ghana as a way of regulating the entry of practitioners into the profession. Just like in the case of other professionals such as doctors, teachers, engineers, nurses among others, the practitioners attend a certain number of workshops or training and are assessed before being given a license to operate. These licenses are normally renewed annually after the training to ensure that the practitioner's knowledge and skills are up to date so that standards can be met. If this process is adapted in the PR profession, it will go a long way in regulating how the PR profession is practiced in Ghana.

Another participant also gave an example to buttress her argument on some of the issues relating to the PR industry in Ghana:

> *Yes, I think the time has come for PR practitioners to be given a license to operate. Can you just get up one day and describe yourself as a doctor? Can you join the Ghana medical association if you have not been trained as a doctor? You obviously have to go through some training and sometimes write exams and attend interviews before you are given a license to practice. Whenever you breach any ethical or professional issue, your license can be revoked for some time before it is restored again. It is sad that in the case of PR, anyone who has a certificate and can speak good English can just get up and say he or she is a PRO for this or that organisation. Do you know that some famous families and individuals like celebrities in Ghana now have people parading themselves as PROs for them? I don't know about other African countries. I can assure you that this will never happen in Europe or America.*

The arguments being made here by these participants are that, the PR profession in Ghana appears to be too porous because there are no strict rules and regulations that protect the profession in the country. As a result, people with varying backgrounds are able to enter the profession freely without any form of gatekeeping. Organisations in Ghana too are not under any obligation or law to employ only practitioners who are members of IPRG to work for them as Public Relations Officers. In view of that, any individual or organisation can employ anyone and such a person can easily describe his or herself as a PR practitioner without hindrance.

Ideally, PR practitioners should be recruited by organisations or individuals based on some form of collaboration in order to ensure that the right persons with the required backgrounds are recruited. For instance, if during an interview for recruitment, an IPRG member is part of the interview panel, the necessary scrutiny can be done to ensure that the right persons are recruited for the job. Moreover, IPRG should step up its publicity and sensitisation effort to ensure that more organisations and individuals will get to understand the rudiments of the PR profession. This will go a long way to reduce the recruitment of unqualified practitioners for organisations and individuals in Ghana. Arguably, this will also go a long way in improving the standards of PR practice and reduce some of the challenges affecting the profession in Ghana or Africa.

6.5.4.1 Suggestions for improvement of the PR industry in Ghana/Africa

As part of the concluding questions for the study, the participants were asked to suggest practical ways by which the PR industry in Ghana could be improved. When the question was posed, the majority of the participants were of the view that the professional body in Ghana (IPRG) needs to step up its effort as far as PR professionalism is concerned. This will enhance the growth of the industry in Ghana. The majority of them indicated that professionalism can be achieved if there is constant professional training which will keep practitioners abreast with current trends in the PR profession globally. Apart from the practitioners themselves, there should be more publicity and sensitisation about PR as a profession so that Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), Managing Directors (MDs) or other heads of institutions in Ghana will get to understand the whole concept of PR and the need to recruit qualified practitioners as Public Relations Officers for their organisations. Moreover, IPRG should continue to

organise courses which can come in the form of conferences or workshops for its members to keep them abreast with global contemporary PR practice. Again, some courses should also be developed and targeted at senior management of organisations in Ghana so that they will understand what the PR profession stands for and also value its contributions to the achievement of organisational goals. Even if the practitioners are well trained in the job and their bosses still have negative impressions about PR, it will still not yield the desired results. These suggestions confirm the findings of Black (2014) who insists that PR practitioners must constantly develop themselves through skills sharpening in order to remain relevant in their organisations. The code of ethics of IPRG should be revised in line with current trends of PR practice globally. This will ensure the highest standards and ethical adherence if the PR profession has to improve in Ghana.

The majority of the participants were of the view that IPRG should consider initiating a bill to be passed into law so that PR practice in Ghana can be strictly regulated as done in other professions. Two participants lamented about issues that related to the phenomenon of journalists being recruited as PR practitioners in Ghana. They described the practice as an "encroachment" which has contributed to the slow pace of progress the PR profession has made in Ghana. Topic et al (2002) make similar arguments as far as PR and other related disciplines such as marketing, advertising and journalism are concerned. They believe that the PR profession and journalism are not the same, so there should be a clear distinction among them. Two other participants corroborated the views of what some of the participants had already said as far as improvement in the PR industry is concerned. The two participants were of the view that PR and journalism are not the same so organisations need to hire the right professionals who possess a PR or communication background as PR practitioners and not those who possess specialisation in journalism.

One participant was of the view that there should be some form of regulation of the PR profession such that it will require a license to operate, just as it is done with other regulated professions like Medicine, Nursing, Law, etc. Her views are captured below:

You see, the way the situation is currently, if our professional body doesn't sit up, people from different backgrounds will continue to flood the PR

profession. I am saying this because you cannot do that in other professions like nursing, teaching, etc., you will need to have a license which must be renewed annually. In the event that the practitioner breaches the code of conduct of the profession, their license could be revoked. At least, this can bring some sanity to the profession. I must add that the current situation about PR practice in Ghana is very bad.

Another participant shared similar sentiments to the above:

If the PR profession is properly regulated in Ghana, we can also compete with our counterparts in the western countries. I believe that there should be more publicity about what PR entails so that organisations will see the need to engage only professional practitioners. Sometimes, it is probably because organisations do not know much about the concept of PR that is why they at times employ a person who does not have a professional background in PR or communication.

In a concluding statement summarised by one participant, she said as below:

I believe we the practitioners ourselves need to begin to 'fight' from all fronts to improve things in this profession. If we don't continue to remind the regulatory body about some of these challenges, we will not get anywhere. I think that we should make these points the subject for discussion during our next AGM. This is because practitioners can come out with practical and better ways by which we can curtail some of these issues. I believe we can make a lot of progress if we pursue this path relentlessly.

The overall effect is that the public relations profession has come a long way but its concepts and purposes are still not well-understood by most organisations and individuals, including some of the practitioners themselves. The situation appears to be more pronounced within the African continent where the profession is relatively new. It thus requires more research and publicity on the core functions of Public Relations. These efforts should not be left to researchers alone, but to a large extent, the practitioners themselves.

6.6 A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR PR PRACTICE AMONG WOMEN IN PR IN GHANA

The first aspect of the chapter discussed in detail the findings of the one-on-one interviews conducted with female PR practitioners in Ghana as related to literature. The findings guided the researcher in the development of a framework. Details of the framework are presented in Chapter Seven. In developing the framework, the researcher was further guided by the tenets espoused in the theories employed in this current study which have been adequately discussed in chapter two (2) and have been briefly highlighted below.

6.6.1 Theoretical statement for the proposed framework

The broad objective of the study investigated gender issues among female PR practitioners in Ghana. Specifically, the study investigated the position female PR practitioners in Ghana occupied, the roles they performed, and the communication strategies they employed for communicating with their publics as well as the core issues relating to the development of a framework on PR practice in Africa generally, and specifically to women in the PR profession in Ghana. Based on what has been reviewed in literature, and the findings from the primary data, as well as the theories employed in this study, an appropriate framework was developed. The one-on-one interviews that the researcher conducted gave an insight on how the theories could be applied as far as issues relating to women in the PR profession in Ghana are concerned. The basic assumptions of the theories employed in this study further provided a glimpse of how PR should be practiced in order to enhance mutually beneficial relationships between organisations and their key stakeholders. Before the proposed framework was outlined, this subsection briefly discussed the theoretical statements as already ceded in the literature that was reviewed.

The gender theory: Gender basically refers to the characteristics of a man and a woman which have been socially constructed. These usually include norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a male or female as well as the relationship with each other. Arguably, gender is one of the most salient areas of a person's identity. This is because, gender always has an influence in a person's appearance, interest,

activities, friendship, interpersonal styles and to a large extent career decisions. As already established in literature, most women in the PR profession globally have experienced some forms of discrimination because of their gender. Some of these discriminations come in a form of unequal pay, glass-ceiling and unequal opportunities among others. In the case of PR, there are some organisations or individuals who may sometimes discriminate against women simply because of their gender. While this is the case, the gender theory employed in this study is crucial because it aided the researcher to establish the gender issues that affected women in the PR industry in Ghana. The rationale was to compare and contrast with what existed in literature globally to the Ghanaian or African situation. The development of a framework therefore was supposed to help in contextualising the gender issues identified in the Ghanaian context to what existed globally and provide practical steps to mitigate such gender related issues especially among women in the PR profession in Ghana. The differential roles of men and women for instance have always been used to explain why gender differences exist in both sexes and why men may choose to work in certain professions while women may be attracted to other professions like Public Relations.

The gender theory employed in this study undoubtedly helped in shedding more light on gender stereotyping which is often one major cause of gender inequality that appears to be widespread in the PR profession globally.

The feminist theory: As already indicated in this study, feminism is basically the movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and the oppression of women in society. Studies have confirmed that women have been part of PR practice for decades and they mostly form the majority of the PR workforce almost globally. However, just a few of them are able to progress to higher positions while the few men in the profession often occupy top positions. This has resulted in the relegation of a good number of women in the profession to the background. Although feminist theories are often varied and diverse, the majority of them normally attempt to analyse the experiences of women in relation to gender subordination which has undoubtedly been identified as one of the root causes of women's oppression and how gender discrimination is perpetuated among women in almost all spheres of life. This study hinged primarily on the experiences of women in the PR profession as a way to investigate the issues that affect them and the strategies they are employing to mitigate such obstacles. Liberal

feminism for instance argues women's unequal access to legal, social, political and economic institutions as causes for the reasons why most women are oppressed in society. In employing the gender dichotomy into this study, the participants who were female PR practitioners in Ghana accredited by IPRG shed more light on gender related issues that affect them in the profession. Thus, this gave a glimpse of the gender situation among women within the PR industry in Ghana. The issues highlighted by the participants aided the researcher in the development of a framework by providing guidelines for both current and future practitioners in Ghana. The study envisaged that these guidelines contained in the framework formed the foundation and basis for some women in the PR profession in Ghana who were hitherto oppressed or subordinated to rise up to the occasion and compete favourably for top positions in their organisations. Again, there was the need for women in PR to be offered equal opportunities enjoyed by their male counterparts if they were earlier disadvantaged.

The relationship management theory: The relationship management theory focuses on the concept of trust, mutuality, openness, satisfaction, mutual understanding and reciprocity in relationships. Maintaining relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders is one key area that concerns PR. Communication therefore plays a crucial role in maintaining relationships. Organisations always have to create an opportunity to constantly engage and interact with their numerous publics. This is the best way feedback can be ascertained and problems identified so that solutions can be prescribed. The relationship management theory further postulates that the management of an organisation's Public Relations can be achieved through symbolic behaviours between it and its publics. This is usually based on common interest and shared values that support mutual understanding and benefits to both parties. For example, in the case of female PR practitioners who have participated in this study, the guiding principle should be that the policies and programmes that are rolled out in their organisations should make room for actions that exist between the organisation and its numerous stakeholders. This is necessary because relationships can be nurtured and maintained if there is always an opportunity for both parties to interact and share common ideas. Given the day-to-day activities such as media relations, community relations, corporate social responsibility among others that female PR practitioners in this study undertake, they must focus on best ways by which these activities can bring

the stakeholders and organisations closer. This is because if organisational goals are to be achieved, it will take both parties to do so in short-, medium- or long-term plans.

The excellence theory: The excellence theory serves as a normative model and a foundation for Public Relations practice globally. The model which was developed from a series of studies (Dozier et al 1995; Grunig 1992; Grunig et al 2002), outlines practices for effective Public Relations campaigns so that goals of organisations can be achieved. The theory argues that, for organisations to be excellent and also meet their goals, PR should be managed strategically. The theory offers ten principles and these principles help organisations to ensure effective PR practices. The theory postulates further that PR is a very important department within an organisational set up and therefore should be a separate management function in order to curtail the usual encroachment from related disciplines such as marketing and advertising or other departments in the organisation such as Human Resource Management, Administration, Legal among others. One of the principles of the excellence theory states that PR must be headed by a manager rather than a technician. This is because, managers often possess research skills and knowledge to elicit information and also prescribe conflict resolution mechanisms to ensure peace in the organisation. Moreover, if the PR practitioner is recognised in the organisation as a manager, she can participate in top decision-making processes. The theory therefore insists that PR must be part of the dominant coalition and its practice must be based on two-way symmetrical communication. This helps in facilitating feedback and also makes room for constant interactions between the organisation and its stakeholders. Moreover, the process ensures mutual beneficial relationships are nurtured and maintained between the organisation and its stakeholders. The excellence theory insist that PR practice should be considered on four key strategic levels: the organisational, functional, societal and programme levels. In other words, PR must be placed at the top to play managerial roles and be part of those that matter in the organisation. The practitioner is therefore expected to take decisions and counsel management based on scientific research and not by mere conjecture. This will help to improve relationships between the organisation and its publics. At the functional level, the PR practitioner is expected to constantly monitor and evaluate PR programmes so that she can make meaningful contributions on how to improve organisational relationships and societal effectiveness.

Again, at the functional level, PR can compare and contrast the structures and processes or activities performed in other departments that have similar structures and activities. This should form the basis for scientific research by linking PR theories to practice. At the programme level, the major activities that the PR department undertakes such as media relations, corporate social responsibility, employee relations and community relations among others are supposed to be constantly evaluated to ascertain their effectiveness and the need for improvement. It is envisaged that if the PR practitioner evaluates these programmes, she will get to know whether they are effective or not. The first and foremost consideration here is to influence a positive behaviour, attitudes and unity between both the organisation and its publics. At the societal level, PR must ensure that the public is always considered first by being responsive and accountable to societal needs at all times. This can be achieved through ethical conducts and social responsibility programmes. Arguably, these programmes can foster goodwill and cordial relationship between organisations and their publics. The excellence theory makes a strong point that, excellent organisations are those that incorporate and value the contributions of the PR department as far as the achievement of organisational goals are concerned. This study involves women in PR practice in Ghana. These female practitioners represent various organisations in Ghana and handle communication related issues. The excellence theory as employed in this study helped the researcher in establishing whether the position occupied by them and the roles they played were in consonant with the key principles espoused in the excellence theory. The theory also helped the researcher to identify the placement of PR functions that are strategic or technical and how these impacted on PR activities among female PR practitioners in Ghana. This was important for assessing practitioners' candid view or their understanding of PR functions by top management as well as employees in their various organisations in Ghana.

Based on the tenets of the various theories employed in this study, as well as the literature that has been reviewed, most of the findings do not support the ideal situations as indicated in these theories. Most of the participants in the study have faced numerous challenges in their quest to progress on the professional ladder. PR practice among the practitioners is therefore not necessarily hinged on the key assumptions of the theories. This is because, most of the practitioners are faced with various challenges thereby making it practically impossible for all of them to religiously adhere to the assumptions

indicated in most of the theories employed in this study. The study therefore confirmed a serious gap in relations to literature, the theories employed as well as PR practice among female practitioners in Ghana. Most of the issues discussed and described as the ideal situation by scholars existed more in books but in reality, was not so in relation to PR practice within the Ghanaian context.

The following key findings defined the study:

- The participants in the study possessed different academic backgrounds. Whiles some had formal training in PR or communication, others did not.
- Some practitioners were made to report to heads of other departments instead of management directly. In some cases, the PR departments were subsumed under other departments such as human resource and marketing.
- Some organisations did not recognise PR as a management function even though their organisational structures clearly depicted and placed PR at management level. The phenomenon merely existed in their organisational documents but in reality, it was not the case.
- Most PR practitioners in Ghana played technician roles and a combination of other roles. Just a few practitioners were placed at management level.
- Several designations were given to practitioners depending on the core mandates of the organisations they practised PR in.
- Research in PR was acknowledged as an important exercise among the practitioners, but the study confirmed that most of them did not pay much attention to it. On a few occasions, they conducted informal research as and when it was necessary.
- The practitioners employed both conventional and new media channels of communication. The monitoring mechanism for both channels of communication was poor and uncoordinated.
- Measurement of PR programmes was done through informal ways. Some practitioners did not measure their PR programmes at all.
- Most practitioners were not part of the dominant coalition as they did not participate in top management meetings. Even if they were given the opportunity, they mostly acted as master of ceremony or coordinators. On a few

occasions, they were allowed to make suggestions rather than counsel management.

- Most of the practitioners did not engage in advocacy work. Instead, they focused on publicity of their organisations' products or services through traditional and new media outlets.

- The use of websites was confirmed by almost all the practitioners as they had initiated their developments, monitored and constantly updated their organisations' websites.

- Most of the practitioners did not believe that PR as a profession was a management function.

- Some traditional and cultural practices in Ghana were found to have negatively affected a smooth PR practice in the country. For instance, some communities will put a ban on drumming and noise making during the celebration of festivals and funerals of prominent personalities like chiefs and royals.

- Constant interaction between organisations and their publics was found to be key as far as relationship building was concerned. The practitioners mostly employed durbars as a strategy for interactions.

- Technology emerged as one key area that most PR practitioners were concerned about. Most of them were upgrading and sharpening their skills in modern technology in line with current trends in PR practice.

Given the key findings in this study, an appropriate framework that was aimed at addressing current issues that related to PR practice in general and specifically to women in the PR profession in Ghana was developed. The guidelines in the framework were contextualised to the Ghanaian situation based on the key findings. The framework which is discussed in detail in the next chapter represents a holistic view of what scholars have described as excellent PR practice. Communication management and relationship management strategies that are key as far as the successes or failures of every organisation is concerned are discussed in the proposed framework. Moreover, the framework was developed in order to guide current female PR practitioners as well as future ones by providing a structure that will improve or enhance PR practice among them.

6.7 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter provided an in-depth discussion and interpretation of the study's findings from one-on-one interviews conducted among thirty-seven (37) female PR practitioners in Ghana. This consisted of both private and public organisations that employed female PR practitioners and the participants were all accredited members of the Institute of Public Relations Ghana (IPRG). The practitioners were a blend of both younger and older ones with their ages ranging from 25 to 55 years. The study established that some practitioners possessed PR or communication background while others obtained certificates from different disciplines but later took advantage of PR practice to undertake courses in communication and related areas such as marketing, human resource development and advertising. The study established that the practitioners were given different designations depending on the organisation as well as what the organisation's core mandate was.

The study was hinged on four (4) specific objectives. However, the broad objective was to investigate gender issues among female PR practitioners in Ghana as ceded in literature. The rationale was to compare and contrast what existed in literature globally to what pertained in Ghana as far as women in the PR industry were concerned.

Specifically, four objectives were investigated in the study. The first objective was to determine the position of female PR practitioners in Ghana. The study established that PR as a management function existed more in books than in practice. This is because, most of the participants were placed in lower positions in their organisations instead of being part of the decision-making bodies of their organisations. It was established further that a few practitioners were placed in real top or managerial positions in their organisations but that was mostly based on several intervening factors such as long service, loyalty, higher academic and professional qualifications and proximity to the dominant coalition among others. While some organisational structures clearly showed and placed PR at managerial levels, most of it was cosmetic. Such practitioners still played technician roles but will be called upon from time to time to collaborate with management whenever there was a crisis situation and the role of the PR practitioner was crucial. Once the crisis was over, they will most often revert to their normal technician duties.

Another objective was to analyse the roles played by female PR practitioners in Ghana. The study established that different roles were played by the practitioners depending on the situation at hand. It was found that there were even instances where some of the practitioners were asked to play roles that were completely unrelated to their position or training and yet they had to comply. The most dominant roles established in the study were expert prescriber and communication technician roles. Some of the practitioners were lucky to be placed at managerial positions so they performed the expert prescriber role. In such instances, they had other deputies who could be of the same gender or mixed and they were in charge of other portfolios such as media relations, community relations, and corporate social responsibility among others. These deputies reported to the head of PR who then also reported to management during meetings. Others were simply placed at lower positions so they had no option than to play the technician roles with the hope that they could progress to the top with the passage of time. Although other roles emerged as ceded in literature, the study established that the majority of the practitioners played an all-encompassing role depending on what was available at a particular time as far as the organisation was concerned.

Apart from establishing the position and the roles of female PR practitioners in Ghana, the study further investigated the specific communication strategies and by extension the channels female PR practitioners in Ghana employed to communicate with their publics. It was established that the practitioners used both conventional and new media tools to reach out to their various publics. Popular social media tools such as Facebook and WhatsApp were among the most dominant tools used to reach out to a larger audience. However, the practitioners employed other platforms which were equally used from time to time. The findings confirmed that most of the practitioners took advantage of new media platforms and got their organisations fully represented as those were the most current platforms for mass communication. The use of websites was confirmed as almost all the practitioners indicated that they had developed websites for their organisations where their products or services were being publicised, and these websites were constantly being updated and monitored by the practitioners.

The final objective was to develop a current or an appropriate framework that could provide guidelines for PR practice generally in Africa, and specific to women in PR in

Ghana. The participants suggested the need for the regulatory body of PR practice in Ghana (IPRG) to consider initiating a bill to be passed into law. This is because, the entry point for PR practitioners in Ghana is so porous and could be regulated to allow for only people who have attained formal training in communication or PR to be licensed to practice as existing in other professions in Ghana. The study further established that the PR industry in Ghana has grown over the years and now have good prospects to increase in terms of membership and professionalism for its members if the regulatory body doubles it responsibilities. The participants made a firm conviction that if proper policies are implemented to regulate the PR industry with regard to professionalism and ethical conduct, PR practice in Ghana will be enhanced. The majority of the participants emphasised the need for IPRG to constantly organise training opportunities for practitioners to keep them abreast of contemporary PR practices. Generally, the findings of this studies supported what existed in past studies as well as the linkage of theory to PR practice.

In the previous chapter, the research results were presented and interpreted. The next chapter which is the final chapter of the study presents a summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations. The chapter also presents into detail a proposed framework on women in Public Relations as well as factors that can engender effective or excellent PR practice. The framework proposed in the chapter identifies some practical challenges that affect the rapid progression of women in the PR profession globally.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND FRAMEWORK FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter six of this study, the researcher discussed and interpreted the results of the research from primary data. The interpretation of the findings was based on the broad and specific objectives that underpinned the study. The researcher was further guided by the structure of the interview guide which was employed for primary data collection. The findings were therefore linked to the literature as well as the theories that were used in the study.

As indicated in the previous chapters, the main goal of this study was to develop a framework for effective or excellent PR practice in general, and specific to women in the PR profession with special reference to Ghana or for that matter Africa. This chapter focuses on the summary of the entire study, draws conclusions based on the key findings and also offers recommendations for mitigating any challenges that were identified in the study. Moreover, the chapter presents a proposed empirical framework for PR practice among females in the profession. The development of the framework is based primarily on the various theoretical statements that have been adduced from secondary data and the findings from primary data. This chapter therefore presents a vivid summary of the entire study in a concise and comprehensive manner that enabled the researcher to illuminate on the research problem which was the main issue that the researcher set out to investigate.

7.2 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Several key findings came up strongly as far as PR practice among female practitioners in Ghana is concerned. Here, a prognosis in the light of the four main objectives that underpinned the study is necessary to enable the researcher to show clearly the rationale for the study. To achieve this, it is necessary to restate the objectives to guide the discussions on the key findings:

- To establish the position of female PR practitioners in Ghana.
- To analyse the roles (activities) that female PR practitioners in Ghana play.
- To investigate and describe the communication strategies employed by female PR practitioners in Ghana.
- To develop a framework that guides the practice of PR among female practitioners in Ghana.

As already adequately espoused in this study, the main goal of the study was to develop a current and an appropriate framework for effective or excellent PR practice among women in the PR profession in Ghana. With regards to the conceptualisation of PR by the practitioners, the study found that PR was an integral part of the communication function of most organisations in Ghana. In other words, most organisations in Ghana found the need to establish PR departments and recruited practitioners to operate them. These practitioners have a responsibility to always communicate the policies and programmes of their various organisations to the numerous stakeholders who are crucial as far as the successes or failures of their organisations are concerned. A critical assessment of the functions undertaken by these PR departments revealed that, they mainly played four major functions of public relations – communication, relationship building, reputation and image management as well as strategic management functions.

The PR practitioners mostly develop communication strategies and tactics to communicate with their stakeholders internally or externally. The study found that most of the practitioners believed that PR should play a management function but in practice, it was only a few that were accorded such a recognition. It was evident from the findings that most of the practitioners were not recognised as managers who possessed expertise in PR or communication and therefore their organisations did not accord them that opportunity to work as managers. One unique finding from the study was the fact that most of the practitioners did not possess a background in communication or PR, but yet they were appointed as heads of PR departments and automatically played the role of public relations practitioners although that was not the ideal situation. It is worth noting that some practitioners in the study possessed academic qualifications from completely different disciplines such as sociology, psychology, social work, political science, government among others, and yet were recruited by reputable organisations

in Ghana as PR practitioners. In some cases, some of the practitioners found the need to cement their positions as PR practitioners by acquiring a post-graduate diploma in communication studies or a certificate from the professional body (IPRG). Majority of the PR practitioners possessed marketing backgrounds but yet were recruited and worked as public relations practitioners. The role of a marketing practitioner is not the same as a public relations practitioner. Admittedly, both practitioners may play roles that are related in the interest of the organisation. Whiles the marketing department may be focusing more on sales and profits, the PR department has a responsibility for the entire organisation in terms of its image and reputation management which could also affect the product or service that an organisation showcases. If the process is not professionally managed by the PR department, it can affect the entire organisation including the product or service. The study also found the need for heads of organisations such as Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), Managing Directors (MDs), General Managers (GMs), and Director-Generals (DGs) among others to be trained in communication. This is because, if the PR practitioners are trained and their bosses still have negative perceptions about PR, most of the efforts of the PR practitioners will still not yield any positive results. Moreover, the managerial role of the PR practitioner will always be missing since their bosses will usually not see the need for such a recognition or their professional counselling.

Research in PR is an integral part of PR practice globally. The study found that research was acknowledged by all the practitioners, but yet most of their research procedures were largely unscientific because they mostly undertook informal research to elicit information about their organisation's product or services. Beyond testing the clarity of their messages, no serious research work was carried out by the practitioners. Formative research for instance which is normally carried out by organisations to determine attitudes and perceptions as well as the general understanding that the stakeholders may have before a major policy or programme is rolled out was rarely practised by a majority of the practitioners. Although some of the practitioners confirmed in the study that after rolling out a major programme, they monitored and eventually evaluated such programmes, it was mostly done through informal means which was assessed to be poor and uncoordinated, thereby making the research results unscientific.

The study also found that the practitioners were given varied designations. These designations were based on the nature of the organisations as well as their size. With regards to the communication approaches that the practitioners employed, the study established that both dialogue-based and monologic methods were used to reach out to their stakeholders. However, the study further established that most of the practitioners had shifted from one-way to two-way communication because it had been tested and confirmed to be the best as far as communication is concerned since it allowed for more feedback. Therefore, most organisations found the need to foster constant interactions between them and their stakeholders through the use of durbars.

With regards to the core roles that the practitioners performed, the study confirmed that a majority of the practitioners practised PR as technicians and a few the at managerial levels. Those who were placed at managerial levels worked closely with top management by playing strategic functions. Such practitioners reported directly to top management while those at the technician levels reported to heads of other departments such us human resources, administration, operations, legal among others. Practitioners under the technician levels mostly carried out the craft side of PR such as writing, editing, and organisation of press conferences, monitoring and evaluating, and the management of their organisation's websites among others. Other practitioners reported to the marketing manager as the head of PR. In such instances, PR was mostly subsumed under marketing, so the marketing manager was then the boss instead of the reverse. This situation did not allow for effective or excellent PR practice in such organisations.

Although the counselling role of the PR practitioner was not so manifest, a few were given the opportunity to sit at managerial meetings. During such meetings, the PR practitioner mostly played the role of a coordinator, so when critical decisions were being taken by top management, the PR practitioner did not really have a strong voice. In some instances, the practitioners were given the rare opportunity to suggest which were not binding on top management. This is because management did not recognise them as experts or probably because they did not understand the importance of PR to their organisations. The study further confirmed that a few practitioners enjoyed full recognition as managers in their organisations. In such instances, the counselling role

of the PR practitioner was manifest as the practitioner will normally work closely with top management by taking part in meetings where critical decisions were taken.

Before concluding the study, the researcher found it expedient to elicit information from the practitioners about the PR industry in Ghana. Generally, the study found that the practitioners were unanimous on certain issues that related to the PR industry in Ghana. For instance, the practitioners believed PR practice had improved remarkably in Ghana as compared to some years back where the profession was mostly associated with propaganda and white-washing. Moreover, many organisations in Ghana are now appreciating the role of communication, thus, have found it necessary to employ the services of PR practitioners to communicate on their behalf. What has remained a huge challenge is the fact that people from unrelated disciplines have found themselves in the profession and now parading themselves as public relations practitioners. The study confirmed that this situation had affected professionalism in the PR profession in Ghana because most of these "unqualified" practitioners do not often adhere to professional and ethical standards in PR practice. Again, a majority of the practitioners believed the "entry gate" for PR practice in Ghana appeared to be too porous. So, there was the need for the regulatory body- IPRG to "close the gap" in order to allow for only people with the requisite training and background in PR or communication to be accredited to practice just as it is the case in other professions.

The participants therefore called for a need for the regulatory body to initiate processes so that a law can be passed that will require practitioners to be given a licence to practice. In that case, the licence should be renewed annually based on good conduct and adherence to highest professional PR standards. The practitioners further called for a more pragmatic approach to PR practice in Ghana by the regulatory body so that more practitioners can be elevated to occupy managerial positions in the PR profession in Ghana. This can be achieved if there is an improvement in the understanding of the purposes of PR by both senior management of organisations and the general public. If this is done, the participants believe it will enhance and increase professionalism, ethical practices and more understanding of the core purposes of PR which can lead to an increase in the budgetary allocations to PR practitioners for their activities. The results also confirmed that PR practice in Ghana was largely hinged on the cultural and political environment in the country which has been adequately espoused in literature.

The overall effect is that the participants believe the PR industry in Ghana has a brighter future and there are prospects for PR to grow to an advanced stage and compete favourably with other countries although several challenges currently hamper the smooth growth of the profession in Ghana.

The next sub-section focuses on conclusions on the research objectives that underpinned the study.

7.3 CONCLUSIONS ON RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The previous sub-section presented a summary of the findings in relation to the objectives that underpinned the study. The next section basically discusses the conclusions that the study found on the various objectives. The rationale was to ensure that the objectives were verified and achieved. Moreover, the main objective was to determine whether the research problem that the study set out to investigate was adequately addressed.

7.3.1 Conclusion on the position that female PR practitioners in Ghana occupy

The first objective of the study was to establish the position of female PR practitioners in Ghana in the organisational hierarchy. The study established that only a few female practitioners occupied managerial positions in their organisations. This was due to several factors which have already been adequately discussed in this study. Those who occupied managerial positions in their organisations reported directly to top management and also sat in managerial meetings where critical decisions of their organisations were taken. In other words, the practitioners had a voice as far as the policies of their organisations were concerned. This notwithstanding, some of the participants who took part in this study were placed in technician positions, so most of them were mainly involved in the craft aspect of PR. They did not sit in management meetings and therefore had very little influence on issues relating to their organisations because their views were not often sought before policies were implemented. In most cases, management will only seek their views as and when it became necessary, especially issues related to their department. The study however established that the practitioners who were placed in technician positions had easy access to management

although they were not part of them. The main reasons identified in this case were that because of the critical roles the PR practitioners played in their organisations, management found it necessary to sometimes discuss issues with the practitioner especially if a message had to be communicated to their stakeholders internally or externally. Beyond that, major policies and programmes that the organisations intended to roll out did not incorporate the views of the technician PR practitioners. This was because they often had less influence on top management.

7.3.2 Conclusion on the specific roles (activities) that female PR practitioners in Ghana play

This objective aided the researcher to analyse the specific roles that female PR practitioners in Ghana engaged in their various organisations. Just like the findings on the position that female PR practitioners in Ghana occupied, the study established that the majority of the practitioners played technician roles which mainly involved writing, editing, organising press conferences, granting media interviews, monitoring and updating their organisation's websites among others. Just a few of the practitioners played the expert prescriber role. Most organisations did not recognise the PR practitioners under this role as experts in their areas, and therefore were made to play the normal day-to-day duties that the practitioners were often assigned by their bosses. The counselling role of the PR practitioner was missing in most cases because the practitioners were not recognised as people who were qualified to counsel management on issues related to their organisations. One can therefore argue that management probably sought counsel outside the PR departments of their organisations. The study further established that it was mostly during crises periods that practitioners under this role were consulted and management will normally play an active role by collaborating with the practitioner to solve the crisis. Once the problem was solved, the practitioner reverted to her normal routines as a technician and its associated roles. The study further established that the PR roles in Ghana that the practitioners played were not codified as confirmed in other jurisdictions. Most of their roles depended largely on the nature of the organisation and the roles that are documented in literature. The practitioners played different roles, but the most dominant among them was the technician and the expert prescriber roles. It is worth noting that most of the practitioners had business or marketing backgrounds rather

than communication and this automatically resulted in the merger of communication and marketing which posed challenges to effective public relations practice in such organisations.

7.3.3 Conclusion on the communication strategies employed by female PR practitioners in Ghana

Another objective of the study was to establish the communication strategies and channels that female PR practitioners in Ghana employed to reach out to their numerous stakeholders. The study established that the practitioners employed both conventional and new media channels to communicate with their stakeholders. These channels were both dialogue-based and monologic, so the practitioners employed both approaches for communicating depending on the situation at hand. However, the study established further that the majority of the practitioners emphasised the use of dialogic channels because it was tested and proven to be more effective as it allowed for feedback. The study, therefore, considers the use of monologic communication as counterproductive as it does not reinforce the 6th principle of the excellence theory. The principle advocates for public relations departments to employ channels that are more dialogue-based with their publics as this approach has been proven to be more effective in mitigating conflicts, and also building and maintaining relationships between organisations and their numerous publics.

The study confirmed a catalogue of communication channels employed by the practitioners such as radio, television, print media, outdoor advertising among others which constituted the traditional media. New media channels such as social media, websites and the use of WhatsApp platforms were the most popular new media tools the practitioners employed. As already indicated, the traditional media channels were found to be monologic while the new media channels allowed for opportunities for both parties to interact frequently. Websites were widely used by the practitioners as all of them indicated they had developed websites for their organisations and the practitioners were the ones who constantly monitored and updated them. One unique finding that the study established was that a majority of the participants shifted to face-to-face engagements through the use of durbars and small meetings which enabled them to obtain instant feedback from their stakeholders especially the employees. This

approach is found to be consistent with the tenets of the relationship management theory employed in this study. The theory advocates for interpersonal communication between organisations and their stakeholders as it is one of the best ways relationships can be nurtured and maintained.

7.3.4 Conclusion on a current framework for excellence PR practice among women in the PR industry in Ghana

This was the final objective of the study and it aided the researcher in the development of a current framework which was deemed appropriate to engender excellent or effective PR practice among women in the PR profession in Ghana. The approach was based on an extensive literature review on public relations practice in general and specific to women in PR globally. Moreover, the key tenets of the four theories employed in this study namely- gender, feminist, excellence and relationship management theories also aided the researcher in the development of the framework. The participants in this study expressed their views on the PR industry in Ghana as well as the strategies they the practitioners themselves employed to remain relevant in their organisations. The study found that PR practice is key to most organisations in Ghana as it was evidenced that most organisations employed the services of PR practitioners to communicate their businesses to their customers on their behalf. Aside from that, some organisations employed more than one practitioner to work in their PR departments.

The study confirmed that the Institute of Public Relations Ghana (IPRG) had over the years ensured that ethical and professional standards in the PR profession were held in high esteem. What however remained a huge challenge was the inability of IPRG to regulate the entry of practitioners which has opened the floodgates for people with different backgrounds to flood the profession which has the propensity to affect its fortunes in the future if not curtailed. The practitioners saw the need for them to work harder than before and also upgrade themselves in order to compete favourably with their male counterparts in the PR profession in Ghana. Some of the participants expressed worry about the fact that the PR industry has a larger workforce being women, but yet there is still a leadership gap which is more pronounced in most parts of the world where PR is practiced.

The participants further expressed the need for a level-playing-field in the profession so that more women can move into leadership positions. The study established that more women in the PR profession were upgrading themselves in order to compete for top positions in their various organisations. The study further found that most female PR practitioners in Ghana were faced with several challenges such as sexism, gender discrimination, sexual harassment among others, so these challenges undoubtedly affected their quest to progress rapidly to top management positions. As already indicated in this study, just a few female practitioners managed to navigate such challenges to move into top positions. The study therefore concludes that, there is a need for organisations or for that matter top management to empower and move more women into leadership positions if they possess the requisite qualifications, experience and competences to occupy such top positions.

Having adequately dealt with the conclusions on the objectives of the study, the next sub-section will focus on the key recommendations that the study has proposed.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the conclusions drawn from the findings of the study, the following recommendations are inevitable. It is envisaged that these recommendations will lead to effective or excellent PR practice among women in the profession.

7.4.1 Training for personnel of the PR department and top management

The study established that PR has been recognised as a crucial tool for information dissemination as well as publicity for organisations. This is because the activities of most organisations are often communicated to their stakeholders from the PR departments. The study further established that most organisations in Ghana do not fully understand the purposes and importance of PR. Meanwhile, if organisational goals are to be achieved, they will need the PR department to constantly engage both internal and external stakeholders to contribute to achieving such goals. In view of that, the study recommends that PR practitioners, their staff as well as top management should be taken through constant training so that they can have a full grasp of the purposes of PR and the contributions it can make to the achievement of organisational goals. Because some practitioners and their bosses do not understand the full concept of PR,

excellent or effective PR practice can be hampered in most organisations in Ghana. The study, therefore, recommends that practitioners who occupy both managerial or technician positions should undergo constant training in a form of workshops, seminars, conferences, and symposia among others to sharpen their skills and also keep them abreast with contemporary PR practices. The PR profession has evolved over the years, so this demands that PR practitioners continue to update their knowledge on recent happenings relating to the profession. The training could be done here in Ghana or sometimes at the international level from time to time. Apart from training the practitioners or top management outside their various organisations, very experienced industry personnel could also be invited to take the practitioners and top management on separate training from time to time.

It is worth noting that the findings revealed that a majority of the participants possessed a marketing background. PR and Marketing are not the same. Therefore, organisations that have recruited marketing officers ought to see the need to provide further training for such personnel to enable them to have a fuller understanding of PR and incorporate those ideas alongside their marketing knowledge to enhance effective PR practice in their various organisations.

The Institute of Public Relations, Ghana (IPRG) which is the only professional body that regulates PR practice in the country should continue to organise training to its members as a way of constantly building their professional capacity. Moreover, the individual practitioners should also see the need to open themselves up for every learning opportunity in order to upgrade themselves in PR or communication. This is because, it is the best way in which they can remain professional and relevant to their organisations. Again, if the practitioners upgrade themselves to a master's degree level, it will go a long way to sharpen their skills and also broaden their knowledge in the PR discipline. Apart from that, it will boost their morale and fit them into top management as they will be respected by their bosses and recognised as experts in their area. The study therefore recommends that training series should include top management by giving them orientation on PR and its purposes. It must be noted that if the practitioners are trained while their bosses still have negative perceptions about the PR profession, they will still not achieve the desired results. This is because, the practitioners will need the full cooperation of management to carry through their PR

activities, and so if management does not support such activities, it will be practically impossible for the various practitioners to achieve the goals that they set out for themselves. The PR department can also initiate its own training programmes which can be modelled for its internal staff as well as other heads of departments in the organisation so that the staff will get to understand the concept of PR. Once in a while, a well experienced PR practitioner could be invited to the organisation to deliver a lecture on the importance and purposes of PR so that the employees can get a full grasp of what PR stands for. If an outsider is invited to speak to the personnel, it will increase the interest and create more room for the learning of PR and its purposes. Such lectures could be tied to some major programmes that the organisation may organise in the course of the year.

7.4.2 Elevation of the PR practitioner into top management and decision-making processes

The study confirmed that a majority of the practitioners were placed at middle-level or lower-level positions in their organisations. In fact, just a few practitioners were placed at top management level positions and therefore participated in policy formulation or decision-making processes in their organisations. This situation is in sharp contrast to what scholars have espoused as the ideal situation. The study recommends that organisations need to empower the PR practitioners by elevating them to "earn a seat" at the top management table and also have a stronger voice in critical decisions of their organisations. The study found that even in the case of those practitioners who were elevated to top management, some of it was simply cosmetic because the practitioners did not have much influence on happenings in their organisations. In other words, they simply lacked the power to influence the decision makers in their organisations. It is worth noting that most of the practitioners however had easy access to top management but what remained a huge challenge was their inability to influence decisions at the top management. In such cases, the practitioners could not contribute to the strategic management of an organisation's publics and also advise management on a wide range of issues that relate to the organisation, so if the practitioner is not given such an opportunity, she cannot function well in such a hostile environment. Moreover, in PR, one of the core functions is to nurture long term relations between an organisation and its numerous stakeholders. The ultimate goal of PR has always been

to ensure that there is peace and harmony in the organisation. Thus, the need to encourage constant interactions with top management and stake holders. The practitioners here act as mediators, liaisons, or interpreters between management and stakeholders. Therefore, there is the need for the PR practitioner to be offered that managerial recognition to enable her to contribute to the goals of the organisation. In other words, empowering the PR practitioner in the organisation to be part of top management will go a long way to enhance her professional capacity and for her department to serve the interest of the organisation in terms of its short-, medium- or long-term goals.

7.4.3 Separation of Public Relations functions from other related functions

Numerous scholars in the PR discipline have made the argument that, PR should be recognised as a management function and must be separated from related disciplines such as marketing, advertising, human resource management among others. The study found that in some cases, PR was subsumed under marketing or other departments. Again, the study established that in some cases too, PR was integrated into marketing and was described as marketing communication in such organisations. This should not be the case. For PR to be effective, it must be independent. In other words, PR must stand on its own without being merged with other departments. Ideally, it is the PR practitioner who should be recognised as the immediate boss so that marketing and other departments can be placed under it, but in most cases, it is rather the reverse where PR is often relegated to the background. If this practice continues, PR will not be able to act and function well as a result of the "encroachment" from other related professions. This situation is not an ideal one for the PR practitioners because they will always have very little power and cannot function well in their positions.

Some organisations however separated the PR department from other departments. For the PR practitioner to be effective in the organisation, she must be recognised as an expert in her area who can "diagnose problems and prescribe solutions" to them. The counselling role of the PR practitioner should be manifest so that if there is the need for management to be counselled, the practitioner can do so and it will be accepted. The study therefore recommends that PR should be independent in the organisation and must be headed by a professional PR manager so that the

department can fully execute its strategic function. In instances where PR is merged with other departments such as marketing and human resource, the focus is normally more on publicity of the organisation, or its products or service although PR has a strategic role to play by managing the image and reputation of the organisation. Aside from that, PR is supposed to ensure that mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders are well established. Again, in situations where the PR practitioner is working under another head of department, there is always going to be friction between the two heads. This situation does not engender professional PR practice and can cause a long-term ripple effect on the organisation's profits. In an ideal situation, marketing and PR can collaborate by working together with the different functions so that the goals of the organisation can be achieved. Again, there is the need for a clear distinction in terms of the roles that each department is supposed to play in order to curtail the usual encroachment from other departments which sometimes lead to unnecessary tension between the PR practitioner and other heads of departments. If Marketing and PR are merged in the organisation, there is always that level of conflict as to who is to be superior to the other which often degenerate into the friction between the two practitioners. Thus, this study strongly recommends that organisations should separate the PR department from other departments such as Marketing, advertising or HR, regardless of the organisation's nature, size, purposes or its unique organisational history.

7.4.4 Dialogue-based approach communication

As already established in literature, the main purpose of PR is to nurture, build and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders. The study found that the practitioners adopted both one-way and two-way methods of communication. The practitioners employed each channel based on the situation at hand. The study further confirmed that most of the conventional media tools that the practitioners employed were one-way whiles the new media channels were more dialogue-based because of their interactive nature.

Scholars have described two main types of communication- asymmetrical and symmetrical. It is worth noting that both are dialogue-based but the most appropriate method of communication that has been highly recommended is the symmetrical

method of communication. Organisations employing the two-way asymmetrical method of communication are usually aiming for scientific persuasion. Although feedback is considered, most often, the organisation is always interested in persuading its stakeholders to adjust to it instead of the reverse. The two-way symmetrical communication model is described as the ideal and most ethical for PR practice because it considers the interests of its stakeholders as well as the public interest. Again, two-way communication encourages more interactions and collaboration between an organisation and its stakeholders. This often allow for negotiations and consensus building. As a results, it aides organisations to identify bottlenecks and work to address them as quickly as possible.

In addition to the above, two-way symmetrical communication also engenders the concept of trust, honesty, transparency, shared vision as well as mutual understanding between the organisation and its stakeholders. Excellent organisations are those that employ two-way symmetrical communication because it depicts an orientation in which organisations and their stakeholders are able to interact and adjust to each other. Research is well grounded here and it enables both parties to achieve mutual understanding which also helps in building healthy relationships. The feedback that both parties obtain helps in building bridges as there is always an opportunity for resolution of conflicts through discussions and suggestions. As already indicated, the study found that female PR practitioners in Ghana employed both one-way and two-way methods of communication and by extension two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical. However, the study found that there was a strong indication that the PR practitioners who participated in this study were gradually gravitating more towards two-way symmetrical communication because it had been tried and tested to be the best form of communication that an organisation can adopt.

As adequately espoused in literature, two-way symmetrical communication has been universally accepted and recommended as the ideal form of communication. Based on the findings of this study, it is proposed that both methods should be employed alongside, depending on the situation at hand in the organisation. In that case, the decision should be left to the sole discretion of the PR practitioner in the organisation. However, the study makes a firm recommendation that the practitioners should employ

more two-way symmetrical methods of communication in their organisations in order to balance how PR is practiced.

In Public Relations, persuasive communication is critical but it must be done with the highest ethical consideration. Therefore, in adopting both methods, it will give the practitioners an added advantage as they will always have the opportunity to assess the situation at hand and make a determination as to which method to employ at a particular point in time.

7.4.5 Amalgamation of communication functions across departments in organisations

The research findings showed that internal communication functions were sometimes shared with other departments in organisations such as administration, human resource management, legal, operations among others. Again, anytime the heads of these departments encroached into the core functions of the PR department, it naturally created tension between the heads. Moreover, it sometimes led to contradictions and inconsistences in the communication process, as there was always the possibility of one department saying something and the other department communicating differently on the same issue. This could obviously lead to confusion and create a negative impression that the organisation was trying to hide something.

In order to engender an excellent and effective communication function, this study proposes that all communications across various units and departments in every organisation be integrated into the PR department so that the communication process can be well coordinated by the PR department rather than any other department. In instances where other departments are commenting on issues about the organisation especially in the media space, it can lead to so much confusion as they will not speak with one voice. As a way of curbing friction among heads of other departments and the PR departments, it is important that organisations have clearly defined roles for each department. Whatever information that has to be communicated from any department should be coordinated and executed by the PR department rather than any other department in the organisation. This can ensure more clarity and consistency in the messaging. Again, in order for organisations to nurture and build mutually beneficial

relationships internally and externally, the communication must be aligned to the core goals of the organisation. It is often advised that organisations must speak with one voice. It is envisaged that if organisations allow for the integration of communication functions across departments, it can go a long way to enhance harmony and peaceful co-existence among the various heads of departments of the organisation. At the end of the day, every department will definitely have a contribution to make so that organisational goals can be achieved.

7.4.6 The need for formal environmental scanning and evaluative research

The findings of the study revealed that formative research was one area that the practitioners did not pay much attention to. Formative research is crucial to every practitioner because it helps to determine public perception, attitudes or knowledge of an organisation, its products or services. For PR programmes to be implemented, it must be grounded on scientific research results. In other words, the basis for recommending to management to roll out a particular programme or policy must be well grounded on research. This is because, there is always the need for management to understand the core issues that affect its stakeholders so that policies and programmes can be formulated to address them. Environmental scanning, otherwise known as information gathering helps PR practitioners and management to take the right decisions. This is so because gathering information about a segment of the public, the way they react to the organisation, and their opinions about issues that are dear to their hearts help management in taking the right decisions. The study recommends that PR practitioners should sharpen their knowledge and skills in scientific research to enable them to carry out constant research on their own about their organisations, its product or service. The study found that most of the PR practitioners did not have dedicated research officers in their various research departments to conduct scientific research beyond the informal methods that the practitioners carried out for investigations. The study further recommends that PR practitioners should work closely with officers in charge of the various research units in their organisations to enable them to conduct scientific research about their organisations, its products or services which are more PR related. Moreover, if the research units are tasked to conduct the scientific research, they are most likely going to produce independent and more reliable results devoid of personal biases and that can give a clearer picture on the issues

concerned which can help management in strategic positions to deal with such issues. Evaluative research is also critical to the practitioners because it will aid them to effectively gauge and understand the outcome of their programmes once they are rolled out. The current trend where the practitioners employ only informal methods of evaluation cannot help in determining the right results. This study therefore recommends that more scientific and rigorous methods of research such as surveys, interviews and focus group discussions should be adequately employed during evaluation periods. Measurement and evaluation should not be based on informal methods or media reports. Beyond the informal methods of gathering information, there is the need for formal research to be conducted at all times by the practitioners in order to obtain the right information.

Arguably, environmental scanning and evaluation also help organisations to manage competition because the results from the research will always guide the practitioners and management to take the right decisions by employing the appropriate strategies to reduce or avoid competition.

7.4.7 PR and technology/new media platforms

The study confirmed that a majority of the PR practitioners employed new media tools to engage with their stakeholders. The use of websites was most popular among practitioners. Facebook for instance was widely used as a tool for reaching out to their numerous publics. These tools contributed to contemporary PR practice, so a practitioner in the 21st century who ignores such popular tools for communication does so at his or her own peril. Social media has undoubtedly contributed in several ways to make PR more interactive as the practitioner can constantly engage with her publics who are active online. This situation therefore poses a bigger challenge for PR practitioners now than ever before. This is because, they have to stay online almost 24/7 to enable them to monitor what is being said about their organisations online and provide the needed feedback for their stakeholders. Social media has also been tried and tested as one of the best channels through which practitioners can build relationships and reinforce their brands. As confirmed in this study, new media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube among others have served as integral parts of organisations and businesses worldwide. Almost every organisation now owns a

social media account being managed by the practitioners themselves or under supervision by the PR practitioners. These social media tools can also serve as a conducive environment for formative and summative research to be conducted by PR practitioners in order to measure their programmes and their outcomes. The implication here is that, PR practitioners should move beyond informal research methods such as recording the number of likes, shares, or followers but measure the real outcomes as far as PR goals are concerned.

Arguably, social media is now what is most popular globally, so almost every organisation is leveraging on it to reach out to their numerous stakeholders which is now being described as revolutionised. Technology is very fast, easily accessible and produces unlimited opportunities to all users. As a result, what is now being described as technology PR appears to be emerging as a popular career path for most organisations to constantly communicate with their stakeholders. Based on these findings, the study recommends that PR practitioners need to sharpen their skills and knowledge in technology or modern methods of communication in order to stay abreast with their constituents online. Aside from that, PR practitioners need to develop social media policies to guide them even as they take advantage of the relevant social media networks that aid them to engage with their constituents almost on a daily or hourly basis. These social media policies if developed will serve as a blueprint that will guide the practitioners on how to communicate about their organisation's products or services as well as socialise with their various constituents. Because of the porous nature of social media sites, credibility and trust issues could arise while communicating as part of their efforts to build lasting relationships with their constituents.

There is no doubt that technology has changed the face of PR practice globally, so most PR practitioners are now struggling to adjust to the internet's impact on the PR profession. This new media environment means that PR practitioners are now having to stay abreast with new technological development in the age of new media. Apart from that, the PR practitioners will have to represent their organisations in the new media environment while conducting media relations with non-traditional journalists such as "citizen journalists", bloggers and popular Facebook influencers. The study therefore makes a firm recommendation that PR practitioners should intensify their social media tools and also expand their communication outlets in line with

contemporary PR practice. For the PR practitioners to be able to navigate his or her way through modern PR practice, enhancing their skills and knowledge in tools such as computers, smartphones and the state-of-the-art equipment that can aid them to do their work should engage their attention now more than ever before.

The next sub-section presents the proposed framework which is the main goal of the study. The framework is presented in a pictorial form and further explained in text for easy comprehension.

7.5 THE PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

The main goal of this study was to develop a framework that could guide female PR practitioners in the profession and also contribute to effective or excellent PR practice. The framework is hinged on the theoretical statements that have been adequately discussed in literature, the findings that the study produced and the recommendations and conclusions that were drawn from the study.

According to Kivunja (2018), a framework is basically the art of putting together ideas, concepts and themes that constitute a deeper and broader knowledge base. Glanz (2008) offers similar explanations as far as frameworks are concerned. Glanz (2008) points out that frameworks often bring together ideas, interrelated concepts, definitions and propositions that attempt to explain, predict events, or situations by stating the relationship that exist among variables.

Thus, the proposed framework in this study attempts to present the issues in a pictorial form by explaining the ideas and concepts as well as the relationship that exist among them in a more holistic manner. These concepts and ideas are further espoused in a form of guidelines to serve as a blue print for female PR practitioners.
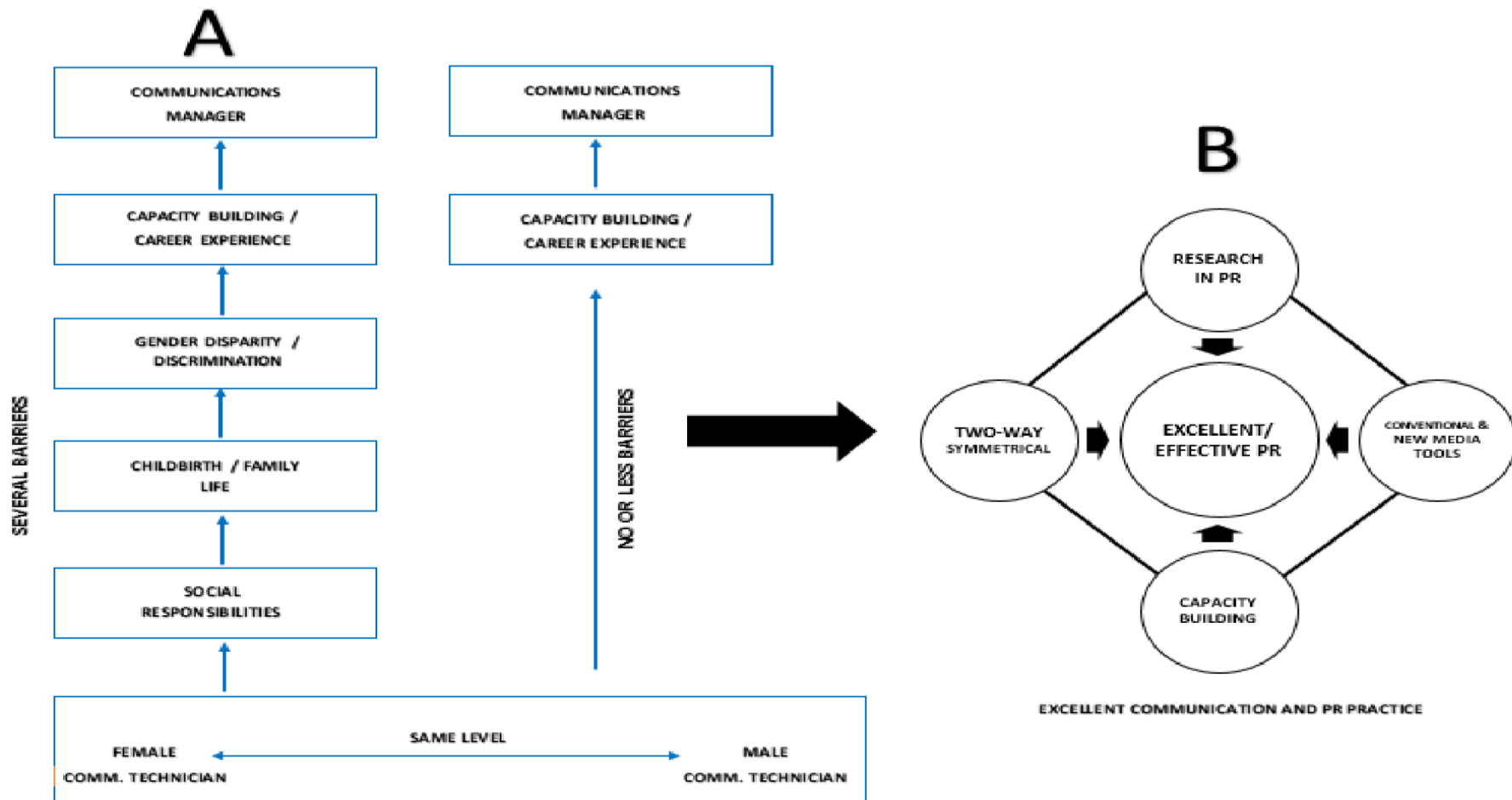
Figure 7: Framework on women in PR in Ghana and excellent PR practice

Figure 8: Framework on women in PR in Ghana and excellent PR practice

In the previous chapters, the study discussed a number of challenges that female PR practitioners face globally and specific to Ghana. The practitioners catalogued these challenges which were adequately discussed in the findings. The above framework (see figure 8 A & B) which in two-fold presents a pictorial and a holistic view of PR practice among females and identifies some of the peculiar barriers that female PR practitioners often experience as well as the strategies that can be employed to engender effective or excellent PR practice. The framework is considered critical for women in the PR profession in Ghana/Africa because, it identifies the core barriers that often prevent a good number of women in the PR profession from progressing rapidly to top positions in their organisations as compared to their male colleagues. While the first aspect of the framework focuses on women's issues in the PR profession, specifically the barriers, the second aspect of the framework looks at activities that female PR practitioners in Ghana can undertake in line of practice to ensure effective or excellent PR practice in their various organisations.

7.5.1 Explanation of the framework

This section of the study discusses the main issues that constituted the development of the proposed framework. The researcher was guided by the theoretical statements which were empirically verified in the findings of the study in the previous chapter. The framework as seen in figure (8 A & B) has been simplified for easy understanding.

7.5.1.1 Communications manager

Numerous studies have confirmed that, for PR to be effective or excellent, it must be recognised as a management function. In other words, PR must be part of the top decision-making body of an organisation in order to counsel management on policies or decisions that they take. While this is the case, women in the PR profession have made enormous contributions to PR practice, teaching and research, but most of these contributions have often been deliberately masked. Women have faced and continue to face numerous challenges in the PR profession and these challenges often prevent them from progressing rapidly on the corporate ladder, thereby making it extremely difficult for more women to climb to the top of their careers in order to take up leadership or top positions in the PR profession. The framework in this study clearly depicts most

of the systematic barriers that the majority of women in the PR profession go through before they are able to get to the top by occupying managerial positions in their various organisations.

As already indicated, several studies have confirmed that women in the PR profession face challenges such as career discrimination which often comes in a form of glass ceiling, pay gap, bias against women, sexual harassment, lack of mentorship among others that have been adequately documented. These challenges have undoubtedly had a ripple effect on the smooth progression of a number of women in the PR profession.

It is worth noting, that most women in the PR profession often start their career from the technician level before progressing into middle-level or top positions. As clearly seen in (figure 8 A), a female PR practitioner who begins her career may start from the technician level and slowly progress to the top. Such a female practitioner is faced with numerous challenges such as social responsibilities, child birth and family life among others. A few women often face gender bias or discrimination along the PR career paths.

Historically, numerous studies have also confirmed that women face unequal access to social and economic power in most spheres of life. These inequalities in access to many opportunities have rendered a lot of women to be marginalised and often described as minority groups. Aside that, stereotyping and persistent discrimination against some women in the PR profession manifest in several ways including gender relations and the value for gender roles as well as responsibilities. This situation has arguably led to some severe implications for women's rapid progression into the PR profession. The obvious conclusion here is that, these negative factors have contributed to the inequalities that exist between men and women in the PR profession.

Although the PR profession appears to be socially constructed and fit for women, the few men in the profession occupy most top or higher positions. As indicated in the framework, traditional social roles of women such as taking care of the home and general family responsibilities that they have to perform at home sometimes limit their access to certain opportunities on their career paths.

On the African continent for example, several socio-cultural and traditional beliefs have created a fertile ground for women to be unjustifiably discriminated against in some aspects. For instance, due to some patriarchal structures and systems in Ghana/Africa, it has created a systemic male dominance which has resulted into female subordination. There is no doubt that the situation has somewhat promoted negative socio-cultural practices, structures and policies that have all contributed to the restriction of a number of women in the PR profession from getting easy access and equal opportunities such as accelerated promotions, the recognition of leadership skills of women, placement into managerial positions, capacity building programmes or other support systems and groups among others have often been denied them. There is still lower representation of women in leadership positions in the PR profession as compared to men. This has led to most women having less power to influence decisions in their various organisations (Blankson 2004; Blankson 2009; Rensburg, 2003; Rensburg, 2005; Stern, 2005).

7.5.1.2 Childbirth/ family life

As indicated in figure (8 A), childbirth has been identified as one big challenge for a good number of female PR practitioners. Work-life balance issues have undoubtedly prevented a lot of female PR practitioners from progressing rapidly in their careers to occupy top or executive positions. Women in the PR profession have to find ways to manage their career and also give birth or cater for their children if they already had them before getting into the profession, or if they were to have children alongside their career roles as practitioners. This is a critical issue for most working mothers in the PR profession because being able to have a work-life balance is important but at the same time difficult especially if you have many children or larger families (Aldoory & Toth 2002; Hill et al 2016; Livingston 2015; Parker 2015).

Women are usually the primary parents caring for children and other family members during their peak years in the workforce. So, having children alongside their career often pose several challenges to their profession. In the PR profession for instance, women who have had children alongside their career are sometimes referred to as "mommy tracks". As a result, some of these nursing mothers are sometimes forced by the circumstances to abandon their career for long periods or do not return at all. In

others words, some female PR practitioners who want to become mothers are sometimes forced to choose between having children and catering for them or leave their jobs entirely for long periods before returning if the opportunity is still there in the first place. This is in spite of the fact that a lot of women in the PR profession are worthy and capable of becoming successful leaders and can take up top-most positions in their career if given the opportunity.

These challenges that women face in the PR profession obviously impede women's long term progression into top positions. As a result, a majority of women are usually disadvantaged in many ways as compared to their male counterparts. For example, a female PR practitioner may possess the same qualification and number of years of career experience in the same level with a male practitioner, but because a female practitioner will have to navigate her way through several barriers which include work-life balance, she is most likely going to lose certain career opportunities as compared to her male colleague. Again, women and men may have parallel career paths in the PR profession but most women may not return to practise after having children. This leaves women with a situation that can be described as unused career potentials or progression.

Given these numerous challenges that a lot of women in the PR profession face, this framework advocates for organisations to initiate career development opportunities that could be targeted for women in the PR profession. Work-life flexibility is critical for most women in PR because it could go a long way in closing the gender gap that often exist between male and female practitioners. Further, there should be a deliberate increased advocacy for organisations to be encouraged to advance women in the PR profession through empowerment programmes and policies. This can go a long way to attract a lot of young female practitioners into the profession and also retain the older ones. By so doing, there could be an overt guarantee that such younger female PR practitioners as well as active ones in the profession could still have children and keep their jobs without any hindrance. Moreover, the female practitioners, regardless of whether they are young or old can be given the equal opportunity to compete favourably with their male counterparts for top positions in their organisations.

7.5.1.3 Gender disparity/discrimination

Scholarship on PR that has focused on gender-related issues confirms that the PR profession has over the years experienced some set of gender-based phenomena which has contributed to the disparity between male and female PR practitioners.

Some female PR practitioners globally have experienced systemic gender discrimination in terms of remuneration, promotions and power to influence decisions in their organisations. This has undoubtedly created a divide between male and female PR practitioners because of the inequality women sometimes suffer in career roles which have prevented some of them from rising to top positions in the PR profession. In other words, most female PR practitioners are often placed in technician rather than managerial positions or roles. As seen in (figure 8 A), some female PR practitioners often encounter several gender-based problems in the profession so this usually stifle their rapid progression into top positions (Grunig & Toth 2000; O'Neil 2003; Wood 2003).

Considering that studies have confirmed that female PR practitioners outnumber the men in the profession, the framework advocates that women in the PR profession should be given equal opportunities to compete for every opportunity that their male counterparts may be offered. Organisations should therefore be encouraged to develop gender policies that discourage such gender-related issues which affect female PR practitioners in order to pave ways for their smooth progression into managerial positions in the PR profession. The framework advocates further that women should therefore be offered every opportunity that helps in terms of their career development. There is the need to achieve gender parity in the PR profession. In that vein, there should be improved diversity, equality and inclusion of more women in the PR profession into top positions and also be part of the decision-makers of organisations. Achieving equality cannot be a one-off campaign. Instead, organisations should show more commitment to diversity, equality and women's inclusion as far as the PR profession is concerned. This can be embedded through their organisational policies. There must be parity across board and most organisations should be able to challenge the current status quo to engender a positive change. It is envisaged that if this is done, it will go a long way in curbing the overt or subtle gender parity and discrimination that

some organisations or individuals often perpetuate against most female PR practitioners globally.

7.5.1.4 Male PR practitioners

The PR profession is a field that has been flooded globally by more women than men (Place 2010; Poffenberger 2007; Simorangkir 2010). Although much scientific research appear not to establish most of the reasons that account for why more women are found in the PR profession, there is a conventional notion that hold that PR as a profession appears to be more appealing to women as a career choice than men, probably because PR requires substantial investment in relationship building and the need to expand lines of communication, which are areas that most women have historically excelled in as compared to their male counterparts (Krugler 2017).

While this is the case, numerous studies have established the fact that the few men in the PR profession occupy most top positions and therefore hold more power to influence decisions in their organisations as compared to women. As clearly shown in (figure 8 A) in the framework, a male PR practitioner who begins his career even from the technician level, will most often experience no or less hurdles to clear before progressing into top or managerial positions in their organisations.

Society appears to have given undue advantage to men as they are often seen as people who are tough and better managers than women (Addottey 2011; Fredrick 2003; Froechlich 2004). This notion has skewed a lot of women in the PR profession into technician or less challenging roles because the conventional notion hold that most women are too emotional to occupy top positions and have not demonstrated good leadership skills and competences. As a result, there has always been that fear that if women are offered such higher positions, they will not succeed (Grunig et al 2001; Sebastian 2011; Sha & Dozier 2011; Sha & Dozier 2012).

Because the few men in the PR profession have no or less barriers to cross, they are often able to progress rapidly into top positions in the PR profession as compared to women. Moreover, such men are often given more career opportunities to develop at a faster pace as compared to women who sometimes have to clear several barriers before they can progress to the top. Men do not get pregnant nor give birth. So, a man

can stay in his profession for over a decade without any interruptions in his career. Because of that, organisations may see them to be more loyal, committed and hardworking which will be appreciated by their bosses as compared to women who are sometimes forced to stay at home for long periods during child birth or family care. There are some bosses or organisations that may not take kindly to the long absence of women from their portfolio, so men will often be given more attention by top management than women because they will most often appear to be contributing more to organisational goals than women. These and other factors have all contributed to the inability of most female PR practitioners not being able to compete favourably and be given equal opportunities in the PR profession as compared to their male colleagues. Organisations or bosses may sometimes show open bias in favour of male practitioners against female practitioners.

Given these revelations, the framework advocates that organisations need to recognise the peculiar situation that women in general find themselves in as having to navigate their way through their career and family lives and at the same time also progress to the top. Therefore, there is the need for friendly policies to be formulated by organisations that will encourage a lot of women to balance their family and career lives, but at the same time be able to progress rapidly in their careers. Moreover, there is the need for organisations to encourage and support a lot of women in the PR profession to progress. This can bring about diversity because women have the potential to contribute significantly to organisational goals and can also bring on board new or innovative perspectives that can engender overall organisational goals.

As indicated in the framework, the second aspect of the framework focuses on excellent or effective PR practice and communication. The framework recommends that the PR practitioners, regardless of whether they are males or females need to practice excellent communication. This can be achieved through the channels that they employ to enable them to communicate effectively. In communicating with their stakeholders, the practitioners should be mindful of the fact that in exchanging ideas, opinions, thoughts and knowledge, the message ought to be received with clarity and purpose. This therefore requires constant training to acquire the necessary skills and competences. If organisations communicate effectively, their stakeholders who are supposed to receive the information will feel satisfied. Communication comes in several

forms- verbal and non-verbal, reading, visual and listening. The communication can occur in-person or through the internet via social media, websites or over the telephone through audio calls, videos or via emails. Therefore, for an organisation to communicate effectively, the message must be clear, correct, concise, complete and compassionate.

Arguably, effective communication can help an organisation to manage employees and build teamwork, grow an organisation more rapidly and also retain employees. Moreover, effective communication can help in building stronger relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders, while at the same time open more opportunities for the organisation. PR practitioners therefore have a responsibility to develop effective communication strategies that can be supported by management to enable the department to effectively communicate with the various groups of publics of their organisations. In considering the concept of effective communication, practitioners must bear in mind that they need to use the right platforms to communicate.

The second aspect of the framework that this study has developed is hinged on four main building blocks- research in PR, two-way symmetrical communication, and a blend of both conventional and new media tools as well as capacity building of PR practitioners. It must be emphasised that the building blocks in the framework are interrelated so they must be practiced simultaneously because each one depends on the other in order for the desired goals to be achieved. It should be seen as a holistic and integrated approach that PR practitioners can adopt in order to engender excellent or effective PR practice, while at the same time communicate the policies and programmes of their organisations to their numerous stakeholders. It is envisioned that the second aspect of the framework can significantly contribute and guide practitioners in the development of their communication strategies which are essential in PR practice globally. PR practitioners are the faces of their organisations as they have always been at the forefront in communicating the activities of their organisations to the public on whom their successes or failures depend. This framework therefore advocates for proactive methods of communication with the view that practitioners can promote cohesion and support both internally and externally in their organisations.

7.5.1.5 Research in PR

As confirmed in the findings of this study, research in PR was acknowledged as an important aspect of PR work but yet a majority of the practitioners did not engage in scientific research in their organisations. Beyond testing the clarity of their messages through informal methods, the practitioners did not engage in any serious research as far as their programmes were concerned. This framework therefore advocates that for PR practice to be effective, the practitioners need to acquire skills in PR research. In fact, the basis for starting a programme or any activity in the organisation should be grounded on results from scientific research. Research in PR is often considered a bedrock and a true management function because PR practitioners must use research to engage in problem solving and also advise management especially during crises periods. Apart from that, research will always enable the PR practitioner to advise management on major organisational policies and to build and maintain long-term relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders. If the practitioners make it a habit of conducting constant research, it will enable them to identify the right channels to communicate their messages. Results from scientific research will always guide the practitioners to package messages to enable management and the practitioner to communicate the right information to the stakeholders. Moreover, research will always help the organisation to fight or reduce competition. In other words, research must be seen as a toolkit for every practitioner as it has always been the case that every profession has its own toolkit.

7.5.1.6 Two-way symmetrical model of communication

The two-way symmetrical model of communication which is described as a dialogue-based communication has been adequately espoused by Grunig (1992) from the excellence theory of PR and communication management. It has been described as one of the best PR practices because it advocates for organisations to build mutually beneficial relationships between themselves and their stakeholders. This is because frequent two-way communication helps in negotiations with the stakeholders which is also the most successful way of resolving conflicts and promoting mutual understanding and respect between an organisation and its stakeholders.

The phenomenon of mutually beneficial relationships also has countless advantages which include media relations, customer service, advocacy and marketing among others. Two-way communication is particularly crucial in crises communication. Any organisation that takes its stakeholders for granted does so at its own peril. Contemporary PR practice demands that organisations should always create a congenial atmosphere to constantly interact with its stakeholders. This framework thus advocates that PR practitioners and their organisations should always ensure that there is an opportunity to interact frequently. This helps to identify bottlenecks so that solutions can be found to ensure peace and harmony.

Two-way communication engenders excellent or effective PR practice. Apart from that, it influences opinions and can help to change negative attitudes, perception and behaviours. It also helps in consensus building as well as relationship management through constant interactions. PR practitioners employing the two-way communication method are often described as *boundary spanners* because they serve as a link between the organisation and its stakeholders by acting as mediators, liaisons and interpreters of all the activities of the organisation. This framework therefore advocates that PR practitioners and management should practice two-way communication at all times because it is one of the best ways that excellent PR practice can thrive.

7.5.1.7 Conventional and new media tools

The findings of the study confirmed that the practitioners employed both conventional and new media tools to reach out to their stakeholders. The findings further revealed that the practitioners were gravitating more towards new media tools rather than the traditional media. Conventional media has been one popular form of marketing and spreading information through television, radio, newspapers, and magazines among others for decades. Although it is now seen as an old form of communication, it is still relevant to PR practice in the 21st century. A good number of PR practitioners still leverage on the advantages of conventional media for their businesses and the reinforcement of their brands. With the advent of digital media, more PR practitioners have found the need to employ such modern technologies to effectively engage with their stakeholders. New media tools such as blogs, emails, social media networks, websites, and WhatsApp platforms among others are now the most popular medium

of communication globally. As a result, almost every organisation is now leveraging on such platforms to effectively interact and possibly do business with their stakeholders. One unique advantage of the new media tools of communication is its ability to send instantaneous information and at the same time generate feedback. These new tools have undoubtedly helped in effective PR practice in a modern era. As the findings of the study confirmed, this framework advocates that practitioners should employ a blend of both old and new tools for communication. The comparative advantage of employing either the new or old tools at the same time should be hinged on the sole responsibility of the PR practitioner and at the same time the situation that the organisation finds itself in. In that case, the PR practitioner is the one who holds much of the discretional power and can exercise it at any time the need arises. Although both old and new communication tools have their strengths and weaknesses, it is envisaged that the application of both tools can enhance excellent and effective PR practice as the practitioners constantly engage with their stakeholders.

7.5.1.8 Capacity building

The study found that capacity building was one key area that PR practitioners needed to pay much attention to. In order for PR practitioners to remain relevant in their organisations, they need to constantly build their capacity. This can be done by the practitioners attending seminars, workshops, conferences, both local and international, symposia among other programmes that are PR or communication related, to acquire new knowledge and skills in the field. In other words, PR practitioners need to keep abreast with current trends in the PR industry globally. The framework, therefore, recommends that training should not be skewed towards the PR practitioners only, but should include key members of their organisations. This is because the desired results will not be achieved if the practitioners are trained in the field and yet top management still has a negative perception of the purposes of PR. Invariably, the practitioners will not get the needed support from management as far as the activities of their department are concerned. Black (2014) for instance makes a firm argument that PR practitioners must constantly develop themselves professionally by sharpening their skills in other to remain relevant in their organisations.

In the case of practitioners who do not possess formal training in PR or communication, the framework advocates that such practitioners should take up courses in the relevant areas to build their capacities in order to remain professional. Scholars such as Cutlip and Center (2013) insist that PR is a specialised area that requires some formal training in order for the practitioner to understand the rudiments of the profession. The framework therefore advocates that PR practitioners should take advantage of every learning opportunity to upgrade themselves in order to build their capacity. The Institute of Public Relations, Ghana (IPRG) for instance which is the sole regulatory body as far as PR practice in Ghana is concerned can also organise several professional courses in public relations that focus on current and global issues about PR to enable the practitioners to participate in such courses to build their capacity.

Apart from such courses, senior practitioners, both active and retired, can serve as mentors for some practitioners especially the younger ones who have less experience. The framework therefore advocates that training and retraining of PR practitioners is key if organisational goals are to be met. This is because, PR has a pivotal role to play by supporting management to deliver on their goals. If possible, organisations should be able to sponsor PR practitioners both at the local and international levels to attend courses and acquire new knowledge. This is one of the surest ways by which PR practitioners can demonstrate competences in their field.

7.6 JUSTIFICATION FOR FRAMEWORK AND IMPLICATION FOR THEORY, POLICY AND PR PRACTICE

One of the main goals of scientific research is to produce findings that are empirical so that audiences will be able to relate to the findings and also connect such findings to real-life situations. The findings of the study were in line with literature that was reviewed and theories employed. The study aimed at providing insights into PR practice in general, and among women in PR in Ghana. It is envisaged that the implementation of this current framework will contribute to general knowledge and understanding of PR practice as well as among women in the PR profession in Ghana or for that matter Africa.

The findings of the study confirms that PR practice in Ghana is currently fraught with numerous challenges. Indeed, the concept of the PR profession itself as well as its purposes appear not to be adequately understood by most organisations in Ghana as well as a majority of the practitioners themselves who profess to practice the profession. It is not surprising that the study has revealed that a majority of the practitioners did not possess a core PR or communication background and yet organisations found it expedient to employ such personnel as their PR practitioners. Regrettably, some organisations subsumed the PR department under other departments such as marketing, human resources development, administration and the office of the registrar among others. This situation which should not be the case demonstrates the fact that most organisations in Ghana appear not to understand the PR concept and the value that PR can bring to an organisation, hence, treating PR as a subset instead of it standing on its own as prescribed by scholars in the field of PR and communication. Again, it can be argued further that the level of understanding of the PR profession is low as compared to older professions such as teaching, law, medicine, and engineering among others. As a result, there is still a negative perception of PR and what its purposes are to an organisation.

It must be noted that numerous scholarships on PR has found that there is paucity of PR literature that is unique to Africa or for that matter Ghana (Rensburg 2008; Skinner 2013; Skinner & Mersham 2009; Skinner & Rensburg 2011; Van Heerdeen 2004). Most of the studies on PR have been situated to the west although there are vast differences in cultural, political, economic and social factors which sometimes make it difficult to fit what happens in other jurisdictions especially the west to the Ghanaian or African context.

This situation has adversely affected PR practice in Ghana and most parts of Africa. It can therefore be argued that the current situation does not engender effective PR practice, so one may not be wrong to conclude that PR practice in Africa currently, cannot be described as excellent or effective. The situation is probably more pronounced as far as women in the PR profession in Africa is concerned. This situation has arguably made this study and its recommendations more relevant to PR practice in Ghana than ever before. The comprehensive guidelines provided in the framework as well as the general information produced in this study should serve as a blueprint

for PR practitioners in Ghana to adopt and probably review some of their communication strategies as well as their modus operandi as far as PR practice in Ghana or Africa is concerned.

Given that the PR profession has evolved globally and continues to evolve, it is incumbent on the practitioners to constantly upgrade themselves and keep abreast with current trends of PR practice globally. With advancement in technology, the face of PR has changed as compared to decades back, hence the need for practitioners to constantly sharpen their skills and competences to be able to remain relevant in their organisations. With the advent of new media especially social media such as Facebook, the concept of influencers and the "citizen journalist", PR practitioners have to be on top of issues that relate to their organisations by constantly monitoring their channels for information and providing the necessary feedback for management to address any concerns that might be raised through such medium.

7.7 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The essence of any research is to make some contribution to knowledge in the area of the study. The main contribution of this study is the development of a framework for effective or excellent PR practice in general, and specific to women in the PR profession.

Arguably, this study has provided new insights into the nature of PR practice in Ghana especially among female practitioners. The framework was developed based on an extensive literature review and the theories employed in the study- gender, feminist, excellence and relationship management as well as the empirical findings that the study produced from primary data. Apart from the Ghanaian perspective, the study by extension has made a significant contribution to the ongoing discussions on PR practice on the African continent. This current framework is unique as it is the first of its kind to be developed in Ghana or for that matter Africa. Indeed, this current study can be described as a trailblazer because major studies on women in Public Relations in Ghana or for that matter Africa have been rare or sparsely documented.

Given that the study has established an academic lacuna as far as PR practice in Ghana is concerned, it will undoubtedly make significant contributions to PR research,

teaching and practice on the African continent. Earlier researchers had established the paucity of documentation of the evolution of the PR profession in most parts of Africa including Ghana. The situation is even more pronounced as far as studies on women in PR in Africa is concerned. In other words, studies in PR that have specifically focused on issues that relate to women in the PR profession in Africa have received very little empirical research attention.

Given the unavailability of major studies on women in Africa, this current study will arguably serve as a pioneer work and a major reference point as far as studies on women in PR is concerned. Indeed, one can reasonably conclude that studies on women in PR in Africa is an unexplored terrain as research on women in PR in Ghana and most parts of Africa has not been extensive. It is envisioned that this current study will make an enormous contribution to augment the existing scarce literature by closing the gap. The major contribution of this study therefore is the development of the framework which has provided a structure and practical guidelines to identify and address women's issues in the PR profession in Ghana and by extension in Africa.

Arguably, this study has also contributed to the current academic debate on PR and the new knowledge that the study has produced will stimulate further research on PR in general and women in the profession.

7.8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As already indicated in this study, Public Relations practice in Ghana and most parts of Africa has not been extensive. Aside that, studies on women in PR have been rare.

In fact, the few studies on women in PR that have been cited are mostly student's dissertations from some universities in Africa. So far, an extensive search by the researcher both online and at institutions of higher learning in Africa has confirmed that not even a single major publication on women in PR on the African continent has been sighted.

In view of the fact that the study has illuminated several challenges as far as PR practice in Ghana or for that matter Africa as well as on women in the PR profession is concerned, the following are recommended as key areas for future studies.

- Women dominate in PR practice globally but just a few of them have been able to rise to the top of their careers. Although this study has unearthed some of the causes, it is recommended that further research is conducted in that area.

- Research on PR roles in most parts of the world has not been extensive. In fact, the situation is even more pronounced in most of parts of Africa including Ghana. This study therefore recommends that more studies should be conducted on PR roles since they often differ from jurisdiction-to-jurisdiction as a result of different factors.

- Research in PR was acknowledged by the participants in the study as key but yet very little attention was paid to that area. The study recommends that further research be conducted in that area to ascertain the reasons and also come out with innovative research methods in PR for practitioners to adopt.

- There are virtually no studies that establish the position of women in PR in most parts of Africa including Ghana. The few studies found have been situated to the west. The study therefore recommends that further studies be conducted in that area to establish the position of female PR practitioners in Africa so that scholars can compare and contrast with other jurisdictions.

- One key area that emerged in the study was the fact that a majority of the practitioners did not conduct research to measure and evaluate most of their PR programmes beyond the informal research that they often conducted. This study recommends that extensive research be conducted in that area to stimulate the research skills of practitioners and academics as the findings could always be published.

- To further appreciate the concept of PR and how organisations understand its purposes and importance, more research can be conducted on management's understanding and perception of the importance of PR. This will improve the understanding that organisations may have about PR and how to place the PR office in the organisational structure in Ghana or Africa.

- Finally, it is recommended that the framework that has been developed in this study be tested in other parts of Africa and across organisations to establish whether the results are the same or different. If the framework is replicated in other jurisdictions, it will stimulate further discussions and broaden the ideas

that have already been espoused in this current framework to enhance excellent or effective PR practice in Ghana.

7.9 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The main goal of the study was to develop a framework for excellent PR practice among women in the PR industry in Ghana. The broad objective of the study was to investigate gender issues in PR with special reference to the Ghanaian context. The specific objectives that underpinned the study were to determine the position of women in the PR industry in Ghana, to establish the roles (activities) that women in PR in Ghana play, to investigate and describe the communication strategies and channels that female PR practitioners employ for communication, as well as the development of an appropriate framework that could provide guidance for excellent or effective PR practice among women in PR in Ghana. The study established that a good number of women in the PR industry globally have made enormous contributions to PR practice, but several challenges that they face have impeded their rapid progression into top management positions in the PR Profession globally. It is envisaged that the framework that has been developed in this study if practised in its fullness, should provide some blueprints for both organisations that employ the services of PR practitioners, as well as the practitioners themselves. The framework is considered more critical as numerous studies have confirmed the paucity of literature on PR generally in Africa, as well as women in PR in Ghana and by extension Africa.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

My name is Mr. Justice Issah Abudulai, I am conducting an interview for my PhD thesis. The research topic is *Developing a Framework for Public Relations Practice: An Examination of Gender Issues among Female PR Practitioners in Ghana*. The goal of the study is to explicate the career experiences of female PR practitioners in Ghana. Moreover, the study seeks to establish gender issues in PR among female practitioners in Ghana. The interview is expected to last for about 45 minutes or maximum an hour. Your name or organisation will not be mentioned in the findings. Quotes used from the interview will be identified by using a code and not the name nor the organisation of the participant. The researcher will adhere strictly to issues of confidentiality and general ethics in research.

SECTION A: CAREER EXPERIENCES AND GENDER ISSUES IN PR AMONG FEMALE PRACTITIONERS.

These set of questions seek to test the career experiences of female PR practitioners as well as gender issues they have encountered in line of practice.

   a. How would you describe your experiences of being a female PR practitioner?
   b. How would you describe the PR industry in Ghana generally?
   c. What kind of gender-related career issues have you encountered in line of practice? If yes, what strategies do you normally employ to mitigate gender issues?

SECTION B: THE POSITION OF FEMALE PR PRACTITIONERS IN GHANA.

These set of questions seek to ascertain the positions that female PR practitioners in Ghana occupy on the organisational hierarchy.

   a. What is the current position of PR on your organisational hierarchy?
   b. Whom do you report to as a PRO/Communication manager?
   c. If PR occupies a managerial position, what contributions do you make in your organisation in terms of highest decision-making processes?

d. How would you describe your relationship with management in relation to the position you occupy?

SECTION C: THE ROLES (ACTIVITIES) THAT FEMALE PR PRACTITIONERS IN GHANA PLAY.

These set of questions seek to establish the specific roles that female PR practitioners play on a daily basis in their organisations.

a. Can you describe the roles that you play in your organisation?
b. Does your work as a PRO/Communication manager require some form of research?
c. How does your outfit manage the image and reputation of your organisation?
d. What significant events has your outfit undertaken in the last few years?

SECTION D: THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY FEMALE PR PRACTITIONERS IN GHANA.

These set of questions seek to identify and describe the communication strategies that female PR practitioners are employing in their organisations. Moreover, the questions seek to establish the specific communication channels female practitioners are using to engage their stakeholders.

a. What communication strategies do you often employ in your outfit?
b. What specific channels do you employ in your outfit to communicate with your stakeholders?
c. How effective are they?
d. How has technology changed the face of PR in your organisation?

SECTION E: A CURRENT FRAME WORK TO GUIDE THE PRACTICE OF PR IN GHANA.

These concluding set of questions focus mainly on issues relating to the development of a proposed framework for female PR practitioners in Ghana/Africa.

a. What suggestions can you provide as a way of improving the way PR is practiced among female PR practitioners in Ghana?

b. A good number of female PR practitioners often encounter a lot of obstacles in their quest to climb up the professional ladder. Given your wealth of experience in the PR profession, what strategies would you recommend to your colleague female practitioners in order that they can navigate their way through these obstacles?

SECTION F: DEMOGRAPHICS

Can you please tell me a little bit about yourself?

a. What is your designation in your organisation?

b. How long have you been working as a communication/PR practitioner?

c. What formal education do you possess in communication/Public Relations?

d. What is your educational background- Certificate, Diploma, Degree, Masters, Ph.D, other qualifications?

e. What is your current membership category with IPRG- **Accredited**, **Associate**, **Corporate**, **Affiliate**?

f. Age {20-24} (25-29) {30-34} {35-39} {40-44} {45-59} {50-54} {55-60}

Thank you very much for participating in the study. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on my personal email issahtoday@yahoo.com or my cell phone number +233 209 198 345.

APPENDIX B: INTRODUCTORY LETTER FOR THE QUALITATIVE STUDY

The Director-General

Public Affairs Directorate

Ghana Police Service

P.O. Box 116

Accra

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT GHANA POLICE SERVICE

I, Justice Issah Abudulai, I am doing research with Prof Takalani Mudzanani, a professor in the Department of Communication Science towards a Doctor of Philosophy at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled **"Developing A Framework For Public Relations Practice: An Examination Of Gender Issues Among Female PR Practitioners In Ghana".**

The main aim is to investigate the career experiences of female PR practitioners in Ghana. Specifically, the study investigates gender issues in PR among female practitioners in Ghana. The rationale is to determine how female PR practitioners in Ghana practice PR through the application of models and the type of roles they play in their various organisations. Additionally, the study seeks to establish the achievements of female PR practitioners in Ghana, the obstacles they face in line of professional practice as well as the strategies they employ to mitigate such obstacles. Apart from focusing on how female PR practitioners practice PR in Ghana, the study seeks to further gain insight into how PR is practiced by female practitioners within the African continent as a whole. This is especially so because, numerous studies have confirmed

minimal scholarship on the subject area. It is envisaged that this study will contribute to existing body of knowledge on PR practice in general, and the participation of women in the PR profession globally, continentally and in Ghana. The findings of this study will aid in the development of a framework that will guide the practice of PR by female practitioners in Ghana and Africa for that matter. The findings of the study will be made available to the participant upon request.

Yours sincerely

Justice Issah Abudulai

Lecturer (UPSA)

July 7th, 2022

Title: Developing A Framework For Public Relations Practice: An Examination Of Gender Issues Among Female PR Practitioners In Ghana

Dear Prospective Participant

DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE: AN EXAMINATION OF GENDER ISSUES AMONG FEMALE PR PRACTITIONERS IN GHANA

My name is Justice Issah Abudulai and I am doing research with Professor Takalani Mudzanani, a lecturer/professor in the Department of Communication Science towards a Doctoral Degree at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled A Phenomenological Study of Female Public Relations (PR) Practitioners in Ghana.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

I am conducting this research to find out about how female PR/communication practitioners conceptualise and practice public relations in relation to PR models, roles and positions they hold in their various organisations. This will be carried out by investigating their lived experiences. The study will gain insight into how PR is practiced among female practitioners in Ghana and some of the obstacles that confront them as well as the strategies they employ to mitigate such obstacles. The study will contribute to the body of knowledge on the discipline especially from the Ghanaian or African perspective. It is envisaged that the information gathered from primary and secondary data would culminate into the development of a framework that will help to guide and shape PR practice among female practitioners in Ghana.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You have been purposively selected as one of the participants in this study because you possess peculiar characteristics that are of interest to the researchers. You have been particularly selected because you are the head of PR/communication in your organisation. Additionally, we believe that your wealth of experience in PR practice will help us in the collection of rich data that will help shed light on how PR is practiced among females in Ghana. Moreover, there is paucity of information on women in the PR profession in Ghana or Africa for that matter. Your contact details were obtained from the Institute of Public Relations, Ghana (IPRG) where you are a certified member of the professional PR body in Ghana and you are also in good standing. About 40 senior female PR practitioners in Ghana who occupy managerial positions in their various organisations are expected to participate in this study.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

Your role, should you voluntarily agree to participate in this research, will be for you to provide relevant information that will be based on the questions that will be put to you by the researcher. Semi-structured interviews will be employed. You will be expected to consent to the taking of notes and also permit the researcher to audio-tape the entire interview for transcription and analysis. The audio-tapping will be for academic purposes only. The questions will focus mainly on how female PR practitioners

conceptualise key terms in PR and the various activities that they perform in the PR department of their organisations as well as the positions they occupy. The interview is expected to last for about 45 minutes or maximum one (1) hour.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The study will be beneficial to you in the sense that minimal studies exist on women in PR within the Ghanaian or African context. Therefore, your participation in this study will make an enormous contribution to the growth of knowledge on women in PR within the Ghanaian or African context. It is more beneficial because Ghana is far behind as far the body of knowledge of PR is concerned. Moreover, your participation in the study will help shed more light based on your years of experience as a female PR practitioner. This will enable the researcher develop a framework that will guide the practice of PR among female PR practitioners in Ghana. Arguably, your organisation/department will benefit from the findings by using it as a guide to enhance your professional capacity as a female PR practitioner.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

Data collected from the interview will be kept confidential and under no circumstance will your name or your organisation be mentioned in the analysis. A special code will be assigned to ensure utmost anonymity. The transcribed data will be kept in safety pending the final acceptance of the dissertation. Thereafter, the transcribed data will be destroyed based on approval from the department of communication science of UNISA.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Under no circumstance will your personal name or organisation be mentioned in any part of the data analysis. Apart from the principal investigator (researcher) and supervisor, no other third party will have access to any information as far as your identity or that of your organisation is concerned. In that case, no third person will be able to link your answers to you or your organisation. Your answers will be given a special code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, including any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings.

Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that the research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

The final results from the study may be used for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings in the future as and when it becomes necessary. However, your name or that of your organisation will not be mentioned in any part if a publication emanates from the study.

With regards to focus group discussions, while every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that you will not be connected to the information that you share during the focus group, I cannot guarantee that other participants in the focus group will treat information confidentially. For this reason, I advise you not to disclose personally sensitive information in the focus group discussion.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet *at UNISA* for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if

applicable. Hard copies will be shredded and/or electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer through the use of a relevant software programme.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

The study is purely voluntary and you will not be given any payment or incentives for participating in this study. However, a copy of the key findings could be made available to you once a formal request is made to that effect.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the Scientific/Higher Degrees Review Committee, Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Justice Issah Abudulai on 0209198345 or justice.abudulai@upsamail.edu.gh

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Professor Takalani Mudzanani on mudzate@unisa.ac.za or **phone number.**

Alternatively, contact the research ethics chairperson of the Ethics and Scientific Review Committee, Department of Communication Science, Mr. Siyabonga M Mfuphi **and contact details here, including email, internal phone number and fax number.**

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you.

Justice Issah Abudulai.

APPENDIX D: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the <insert specific data collection method>.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname……………………………………… (please print)

Participant Signature…………………………………………..Date…………………

Researcher's Name & Surname: Justice Issah Abudulai

Researcher's signature: Date: 7TH July, 2022.

APPENDIX E: ETHICAL APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

UNISA | university of south africa

COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

07 June 2022

Dear Mr Justice Issah Abudulai

| NHREC Registration # : |
| Rec-240816-052 |
| CREC Reference # : |
| 64100758_CREC_CHS_2022 |

Decision:
Ethics Approval from 07 June 2022 to 07 June 2027

Researcher(s): Name: Mr JI Abudulai
Contact details: 64100758@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Supervisor(s): Name: Prof. TE Mudzanani
Contact details: mudzate@unisa.ac.za

Title: A Phenomenological Study of Female Public Relations (PR) practitioners in Ghana

Degree Purpose: PHD

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa College of Human Science Ethics Committee. Ethics approval is granted for five years.

The *low risk application* was reviewed by College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the

confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.

5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.

6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.

7. No fieldwork activities may continue after the expiry date **(07 June 2027)**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number **64100758_CREC_CHS_2022** *should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,

Signature: Khan

Prof. KB Khan
CHS Research Ethics Committee Chairperson
Email: khankb@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429 8210

Signature: PP A HM udusi

Prof K. Masemola
Exécutive Dean: CHS
E-mail: masemk@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429 2298

APPENDIX F: EDITORIAL LETTER

EditorialGate Services
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Tel: +233 24 252 0797
Email: dadankwah@outlook.com

EditorialGate
The Gate to Scholarly Communication

January 16, 2023

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir/Madam,

EDITORIAL CERTIFICATE

This document is to certify that the thesis with the details listed below has been edited for English language, grammar, punctuation, spelling, referencing and overall style. Neither the research content nor the author's intentions were altered in any way during the editorial process.

Documents that have received this certification have been assessed as language ready for publication. This notwithstanding, the author has the right and choice to accept or reject our suggestions and changes.

Thesis title:	Developing a framework for public relations practice: An examination of gender issues among female PR practitioners in Ghana
Author:	Justice Issah Abudulai
Institution:	University of South Africa
Date issued:	January 16, 2023
Sections edited:	The entire thesis

You can contact EditorialGate Services for any concerns about this document or certification.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Dominic Agyei Dankwah, (PhD in Information Science, MA in Library Studies).