

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

A STUDY OF FEMALE MANAGERS PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENTS

BY

JEMIMA GYAMESI

(MAPR 20013)

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM,  
ACCRA, IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF  
MASTER OF ARTS (M.A.) DEGREE IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES (PUBLIC  
RELATIONS).

NOVEMBER, 2021

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I received so much help from many individuals in diverse ways to enable me complete this study.

My first acknowledgement goes to my supervisor, Dr. Mavis Essandoh who made great inputs in my work. Thank you very much Mum, I appreciate all the efforts you made to help me finish my dissertation.

My next acknowledgement goes to my parents, for their financial support and care throughout the period I did the research. My thanks go to my siblings Jennifer, Josiah and Joshua for all their encouragement during the research period.

Thirdly, I want to thank all the research participants of this research. Without them this research would not have been possible, Thank You.

Finally, I want to thank my friends: Alfred Kissi Simpey, Anita Boakye, Audrey Awuku, Harriet Asante, Josephine Ogoe, Joseph Agbezuke, Kai Yusufu, Michael Kwakye for their support and help.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this research to the Almighty God for His direction and His help throughout my life in this school and also for inspiring confidence in me to go through life with a positive zeal. I also dedicate this work to Mr. Michael Beckoe and the Late Uncle Ebo Derby for mentoring me through my life and Rehina Adams for her financial support throughout my journey in school. I further dedicate this research to my Mother Rita Mensah and my late Father, Mr. Bismarck Gyamesi. And my siblings, Jennifer, Josiah and Joshua. God Bless you all.

## STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my original research, and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this institute or elsewhere. I am responsible for any shortcoming.

.....

Jemima Gyamesi

(Candidate)

.....

Date

**SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION**

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

.....  
Dr. Mrs. Mavis Essandoh  
(Supervisor)

.....  
Date

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to find out how gender and leadership stereotypes have impacted women's access, success and experiences in leadership roles in Public Relations. A qualitative in-depth interviews was employed to gather data. Data was collected through interviews with 10 women working in leadership positions in the public relations field and analyzed based on themes and using the Feminist Standpoint Theory and the Liberal feminist theory which were the theories underpinning this research. The study found six major themes related to the experiences of these women leaders in public relations: (a) promotional barriers, (b) double standards for women, (c) pressure of stereotypes, (d) leadership styles, female competition and bullying, and (f) optimism about the future. The study found that these women thought that gender has influenced the challenges and success they have faced in their careers; Specifically, the participants described their challenges as promotional barriers as well as inequalities in salary and representation in leadership roles. The findings also indicated that these women thought they were perceived as leaders in both a positive and negative light and believe a double standard exists between women and men leaders. Finally, the study also found an issue with female competition in the form of workplace bullying. However, the participants see a shift happening in the field of public relations regarding gender issues, which they believe will benefit women.

This study recommends that laws are put in place in organizations and in government such that equity is achieved among men and women alike in the workplace. Also, Developing mentorship programs for women in leadership roles to connect with those women in high school or college could be a way to show young women that women do have a spot in leadership and to help create advocates for other women.

There are several opportunities for future research to further develop these findings and to arrive at a greater understanding of women in leadership roles in Public Relations. One particular area that could be to open the study includes both male and female perspectives regarding women in leadership roles. Another area could be to dive deeper into the issue of interpersonal relationships within the workplace and specifically look into female competition and workplace bullying. This study found that gender has influenced the experiences of a selected group of women leaders in public relations in a variety of ways, such as salary, promotions and expectations. It is likely that gender will continue to impact women's experiences until equity is achieved.

It concludes that the influx of women within the profession does not devalue the profession. Therefore society must work toward achieving equity for women.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>DEDICATION</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>STUDENT’S DECLARATION</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>SUPERVISOR’S DECLARATION</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>ABST RACT</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.0 Background and Context of the Study .....	1
1.1 Statement of the problem .....	2
1.2 Objectives of the Study .....	3
1.3 Research Questions .....	3
1.4 Rationale of the Study .....	4
1.5 Significance of the Study .....	4
1.6 Proposed Research Methodology .....	4
1.7 Scope of the Study.....	5
1.8 Organization of the Study .....	6
1.9 Chapter Summary .....	7
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</b> .....	<b>8</b>
2.0 Introduction .....	8
2.1 Empirical Evidence of Existing Literature .....	8
2.1.2 The Feminization of Public Relations .....	11
2.1.3 The Social role Theory .....	12



2.1.3 Organizational Roles of Public Relations .....	14
2.1.4 Women in Public Relations/Glass Ceiling Phenomenon in Public Relations and Communications .....	16
2.1.5 Leadership In Public Relations .....	19
2.1.6 Inequality in organizational structures .....	21
2.2 Theoretical Perspective .....	22
2.2.1 The Feminist Standpoint Theory .....	22
2.2.2 The Liberal-Feminist Theory .....	25
2.9 Chapter Summary .....	27
<b>CHAPTER THREE .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>28</b>
3.0 Introduction .....	28
3.1 Study Design .....	28
3.2 Sample.....	29
3.3 Data Collection.....	30
3.4 Data Analysis .....	31
3.5 Advantages and Disadvantages of Qualitative Research .....	32
3.6 Chapter Summary.....	34
<b>CHAPTER FOUR.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>35</b>
4.0 Introduction .....	35
4.1 Themes .....	35
4.1.1 Promotional Barriers .....	36
4.1.2 Double Standard for Women.....	40
4.1.3 Pressure of Stereotypes .....	42

4.1.4 Leadership Style.....	42
4.1.5 Female Competition and Bullying .....	44
4.1.6 Optimism about the Future.....	46
4.2 Discussions of Findings .....	48
4.2.1 Promotional Barriers .....	48
4.2.2 Double Standards for Women .....	51
4.2.3 Pressure of Stereotypes .....	52
4.2.4 Leadership Styles .....	53
4.3 Chapter Summary.....	58
<b>CHAPTER FIVE.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>59</b>
5.0 Introduction .....	59
5.1 Summary of Major Findings .....	59
5.2 Recommendations for Policy Making.....	60
5.2.1 Recommendations for Further Study .....	60
5.3 Limitations of the Study .....	61
5.4 Conclusion.....	61
<b>APPENDIX .....</b>	<b>64</b>

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Background and Context of the Study**

Owing to the events of the World War II, women got the opportunity to leave home to fill positions in the work place. Women found public relations to be favorable because it had less institutional barriers unlike law and medicine that allowed only men to practice (Janus, 2008). During the World War II, women had the chance to occupy jobs that were originally filled by men because most of the men had been recruited to war. Many of these women were however drawn to the communications field (Horsely, 2009). By the 1960s, a small percentage of women made up the PR field. Then in the mid-80s there was a change in numbers as women began matching up to the number of men in the field. According to Creedon (1991), women are mainly drawn to public relations jobs because they offer the chance to be creative and write.

Froehlich (2004) also argues that having good communication skills is a particular biologically determined trait that women possess which makes them especially suited for a communication profession such as public relations. With these ideal qualities, it is said; women can rise to challenges typically found in these professions (Froelich, 2004).

Rea (2002) also holds that it is women's learned abilities that causes female practitioners to choose public relations over another profession. Rea (2002) argues that significant, but not usually consciously articulated by women, is that public relations is attractive because traditionally feminine skills in networking and multi-tasking are encouraged and valued. This phenomenon, called the "Gender Switch", initialized the quantitative feminization of public relations (Dozier 1988).

At the end of the 1990s, according to the US Department of Labor, two thirds of PR specialists were women (Grunig, Toth & Hon 2001, p. 5). Research has also repeatedly shown that a strong vertical segmentation had taken place where men are more often working in the higher paid manager role while women work as PR technicians and therefore earn less money (Broom & Dozier 1986). Gender predicted income as women earned less than men in public relations, even when they are of equal education, professional experience, and tenure in their present position (Broom & Dozier, 1986). The main issue surrounding the idea of feminization is, the concern that the increasing number of women working in a traditionally male occupation will devalue the profession, resulting in less management autonomy and lower salaries (Horsley, 2009, p. 100). Currently, Although most women are still stuck at the technician roles due to gender inequality, negative attitudes and assumptions towards women in the public Relations field, some of them have risen through against all the odds and have become leaders and managers in the field (Gyan 2014).

Feminization played, and is playing, an influential role in the development of Public Relations (Beaty, 2013). Female public relations practitioners have gained more respect and have been presented with greater professional opportunities, but there is still room for improvement in the way female practitioners are viewed and treated (Beaty, 2013).

### **1.1 Statement of the problem**

According to Poffenberger (2007), there are stereotypes and assumptions that affect the advancement of women in the PR profession. Some of which are that, women are sometimes seen as confrontational or too assertive in leadership roles, which can make them not well liked. Also, women are sometimes seen as not very supportive of others (Carli 2006, p. 77).

(Carli 2006, p. 71) found that, “Women who exhibit exceptional agentic competence may be evaluated unfavorably because such behavior violates prescriptive gender-role norms, particularly in domains such as management and leadership, which are seen as stereotypically masculine.” This study seeks to find out how these stereotypes and assumptions influence the experiences of individual women in management and leadership roles in the field of public relations with the goal of learning what issues these women face, uncovering any problems that may exist, and understanding their work environment.

## **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

This study is specifically designed to ascertain:

1. The different factors and barriers that influence women’s rise to leadership positions.
2. The stereotypes that affect roles assigned women in the workplace.
3. If there are any barriers women who have attained leadership positions in PR face that hinders their leadership role

## **1.3 Research Questions**

1. What are the main factors that influence women’s rise to leadership positions?
2. What stereotypes affects roles assigned women in PR?
3. barriers do women who have attained leadership positions encounter in their leadership role?

#### **1.4 Rationale of the Study**

Previous research has examined the roles, experiences, and attitudes of women in public relations (Aldoory & Toth, 2002; Horsley, 2009; Toth & Cline, 1989; Toth & Grunig, 1993). As society changes over time, it is important to continue examining the status and experiences of women in public relations. It is also important to learn about the experiences of women in leadership roles, given their minority status at that level. In this study, the researcher investigates how gender influences the experiences of individual women in leadership roles in the field of public relations with the goal of learning what issues these women face, uncovering any problems that may exist, and understanding their work environment.

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

It is essential to bring attention to the discrimination female public relations practitioners experience, especially since they may be perceived as having access to equal opportunities because they are the field's majority. This study will also inspire up and coming females in the Public Relations field that regardless of the existing stereotypes and assumptions of women in leadership, they can still rise through and achieve greater heights in the profession. This study will also add to scholarly work on the study of on women in Public Relations in Ghana.

#### **1.6 Proposed Research Methodology**

A Qualitative research method will be used for this study because the purpose of this research is to understand the roles and experiences of individual female managers in the Public Relations profession. Creswell (2013) states that qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is , how people make sense of the world and the experiences they have in the world. The types of qualitative approach which will be used are in-

depth interviews. Interviews are an appropriate approach when trying to look for meaning and understand the experiences of others. Lindlof and Taylor (2011) explain that interviews are used to gather in depth information that cannot be observed and to gain an understanding of someone else's ideas and experiences. An inductive approach will also be used in this study to find underlying themes associated with the data collected.

The sample strategy for this study will be purposive type. Purposive sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Clark, 2011). In addition to knowledge and experience, Bernard (2002) and Spradley (1979) noted the importance of availability and willingness to participate, and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner. Using this sample strategy will allow the researcher identify and select participants based on their knowledge about the study. This will be followed by the snowball technique. This will enable the researcher, get referred to more female managers from the originally selected sample, so that a fair number of participants will be reached.

### **1.7 Scope of the Study**

This study will focus on ten (10) individual female managers in Public Relations departments within public organizations in Ghana. It will focus on the various challenges they face in their respective organizations and positions and how they overcome it. This study is expected to be conducted within three months from its start date and will therefore be an exploratory one.

## **1.8 Organization of the Study**

This study is organized into five different chapters with each chapter linking to the other to produce a complete work.

Chapter one presents an introduction that sets out the main focus of the study. It outlines the background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, the research questions, the rationale of the study, significance of the study, the proposed methodology for the study, scope of the study, and the organization of the study.

Chapter two consist of a review of literature: a brief introduction, indicating what the chapter contains, specific areas covered and reasons for the review, Review of empirical and theoretical literature. The review of literature would provide additional justification for the purpose and direction of this study.

Chapter three of this study shall discuss the research methodology; introduction, study design, the sample for the study, the data collection methods, methods for data analysis and the advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research.

Chapter four of this dissertation analyses the data findings addressed in the research question and the objective of the study. The discussion of the study will be done in order to relate it with the literature reviewed and theoretical framework.

Finally, chapter five will cover the Summary of major findings, recommendations for policy and further study, limitations of the study and the conclusion.



## **1.9 Chapter Summary**

The chapter looked at the background and context of the study. Study, The problem statement, objectives of the study, research questions, rationale for the study, proposed methodology, the of the study, significance of the study, proposed research methodology and the scope of the study were all outlined in this chapter.

The next chapter will discuss the literature review and theoretical framework of this study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

The first part of this chapter explores some related works for this research. As gender raises questions of inequalities, the related studies looked at positions of authority, leadership and stereotypes in public relations. The second part of this chapter explores the theoretical underpinnings for this research.

#### **2.1 Empirical Evidence of Existing Literature**

Janus (2008) studied gender, leadership and public relations. Janus (2008) wanted to explore how women leaders in public relations performed their roles and the factors that made them successful. It was because, women made up 70 per cent of the work force of public relations yet only 20 per cent filled top leadership roles. Janus (2008) used feminist theory and social role theory to underpin the research.

The study posited that issues like work-life balance and the “queen bee syndrome” were two examples of how gender might filter decision. Also, female leaders will conduct their leadership role in a more transformational way (using two-way communication styles or feminine traits) whereas men will lead in a transactional manner (masculine attributes, competitiveness, controlling and independence). Janus (2008) asserts that women in the PR industry will have stronger opinions about gender discrimination, whereas men will be less likely to acknowledge that there was a problem.

A case study was employed in the research. 12 in-depth interviews were conducted in addition to a participant observation. The identity of the firm used was protected by referring to the firm as MW.

The interview consisted of 12 public relations counselors. Six subordinates and six managers provided insights into views on management. Three men and three women for each experience helped discover how gender played a role. The six subordinates had three to five years of experience in public relations. The managers had 10- 15 years“ experience. The 12 interviews consisted of 60 minutes with six subordinates and six executives. The questions for subordinates were: job information, mentoring experience, perceptions about leadership styles, work-life balance, gender discrimination and diversity in the workplace. The questions for managers were: job information, mentoring, perception about leadership styles, work-life balance, consideration for personnel decision, gender discrimination and diversity in the workplace.

Janus (2008) found that work life-balance did not come to play in hiring and promotion decisions. In addition, both men and women were transactional (competitive, controlling etc.) and transformational (using two-way communication styles). The managers said it was important to have work-life balance and found it easier to achieve now than when they were juniors. The findings showed that the many factors of the employees overall social location (class, race) trumps gender when it comes to leadership styles, mentoring relationships, gender disparity, work-life balance and hiring / promoting.

The work of Janus (2008) was very significant for this study since she investigated the leadership style of males and females in public relations. This was an aspect of this research which was studied, which in essence helped to bring out relevant issues in the study.

Another research by Frederick (2003) studied representation of male and female traits in high-level and low-level hiring in public relations. The purpose of the study was to determine if sex role segregation and stereotyping were prevalent. The research was an exploration of gender role

stereotyping in the advertising of jobs in public relations and compared the existence of male and female traits in advertisements for managers and entry-level positions in the field of public relations.

Frederick (2003) posited that gender-based salary discrimination existed in the field of public relations because past research showed that women earned less than men in public relations. Frederick (2003) asserts that, women in the field of public relations were segregated into technician roles and that barriers still existed that prevented women from obtaining, managerial positions. An important area Frederick (2003) tackled was in relation to the gender differences in the job descriptions for managerial and technician positions. In advertisement for technician duties, more feminine traits were featured and in advertisement for managerial roles, masculine attributes were sought.

The sample size for the study consisted of 250 jobs descriptions pulled from four different websites. The websites used for the study were hotjobs.com, monster.com, PRSA.org and flipdog.com. These four websites were chosen because they were popular online global career networks and comprised the largest job collections. 125 job descriptions were for technician (entry-level) positions and 125 job descriptions were for manager positions. A data set was designed with three categories: leadership styles, skills and activities and a list of items was developed for each gender among the three different activities. A seven-item list for skills, a four-item list of leadership styles and a nine-item list of activities were used to analyze the sample.

The activities were developed from a 17-item list that was used by researchers at Boston University and applied in a 1986 unpublished study of professional women in public relations, Toth and Grunig (1986) as cited in Frederick (2003). The list of activities that public relations practitioners performed was separated into two categories: managerial activities and technician activities. The

17-item list was divided by Toth and Grunig's research. They split the 17-item list into a nine-item list of managerial and technician duties in the order that they were most performed. The seven-item list of skills in managerial jobs and the four-item list of leadership styles were developed by Alimo-Metcalf (1994).

The study found that employers sought male traits in advertising for managerial jobs and female traits when advertising for technician jobs. In all the three categories: activities, skills and leadership styles, managerial advertisements had significantly more male attributes than female attributes and for entry level jobs, female traits were predominate. The research also showed that more companies hired more females than males for entry-level positions.

The study by Frederick (2003) was significant to this study because it looked at two of the three categories: activities and leadership style and tested how males and females differed on these attributes using the four-item list of leadership skills and the nine-item list of activities

### **2.1.2 The Feminization of Public Relations**

The number of women entering the field of public relations in recent years has increased greatly (Khazan, 2014). As women continue to pursue careers in professions other than those considered traditionally "for women" such as nursing and teaching, many factors affect the workforce, such as salary, status, and influence within the field (Grunig, L. A., Toth, & Hon 2001, p. 9). The feminization of public relations has made an impact in the profession considering the status of the industry, gender inequities, salary discrepancy, and organizational roles. The communication roles of both women and men in the field of public relations must be considered in order to fully understand the effects of the feminization of public relations (Grunig, L. A. et al., 2001). According to the PRSA/IABC Salary Survey of 2000, women represent about 70% of the public relations field compared to 1979 when less than 44% of the public relations employees were

women (York, 2004). However, men still benefit more in terms of achieving more jobs, higher salaries, and promotions at the management level (Aldoory and Toth, 2002, p.103).

A primary issue related to the feminization of public relations is the declining status of the industry (Grunig L. A. et al., 2001). Lesly (1988, p.5) believes that because of the number of women in public relations, there is a “soft” perception of this field. Therefore, public relations is not always considered a vital part of the management function, but rather as a “soft” and many times disposable element of it (Lesly, 1988, p. 5). When women enter public relations, they are encountering a double discrimination, by gender and by career choice (Krugler 2017). Women in public relations face proving themselves as women in the corporate world as well as proving that effective communicators are key to the dominant coalition ( Krugler, 2017).

### **2.1.3 The Social role Theory**

The social role theory by Eagly, (1987) posits that men and women behave differently in social situations and take different roles, because of societal expectations of them (Eagly, 1987). Social role theory used a structural approach to sex differences, rather than a cultural approach. He argued that, structural pressures (family, organizations, and communities) have caused men and women to behave differently. These stereotypical gender roles are formed by social norms that apply to people of a certain category or social position. According to Eagly (1997), society has shared expectations about women and men and these expectations form female and male gender roles. Therefore, individuals tend to act the way that these roles imply and as a result, men and women learn different skills, thus perpetuating sex differences.

Eagly (1997), suggests that beliefs about the differences between men and women can be divided into two dimensions: communal and agentic. According to Bakan (1966), agentic qualities are

manifested by self-assertion, self-expansion and the urge to master and be independent with agentic qualities being attributed to males. Communal qualities are manifested by selflessness, concern for others and emotional expressiveness, commonly associated with domestic activities, and for the most part associated with women. Eagly (1997) uses these dimensions to differentiate between males and females in work and family life .

Division of labour, according to Eagly (1987) is the cause of the differences between males and females, because women often assume responsibilities at home, with men often assuming responsibilities outside the home. Division of labour gave rise to gender role expectations and sexbased skills and beliefs, which in effect produced differences in social behavior among males and females.

The Social Role theory implies that individuals might question the capacity of women in particular positions, such as leadership roles because of the stereotypical role expectation by society. Straker (2008) suggests three common patterns that correspond to the beliefs about gender. These are: women take on more domestic tasks; women and men often have different occupational roles; and in occupation, women often have lower status. There are some limitations of the social role theory. First, Sczesny and Kuhnen (2004) show that social stereotypes do not always affect the decisions and behaviour of individuals. People can make cautious and systematic decisions that do not perpetuate stereotypes. The second limitation is reflected in the meta-analytic research by Eagly (1997).

There was considerable disparity between outcomes because of the issue of size, even though numerous studies were reviewed, but later studies considered other statistical analysis. Though

the social role theory has its limitations, it helps individuals to know that there are a continuum of role styles in organizations (Dulin, 2007).

### **2.1.3 Organizational Roles of Public Relations**

Tench and Yeoman (2006) identify two dominant public relations roles: The communication manager, who plans and manages public relations programs, advises management, makes communication policy decisions and oversees their implementation. The communication technician, who is not involved in organizational decision making, but who implements public relations programs such as writing press releases, organizing events or producing web content. They argue that Technicians usually do not get too involved in research or evaluation; they are the ‘doers’ (Tench and Yeoman, 2006, p. 28). The communication manager role itself is divided into three identifiable types. Firstly, the expert prescriber, who researches and defines public relations problems, develops programs to tackle these problems and implements them. Secondly, the communication facilitator, who acts as a communication broker, maintaining two-way communication between an organization and its publics, liaising, interpreting and mediating. Thirdly, the problem solving process facilitator, who helps others solve their communication problems, acts as a counselor or advisor on the planning and implementation of programs. There are two other roles, sitting between the manager and technician (Tench and Yeoman 2006, p.29). The first role is the media relations’ role, a highly skilled job requiring profound knowledge and understanding of the media. This is not just about the dissemination of messages, but a crucial function where the needs of the media are met in a sophisticated way. The second role is the communication and liaison role, meaning the individual who represents the organization at events and meetings and creates opportunities for management to communicate with internal and



external publics. The classification into manager and technician roles does not mean that the lines are fixed.

Most public relations' professionals perform a mix of manager and technician work, but the point is that one role will tend to predominate.

Steyn and Puth (2000, p. 20-21) reinforce that there is enormous variety within these roles. A technician employed for their writing skills may be involved in a range of work such as writing press releases, speech writing, writing for the web, or may be involved in just one job, for example producing inhouse journals. The communication manager may be responsible for the full public relations program or, if they work for a large corporate organization may be responsible for one specialist area such as government or investor relations. Trench and Yeoman's (2006) argue that there is a lot of confusion about who does what in public relations. However, amidst this confusion, it is quite clear that the technician role is reserved for women. Dozier (2002, p .203) found that "gender discrimination plays an important role in this process of role segregation". Women work predominantly at the technician level mainly because they have fewer years of professional experience (Hon, 1995). The technician level therefore serves as a ghetto for women in public relations. It serves the same function in public relations that occupational segregation embodies in the larger labor force (Hon, Grunig, L. A., & Dozier, 1992). Furthermore, the dynamics of role segregation are quite complex and are influenced by biological issues, social issues, labor force issues, and public relations professional issues. The biological and socialization attributes that men generally possess enable them to assume the manager role with greater ease as compared to women. Additionally, women are generally more attracted to the less risky technician role because of its low level of involvement and commitment (Hon et al., 1992)

#### **2.1.4 Women in Public Relations/Glass Ceiling Phenomenon in Public Relations and Communications**

Though the majority of public relations practitioners are women, their lack of representation in management limits opportunities for them and the benefits an organization can endure due to their contribution (Wrigley, 2002). The lack of power of women in organizations is attributed to the lack of women in decision-making roles and positions. Because of the lack of presence of women in management roles, the organizational culture is created and dominated by men (Haas 2007).

Therefore the atmosphere of such organization may be unreceptive to other women's applying (Hon et al., 1992). On the other hand, organizations that employ more women and allow them to ascend into management roles are viewed as having more progressive climates and are more attractive to women (Moore, 1986). Because of this, many researchers and scholars advise women to network and tap into informal coalitions in order to build a support system within an organization (Poffenberger, 2007).

In a study by Tam, Dozier, Lauzen, and Real's (1995) cited in Poffernberger (2007), they posit that mentoring relationships can positively affect a woman's ascent into management. This opportunity can also impact role enactment and professional growth of practitioners. (Poffenberger, 2007). Mentoring is defined as a relationship between a superior and a subordinate employee (Raabe, 2003). Where the mentor can provide the mentee with basic knowledge and skills about the profession as well as insight and a broader perspective of the corporate culture and the business environment (Tam et al., 1995). Regardless of gender, any practitioner can benefit from an effective mentor. However, because of the few number of

women managers, women practitioners may be less likely than men to experience the benefits of same-sex mentoring (Tam et al., 1995).

Another study by Tam, Dozier, Lauzen, and Real's quantitative study (1995), in which they researched the impact of gender on mentoring relationships found that men and women benefit the most from same sex relationships in terms of intensity and support. However, since men are predominantly found in management roles, they are more beneficial for subordinates in terms of role enactment and career advancement. Therefore male subordinates benefit the most from mentoring relationships because male mentors provide a more active and intense mentoring experience as well as contribute to their ascent into management (Tam et al., 1995). Regardless of these findings, Tam et al. (1995) advise all practitioners to actively seek out an influential and powerful mentor. Despite seeking the support of other women professionals, there are inevitable barriers women may and will encounter in pursuing management and leadership roles in public relations and communications as well as in other disciplines of business (Hon et al., 1992). These barriers may include: men in top management wanting to promote those similar to them (Hon et al., 1992); women finding difficulty in establishing a public identity that aligns with a high power position (Conrad, 1985); a lack of support and confidence in women from home and society (Hon et al, 1992); and the conception of power alone, meaning power is mainly associated with men (Helgesen, 1990). However, a general feminine trait is that women are effective communicators therefore, they are often associated with two-way symmetrical communication, which is often seen as one of the most effective ways to practice public relations (Grunig, J. E. & Hunt, 1984). "Two-way symmetrical communication invokes cooperation, collaboration, and relationship building," which are often associated with women (Grunig, J. E. & Hunt, 1984, p. 429). "Given this feminine propensity for fostering interdependence and

mutuality, perhaps women's styles of communicating and managing should be heralded rather than forsaken" (Grunig, J. E. & Hunt, 1984, p. 430). As women in Public Relations is studied more, researchers are linking the nature of public relations to the nature of women. Furthermore, progressive styles of leadership are also associated with feminine characteristics.

Despite the research in support of women in public relations and leadership roles, there are still gender discrepancies in hiring, salary, and promotions (Aldoory & Toth, 2002). In a quantitative study, Aldoory and Toth (2002) found that there are eight factors that explain why gender differences exist in terms of promotions. These factors include: (a) socialization, (b) sex discrimination and sexism, (c) unrealistic expectations of women who balance family and work, (d) biological determinism, skills differentials, (f) favoritism towards men due to their low numbers, (g) type of organization influences access to promotions, and (h) gender discrepancies in promotions do not exist (Aldoory and Toth, 2002, p. 123). The majority of these factors secure the existence of a male-dominated organization into place despite the influx of women in the industry and the workforce.

Although many public relations scholars have focused on the role of women in public relations and the gender discrepancies in the field, Wrigley (2002) explicitly targeted the role of the glass ceiling phenomenon in public relations. According to Wrigley (2002), the glass ceiling phenomenon is an important area of study in the public relations and communications discipline because of the nature of the field of public relations, the nature of today's business climate, the contributions to the bottom line, and the responsibility to students. In her qualitative study, Wrigley (2002, p. 54) proposed the theoretical concept, "*negotiated resignation*", to explain the psychological process of how women handle the glass ceiling phenomenon. "*Negotiated resignation*" is used to describe the way in which women described the glass ceiling as well as

the strategies that they used to overcome it. Wrigley (2002) argues that the conciliatory strategies mentioned by women do not address the larger question of whether the structure is at fault. Instead women focus mainly on personal strategies to handle discrimination in the workplace.

Wrigley's (2002) study uncovered five factors that possibly contribute to the glass ceiling for women in public relations and communications management. These factors include: denial, gender role socialization, historical precedence, women turning against other women, and corporate culture. In addition, the women in Wrigley's study identified strategies to overcome the glass ceiling. These include: mentoring, working hard(er), changing jobs, going out on your own, demonstrating competence and efficiency, taking control of your own future and creating new work cultures, being a problem solver, and having patience (Wrigley, 2002).

### **2.1.5 Leadership In Public Relations**

Scholars have established that leadership is essential to effective Public Relations practice Berger, Meng, Gower and Heyman, (2012). Leadership is a manner by which an individual influences the thoughts, attitudes and behavior others. Leaders set a direction for the team; they help people see what lies ahead; they assist staff to visualize what they might achieve; they encourage and inspire the society. Without leadership, a group of human beings quickly degenerates into argument and conflict, because we see things in different ways and lean toward different solutions. Leadership helps to point us in the same direction and harness our efforts jointly. Leadership is the ability to get other people to do something significant that they might not otherwise do and energizes people toward a goal (Mills 2005)

According to the Great Man Theory which is one of the propounded theories of leadership which is also called the Great Person Theory, leaders are born with just the right traits and abilities for

leading – charisma, intellect, confidence, communication skills, and social skills (Borgatta et al, 1963). The theory suggests that the ability to lead is inherent and that the best leaders are born, not made. It defines leaders as valiant, mythic, and ordained to rise to leadership when the situation arises (Yukl,2012)

The term “Great Man” was adopted at the time because leadership was reserved for males, which demeans a woman’s ability to be a leader. Berger et al (2012) in their study to test for excellent leadership in public relations at Alabama, asked participants in the study to rank 12 leadership-development approaches according to importance. The highest-rated leadership-development approach was “strengthen change management capabilities,” followed by “improve the listening skills of professionals” and “enhance conflict management skills” (Berger, 2012, p. 18). And if anyone possesses such qualities, regardless of gender they should be given the opportunity to.

In researching leadership roles in public relations, Aldoory (1998) and Aldoory and Toth (2004) address the following areas: leadership styles, gender and sex differences in leadership, and leadership in public relations. Two leadership roles, transactional and transformational, have been commonly explored by researchers in past management research (Aldoory, 1998). Transactional leadership is typically associated with men and includes a reward/punishment system: employees are rewarded for their effective services and punished for insufficient performance (Bass, 1990). This is closely associated with an autocratic style of leadership. On the other hand, the transformational style is usually associated with women. It includes encouraging employees to achieve and perform in terms of a broader goal and to work as a team (Rosener, 1994). “Transformational-type leaders use tactics that seek to create connections, establish rapport, and reinforce intimacy” (Pincus & DeBonis, 1994, p. 191).Transformational

leadership is closely associated with a more democratic style of leadership. It should be noted, however, that many researchers do not believe that one particular style of leadership enables managers and leaders to succeed in every situation or circumstance. Therefore some argue for a situational theory of leadership. Scholars have asserted that effective leaders modify their style to best compliment the situation, the circumstances, or the environment (Casimir, 2001).

### **2.1.6 Inequality in organizational structures**

O'Neil et al. (2008) in their review of Women's careers at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the Netherlands proposed three reasons why organizational structures and systems are still firmly entrenched in the traditional, masculine form of organizing. First, they suggested that the current structures work for those employed at the senior levels of organizations, the majority of whom are men. Thus there is no compelling rationale for changing the system since the status quo works for those in charge.

Second, they proposed that comprehensive data about women's experiences at lower and middle levels of organizational life are not systematically collected. They posited that this means that women who may be poised to move up in the organizational hierarchy may simultaneously be juggling multiple life roles and finding organizational policies and procedures non-supportive of their life choices. This lack of organizational support, encouragement, and opportunities may bear some direct responsibility for women "opting out" (O'Neil et al, 2008, p. 735). Thus, rather than suggesting that there is something inherent in women that makes them exit organizational life, examining the impact of traditional masculine forms of organizing may be more effective in solving the problem of the lack of women in leadership roles. Third, they proposed that while structures and systems may change, organizational culture and individual attitudes often lag far behind. They highlighted Virginia Schein's (2007) studies that showed that from the 1970's to

the 2000's, men's attitudes about women being less suitable than men for leadership roles have remained firmly entrenched. These attitudes continue to put women aspiring to senior leadership roles at a distinct disadvantage, as evidenced by Burke et al (2008, p. 278) conclusion that "the biggest obstacle to career advancement for women is the attitudes, biases, perceptions and behaviors of their male colleagues."

## **2.2 Theoretical Perspective**

A theory is fundamental to understanding the reality that guides the research process and interpretation of data and explains the subject under investigation. Researchers attempt to explain phenomena by looking for order and consistency in their findings and as a result develop theories (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). Until more recently, it was generally considered that one of public relations' major disadvantages was its lack of theoretical development. Currently, however, the field benefits from paradigmatic diversity and displays a strong push towards theory building (Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuru, & Jones, 2003, 2008).

### **2.2.1 The Feminist Standpoint Theory**

This study uses the Feminist Standpoint Theory to help understand participants' experiences as women working in leadership roles in public relations. According to Swigonski (1994) a standpoint is a position in society, involving a level of awareness about an individual's social location, from which certain features of reality come into prominence and from which others are obscured. Standpoint theory begins with the idea that the less powerful members of society experience a different reality as a consequence of their oppression" (Swigonski,1994, p. 390). Feminist standpoint theory emerged in the 1970s from the Marxist tradition, coming from the



analysis of the conditions of the working class (Swigonski, 1994; Harding, 1991; Hartsock, 1983).

As Wood (2005) states, “Feminist standpoint theory draws especially on the Marxist claim that the work we do the activities in which we engage shape our identities and consciousness and are extensions our knowledge” (Wood, 2005, p. 61). Starting out, the theory was a type of analysis, connecting everyday life and politics to understand the oppression of women (Heckman, 2001).

A few key elements that outline feminist standpoint theory are: 1) “Society is structured by power relations, which results in unequal social locations for women and men: Men are the dominant, privileged, or centered group, and women are a subordinate, disadvantaged, or marginalized group and these common conditions shape the experiences of women and men” (Hallstein 1999, p. 63).

2) Women are “outsiders within” (Collins, 1986, p. 308), meaning that they have two views of women, one that the culture or society has of women and a personal view of what it means to be female based on their own experiences (Hallstein, 1999, p. 63). “Subordinate people have the potential for “double vision” a knowledge of awareness and sensitivity to both the dominant worldview of society and their own perspective” (Swigonski, 1994, p. 391). Given that women can be outsiders within they may be able to see the differences or connections between the dominant view and the view of those on the outside. The dominant group’s view has the possibility to be partial and incomplete whereas the subordinate group’s view could be more complete because they tend to care less about upholding social order and have a more open perspective (Swigonski, 1994).

3) Standpoint refers not simply to location or experience, but to a critical understanding of location and experience as part of and shaped by larger social and political contexts and, specifically, discourses (Wood, 2005).

4) Both men and women can have multiple standpoints and differences due to power relations elements like race and sexual orientation (Hallstein, 1999; Wood, 2005).

There have been different questions and complaints throughout the years surrounding this theory. The biggest issue with feminist standpoint theory is the idea of essentialism, or the notion that the theory develops a generalization about women, as though all women are the same rather than acknowledging the diversity exists among women (Wood, 2005). Using standpoint theory to try and understand the experiences of many groups of women because not all women are the same is way to try an avoid generalizing such as the critique suggests. Another criticism is that feminist standpoint theory does not present a sufficiently complex understanding of experience and rests on a dualism between subjective experience and objective truth (West & Turner, 2004). This suggests that even when using the theory to understand standpoint or experiences, scholars cannot really achieve understanding because of their presumptions about the nature of reality.

Although this says that scholars cannot understand another's standpoint because of their previous beliefs, standpoint theory is still useful in bringing to light another person's experience. As Harding (1991) explains that only through such struggles can we begin to see beneath the appearances created by an unjust social order to the reality of how this social order is in fact constructed and maintained. This need for struggle emphasizes the fact that a feminist standpoint is not something that anyone can have simply by claiming it. A standpoint differs in this respect from a perspective, which anyone can have simply by 'opening one's eyes'.

The goal in using this theory for this study is to learn how feminist standpoint theory can be used to understand the experiences of women in leadership positions in public relations.

### **2.2.2 The Liberal-Feminist Theory**

This study will also use the liberal-feminist theoretical framework. Liberal feminism is used in this study to help understand issues of inequity between men and women. The concept of liberal feminism focuses on equality between men and women and maintains that to achieve such equality requires efforts from not only women but from society as a whole (Tong, 2014, p. 46).

The Liberal Feminism perspective, “emphasizes social and legal reform through politics that are designed to create equal opportunities for women and to establish individual civil rights so that no one is denied access to the social-economic system because of sex, race, or class” (Freeman 1990, p. 75). Liberal feminism, explained by (Steeves 1987, p. 98), “assumes specific changes within the existing system ultimately can achieve freedom of expression and equity for women.”

The belief of liberal feminists’ is, that when women have the opportunity to pursue their potential for individual development like men and sexist discrimination is eliminated, women’s liberation is achieved (Freeman, 1990, p. 75). Most liberal feminists focus on finding ways of creating and supporting opportunities for educational and professional success (Steeves, 1987, p. 130). The underlying emotion surrounding this perspective is one of optimism. Liberal feminists believe that optimism influences working for change within an organization as well as within the industry itself especially since public relations is based on “accommodation, negotiation, and the resolution of conflict between organizations and the groups on which their employers depend” (Grunig, L. et al 2001 ). Furthermore this approach suggests that women should focus on change within themselves in order to overcome the gender bias (Grunig, L. et al., 2001). This may

include proving their capabilities and competencies in the workplace in a way that men do not necessarily have to.

In an extensive 2001 study, L. A. Grunig, et al. analyzed several liberal feminist strategies for women's advancement in the workplace which emphasize the necessary changes women must undertake in their personality traits, communication behavior, and management style. By stripping themselves of any perceived feminine traits, women can blend more effectively with men. "The strength of liberal feminist strategies lies in the empowering effect these tactics can have since liberalism assumes women as individuals can and do overcome discrimination" (Grunig, L. et al., 2001, p. 321). These strategies can also help women secure advancement, which liberal feminists argue, can contribute to institutional transformation, a radical feminist goal that will be discussed next.

Liberal feminist strategies mainly focus on how women can "work" the system rather than fight it (Gyan, 2014). Under this argument, the following strategies were discussed in L. Grunig, Toth, and Hon's (2001) study: finding the right institution to work for, denying the existence of discrimination, recruiting male practitioners, facing important work-life balance choices, insisting on inclusion in management decision making, and networking with men. Another focus of liberal feminists targets women's competency in public relations, by requiring them to refine the skills

and knowledge required to advance in public relations. Women should also demonstrate professionalism and empower themselves by networking and connecting with other women.

Therefore the liberal feminist perspective is shrouded in women being proactive in their endeavors and deciding their fate through their own efforts (Grunig, L. et al., 2001). This perspective, thus, minimizes the structural factors that impede women's agency.

## **2.9 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, the researcher explored some existing literature for this research. She also introduced the Feminist Standpoint Theory and Liberal Feminist theory as theoretical underpinnings for this research.

The next chapter will look at the Research Methodology, the study design, sample, data collection tools used, the data analysis method and the advantages and disadvantages of the methodology used.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter describes the methods of data collection and analysis that were used for this study. It outlines the sample size, the sampling procedure, data collection, as well as data analysis that were employed. The study was structured as a qualitative study where depth, rather than breadth of phenomenon was of importance. The research used in-depth interview techniques to help explore how PR managers and technicians negotiated gender in terms of their role performance. The chapter further expands on the method of data collection and analysis.

#### **3.1 Study Design**

This study used the qualitative method because the purpose of this research is to understand the roles and experiences of individual female managers in Public Relations and corporate communication. Creswell (2013) states that qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of the world and the experiences they have in the world. Flick (2002) also explains that qualitative research is concerned with constructions of reality it's own constructions and in particular those constructions it meets in the field or in the people it studies.

The main technique used to collect data was in-depth interviews. The main technique of qualitative approach which will be used to collect data is in-depth interviews. Interviews are an appropriate approach when trying to look for meaning and understand the experiences of others. Lindlof and Taylor (2011) explain that interviews are used to gather in-depth information that cannot be observed and to gain an understanding of someone else's ideas and experiences. This

is also to ensure that participants are questioned further on issues. Since detailed responses which border on the personal as well as professional aspects of the respondents are sought, the names and personal details of the respondents will not be recorded. The conversation will therefore be secure and confidential. Further, clear and elaborate explanations will be given to respondents about the objective and the essence of the study. As Gordon, (1980) as cited in Musah (2007) asserts, effective in-depth qualitative interview entails creating a shared concern for each other, in which both the interviewer and the respondent understand the contextual nature of the interview.

### **3.2 Sample**

The sample frame for this study was women within the age range of thirty (30) to sixty (60) years. These women hold management and leadership roles with public relations or corporate communications related titles in Accra. The sample strategy for the study was mainly purposive sampling. The type of purposive sampling used was maximum variation. According to Maykut and Morehouse (2000), a maximum variation sample is a purposefully selected sample of persons or settings that represent a wide range of experience related to the phenomenon of interest. This strategy was chosen because there is a specific audience to target for the purpose of this study. This will be followed by the snowball technique which will enable the researcher get referred to more female managers from the originally selected sample, so that the intended number of participants will be reached.

Participants were located in Accra and were approached based on mutual acquaintances or recommendations from others. This study included women working in different industries and with different backgrounds to incorporate different perspectives and to increase the validity of

the findings. The sample size consisted of ten (10) participants. Though the sample size was somewhat small, saturation was met when the participants all started to provide the same answers to the research questions.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

After getting approval from the Institutional Review Board and upon getting consent, the interviews began. Participants were interviewed face to face and over the phone. All of the interviews took place in a private location, in the participant's office or at a place of her choosing, in an attempt to avoid distractions and keep the information confidential. The location of the interview was up to the participant for two reasons: (1) to make the participant feel as comfortable as possible and (2) to make the interview convenient for the participant. The interviews lasted between forty and sixty minutes. This provided enough time to cover all of the interview questions and allowed participants the opportunity to elaborate in detail. The interviews were recorded, with permission from participants. A set of semi-structured interview questions was developed to guide the conversation between the researcher and the participants. The goal in using semi-structured questions was to guide the topics while allowing for flexibility in answers, with the hope of promoting or facilitating natural conversation. This study focused on women's roles, equality in the workforce, and gender and leadership in public relations. There were separate questions for each concept to better gauge the participants' views, attitudes, and experiences with each. The questions were grouped into four categories: opportunities, leadership style, perceptions of women leaders, and demographic questions. The first section of questions was used to gather background information on the participant, different roles they have had and the different tasks they have performed as well as information about their current career position. This section also included questions about their work environments, colleagues, and



opportunities. The next two sections of questions centered on the concept of leadership. Questions asked for participants' views and opinions on the term and its meaning as well as the idea of women in leadership roles compared to men. Due to the fact that all of these women have been in some type of leadership position, the women were asked to not only explain what leadership meant to them, but to talk about their experiences of being a woman in a leadership position. There were also questions about women in the public relations field in general. These questions focused more on overall views regarding the equality of women, specific challenges they face compared to men, and perceptions of women in leadership positions. All of the interview questions were asked to better understand the attitudes, opinions, and values of women in leadership positions in public relations. The participants in this study are anonymous. Due to the nature of the study, asking about roles and experiences that these women have or are currently dealing with, some of the information may be sensitive and private information. Measures taken to ensure the privacy of participants included conducting interviews in a private location, destroying recordings after they were transcribed and using numbers to identify participants rather than using names.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

The transcribed data was organized into common patterns or themes based on the objectives of the study to identify the barriers that influence women's rise to leadership positions, the stereotypes that affect roles assigned women and the challenges faced by women who have attained leadership positions. The dominant and errant views were emphasized. After data had been transcribed, the findings of the research were discussed with reference to the theory, concepts, themes and related works.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the data collection and analysis, reflexivity was used to acknowledge the researcher's biases and position. According to Maxwell (2013), even though researcher subjectivity cannot be eliminated, researchers should understand how it might influence a study and its conclusions. The researcher, a woman with a degree in public relations but not a woman in a leadership position, was both an insider and an outsider in this study. The shared characteristic of being a woman could have had a positive effect on the information gathered from the participants, who might have felt comfortable opening up and sharing more freely. However, to ensure the researcher did not let her personal beliefs interfere with the analysis, the findings focus solely on the data. The researcher has tried to be transparent regarding the study's findings by providing clear information and direct quotations from participants that indicate how the conclusions were formed.

### **3.5 Advantages and Disadvantages of Qualitative Research**

There are some benefits of using qualitative research approaches and methods. According to Denzin (1989) Qualitative research approach produces the thick (detailed) description of participants' feelings, opinions, and experiences; and interprets the meanings of their actions. In terms of language testing, for example, Bachman (1998) showed in his study that qualitative research results provide the relationship of information processing with performance specifically and deeply. Chalhoub-Deville and Deville (2008), too, argued that qualitative approaches are employed to achieve deeper insights into issues related to designing, administering, and interpreting language assessment.

Also, Maxwell (2012) posits that qualitative research design (interactive approach) also has a flexible structure as the design can be constructed and reconstructed to a greater extent. Thus, the thorough and appropriate analyses of an issue can be produced by utilising qualitative research methods, and therefore the participants have sufficient freedom to determine what is consistent for them (Flick, 2011). As a result, the complex issues can be understood more easily. For example, researchers acknowledged that, because of the nature of classroom dynamics, learners' behaviour may be affected by the numerous factors outside of research focus. In this respect, the qualitative research approach is required to capture these dynamics. As the nature of language assessment practices is also complex, there is a suggestion by Mohan (2012) to employ the qualitative research methodology. Thus, the qualitative research can contribute to the understanding of the complex features of language assessment.

In spite of the above advantages of qualitative research, it also has some disadvantages. First, Silverman (2010) argues that qualitative research approaches sometimes leave out contextual sensitivities, and focus more on meanings and experiences. Phenomenological approach, for instance, attempts to uncover, interpret and understand the participants' experience (Wilson, 2014; Tuohy et al., 2013). Similarly, Cumming (2001) in exploring dynamics of second language writing focused on the participants' experience rather than any other imperative issues in the context. He engaged six countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Japan and Thailand) and experienced writing instructors of these countries in his research. He stated that, The sampling was selective and purposive, which focused on instructors with high levels of expertise in each setting, rather than aiming to be representative of educators in the particular countries or institutions (Cumming, 2001).

The in-depth interview used as a data collection tool in this study was conducted Face to Face and through phone calls.

Face to Face interviews are characterised by synchronous communication in time and place. Due to this synchronous communication, Face to Face interviews can take advantage of social cues. Social cues, such as voice, intonation and body language of the participant gave the researcher a lot of extra information that can be added to the verbal answer of the interviewee on a question. On the other hand this visibility can lead to disturbing interviewer effects, when the interviewer guides with his or her behaviour the interviewee in a special direction.

### **3.6 Chapter Summary**

The chapter has been able to outline the specific methods that was used to gather and interpret data from the field. It has also been able to tell the population and sampling size of the study and data collection instrument as well data analysis as well as the advantages and disadvantages of the qualitative method.

The next chapter will present findings from the data collection and thorough analysis of the received data. The analysis will be based on the set research questions and discussed into detail using reviewed literature and theoretical framework.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher engaged participants spoke about their experiences as women in leadership positions in public relations, their narratives centered on 17 initial themes. Those themes were then refined and organized to form six overarching themes: promotional barriers, double standards for women, pressure of stereotypes, leadership styles, female competition and bullying, and optimism about the future. A description of each theme is listed in table one.

#### 4.1 Themes

Theme	Description.	Codes
Promotional Barriers	Talks about the different barriers that The participants think impact advancement for women	1.1 Male dominated 1.2 Fear of women 1.3 Impact of family
Double standards for women	Talks about how the participants think there is a difference in the views, expectations and treatment of women	2.1 Negative association 2.2 Amount of effort 2.3 Favoritism
Pressure of stereotypes	Talks about the different ways participants feel they must act or perform in the workplace or as a leader because they are women	3.1 Display of confidence 3.2 Capability 3.3 Compassion

Leadership styles	Talks about how participants view leadership	4.1 Different types of leaders 4.2 Definition of leadership
Female competition & bullying	Talks about how women are not receiving support from other women and are experiencing issues with bullying	5.1 Unsupportive females 5.2 Workplace bullying
Optimism about the future	Talks about how participants think there are positive aspects to being a woman in PR and that overall workplace conditions are changing and will continue to do so in the future	

**Source: Researcher’s field data, 2021**

**4.1.1 Promotional Barriers**

When explaining what the participants think about the opportunities available to them, they talked about different barriers that they think impact advancement for women in the public relations field. The participants highlighted specific ways they felt gender influenced their

opportunity for promotion, including the fear of women, and the impact of children and taking care of family.

Participants talked about there being restricted access for women and the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in public relations. The following comments are representative of this theme:

Participant 6:

I do feel like there is almost unspoken access for men just because they connect on different things than we do, but I don't feel like access is closed. I feel like a female can break into that if you don't let that bother you and just go for it. So I think we have to work harder.

Participant 9:

I think women have the power of verbal, written communication and relationship management skills that can often trump access, if the access is equal. If women had greater access, then we'd have even more power.

Some participants referenced the glass ceiling when talking about the struggle for women to reach top positions.

Participant 4 explained:

If we are talking about women being represented equally in leadership in internal PR for companies, large corporations, probably not because the further you get up the ladder, it is harder for women to get there than men.

Participant 1 said: "I have a woman boss, and she broke the glass ceiling here."

Participant 5 said: “I am someone who has not felt the pressure of the glass ceiling in my career. I recognize it’s there, but I haven’t exactly felt that pressure”

The participants also talked about the reality that the top-level roles in public relations are filled with men. The participants acknowledged the past trends of men in management roles, and some recognized that men are still in those roles. All 10 participants mentioned that they think women are not represented equally in leadership roles in public relations.

Participants 1 and 3 said leadership is “still male dominated.” The following comments are also representative:

Participant 2, speaking of a corporate realignment she had witnessed: “It ended up that all of the males had the primary roles and would be tasked with more important relationships, and all of the females were in lesser roles.

Participant 8: “It’s definitely more skewed toward men in management, like the leaders, and in PR tactical people that are actually doing work are more female.”

Participant 9: “The predominant gender in leadership roles at every department at most organizations I know are men and it’s no different from the Public Relations industry”

The participants also talked about how they think that some people fear women in leadership or powerful roles and that fear can influence their opportunity for advancement.

Participant 8 said, “I would say that men are concerned that women know a lot and they feel threatened.”



Participant 1 explained, “I would say [industries with fewer opportunities for women] corporate and government, because they are traditional male dominated industries, sometimes fear women in leadership.”

Participant 3 explained:

My female colleagues and I have been passed over for a position that we were, in some cases, already doing the work and doing it well, because our promotion would have potentially threatened a supervisor.

Finally, Participant 2 stated: “I think that women in high-level positions can definitely be intimidating to some people.”

Another issue that multiple participants addressed was the work-life balance issues they experience and how having children impacts their careers. Participants talked about the struggles they have experienced or have seen other women experience after having children. The following comments are representative:

Participant 1:

Personally, I think being a deputy director will be my last rank because, I want the opportunity to also be a mother, a wife and also do my duties at church. Accepting a higher rank will hinder Me from having time for other important things in my life.

Participant 2:

I’ve not been penalized for putting the priority on my children because I’ve been able to still produce really strong results, but I certainly have seen other people whose careers have been completely derailed because of kids or because they didn’t have spouses who understood sharing the workload at home.

Participant 8: “The one thing that’s really difficult and I think you have to keep balanced if you are in the PR world, is work-life balance. And it is very hard to do.

#### **4.1.2 Double Standard for Women**

Within this theme, most participants brought up differences in the views, expectations. And treatment of women and men in leadership roles in public relations. Eight (8) of the participants said they think a double standard exists when it comes to women and men in leadership roles in public relations. Multiple participants noted the difference in how people view the personalities of women and men in leadership positions and the different expectations they feel that people have for women and men. The participants also said they feel like they are treated differently because of their gender.

When the participants were asked if they felt people would respond to them as a leader the same way they would respond to a man, many said no. The following comments illustrate this perspective:

Participant 1: “I may have been called names for being assertive and confident, where a guy in that same stead may have been called ambitious. “

Participant 4: “The double standard on how you are viewed – a man being firm and direct and then a woman just being rude. That is just a cultural thing.”

Participant 2: “If I were a male I think they would be like, ‘Oh, okay,’ instead of pushing back on me in front of other leaders.”

Participant 9:

I’ve seen women sink or swim around things like appearance, behavior at social events, and attire. I’ve seen things like that and I don’t know if men would suffer the same consequences.

Participants also talked about negative characteristics they think people associate with them or with women leaders, in general, in public relations.

Participant 7 said: “I think my peers perceive me as more aggressive than necessary or confrontational when I am just trying to be collaborative.”

Participant 8 explained: “I’m not as chit-chatty with my employees... and I think as a female I’m probably perceived as cold in that regard.”

Participant 4 said: “If you seem overconfident, you can have a negative connotation. ... If you are too firm, everybody is going to think you are too proud.”

Participant 6 said:

I think that being supportive is something that people expect of you when you are a female, and when that nurturing, like ‘Come tell me about what is going on in your life,’ style isn’t natural to you at its best I think people are just disappointed and at its worse it gets you labeled as a cold or hard to work for.

The participants in this study highlighted the amount of work and effort women put in to be successful. Some participants noted that they feel that because they are women they have to “go above and beyond” (Participant 1) to get recognition.

Participant 10 said: “Women have to work harder than men in order to get a role, and may even be more qualified.” Almost every participant brought up their work ethic and stated that they “work hard” (Participant 5) and “set high standards” (Participant 3) for themselves.

Some of the participants stated that they have not been treated differently because they were female and neither are their salaries lesser than their male counterparts.

### **4.1.3 Pressure of Stereotypes**

Many participants talked about how they feel like they have to act a certain way, like more professional or confident, in the workplace and as a leader because they are women. Participants explained they must show they are confident and prove they are capable before others will take them seriously. One participant also mentioned the need to act more compassionately because she is a woman. Several women talked about feeling like they need to act more professionally as a woman leader.

Participant 1 stated: “I always had to be more professional, more formal; it has to do with establishing your presence and your reputation.”

Participant 7 said: “If I do not show confidence in my own decision, then it is hard to get everybody else on board.”

Most of the participants also said that in some way or another they had to earn respect before they were trusted.

Participant 8 stated: “I’ve always felt respected ... but when you’re first starting a role and you’re new, regardless of what level you are, you still have to earn that respect.”

Participant 6 said:

I feel like I am respected in some areas of the organization more than others ... [and] that have to do with who I’ve had an opportunity to work with and whether I’ve had a chance to prove myself as a leader.

### **4.1.4 Leadership Style**

Throughout the study participants talked about leadership style and in what ways they

Think gender has an influence on the leadership style of women in public relations. When talking about the different ways they think gender can influence leadership, participants, talked about what made a good or bad leader and male versus female leadership.

In general, the participants described a good leader as someone who is encouraging, someone who builds trust, and someone who is a good listener (Participants 10, 5, 6 and 1). When describing a bad leader, participants used terms like “unsupportive,” “managerial,” “patronizing” and “insecure” (Participants 6, 4, 8 and 2). When asked whether they thought their previous supervisors had influenced their own leadership style, all of the participants said yes. All of the participants reported having both negative and positive experiences with former supervisors, both male and female, and all except one of the participants said they have had a woman supervisor or leader at some point in their career. More than half of the participants thought there were different leadership styles for men and women, while others thought there were different leadership styles in general

(good and bad) not related to gender.

Participant 8 explained:

I think that men think differently than women. I think women are much more relational and more detailoriented compared to men. They are probably more narrowly focused and process-driven.

On the other hand,

Participant 4 said:

“I would say there are good leaders and bad leaders across the board. I would say that a man or a woman can have the characteristics of a good leader.”

All of the participants agreed that different leadership styles can be effective regardless of gender. Participant 7 stated: “I think that leadership styles are effective in different ways for different people.”

The participants also discussed the concept of leadership and what it means to them. Interestingly, all of the participants had very similar ideas of what leadership is. When asked to describe leadership, almost all of the participants used the same phrases such as having a clear vision, working together, and working toward a common goal/objective. Participant 4 said: “Leadership is building trust, seeing a vision, and supporting the team ... and giving them the tools and opportunities to make your vision happen.”

#### **4.1.5 Female Competition and Bullying**

The interviews with these participants revealed an issue of female competition that suggests several of these women had experienced incidents of bullying in the workplace. Several participants mentioned that one obstacle impeding women’s advancement is other women. These participants talked about how they felt a lack of support from other women. The following are representative:

Participant 1 stated: “Women do not support women.” She went on to say “the bar is set higher for women, and it’s usually set higher for women by women ... You have to do something to break out or you have other women hold you back and they just set the bar higher.”

Participant 5 described a concrete example:

I had a boss who pulled my team to get in kind of a meeting with her while I was on leave because she wasn’t happy with my project and how I had done it. She had not yet told me she wasn’t happy with it; she told my team. That was very irritating and I felt like that was a demeaning move.

Participant 1 also described bullying from women:

One organization had several female executives and while they like to say they support other female leaders, they did not. They tended to advocate for other young men. They felt threatened by other women ... they isolated other young female leaders.

Participant 10 agreed:

I would have to say the most disappointing thing to me even to this day is the fact that women do not support women. Women are awfully competitive with each other and instead of upholding, supporting and trying to really put somebody up to the next level and help them grow, we sometimes take credit for what they are doing or pull them back and not really support them in the manner that they should be.

Throughout the discussion, the participants also touched on the issue of bullying in the workplace more broadly. Almost all of the participants mentioned that they have experienced bullying from a male or female at some point during their career.

Participant 6 said: “Sadly I have felt it bullying more from other females than males. Little gestures and comments to make sure I understand my place versus their place.”

Participant 4 said of her previous supervisor: “He was just a bully. He would tell you one thing and then turn around and do something else.”

Participant 7 said: “I felt like his feedback was negative almost every time ... and he’d be like, ‘You’re great.’”

Participant 2 said: “My First female boss was a bully. Just the way she talked to me ... and her and her assistant would sit at their desk and talk; you knew they were talking about other people.”

#### **4.1.6 Optimism about the Future**

Despite their experiences with gender bias and bullying, throughout the interview participants expressed a sense of optimism for women in public relations. Participants spoke positively about being a woman in public relations and said that overall, workplace conditions were improving. They believed those changes would continue into the future. Every participant listed at least one positive characteristic they attribute to women leaders.

Participant 1 said: “I think people see women as strong communicators, empathetic, creative, and good listeners.”

Some participants went on to offer positive perceptions they think others have of them, including people who report to them, their peers, and their supervisors.

Participant 8 said: “I think if you’d ask the people that work for me they’d say I like to have fun but I’m intense ... My peers would think that I’m probably a collaborative leader.”

Participant 3 stated: “I think I am viewed as a person who is highly capable and definitely has the organization’s goals in mind.”

Participant 5 mentioned: “I have been told that I shoot straight and that I am optimistic.”

Participant 4 said: “Nobody as of yet has ever really circumvented me or gone around me. They know I listen, but they also know I am decisive.”

All of the participants also said that overall they think people have positive feelings about women in leadership roles in public relations, and some participants perceived their gender to be an advantage. The following comments illustrate this perspective:



Participant 1:

I don't see it being a woman as a hindrance any longer. It can be an advantage sometimes because I think sometimes women are underestimated and so I can be quiet and reflective in a meeting but then speak up and people pay attention, too.

Participant 4:

I think more and more we're seeing that women do have the makings of a good leader and they're showing it. More and more, seeing women leaders showing that they can lead a country or state, lead a company, a global company, and be successful at it.

Participant 5:

Yes, I think there are positive feelings. ... I think that we're at a place where we [women] can really represent well what we contribute. I think that we have an opportunity to help change the idea of the role of communication because of the heightened interest in having more women in leadership roles.

Participant 6:

What I like about [being a female leader] is that there are opportunities to break out and surprise people with the confidence you have or your capability. Sometimes I do think we get opportunities that men don't; you just have to know how to use it in a way that is beneficial.

Participant 9: "I think women have the power of the verbal skills, the written skills, the communications skills and the relationship management skills ... that give them a lot of power."

Participant 10: "I think a woman can bring a different perspective than a male."

Participants also mentioned a shift in perspective and described how the workplace is changing and benefiting women. Multiple participants noted there is a "changing dynamic" (Participant 8) and a "generational difference" (Participant 1), both of which, they believe, are expanding opportunities for women.

Participant 10 said:

I've worked in smaller firms. ... In that particular situation, those people in leadership that were partners were actually younger than I was. It was a very different generational thing and mentality, and they actually treated us more equally, which was very refreshing.

The participants believed that as society continues to change, women will get more opportunities because of their gender.

## **4.2 Discussions of Findings**

Based on the findings, it can be said that this group of women in public relations think gender has had a significant impact on their experience. All of the participants described incidents throughout their career that were directly related to gender, consistent with Hartsock's (1983) concept of feminist standpoint as one that explains a "female experience at a particular time and place, located within a particular set of social relations" (Harstock 1983, p303).

### **4.2.1 Promotional Barriers**

The findings in the study seem to go against the ideas of liberal feminism. One of the main ideas behind liberal feminism is that once things are made equal for women and men in the public sphere, politically and socially, women would be able to succeed like men. Based on the participants' experiences this is not the case. Participants talked about different promotional barriers that they thought had impacted opportunities for women in public relations. Similar to findings by Krider and Ross (1997), this research found that women still acknowledge the existence of a glass ceiling as a promotional barrier. Participants also mentioned feeling like there was restricted access for women leaders. When participants were asked if they thought they were given the same opportunities in promotion and hiring as their colleagues, many said yes;

however, many of those participants went on to describe different barriers they saw impeding the advancement of women.

Liberal feminism also focuses on creating opportunities for success for women, although it seemed that most participants talked about how women were not supportive of other women. It was evident that women were not supportive when it came to other women, based on the experiences and interactions the participants had with their female bosses or coworkers. The participants talked about the issue of female competition, something that Dalton (2007) calls the “queen bee” behavior. Dalton (2007) describes “queen bees” as, “women who achieve success then effectively build a moat around themselves rather than build bridges to enable and mentor other women.” Several participants in this study talked about how women were not supportive of other women.

Some participants mentioned that in the “old boys’ club,” men were supportive of one another and helped one another succeed, whereas women are perceived as competing with one another. Others went on to explain that men are advocates for other men, which helps them to be successful and rise to the top, while women might have mentors but not advocates; no one is advocating for them, helping them move to the top. What is the reason for this female competition? Could it be because in today’s society leadership opportunities for women are hard to come by or could it be that women have been conditioned, by society, to believe that there is only one spot for a woman at the table?

Participants also mentioned that they think that sometimes people fear women in leadership or other powerful roles. Some participants described situations in which they were passed over for a

promotion because they might have been perceived as threatening to someone in a higher position.

This fear could be in part to the gender stereotypes that are assigned to women. Women are sometimes seen as aggressive when trying to be firm and decisive, which conflicts with men and other women's perceptions of how women should behave. "Women whose leadership style runs counter to female stereotypes often experience resistance or backlash and In addition to being overlooked for advancement, fear of backlash can discourage them from actively pursuing opportunities" (Hill et al., 2016, p. 25). Some participants mentioned that the fear of women sometimes comes from other women. Hill et al., (2016, p. 25) reported, "Men are not alone in these biases against women in the workplace. Researchers have found that women workers in particular show evidence of implicit bias against female bosses... Women are especially biased against older female bosses" (Hill et al, 2016, p.25). This bias could be a result of women fearing other women, fearing them because they are the "mean" or a fear that they will be unsupportive as boss or colleague.

Participants also mentioned the issue of work-life balance and the impact that children have on a woman's career. Most of the women mentioned that having work-life balance is important but difficult, especially with children. Just as Hill et al., (2016) found, "Women are usually the primary (if not the only) parent caring for children and other family members during their peak years in the workforce" (Hill et al., 2016, p. 18). Multiple participants stressed the challenge that having children presents to a woman's career. The ideas of the participants in this study differed slightly from previous research by Aldoory and Toth (2002), which found a perception that women who had children were expected to leave the workforce altogether. Whereas Hill et al.,

(2016, p.19) reported, even though a majority of women struggle with the idea of going to work after having children, “many women do continue their careers and many who leave come back within a year or less” . In this study, participants did say they thought women could be successful and have children at the same time; they just noted it was a struggle. Participants explained that in order to have a career and family there is the need to find balance. One, participant, suggested that a woman has to be willing to give and take during different parts of her career such as working less at times. Though women may have to deal with the struggle of work-life balance, studies show it is not preventing women from having children.

#### **4.2.2 Double Standards for Women**

The strengths and weaknesses of feminist standpoint theory can be used to explain the experiences of women in public relations. Hallstein’s (1999) main concept of the theory that society is structured by power relations resulting in unequal social locations for men and women, with men being the dominant and women being the disadvantaged provides an explanation for why men dominate high-level positions and hold a greater share of power in public relations even though there are more women in the industry. Based on this idea, the gender bias reported by these participants make sense. If men are seen as dominant, it is understandable that women are constantly being compared to men, that women face more obstacles when trying to succeed, and that women in some cases be less than men.

### **4.2.3 Pressure of Stereotypes**

In line with previous research, many of the participants noted that they did not think women were represented equally in leadership positions in public relations, especially the top management positions.

The idea within feminist standpoint theory of women being the “outsider within” rationalizes the feeling of needing to act a certain way. Under the assumption that women have these two views of women, society’s view and their personal view, it makes sense that women leaders in public relations feel the pressure of stereotypes and expectations to act a certain way. They feel like they need to be nurturing and easy-going leaders not too harsh because that would not be expected of a woman compared to some other traits they have experienced from their previous leaders, who have been decisive and firm. The participants explained that even though some have had leaders, both male and female, who were strong, confident and decisive, they felt like they had to make sure they came across as understanding and in some ways motherly as leaders because they were women.

Similar to the research conducted by Aldoory (1998), this research found that women in leadership positions are looked at differently or negatively while men in leadership engage in behaviors considered natural for men. For example, one participant explained that while a woman might be called “rude”, a man in the same position might be seen as strong. When participants were asked whether they thought people would respond the same to them if they were male, most answered no. More than half of the participants in this study said a double standard exists, agreeing with the previous research conducted by Toth and Cline (1991). Participants in this study also emphasized the amount of effort they had to put in. Many said they felt they had to work harder than men to be taken seriously or to get a promotion.

The participants in this study described feeling pressure to act a certain way because they were women. Several participants said they had to act confident and more professional so they would be taken seriously. Others talked about how women leaders felt the need to hide emotions in order to succeed, similar to the study conducted by Cline et al. (1986) that talked about women being placed in specific roles because of certain perceptions. In both of the studies women talked about feeling expected, to behave, respond or work, in a specific way because of their gender, like act serious so they were seen as firm and decisive, not emotional or soft.

#### **4.2.4 Leadership Styles**

The participants also discussed different styles of leadership. All of the participants noted they had experience with both good and bad supervisors, male and female. Participants addressed differences they saw among men and women leaders as well as good and bad leaders. Although some participants thought leadership style was related to gender and other participants did not, similar to the findings of Appelbaum, Audet and Miller (2002), all of the participants agreed that different leadership styles can be effective for different people regardless of gender. Much like the research conducted by Aldoory (1998) that found female public relations leaders defined leadership as having a vision and providing guidance, almost all of the participants in this study used phrases such as “clear vision” and “working together” when describing effective leadership.

The key idea of standpoint referring not only to location or experience, but to a critical understanding of location and experience as it relates to the bigger picture in society, would suggest that women in public relations understand how gender plays a role in their everyday lives, at work. The problem with this is that a lot of the participants were upfront about some ways in which they were disadvantaged or treated differently, but they were quick to write off the notion of sexism as not applying to them. Many participants did not seem to be aware of or

fully grasp the ways that gender played a role in their lives or careers. For example, when one participant was asked if she had ever felt discriminated against because of her gender she said no but within minutes provided a description of discrimination without identifying it as such. Can participants really be said to have a standpoint regarding their experiences if they do not articulate key aspects of the theory?

Another thing to consider is how useful this theory is if women do not want to talk about gender. Based on the interviews with these participants, it seemed as if they did not want to talk about gender issues.

As reported in the findings section, most participants acknowledged gender, but they also seemed to find excuses or were quick to defend certain actions that disadvantaged them. One participant talked about how she was passed over for a promotion, which was given to a male counterpart even though she had basically already been doing the work. She continued to say that she was not picked because it would have threatened someone in a higher position, but she believed the decision was due to workplace politics, not gender. Many participants recognized that gender differences and bias existed in some industries or work environments, but most did not want to admit or accept that it had happened to them or where they worked. Through additional conversation it was made clear, for some, that they dealt with issues of gender, but others did not go into detail about their experiences and moved on to a different topic.

The word feminist can have a negative connotation (Huffingtonpost.com) and for that some women do not want to be labeled as such. In an article in *The Atlantic*, Kaminer, states, “If widespread support for some measure of equality reflects what women see or wish to be seen, society, their unwillingness to identify with feminism reflects the way they see themselves, or wish to be seen by others” (1993). This can be true of participants in this study, they all may



know that it, gender bias, exists and not agree with it but their unwillingness to identify with it could have to do with how they want other people to view them.

#### **4.2.5 Female Competition and Bullying**

Another issue brought up by participants was the issue of bullying in the workplace. Almost all of the participants mentioned some experience with bullying at some point in their career, from both men and women. A few participants said they had experienced more bullying incidents with females than with males, although participants talked about occurrences with both genders. The participants also treated bullying as if it was normal and to be expected much like that of being treated differently because of gender. Participants seemed to consider it part of the workplace.

#### **4.2.6 Optimism about the Future**

All of the participants mentioned that they think in general people are supportive of women leaders in public relations and that more women are rising into leadership positions and showing that they are worthy and capable. Similar to previous research conducted by Vasavada (2014) that said that women leaders use gender as strategic tool or a way to represent their company, this study also shows that some women leaders view their gender as an advantage and feel that they can use it to benefit themselves or their company. One participant explained that because she is a female agency owner, she attracts female-owned or -run clients. Others said they feel they bring more to the table as a woman and can be more impactful in public relations than a man. Finally, participants said they see change coming to the workplace and they see this shift as a benefit for women. Those who mentioned change attributed it in part to the ideas and mindset of a younger generation. As participants were discussing some of the struggles that women face, some tended

to follow up with positive statements or reassurance regarding the future. It seemed as if participants wanted to shed a positive light on the topic even if they were discussing negative treatment or inequities that women face.

Overall, most participants wanted to keep the conversation positive by focusing on the “changing times” or other positive aspects of their careers rather than talk about how they may have been treated differently because of gender, even those participants who explained in detail an instance where they experienced gender bias. It appeared as if the participants wanted it to seem like they were apart of new “time” and that gender issues were a thing of the past. Across all scenarios most of the participants avoided or excused gender discrimination in the workplace. It could be because of the idea of feminism or being a feminist.

To answer the first research question, **what are the main factors that affect women’s rise to leadership positions?**, they talked about how gender has been the main factor that has influenced the challenges and success they have faced in the careers. Participants addressed inequalities in promotional offers because they were women. The participants talked about promotional barriers that limit or prevent advancement. The participants in this study also described the amount of effort that they felt they had to put in to receive opportunities as challenging because of their gender. Participants explained that some of their success is due in part to a shift in perspective in the workplace. Participants mentioned experiencing, more recently, a more accepting work environment for women due to a different way in thinking, which they believed has been and will be beneficial for women and would result in more opportunities for women. Some participants viewed organizations recognizing and valuing their (a woman’s) perspective as a success. The participants talked about how they started to view

their gender as an advantage when it comes to leadership and they think that there can be positive aspects to being a woman leader.

In response to the second research question, **what stereotypes affect roles assigned women in PR?** Responses from the participants affirmed the Social role theory. A participant mentioned how women may still be undervalued because of the notion that leadership positions are not meant for women. Since it is assumed that certain roles are not fit for a woman, these participants mentioned that more often than not, women were assigned lesser roles and are not included in certain major activities which may hinders them from acquiring the necessary skill and expertise to handle leadership roles. However, the participants thought women leaders in public relations are seen as worthy and capable of being a successful leader and believed that in general people think positively about women in leadership roles and the future of women in leadership roles in public relations. They also talked about how they feel respected as a woman leader and they think they are seen as a respected leader. Some of the participants mentioned that some women in leadership roles are perceived as intimidating, saying that some fear women in high-level positions. Participants mentioned that they think the perception of women leaders is different than the perception of men leaders. This aligns with what Eagly and Karau (2002) said about the different perceptions of gender that the activation of beliefs about women and men by gender related cues thus influences people to perceive women as communal but not very agentic and men as agentic but not very communal. The participants also think that a double standard exists, which influences how women are perceived as leaders. Eagly and Karau (2002) explain that people tend to believe that some behaviors are only appropriate for certain sexes. These expectations in a way lead to stereotypes and this gendered way of thinking.

To answer the third research question, **What barriers do women who have attained leadership positions encounter in their leadership roles?** The participants mentioned that there are moments of sabotage by counterparts both male and female. Most of the participants said they have had to push through internal and external barriers to find the confidence to express their ideas . They also mentioned that building beneficial alliances and strategic relationships as women can be difficult.

### **4.3 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the findings of the research questions that underlined the study. Information gathered from the interviews were analyzed in detail based on the research questions of the study were discussed into detail as well as references to the literature review of the study.

The next chapter presents the summary of major findings, recommendations for policy and further study , limitations and the conclusion for this study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

In the previous chapter the researcher presented data and discussed and analyzed findings. This chapter is the final chapter of the study and entails a summary of all major findings of the study, conclusions reached from the analysis and recommendations for Policy and further study and also the limitations of this study.

#### **5.1 Summary of Major Findings**

This study was conducted to examine how gender has influenced the experiences of a select group of women in leadership roles in public relations. This study focused on the participants' previous experiences as well as their thoughts and opinions in order to understand how they think gender impacts women in leadership positions in public relations. Six overall themes emerged from the findings: promotional barriers, double standards for women, pressure of stereotypes, leadership styles, female competition and bullying, and optimism about the future. The findings of this study contradict the idea of liberal feminism that stated that by making changes in the "system", women will achieve equality. The findings insist that inequalities still exist for women in the workplace, which raises the question of whether liberal feminism can still apply. This study highlights the strengths and weaknesses of Feminist Standpoint Theory. Showing the importance of trying to understand women's' experiences, in particular, what issues women leaders in public relations are still experiencing, acknowledging that previous issues of inequalities and work-life balance still exist. While also shedding light of more recent issues that women leaders in PR are facing, in the workplace, such as female competition and bullying.

Alternatively, one must ask how useful is it to use feminist standpoint theory to understand women's experiences if women do not want to talk about gender or recognize the role it plays. This study also points out the question of why women don't want to talk about gender and the need to continue the dialogue about feminism and the feminist label.

## **5.2 Recommendations for Policy Making**

This study recommends that policy makers put in place laws in organizations and in government such that equity is achieved among men and women alike in the workplace.

Also, this study recommends developing mentorship programs for women in leadership roles to connect with those women in high school or college could be a way to show young women that women do have a spot in leadership and to help create advocates for other women.

### **5.2.1 Recommendations for Further Study**

There are several opportunities for future research to further develop these findings and to arrive at a greater understanding of women in leadership roles in Public Relations.

One particular area would be to open up the study, to include both male and female perspectives regarding women in leadership roles.

Another area could be to dive deeper into the issue of interpersonal relationships within the workplace and specifically look into female competition and workplace bullying.

This study found that gender has influenced the experiences of a selected group of women leaders in public relations in a variety of ways, such as salary, promotions and expectations. It is likely that gender will continue to impact women's experiences until equity is achieved.

### **5.3 Limitations of the Study**

This study has some limitations that should be addressed. The sample for this study was a limitation, in that participants did vary in terms of professional experience but lacked diversity in terms of geographical location.

Another aspect of this study that influenced the findings was that all of the participants were female. The study focused on the experiences and perceptions of women; however, additional studies of gender should include men, as well.

Another limitation of this study was the method that was used. Qualitative methods are interpretive and focused on meaning and understanding experiences rather than quantitative methods which are systematic and mathematical. When using a qualitative method, the researcher is the instrument, this can lead to bias and subjectivity because all of the understanding and interpretation is coming from the researcher, compared to using a quantitative method which involves numerical data and testing the relationship of variables to find the outcome of the research. While a qualitative method was a suitable method for the purposes of this study, its limitations should be recognized.

### **5.4 Conclusion**

This study contributes a relevant and qualitative understanding of the experiences of women in leadership roles to existing literature.

Hon et al (1992, p. 434) suggests that, gender research and discussion in PR too often have failed to recognize that if feminization brings deflating salaries and status to the profession, then

the real problem lies in societal devaluation of women and the feminine but not in women themselves. Furthermore, they argue that the alternative perspective

There are ways that society and women can work toward achieving equity for women. Society as a whole can continue the dialogue of equal rights for women and expand the conversation to issues of gender bias not only in the workplace but in society in general. Working to break down gender stereotypes can help bring acceptance of different roles for those of either gender.





**APPENDIX**  
**INTERVIEW GUIDE**

My name is Jemima Gyamesi. A graduate student of the Ghana Institute of Journalism. I am conducting interviews for my thesis research. The research topic is women and public relations. The interview is expected to about an hour and will include questions about women in public relations, women leaders in PR, and perceptions of women leaders in PR. If at any time during the interview you wish to not answer a question, you are free to do so. Your name will not be used in any way when the findings are reported. Quotes used from the interview will be identified by a number and not by the name of the participant. There are no right or wrong answers and the data will be used solely for academic purposes.

**Opportunities available to women in PR**

- Can you tell me about your current position and some of your previous positions leading to this?
- Have you ever experienced a time in your career where you felt you were treated differently because you were a woman?
- Do you feel you have been given the same opportunities in hiring, promotion, or salary as your male colleagues who are in the same position as you?
- Do you tend to see more women in a specific role compared to men, within the public

Relations industry? If so, Why do you think that is?

- Do you think, overall, women have the same opportunities in hiring, promotion, salary in

Public relations as men?

### **Leadership style of women in PR**

- What does leadership look mean to you?
- How many of your supervisors have been female?
- Do you think this has influenced how you function as a leader?
- Do you think there is a difference between male leaders and female leaders?
- Do you think one leadership style is more effective than another based on gender?
- Do you think women are represented equally in leadership positions in PR?
- Do you think women leaders have the same access or power as male leaders?
- Can you tell me about, what it is like being a woman in a leadership role in PR?
- What do you enjoy about current position?
- What do you dislike?
- What obstacles do you face as a female PR manager
- Do ever feel like you have to act a certain way, because you are a woman Leader?

## **Perceptions of women leaders in PR**

- Do you feel like you are respected as a leader?
- In your view, are you taken seriously? Are you treated with respect as a female PR manager?
- Throughout your career have you ever experienced bullying, by a male or female, in your position as a leader ?
- How do (you feel) people respond to you as a leader? (From those you lead or manage, in your years, and your superiors) What makes you think so?
- In your candid view, do you think it would be the same if you were a male?
- In general, do you think there are positive feelings associated with being a woman in a Leadership position in PR?
- Do you ever feel frustrated in your role as a PR manager?
- Do you have any regrets or have you ever felt regrets for working as a PR manager?

Is there anything you else you want to add to this interview?

Thank you for your views and time.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aldoory, L. and Toth .L. (2002). Gender discrepancies in a gendered profession: A developing theory for public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 14(2), 103-126.

Alimo-Metcalfe, B. (Eds.) (1994). *Women in Management*. Morgan Tanton,London :Routledge

Bachman, L. F. (2000). Modern language testing at the turn of the century: Assuring that what we count counts. *Language testing*, (1), 1-42. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/026553220001700101>

Bakan, D. (1966). *The duality of human existence:An essay on psychology and religion*. Chicago:

Rand McNelly.

Berger, K.B., Meng, J., Gower, K.K., Heyman, C.W (2012) :A Test of Excellent Leadership in Public Relations: Key Qualities, Valuable Sources, and Distinctive Leadership Perceptions.

Broom, G. Dozier, D. (1986). *Advancement For Public Relations Role Models*.

Burke R. J., Koyuncu M., Fiksenbaum L. (2008). Still a man's world: implications for managerial and professional women in a Turkish bank.

Carli, L. L. (2006) . Gender issues in workplace groups: Effects of gender and communication style on social influence. In M. Barrett & M. Davidson, *Gender and communication at work* (pp. 69-83) . Aldershot, Hants, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub.

Chalhoub-Deville, M., & Deville, C. (2008). Utilizing psychometric methods in assessment. In E. Shohamy, & N. H. Hornberger (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of language and education* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Vol. 7, pp. 211-224). New York, NY: Springer Science + Business Media LLC.

Cumming, A. (2001). ESL/EFL instructors' practices for writing assessment: Specific purposes or general purposes? *Language Testing*, (2), 207-224.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/026553220101800206>

Creedon, P. (1991). Public relations and women's work: Towards a feminist analysis of public relations roles. *Public Relations Research Annual*, 67, 3-12

Creswell, J.W. (2013) . *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE publications.

Darlington, Y., & Scott, D. (2003). Qualitative research in practice: Stories from the field. *Social Work Education: The International Journal*, 22(1), 115-118.

Denzin, N. K. (1989). *Interpretive interactionism*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage

Dulin, M. A. (2007). *A Lesson on Social role theory : An Example of Human Behaviour in the Social Environment Theory*. (Published doctoral thesis).University of Houston, Texas.

Eagly, A. (1987).*Sex differences in social behaviour: A social role interpretation*. Hilldale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Eagly, A.H. (1997). Sex differences in social behaviour: Comparing social role theory and evolutionary psychology. *American Psychology*, 50, 1380-1883.

Flick, U. (2011). *Introducing research methodology: A beginner's guide to doing a research project*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Grunig, L. A., Toth, E. L., & Hon, L. C. (2001).*Women in public relations: How gender influences practice*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Hallstein, L.O. (1999) . A postmodern caring: feminist standpoint theories, revised caring, and communications ethics. *Western Journal of Communications*, 63(1) .

Harding, S. (1991) . *Whose science? Whose knowledge? Thinking from women's lives*. NY:

Cornell University Press.

Harding, S. (1993) . “Rethinking standpoint epistemology: What is strong objectivity?” In L. Alcoff and E. Potter (eds.), *Feminist Epistemologies*. NY/London: Routledge.

Janus, J.M (2008). *Gender roles, Leadership and Public Relationships*.(Published master’s thesis).University of Missouri, Columbia.

Lesly, P. (1988). Public relations numbers are up but stature is down. *Public Relations Review*.

Lindlof, R. T., & Taylor, C. B. (2011) . *Qualitative communication research methods*. London: Sage

Manias, E., & McNamara, T. (2015). Standard setting in specific-purpose language testing: What can a qualitative study add? *Language Testing*, 33(2), 235-249. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0265532215608411>

Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. London: Sage.

Maykut, P. & Morehouse, R. (2000). *Beginning Qualitative Research. A Philosophic and Practical Guide*. London: Routledge Falmer.



Merriam, B. S. (2009) . Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation. San Francisco:

Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint.

Mohan, B. A. (2012). Qualitative research methods in second language assessment. In L. V.

Hedges, R. Coe, & M. Waring (Eds.), Research methods and methodologies in education (pp.

752-767). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mills, D.Q (2005). How to lead, how to live: Waltham, MA: Mind Edge press

O'Neil D. A., Hopkins M. M., Bilimoria D. (2008). Women's careers at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

Patterns and paradoxes. J. Bus. Ethics

Patton, M. Q. (1990). Qualitative evaluation and research methods. Newbury Par, CA: Sage publication.

Peters, S., & Froehlich, R. (2006) . Women's surge towards PR agencies: The role of 'new' gender stereotypes and the organizational context. Conference Papers – International Communication Association, 1-28.

Poffenberger, C.D (2007) A Double Standard : Women Leaders In Public Relations And Corporate Communications. Florida State University.

Rea, J. (2007). *The feminization in Public Relations: What is in it for Girls?*(Published doctoral thesis). Victoria University.

Sallee, M. W., & Flood, J. T. (2012). Using qualitative research to bridge research, policy, and practice. *Theory Into Practice*, 51(2), 137-144. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2012.662873>

Schein V. E. (1976). *Think manager, think male*. Atlanta

Schein V. E. (2007). *Women in management: reflections and projections*.

Szeny, S., & Kuhnen, U. (2004). Meta-cognition about biological sex and gender- stereotypic physical appearance :Consequences for the assessment of leadership competence. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*.

Silverman, D. (2010). *Qualitative research*. London: Sage.

Steeves, L. H. (1987). Feminist theories and media studies.*Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 4(2), 95-135.

Steyn, B. & Puth, G. (2000). *Corporate Communication Strategy*. Sandown: Heinemann.

Straker, D.(2008). *Changing Minds, Persuasion Psychology*.Great Britain: Gower Publication.

Swigonski, M. E. (1994) . *The logic of feminist standpoint theory for social work research*.

National Associate of Social Workers.

Tench, R.& Yeomans, L. (2006). *Exploring Public Relations*.London: Pearson Education Limited.

Toth, E.L. & Cline, C.G. (1989). *Beyond the Velvet Ghetto*. International Association of Business Communications Foundation

Tong, R. (2014) . *Feminist thought: A more comprehensive introduction*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press

Tuohy, D., Cooney, A., Dowling, M., Murphy, K., & Sixsmith, J. (2013). An overview of interpretive phenomenology as a research methodology. *Nurse Researcher*, 20(6), 17-20.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.7748/nr2013.07.20.6.17.e315>

Wilson, A. (2014). Being a practitioner: An application of Heidegger's phenomenology. *Nurse Researcher*, 21(6), 28-33. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7748/nr.21.6.28.e1251>





