



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***EXPLORING PUBLIC RELATIONS ROLES AND DECISION-MAKING
PROCESSES TOWARDS ACHIEVING BEST PRACTICES AMONG
PRACTITIONERS OF NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS***

NSINI ANSELEM EYO

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By

NSINI ANSELEM EYO

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

April 2021

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, Lion Obong Barrister Philip Anselem Eyo and Obongawan Juliana Anselem Eyo. My beloved wife, Dr. Chinedu Nsini-Eyo and siblings, Ukeme, Ime, Yemeti, and Daramfon for their unflinching support and prayers throughout my studies.



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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April 2021

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Faculty : Modern Languages and Communication

This study explores the roles of accredited Nigerian public relations (PR) practitioners, their decision-making involvement, and standards of practices in relation to internationally accepted best practices. Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) is challenged by lack of autonomy and interference in its operation of regulating the profession by the executive arm of government. Thus, the objectives of this study explore specific roles of PR practitioners, consequences of non-performance of expected roles, decision making involvement towards achieving organizational goals, and ascertaining the current standards of the profession in meeting with globally accepted practices. The study was conducted in Uyo Akwa Ibom State, South-South region of the Federal Republic Nigeria. A qualitative research approach was deployed for the study. Data collection emanated from semi-structured interviews, observation, and documents reviews. Interview was conducted with 52 informants across three categories of participants: the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), registered PR practitioners and stakeholders. Based on thematic analysis, data was triangulated to ensure consistency and validation of findings for the study. Findings revealed that PR practitioners in Akwa Ibom State were performing mainly technician functions with no involvement in decision making. Further findings showed low standards of practices particularly the regulatory body (NIPR) ability to enforce code of conduct and ensure acceptable standards of practices in the profession. Non engagement of PR personnel and involvement of PR practitioners in decision making militates against the practicality of excellence in PR. The findings suggest urgent need for policy change to enable NIPR as the governing body that regulates the profession to improve its operation and standards. Consequently, the study recommends greater engagement of PR practitioners in management and decision-making roles as well as de-politicization of NIPR. Hence, autonomy of NIPR ensures standardization of profession in line with internationally accepted best practices of PR.

Keywords: Role Theory, Public Relations, Decision Making, Stakeholders

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Falsafah

**MENEROKA PERANAN PERHUBUNGAN AWAM DAN PROSES MEMBUAT
KEPUTUSAN UNTUK MENCAPAI AMALAN TERBAIK DI KALANGAN
PENGAMAL INSTITUT PERHUBUNGAN AWAM NIGERIA**

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Kajian ini meneroka peranan pengamal perhubungan awam (PR) Nigeria yang telah mendapat akreditasi, penglibatan mereka dalam membuat keputusan, dan piawaian yang berkaitan dengan amalan terbaik yang diterima pada peringkat antarabangsa. Institut Perhubungan Awam Nigeria (NIPR) dicabar oleh kekurangan autonomi dan gangguan dalam operasi pengurusan profesional oleh eksekutif kerajaan. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk meneroka peranan khusus pengamal perhubungan awam dan keberkesananannya, akibat daripada tidak melaksanakan peranan yang diharapkan, penglibatan membuat keputusan untuk mencapai matlamat organisasi, dan memastikan standard terkini profesion dalam memenuhi amalan yang diterima secara global. Kajian ini dijalankan di Uyo, Akwa Ibom, wilayah Selatan - Selatan Republik Persekutuan, Nigeria. Penyelidikan kualitatif adalah pendekatan yang digunakan untuk kajian ini. Data untuk kajian ini diperolehi berdasarkan kepada kaedah kualitatif melalui temubual mendalam secara separa berstruktur, pemerhatian dan analisis dokumen. Menemuduga telah dijalankan dengan 52 orang dari tiga kategori peserta, Institut Perhubungan Awam Nigeria (NIPR), berdaftar pengamal perhubungan awam dan pihak berkepentingan. Berdasarkan analisis tematik data adalah segi tiga untuk memastikan ketekalan dan pengesahan dapatan kajian ini. Keputusan dari kajian ini menunjukkan pengamal perhubungan awam di negeri Akwa Ibom melakukan cuma peranan juruteknik tanpa melibatkan diri dalam membuat keputusan. Juga penemuan dari kajian ini menunjukkan standard amalan yang rendah kerana NIPR tidak dapat menguatkuasakan tatakelakuan dan memastikan piawai amalan yang boleh diterima dalam profesion perhubungan awam. Bukan menggunakan pengamal perhubungan awam, dan penglibatan pengamal perhubungan awam dalam membuat keputusan menghalang amalan kecemerlangan perhubungan awam. Keputusan dari Penyelidikan ini keperluan untuk perubahan dasar mengawal dan meningkatkan standard standard amalan perhubungan awam. Kajian ini mencadangkan untuk penglibatan lebih lanjut pengamal perhubungan awam dalam Pembuatan Keputusan yang tidak bergantung kepada kerajaan bagi meningkatkan mutu standard NIPR. Mulai sekarang autonomi NIPR memastikan penyeragaman profesion sejajar dengan amalan perhubungan awam yang diterima secara antarabangsa.

Kata kunci: Teori Peranan, Perhubungan Awam, Membuat Keputusan, Pelanggan

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACEJMC	Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications
AG	Global Alliance
CEO	Chief Executive officer
CMS	Christian Missionary Society
CPRE	Commission on Public Relations Education
EFQM	European Foundation for Quality Management
GAPRC	Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication
IABC	International Association of Business Communicators
ICCO	International Communications Consultancy Organization
IMC	Integrated Marketing Communication
IPR	Institute for Public Relations
IPRA	International Public Relations Association
IPRM	Institute of Public Relation Malaysia
MDAs	Ministries Department and Agencies
NGO	Non-profit Organization
NIPR	Nigerian Institute of Public Relations
NPF	Nigerian Police Force
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PR	Public Relations
PRAN	Public Relations Association of Nigeria
PRCA - MENA	Public relations and communications association of Middle East North Africa
PRCA - SEA	Public relations and communications association of South East Asia
PRCA	Public Relations and Communications Association

PRCA-UK	Public relations and communications association of United Kingdom
PRIA	Public Relations Institute of Australia
PRINZ	Public Relations Institute of New Zealand
PRISA	Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa
PRSA	Public Relations Society of America
STOPS	Situational Theory of Problem Solving
UAC	United African Company
UAE	United Arab Emirate
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNUDHR	United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights
USA	United State of America

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Public relations (PR) have been an effective way of building relationship between individuals, groups, organization, and stakeholders (Grunig, 2011; Ugoani, 2020). PR activities in Nigeria traverse both public and private establishments, resulting in high demand for the profession in the country (Udomisor & Osademe, 2013). Research findings suggest that PR practitioners in Nigeria are largely technicians with little managerial roles (Amujo & Melewar, 2011; Ubwa 2014). Contrast to their counterparts in developed or Western countries where practitioners are specialized and skilled to carry out both technician and managerial roles particularly in their involvement in decision making process (Ubwa, 2014). Evidently, standards with respect to performance that is built on ethical regulations has the propensity of safeguarding professionalism in PR practice (Peterson, 2003; Tian & Peterson, 2016; Haque & Ahmad, 2017). Ethics and the standards of practice are equally important in the profession. Thus, these standards must not only be applicable but guided by ethics to qualify or motivate professionalism of the profession (Ndu, Nnolim & Nwaizugbo, 2014; Haque & Ahmad, 2017).

Sriramesh and Stumberger (2017) suggested that the effect of globalization has resulted in the integration of some universal principles of PR to accommodate local setting. This is because diversity in culture, beliefs, societal systems and governance of the various races, countries and people of the world shapes their way of life and identity. As such, even though the Western perspectives of PR practice has been virtually adopted by the rest of the world, adapting some generic principles of specific cultural, political, social and economic conditions in various societies within developing nations given their multifaceted socio-economic backgrounds is equally important for the development of PR profession (McKie & Munshi, 2007; Fuse, Land & Lambiase, 2010; Sriramesh & Stumberger, 2017).

A significant amount of culturally related features has been identified and acknowledged between the Western, European, Asian and the African PR practices as well. As a result of this, Puspa (2013); Kriyantono and McKenna (2017) findings on Asian PR practices concludes that certain countries have their own PR practices specifically due to their own cultural characteristics and so applying Western theories and practices without putting them in context leads to inappropriate and misleading assumption (Gezgin, 2019). The cultural element of PR practice is evident in terms of power distance, individualism/collectivism, Confucian dynamism and masculinity/femininity dimension of PR (Gezgin, 2019) has proven that application of globally Western model of PR is not feasible in all countries.

For instance, budi system otherwise known as cultural appropriateness practiced in Malaysia inculcates societal norms and taboos with precise identity of dos and don'ts in relational communication among and between members of the society (Ramli, 2013). Although Malaysians are free to hold different ideologies and practice various religious rituals, the budi system advocates for polite communication in respect to differences that

exist in a multi-cultural and religious society such as Malaysia (Sofjan, 2016). As such, *budi* is engraved in Malaysian relational communication, failure to adhere to accepted practices of Malaysian culture is unacceptable in the social system and perceived as ethically and morally doing something wrong (Ramli, 2013).

Similarly, Guanxi practice in China has not only shaped Chinese society but has been part of the Chinese society and culture for a very long time (Servaes, 2016). Consequently, Guanxi has greatly influenced PR practice in China particularly. Although, Guanxi literally means social relationships and social exchange in the society (Chi & Seock-Jin, 2017) the system involves exchange of gifts, favors, and banquets (Tsetsura, 2015). Thus, cultivation of personal relationships, networks and friendships of mutual reliance ensure obligation and indebtedness to each other. Accordingly, payment for media coverage and news, exchange of favors is grounded in human sentiments has become a tool for manipulation of human sentiments and relationships (Servaes, 2016). Although, the ethics of Guanxi practice has been criticized with critics arguing that it helps in manipulating relations and sentiments as people who are socially indebted to each other expect payment in the future which may lead to compromises and unethical activities (Servaes, 2016).

Similarly, brown envelop syndrome in African journalism and by extension Nigerian PR practice seems to influence news reporting to suit the intention of a particular individual or a group of people (Skjerdal, 2018). Brown envelop syndrome has become a common practice in PR practice in Nigeria. Oberiri (2016) noted that monetary bribe, handout, and gifts given to PR practitioners particularly journalist pressurize them into doing what the giver of the handout wants. As such, once handout is accepted by practitioners, they become incapable of ensuring objective reporting. The implication of this is that demand for bribes and other forms of gratification by journalists before coverage of event or publishing of new stories and sentimental reporting contradict ethics of journalism (Oberiri, 2016).

However, scholars like Skjerdal (2010) argue that for a better understanding of brown envelope syndrome in African journalism or PR practice, consideration must be given to social, political, and economic conditions of the African countries. Thus, examining the socio political and economic situation of developing nations like Nigeria, governance system, level of activism, press freedom and media ownership explains why some of these practices persist. This is because most media outfit in African counties like Nigeria are either affiliated to the government or owned by government and they are constantly used for praise singing (Ibbi, 2016; Ekeli, 2017). Citizen journalism and to a great degree private media outfit seek to balance news reporting through objective reporting (Ekeli, 2017; Roberts, 2019). As such, brown envelope becomes a form of appreciation for publicity by clients and not bribery given that most private owned media outfit depend on advertisement and event related coverage to generate funds for their operations (Ibbi, 2016). Therefore, monetary appreciation for PR practices like paid news coverage may not be unethical in the context of appreciation for favour because such practices may have been in place long before globalization of PR (Skjerdal, 2010).

Notably, theory building, approaches and theories in PR has been predominantly from the American perspectives and few from Western European countries (Siramesh & Vercic, 2003; Kriyantono & McKenna, 2017). Cultural differences to a large extent affect the practice of PR including daily dealings and strategies of PR practitioners (Yeo & Pang, 2017). Equally, the concept of Guanxi or Confucianism deeply penetrates several aspects of business and social life of the people in many Asian countries. Case in point, personal relationship, and networks (Guanxi) in China, South Korea, Japan, Indian and Vietnam is essential for business. Thus, building relationships with key publics goes along the lines of performing a favor to make ends meet instead of doing it on merit (Zhang, Shen, & Jiang 2009; Van Ruler, 2015).

The cultural aspect of PR reflects in the social life of individuals and organizations evident in hierarchy and ranks where everyone has a fixed position and respect is accorded to the highest ranked person in authority (Zhengye, Yunxia, & Michael 2012; Servaes, 2016). Therefore, participation and involvement in a decision making process is subject to personal or individual relationship with the management along with total loyalty thereby leaving decision making exclusively to high ranked officials (Dunning & Kim, 2007; Van Ruler, 2015). As a result, PR roles lack decision making and remains largely technician role.

Subsequently, PR existed in Africa long before colonialism of African by Europeans colonialist (Van Heerden, 2005). Pharaohs of ancient Egypt made known their achievements and policies through public announcement by their spokespersons, word-pictures, tombstone inscription and impressive monument (Rensburg, 2002). The challenge of PR in Africa in the 21st century is mainly the lack of positioning to be part of management or involvement in strategic decision-making process (Omondi, 2012). The diverse and complex nature of socio, cultural, political, economic and developmental issues of the African society have great impact on the effectiveness of PR practitioners in the continent. Although there are slight differences in the practice of PR in the various African nations, due to cultural differences, however studies show that South Africa, Uganda, Nigeria, Kenya, Mauritius, Guinea, and Tanzania PR practitioners are largely technicians with little involvement in strategic management due to lack of understanding of the role of PR (Rensburg, 2002; Van Heerden, 2005; Steyn, 2009; Mersham & Skinner, 2016; Omondi, 2012; Ubwa, 2014; Gusau, Abdullah, Hasan & Tamam, 2018).

PR practice in Europe is synonymous with the American perspective even though it has not been overwhelmingly embraced (L'Etang, 2004). Likewise, PR literatures are largely dominated by American scholarship as notable and major textbooks, theories and concepts from academic, press and practitioners originated for the US and permeated to other parts of the world (Vercic, Van Ruler, Buttschi, & Flodin 2001; Ki & Ye, 2017). Kenny (2017) noted that after the publication of Grunig and Hunt (1984) four models of PR, Grunig's Excellence Theory has dominated the theory and practice of PR. Likewise Kriyantono (2020) noted that excellence theory has dominated PR research for over four decades. Nevertheless, excellence theory is without criticism as Kenny (2017) argued that excellence theory cannot travel smoothly across national and cultural boundaries because it does not take into consideration the level of development of nations, economic systems, media systems and activism level, political system, and cultural difference. This

is rightly so because media system of Western countries is not at par with developing nations like Nigeria where press freedom is curtailed (Layefa & Johnson, 2016) and PR practitioners are not engaged in managerial role or given the chance to participate in decision making process (Ogunyombo & Azeez, 2018).

Kriyantono (2020) in his criticism echoed Gower (2006) sentiment that the research agenda of excellence theory tend to regard PR primarily as management function based on its functions with emphasis on organizational theories without revealing the underling relation between individuals and organization. Buttressing further, Kriyantono (2020) stressed that PR is ideological rather than just functioning because PR helps in the spread of certain ideologies particularly where management of an organization constantly project organizational interest to various stakeholders. Consequently, some scholars such as Van Ruler, Vercic, Butschi, and Flodin (2004) identified common characteristic between the European and American model of PR. A common attribute between the American and European PR professionals is visible in their performance of dual roles and function (Vercic, et al., 2001; Johansson & Larsson, 2015).

However, there are some differences that are apparent between American and European perspectives of PR with particular focus on how PR is used as a communication tool to affected stakeholders (Johansson & Larsson, 2015). For instance, the European model of PR has a border societal role (Raupp, 2011) with holistic functions and community-oriented activities beyond organizational boundaries (Vercic et al., 2001). Whereas the American model is rather situational and interest oriented (Van Heerden, 2005) in the sense that PR service largely caters for organizational publics and is geared at maximizing monetary benefit or incentive. Accordingly, Yeo and Pang (2017) stressed that problem-solving abilities of individualistic organizational setting becomes activities that are paramount to the organizations and their publics or stakeholders in the practice of PR in America.

In broader sense PR perspectives pay great attention to societal needs, its subsystems with loyalty, group solidarity, personal relationships and promotion affected publics within a multifaceted society (Garcia, 2017; Yeo & Pang, 2017). Kant (1781) argued that research without practice is empty and practice without research is blind, thus criticism and culturalization is needed to improve the field of PR. While the Western perspective of PR practice cannot be universally applied because of cultural difference even though it is widely used, the context and perspectives of non-Western practice such as Confucianism and paid news show the growing need for cross-cultural and multicultural PR (Gezgin, 2019). It is apparent that excellence theory seeks to ensure professionalism and standardization of PR practice particularly involvement of PR in decision making. Hence, PR ensures corporate sustainability through effective and efficient communication that enhances positive interaction with stakeholders and attainment of desired goals (Rego, Cunha, & Polonia 2017).

PR practice has evolved to embrace corporate sustainability because a major function of PR is to create and maintain excellent relations between organization's stakeholders and the public at large (Brockett & Rezaee, 2012; Rivero & Theodore, 2014). As such, corporate sustainability is built around organizational structures to embrace PR practice

(Gilaninia, Taleghani, & Mohammadi 2013). This is to say that in order to achieve institutional goals, objective and corporate sustenance, PR tools such as press releases, publicity, lobbying and persuasive communication helps in creating public awareness by providing information to stakeholders thereby ensuring stakeholders confidence and trust in the organization (Penning, 2007; Rivero & Theodore, 2014).

1.1 Background of Study

The existence of factors that may possibly affect the growth and development of PR in different countries have been acknowledged by scholars of which Nigeria is not an exemption to this fact (Chen, 2013; Ubwa, 2014). Ubwa (2014) attributed lack of enforcement of codes, corruption and misuse of authority by those in power, lack of formal curriculum for the study of PR in colleges and submission to top management desires as barriers to the development of PR in Nigeria. He further stressed that PR in Nigeria is neither fully occupationally, nor organizationally professional and currently seen as an occupation or a trade. This is because practically anyone can practice the profession without formal training, and this is why the profession is equated to a trade as anyone and everyone is free to trade.

The term trade within this context is an individual who is unqualified, untrained, and unskilled to hold or occupied PR position but is seen holding the position and discharging PR duties that are below the expatriation of a PR professional. Thus, PR position and profession becomes a trade in which anybody is free to buy or sell (Ubwa, 2014). As such, individuals occupying offices have role expected of them as occupants of such offices. Thus, prescription of roles in connection with role theory of PR is largely shaped by expectations of the outside target groups or stakeholders (Sesen, 2015). Consequently, description of different roles, and key activities of practitioners in the organization ensure role performance. However, the basis for practitioners to perform roles and the consequences of not performing such roles become pertinent issues in meeting the needs of stakeholders. On this premise, attention is drawn to the consequences of not performing expected roles as well as choices made when dealing with various stakeholders.

Holmes Global Communications Report 2016 envisaged growth in global PR agency sector to \$20 billion by 2020 and notably, Nigerian PR firms are absent (Bamgbola, 2016). Although the report can be viewed as an individualized effort lacking input from the government perspectives as well as the country's PR governing body which is the Nigerian Institute of Public Relation (NIPR). It is however important in the projection and performance of PR practices to ascertain standards of PR practices in the country given that transparency is a core component of PR practices (Stanic, 2019). PR has been instrumental in-service delivery in the Nigeria right from the colonial times and as such, relations with various stakeholders can be greatly enhanced if practitioners are engaged to perform strategic management roles (Nwakanma, 2013). However, Nwakanma observed that non engagement of properly trained and registered practitioners and consultancies by Ministries Department and Agencies (MDAs) in Nigerian hinder the development of PR profession as areas of opportunities to provide and improve service delivery cannot be realized through the non-engagement attitude of governmental bodies.

Sesen (2015) posited that PR roles include economic, social, and legal roles. However, Sesen, (2015) argued that the social role of PR is shaped by the expectations of the external targeted group (stakeholders). In other words, the external policies of the organization are orchestrated and coordinated by the PR practitioner. On this premise, the organization must act in accordance with local laws governing the social system and ethics while its practitioners must also perform roles and functions expected of them in accordance with organizational laws. In the same vein, non-performance of roles by practitioners negates the very essence of their engagement. As a result of this, some scholars argued that involvement in decision making is not a function of practitioners since they are often not part of management or dominant coalition group (Reber & Berger, 2006; Putra, 2009). Instead, practitioners should be concerned with communication given their limited strategic competencies and involvement in decision processes of the organization as most of them are ill-equipped for the job (Gusau et al., 2017).

Consequently, findings indicate that PR in Nigeria is yet to be professionalized and is currently seen as trade or occupation. Various reasons have been attributed to why PR is a trade and not profession they include non-compliance with code of conduct (Osemeke & Adegbite, 2016); outdated curriculum for PR education and training (Amujo & Melewar, 2011); inability of NIPR to enforce its own code and laws against erring parties (Udomisor & Osademe, 2013); non engagement of qualified persons to manage PR position, units and department (Ubwa, 2014); engagement of PR as merely information and communication tool (Ukonu, Anyadike, & Okoro, 2018); exclusion of PR in management decision making (Chizobam & Obinna, 2018); non engagement of formally registered professional (Okechukwu, 2019).

Evidently, the above findings indicate that PR in Nigeria is given less importance because formally trained or qualified practitioners are not engaged or deployed where needed, non-inclusion in management, relegation to communication functions and roles, invisibility of NIPR in policing and regulation of the profession as well as non-compliance with laws establishing the profession and ethical conducts are amongst the hindrance to PR profession in the country.

For instance, Ukonu et al. (2018) stated that with social media anyone with a cell phone and e-mail can claim to be a PR consultant and this is due to the perception that anyone can be a PR practitioner without having any formal training. Also, the inaction of NIPR in regulating the practice of profession has further opened the door for anyone without formal training to practice PR in the country. Drawing from Sesen (2015) assertion that the association between social position and behavior offers a definition of role, it appears that PR practitioners are expected to perform roles in fulfillment of the expectations. On one hand, scholars like Sesen (2015) argued that roles are expected human actions. On the other hand, some other scholars like Asunta (2016) argued that roles are reactive behaviors of occupants of a social position. This implies that PR roles are predictive because expectations accompany action (Biddle, 1986; Johansson & Larsson, 2015; Asunta, 2016). And so, given the expectation from persons occupying PR positions, practitioner's involvement in decision making cannot be overlooked, taking into consideration excellence PR and models of PR.

1.1.1 The Development of Public Relation in Nigeria

Some scholars have attribute the advent of PR in Nigeria to colonial rule, while the development of PR is traced to five eras namely, the public enlightenment era commencing between 1859 to the late 1930s, broadcasting era commence in the late 1930s, political propaganda era commences in the late 1930s to mid-1940s, public information era 1945 to early 1960s and the professionalization era which took place in the early 1960s to late 2000s accordingly (Otubanjo, Amujo, & Melewar 2010; Ubwa 2014). Activities build up and events leading to the independence of Nigeria from Britain further gave PR a big boost in the country (Otubanjo & Amujo, 2013). The 1930s, political propaganda era of PR in Nigeria saw increase in activism because of the educated African youth who took up various mediums such as newspapers and public campaigns to raise awareness against colonial rule in Africa and demand for independence (Mordi, 2011). Therefore, political propaganda of the 1930 brought about PR activism drawing the educated elite to be actively involved in PR activities thus setting the tone for the profession after attainment of independence (Otubanjo & Amujo, 2013).

Akpabio (2009) argued that PR has long been in existence in the African continent and by extension Nigeria even before British colonialism. Buttressing further, Akpabio, (2009) stresses that ancient roots of PR in Nigeria is evident in the role of town criers, who were responsible for mobilizing gatherings in the village square/hall, usage of the talking drums as mass media for communication and awareness, evoking deeds of ancestors and magnifying past events through wooden drums. Although there is consensus that PR in Nigeria is still underdeveloped due to competence level of practitioners and the institutional approach to engagement of PR and enforcement of code of the profession (Okechukwu, 2019). Evidently, Nigerian practitioners are not members of management, not involved in decision making process, lack specialized skills and ill-equipped educationally and in training to perform boundary spanning functions and environmental scanning (Akpabio, 2009; Ubwa 2014; Ukonu et al., 2018). Despite the limited role of PR and its practitioners as noted by scholars like Ubwa (2014), PR has always been part of the Nigerian society although the practice may not align with Western perspectives.

1.2 Problem Statement

In a globally sense, PR is viewed as a contributory factor in building relationships between organizations and stakeholders (Amujo & Melewar, 2011; Onyeneje, 2016; Ki, Kim & Ledingham, 2015). However, the practice of PR in Nigeria is still primarily focused on dissemination of information to the public with minimal guided principles (Ubwa, 2014). Notably, Amujo and Melewar (2011) echoed Ubwa's sentiment that PR in Nigeria is neither fully occupationally professional nor organizationally professional which is to say that lack of specialization and standardization in the PR profession, usurping of PR roles and functions by related field, lack of formal curricular for teaching of PR in higher institution of learning have made the profession become such that everybody and anybody is fit and free to practice.

Anyebe (2018) also asserts that CSR humanizes the organization hence, the usage of PR as a basic mechanism for disseminating information to stakeholders on organizational CSR efforts' including securing of media coverage is a perilously non-strategic engagement. As such, Anyebe assertion typically reflect the practice of PR in Nigeria where PR practitioners serve as merely information propagators with little or no contribution at the managerial sphere.

Thus, besides PR being a mechanism for publicity, a socially responsible firm keeps balance between profitability and responsibility towards its publics and the society at large (Aupperle, Carroll, & Hatfield 1985; Carroll, 1991). CSR has primarily been used as a PR tool by organizations (Capriotti and Moreno 2007; Kim and Reber 2009), however Uadiale and Fagbemi (2012) revealed that CSR initiatives in Nigeria are largely tailored to aid marketability and profitability of the firm. Thus, in their quest to increase competitive edge over competitors as attractive alternative and give their brand iconic value, CSR provides firms the competitive differentiation needed (Ibrahim & Abubakar, 2020).

The role of PR in decision making goes beyond communication and dialogue with stakeholders as practitioners are expected to participate in organization decision and not merely implement decision made by others (Neill & Lee, 2016). Thus, decision making process in PR require practitioners as experts with knowledge, skills, ideas, and abilities to propose, advice, provide input and information to management for policy formation and subsequent implementation of organizational decision (Mykkanen & Vos 2015; Mykkänen, 2017). On the other hand, involvement in decision making requires practitioners to sit at the decision making table with management or become members of the upper/top management team and participate directly in the decision making (Dozier & Broom, 1995; Jeong & Park, 2017). Notably, studies on PR decision making in Nigeria focus more on the various ways practitioners maybe involved in organizational decision making (Ubwa, 2014; Achor & Okoye, 2015). As such, less focus has been given to practitioner's discretion, decisional powers, and ethical consciousness as well as the extent to which Nigerian practitioners are involved in decision making for organization effectiveness.

Similarly, excellence theory advocates for practitioners to either be part of the dominant coalition or report directly to management in order to participate in decision making (Grunig, 1992). The situational theory of problem solving (STOPS) shifts focus from decision making involvement to problem situations and solution to issues (Kim & Grunig, 2011). On this premise, practitioner as problem solvers with communicative actions must be expected to either act to address stakeholder's needs, advice or give management (decision makers) information to act upon. However, Nigerian practitioners are not engaged or empowered to be actively involved in the decision making (Oso & Semiu, 2012; Olatunji, 2014; Fashakin, 2016).

Consequently, the lack of engagement of qualified or trained practitioner's particularly in public entities like government agencies and department has made the task of addressing stakeholders needs daunting and unattainable (Igben, 2016; Atuma, 2017) and this is perhaps the reason why Nigerian PR practitioners are continuously viewed as

publicists responsible mainly for sending out media releases and event information to the press because they only play technician roles of acting on the orders of top management with no contribution or involvement in management decision making for organizational effectiveness.

Futhermore, the lack of liaison (engagement) of PR practitioners in the Nigerian polity impedes the rule of engagement and international best practices (Oso & Semiu, 2012; Dhanesh, 2017). For instance, Oil spillage is a perennial problem in the oil producing states in Nigeria particularly the Niger Delta region of the country in which Akwa Ibom State is not an exemption. In this regard, the inaction of the government and practitioners alike leads to feeling of neglect by communities affected. The feeling of neglect stems from the fact that oil exploration and drilling corporations do not engage qualified practitioners to build relations with host communities and solve issues concerning oil spillages and environmental degradation. Accordingly, (Amadi and Abdullah 2012; Onyeneje 2016; Nwobodo-Anyadiiegwu and Mbohwa 2017; Umar and Othman 2017) noted that corporate social responsibilities (CSR) initiatives of oil companies in Nigeria are imposed on host communities along with inadequate communication and non engagement relating with host communities (oil producing areas). As a result of this, projects geared at addressing agitation of oil producing communities in Nigeria does not adequately address sustainable needs of communities as they are born out of short-range convenience because most PR personnel engaged by the government and oil exploration firms are unqualified (Prpich, Sam, & Coulon 2019).

Subsequently, Akingbolu (2017) further validate the lack of engagement of trained practitioners particularly by government agencies stressing that the existence of so many quacks laundering the linens of government officials dent the reputation of PR profession in the country and hinders the professionalization of PR in Nigeria. The consequences of this is that propaganda, unethical acts and practices like bribery, brown envelope syndrome continuously mar the profession in the country. Failure by government and even corporations to engage trained practitioners hinders development of PR in the country. Nwakanma (2013) also observed that with over 350 Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs) in Nigeria less than 10% of these MDs engaged registered PR practitioners. This negligent attitude of the government even with the existence of legislation establishing the practice and profession of PR hinders opportunities of government business to improve service delivery by practitioners through the utilization of properly registered practitioners.

The Holmes 2016 Global Communications Report states that global PR agency sector will approach \$20 billion by the year 2020. However, one significant problem with this global study is the fact that Nigerian PR firms are absent in this study as well as the rankings of the report (Bamgbola, 2016). The diagram below shows areas in which PR profession and practice experienced growth and improvement as contained in the first ever published PR report in Nigeria. Interestingly, the report is an individual effort which clearly lacks input from the government perspectives and perhaps the country's PR governing body NIPR.

Although, LSF/PR became the first and only Nigerian PR agency to be ranked by Holmes global annual report 2019 as the 11th most creative PR agencies in the world (Okeke, 2019). However, government agencies, institutions, and organizations, in Nigeria repeatedly display a nonchalant attitude in engagement of PR (Kalu, Nma, & Emmanuel, 2015). On this premise, it is essential to study the performance of NIPR accredited members as practitioners in their positions to ascertain their specific roles and standards of practice of PR in Nigeria given the fact that ethics and ethical compliances are core ingredient in the practice of PR.



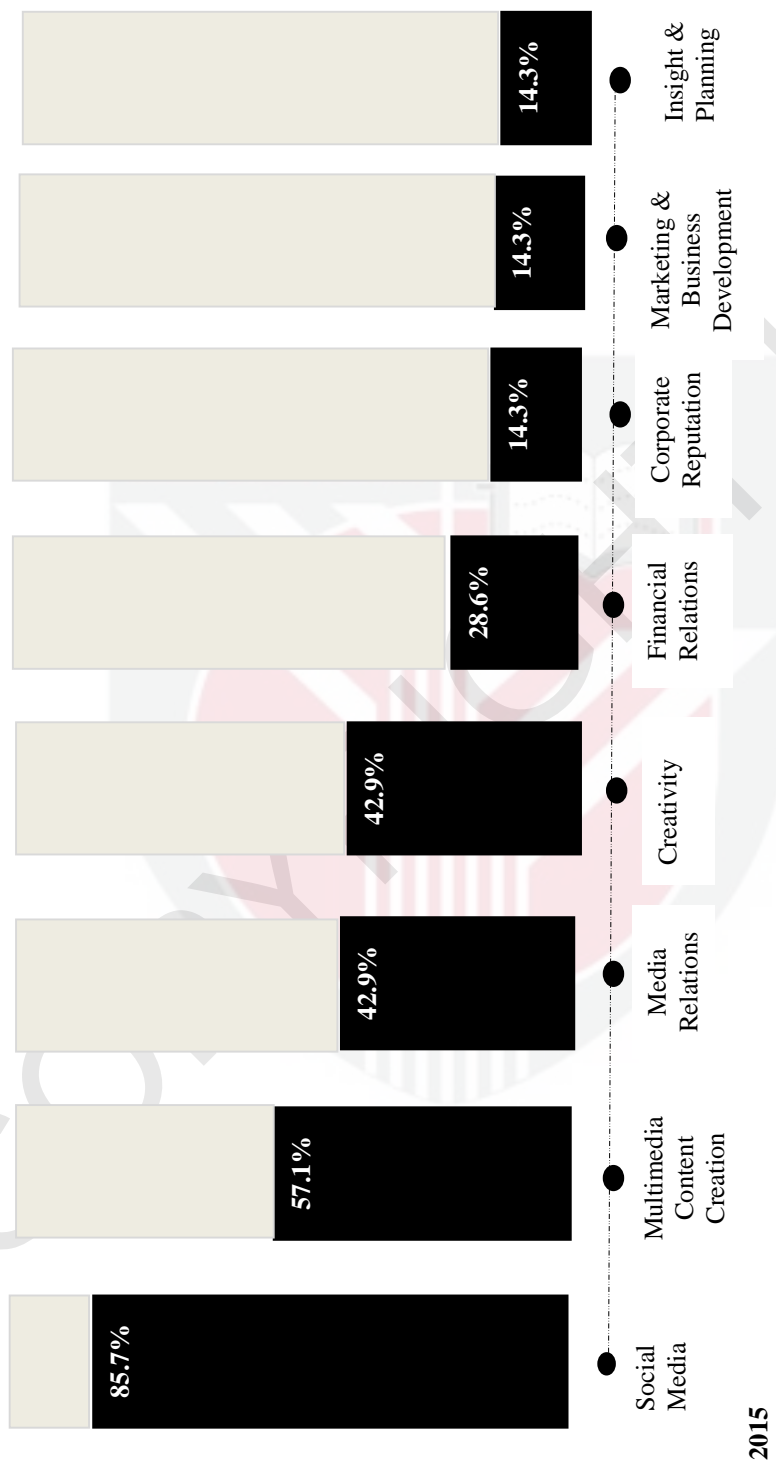


Figure 1.1: Inside the Nigerian Public Relation Industry
 [Adopted from Bangbola (2016).]

The Global Alliance (GA) is a confederation of the world's major PR and communication management associations and institutions which seeks to raise the professional standards of PR through the unification of PR protocols across the globe (Skinner, Mersham, & Valin 2004). Administrative procedures of entities are geared at establishing efficient, responsible, and consistent management actions (Trashlieva & Radeva, 2018). As such, purging discord and conflict in an organization ensures legitimacy of management action through the application of rules in an objective manner to arrive at organizational decision (Trashlieva, & Radeva, 2018). Thus, focusing on rational economic goals implies that standards must be guided and applied in accordance with stipulated laws and ethics to legitimize management actions in an objective and consistent manner as well as ensure professionalism (Ndu et al., 2014; Asunta, 2016). A major criticism of NIPR is its inability to curb activities of quacks (untrained and unregistered practitioner) as well as ineffective monitoring and implementation of code of conduct (enforcement). Notably there is no precedent regarding sanctions handed down to erring practitioners since the inception of NIPR in 1990 either from the private or government sphere (Udomisor & Osademe, 2013). It is necessary at this juncture to ascertain NIPR's capacity to develop and maintain standards in meeting with international acceptable practices.

Besides identifying factors militating against PR practice in Nigeria, issues such as low competency of practitioners suggest the need for standardization of PR education and training processes to produce qualified and proficient practitioners. Similarly, inability to meet stakeholder's expectations particularly inadequacies in service delivery by entities principally governmental bodies implies the need for engagement of PR in the Nigerian polity (Ojobor & Ewurum, 2016). Furthermore, relegation of PR to mainly information dissemination indicates the level of importance attached to PR as well as lack of understanding of PR. Likewise, excellence theory proposed involvement of PR in management decision making (Grunig & Grunig, 2008). Thus, this study makes a case for greater involvement of Nigerian PR professionals in decision making process as well as standardized education and training process to enhance the profession in the country.

In addition, besides meeting stakeholder's expectation, effective role performance also increases stakeholder's expectation because effective role performance enhances professionalism (Sesen, 2015). Thus, engagement of trained and component practitioners can help reduce unethical activities such as brown envelop syndrome in Nigerian PR practice. Furthermore, the attitude of engaging untrained and unqualified persons by governmental bodies and agencies to manage their PR unit, department and positions in the face of existing legislation establishing the profession in the country suggest the need for independence of NIPR as the regulatory body of the profession. Thus, this study calls for autonomy of NIPR in regulating its affairs as an independent body devoid of interference by the government of the day and by extension politicians to curtail recurrent usage of PR as an instrument to laundry their image. For this reason, the inaction and inability of NIPR to sanction entities found to engage un-registered practitioners in breach of NIPR laws which makes it an offence to practice without formal registration or accreditation suggest the need for independence of NIPR to effectively police and improve the standards of practice of the profession. Hence, this study is focused on the specific roles of NIPR accredited (registered) members and their participation or involvement in decision-making for organizational effectiveness and in keeping with internationally accepted best practices of PR profession.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the specific roles performed by NIPR accredited practitioners?
2. How are NIPR practitioners involved in decision making for organizational goals?
3. To what extent are the current standards of practice of NIPR in line with internationally accepted PR best practices?

1.4 General Research Objective

1. To identify the role performance, involvement in decision making and standards of practices among NIPR accredited (registered) practitioners.

1.5 Specific Objectives

1. To explore the specific roles performed by NIPR (registered) practitioners.
2. To explore decision making involvement of NIPR practitioners in meeting organization goals.
3. To discover NIPR standards of practices in professionalism, ethics, training, and best practices in line with international accepted PR best practices.

1.6 Significance of the Study'

Research indicates that Nigerian PR practitioners largely perform technician role with no participation in decision making. Given the nature of role theory in PR, practitioners are expected to function and perform roles not only as members of the organization or actors in the organization but also as experts in the field capable of offering useful information and advising management for organization effectiveness. Equally, involvement in decision making requires practitioners to be members of the dominant coalition (management) and directly and collectively participate in decisions as it affects the organization.

However, the functions and role performance of Nigerian practitioners is impaired by management/organization goals and perception of PR. Against the backdrop of practitioners operating mainly within the purview of management even on ethical matters which in turn hampers practitioner's self efficacy. This study is significant because it adds to existing body of knowledge in PR. Additionally, besides highlighting impediments to PR roles, rational behind performance of specific roles, non participation in decision

making and current standards of practice when compared to accepted best practices. Finding from this study enables understanding of hindrance to PR in Nigeria and also offer policy makers inputs with respect to ways of empowering practitioners to function and perform their respective roles without interference or fear of retribution from management. Equally, findings from this study also proffer avenues through which practitioners can participate in decision making to elevate and improve the standards of practices of the profession in the county.

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

Role theory in PR focuses on actors of the organizations in a social system. As such, individuals as organization actors must behave according to the rules and patterns of the organization (Allen & Caillouet, 1994; Sesen, 2015). Theoretically, the role theory is unfeasible in the Nigerian context because Nigerian practitioners are solely performing single role of information dissemination or communication functions as opposed to performing both technicians and managerial roles (Ubwa, 2014). Given that practitioner's role, function, action, and choice are subject to management directives and organization discretion. Hence, the role theory is limited in scope in the Nigerian context because organization management decides the role, location, importances and functions of PR and this to a great degree hinders practitioner's ability to function without subjugation to management motives. Research indicates that PR role relates to the specific tasks performed by practitioners either as technicians or managers (Dozier, 1983). However, Nigerian practitioners are subjected to performing mainly information and communication thereby hampering the role theory in operation.

1.6.2 Policy Significance

This study makes a case for enactment of policies geared at protecting and preserving practitioner's right and greater involvement in decision making even as employees subjected to organization laws. This is because quite often Nigerian practitioners are made to stay silent or lose their employment in the event of voicing out against unethical acts or actions of the organization. Similarly, NIPR as an independent body is unable to interfere or review appointment or employment of untrained or unregistered practitioner's appointed to lead PR department or unit in breach of NIPR orders. This further highlight the lack of engagement of registered practitioners and lack of enforcement of code of practices as well as protection of practitioners in the event of conflict of interest emanating from ethical breach by firms.

Strategic planning in stakeholder management requires a systematic action to establish and improve relationship with organization and its various stakeholders (Grunig, 2011). In the quest to answers the question why an organization act or behave in the way it does, or who is the organization? Consideration must be given to the underlining objective, goals, rules, policies and culture upon which the organization is founded. This is because organization goals and culture influence employee's roles, behaviours, and performance (Nazir & Islam 2017).

The following points below highlights the need for policy changes or formation to aid practitioner's role performance and NIPR regulate the profession effectively.

- Holmes report (2016) acknowledged significant improvement in international PR, however Nigerian firms are absent in the international stage. Moreso, private sector initiative propelled research development of PR reports in Nigeria while less input was recorded from the government/public as evident in the first ever Nigerian PR report published in 2016.
- Eckardt (2016) report on Nigerian PR industry titled Client "Budgets Are Biggest Challenge for Nigeria's PR Market" found that clients were reluctance to commit funds to projects which incidentally is the biggest challenge for Nigerian PR agencies even though PR is not a new industry in the country.
- Usurping duties by allied disciplines the lack of specialization, employment of unqualified/untrained PR personnel, lack of effective leadership in the NIPR (Udomisor & Osademe, 2013).
- With over 350 Ministries Department and Agencies (MDAs) that exist in Nigeria less than 10% of those (MDAs) formally uses registered public relations consultancies for their PR works (Nwakanma, 2013).
- PR is predominantly used as a basic mechanism for broadcasting information to stakeholders on organizational CSR efforts including the securing of media coverage and this is a perilously non-strategic engagement of PR (Anyebe, 2018)

Against the backdrop of less than 10% of (MDAs) in Nigeria engaging registered PR, such action denotes the perception of PR in the Nigerian polity which is why there is need for such policy change. Similarly, client reluctance to spend to boost PR activities can be attributed to low competency of practitioners which emanates from low standards of education and training. For instances, imposition of projects on host communities of oil production areas in the country can be prevented if trained personnel (PR practitioners) are engaged to dialogue between the government and the people. Likewise, it is expected that community involvement in multinational CSR projects must reflect the openness of the company and government authorities in meeting stakeholder needs (Uduji, Okolo-Obasi, & Asongu 2020). However, this is not the case as communication management on the part of the practitioners as well as the government in its relations with various stakeholders does not benefit stakeholders due to non engagement of PR to perform the role of liaison.

Ukwayi, Eja-Eja and Ojong (2012) suggested the establishment of PR units to help mediate between communities and government in addressing host communities' agitations. On the premise that data is essential for policy planning and implementation (Anderson, 2015), findings from this study makes a case for enactment of laws or rules to compel MDAs to use registered PR in their operation in order to meet stakeholder's needs and credence to profession. Hence, accomplishing performance and

standardization of PR practice and attainment of professional excellence in PR can be attainable through effective implementation of policies (Yaro, Arshad, & Salleh, 2017).

1.6.3 Methodological Significance

Qualitative research approach emphasizes on drawing meaning from informant opinion and experience (Creswell, 2014; Almalki, 2016). As a result of this, a systematic and logical steps and action were taken to adequately answer research questions and achievement of objectives of the study (Ghafouri & Ofoghi, 2016). Methodologically, rigor in the context of this study involved collecting data from PR practitioners as experts in field and as targeted population.

Besides identifying participants, interview protocol was pilot tested before the main study was conducted. Equally, participants consent was sought before participation in the study. Also, participants verified their opinion and views through member checking process. More importantly, interview transcript was verbatim transcription to establish and ensure trustworthiness of data which is a fundamental component of rigor in qualitative research. Methodological rigor with respect to verbatim transcription is important because it enables researcher to understand participant's exclamation and interjection words and meaning in relation to the topic or issues of discussion.

As a result, triangulation of interviews, observatory field notes, and document review validated findings of the study, trustworthiness of data and credibility of methodology (Turner, Cardinal, & Burton 2017; Risjord, Moloney, & Dunbar 2001; Casey & Murphy, 2009; Abdalla, Oliveira, Azevedo, & Gonzalez 2018). Consequently, triangulation of data strengthens and validate outcome of the study (Heale & Forbes, 2013). This is because triangulation enables better understanding of studied phenomenon as combining multiple sources of data helps overcome intrinsic biasness in the process and at the same time add richness and depth to a research inquiry (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness 2018).

1.6.4 Practical Significance

Relegation of PR to mainly communication and information dissemination (Ubwa, 2014), non engagement of registered practitioners by entities and perception of PR (Nwakanma, 2013), inability of NIPR to regulate the profession (Udomisor and Osademe, 2013), centralization of power structure and non empowerment of PR to participate in decision-making (Ogbo, Chibueze, Christopher, & Anthony 2015) represent pitfalls to the practices of PR in Nigeria. Given that findings from this study represent credible information drawn from informant's original views/data with rigorous interpretation of their views and opinion on PR roles, participation in decision making and standards of practice. Thus, findings from the study offer practical steps to improve the practice of PR in Akwa Ibom State Nigeria. Given that practitioners are often unable to influence or persuade management to prioritize ethics over profit or business performance. Hence, engagement of registered practitioner's ensures dialogue with management on the need to imbibe ethical actions over business goals.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study is focused on exploring the specific role of NIPR practitioners, their involvement in decision making and the standards of accepted best practices. The study is bounded in Akwa Ibom State, (South- South Nigeria) and focuses only on registered (members) practitioners of Akwa Ibom State chapter of NIPR. A total of 52 informant's participated in the study and data collection lasted about three months period, August to September 2019. Against the backdrop of factors militating against PR practice in the state the study focused mainly on practitioners across public, private, NGO and government linked entities within Akwa Ibom State who are by default qualified to practice in their capacity as members of NIPR.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Role Theory:

Role theory in PR focuses on the role and functions of all actors in the organization as a social system (Sesen, 2015). Accordingly, practitioners and by extension the organization are actors who behave according to expatiation of stakeholders and in line with ethics, rules and regulation governing them (Allen & Caillouet, 1994). PR has developed rapidly over the past decade with the advent of social media. The complex nature of PR roles is evident in the various concepts, terms and process within the field geared as specifying roles associated and connected to PR. Broom and Smith (1979) is credited as pioneering research on PR roles with their postulation of the four roles performed by professionals in the field namely, communication facilitator, expert prescriber, problem-solving/facilitator, and communication technician.

Consequently, Dozier (1983) restructured the four roles to two roles namely, managerial and technician roles. Van Ruler and Vercic (2008) reaffirms the four-role perspective in the European context arguing that PR is a multi-dimensional concept that goes beyond managerial or technician because PR roles extends to public sphere in respect to behavioral consequences of an organization within the social system. Amongst notable advocates of role theory in PR includes, (Broom & Smith (1979); Dozier (1983); Grunig & Hunt, (1984); Dozier & Broom (1995); and Sesen (2015), to name a few. However, Lattimore, Baskin, and Heiman (2004); Sesen (2015) both agreed that PR theories largely emanates the field of communication, as such, PR roles is affected by the characterization of an organization in the social system. This is to say that an organization perception of its role reflects its activities in a social system (Miles, 1978).

Similarly, increase in technology has enhanced global integration (globalization) and as such PR has evolved due to increase in internet usage, social media platforms and communication outlets leading to business commercialization and efficient communication (Thurlow, Sévigny, & Dottori, 2018). As such, Neill and Lee (2016) acknowledged the fact that the frontiers of PR have expanded with identification of a role of internal social media management. The scope of this role involves managing internal and external social media communication channels and platforms within the

organization. Hence, PR roles considering the role's theory encompasses actions that ensure the sustainability of the organization, implementing rules and patterns under organizational behaviors and frameworks, as well as contributing positively to changes in the corporate image.

Public Relation:

There are numerous definitions and perspectives' regarding the definition of PR, and this has been attributed to the emerging nature of the field. Rivero and Theodore (2014) define it as a management function designed to build mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics. Given the lack of universally agreed definition of the concept of PR in light of boundaries, underling theoretical outlook, and the changing nature of PR as observed by both scholars and practitioners L'Etang, (2013); Thurlow et al., (2018); Davidson (2016); Fitch and L'Etang (2017); Russell and Lamme (2016) all agreed that the field of study is informed by a wide range of assumptions, views, and values which are subjectively debated. As such, the concept of PR connotes a range of meanings including the cultural aspect of PR (L'Etang, 2013). Consequently, Heath and Coombs (2006) argued that although the origin of PR is subject to debate, there is however consensus that modern PR emerged from the United States in the late 19th century. However, some scholars argued that the apparent origin of PR is not exclusively credited to United States given the cultural practices that exist before the conceptualization of PR (Ihlen & van Ruler, 2007). However, changes in the concept and practice of PR reveal the growing roles of organizations in a social system.

A generic definition of PR stems from Cutlip and Center's effective public relations (1952; 1964) cited in Broom and Sha (2013) described PR as management function that identifies, establishes, and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between organization and its various publics on whom its success or failure depends on. Similarly, Grunig & Hunt (1984) defines it as management of communication between organization and its publics. Although the role and functions of PR as well as the PR industry is continuously evolving, however PR is a communication function through which managers and by extension management of an organization adopts, maintain, and adjust to functions in its dealing with its publics and the surroundings it operates for the achievement of organizational goals. In other words, PR fosters open communication where organizations do not only target audience or publics, but also change the attitude, behaviors and perception of its publics and the society in a more assertive manner (Cardwell, et al., 2017; Kim & Krishna, 2017).

Decision Making:

There are various definition of decision making particularly in the field of management science and administration. Luthans (1989) defines decision making as choosing between alternatives. Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Théorêt (1976) describe it as a process that encompasses identification, development, and selection of suitable actions for solution to issues. Simon (1979) describes it as problem-solving process directed towards the discovery and selection of a course of action to address an issue. Habermas (1998) describes organizational decision making as a strategic action geared towards successful

solving of issues facing an entity. Notably, the various definitions are synonymous to management science, marketing, business as well as public administration.

However, in the context of this study decision making follows the path of excellence public relations which according to proponents postulate that practitioners must be in positions within the organization management setup where they can help the organization on issue identification, policy formation and implementation as well as adapting to changes in the environment the organization operates (Grunig & Grunig, 2008). As such, the process of decision making in PR centers on the notion that practitioners must actively participate or directly involved in decision making process by offering managers, management and CEOs, expert information, advises and proposals that are of strategic importance for management to arrive at decisions as it affects the organization (Mykkänen & Vos, 2015). On the other hand, involvement in decision making denote practitioners directly sitting in management table when decisions are being made and contributing directly to formation and implementation of organizational decision and choices or directly reporting to management regarding decision taken on behalf of the organization (White & Dozier, 1992). In other words, while practitioners only contribute inputs or information that may or may not be taken into consideration by management in the decision making process. Involvement in decision making on the other hand requires practitioners to be part of the decision making body (Top management) using their expertise and experience to collectively and actively in conjunction with management decide for and on behalf of the organization (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002).

Given that organizations constantly sought to acquire or legitimize their actions, strategic actions of PR practitioners denotes that if practitioners are to contribute to organization effectiveness, they must not merely implement decision made by other, rather they must actively participate and be involved in the decision making (Mykkänen & Vos, 2015).

Similarly, literature on PR decision making generally revolves around management understanding of the communicative aspects of decision-making processes as contributing to organization communication success (Mykkänen & Vos, 2015). As such, it is important that practitioners process adequate knowledge, skills, and ideas, required to actively participate in decision making. Given that organizational decision making involves a process of determining best mechanism suitable for solving problem. Hence, active communication must be established and maintained for practitioners to contribute effectively to their roles in the organization (Onsongo, Mberia, Jjuuko & 2017).

Thus, Dozier (1986; 1992) argued that if practitioners must help the organization adapt to changes in their environment, practitioners are to fully participate and be involved in the management decision-making process rather than just taking or following orders by implementing or execute directives and decisions made by others. Although the technician and managerial debate seems to suggest technicians are limited in scope and function as against managers given the different position practitioners may hold (Dozier, 1992). On this premise, ethical decision-making is specifically geared at issue management. In other words, practitioners with specialized expertise are to advise

management on the right course of action in line with ethical demands and also act ethically on behalf of the organization (Mykkänen & Vos, 2015). Hence, practitioner's independence as professional in the field is important to avoid influence and pressure that impede practitioner's judgment and action to compromise ethical standards expected of them as professionals.

Stakeholders:

Stakeholders are described as a group of individuals who are under the influence of business activities or who can influence the business operations of a company to fulfilment strategic goals of the organization (Freeman, 1984). The stakeholder concept posits that the existence and survival of a business entity largely depend on its ability to build relationships with publics as well as create value for all its stakeholders (Freeman & Dmytriiev, 2017). Although composition of stakeholders may differ depending on a firm's business model, size, industry, and sector. However, the core stakeholders of a given entity characteristically includes its internal and external stakeholders such as customers/clients, employees, managers/management, investors, located surroundings/communities, financiers as well as its owners (Hawrysz, & Maj, 2017). Equally, stakeholder theory primarily views an organization from both individualized perspective which is the company itself and the stakeholder's perspective which is the firms' external stakeholders (Seman, Zakuan, Rashid, Nasuredin, and Ahmad 2018). The implication of this is that organizations are responsible in their operations of catering for the interest of its stakeholders and the organization (Freeman, 1984). According to Freeman, Harrison Wicks, Parmar, and De Colle (2010) stakeholders are mutually dependent, as such creating value for one stakeholder means creating value for every other stakeholder within the organization. Significantly, the various stakeholders both internal and external are equally important for the survival of the organization. Consequently, scholars have also argued that although stakeholder theory is complex in terms of approach taken to identify and engaging important stakeholders. Hence, trade-off of stakeholders within the organization must be avoided while, management continuously seek ways of guiding the interest of every of its stakeholders (Harrison, Bosse, & Phillips 2010). Subsequently, stakeholder's engagement goes beyond communicative interaction between organization and its stakeholders, (Dhanesh, 2017), therefore, adequate identification and engagement of stakeholders, ensures stakeholders satisfaction and organization effectiveness.

1.9 Summary

This chapter highlights background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, and objective of study, significance of study, scope of study, limitation of study and conceptual definition of terms. Consequently, past research findings and relevant literature relative to the statement of problem and research objective of the study suggest that PR practitioners perform a range of roles that cuts across technician and managerial spectrum. However, the specific roles and functions of practitioners in Akwa Ibom State is still limited to mainly technician roles.

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

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