

**COMMUNICATION BETWEEN STATE INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR PUBLICS: A
STUDY OF THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND ADMINISTRATIVE
JUSTICE (CHRAJ)**

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DECLARATION

I, Richard Amoako Ansong, declare that except for the works of other authors duly referenced, the work presented in this dissertation was done by me, under the supervision of Dr Margaret Amoakohene. I further affirm that this work has not been submitted either in part or whole to any other educational institution for the award of any degree, diploma or certificate.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother, Madam Alice Asantewah, whose toil and sacrifices have brought me this far, and also to the Commissioner of CHRAJ, Madam Laretta Vivian Lamptey, for her immeasurable support and encouragement while this dissertation was being written.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated how state institutions in Ghana communicate with their publics, using the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) as a reference point.

In a survey, the researcher sampled 150 respondents, comprising 100 respondents from the Ministries, Departments, and Agencies, with the other 50 made up of persons who had filed complaints with the Commission at its head office in Accra.

Underpinned by the media richness and systems theories, the study revealed that CHRAJ had been communicating with its external publics using mainly the traditional media, with radio being the most dominant and preferred medium. The study also found that the Commission had feedback mechanisms (such as letters, visits, and telephone) in place to allow its external publics, especially complainants, to keep abreast of happenings within the Commission. The results also gave an indication that the Commission had been practising an open system, as the various communication channels allowed the external publics to access information without much difficulty. The Commission was, therefore, rated highly by its external publics.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Communication is a very vital ingredient for creating and sustaining relationships between institutions and their publics. It is, therefore, not surprising that some scholars have rightly described it as “the nervous system” or the “life-blood” of any human social action (Sambe, 2009). Communication is deemed excellent when it assures the achievement of organisational effectiveness, by helping to match organisational goals with the expectations of its strategic constituents. Without communication structures and processes which enable the two-way exchange of information between institutions and their publics, it is difficult to imagine how institutions can be responsive to public needs and expectations (Grunig, 1992).

Haider, McLoughlin & Scott (2011) note that a key aspect of governance is how citizens, leaders, and public institutions relate to each other in order to make change happen. Importantly, two-way communication allows an institution’s publics to monitor its activities, to enter into dialogue with the institution on issues that matter to them, and to influence policy outcomes. This also encourages the development of trust between institutions and their publics, and forms the foundation of legitimacy for institutions over the long-term. Haider et al (2011) also observe that on a practical level, communication can be seen as essential to the development of an institution’s capability, accountability and responsiveness in the following ways:

- **Capability:** Consultation and dialogue between institutions and their publics can, in

principle, improve public understanding of, and support for, policies which may be initiated by such institutions and encourage public ownership of reform. Without the support of the public, institutions often lack the capability to get things done.

- **Accountability:** Access to information and transparency are in theory vital for enabling citizens to monitor and hold institutions to account for their actions and inactions. There is significant evidence that transparency can reduce opportunities for corruption.

- **Responsiveness:** A well-informed public strengthens the demand for institutions to be accountable. For example, debate through the media, public information campaigns, and social accountability mechanisms have all worked to encourage institutions to be responsive to demands of the public and resulted in better public service delivery.

Panos (2007), nevertheless, makes the point that in order to impact on governance outcomes, public officials need to be willing to be influenced by public opinion. He posits that in practice, the line between sophisticated communication which seeks to ‘manufacture’ consent, and genuine consultation, which shows a willingness to engage people and possibly change plans based on their input, can often be blurred. In such contexts, communication can potentially play a crucial role in managing expectations, building trust in, and oversight of, state institutions, aiding the formation of an inclusive national identity and fostering an engaged and participatory citizenry. Moore (1995) also prescribes strategic communication which, according to him, is designed to advance particular policies or organisational strategies by making them comprehensible and by enlisting the support and cooperation of those who must work together to produce the intended result. He notes, in particular, that strategic communication raises the ante for communication— which goes beyond raising awareness to using communication to assist stakeholders or clients in learning new

information and developing new attitudes to facilitate adoption of new behaviours (Moore, 1995).

For Canel (2007), an institution's message is both an abstract and specific definition of what the institution is. He believes that through the message, an idea is transmitted about the institution; and about who runs it, and the public activity it carries out. Therefore, he advises public institutions to put out messages that cause their recipients to trust in their institutions, that justify their existence and that transmit the good work they do. Canel concurs with Moore on the need for a communication strategy, and notes that the communication strategy of a public institution can be focused in different ways:

- Communication that serves the strategic aims of the organisation: Here, communication comes behind strategy, and communicators' involvement in decision making is very limited. Communication gets involved once the policy decision has been taken to facilitate its application.
- Communication at the centre of the organisation's strategy: This entails the person in charge of communication, together with the rest of the directors, deciding on the public policy that best defines the identity of the institution (Canel, 2007, pp. 79-80).

Pollitt and Summa (1997) also wade into the discussion about the need for institutions to communicate by introducing the concept of *ethos*. They note that their [institutions] *ethos* is identified through the definition they make of themselves and their role, their description of aims, and their interest to those they serve, the qualities they ascribe to themselves and to their work when they project a public image as experts in their field. Clearly, an institution's message should, therefore, respond to questions such as: Who are we? What is our mission?

What qualities do we have? Erbiti (2003) takes cognizance of these questions and recommends that the department in charge of communication in an institution should handle all incoming, outgoing, and internal messages. He, however, cautions that the effectiveness of this will depend on the department's direct relationship with the heads of the institution, on its position at the centre of the institution's structure, and on the communication skills of those who belong to it. Barret (2000) also notes that communication gives credibility to state institutions, and only if they are credible, relevant, and indispensable to their various users will they be capable of successfully facing the future.

Having established the importance of communication for state institutions, Bennett and Jessani (2011) are of the opinion that the choice of one channel over another or the use of several channels will depend on the kind of message, its content, available resources, and how the audience likes to receive the information. However, Dye (2009) reveals several key factors institutions should bear in mind when dealing with the media if they wish to maximize the impact of their work. First, they should be accessible, prompt, honest, helpful, and reliable; second, they should understand the culture of the media community; and finally, they should be aware of the different types of journalists around—sensationalist, ideologist, well-informed pack followers, columnists, or commentators and community journalists. Their handling of news will obviously be different. Be that as it may, Erbiti (2003) posits that lack of communication gives the impression of a dull, gloomy institution with little known about it, whose worth is debatable and whose existence could be called into question.

1.2 National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)

For National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), communication becomes inevitable considering the pivotal role they play in the development of every nation, as they serve to

promote and protect the fundamental human rights and freedoms of citizens. Indeed, the principal source of normative standards for NHRIs, the Paris Principles, adopted in 1991 provides that for national institutions to be effective in meeting the ideals for which they were created, they should be established by the national constitution that clearly sets out their role and powers and that their mandate should be as broad as possible (International Council on Human Rights Policy, 2005).

The Paris Principles state, among other things, that national institutions should be pluralist and should co-operate with a range of social and political groups and institutions, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), judicial institutions, professional bodies and government departments. They also enjoin NHRIs to make recommendations and proposals to governments on various matters in respect of human rights, including proposed and existing laws, human rights violations, and the national human rights situation in general. They, particularly, require national institutions to promote teaching and research on human rights and organise public awareness and educational programmes (International Council on Human Rights Policy, 2005).

For institutions with quasi jurisdictional functions - those that receive and handle complaints of human rights violations from members of the public – they are to inform petitioners or complainants of their rights, available remedies, and to promote access to them. They are also to hear complaints, transmit, and make appropriate recommendations to competent authorities for redress. According to the International Council on Human Rights Policy's 2005 report, national institutions tend to be more effective when they enjoy public legitimacy. The report further elucidates that national institutions are able to win public legitimacy when they are seen to stand up for the rights of the powerless against powerful interests, and act fairly in dealing with issues that fall within their domain.

Perhaps, an even greater source of effectiveness for national institutions, as captured by the report, is found in their ability to make their services as accessible to the public as possible. National institutions are expected to make known what they do, and how they can be contacted, to the public and non-governmental bodies. Their offices should be accessible, especially to socially disadvantaged groups and other vulnerable persons in the population. Furthermore, national human rights institutions are expected to have an open organisational culture, one that assures the public and partner organisations of their willingness and readiness to welcome and address the concerns the public might have. Organisations that are open, collaborative and self-critical are thought to be far more likely to respond well to the needs of the public and to identify shortcomings in their practice.

In addition, national institutions with mandate to receive and handle complaints from members of the public are expected to handle those complaints speedily and effectively. Their procedures are to be simple, accessible, affordable and speedy. Communication is, thus, very vital to the work of national human rights institutions, as it serves as the conduit through which they reach out to their publics as regards the effective discharge of their mandates. Therefore, how this communication is carried out between these institutions and their publics portends to a large extent whether those institutions will succeed or fail in their duties.

1.3 The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ)

Ghana is not only touted as a model of democracy on the African continent but is also acclaimed to be among the best in terms of respecting and upholding the fundamental human rights and freedoms of individuals. Chapter five of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of

Ghana guarantees the fundamental human rights and freedoms of all persons in Ghana. Pursuant to this, the Constitution also devotes chapter 18 to the setting up of the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) to promote and protect the fundamental human rights and freedoms of all persons in Ghana. Consequently, Parliament passed Act 456 in 1993, establishing the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ). The Commission has a three-fold mandate: a national human rights institution, ombudsman, and an anti-corruption agency. Article 218 (f) of the Constitution also gives the Commission the mandate to educate the public on their fundamental human rights and freedoms.

The functions of the Commission, as captured in Article 218 of the 1992 Constitution, are the duty to:

- a) “Investigate complaints of violations of fundamental rights and freedoms, injustice, corruption, abuse of power and unfair treatment of any person by a public officer in the exercise of his official duties;
- b) Investigate complaints concerning the functioning of the Public Services Commission, the administrative organs of the state, the Armed Forces, the Police Service and the Prisons Service in so far as complaints relate to the failure to achieve a balanced structuring of those services or equal access by all to the recruitment of those services or fair administration in relation to those services;
- c) Investigate complaints concerning practices and actions by persons, private enterprises and other institutions where those complaints allege violations of fundamental rights and freedoms under the Constitution;

- d) Take appropriate action to call for the remedying, correction and reversal of instances specified in paragraph (a), (b), and (c) of this clause through such means as are fair, proper and effective, including –
- I. Negotiation and compromise between the parties concerned;
 - II. Causing the complaint and its finding on it to be reported to the superior of an offending person;
 - III. Bringing proceedings in a competent court for a remedy to ensure the termination of the offending action or conduct, or the abandonment or alteration of the offending procedures; and
 - IV. Bringing proceedings to restrain the enforcement of such legislation or regulation by challenging its validity if the offending action or conduct is sought to be justified by subordinate legislation or regulation which is unreasonable or otherwise *ultra vires*.
- e) Investigate all instances of alleged or suspected corruption and the misappropriation of public moneys by officials and to take appropriate steps, including report to the Attorney-General, and the Auditor-General, resulting from such investigations;
- f) Educate the public as to human rights and freedoms by such means as the Commissioner may decide, including publications, lectures and symposia; and
- g) Report annually to Parliament on the performance of its functions.”

The Constitution also makes the Commission independent of the executive and judicial arms of government, and makes it only accountable to the people of Ghana through Parliament.

The Commission is expected to submit its report annually to members of Parliament who are representatives of the people.

The Commission is headed by a Commissioner, and two Deputy Commissioners. It currently has offices in all the ten administrative regions of Ghana, two sub-regional offices in Tema and Obuasi, as well as 100 district and municipal offices strategically spread across the length and breadth of the country.

CHRAJ is mandated to receive and handle complaints from members of the public whose rights are violated, and to ensure that those persons are able to receive the appropriate remedies. Therefore, all persons whose rights are violated can lodge a verbal or written complaint at any of the Commission's offices across the country. In addition, the Commission is to adopt whatever means the Commissioner may deem fit to help members of the public to be attuned to their rights through education. The Commission also monitors and issues a yearly report on the human rights situation in the country, as well as ensures that the nation also complies with all regional and international conventions and commitments Ghana has signed on to.

Therefore, the Commission is expected to engage with its publics (complainants, respondents, and the general public) across the board through communication in order to achieve its vision of ensuring a society that is truly free, just and equitable, where human rights and dignity are respected, where power is accountable, and governance is transparent. To this end, it is incumbent upon the Commission to provide accurate, timely, and reliable information to members of the public to keep them abreast of its mandate, in order for the public to avail themselves of the Commission's services to have their rights promoted and protected at all times.

1.4 Problem Statement and Research Questions

Article 21 of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana guarantees the fundamental human rights and freedoms of all persons in Ghana. Article 218 of the same constitution mandates the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice to promote and protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of all individuals in the country. Article 218 (f), in particular, tasks the Commission “to educate the public as to human rights and freedoms by such means as the Commissioner may decide, including publications, lectures and symposia.” In addition, the Paris Principles, which serve as a foundation document for all national human rights institutions (NHRIs), enjoin such institutions to be as open and as accessible to members of the public as possible. By so doing, institutions are thought to win the confidence and legitimacy of members of the public whose interests they exist to serve.

However, in Ghana, the airwaves are often awash with stories about the kind of frustrations people go through in their attempts to access information and to avail themselves of the services certain state institutions render to the public. This has led to several efforts being made by past and present governments to address the problem and to ensure efficient service delivery by all institutions of state. For example, in 2007, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) government, under the leadership of former president John Agyekum Kufuor, introduced the Citizen’s Charter with a view to “arresting the widespread irritations, frustration and desperation encountered by the public when they come into contact with public agencies” (Ghana News Agency, 2007). The Charter was aimed, primarily, at improving communication between institutions and citizens by way of giving citizens and stakeholders

essential information about services or functions of a public agency or department of the government, and the manner in which they could assess the efficiency of those services.

CHRAJ is a state institution that is supposed to have constant interactions with the public. Indeed, the Commission has officers whose duty it is to visit various communities and educate members of the public as regards their fundamental human rights and freedoms, providing them opportunities to explain the functions and activities of the Commission to the public. Also, the Commission makes use of the media to inform members of the public about its activities. Furthermore, the Commission's offices are always open to members of the public to enquire about anything of interest to them in relation to its work. However, there have been complaints by sections of the public on the detachment of the Commission with regard to its communication with the public (Forum for Public Accountability, 2012). The problem of this study, therefore, was to investigate how in spite of these channels there seemed to be a gap in information flow and access to information between the Commission and its external publics. Given this problem, the study sought to address the following questions: 1) To what extent would channels used by CHRAJ to communicate with its external publics facilitate access to information; and 2) To what extent did those channels make CHRAJ open or closed to members of the public?

1.5 Objectives of the study

The study sought to find out:

1. Whether external publics of CHRAJ knew communication channels that were available to them to access information as well as to give feedback; and
2. The extent to which those channels made it easy or difficult for members of the

public to access information from CHRAJ.

1.6 Significance of the study

Being one of the few studies carried out in Ghana that concentrate on how state institutions communicate with their publics, the study helps in pointing out some of the strengths or lapses in how state institutions communicate with their external publics. Also, the study provides policy guidance for CHRAJ and other state institutions in terms of how they can tailor their messages to reflect the needs of the Ghanaian public. The study is also significant as it provides a basis for further research as regards communication between state institutions and their publics.

1.7 Operational Definitions

Wimmer and Dominick (2003) claim that the integral role that observations play in research demands that one gets a clear statement of what is to be observed. Based on this assertion, some concepts and variables used in this study have been operationally defined below:

State Institutions: Refers to all organisations set up by the state to provide certain essential services to the public and are funded out of the public purse.

Publics: Refers to all persons who are outside of an organisation but have a stake in the organisation's work (External publics).

Open Systems: Organisations which allow their external publics to access information on their activities.

Closed Systems: Organisations which do not allow their external publics to have access to information on their activities.

1.8 Summary

This chapter introduced the study and gave general overview of how and why institutions communicate with their publics. The chapter also defined the problem being studied, outlined the research objectives, and the significance of the study. National Human Rights Institutions, in general, and the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, in particular, were profiled. The next chapter situates the study within the systems and media richness theories and reviews the related works on the study.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter situates the study within the context of the systems theory and media richness theory. It also reviews literature and studies relating to how state institutions communicate with their publics. Additionally, the chapter looks at the limitations of the two theories used and justifies their relevance to the study in spite of the limitations.

2.2 Theoretical framework

This study employs two theories (systems theory and media richness theory) to discuss how CHRAJ as a state institution sustained its relationship with its publics through communication, as well as whether the various communication channels used were effective in assisting the Commission reach out to its publics.

2.3 Systems theory

State institutions are established to provide certain essential services to members of the public. Therefore, the important role members of the public play in the successes or failures of state institutions requires that the public is not kept in the dark with regard to what

institutions do. This relationship between institutions can only remain unfettered if there is effective communication.

The systems theory is a relationship theory propounded by L. von Bertalanffy in 1968. The theory looks at organisations as being made up of the following; an object, consisting of attributes and having internal relationships among its objects, as well as existing in an environment. Organisations have recognisable boundaries within which there must be a communication structure that guides the parts of the organisation to achieve organisational goals. The leaders of the organisation create and maintain these internal structures.

According to Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier (1995), “the systems perspective emphasises the interdependence of organisations with their environments, both internal and external to the organisation.” According to the systems perspective, organisations depend on their environments for sustenance, while the environment also depends on the organisation for its products and services. Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000) define a system as “a set of interacting units which endure through time within an established boundary by responding and adjusting to change pressures from the environment.” This means there is the need for an effective two-way communication with inbuilt feedback mechanisms to ensure the continuous growth of the system.

This theory, according to Niemann (2005), provides a model for seeing interrelationships, rather than focusing on individual factors. He further argues that a primary aim of the theory is to integrate accumulated knowledge into a clear and realistic framework. This implies the need for communication to bring about understanding and cooperation between an organisation and its publics. Also implicit in this view is the fact that an organisation, like a living organism, is dependent on its environment for the essentials that support its life.

Therefore, an institution is regarded as a complex set of independent parts relating to adapt continuously in a changing sphere to achieve its goals.

A closed system, according to proponents of this theory, does not interact with its environment. It does not take in information and therefore is likely to lead to a failure or collapse. An open system receives information, which it uses to interact dynamically with its environment. Openness increases its likelihood to survive and prosper.

Organisations which adopt the open system always pick signals from the environment as regards how they are keeping in touch with their publics, as well as how their relationship could be strengthened through effective communication. As Littlejohn (1996) notes rightly, open systems do not only generate feedback but also have flexibility on how feedback can be used to adjust inputs to thrive in their environment. Closed systems, however, do not allow much information to move in or out of the environment. To survive and adapt in the closed system would require some degree of penetration.

Therefore, by resorting to the systems theory, I hope to find out how CHRAJ, in this instance the organisation, interacts with members of the public, or the environment. Thus, how information flows from CHRAJ to members of the public, who very much depend on this communication in order to have their fundamental human rights and freedoms protected and promoted at all times.

In the end, the systems theory will aid in finding out whether CHRAJ, as an institution, has been open or closed to members of the public. Also, the application of the systems theory will assist in making appropriate recommendations on how CHRAJ can improve upon relationship with its publics through effective communication.

2.4 Limitations of the Systems theory

Niemann (2005) makes the argument that the increasing reliance of organisations upon their environment and the systems in which the organisation functions clearly portrays the important role that the internal communication plays for the survival of an organisation. As proponents of the systems theory often make the point that communication creates and maintains relationships between an organisation and its publics, both internal and external, Niemann's view is that organisations should be able to build internal networks to influence interdependence within the system before external relationships.

Baker (2005) also argues that organisations are distinct units that conduct inter-organisational relations for the purpose of exchange of information. Following from this, Fiol (1989) asserts that the theoretical approach seems to preclude the formation of internal hybrids because of its demand for the establishment of strong organisational boundaries. He makes the point further that organisations with strong boundaries (closed system) are unlikely to engage the interactive decision-making process of the organisation because of the likely fear of loss of control over employees. Despite these limitations, the theory laid a framework that is still relevant today as it underscores the interdependence of organisations with their environments, and the need to ensure the free flow of information to sustain the relationship. Also, Christensen and Cheney (2005) point out that corporate communication maps out all the internal and external communication dimensions relevant to the projection of a coherent image of the organisation in its surroundings. This, therefore, means that with a well-thought through communication strategy, the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice should be able to keep both internal and external publics abreast of its activities.

2.5 Media Richness Theory

Propounded by Daft and Lengel (1984), proponents of the media richness theory propose that communication media have varying capacities for resolving ambiguity, negotiating varying interpretations, and facilitating understanding. Two main assumptions underpin this theory: that people want to overcome equivocality and uncertainty in organisations; and the fact that a variety of media commonly used in organisations work better for certain tasks than others.

Daft and Lengel (1984) use four main criteria to present a media richness hierarchy, arranged from high to low degrees of richness, to illustrate the capacity of media types to process ambiguous communication in organisations. These criteria are: the availability of instant feedback; the capacity of the medium to transmit multiple cues such as body language, voice tone, and inflection; the use of natural language and; the personal focus of the medium. According to proponents, face-to-face communication is the richest communication medium in the hierarchy followed by telephone, electronic mail, letter, note, memo, special report, and finally, flier and bulletin.

From a strategic management perspective, the media richness theory suggests that effective institutions make rational choices matching a particular communication medium to a specific task or objective and to the degree of richness required by that task (Trevino, Daft, & Lengel, 1990, in Soy, 2001). Therefore, the application of this theory is to help elicit whether the various channels which CHRAJ uses in communicating with its external publics have worked to serve the Commission's interest of reaching out to its audiences.

2.6 Limitations of Media Richness theory

Dennis, Valacich, Cheri & Morris (1998) argue that although the richness of a medium may create some differences in the way a particular message is delivered, it does not, in any way, affect accuracy. Therefore, they explain that since what is important is the message that is communicated, then there is no basis to conclude that a particular medium is richer than the others. Again, Ngwenyama and Lee (1997), and Gerritsen (2009) hold the opinion that culture plays a role in determining a receiver's media choice. They note that media preference is affected by communication mode and cognitive style. Barkhi (2002) suggested, therefore, that even in a given situation with the same messages and motives, the best media chosen can vary from person to person.

These limitations notwithstanding, the theory is still relevant to the study as it helps organisations to find out whether the media they use are able to serve the purpose of sending their messages out to their publics. The theory also helps in letting organisations know the most effective medium to use for particular purposes, as they seek to remove barriers to their communication with their external publics.

2.7 Related Works

According to Hargrove and Glidewell (1990), a public institution has a distinct identity that is appreciated, accepted, and trusted by stakeholders. Therefore, a public organisation that builds its identity around questionable or unacceptable practices is unlikely to escape public scrutiny and political intervention. For institutionalisation to proceed, a public organisation needs to select and routinize not only solutions that work but solutions that fit with prevalent values and norms in its environment (Weeks & Galunic, 2003). This means that institutions of state must embed sanctioned norms firmly into their operations, to create the coherence

required to perform, as well as being responsive to the environment within which they operate. This requires that the organisation absorbs new demands and adapts its structure and policy ideas when necessary (Boin & Christensen, 2008). It is, therefore, very important that organisations engage in communication with their publics so as to position themselves for changes which may occur within their environments.

Lammers (2011), in a study on ‘How Institutions Communicate: Institutional Messages, Institutional Logics, and Organisational Communication,’ reviews scholarly and primitive uses of institutional messages and related ideas in a variety of social science disciplines. He develops the idea of the institutional messages as carriers of institutional logics. He considers how people make sense of institutional messages as institutional logics are developed, shared, and changed. According to him, institutional messages are collations of thoughts that may have the force of law, intentionally or unintentionally spread via mediated and face-to-face interactions in organised settings. As such, institutional messages may be seen as elements of discourse, “the structured collections of texts embodied in the practices of talking and writing” (Grant, Hardy, Oswick, & Putnam, 2004, p. 3). As Lammers further explains;

Institutional messages can be specified as having varying endurance, reach, and encumbrancy; they are exchanged among individuals, organisations, and other institutions, and they influence the behaviour of each.

The institutional message communicates the core meaning of an organisation to internal and external audiences. In addition, the institutional message is understood as aligning an organisation’s activities and image with rules established in its environment (Lammers, 2011).

Lammers (2011) elucidates further that institutional messages can be clarified by examining the intersection of the extent to which they are intentional or purposive on the one hand, and the extent to which they encumber the receiver on the other. According to him, on the sending side, we can distinguish two types: those sent intentionally, and thus involving the

problems of clarifying, amplifying, or otherwise getting the message across, and those sent unintentionally by virtue of the actions of the organisation or organisations that make up the field. He also notes that, on the receiving side, we may also distinguish two types: messages that the receiver has an obligation to receive and act on and messages that do not obligate the receiver to take actions but, nonetheless, may make certain actions more or less likely. Lammers posits, further, that we can identify strong institutional messages as those that encumber responses from receivers, whether that means complying with a law, rule, or code, or recognising the compliance of another, as in acknowledging the accreditation of an organisation. In general, the more intentional and encumbering the message is, the stronger the institution. Intentional messages that do not encumber responses or behaviours from others are characteristic of fading or emerging institutions and some social movements: Membership and participation is voluntary. Unintentional messages that do encumber respondents may be understood as miscommunication, confusion, or perverse outcomes, where the outcome is different from the intended effects. Finally, unintentional messages that do not encumber responses are characteristic of weak institutions.

McPhee and Zaig (2000) also discuss four message flows that contribute to the communicative constitution of organisations. In their work, they explicitly develop the idea of messages as “the blood, the hormones, and the nerve impulses that affect and relate [the] member cells of an organisation” (Terms, Assumptions, and Context of the Model section, para. 9). McPhee and Zaig identify four requisite message flows: membership negotiation; self-structuring; activity coordination; and institutional positioning.

In a study on Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) and their Communication Strategies, Gonzalez, Lopez and Garcia (2008), analyse the communication strategies developed by

European Union Supreme Audit Institutions in order to publicise the results of their activity and to provide the public with an overall vision of what they do. They find in their study that when institutions begin to open up to the public, they become more accountable, justify their existence, and that forms an essential component of their independence and efficiency, and also brings about measures to assess the impact of their work.

In furtherance, Gonzalez *et al* (2008) note that SAIs' adoption of communication strategies will enhance transparency and accountability. Gonzalez, Lopez, and Garcia (2008, pp. 436-437) put forward various reasons that explain why SAIs need to have a communication strategy:

1. The capacity of public bodies to demonstrate the results of their activity allows them to justify their existence (Waerness, 1999, p. 150).
2. SAI freedom to define their own communication policy toward the media and the general public is an essential component of their independence and efficiency (European Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions [EUROSAI], 1999).
3. Having a communication policy favours the establishment of impact assessment measures. SAIs regard press coverage as indicative of the value of their work (Lonsdale, 1999, p. 103).
4. A communication policy can positively influence SAI compliance with freedom of information legislation because it allows for information release through the different channels open to it.
5. Lack of a communication policy gives the impression of a dull, gloomy institution with little known about it, whose worth is debatable and whose existence could be called into question. Such a situation could give rise to leaked information, half-truths, and misunderstandings due to the lack of a mediator who comes between the work of the institution and the journalist charged with passing the information on to society (Erbiti, 2003,

pp. 32-33).

In another study by Gonzalez *et al* (2012) which focussed on Communication as a transparency and accountability strategy in SAIs, they emphasise the fact that these organisations should base their strategy on three fundamental props—target audience, message, and channels of communication. The study reveals, for instance, that the German SAI has set its communication objectives as to fulfil its constitutional mandate, satisfy stakeholders' information needs, build a reputation for integrity and excellence and enhance audit impact. Its communication strategy is aimed at three groups--audited bodies, constitutional bodies (including Parliament and the Federal Government), and civil society, media, and citizens (Winter, 2011, pp. 3-12). Apart from civil society, all these sectors are considered by INTOSAI to be major recipients of its communication strategy.

Another revelation by Gonzalez *et al* (2012) is the fact that media relations also take place through SAI websites. Several SAIs have designed their websites so that part of the available space is devoted to the media. In *Better Access, Better Information, Better News: The Ten Essential Elements of an Online Newsroom*, Bransford (2001, p. 3) points out that the best way to guarantee that journalists get the right message is to set up an online newsroom with direct access via a website. Canada's SAI, for example, has a media room that contains information about news releases, media statements associated with the reports, statements to House of Commons committees, statements to Senate committees, statements to territorial legislative assembly committees, and speeches. The Italian SAI has a system known as "comunicazione," which allows journalists to register and receive press statements and newsletters by e-mail. The Cour de Comptes has a media space called "presse," which offers press dossiers, statements, speeches, summaries of reports, articles, and miscellaneous

publications.

Also, the Norwegian SAI website has a press statement file, while the Czech Republic provides the media with its logo. Other SAIs that have media space on their websites are those from Estonia, Mexico, Sweden, and the United States. All of them have direct media room access from the main page, which suggests that the media are regarded as a primary audience (Callison, 2003) as well as being one of the major communication channels together with the Internet.

Social media has also been identified as a useful tool to evaluate public organisations' openness and to improve their transparency and accountability (Druke, 2007; La Porte, Demchack, & De Jong, 2002). One fundamental feature of social media that sets them apart from the mass media is that the communication is two-way, allowing interactive dialogue and participative decision making, thus reinforcing public confidence when communication takes place between an institution and the public. Their use provides further advantages: they complement the communication system; they are low cost; space and time obstacles are practically non-existent; and they are easily accessible (Park & Cho, 2009).

Based on a survey, the study found that European Union SAIs undertake wide ranging communication activities involving a close relationship with the media and the use of Internet websites to publish their results and to provide users with an overview of their work. The study also observes that communication policy has led to a communication strategy that includes essential elements any organisation wishing to develop such a strategy should factor in: objectives, audience, products, and channels of communication. It does not, however, refer to other matters that are also important and that SAIs should bear in mind: reviewing

current strategy (if it exists), available communication tools, strategy budget, the strategy timeline, instruments to ensure the right message is got across, and tools to measure internal and external communication (Bennett & Jessani, 2011, p. 107).

The study highlights the fact that, on the one hand, SAI strategic plans are helping them to define themselves by specifying their mission, vision, and values, and on the other hand, the mission is going to affect the message, which will reach its target audience via the media and websites. The media are able to deal differently with information produced by SAI activity. This information can help them fortify their role but it can also weaken it if there is no permanent communication with journalists that will prevent leaks and scandals, especially related to information about audit reports, the main area of activity.

Therefore, Gonzalez *et al* (2012) recommend that SAIs should hold press conferences when the results of an audit are especially relevant and, in other cases, produce press releases and summaries. Their relationship with the media should not just be limited to reporting on audit results. They need to weigh up the importance of the information to decide whether or not to call a press conference or simply issue a press statement.

In a study done by Newton and Norris (1999) in the UK on confidence in public institutions: faith, culture or performance, the scholars take a close look at institutions of representative democracy and do an assessment of whether the public still has confidence in their ability to deliver to their expectation. Based on a comparison of 17 trilateral democracies, the study finds that an erosion of confidence in the major institutions of society, especially those of representative democracy, is a far more serious threat to democracy than a loss of trust in

other citizens or politicians. Giddens (1990) and Seligman (1997) also argue that in our large-scale and impersonal modern world, social and political stability and integration increasingly depend on confidence in institutions rather than trust in individuals, so vibrant institutions matter more to contemporary democracies than does the quality of interpersonal relations among citizens.

The study concludes that at the national level, social trust and confidence in government and its institutions are strongly associated with each other. It finds further that social trust can help build effective social and political institutions, which can help governments perform effectively, and this in turn encourages confidence in civic institutions. However, as Pharr *et al.* (2000) observe, it is important to keep in mind that citizens' performance evaluations reflect subjective perceptions rather than objective measurements, and as such they are dependent upon access to information through mass media and other sources.

2.5 Summary

This chapter placed the study in the context of the systems and media richness theories. Amedahe (2005) argued that in undertaking empirical studies, researchers need to read materials related to the problem or topic to find out what has already been written about the topic. Consistent with this assertion, this chapter reviewed the related works on communication between some institutions and their publics. The next chapter explains the methodology used for the study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes and explains the research methodology. It covers the research design including the population and the sample size, as well as the sampling technique, procedure for data collection and subsequently how the data was analysed. It, therefore, covers how the researcher went about gathering data to undertake this study and how the data was analysed to produce the findings.

3.2 Research Design

The research is a study of how CHRAJ communicates with its external publics. The study, therefore, employed the quantitative research method, specifically a survey, and a review of some documents of the Commission. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011), a survey allows a researcher to collect a large amount of data with relative ease from a variety of people, thereby allowing the researcher to examine many variables in analysing the data. Reinard (1998) also believes that a survey is a good method to measure and describe the

distribution and characteristics of a population in its current setting. It is easier for researchers to describe a particular phenomenon at a period in time to be able to draw conclusions which are measurable.

Since the study sought to find out the extent to which members of the public receive information in respect of the functions and operations of CHRAJ as a state institution, I found survey the most appropriate method to use.

3.3 Population and Sample size

The population for the study comprised persons who work in the Ministries, Departments and Agencies in Accra, as well as persons who have filed complaints with CHRAJ totalling 150. In all, 210 questionnaires were distributed, with 150 respondents returning their questionnaires within the limited period allotted.

3.4 Sampling Technique and Procedure

Respondents were picked from the various Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in Accra in a simple random sample. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011), simple random sample is the most basic type of sampling where each subject, element, event, or unit in the population has an equal chance of being selected. Therefore, the researcher visited the MDAs in Accra and distributed 160 questionnaires among the workers since they formed the population. The distribution was done purposively bearing in mind age differences of respondents and the need to ensure gender balance. Hence, the researcher decided to distribute 80 questionnaires among females, with the other 80 going for the males.

The other 50 respondents were drawn from persons who had filed complaints with the Commission at its head office in the Old Parliament House in Accra. A list of complainants, numbering 150, was secured from the Complaints Unit of the Commission, which formed the sampling frame for a systematic sampling with random beginning. The researcher, thereafter, picked a number (8) at random as the starting point and a sampling interval (6) to draw the 50 persons from the list. Thus, the 50 included the numbers 8, 14, 20, 26, 32, 38, and so on.

3.5 Data Collection Instrument and Procedure

In gathering data for the study, the researcher depended mainly on a questionnaire (appendix 1) which was prepared based on the objectives of the research, and documents secured from the Commission's Public Relations Unit. The questionnaire was prepared to answer the research questions, and almost all the questions were closed ended in order to avoid ambiguity in the responses.

The four-part questionnaire included the various communication channels CHRAJ used, how external publics accessed general information on the Commission's work, how complainants accessed information on complaints they filed, and demographics of respondents. Although the study had two separate sets of respondents, the same questionnaire was used. This was to allow persons who had filed complaints with the Commission before, but were not drawn to be part of the complainants, to also have the opportunity to fill the last part which boarded on accessing information on complaints. There was, indeed, one person who fell into this category and so was able to respond to the last part even though he was selected at random in the ministries.

Respondents from the Ministries, Departments and Agencies filled out the questionnaire and returned them to the researcher for the analysis. However, owing to time constraints, the researcher secured the telephone numbers of the 50 complainants who were selected and called them on phone to administer the questionnaire. This approach saw some complainants butting in with details of their complaints, but the researcher remained focused and elicited the needed responses for the study. Out of the total number, there were 75 males and 75 females. Most (77.3%) of the respondents have received tertiary education, 15.3% secondary, 4% basic, whilst 3.3% have received other forms of education.

3.6 Data Analysis and Presentation

A Computer assisted programme – Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the data collected. The data was screened and coded into the SPSS for analysis and construction of tables, charts and graphs. It (the data) was later presented using the calculations of frequencies and cross-tabulations. The choice of tables, charts and graphs for the data presentation was to make it easy to communicate the summarized data. Discussion of the findings was done focussing on the related works and the two theories (media richness and the systems theories) that underpinned the study.

3.7 Summary

This chapter described how the survey was conducted in gathering data for the study. Specifically, the chapter described the population for the study, the sample size, the data collection procedure, the instrument used to collect the data, and the sampling technique used to select the two groups of respondents. It also explained how the data was presented and analysed.

The next chapter presents the analysis of the findings and a further discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data and interprets the findings in line with the research questions and objectives set for the study. It also draws on literature and the two theories that underpin the study and gives meaning to the findings by discussing and drawing inferences from them (the findings).

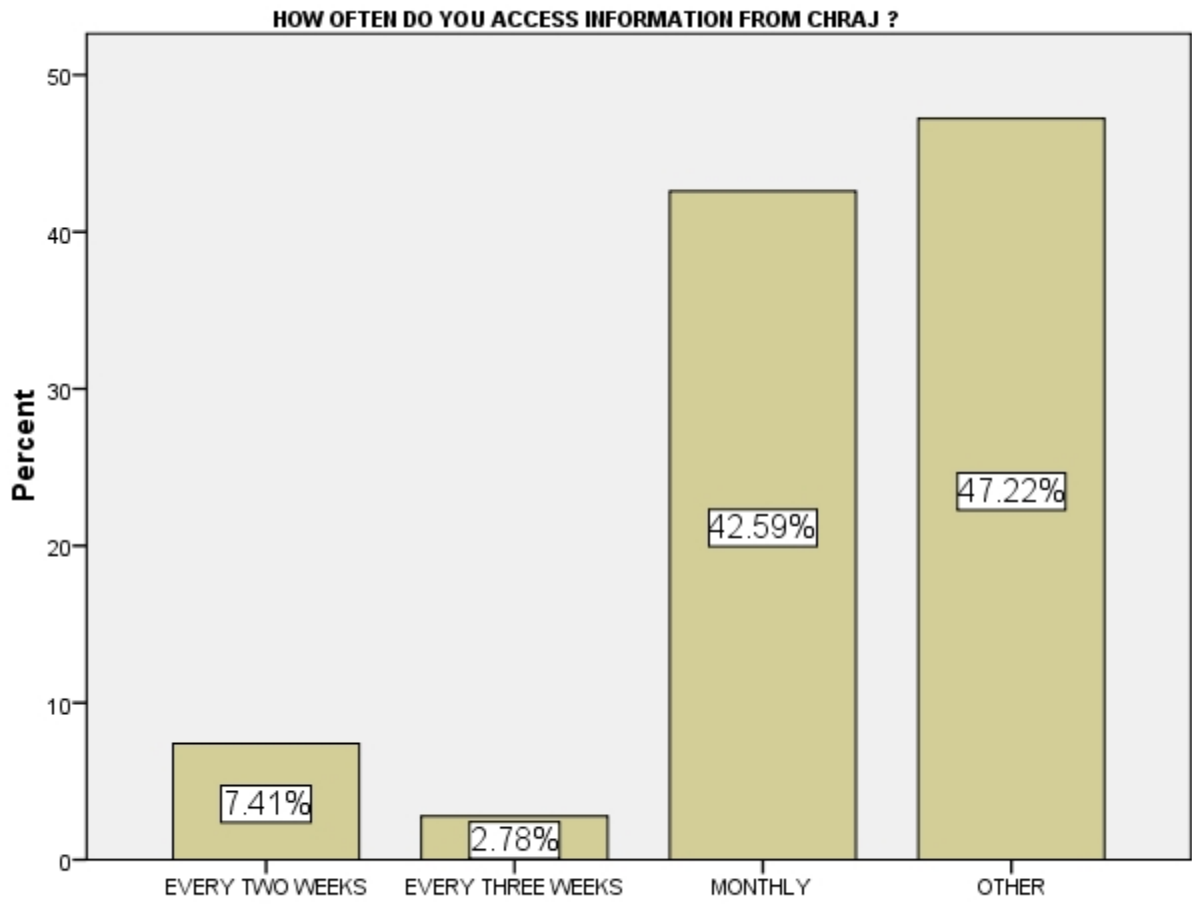
4.2 Accessing information

In order to determine whether CHRAJ, as a state institution, interacts with members of the public, the study sought to find out if respondents ever accessed information from the Commission or not. Data gathered indicates that a little over seven in ten (72%) respondents answered in the affirmative that they accessed information from CHRAJ, with 28% of them

responding in the negative that they did not access information from the Commission.

Lammers (2011) posited that institutional message communicates the core meaning of an organisation to internal and external audiences. In addition, the institutional message is understood as aligning an organisation's activities and image with rules established in its environment. The findings, therefore, seem to suggest that most of the respondents have felt the need to learn more about the Commission's work by way of accessing information on its activities.

CHART A



And out of the 72% who answered YES, the chart above gives an indication of how often they accessed information from the Commission.

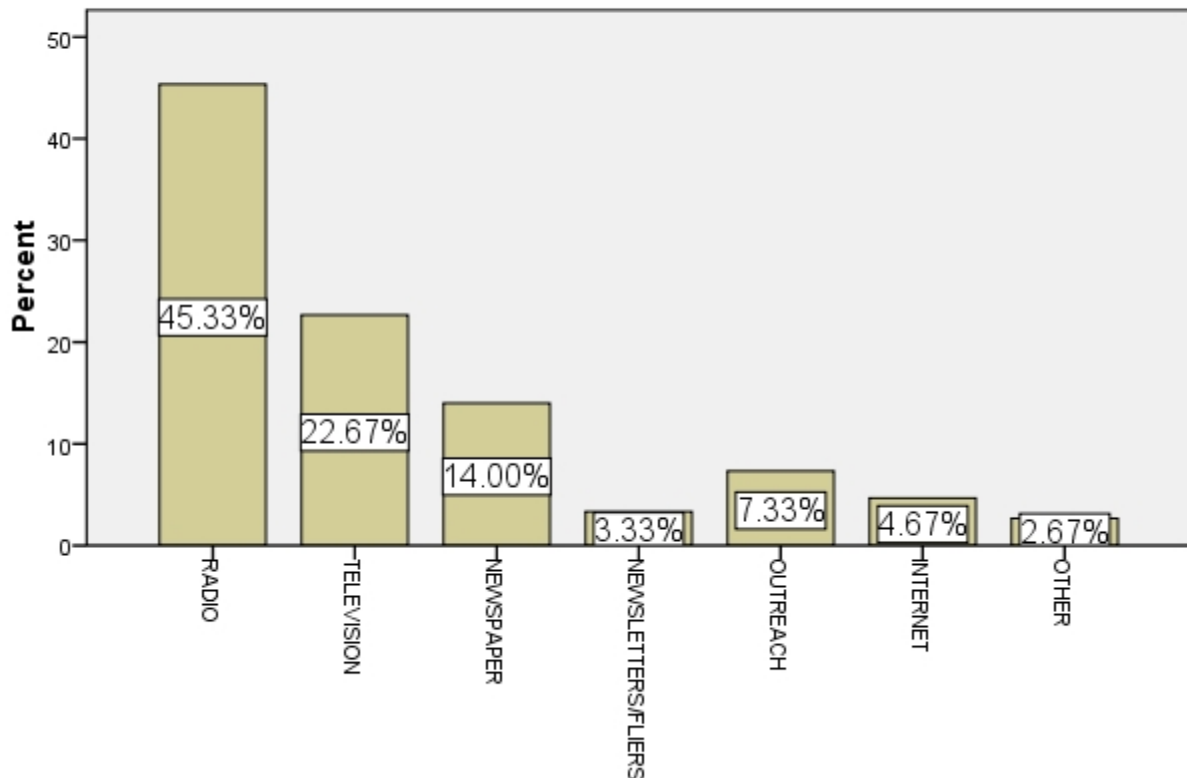
The data shows that almost half (47.2%) of the respondents did not have a specific timeframe within which they accessed information from the Commission but did so as and when necessary.

However, 42.6% said they accessed information every month from the Commission, while 2.8% said every three weeks, with the remaining 7.4% doing so every two weeks.

4.3 Communication channels

An important area of interest of this study was to find out whether external publics of CHRAJ knew communication channels that were available to them to access information and to give feedback. To ascertain this, a question was asked of respondents to select from among a list of channels where they first heard about CHRAJ. Below is a summary of the analysis of data gathered on this area of the study. CHART ‘B’

THROUGH WHICH MEDIUM DID YOU HEAR ABOUT CHRAJ?



The analysis of the data as presented on the chart ‘B’ above indicates that out of the total of 150 respondents surveyed, nearly half (45.3%) of them said they first heard about CHRAJ on Radio, Television followed with 22.7%, with Newspaper obtaining 14%, whilst 7.3% of the respondents said they first heard about CHRAJ in one of the Commission’s Outreach programmes. There was, however, only 4.7% who read about CHRAJ on the Internet, with

2.7% hearing about CHRAJ from other sources which included friends and relations who knew about the work of the Commission.

4.4 Preferred medium

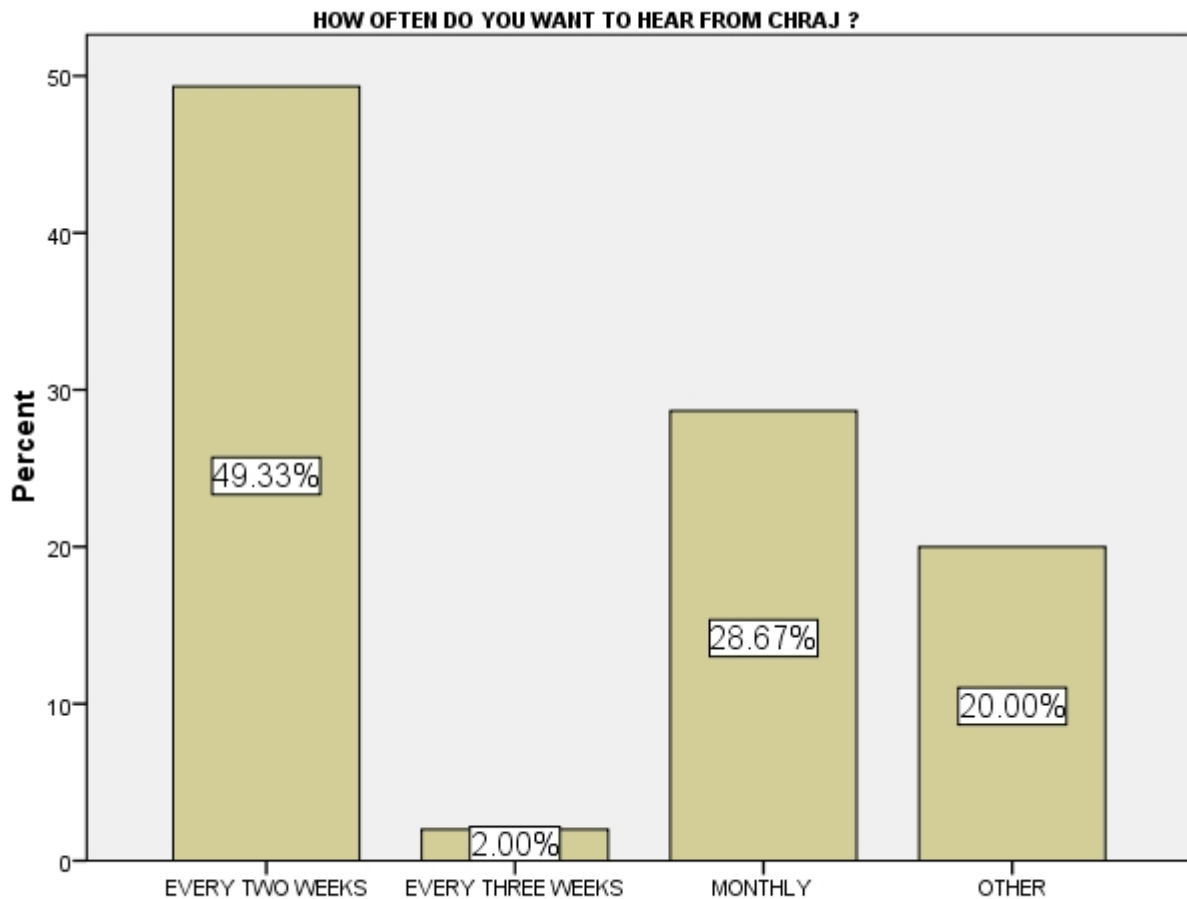
The study also sought to find out whether respondents had their preferred medium through which they wanted the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice to communicate with them. The data gathered on most preferred medium of respondents as regards CHRAJ's communication with them also indicates that, radio remained the most preferred medium with 55 (36.7%) respondents opting for it, while 48 (32%) respondents, on the other hand, had a preference for Television, 22 (14.7%) meanwhile preferred Newspaper, with 21 (14%) preferring the Internet. Only 2 (1.3%) respondents each opted for Newsletters/fliers and Outreach respectively. In addition, a cross-tabulation of preferred medium and age range of respondents reveals that, 18 out of the 21 respondents who preferred the internet fell within the 20-29 age range. Also, 27 out of the 55 respondents who preferred radio were within the 30-39 age range, whilst the other age categories were evenly spread across the other media.

A further question was asked of respondents to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed to the statement that, it is difficult to access information from CHRAJ. Instructively, 25.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed to the statement that it was difficult to access information from CHRAJ, while 34% disagreed, 34.7% meanwhile somehow agreed to the statement. Also, 1.3% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with 4.7% agreeing.

4.5 Communication timeframe

Since a major motivation for undertaking this study was to seek ways of improving communication between CHRAJ and members of the public, respondents were asked to indicate how often they would want to hear from the Commission.

CHART C



Data, as found on the Chart 'C', shows that almost half (49.3%) of the respondents surveyed wanted CHRAJ to communicate with them every two weeks, with only 2% favouring three weeks. Also, while 28.7% wanted to hear from the Commission every month, 20% meanwhile did not have specific timelines within which they wanted to hear from CHRAJ but believed there must be communication when the occasion demanded it.

4.6 Service delivery and its rating

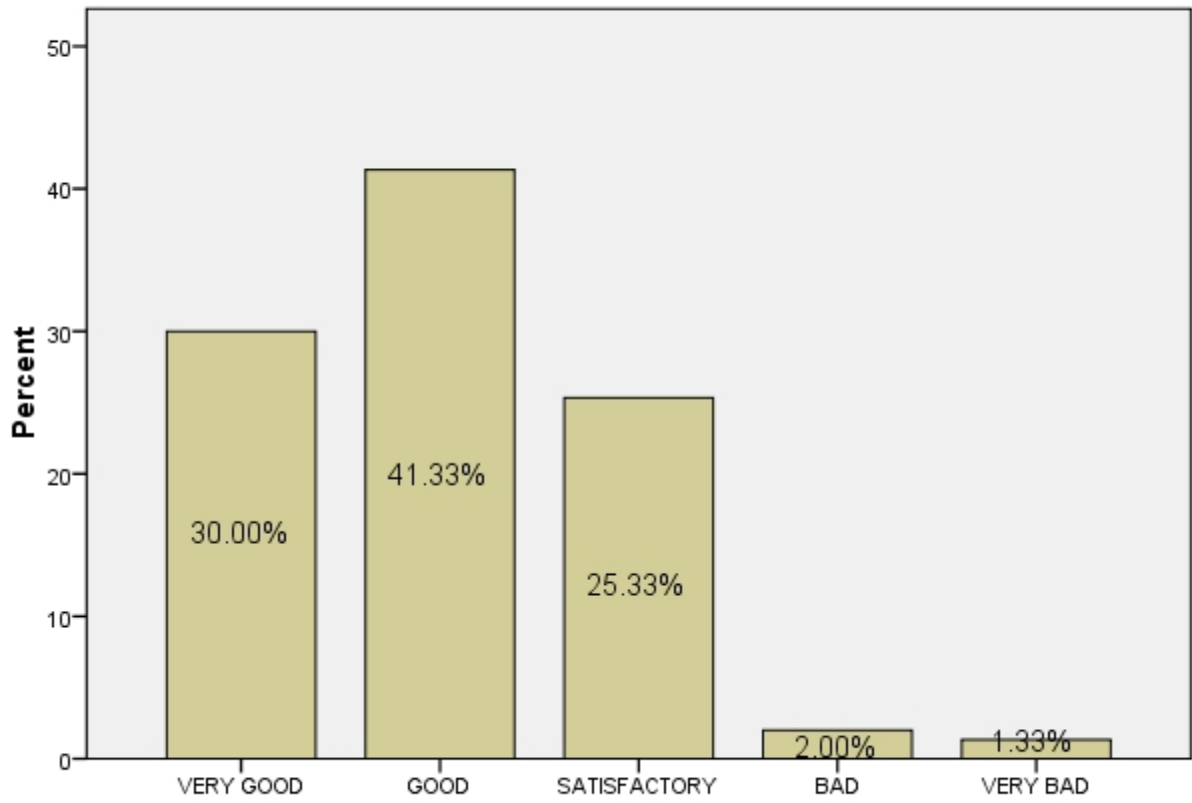
The study was also interested in finding out whether respondents saw CHRAJ as an institution that was ready to address their concerns. Findings on data gathered in respect of this aspect of the study indicated that close to half (46%) of the respondents agreed that officers of CHRAJ had always demonstrated their readiness to address their concerns, 26.7% agreed strongly to the statement, with 24% agreeing somehow. However, 1.3% felt that officers of CHRAJ did not exhibit good work ethic and, therefore, disagreed strongly to the statement, while only 2% disagreed to the statement that officers of CHRAJ were ready to address their concerns.

The findings speak volumes of the kind of social trust the Commission has built among respondents, over the years, which is very vital for its ability to deliver effectively on its mandate, as most respondents saw the Commission as willing to address their concerns. This corroborates the point raised by Newton and Norris (1999) that social trust helps build effective social institutions, and this in turn encourages confidence in civic institutions. Thus, since most respondents saw officers of the Commission to be ready to address their concerns, they would most likely make use of their services because they believed in their ability to deliver to their expectation.

Pharr et al. (2000) rightly observe that citizens' performance evaluations reflect subjective perceptions rather than objective measurements, and as such they are dependent upon access to information through the mass media and other sources. Therefore, the study sought to find out from respondents how they would rate the services of CHRAJ and whether or not it was delivering to their expectation as a state institution.

CHART D

HOW DO YOU RATE THE SERVICES OF CHRAJ



The findings on how respondents rated the services of CHRAJ as captured on the chart ‘D’ above indicated that 45 (30%) out of the 150 respondents surveyed rated the services of the Commission as very good, whilst 62 (41.3%) said CHRAJ’s service was good, and 38 (25.3) respondents said the Commission was rendering satisfactory services to members of the public. However, three (2%) respondents said the Commission’s service was bad, with only two (1.3%) respondents rating CHRAJ’s services as very bad.

4.7 Filing Complaints

Since the Commission is the foremost institution with regard to human rights promotion and protection in Ghana, the study also sought to find out whether respondents were availing themselves of the Commission's services through the filing of complaints. The data indicates that 51 (34%) out of the 150 respondents surveyed had filed complaints with CHRAJ before on various issues which hindered their ability to enjoy their fundamental human rights and freedoms, whilst 99 (66%) respondents had not filed complaints with CHRAJ before.

All complaints were filed at the Commission's head office at the Old Parliament House in Accra. Out of the 51 complaints, 34 (66.7%) were written and filed by complainants themselves, whereas 17 (33.3%) were verbal complaints which officers of the Commission later penned.

As regards the complaint filing procedure, 43 (84.3%) respondents said they were satisfied with the mechanism put in place by the Commission to receive complaints from members of the public, whilst 8 (15.7%) respondents registered their displeasure with the procedure for filing complaints.

4.8 Feedback

Since feedback is key to creating and maintaining cordial relationships between organisations and their publics, the study sought to find out whether the Commission had a feedback mechanism in place which kept complainants, especially, abreast of the kind of attention their complaints received after they had been filed.

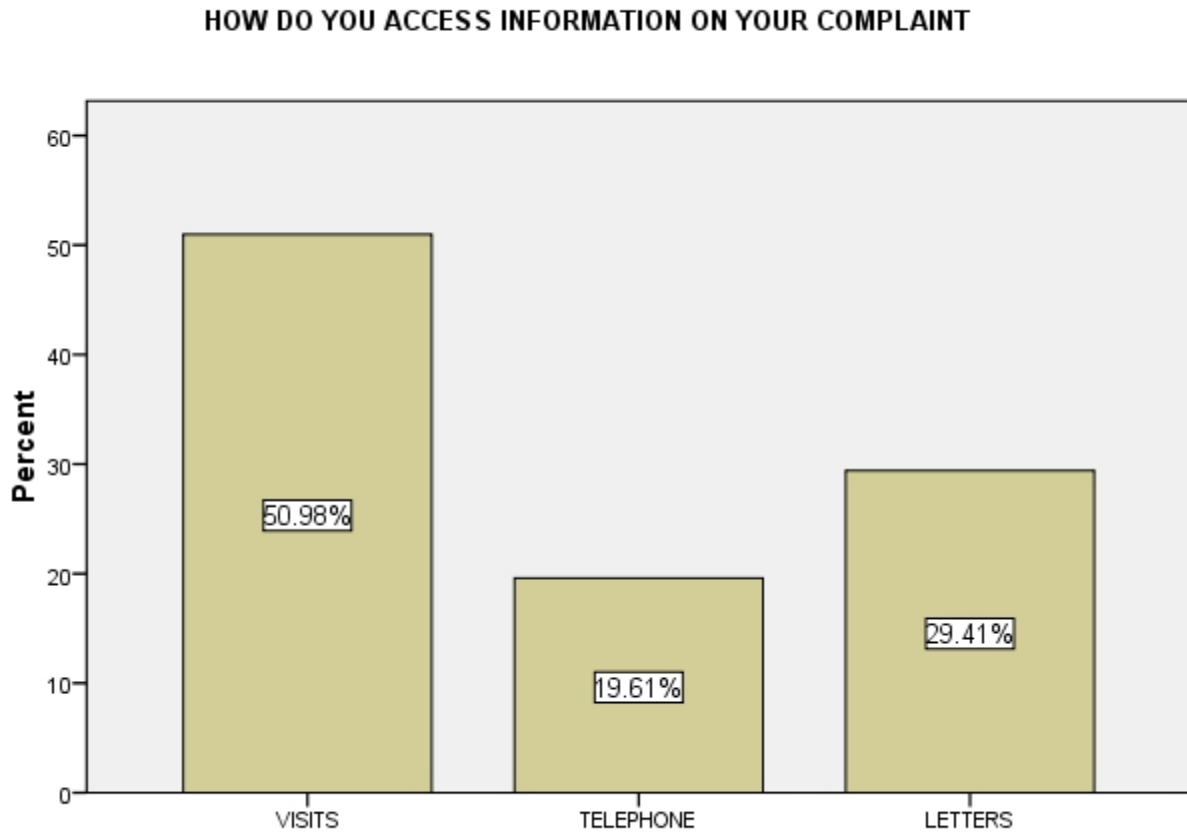
The findings indicate that, close to nine in ten (86.3%) respondents said they receive

feedback from the Commission with regard to their complaints. However, a little over one in ten (13.7%) of the respondents said they were left in the dark about their complaints as CHRAJ failed to give them feedback.

4.9 Complaint accessibility

Another area of interest of the study was to find out from respondents, especially complainants, how they were able to access information on the complaints they filed with the Commission. The findings are presented on the next page.

CHART 'E'



Findings from the chart 'E' above indicate that more than half (50.98%) of the respondents said they paid visits to the Commission in order to access information on their complaints, whilst close to three in ten (29.41%) of the respondents said the Commission wrote to inform them about developments on their complaints, with the remaining 19.61% saying officers of the Commission communicated with them on their complaints via telephone.

Further, the study was interested in finding out from respondents how often they engaged the Commission's officers in communication as regards their complaints.

The findings from the data gathered indicate that, 24 (47.1%) out of the 51 persons who had

filed complaints with the Commission could not recall a specific timeframe within which officers of CHRAJ communicated with them on their complaints, but said they (officers) did so at their own convenience and the timing was not fixed. Meanwhile, 21 (41.2%) respondents said the Commission communicated monthly with them on their complaints. Also, only one (2%) respondent said communication took place every three weeks, with 5 (9.8%) respondents saying CHRAJ communicated with them on their complaints every two weeks.

But the study went further to find out from respondents how often they wanted to hear from CHRAJ in respect of the complaints they file. From the findings, nearly seven in ten (66.7%) of the respondents said they would rather the Commission communicated with them every two weeks on the complaints they file, whereas 25.5% said there must be communication as and when necessary and, therefore, did not favour a fixed timeframe within which they wanted to hear from CHRAJ on their complaints. However, 5.9% wanted to hear from the Commission every month, with the remaining 2% expressing their desire to hear from CHRAJ every three weeks on their complaints.

4.10 Public Education

The study also sought to find out from respondents whether or not they had received education on their fundamental human rights and freedoms from CHRAJ before, since the 1992 Constitution in Article 218 (f), specifically, mandates the Commission to educate the public on their rights. The data suggests that, a little over seven in ten (71.3%) respondents said they had received education on their fundamental human rights and freedoms from officers of CHRAJ before, with close to three respondents in ten (28.7%) saying that the

Commission was yet to reach out to them as regards their human rights education.

However, it is important to stress that as many as 47 out of the 51 respondents who had filed complaints with the Commission said they had been educated by officers of CHRAJ on their human rights, with only four respondents saying the opposite. But as many as 39 respondents who had not filed complaints said they had not received education on their human rights, whilst 60 respondents said they had.

4.11 Discussion

The findings of the study as regards the various channels CHRAJ uses for its communication with its external publics go a long way to support what proponents of the media richness theory have put forward that communication media have varying capacities for resolving ambiguity, negotiating varying interpretations, and facilitating understanding (Daft and Lengel, 1984). The findings indicate that most respondents first heard about CHRAJ on radio (45.3%), followed by television (22.7%), with newspaper (14.0%), outreach (7.3%), internet (4.7%) newsletters/fliers (3.3%), and other (2.7%) following in that order. While the findings fail to corroborate proponents' assertion that face-to-face communication is the richest medium, it however supports one of the core assumptions of the media richness theory that a variety of media commonly used in organisations work better for certain tasks than others. For example, radio has proven to be an effective medium for CHRAJ's communication with its publics even though it does not require a direct contact between officials and members of the public.

Indeed, according to the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice's Annual Report, 2010, the commission undertook a total of 3,051 public education activities across the

country using both the print and electronic media as well as the other channels featured in this study. However, it can be said that radio worked better for the Commission than all the other channels considering the number of respondents who heard about it through that medium. According to officials of the Commission, its officers across the country have made special arrangements with managers of radio stations within their various locales, which allow them (officers) to appear on their programmes to not only educate the listening public on human rights but to also contribute to important national debates on their platforms.

The findings also corroborate the view held by Bennett and Jessani (2011) that the choice institutions make of one channel over another or the use of several channels will depend on the kind of message, its content, available resources, and how the audience likes to receive the information. This is because radio (36.7%) still remained the most preferred medium for respondents even though it saw a reduction in numbers (compared to the 45% who heard about CHRAJ on radio). Television (32%) and newspaper (14.7%), the other traditional media, also followed radio closely.

However, the finding does not come as a surprise considering the many attributes radio has over the other traditional media. Aside the fact that radio is very cheap and fast, it is also very mobile which allows people to listen on the go. Again, most radio stations review the various newspapers every morning which allows listeners to stay on top of issues. Radio also provides the opportunity for listeners to phone-in to programmes to ask questions or make contributions to the discussion, providing mechanisms for feedback from listeners and vice versa. Radio can, therefore, be said to be a rich medium for CHRAJ to communicate with its external publics.

In addition, the Internet (14%) came up as one of the most preferred mediums for

respondents. This supports the finding made by other scholars that the internet has been identified as a useful tool to evaluate public organisations' openness and to improve their transparency and accountability (Druke, 2007; La Porte, Demchack, & De Jong, 2002). It, therefore, behoves on the Commission to take full advantage of the internet and the opportunities it brings in order to improve upon its communication with its external publics, especially the youth, as evidenced by the findings of Gonzalez et al (2012), and corroborated by Callison (2003), that most institutions are now making use of the internet to ensure effective communication with their publics.

Also, as noted by Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier (1995), the systems perspective emphasises the interdependence of organisations with their environments, both internal and external to the organisation. The research findings amply support this assertion as 72% of the respondents said they actually accessed information from CHRAJ. This supports the fact that institutions and their publics depend on each other in order to sustain the system. The findings also support one of the core assumptions of the media richness theory that people want to overcome equivocality and uncertainty in organisations as evidenced by the number of respondents who access information from CHRAJ.

Although the findings indicate that nearly half (47.2%) of the respondents did not have specific periods for accessing information from the Commission, it emerges that 42% did so monthly to have information on their fundamental human rights and freedoms, 2.8% every three weeks, with 7.4% accessing information from CHRAJ every two weeks. There was, however, a reverse when it came to how often respondents wanted to hear from the Commission, as almost half (49.3%) of the respondents rather preferred to hear from CHRAJ every two weeks. Meanwhile, 28.7% wanted the Commission to communicate with them on

monthly basis, whilst 20% wanted CHRAJ to do so as and when necessary, with only 2% preferring three weeks.

Another important finding which the study brings to the fore is the fact that nearly 60% of the respondents believed that it was not difficult to access information from CHRAJ, thereby marking it as an institution which practised an open system. This, therefore, supports Littlejohn's (1996) assertion that open systems allow information to flow both within and without, unlike closed systems which do not allow much information to move in or out of the environment.

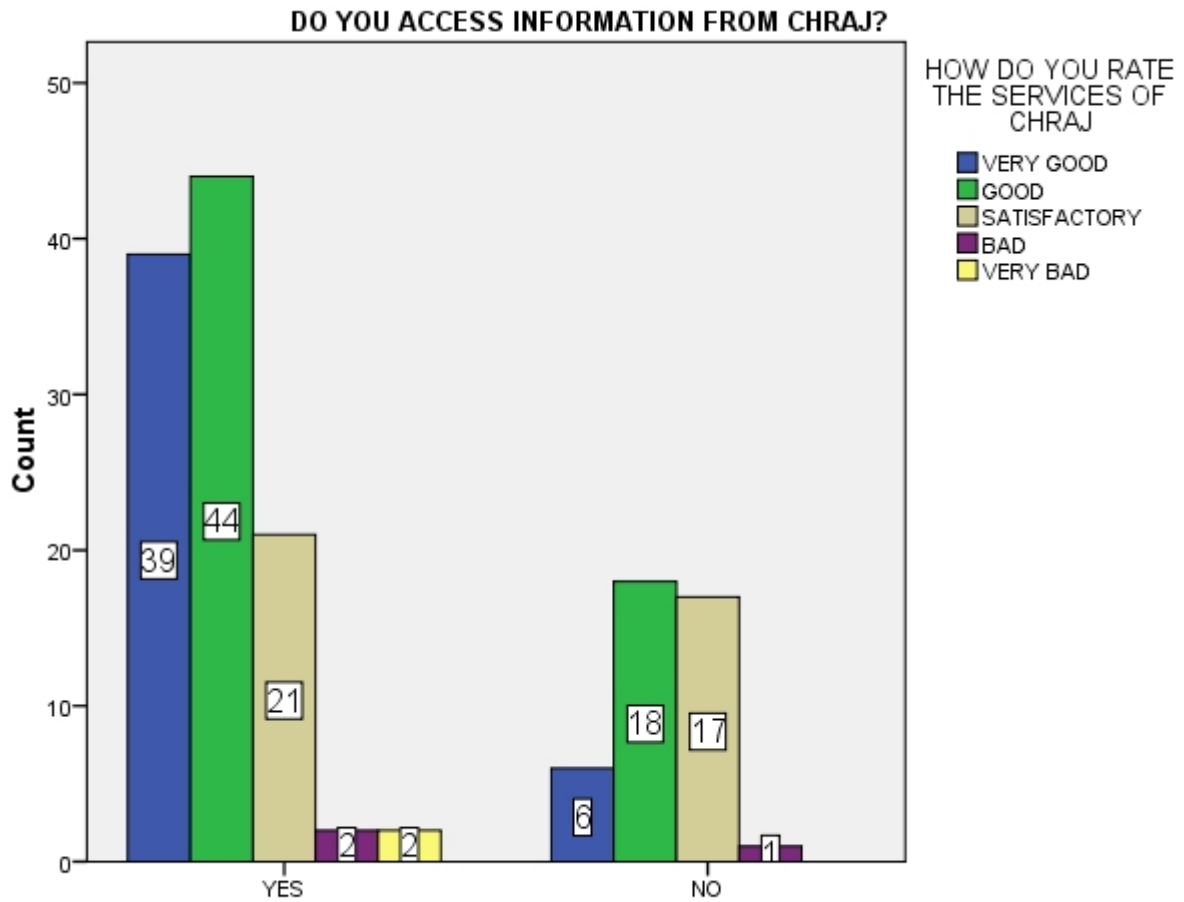
It can, therefore, be argued that since CHRAJ was open to the public, it had become more accountable, justified its existence, and that formed an essential component of its independence and efficiency, and also brought about measures to assess the impact of the Commission's work, as Gonzalez, Lopez and Garcia (2008) put forward.

The findings also indicate that the Commission had put feedback mechanisms in place to allow for an effective two-way communication flow between the institution and its publics, especially complainants. Indeed, nearly nine in ten (86.3%) respondents who had filed complaints with the Commission said they received feedback from CHRAJ on those complaints, underscoring the fact that the Commission was practising an open system. As Littlejohn (1996) notes, "open systems do not only generate feedback but also have flexibility on how feedback can be used to adjust inputs to thrive in its environment."

The findings corroborate the admonition by Pharr et al. (2000) about the need to keep in mind

that citizens' performance evaluations reflect subjective perceptions rather than objective measurements, and as such they are dependent upon access to information through the mass media and other sources. This is further expatiated in a cross tabulation of how persons who accessed information from the Commission rated its services on the next page.

CHART 'F'



As can be observed from Chart 'F' above, respondents who had access to information from the Commission gave it higher ratings than those who had no access to information from CHRAJ. This can be attributed to the fact that those who had access to information had been cleared of every ambiguity and uncertainty about the Commission's services and therefore rated it higher, as proponents of the media richness theory put forward, unlike those with no information. The finding, therefore, supports that of Erbiti (2003) that lack of communication gives the impression of a dull, gloomy institution with little known about it, whose worth is debatable and whose existence could be called into question. He warns, further, that such a situation could give rise to leaked information, half-truths, and misunderstandings due to the lack of a mediator who comes between the work of the institution and the journalist charged

with passing the information on to society.

4.12 Summary

In this chapter, data gathered on communication between CHRAJ and its external publics were presented and analysed. The scope of the chapter, therefore, included the various channels through which the communication is done, whether respondents have their most preferred mediums, and whether or not respondents have difficulties accessing information from the Commission. In order to establish respondents' views on how they see CHRAJ's communication with its external publics, respondents' ratings of the services of the Commission, and how often they wanted to hear from the Commission, among other issues, were also presented and analysed. The chapter also discussed in detail some of the findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This study sought to investigate how state institutions in Ghana communicate with their publics, using the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice as a reference point. It was, therefore, a response to the many who pour out their frustrations at the difficulties they experience daily in their attempt to get access to information from some state institutions, as expressed by former president John Agyekum Kufuor at the introduction of the Citizens Charter in 2007 (GNA,2007).

The findings from the data were presented and discussed in the previous chapter. This final chapter provides the summary of the findings and outlines, not only the limitations of the study but also, measures that can be put in place to help improve upon CHRAJ's communication with its external publics.

5.2 Summary of Findings

In terms of the channels the Commission used in communicating with its external publics, the result generally suggested that, CHRAJ had been using different channels including: the traditional media (radio, television, and newspapers), outreach, fliers/newsletters, internet, and even persons associated with the Commission. However, not only did most respondents hear about CHRAJ on radio, but it (radio) also emerged as the most preferred medium for respondents. Thereby, confirming one of the core assumptions of the media richness theory

that a variety of media commonly used in organisations work better for certain tasks than others. The findings, therefore, emphasise the fact that external publics of CHRAJ were aware of the various communication channels available to them to access information and give feedback on the Commission's work.

The study also finds that the Commission had been practising an open system, allowing its external publics to access information on its work through radio, television, visits, fliers, among others, without let or hindrance. In addition, it emerges that the Commission provides feedback to persons who file complaints with it, making most respondents give the Commission's services high ratings. This, therefore, affirms the view held by most scholars discussed earlier that when institutions communicate they help to remove every ambiguity and uncertainty from the minds of their publics, and this culminates in they (institutions) winning the support and confidence of their publics.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

Like any human endeavour, this study had limitations. One of such shortfalls was in getting current related studies that were carried out in Africa, especially in Ghana. As a result, the study relied on works on how some state institutions communicate with their publics mostly in Europe. This did not make it possible for the researcher to compare findings from similar socio-cultural backgrounds.

Due to time constraints, this study covered only persons who work in the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (who belong to the middle class and were, therefore, expected to have some form of engagement with the Commission as regards its work), as well as complainants who deal directly with the Commission at its head office. Future studies should

be expanded not only to cover complainants from the other offices of the Commission but to also cover other segments of the population (like market women, students, farmers, etc.), who also have an equal stake in the Commission's work.

Finally, this study sought to investigate how state institutions communicate with their publics but focussed only on CHRAJ. Therefore, future studies need to shed the spotlight on other state institutions too in order to have a clearer picture as regards how state institutions in Ghana communicate with their publics. Inasmuch as the findings of this study provide very useful insight into how CHRAJ communicates with its external publics, they (the findings) must be seen within the context of these limitations.

5.4 Recommendations

As shown in this study, radio has proven to be the richest medium for CHRAJ's communication with its external publics. Therefore, the current practise whereby some of the Commission's offices have arranged for slots on various radio stations where they educate the public on their rights should be replicated across all its offices, as it seeks to fulfil its constitutional mandate (Article 218 *f*) to educate the public on their fundamental human rights and freedoms.

There is also the need for the Commission to explore the potential that the internet presents as an effective medium, in order to reach out to the youth especially. Considering the number of respondents who chose the internet as their most preferred medium, and as evidenced by the findings made by other scholars on same, CHRAJ needs to explore its usage to improve upon communication with its external publics. For example, aside CHRAJ regularly updating its website, it can also have a presence on Facebook or any of the other social media platforms to

engage Ghanaians on human rights education. This would go a long way to expand access and generate opportunities for feedback which has been identified as key to ensuring cordial relationships between institutions and their publics. Additionally, as the Commission focuses on improving upon communication with its external publics, on the one hand, internal communication channels such as notice boards, memoranda, intranet, and the use of intercom to provide information to internal publics, on the other hand, must be improved.

Finally, the Commission needs to have a communication strategy to ensure it builds and maintains constant relationships with its publics, considering the immeasurable role they (publics) play in its (the Commission's) successes or failures. This would ensure that its communication activities are well coordinated and able to meet the needs of all publics across the board. The researcher, unfortunately, did not come across any communication strategy for the Commission whilst undertaking the study, as officials said they had initiated a process to come out with one. It is, therefore, important for the Commission to have a communication strategy, which would help it to better define and specify its mission, vision, and values in order to ride on the public's support to effectively deliver on its mandates.

5.5 Conclusion

This study establishes that the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice has been engaging its external publics in communication, with radio as the medium most preferred and used for the communication. While the study attributes this development to the many attributes radio has over the other channels, it also establishes the need for CHRAJ to explore the potential of the internet to improve upon communication with its external publics.

The study also evinces the Commission as one which practises an open system, as the various

communication channels made it easy for its external publics to access information on its work. The channels also allowed the external publics the opportunity to give feedback on the Commission's work. This arrangement, of course, had a positive bearing on the ratings the Commission enjoyed from its publics, thereby supporting the view by other scholars that institutions which communicate with their publics win their (publics') support and confidence for effective and efficient delivery of their mandates.

Therefore, the data gathered served a great deal in assisting the researcher meet the objectives of the study, as the findings amply indicated that external publics of CHRAJ knew the communication channels available to them to access information on the Commission. Further, this awareness made it quite easy for the Commission's external publics to access information on its work.

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APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

I. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

(Please tick where applicable)

Gender

Male [] Female []

Age range

Less than 20 [] 20-29 [] 30-39 [] 40-49 [] 50-59 [] 60+
[]

Marital status

Married [] Single [] Divorced []

Level of Education

Basic [] Secondary [] Tertiary [] other (specify) [] _____

II. CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

1. Have you heard about CHRAJ before? YES [] NO []

2. Through which medium did you hear about CHRAJ?

Radio [] Newsletters/news fliers []

Television [] Outreach []

Newspaper [] Internet []

Durbars [] Other (Specify) [] _____

3. Which is your most preferred medium?

Strongly agree [] Agree [] Somehow []
Disagree [] Strongly Disagree []

6. Officers of CHRAJ are always ready to address your concerns.

Strongly agree [] Agree [] Somehow []
Disagree [] Strongly disagree []

7. Have you received education on fundamental human rights and freedoms from CHRAJ before?

YES [] NO []

8. How do you rate the services of CHRAJ

Very good [] Good [] Satisfactory []
Bad [] Very bad []

9. How do you think CHRAJ can improve upon communication with its external publics?

IV. ACCESSING INFORMATION ON COMPLAINTS

(Kindly answer the next set of questions if you have filed a complaint with CHRAJ before)

1. Have you filed a complaint with CHRAJ before?

YES [] NO []

2. If yes, in which of the CHRAJ offices did you file your complaint _____

3. How did you file your complaint

Verbal []

Telephone []

Written []

Other (Specify) [] _____

4. Were you satisfied with the procedures? YES [] NO []

5. Were you given feedback? YES [] NO []

6. How do you access information on your complaint

Visits []

Letters []

Telephone []

Other (Specify)[] _____

7. How often does CHRAJ communicate with you on your complaint?

Every two wks. []

Every three wks. []

Monthly []

Other (Specify) [] _____

8. How often do you want to hear from CHRAJ on your complaint?

Every two wks. []

Every three wks. []

Monthly []

Other (Specify) [] _____

THANK YOU.