

**GENDER, COMMUNITY AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE IN
GHANAIAN MINES: A SOCIO-LINGUISTIC STUDY OF GENDER AND LANGUAGE
NUANCES**

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ABSTRACT

Community affairs and public relations practice in Ghanaian mines has been dominated by females. To gain adequate understanding of this phenomenon, it is prudent to explore its gendered nature. Literature from feminist theorists draws collective attention to the centrality of gender in shaping social relations, pointing out that gender is one of the central organizing principles around which social life revolves. However, the field being feminized faces the realities of gender-bias, glass ceiling effects, dwindling fame, status and lack of influence within the sector. This paper explores the community affairs and public relations practice as well as the phenomenon of engendering their roles in Ghanaian mines. The study was a phenomenological inquiry which adopted qualitative approaches, and conducted in-depth interviews with respondents in three mining companies. Discourse analysis was employed in analysing the statements of the respondents. Results show that community affairs and public relations officers from the mines function as the face of the mining companies in the communities in terms of engagements and communications. Results further indicate that culture, customs and traditions temper the language and posture of the mining communities making it very difficult for them to be aggressive, tough and rough towards female community affairs and public relations officers. Thus, female community affairs and public relations officers serve virtually as shields against the venoms and darts of anger emanating from the occasional embittered community members. The paper has social and practical implications for ensuring diversity management and gender equity in Ghanaian mining environments.

Keywords: gender, community affairs, public relations, communications, language nuances, engagements, Ghanaian mines.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The practice of Public Relations (PR) has received much attention dating back to the 20th century (Umeogu & Ifeoma, 2012; Zaretsk, 1996). From the perspectives of practitioners, 'public relations' refers to the management function that seeks to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their stakeholders through a two - way symmetrical communication module. Public relation has both philosophical and pragmatic roots traced throughout civilization. Indeed, leaders of ancient civilizations such as Babylonia, Persia and Assyria used poems and other writings to promote their prowess in battle and politics. The public relations practice was introduced into Ghana by the British colonial administration, and after independence, the Ghana Institute of Journalism was established with the aim of training public relations professionals in 1971 and in 1972 the Public Relations Association of Ghana (PRAG) was formed.

Public relations is said to be a gendered field according to studies conducted in Canada, Australia and the United States of America (Rea, 2007). Other studies found that women dominated or out-numbered men in PR practice (Schuebel, 2009; Janus, 2008). Another study conducted into membership structure of all central public relations unions in Finland in 2013 showed that up to 89.2% of the operators in the industry were women. In the light of these results, Finland has the most female-dominated public relations field of all Nordic countries. In Sweden, the share of women membership in their union is around 80%. In 2013, a total of 792 people, of which 612 were women, applied to the University of Helsinki to study Media and Communication. Similarly, in the United States, the domination of the field by women is a significant phenomenon, where in 2011 the share of women in the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) was 71%. Also, in Germany, the field has gradually become dominated by women, though the figures from 2009 indicate that there were still 10% more men than women in PR-related jobs in Germany. This trend has brought about certain side-effects which have been the aim of this research, as the trend in the dominance of females in PR practice has not been previously studied properly as a sociocultural phenomenon.

Fuller (1998) explained that, for good corporate governance in any economy, we need such female virtues like cooperation, caring, pacifism and their nonviolence nature to promote peaceful coexistence in industrial organizations. There is also the growing recognition that females are endowed with classic style of communication which appears to be vital in corporate entities, placing them in solid public relations portfolios, with absolute responsibilities of linking corporate bodies to both internal and external environments, such as financial institutions, employers' associations, trade unions as well as state departments and agencies (Aboagye, 2003). In seeking to bring about positive industrial change, industrialists are of the view that women's ways of being must be recognized as viable alternative to male modes in public relations practices and that public knowledge, academic scholarship and organization of social life should be adjusted to take serious account of female recruitment into public relations portfolios (Mc Fadden, 1989). As many scholars have noted (Ampofo, 2014; Agyepong, 2010; Lee, 2000), there is little academic research on this subject. Fewer women are attracted into the study of mathematics and engineering due to socio-cultural and other factors (Ampofo, 2014). That same reason may be motivating women to pursue educational tracks in public relations and communications which are perceived as more liberal and feminine. It is against this background that this study seeks to ascertain the reasons for the dominance, and the roles of women in Community Affairs and Public Relations Practice in Ghanaian mines.

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Gender division of labour is real across the country. This manifests, inter alia, in women being given primary responsibilities like care giving, emotional management and maintenance of routine order, while in the public sphere men are given privileged access to what is described as the locus of true rewards of social life - money, status, power, freedom, opportunities for growth and self-worth (Gender Policy for Ghana, 2011). Though women are the majority of the Ghanaian population per the 2010 Population and Housing Census, they are underrepresented in mining exploration, underground mining and mineral processing. The 2010 population and housing census figures on gender participation and proportion in mining stood at 0.6% for females as compared to 2.0% for males. This picture depicts the general perception that some category of work is considered appropriate for men while another category is for women because of their orientation and socialization. As Bekoe (2012) observes, 'society is still not quite gender-sensitive. Chances are that a man would be chosen if the opportunity came to give a responsible position to both sexes' (p.16). The public relations industry has been dominated by females in the last two decades in Ghanaian mines. Their growing numbers alone has created opportunities for themselves in the industry; and women do, indeed add value to the field of public relations practices (Frederick, 2003). Also, public relations scholars prescribe four roles for PR practitioners: the expert prescriber, the problem solver, the communication facilitator and the communication technician (Schuebel, 2009). These roles are further classified into two broad roles namely: the technician role, where the majority of females tend to group; and managerial roles, where majority of men tend to hold jobs (Schuebel, 2009). The technician role requires journalistic skills like writing and editing while managerial roles involve decision-making and management (Frederick, 2003).

However, any field suddenly becoming feminized or even speculations of a paradigm shift to a female majority may be facing the realities of gender-bias, glass ceiling effects, dwindling salaries, fame, status, influence, sociocultural and organizational barriers (Schuebel, 2009). These consequences make the story of women in public relations in the Ghanaian mines an important one to tell. Many of the studies done on gender in mining were foreign in nature, with a relatively few works done in Ghana (Kilu, Anderson & Sanda, 2014). The few works done however are characterized with research gaps (Knobloch-Westerwick & Alter, 2007; Kilu, Anderson & Sanda, 2014). Some studies employed purely the survey technique, which is limited in providing in-depth understanding of issues pertaining to mine-work culture, gender as well as community affairs and public relations. On research design, some of the works fall short in the provision of adequate information to permit replication of such studies, while in some cases sample selection procedures were not clearly defined, making room for potential sample biases. This, then, constitutes a research gap to be bridged by this paper using the qualitative approach. The study seeks to answer the following questions:

- i. What are the roles of Community Affairs and Public Relations' Practitioners in Ghanaian mines?
- ii. Why are women dominating the field of Community Affairs and Public Relations in Ghanaian mines?

Ghanaian societies exhibit several complementarities between men and women's roles. Men as a group enjoy more rights, power and privileges than women. Indeed, in many cases in Ghana, women's rights, power and

enjoyment of privileges are tied to men as fathers, husbands and brothers (Ampofo, 2014). Some women in Ghana suffer from greater inequalities than men, not due to some inherent deficiencies but because society is structured in ways that privilege men over women – an environment of patriarchy. The concept of differences in gender and its implications for socio-economic development exists and many institutions, policies, practices and processes in Ghana, though may not overtly express discrimination against women are not gender-neutral. This then calls for Ghanaian institutions like the mining companies to be gender mediators of development policies and practices. Relative to men, women are still under-represented and under-acknowledged in the modern economy of Ghana. Most women in Ghana are still clustered at the bottom of most establishments in semi-skilled, poorly paid jobs that reflect historical barriers, in terms of educational qualifications, colonial reinforcement of a culture of domesticity for women, and cultural prejudices to women entering into a number of occupations. Their predominance is in the following subsectors: trade, small scale manufacturing and food processing (Ampofo, 2014; Amu, 2005).

In the area of education, disparities can be found not only in terms of access but also in terms of completion rates, attainment levels, and stereotypes in the curriculum contents. The female enrolment rates as a proportion of total enrolment figures in the 2005/2006 academic year, stood at 68.7% at Junior High School level, 43.4% at Senior High School level and 33.0% at the tertiary level. In the 2009/2010 academic year, total completion rate at primary level stood at 87.10%, with a male completion rate being 89.70% while female completion rate stood at 84.30%. At the JHS level in the same year, total completion rate was 66.00%, out of which male completion rate stood at 70.10% with the female completion rate being 61.80% (Research Outcomes to Education (RECOUP, 2008). Specific factors that exacerbate educational problems for girls include early marriages, teenage pregnancies, discriminatory punitive practices, expulsion or transfer of pregnant school girls while boys who father such children are not held accountable as well as sexual harassment by teachers and other educational staff. Regrettably, in some families where incomes are not enough, only the male child is given the priority to education (Apusiga, 2006).

After the Beijing conference in 1995, many countries including Ghana adopted gender awakening programmes and a search for tools to bring about gender equity. The Beijing Platform of action in itself is an agenda for action that various parties including national governments, international agencies, NGO's, civil society groups and individuals have been invited to act upon to make gender equitable development a reality. Indeed, promoting gender equality and women empowerment in its broader scope is a key objective of the Millennium Development Goal 3. Gender in public relations practice will lead to increase in productivity that will in turn lead to national economic growth. Indeed, growth in national economy will lead to mobilization in national resources that will finance improvements in people's health and education, and further raise productivity (HDR, 2003). Gender in PR is therefore central in these synergies because gender is a critical agent of national development. This study looks at gender, community affairs and public relations practices in Ghanaian mines; women dominance and the unique roles they play in the prevailing masculine and 'macho' culture that exists in the mines.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Literature

Social constructionism is a sociological perspective of knowledge that considers how social phenomenon or objects of consciousness develop in social contexts. It is a domain which has been explored not only by sociologists but also scholars in language and gender such as Kendall (2003), Coates (1995) and Poynton (1989). The world, being socially constructed, 'functions by distributing access to roles and activities in relation to what are regarded as relevant social characteristics such as age, gender, class, etc (Poynton, 1989,

p.56). Besides, 'where such restriction of access to fields exists with respect to any social characteristic, then one can expect this to show up linguistically in terms of differences in what people talk about and in differences in how people are talked about' (Poynton, *Ibid*). Hence, in the mines how women are talked about can convey some language nuances as far as gender is concerned.

The social constructionist school of thought emerged as a critique of the objectivism assumed by the positivist concepts of knowledge (Gergen, 1985). Some versions argue that the differences in behaviour between men and women are entirely sociocultural conventions, meaning that society and culture create the roles, duties and responsibilities of individual genders, and that these roles are generally considered ideal or appropriate behaviour for a person of that specific gender. Whereas other versions believe that behaviour is defined by biological universal factors and other versions claim that there are more genders than just the two most commonly accepted (male and female). For instance, Poynton (1989) stated that 'ideological structures are merely formalisations of patterns of behaviour characteristic of a particular society' therefore, 'as long as individuals participate in the institutions of that society they must perforce act ideologically'. She argues further that 'as long as the four key structures of women's institution – production, reproduction, sexuality, and the socialisation of children remain substantially unchanged, the ideological meanings of man and woman will remain unchanged' (p.20). The focus of the gender debate is to uncover the ways individuals and groups participate in the construction of their perceived social reality, and how social phenomena are created, institutionalized, known, and made into customs and traditions by humans.

Alsop, Fitzsimmons and Lennon (2002) noted that the constructionist accounts of gender creation can be divided into two perspectives, namely, the materialist perspective, which underlines the structural aspects of the social environment that are responsible for perpetuating certain gender roles; while the discursive perspective focuses on the creation, through language and culture, meanings and understandings associated with gender. The sense of one's gender identity is acquired through the internalization of external knowledge. However, it is in fact never fully acquired; it has to be constantly performed and re-enacted in social interactions. Alsop et al. (2002) argued that, 'gender is part of an identity woven from a complex and specific social whole, and requiring very specific and local readings' (p. 86). Thus, gender identity can be viewed as part of socially situated understanding of gender and scholars in language and gender have acknowledged that social life, as far as institutions and roles are concerned, is socially constructed (Kendall, 2003; Cotes, 1995; Poynton, 1989). Language is a major means by which concepts are concretised and transmitted; hence, as Poynton (1989) notes, 'the particular facts of this social construction are, to a considerable extent, named (lexicalised) and those 'facts', as 'meanings', become part of the language used by members of that society'. Poynton (*Ibid*) observes further that 'this naming takes place not in isolation from, but in the context of, a socially constructed understanding of the relations between 'things' (including people, objects, and ideas)... which also become part of the language' (p. 55). Thus, the name 'man' connotes superiority while the name 'woman' connotes a subordinate and a weaker sex.

Organizations vary in practices and processes that are used to achieve their goals and these processes and practices may produce gender inequalities. Considerable research exists exploring how gender inequalities are produced both formally and informally, as work processes are carried out (Acker, 1990). The gendered and embodied nature of work has been explored by writers such as Acker (1990) who articulated new ways of looking at both organizations and the gendered processes embedded in them. Most feminists writing about organizations assume that organizational structure is gender neutral; on the contrary, assumptions about gender underlie the documents and contracts used to construct organizations and to provide the common sense ground for theorizing about them. Their gendered nature is partly masked through obscuring the embodied nature of work.

From the theoretical literature, the four themes characterizing gender inequality according to Ritzer (2000) are: first, human beings being situated in society not only differently but also unequally. Specifically, women get less of the material resources, social status, power and opportunities for self-actualization than do men.

Secondly, this inequality results from the organization of society and not as a result of any significant biological or personality differences. Thirdly, though individual human beings may differ somehow from each other in the profile of their potentials and traits, no significant pattern of natural variation distinguishes the sexes. Fourthly, all inequality theories assume that human beings, irrespective of their gender respond similarly, fairly easily and naturally to social situations. Liberal feminists also believe that all human beings have certain essential features, namely capacity for reasoning, moral agency and self-actualization. The exercise of these capacities can be secured through legal recognition of individual universal rights. Liberal feminists further hold the opinion that the gender inequalities are socially constructed, having no basis in nature; that social change for gender equality can be achieved through organized and reasonable appeal to the public and the state (Philip, 1993).

Empirical Literature

This section reviews work done on gender in Ghanaian mines as well as examples of what has been done in some other countries. From the available literature, it appears not much work has been done on gender, community affairs and PR practices in Ghanaian mines though there is some work generally on female employment in the mines. Some of the earlier publications were on gender disparity in the mines. In a paper presented by Kwami (2007) at the first National Conference on HR Management in the Mining Industry held at Tarkwa in the Western Region of Ghana, the author addressed the issue of disparity between the roles played by men and women in the mining industry. According to her, 'women in mining face similar problems as women in any other technical industry' due, particularly, to lack of skill resulting from sociocultural factors which compel women not to go for some challenging jobs. She attributed the lack of skills 'partly to lack of interest, prejudice, cultural restrictions' (2007,p.1) which combine to rob the nation of a huge 'chunk of the nation's human capital from development and application.' The author observed that since 1897 when the Obuasi Gold Mines (now AngloGold Ashanti) started, the managers of the mines were all men. She noted that this state of affairs continued for a long time, and even as at 2007 women could be seen employed as porters or carriers in, especially the construction areas of mining.

As Kwami (ibid) rightly observes, the Ghana Labour Act, 2003 (Act 651) contains several provisions which favour women. These provisions, which include Sections 10, 55, 56, and 57, are intended to promote women and enhance their productivity. Section 10 provides for the rights of the worker and Section 10 (b) particularly provides that a worker shall 'receive equal pay for equal work without distinction of any kind.' Hence, discrimination against women is outlawed by this provision. Sections 55, 56, and 57 provide among others, that a pregnant woman shall not be engaged at night or overtime and that a woman shall be entitled to maternity, annual and sick leaves. Kwami (ibid) observes that in spite of these provisions in the Labour Act, women do not seem to be interested in taking up mining as a career. In fact, it is not just a lack of interest in mining but also mining related jobs. Hence, in view of the foregoing, the influx of women into the area of community affairs and Public Relations in Ghanaian mines is a new development which this current work seeks to examine.

In Nigeria, in a study conducted by Umeogu and Ifeoma (2012) it was found that 'even though there are fewer men in number, the males have more power than their female counterparts in PR practice.' The study inter alia tried to determine the gender distribution in PR practice in Anambra State of Nigeria. They reiterated a statement by Robinson (2005) that gender does play a crucial role in everyday life as well as in the ways in which culture and language affect professional behaviour. Umeogu and Ifeoma (2012, p.153) conclude that 'while women dominate in number, the men dominate in power.' Thus, their study was not focused on why women were entering the PR profession nor did it have anything to do with mining.

In Australia, as recorded by Lenore Layman in the Encyclopaedia of Women and Leadership in the Twentieth Century, the involvement of women in the mining industry before the 1970s was an exceptional occurrence. However, the change came in the late 1960s and early 1970s 'when barriers to women's employment in mining began to fall.' This change was the result of pressures which included the Australian government's

drive to promote equal employment opportunities and the campaigns of women's movements against 'sex segmented labour market and gender discrimination'. Though this report deals with women in the mines, it did not throw light on women's involvement in community affairs and PR practice in the mines which is the focus of this current work in Ghanaian mines.

Other scholars who have researched into gender issues in Public Relations appear to have focused on feminisation and gender disparity. For example, Geyer (2009) explores the issue of gender disparity prevalent in the discipline of Public Relations specifically, issues arising from the pedagogy of the discipline, to the professional practice of public relations. Secondary research that has emerged over the last 25 years is analyzed by discussing the feminization and perspectives of gender influence on the discipline of public relations. The Public Relations industry has therefore been likened to the nursing career which is considered a feminized career. There has also been the concern that 'although women are the majority in the public relations profession, they continue to be the minority in holding executive or management positions' (Geyer, 2009, p.8). Broom and Dozier (1986; as cited in Geyer, 2009) established an alternative to the popular glass ceiling theory. Broom and Dozier (*ibid*) postulate that the difference in pay and power between men and women in public relations exists because of the role women play, being mainly technician as against managerial positions mainly held by men. According to them, 'women did not aspire to possess managerial roles and were more content in the role of public relations technicians. Based on their study, Geyer (*ibid*) observed that 'women are content in the tasks they perform in the public relations field and lack interest in the tasks of more managerial roles' (p.8).

The International Association of Business Communicators Research Foundation commissioned two professional research reports in 1986 and 1989 to assess the impact of feminization of communication. The first report released, *The Velvet Ghetto* (Cline et al, 1986) focused on why women were not in managerial roles in public relations. The results of *The Velvet Ghetto* (Cline et al., 1986) reiterated Broom and Dozier's (1986) study. Women were relegated to the role of technicians; yet, women were relegated to this role, because of the social perceptions that women were poor managers (Cline et al., 1986). *The Velvet Ghetto* (Cline et al., 1986) contended that women self-select themselves into technician roles. In the second report, *beyond the Velvet Ghetto* (1989) results repeated similar findings from the initial report, but also gave recommendations for future public relations practitioners; the latter report suggested that women should accept the reality of the velvet ghetto and adjust to its existence, in order to succeed (Toth & Cline, 1989).

Some scholars have focused on the image of female PR practitioners and have blamed the media for contributing to the stereotyping of women. According to them, the media have created and reinforced stereotypes through simplified and biased representations of social groups differentiated by characteristics such as sex or race (Lippmann, 1922, as cited in Knoblochh-Westerwick & Alter, 2007). Andsager and Hust (2005) claimed that women have entered public relations at a much faster rate than men over the last two decades. This was the result of a survey conducted with PR students to determine, *inter alia*, whether certain areas of specialization are perceived as gendered. They found out that differences between female and male specialties with their associated characteristics and supporting values delineated in the feminist theory of public relations. Their studies also indicated that students would consider gender orientation before selecting career paths.

Thus, in summary, there have been some studies on gender disparity in the mining industry in Ghana but these did not focus on Community affairs and public relations practice. In Nigeria, studies conducted indicate that though women outnumbered men, the men dominated in power (Umeogu & Ifeoma, *ibid*) while in Australia the increase in female numbers in the mines was due to the government's efforts to promote equal employment opportunities (Layman, *ibid*) but none of these studies and other studies discussed above focused on women's involvement in Community Affairs and Public Relation practice in the mines.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The researchers adopted the phenomenological and integrationist approaches, both derivatives of the qualitative technique of research, to inductively study and understand the experiences of women in community affairs and public relations practice in Ghanaian mines. The adoption of a qualitative approach was justified on grounds of universal acceptability of studying and understanding such critical subjects like gender, community affairs and public relations practices in work organizations. Also, qualitative studies are able to embrace complexity and diversity in both the research process and the findings that are uncovered. Daymon and Holloway (2011) noted that qualitative researchers seek to uncover the views and meanings held by research participants, to understand the world in their terms and therefore to take account of the many changing ways of understanding social phenomena.

The study conducted in-depth interviews on twenty respondents, both male and female staff including managers of community affairs and public relation practitioners from three mining companies in Ghana. The study solicited their perceptions, personal views, experiences and opinions regarding their respective gender compositions, and public relations and community affairs practices. Key informants were selected using purposive and convenient approaches. The purposive method was used because key informants typified the true features of the community affairs and public relations practitioners; while the convenience method was used to select those who were readily available and agreed to be interviewed. A semi structured interview guide was developed, pre-tested and used to conduct the interview sessions. Responses were recorded and subsequently transcribed and organized into themes for analysis, reflecting the objectives of the study. Analysis was done using discourse analysis, logical conclusions and thematic analysis to generate the findings, which were discussed and conclusions drawn on the subject matter.

4.0 RESULTS

Community Affairs and Public Relations' Roles in Ghanaian Mines

In the Ghanaian mines, PR practice is generally titled, 'Community Affairs and Public Relations.' The study observed that the Community Affairs and Public Relations outfit of Ghanaian mines is dominated by females who are responsible for the maintenance and provision of the needs of communities in which the mines operate. This phenomenon of female dominance in PR practice is in tandem with findings in Canada, Australia and the USA (Rea, 2007). However, the factors which account for the female dominance in the aforementioned research and other similar studies mentioned above (Schuebel, 2009; Janus 2008; Rea, 2007) are not the same as the pull factors regarding female dominance in community affairs and public relations practice in Ghanaian mines. Indeed, mining occurs in quite populated areas and so, mining has a lot of impact on the environment and the people who live around the mines. So, community affairs and public relations officers are tasked to ensure that they mitigate the negative effects of the mining operations. This crucial role requires a certain calibre of Community Affairs and Public Relations' officers.

The mining activities have led to several environmental hazards and discomfort to the mining communities. The following extracts of dialogues recorded during the study seem to explain the gravity of harm being caused by the mining companies:

We do blasting that generates dust, noise and emission of chemicals. Our vehicles ply the local roads and generate a lot of dust; sometimes, we have excesses from our operations in the form of spills that are harmful to human life, wild life as well as aquatic life. In view of some of these bad things, it has become an obligation to mitigate their negative effects.

Also, Community Affairs and Public Relations Officers in the mines are responsible for social investment contributions; being what the companies give back to society in the areas where they operate. If mining operations lead to negative effects, then of course their existence should bring positive effect for the benefits of the communities. The brunt of mitigating the socioeconomic cost of mining falls on the mining companies and the liaison between the embittered communities and the mining companies is the Community Affairs and Public Relations Officer. This role is underscored by one of the community affairs and PR officers thus:

'As community affairs and public relations officers, we are responsible for ensuring that the mining companies are in constant interactions, in good relations and at peace with the communities.' The community affairs and public relations officers further have the responsibility to implement complaint and grievance systems with the communities so that they are always at peace with the community because, as noted by this respondent, 'it is better to be a good neighbour and build a good relationship with the people you live with.'

Again, a community affairs and public relations officer has this to say:

As community affairs and public relations officers, we function as the face of the mining companies in the communities in terms of engagement, and in terms of communications. Because the nature of our operations demands we have to be in constant touch with the people around us to create the understanding of our operations, so that when issues come up, we are able to handle them smoothly.

This statement underscores the fact that the facilitating role of 'public relation helps an organisation and its publics adapt mutually to each other' (Seitel, 2001,p. 9). Internally, the Community Affairs and Public Relations Officer in turn, promotes the views of the communities to other departments of the mining enterprise to understand the effects of their operations on the communities, and then to be conscious about their existence, so that in everything that any one does they must have the community at heart. A respondent has this to say:

We are promoting the mine-work brand. Our progress depends on having our smooth operations and successes depend on good community relations.

The foregoing statement is in tandem with PR practice today which deals with several functions - 'it manages corporate relations and ensures quality management for a good corporate image' and also 'manages crisis and issues, which always come up and should be handled professionally' (Seital 2000, pp. 10-11). Similarly, the statement is in line with the definition of PR by Cutlip and Broom (1974) (Cited in Bekoe, 2012, p.8) which states that PR is 'a management function that identifies, establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the various publics on whom its success and failure depend.'

Female Dominance in Community Affairs and Public Relations in Ghanaian Mines

The Community Affairs and Public Relations Practice in Ghanaian mines is dominated by women but the following statement by a community affairs and public relations practitioner is a pointer to the peculiar reason why females dominate as Community Affairs and PR Officers in Ghanaian mines:

You know as women, by nature we are more tolerant, and the communities, when they are coming to lay complaints or grievances, they sometimes come very annoyed, aggressive and shouting all over. However, when they come to meet you as a woman, because our culture and traditions emphasize values like respect for women, it is difficult for the communities to be aggressive towards you as a female community affairs and public relations manager; therefore, they calm down.

The statement that 'by nature we are more tolerant' implies that women have certain inherent tendencies which place them above men in some circumstances such as the practice of PR in the Ghanaian mines. Besides, the statement evokes nuances about gender because it foregrounds the Ghanaian traditional perception of women as soft and tender and, hence, the need for them to be protected. This traditional perception, ironically, becomes the strength of women in PR practice in the Ghanaian mines. In a question to further create an understanding of the phenomenon of engendering community affairs and public relation practices in Ghanaian mines, a respondent said:

From my own personal experience, I worked in 'Ahyeanfre' community, a very aggressive community. The local people will come, shouting, and shouting. When they enter and see you as a

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'woman or female' community affairs and public relations manager, they will say: 'hmmm! You are lucky to be a woman; and being a woman, you are like our mothers or sisters or wives. If you were a man, the noise we would have made here.'

This statement supports (Aboagye, 2003) who made earlier submissions on the growing recognition that females are endowed with a classic style of communication which appears to be vital in corporate entities, placing them in solid public relations portfolios, with absolute responsibilities of linking corporate bodies to both internal and external environments. Similarly, Fuller (1998) posits earlier that, for good corporate governance in any economy, we need such female virtues like cooperation, caring, pacifism and their nonviolence nature to promote peaceful coexistence in industrial organizations.

The following extract from the statement made by the respondent above can be broken into three clauses and each clause examined for its language nuances or implications as regards gender:

'hmmm! You are lucky to be a woman; and being a woman, you are like our mothers or sisters or wives. If you were a man, the noise we would have made here'

The expression, 'hmmm!' is a grunting sound which connotes disappointment or pain. Hence, when the community residents make such an expression it implies they feel pain and disappointment that they cannot show their vengeance in whatever manner they had anticipated. Thus, the posture of a woman even without words communicates symbolically to the community residents. It also depicts a presupposition that even though the woman has not spoken the residents could imagine the soft-spoken manner in which she would communicate to them. This is because ideological structures are 'formalisations of patterns of behaviour characteristic of a particular society. As long as individuals participate in the institutions of that society, they must perforce act ideologically' (Poynton, 1989, p. 20).

Also, the statement, 'You are lucky to be a woman' may have two implications. On the one hand, it could be an allusion to the 'institutionalised inequality /inferiority of women, where they have been denied the right to engage in certain activities – to be certain kinds of people – and their activities and their very selves denigrated and trivialised' (Poynton, Ibid, p. 20). On the other hand, it implies the revered position of women in the society as people who should not be tampered with. This latter meaning is what underlies the next clause, 'being a woman, you are like our mothers or sisters or wives.'

Furthermore, the next clause, 'If you were a man, the noise we would have made here' alludes to the fact that women are not expected to involve themselves in open fighting. As Coates (1995) observes, 'there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that male speakers are socialised into a competitive style of discourse, while women are socialised into a more cooperative style of speech' (p. 13). These foregoing statements buttress the significance of having women as Community Affairs and Public Relations practitioners in Ghanaian mines. In all, the female community affairs and PR practitioners, by virtue of their soft cooperative inclinations, serve virtually as shields against the venoms and darts of anger emanating from the occasionally embittered communities.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In this study, we discussed gender, language nuances with regard to gender, community affairs and public relations in Ghanaian mines. How the mines have succeeded in redefining the gender roles of Community Affairs and Public Relations practitioners. Based on our results, it is evident that the community affairs and public relations departments are dominated by females. Their core mandates include mitigation packages in compensation for causing harm to local communities in the course of mine work operations. They are also responsible for social investment contributions to local communities in the form of scholarship packages to

brilliant but needy students, establishment of farms of palm trees for women in the local communities, construction of schools and hospitals, formation of football clubs as well as the establishment and development of sports infrastructure. The Community Affairs and Public Relations Officers are equally responsible for the maintenance of peace and harmony between the local communities and the mining companies, as well as maintaining long standing workable complaint and grievance systems with the local communities, since their operational successes depend on the local people on whose land the mineral is mined even though the government is the custodian of the gold resources per the Minerals Act and the Constitution of Ghana. Section 1 of the Minerals and Mining Act, 2006 (Act703) and Article 257 (6) of the Constitution of Ghana, 1992 provide that 'Every mineral in its natural state in, under or upon land in Ghana...is the property of the Republic and is vested in the President in trust for the people of Ghana.' Nevertheless, the people in the mining communities on whose land the gold is mined still believe they have a stake in the mineral resources and are keen on the protection of their environment; hence, they are quick to react to any seemingly adverse situation.

The research found that the gender role of Community Affairs and Public Relations outfit of the mines has been defined based on grounds of community engagements, where the females are diplomatic and soft-spoken. Above all, the psychosocial and cultural values of the local people abhor one being harsh and aggressive towards females as mothers, sisters and wives. Thus, though 'the feminist stance, speaking on behalf of women, has been highly critical of contemporary society' and 'feminists have seen women's interest as consistently subordinated to those of men' (Poynton, *Ibid*, p3), women in the Ghanaian mines who practise as Community Affairs and Public Relations Officers are accorded appreciable recognition by the community and their colleagues.

The researchers are of the view that feminine participation in the Community Affairs and Public Relations practice of the mining environment is gaining acceptance as a viable alternative to male modes. Therefore, organizational designs, psychosocial engagements, public and academic discourses must be adjusted to take serious account of female recruitments into the community affairs and PR practices in Ghanaian mines. The study, however, was limited on grounds of using mainly qualitative methodology which is characterized by lack of objectivity and generalization. Therefore, the need for a future research using the mix methodological approach is useful.

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