



**ASSOCIATION OF
COMMUNICATION SCHOLARS
& PROFESSIONALS OF NIGERIA
BOOK SERIES**

**DOMINANT COALITION, PUBLIC RELATIONS AND POWER
RELATIONS DYNAMICS IN MINISTRIES, DEPARTMENTS AND
AGENCIES IN NIGERIA**

Gloria Eberechukwu NWODU & Camilla Nkiru EMECHEBE

To cite this article:

Gloria Eberechukwu Nwodu & Camilla Nkiru Emechebe (2023), Dominant Coalition, Public Relations And Power Relations Dynamics In Ministries, Departments And Agencies In Nigeria in Communication, Media And Power Relations In A Multicultural Society: Context, Issues and Perspectives for Development ACSPN Book Series 8, pp. 32—45

Retrieved from <http://www.acspn.com.ng>

(Institutional or Subscribed access may be required)

Please note that this is an electronic, pre-print version of this article published by the Evan Brothers (Nigeria Publishers) Limited for Association of Communication Scholars & Professionals of Nigeria (ACSPN).

The ACSPN Book Series is exclusive to the Association of Communication Scholars & Professionals of Nigeria.

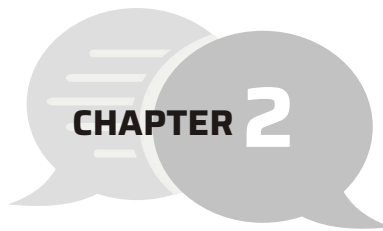
ISBN: 978-978-798-550-1

Copyright © 2023

Editor and Contributors

Layout/Design: Ashroph De Grafico Ventures.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any form or any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publisher, except by reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review.



DOMINANT COALITION, PUBLIC RELATIONS AND POWER RELATIONS DYNAMICS IN MINISTRIES, DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES IN NIGERIA

Gloria Eberechukwu NWODU & Camilla Nkiru EMECHEBE



Introduction

In mainstream public relations practice, the concept of the dominant coalition is pivotal in organizations' decision-making process (Bowen, 2015, Berger, 2005). It also helps in the advancement of public relations status in the hierarchy of functional areas of an organization's management. Arguably, it is the inclusion of public relations practitioners into this group that allows them to solve organisational problems and at the same time make them more socially responsible (Achor and Nnabuko, 2019). In exercising their function or power, members of the dominant coalition relate with their subordinates and other stakeholders; this exercise of power may come in different ways: coercion, threats, and plea. This explains power dynamics that is how power affects a relationship between two or more people in a workplace and other aspects of social and political life (Dunbar and Burgoon, 2005)

In bureaucratic organizations like ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs), power or authority to perform roles are derived from the organization's structure. It is this

hierarchical structure that assigns or prescribes functions to members of the dominant coalition. However, the way the roles are performed in a multicultural society like Nigeria portends some problems, which could jeopardize the ascendancy into or progress of public relations practitioners in the organization's dominant coalition. Nigeria is a multicultural society whose diversities are manipulated through religion and ethnicity to the detriment of national cohesion and progress. This attitude of projecting ethnic chauvinism and religious bigotry seems to have been introduced in the recruitment and allocation of duties in government MDAs. This is done without recourse to the principle of federal character as enshrined in the 1999 constitution as amended, and principles of equity, fairness, and justice. Public relations support diversity and promote strategies that will help to harness its benefits in the achievement of local, national, and international goals or organizational goals.

Viewed from the lens of ethnocentric and cultural determinants, and religious affiliations, the legitimate distribution of power and power dynamics in the MDAs' public relations or information departments seem to exclude diversity promotion among those who influence the organisation's decision-making process. Beyond the traditionally expressed notion of power being the influence that one or more entities exert on other entities, the need to determine who are the legitimate participants in defining, brokering, and utilizing power resources in public relations departments in government MDAs becomes necessary, particularly in a multicultural society, like Nigeria. Based on the foregoing, the objectives of the paper are to: (1) examine multicultural influences on power relations dynamics between public relations practitioners and dominant coalition in MDAs, (2) examine how cultural diversity can engender effective power relations among PR practitioners and dominant coalition in MDAs, (3) examine the use of cultural diversity in brokering and utilizing power resources in MDAs for national cohesion.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. What are the multicultural influences that affect power relations dynamics between public relations practitioners and the dominant coalition in MDAs in Nigeria?
- ii. In what ways can cultural diversity engender effective power relations among public relations practitioners and dominant coalition in MDAs in Nigeria?

Conceptualizing Dominant Coalition, Power and Power Relations

The dominant coalition represents a group of individuals, specifically the top management, in an organization who set organizational goals and values, and whose decisions shape organizational behaviour. Organizational theorist, James D Thompson (cited in Berger, 2005) refers to this group of influential people as an 'inner circle'. Grunig (1992) cited in (Bowen, 2015) defined it as, "the group of senior managers who control an organization" (p. 5). They can further be referred to as chiefs of a functional area or those who wield strategic decision-making power (Bowen, 2015). The structure and complexity of organizations require specialized teams and joint decision-making processes that will inwardly and outwardly lead to effective control of an organization. This means that the dominant coalition shapes organizational actions more than the environment, and those who belong to his group derive power from different sources expertise, authority, coercion, information, charisma, sanctions, and reward. Public relations is a support function and its source of power within the organization is its expertise in communication. Major studies on dominant coalition in public relations practice and management sciences focus on the

relationship between practitioners' role and inclusion in decision-making (Berger, 2005; Grunig, 1992; Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier, 2002; Wilson, 2016; Bowen, 2015).

In its wider view, it anchors on the power-control perspective of members of the dominant coalition in various organizations (Berger, 2015). Other research efforts examined how dominant coalition members' values and perceptions influence their perceptions of public relations participation in organization-level decision-making ((Berger, 2005). It has been argued by some scholars and exponents on the inclusion of public relations practitioners in the dominant coalition, that, the roles played by practitioners in their organizations may constrain or propel their inclusion in the decision-making process. Public relations practitioners perform different roles: the technician role, the manager's role, and the advisory role (Achor and Nnabuko, 2019; Grunig 2002). Organisations differ both in structure and purpose, and this impacts greatly how practitioners carry out each of these roles. It also underpins power relations between members of the dominant coalition and public relations practitioners.

However, in activist organizations, the public relations role goes beyond offering information as a technician, a manager, or an advisor to playing an activist's role. This activist role seems to "...force us to render more transparent the realities of power relations in dominant coalitions and other organizational structures and processes that touch the practice from virtually every side" (Berger, 2005, p.25). It has been argued that the activist's role as a public relations practitioner might help to alter relations of power within dominant coalitions and at the same time influence the general public's perception of the practice (Wilson, 2016; Berger, 2005). Such an activist role suggests challenging existing or prevailing power structures or a kind of resistance, and depending on how modest or futile the resistance is, influences those structures and relations of power. Another argument that seems to resonate across public relations circles is the redefinition or expansion of public relations roles as a path towards changing power relations (Health, Motion and Leitch, 2009). Such thought is conceived due to the power that organizations hold over public relations practices and possibilities, including how compliance to and exercise of this power is enforced. Hence, an alternative conception of public relations seems helpful if the perceived imbalance in power control and relations is to be addressed. Perhaps, one pathway towards actualizing this is, to make public relations a strategic or functional role within an organisational structure.

Power and Power Relations Dynamics

The concept of power is explained under two basic assumptions or perspectives. The first perspective describes power as the ability to influence others to get them to do what you want (Nye and Myers, 2004). Secondly, it is conceptualized as "the degree of control over the material, human, intellectual and financial resources exercised by a different section of the society". More importantly, power is dynamic and relational; it is not absolute and is exercised in social and political relations between individuals and groups. Three ways can be used to activate and influence compliance: through threat (stick), inducement/payment (with carrots), and attracting or co-opting people so that they can do our bidding. Power dynamics explains how power affects a relationship between two or more people in a workplace, home front, and other aspects of social life. In this paper, we are concerned with power dynamics in a workplace how those within the dominant coalition relate with others outside the group, as they exercise their legitimate or arrogated power. It is important to note, that, the way those who wield power or are vested with power in the organization

relate with those who have little or no power affects productivity and defines organizational internal (employee) relations. (Nye and Myers, 2004)

The degree to which power is exercised by an individual or group depends on the kind of resources they have access to and control. This makes power unequally distributed: some groups and individuals have greater control over the source of power while others have little or no control (Veneklasen and Miller, 2002). In different spheres of life, “different degrees of power are sustained and perpetuated through social division such as gender, age, caste, class, ethnicity, race, north-south; and through institutions such as the family, religion, education, media, the law, etc” (Veneklasen *et al*, 2006, p. 1). In some jurisdictions, ethnicity and religion play dominant roles in power distribution and control; many powerful people and institutions sustain their influence by controlling individual who gets to the decision-making table and what becomes part of an agenda. Unfortunately, such attitude by these influential people excludes and devalues the interest or talents of other less powerful groups or individuals within the organisational setting. These power dynamics play out in organizations that are yet to understand the role of public relations in their corporate existence. Those who are privileged to be part of the dominant coalition blur the visibility of public relations practitioners by not allowing them to perform their legitimate corporate role. When power dynamics tilt towards domineering features, it prevents important voices and issues from being heard or expressed, while policy decisions are skewed to favour a few individuals at the expense of the organization or majority (Veneklasen and Miller, 2006). This perspective also leads us into the realm of the dominant coalition and the expression of power relations.

Power relations or relations of power in the dominant coalition can be expressed in four different models/ways: power over, power with, power to, and power within (Burger, 2016;). In the 'power over scenario', power is seen as the traditional dominance model where decision-making is characterized by control, instrumentalism, and self-interest. It also depicts a win-lose kind of relationship and having power involves taking it from someone else, and then, using it to dominate and prevent others from having it. In this power relations model, public relations is an “influence variable in this view” (Berger, 2005, p.6). In the “power with relations scenario”, power is seen as an empowerment model that expects dialogue, inclusion, and negotiation, and the power guiding the decision-making. Public relations' position in this model is that of a relational variable it tries to find common ground among different interests and builds collective strength. Power to relations takes the forms of activism or resistance strategies that PR practitioners could adopt to oppose a dominance model. It also acknowledges individual unique potentials that can be channelled to open up possibilities in an organization.

Multiculturalism, Cultural Diversity and Power Relations

The term multiculturalism has different normative ideas that are conceptualized to align with different disciplines or fields of study. In political philosophy and contemporary political discourse, multiculturalism focuses on responding to and understanding challenges associated with cultural diversity in terms of ethnic, religious, and cultural differences (Bachvarova, 2014; Arneil and MacDonald, 2016). In sociology, multiculturalism is conceptualized as a concept that describes how a given society deals with cultural diversity, both at the community and national levels (Longley, 2020). The International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioural Sciences (2001) refers to multiculturalism as

“the state of a society or the world in which there exist numerous distinct ethnic and cultural groups seen to be politically relevant, and a program or policy promoting such a society” (p.10169). The common denominator of these interdisciplinary conceptualizations is that multiculturalism depicts cultural diversity and the harnessing of diversity for the benefit of all in a multicultural society.

Opponents of multiculturalism argue that it fuels identity politics or the formation of socio-political movements, whose focus is to foster group identity or “further the interests of its group members and force issues important to their group members into the public sphere”(Eagan, 2019, p 7). Beyond this notion, multiculturalism has raised questions about how citizens and political leaders, and public administrators balance a group's social interests with that of national interests. Multiculturalism seeks the inclusion of the views and contributions of diverse members of society while maintaining respect for their differences and withholding the demand for their assimilation into the dominant culture. In Nigeria, many ethnic groups and minority cultural groups have opposed their exclusion in the national scheme of affairs and denigration of their contributions and identities to national development in the past. One of the banes of the development of Nigeria is the failure to harness the benefits of its cultural diversity. Instead of leveraging on diversity, ethnic chauvinism, nepotism, and religious bigotry are promoted.

The public relations position concerning the views and counter-views on multiculturalism is a call to leverage the cultural diversity of a country and the total inclusion of every ethnic nationality in the affairs of the nation. The exclusion of diversities in the sharing and distribution of bureaucratic and political offices causes power imbalance, which breeds disaffection. The power-control perspective in this scenario is that of subjugation that ensues in the master-slave relations; hence a master dictates to the servant and enforces compliance through intimidation, coercion, and denial (Nye & Myers, 2004). This kind of power relations dynamics does not promote public relations' principle of peaceful and harmonious co-existence and mutual understanding.

Theoretical Framework

Several theoretical frameworks are used to explain multiculturalism. Given the nature of this paper, the melting pot theory is adopted as its theoretical foundation. Originally, the melting pot theory of multiculturalism was meant to describe the assimilation of immigrants into a dominant culture of a state or country. Its proponents assume that “various immigrant groups tend to melt together by abandoning their individual cultures and eventually becoming fully assimilated into the predominant society” (Longley, 2020, p.3). It can be modified in varying contexts to explain other aspects of multiculturalism within a country. For example, its epistemic ideology can be applied in public service organizations, where employees are drawn from different cultural and religious backgrounds these diversities can melt into the established rules and regulations (e.g., Principle of Federal Character in Nigeria) guiding the operation of such organizations (e.g. MDAs). The epistemic values of the theory metaphorically can help in harnessing the cultural diversity of a country and the promotion of national integration and cohesion.

However, it is assumed that the melting point theory may be difficult to apply in Nigeria where ethnocentrism, religious bigotry, hegemony, and loyalty seem to be ingrained in people's consciousness. This scenario is different from the argument of the opponents of the melting point theory. They opined that it reduces diversity, and causes people to lose

their traditions; particularly when the government has enforced the model as a state policy. The spate of agitation for separation from the Nigerian state, coupled with toxic social media content against a perceived ethnic group believed to have caused other ethnic groups/nationalities pains and agony in the federation speaks volumes. Unfortunately, ethnocentrism and religious bigotry have crept into federal ministries departments and agencies (MDAs) and have caused a conflict of interest and division among employees. The applicatory and epistemic values of the melting pot model of multiculturalism can also be explained in terms of diversity and its inclusion in the public relations profession or practice. Diversity in public relations entails understanding or acknowledging and harnessing the differences in human demographics, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, status, and physical abilities (O'Donoghue, 2019) to achieve public relations and corporate objectives. Inclusion can be explained in two folds. Inclusion can be a culture or environment that is collaborative, supportive, and respectful for all or addition or acceptance into specific organizational roles. Public relations represents different brands and also serves different clients, the publics, and stakeholders who are culturally diverse. Therefore, it is important, that public relations practitioners understand and practice cross-cultural communication in their workplaces.

Having employees from diverse backgrounds helps an organization solve problems that have to do with cultural/ethnic issues, gender, religion, race, and social orientation. Clients and brands who present problems relating to any of the above-mentioned diversities require solutions from a well-diverse public relations team. Some PR practitioners believed that diversity is lacking in public relations firms and PR departments of organizations, particularly government ministries and establishments (Author's Personal Communication, March 2022). For this reason, "PR firms will lose clients and employees. Also, this lack of diversity creates an echo chamber where ideas become uninspired" (O'Donoghue, 2019, par.6). The ability to blend diverse abilities of the PR team helps in cultivating a culture of diversity and inclusiveness in a work environment; when such a situation is assured, the organization, in the opinion of Grunig (2001) achieves excellence.

Methodology

The survey research design was adopted. The method was chosen because it allowed the researcher to map the variables that impact the phenomena (power relations and diversity) under investigation. The survey research method helped to select samples that reflect dominant features, characteristics or indices of the entire population. The survey research also helped to pinpoint the key variables that improve or undermine power relations and diversity in MDAs, in a multicultural society.

Population

The population of the study comprises public relations practitioners who work in selected MDAs in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This category of people was purposively chosen because they are the implementers of information and communication decisions of the MDAs and other decisions by members of the dominant coalition. Three ministries, three agencies, and three departments were purposively chosen. For ethical consideration and request for anonymity by the MDAs, the names of the ministries were anonymized and denoted as A, B, and C, the names of the departments are denoted as D, E, and F, while those of agencies are designated G, H, and I respectively.

Sample Size

An invitation to participate in a national survey was sent to WhatsApp groups of the public relations and information officers of select MDAs. They were given a week to indicate whether to participate or not. At the expiration of the one week, a total of 150 PR practitioners indicated interest to participate.

Instrument, Method of Distribution and Collection

The research instrument used in the study was a set of questionnaires containing closed-ended questions and structured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, and 5= strongly agree). The questions focused on power dynamics between heads of public relations officers/executives or information officers and the dominant coalition in the MDAs. The questionnaire was distributed electronically via a WhatsApp group created for the survey. The participants were provided with a link to access the Google form, complete the questionnaire and submit it. Completed forms were also retrieved via a link or an email address created for the study.

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The instrument was subjected to content validity using public relations experts while the reliability analysis of the variables yielded a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.852, which is a valid, reliable, and accepted measure.

Findings and Analysis

Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, tables, percentages, mean and standard deviation, etc.). For further analysis and decision-making, the five-point Likert scale was used as shown thus:

Strongly disagree	=	1
Disagree	=	2
Undecided	=	3
Agree	=	4
Strongly agree	=	5
Total	=	15

A cutoff point was determined by finding the mean of the nominal value assigned to options using the formula below:

$$\text{Mean } X = \frac{\sum f}{n}$$

Where: X = mean, \sum = summation sign, n = number of items, f = frequency

The mean = $15/5 = 3$. For decision making, values above 3 were accepted as agreed while values below 3 were rejected.

Demographic data analysis indicated that there were more male (100 or 66.6%) than female (50 or 33.3%) respondents. Ethnic nationality distribution of the respondents showed that 55 or 36.6% are from Hausa/Fulani ethnic group, 40 or 25.6% are from Yoruba speaking ethnic group, 35 or 23.3% are from Igbo ethnic nationality, while the remainder of 55 (36.6%) are from other minority ethnic groups in Nigeria. The distribution of educational qualification shows that more than half (80 or 53.3%) of the respondents are degree holders or its equivalent, 25(16.6%) hold a second degree, 17(11.3%) hold PhDs, while the remainder of 28 or 18.6% holds a professional diploma in communication or public

relations.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents in the MDAS

Ministries	Heads PR Unit/ Information officers
A	18 (12%)
B	17 (11.3)
C	15 (10%)
Department	
D	17(11.3%)
E	18 (12%)
F	15 (10%)
Agency	
G	16(10.6%)
H	17 (11.3%)
I	17 (11.3%)
Total	150 (100%)

Source: Field survey, 2022.

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents in the MDAs. Ministries A, B and C had 18(12%), 17(11.3%), 15(10%) respondents respectively. In the three departments of D, E, and F, the distribution of respondents is as follows 17(11.3%), 18(12%), and 15(10%) respectively. Respondents in Agency Y G, had 16(10.6%), Agency H, had 17(11.3%), and Agency I had 17(11.3%) respectively.

Table 2: The Multicultural Influence of Power Relations Dynamics

Multicultural Determinants/Influences	Mean	StD
A.Race		
Race determines the dominant coalition's use of force to exert control over PR executives/information officers in MDAs	3.22	1.794
Race determines the dominant coalition's use of threats to exert control over PR executives/information officers in MDAs	3.28	1.811
Race determines the dominant coalition's use of persuasion to exert control over PR executives/information officers in MDAS	3.33	1.824
Grand Mean for Race	3.27	1.808*
B.Religion		
Religion determines the inclusion or exclusion of PR practitioners into powerful positions in MDAs	2.97	1.72
Religion plays a dominant role in the dominant coalition's exertion of power over PR executives/information officers in MDAs.	3.37	1.835
Religion determines the dominant coalition's use of threats to exert control over PR executives/information officers in MDAs.	2.95	1.71
Religion determines the dominant coalition's use of persuasion to exert control over PR executives/information officers in MDAs	3.2	1.788
Total Grand mean for religion	3.12	1.76*
C.Ethnicity		
Allegiance to perceived superior ethnic group influences positive power relations among the dominant coalition and between PR practitioners in the MDAs	4.04	2.009

Hatred toward a lowly-perceived ethnic group negatively affects power relations between the dominant coalition and PR executives in MDAs	3.22	1.794
Ethnicity determines the inclusion or exclusion of PR practitioners into powerful positions in MDAs	3.33	1.824
Total Mean score for ethnicity	3.53	1.878*
D.Culture		
An individual's way of dressing negatively impact power relations between coalition and PR executive in the MDAs	2.57	1.60
Hatred for one's culture influences how dominant coalition exerts their power over their subordinates(PR practitioners)	2.46	1.568
Grand mean for Culture	3.8	1.9*
E.Gender		
PREs & Info officers' gender influences how the dominant coalition exercise power over them in the MDAs	3.34	1.832
F.Language		
Language spoken by a certain ethnic group determines the dynamics of power between the dominant coalition and non-members of the group	3.33	1.824
The ability for one to speak a major language within the work environment negatively or positively influence power relations between the dominant coalition and subordinates PR executives/officers	3.35	1.835
The grand mean of language	3.34*	1.827*
G.Education		
The level/quality of PR practitioners' education influences how their superiors exert power over them	3.34	1.832
Educational experiences in the work environment determine power dynamics between PREs/officers and the dominant coalition	3.28	1.811
The grand mean score for education*	3.31*	1.819*

Source: Field survey, 2022.

Multicultural determinants that influence power relations dynamics between members of the dominant coalition and public relations executives/information officers in Nigeria's MDAs range from race, religion, ethnicity, culture, language, gender, and education. From Table 2 above, race had a total mean score of 3.27 and a standard deviation of 1.808; religion had a grand mean score of 3.12* and StD. = 1.76; ethnicity had a grand mean score of 3.53 and StD=1.878; gender had a mean score of 3.34 and StD = 1.832. Other variables such as language had grand mean scores of (3.34 and StD = 1.832), and education had grand mean scores of (3.31 and StD = 1.819) respectively. These results indicate that race, religion, ethnicity, culture, language, gender and education highly influenced power relations dynamics between the dominant coalition and public relations executives /information officers.

Table 3: Cultural Diversity and Effective Power Relations Among PR Practitioners and Dominant Coalition in MDAs

Variables/Statement	Mean	StD.
Integration of all races in the work environment is a major way to engender effective power relations in MDAs	3.38	1.36
Avoidance of discriminatory practices based on one's religion/faith in MDAs can result in effective power relations	3.33	1.824
Tolerance and respect for religious affiliation /faith will improve power relations between PR executives and the dominant coalition	3.27	1.807
Integrating people of diverse talents into organizations' wheel of progress without favouritism promotes effective power relations.	4.12	2.029
Assigning roles/authority to individuals based on their capacity to perform irrespective of their culture, and state of origin can enhance effective power relations	3.35	1.878
Proper recognition of one's educational level & placement can enhance effective power relations	3.34	1.832
Openness in the delegation of duties among workers of diverse cultures and ethnicity may engender effective power relations in the MDAs	3.38	1.843
Non-allegiance to a perceived superior ethnic group in work delegation can engender effective power relations between the dominant coalition and PR executives/officers in the MDAs	4.02	2.009

Source: Field survey, 2022.

Table 3 shows descriptive statistics of cultural diversity and effective power relations among PR practitioners and dominant coalition in MDAs. All the eight statements used in seeking opinions of the respondents (PREs and Information officers) had high mean scores and standard deviations, this indicates acceptance of the statements.

Discussion

Data in Table 2 were used for the analysis of research question 1, which sought to find out the multicultural influences that affect power relations dynamics between public relations practitioners and dominant coalition in MDAs. Seven multicultural influences were identified: race, religion, ethnicity, culture, language, gender, and education. Each of the variables had statements that were used to elicit the opinions of the respondents. Data showed in Table 2 that race determines the dominant coalition's use of force, use of threat and dominant coalition's use of persuasion to exert control over PR executives/information officers in MDAs. Religion determines the inclusion or exclusion, of PR practitioners into powerful positions in MDAs. Religion plays a dominant role in the dominant coalition's exertion of power over PR executives/information officers in MDAs it also determines the dominant coalition's use of threat and use of persuasion to exert control over PR executives/information officers in MDAs.

Allegiance with a perceived superior ethnic group influences positive power relations among the dominant coalition and between PR practitioners in the MDAs (hatred of a lowly-perceived ethnic group negatively) affects power relations between the dominant coalition and PR executives in MDAs. Ethnicity and people's way of dressing negatively impact power relations between the dominant coalition and PR executives in the MDAs, while

hatred for one's culture influences how the dominant coalition exerts their power over their subordinates (PR practitioners). Gender influences how the dominant coalition exercise power over them in the MDAs, while the language spoken by certain ethnic group determines the dynamics of power between the dominant coalition and non-members of the group.

The above results seem to give credence to communal and exchange relationship orientations (Torelli and Shavitt, 2010). The results show that the dominant coalition in the MDAs are exchange-oriented individuals, disposed to give favour to persons of a particular ethnic origin, with the hope of receiving comparable benefits in return. Unfortunately, this kind of communal-oriented people creates division with their power, which is in contrast to the ideal, communal-oriented people found in age-grade organizations and communities. Furthermore, one's ability to speak a major language within the work environment negatively or positively influences power relations between the dominant coalition and subordinates (PR executives/officers). The level/quality of PR practitioners' education influences how their superiors exert power over them. Again, educational experiences in the work environment determine power dynamics between PREs/officers and the dominant coalition.

Data in Table 3 were used for the analysis of research question 2, which sought to identify ways cultural diversity can engender effective power relations among PR practitioners and dominant coalition in MDAs. The result indicates that integrating people of diverse talents into organizations' wheel of progress without favouritism promotes effective power relations while non-allegiance to a perceived superior ethnic group in work delegation can engender effective power relations between the dominant coalition and PR executives/officers. Also, the integration of all races in the work environment could be a major way to engender effective power relations in MDAs while assigning roles/authority to individuals based on their capacity to perform irrespective of their culture, and state of origin can enhance effective power relations. The respondents also believed that openness in the delegation of duties among workers of diverse cultures and ethnicity may engender effective power relations in the MDAs. According to the respondents, proper recognition of one's educational level and placement can enhance effective power relations. Avoidance of discriminatory practices based on one's religion/faith in MDAs can also result in effective power relations. It was also reported that tolerance and respect for religious affiliation or faith will improve power relations between public relations executives and the dominant coalition.

Practical and Theoretical Implications of the Study

This study has both practical and theoretical importance. Its practical importance hinges on a renewed call for the inclusion of public relations in the organisation's dominant coalition. Power relations within the MDAs are determined by the bureaucratic rules and organizational culture and structure, but not by ethno-religious affiliations or ethnic interests as depicted in this study. This study has shown that in a multicultural society highly polarized, and demarcated along ethnic and religious divides, and chauvinism hardly utilises or harnesses the values of diversity. Diversity improves the quality of the decision-making process and decision outcomes and the implication of this fact is that it reduces the arbitrary power of those who are inclined to promote their selfish or ethno-religious interests over those of the organization. Previous research that has focused on power relations within the dominant coalition impacts the public relations functions,

however, when public relations is assigned less organisational power and authority, its influence over strategic decision-making becomes minimal (Grunig, 2015).

Theoretically, this study has expanded the frontiers of power relations studies in organizational settings, particularly in bureaucratic organizations such as ministries, departments, and agencies. This study has shown other dimensions inherent in leadership practices of members of the dominant coalition that create disunity among employees in the workplace. The implication of this scenario to organizational employee relations practices is that it cripples strategic internal communication, employee satisfaction, and transformational leadership expected to drive cultural diversity (Men, 2014). Again, practically, this undermines the behavioural approach to leadership in public relations; PR leadership is defined as “the process of influence which leads to organization-wide collaborative endeavours to achieve public relations goals” (Choi and Choi, 2007, p. 2)

Conclusion

Based on the results of this paper, cultural diversity in its real sense is not promoted by the dominant coalition in the MDAs. Edward and Hodges (2015) explored ways to address the lack of diversity in public relations without offering suggestions on how to deal with those organizational structures or cultures that practically do not allow diversity to thrive. Diversity as opined by Edward and Hodges (2015) “emerges as a product of the dialectics between occupational structures, norms and practitioners' reactions to those constraints; it follows that improving diversity is best understood as an exercise in democracy, where all practitioner voices are heard, valued, and encompass the potential for change” (p.5).

The beauty of public relations practice in a multicultural society hinges on harnessing cultural diversity, which will help to actively engage both the organisations' internal and external stakeholders. Cultural diversity promotes togetherness, enhances performance, and gives an organisation an edge over competitors in terms of talent mix in meeting organizational goals and vision. In harnessing cultural diversity, public relations practitioners should avoid acts that encourage nepotism, ethnic chauvinism, and/or acts that subvert the truth and becloud understanding. Several studies have explored the need to have diversity in the public relations profession or departments and firms. This paper acknowledges that, but further introduces another dimension to it which calls for how diversity is harnessed by the dominant coalition in the exercising of their power in the organization vis-à-vis dominant coalition power control dynamics in MDAs.

The power-control perspective that defines power relations dynamics in mechanistic organizations does not provide a better lens through which excellent public relations practice is viewed, rather it adds to the prevailing posture of the dominant coalition. Building on the Excellence model of public relations, public relations duties and responsibilities are better appreciated when the practitioner is a member of the dominant coalition. However, its exclusion from this decision-making circle based on ethnicity, religious affiliations, culture, and gender is highly regrettable and calls for a re-evaluation of the understanding of public relations among those that occupy functional roles in the MDAs in Nigeria. Though studies have investigated what constitutes the actual roles of public relations in organizations (Wilson, 2016; Gregory, 2008), however, there is a need to specifically understudy public relations roles and how those that occupy a seat at the dominant coalition in the MDAs view or understand public relations, particularly in a highly polarized and ethnoreligious society like Nigeria. As commented by Grunig (1992) cited in

Edwards and Hodges (2019) “Public relations contributes to effectiveness by building quality, long-term relationships with strategic constituencies. Public relations is most likely to contribute to effectiveness when the senior public relations manager is a member of the dominant coalition where he or she can shape the organization's goals and help determine which external publics are most strategic”. (p.2).

Berger and Reber (2006) use power relations theory to discuss how the use of power can make public relations units more active, and effective, and contribute to ethical decision-making in organizations. Essential in the power relations theory is the assumption that public relations by nature are political and that practitioners “...can increase their influence if they become more politically astute, employ more diverse influence resources and tactics, and exert greater political will in organizational arenas where decisions are shaped through power relations” (Berger & Reber, 2006, p. 2). This assertion emphasizes the leadership position of public relations professionals in the organization. To reduce the inherent subversion of organizational goals promoted through ethnoreligious interests and bigotry in the MDA, heads of public relations units should have communication skills, and diverse experiences, be proactive, build relationships, and network among diverse groups of stakeholders (Health, Motion and Leitch, 2009). Furthermore, public relations professionals can change the culture of promoting ethnocentric interests within the dominant coalition in government ministries, departments, and agencies by playing the activist role. As they exercise power and influence within the organization and dominant coalition, they become activist change agents on behalf of the organizational and public interests (Berger & Reber, 2006, cited in Bowen, 2015).

References

- Arneil, B. and MacDonald F. (2016). Multiculturalism and the Social Sphere. In *The Ashgate Research Companion to Multiculturalism*, D. Ivison (ed.), London: Routledge, pp. 95-117.
- Avenant, P.S.J., April, K.A. and Peters, B.K.G. (2016) 'Power relations and complex organisational development', *Int. J. Complexity in Leadership and Management*, 3(3), 218-243.
- Bachvarova, M. (2014). Multicultural Accommodation and the Ideal of Non-Domination. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 17(6): 652-673.
- Berger, B.K. (2005). Power Over, Power With, and Power to Relations: Critical Reflections on Public Relations, the Dominant Coalition, and Activism. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 17(1), 5-28. DOI: 10.1207/s1532754xjpr1701_3.
- Berger, B. K., & Reber, B. H. (2006). Gaining influence in public relations: the role of resistance in practice, Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah, NJ.
- Berger, B.K., Meng, J., & Heyman, W. (2009). Role modelling in public relations: The influence of role models and mentors on leadership beliefs and qualities. In K. Yamamura (edited) *Proceeding of 12th Annual International Public Relations Research Conference that Matters to the Practice*, pp. 10-25. March 11-14, 2009, Holiday Inn University of Miami Coral Gables.
- Bowen, S. A. (2015). Exploring the role of the dominant coalition in creating an ethical culture for internal stakeholders. *Public Relations Journal*, 9(1), 1-23. [Http://www.prsa.org/Intelligence/PRJournal/Vol9/No1/](http://www.prsa.org/Intelligence/PRJournal/Vol9/No1/)
- Choi, Y., & Choi, J. (2008, May). Dimensions of leadership in public relations: Exploring an organization-wide perspective. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Montreal, Quebec, CA.
- Dunbar, N.E. & Burgoon, J.K. (2005). Perceptions of power and interactional dominance in interpersonal relationships. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407505050944>
- Eagan, J. L. (2019). *Multiculturalism in Sociology*. Accessed on January 21, 2022. from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/multiculturalism>
- Elsevier (2001). Multiculturalism. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & behavioural sciences*. Pages 10169-10175
- Edwards, L., & Hodges, C.E.M. (2015). *Public relations, society and culture: Theoretical and empirical explorations*. Routledge, Madison Avenue, New York.
- Gregory, A. (2008). Competencies of senior practitioners in the UK: An initial study. *Public Relations Review*, 34, 215-23.
- Grunig, L.A. (1992). Power in the public relations department. In J.E. Grunig (Ed.), *Excellence in public relations and communications management* (pp. 483-501). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Grunig, L.A., Grunig, J.E., & Dozier, D.M. (2002). *Excellent public relations and effective organizations*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Heath, R. L., Motion, J., & Leitch, S. (2009). Power and public relations: Paradoxes and programmatic thoughts. 12th Annual International Public Relations Research Conference that Matters to the Practice. March 11-14, 2009 Holiday Inn University of Miami Coral Gables.
- Men, L. R. (2014). Strategic internal communication: Transformational leadership, communication channels, and employee satisfaction. *Management communication quarterly*, 28(2), 1-21
- Nwodu, L. C. (2017). *Research in communication and other behavioural sciences: principles, methods and issues*. 2nd edition. Enugu: Rhyce Kerex Publishers
- Torelli, C.J., & Shavitt, S. (2010). Culture and concepts of power. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 99(4), 703-723.
- Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation. Oklahoma City: World Neighbours. Retrieved January 20, 2022, from <https://learn.g2.com/diversity-in-public-relations>.
- Wilson, C. (2016). How dominant coalition members' values and perceptions impact their perceptions of public relations participation in organizational decision making. *Journal of Communication Management*. 20(3), 215-321. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCOM-07-2015-0058>
- Veneklasen, L. & Miller, V. (2006). Dynamics of power, inclusion, and exclusion. *Nonprofit Online News Journal*.