UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

STUDENTS-RUN INITIATIVES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE COMMUNICATION FACTOR

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MAY, 2023

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, **Emmanuel Darko,** declare that this dissertation, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my original work, and it has not been submitted either in part or whole for another degree elsewhere.

Signature:……………………………………

Date:…………………………………………

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of Dissertation as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba

Name of Supervisor's: Mr. Kwesi Aggrey

Signature:……………………………………

Date:…………………………………………

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to all changemakers whose heroic efforts continue to make the world a better place.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the communication that goes into in three students-run initiatives in Ghana. The students-run initiatives that were understudied were *Khays Foundation*, *Organisation for Inclusion and Empowerment* and *For the Future Ghana*. Underpinned by the social capital theory and the four-flow model of organisational communication, the study employed a qualitative multi-case study using interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis to assess the nature of the three students-run initiatives in Ghana. The study also examined the direction of communication within the three students-run organisations and examined the communication-based resource mobilisation strategies adopted by the three students-run initiatives. The study found that the students-run initiatives were by nature extracurricular, non-governmental, volunteer-driven and operate from the bottom-up. The study revealed four communication patterns employed the three students-run initiatives. These were downward, upward, horizontal, and diagonal patterns of organisational communication. Notably, social media marketing, interpersonal communication, and grant sourcing emerged as the key communication strategies for resource mobilisation adopted by the three students-run initiatives understudy for embarking on sustainable development projects at community level. The study concludes that the students-run initiatives exhibit both horizontal and vertical forms of philanthropy and achieve sustainability by relying on local assets and resources for sustainable development.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

1.0.1 Development Defined

Most of the world's discussions and commitments since time immemorial have been towards the development of all global citizens. Development is a multidimensional concept that appears to defy definition. Scholars and practitioners alike have taken different stance on what development means or should be. Initial thinking on development addressed the concept from the economic perspective. Development during this era was a quantitative rather than qualitative change (Rabie, 2016). This perspective which reigned largely between 1950 and 1960 placed emphasis on economic indicators such as gross domestic product (GDP), gross national product (GNP), individual income and wealth, foreign and local investments among others, as the measure of development (Rabie, 2016).

According to Semasinghe (2020), the underlying assumption of the economic view of development is that developed countries are the ones who have successfully grown their economies as reflected in their GDP. Given this, underdeveloped countries' preoccupation was to increase their production capacities to increase their GDP. While recognised bodies such the World Bank favoured this view and seeded earlier models of development in the economic perspective of development, it was later found that growth in GDP did not automatically result in significant improvement in the quality of life for many people (Semasinghe, 2020).

Defining development through the economic perspective provides a useful but an incomplete understanding of development. With the increase in GDP for most countries arose growing disparity in wealth distribution and other social inequalities that necessitated the need to rethink what development is or should be (Simasinghe, 2020; United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, 2010). Subsequent thoughts on development have broaden the horizon and promoted other aspects of human life such as social, political, cultural, and environmental dimensions of development. This shift recognises development as a multidimensional concept that transcends mere increase in GDP. This is, however, not an abandonment of the economic view of development. It is a shift to a more inclusive conceptualisation of which economic indicators are a part of a broader view of development.

Favouring the multidimensional perspective of development, I adopt Rabie's (2016) definition. Rabie (2016, p.8) defines development as a "comprehensive societal process to move the underdeveloped nations from their state of economic backwardness and slow sociocultural change to a dynamic state characterised by sustained economic growth and sociocultural and political transformations that improve the quality of life of all members of society". I believe that this definition provides a broader, more comprehensive understanding for the discussions in this study as it pertains to development. Rabie's recognition for the need to focus on the qualitative rather than quantitative measure of development is analogous to the UNDP's (2010) assertion that development is fundamentally people-centred; the quality of people's life is the real measure of development.

Rabie's (2016) definition also recognises the multidimensionality of development. It identifies the need for economic, social, cultural, political and other aspects of our daily lives that demand a qualitative change. In line with emerging thoughts on development, Rabie's (2016) definition recognises the need to deviate from the Western-centric view of development imposed on non-Western societies as a means of promoting economic growth and modernisation, to embrace a burgeoning view that development is value-laden and should respect the culture and values of each community (Sen, 2014). While there is no consensus on the definition of development, practitioners and academics alike admit that development regardless of what it is considered to be, should be sustainable (Ozili, 2022; UN, 2015).

1.0.2 Sustainable Development

Whether of classical economists who view development strictly from the GDP perspective or environmentalists who hold development firmly from the perspective of protecting the environment, the belief that development should be sustainable appears ubiquitous. The central idea in sustainable development is contained in the 1978 Brundtland Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. The Commission defined sustainable development as development that satisfies the needs of present generations and does not endanger the ability of future generations to meet theirs (United Nations, UN, 1978).

According to the UN (2015), the sustainability of development is highly contingent on dialogue, participation and empowerment. The UN (2015) recognises that for development to be sustainable, people and communities must be actively engaged in the development process. This is an affirmation of Ake's (1998, p. 21) assertion that "people make development sustainable only in so far as its content becomes an integral part of their lives". The engagement of people and communities in the process of development demands communication at different levels that allow people and communities to voice out about their needs as well as contribute their expertise and experience to the process of development.

This engagement allows people and communities to feel respected, empowered and possess a sense of ownership and capability needed to sustain development

(Mefalopulos, 2008). In order to achieve this, different governmental and inter-governmental organisations play significant roles that are augmented by philanthropy (Kumi, 2019).

1.0.3 Philanthropy and Sustainable Development

It is widespread knowledge that sustainable development is capital as well as labour intensive (Kumi, 2019). While major governmental organisations across the globe have been charged with and made significant strides at promoting sustainable development, their efforts have oftentimes not been enough (Unites Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, UNESCO, 2016). For instance, UNESCO (2016) asserts that irrespective of the commitment of governments across the world towards the attainment of universal access to quality education, there is still a staggering deficit of about 68 million teachers needed to achieve this goal. In this and other instances, efforts of governments have oft been complemented by the work of philanthropists.

Before I draw the nexus between philanthropy and sustainable development, there is a need to establish a working definition for philanthropy. Even though evidence abounds on the contribution of philanthropy as regards sustainable development, the meaning of philanthropy has often generated dissent (Wiepking, 2021). Wiepking (2021) asserts that there is no universally accepted definition for philanthropy. The author argues that even though philanthropy appears universal, its conceptualisation and practice is defined by context (Wiepking, 2021). Guided by that, I rely on Kumi's (2019) conceptualisation of philanthropy. Kumi's (2019) conceptualisation of philanthropy is a hybrid of Western and African conceptualisations of philanthropy.

From a Western perspective, philanthropy is understood as "rich, white men giving away their money — and not always for charitable reasons" (Herzog et al., 2020). This understanding of philanthropy assumes that the imperative and ability to do good and deploy private resources for the betterment of society is the preservative of a few wealthy and famous people (Wiepking, 2021). The Western conceptualisation of philanthropy is regarded as vertical — flowing from the rich to the poor (Kumi, 2019). This flow makes philanthropists more powerful than the people and communities they help, creating an imbalance power dynamic (Ahmad & Khadse, 2022). Philanthropy from this perspective is driven by the interests of philanthropists and not necessarily the needs of communities (Kumi, 2019; Wiepking, 2021).

On the other hand, African philanthropy involves the collective mobilisation of resources from within Africa to addressing African development problems (Fowler, 2016; Kumi, 2019). This conceptualisation of philanthropy advances communities' resilience and innovation in pooling internal resources for advancing community development (Hodgson & Pond, 2018). Kumi (2019) asserts that this form of philanthropy is regarded as horizontal and promotes the active involvement of communities in finding solutions to social challenges at the local level. African conceptualisation of philanthropy is built on the needs of communities and leverages on local resources to foster development at community level (Fowler & Mati, 2019).

Both vertical and horizontal forms of philanthropy are essential for addressing social problems at different levels (Kumi, 2019). This affirms UNDP's (2017, p. 26) assertion that "philanthropy, no matter where it originates, is driven by the imperative to meet human needs, alleviate suffering, and tackle systematic challenges that prevent human development and progress".

As I have noted earlier, philanthropy's meaning and practice may vary by context (Wiepking, 2021). In the light of that, various terminologies have been used to connote philanthropy such as *help* (Fowler, 2022), *giving* (Fowler & Mati, 2019), *generosity* (Wiepking, 2021), *charity* (Khumalo, 2014) and some others. While these terminologies may provide contextual meaning to philanthropy, I maintain *philanthropy* for consistency in the study.

Through philanthropy, various sustainable development projects have been funded and promoted. For instance, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD in 2018 reported that philanthropic organisations contributed over USD 23.9 billion to financing development across the globe. This amount rose to about USD 42.5 billion between 2016 and 2019 (OECD, 2021). Beyond financing sustainable development projects, philanthropy has contributed in-kind services in achieving sustainable development in health, education, agriculture, environment and many crucial areas (see Arhin et al., 2018; Grant et al., 2020; Kumi, 2019; Saunders et al., 2019). While big philanthropic institutions and individuals have been credited with philanthropy's remarkable contribution to sustainable development, students remain key players in philanthropy's push for sustainable development even though much of their efforts have been overlooked (Azhar et al., 2020; Drupp et al., 2012; Krizek et al., 2012).

1.0.4 Student-run Initiatives and Sustainable Development

Students have often been instrumental players in fostering sustainable development even though much of literature has overlooked their role (Azhar et al., 2020; Drupp et al., 2012). Students have promoted sustainable development through a plethora of students-run initiatives across the world. Students have been initiators and active participants in promoting almost all the sustainable development goals (Nagel et al., 2022). They have championed sustainable development projects in agriculture (Grant et al., 2020), education (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organisation, UNESCO, 2016), health (Steunenberg et al., 2016), environment (Peace Corps, 2018) and many other SDGs.

Students across the globe have been directly active in sustainable development projects largely under two streams of community-based projects. Firstly, as a component of pre-licensure formal and informal professional development directed by faculty and secondly, as initiated by students without any recourse to faculty or academia (Nagel et al., 2022). The first form of students' involvement in fostering sustainable development which is directed by faculty is also known as student philanthropy and defined as "a teaching and learning approach that integrates charitable giving with academic study, in order to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities" (Olberding, 2009, p. 465). Here, students initiate sustainable development as an obligation in partial fulfilment of the attainment of an academic degree. This variant of students-run initiatives is oft referred to as a top-down approach.

Under this practice, students help to achieve sustainable development directly by sourcing for funds to invest in solving a social problem or indirectly by reviewing grant proposals and advising donors on which social programme deserves investment (McDonald & Olberding, 2012). Alternatively, students involve themselves in fostering sustainable development as purely dictated by altruism or any other motive that is not faculty-driven and or related to academia. Here, students initiate and run sustainable development projects on their own (Drexler et al., 2019). This variant of students-run initiatives is also called a bottom-up approach. It is this variant of student-run initiatives that I focus on in this study. Even though Nagel et al. (2022) admit the lack of consensus on the definition of students-run initiatives, I use the concept in this work to refer to development projects that are instituted and operated philanthropically by students outside academic institutions without recourse to academic requirements or obligation.

Nagel et al. (2022) point out that other terms are used in the literature as being synonymous to students-run initiatives such as students-led, students-created, students-developed, student-operated, and many others. For the purpose of consistency, I used the phrase students-run initiatives because Nagel et al. (2022) contend that "students-run initiatives" is widely been used in literature.

Some evidences of these students-run initiatives have been documented, and literature attests to the fact that students are instrumental players in promoting sustainable development. For example, some students at the Penn State University have established a students-run philanthropic organisation that has raised about $200 million since 1973 to help in the treatment, awareness creation and research on childhood cancer (thon.org, 2023). So far, about 4800 families have been helped through this students-run initiative that thrives on the about 16500 student-volunteers engaged in this initiative (thon.org, 2023). Also, some other students-run initiatives include the White Coffin initiative run by some students at the Universiti Sains Malaysia that has led to the ban of polystyrene in other universities and local government areas in Malaysia (Azhar et al., 2020). Another evidence emanates from students at the Southern Illinois University's Local Gardening Initiative of Carbondale which addresses food security (Azhar, 2020).

In Ghana, I have observed that students-run initiatives are gaining grounds and fostering sustainable development even though literature appears silent on the phenomenon. I have seen a couple of students come together and initiate development projects of different magnitudes and focus relative to the sustainable development goals. In this study, I focused on three of these students-run initiatives in Ghana with emphasis on their communication strategies. These initiatives are run by students from different universities in Ghana. Particularly, I focused on Khays Foundation (University of

Education, Winneba, UEW), Organisation For Inclusion and Empowerment, OFIE (U. E. W) and For The Future Ghana (University of Ghana, Legon).

1.0.5 About the Initiatives

Khays Foundation

Khays Foundation is student-run initiative founded in February, 2020 and has since run projects in education, health, and poverty alleviation. The initiative was founded by Adofo Baah Emmanuel, a student at the University of Education, Winneba and currently runs with the support of over twenty (20) active volunteers. Since its establishment, the foundation has embarked on several sustainable development projects such a mobile library project (SDG 4), providing nutrition for deprived children (SDG 2), health services for underserved communities (SDG 3) among others.

Vision Statement

To live a sustainable legacy for the future of our generation.

Mission Statement

To support the less privileged, needy, and vulnerable in the society and to provide children from underprivileged communities access to quality education.

Organisation for Inclusion and Empowerment (OFIE)

Founded by a Political Science student at the University of Education, Winneba, OFIE is a student-run initiative that promotes sustainable development primarily through advocacy and awareness creation to reduce inequalities. OFIE has since its formation championed sustainable development by providing assistive devices to aid learners with special educational needs (SDG 4 & 10), provided vocational training for women and persons with disabilities (SDG 1, 5 & 8) and reached about 2219 people, served 4 schools in 3 communities through awareness creation on sustainable development.

Vision

OFIE foresees a world where all individuals are empowered to live decent lives irrespective of restricting conditions.

Mission

To reduce inequalities, empower individuals and combat poverty through advocacy, skills training, mentorship and education

For The Future Ghana (FTF)

FTF is a student-run nonprofit organisation that promotes sustainable development through community-based programmes for underprivileged children. It is the oldest among the three organisations involved in this study. It was established in 2016 and have since embarked on Student Training and Education Projects (SDG 1 & 10), after school programmes for underserved populations (SDG 4), and hopes to build an eco-friendly community for underprivileged children in the future.

Vision

To expand our community beyond pioneers and members to stakeholders and beneficiaries, to join us in our quest to create and develop a society that is more ethical and open to change

Mission

Through various initiatives and projects, FTF aims to create a brighter and more inclusive future for these children, helping them break free from the cycle of poverty and inequality. The Organisation is committed to making a positive and lasting impact in the lives of underprivileged children and fostering their personal growth.

1.1 Statement of Problem

According to Mirville (2021), most non-profit organisations such as the ones run by students do not communicate effectively, which affects their ability to mobilise resources needed for the realisation of organisational objectives. The inability of most non-profit organisations to communicate effectively causes them to lose out on competitive funds (Mirville, 2021) and even when they secure some funds, they later experience attrition (Jameson, 2017). Not only is the inability of non-profit organisations to communicate effectively with their stakeholders a threat to fund raising, but it also impedes their ability to attract and retain volunteers, knowing that non-profit organisations rely primarily on funds and volunteers for operations (Alias & Ismail, 2014). While this raises an urgent concern for the general philanthropic sector, it poses a more serious existential crises for student-run initiatives. This is because philanthropy is both volunteer and capital-intensive and students do not have these in abundance (Bloch, 2018).

Effective communication with stakeholders affords student-run initiatives the latitude to enjoy varieties of funding and to enjoy the services of volunteers (Jameson, 2017). This ability to mobilise both material and human resources ensures that student-run initiatives enjoy solvency and sustainability to further allow them to bring about sustainable social change (Mirville, 2021). More so, Student-run initiatives earn the trust and support of community members when they communicate effectively. This has the propensity to create power balance, empower communities to take initiatives and encourage participation among community members to create sustainable development (Ahmad & Khadse, 2022; Hodgson 2020; Mefalopulos, 2008).

A wealth of scholarly attention has been paid to the involvement of students in philanthropic activities. However, much of the discussion has viewed students' involvement in philanthropy chiefly from the perspective of pedagogy (Bloch, 2018; Larson & Fieler, 2019; Olberding, 2009, 2011). These studies have assessed students' involvement in philanthropy as it directly relates to academics and having to be completed for grades. Some studies have explored the benefits students gain from engaging in philanthropy (Larson & Fieler, 2019; Li et al., 2020) whiles others have focused on the short and long-term impact of students' philanthropy on communities (Benz et al., 2019; Centre for the study of student life, 2019; McDonald & Olberding, 2012).

In my analysis of the Northern Kentucky University's (2022) assessment of all published and some unpublished articles on students' engagement in philanthropy from 2006 to 2021, I observed that none of the about forty (40) articles enlisted by the University focused on the communication factor in students' engagement in philanthropy. Also, African literature appears silent on students-run initiatives. Mindful of this gap in literature and Kumi's (2019) claim that the nature of philanthropy in Ghana is underexplored, this study addressed the gap in literature by employing the qualitative multi-case study approach to investigate the nature of students-run initiatives as a relatively new concept in Ghana's philanthropic sector; and, assessed the nature, communication patterns/direction, and communication strategies adopted by these students-run initiatives to mobilise resources for sustainable development.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The study was motivated by the following objectives:

1. To investigate the nature of selected students-run initiatives in Ghana
2. To analyse the communication patterns/direction among selected students-run initiatives in Ghana

3. To investigate the communication strategies used by selected students-run initiatives in Ghana for resource mobilisation

1.3 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. What is the nature of selected students-run initiatives in Ghana?
2. What are the patterns/direction of communication among selected students-run initiatives in Ghana?
3. What communication strategies do selected students-run initiatives in Ghana use to mobilise resources for developmental projects?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The study holds enormous benefits to local communities, philanthropic organisations, volunteers, policymakers and scholars alike. Findings from the study will contribute to addressing the controversy surrounding the nature of student-run initiatives. As pointed out by Nagel et al. (2022), scholars do not agree on a single definition for student-run initiatives largely because of the difference in opinions about the level of involvement of faculty in student-run initiatives. Whiles some scholars view student-run initiatives as self-directed by students (see Drexler et al., 2019; Forbes et al., 2021), some also believe that such initiatives are supervised by faculty or other professionals such as health professionals (see Johnston et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2017). The findings from the study will contribute to appreciating student-run initiatives as development engineered by students for the attainment of sustainable development.

The findings from the study will enlighten Africans and other underdeveloped communities on how to pool resources from within their own environments for their own development. Some scholars have long held that philanthropy is something that wealthy people do for the poor. For example, Wiepking (2020) asserts that the definition of philanthropy is often seen through the Western lens or what Fowler (2022) refers to as the Euro-American perspective. Under this school of thought, many believe that philanthropy depends on the benevolence of the wealthy in society. In contrast, this study, as seeded in the philanthropy of community, provides useful grounds for recognising the ability of poor communities to use their own indigenous resources to fund their own development (see Hodgson, 2020; Mati, 2023). The findings from the study will enable poor communities to realise the internal channels and networks through which they can pool resources for their own development. This enlightenment will empower communities to take charge of their own development. When communities take charge of their own development, it serves as a springboard for indigenous innovation and subsequent initiation of future developmental interventions (Mefalopulos, 2008). The findings of the study will in this regard guide communities in practising sustainable philanthropy.

The study's findings will be useful in providing a guideline for effective relationship building between non-profit organisations and their volunteers. The findings from the study will inform non-profit organisations on effective communication strategies that help in recruiting and retaining volunteers. When non-profit organisations can effectively manage volunteers through communication, it enables them to run cost-effective development interventions. This will mean, making effective use of limited community resources to tackle development challenges. It also implies that resources can be saved to address other important needs of communities. The findings from the study will serve as a blueprint for non-profit organisations in positioning themselves to better communicate with and remain attractive to volunteers.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study investigated the phenomenon of student-run initiatives as a variant of philanthropy for sustainable development. In this study, only three out of the numerous student-run initiatives in Ghana were assessed; For the Future, Khays Foundation and Organisation for Inclusive Education (OFIE). The study limited itself to the qualitative approach to studying phenomena. The study only concerned itself with examining the communication factor in these student-run initiatives as the measure of sustainability.

1.6 Organisation of the Study

The report of this study is presented in five (5) chapters. The first chapter covers the introduction of the report. The introduction captures the background to the study, states the problem that necessitated the study, reveals the purpose of the study, and outlines the objectives and questions that guided the study. The chapter also outlined the significance of the study and defined the confines of the study. The second chapter covers presentation of literature review. The chapter presented the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical review of literature related to the study. Chapter three (3) dealt with the study's methodology. The research approach, design, sample and sampling techniques, data collection methods and procedure, ethics, and issues of trustworthiness of the study are contained in this chapter. Chapter four (4) covers data analysis and discussion of research findings. The fifth chapter presents a summary of the study, conclusion and recommendations stemming from the research findings and suggestion of areas for further research.

1.7 Chapter Summary

This chapters provides an introduction to the entire thesis. The chapter set the tone for the discussions in this thesis by providing a background to all the important concepts in the study. The chapter presents the problem which the study sought to address. Inter alia, the chapter presents the significance of this study, and the scope within which the study was conducted.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I engage the review and discussion of literature related to the study. The chapter delves into the ongoing debates and discussions on the various concepts surrounding development, sustainable development, philanthropy and sustainable development, community philanthropy, nature of students-run initiatives, governance structure and the patterns of communication as well as the communication strategies designed to help such initiatives with regard to resource mobilisation.

2.1 Conceptualising Development

The term development as used by academics, policymakers and practitioners appears to defy definition (Mensah, 2019). Scholars agree that development cannot be defined in terms that provide universal acceptance. In my discussion, I do not attempt to give a definition of development. Rather, I engage in analysis of the arguments and debates that have characterised the discussions on development. I do not arrive at a definition but a conclusion that the meaning of development, whatever it is or should be must emanate from people and communities, not scholars, not policymakers nor practitioners alone.

Scholars have almost unanimously agreed that development is synonymous to change (Mensah, 2019. The sort of change that qualifies to be development is what remains the bone of contention. Sumner and Tribe (2008) argue that most people tend to see development as *good* change. In that case, the authors acknowledge that the difficulty which arises is to determine what change can be said to be good. Sumner and Tribe (2008) admit that the challenge in seeing development as a good change lies in the value judgement of determining what is good and what is bad. Again, the authors argue that development can also be negative as it may apply in an economic decline or crisis (Sumner & Tribe, 2008).

It is enough to admit that development means change, without venturing into the value judgement of good or bad. In any sense, to admit development as change, brings another burden of defining what kind of change, who initiates or even how such a change should occur. Leaning on the scholarly work of Sumner and Tribe (2008), three categories of conceptualisations for development are discussed. The first category treats development's conceptualisation from a historical perspective, the second from policy analysis of short- and medium-term goals and the last from the postmodernist view of development that builds from discourse and the unique values of each community. While I dedicate attention to all the aforementioned schools of thought on development, I argue in favour of the last, the postmodern view of development as the most inclusive conceptualisation of development.

2.1.1 Development as a long-term process of structural societal change

Sumner and Tribe (2008) posit that initial thinking on development after WWII was seen as a process of changing the socio-economic structures of societies. Taking roots in the 1950s and 1960s, this thinking of development was premised on the belief that for societies to develop, there was the need for societies to undergo transformation from rural to industrial, traditional to modern. What this meant at the time was that rural societies were considered underdeveloped and industrial societies, developed. According to Sumner and Tribe (2008), this perspective viewed development as a historical change (Thomas, 2000).

Under this paradigm, development was mainly understood in terms of growth in industries and systems of governance (Rabie, 2016). Under this school of thought, the structural change that denoted development was to be seen in: 1. Change in the economy and 2. Change in social relations (as in change in class systems) (Sumner & Tribe, 2008). The assumption was that when societies grow their economies, there would be a positive ripple effect on the dissection of society based on economic and social status, which will culminate in structural change in the society overtime (Semasinghe, 2020). As such, emphasis was placed on building economies on the back of indicators such as gross domestic product (GDP), per capita income, employment, growth in industries among others (Rabie, 2016).

While these economic indicators provided a useful lens for measuring development, it was subsequently found that growth in economic indicators did not in itself translate into the expected change in social class or even the embetterment in the quality of lives of individuals in the society (Semasinghe, 2020). In contrast, it was found in most societies that inequalities rose with growth in GDP Semasinghe (2020). Growth in industries, with the promise of mass employment failed to alleviate poverty (Rabie, 2016).

The failure in this thinking informed scholars, practitioners and policymakers to rethink their strategy or posture (Rabie, 2016). The emerging view became the new paradigm that placed emphasis on development as a qualitative rather than quantitative change. The focus in defining development thus moved from economies to people and communities (Sumner & Tribe, 2008). This, however, was not a total departure from the view that societies needed to undergo structural change. It was a move to look beyond the long-term structural change in societies to a short-term, non-historical change (Sumner & Tribe, 2008). The new school of thought on development prioritised development thinking in terms of set goals that societies were to achieve for themselves.

This leads to the second category of development thinking, namely development as short-to-medium-term outcome of desirable targets.

2.1.2 Development as short-to-medium-term outcome

With the supposed defect in the historical perspective of development as discussed above, a new approach to defining development emerged. This new perspective aimed at setting short-to-medium-term targets for development. Under this view, development was measured on the back of some set indicators such as the reduction in poverty rate, increase in access to quality nutrition, education and health, among others (Sumner & Tribe, 2008). Development under this perspective was assessed on the ability of growth in GDP to afford people the opportunity to meet their basic needs. This perspective is described by most scholars as technocratic and prescriptive (Sumner & Tribe, 2008).

According to Sumer and Tribe (2008), the fundamental assumption of this perspective is that societies can develop or be seen as developed if they are able to meet some set of development objectives (UNDP, 2010). This model of development exists in contemporary development discourse and is still trumpeted by development agencies such as the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Health Organisation (WHO), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and many governmental organisations (Sumner & Tribe, 2008). Examples of such development objectives or goals include but not limited to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that run its cause till 2015 and now, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) expected to be achieved by the end of 2030 and the Africa Agenda 2063 (Rabie, 2016; UN, 2015).

Development under this, according to its proponents, is attained upon the successful realisation of the outcomes and targets of predetermined development goals (Sumner

& Tribe, 2008). While this new model has received much patronage and promotion among leading institutions, a pressing concern is raised against this school of thought. The main issue of who sets the objectives and whose interests these objectives serve continue to be rife among major stakeholders of development (Ozili, 2022). The concern about who sets these development objectives appears to have cultivated a seeming uneasiness among development practitioners, scholars and policymakers alike.

The issue appears to centre on, what processes lead to the setting of the development goals? It appears that these processes are often technocrats-driven (Sumner & Tribe, 2008). Agencies and technocrats determine for the masses what goal is worthwhile and what outcome will make communities developed. The masses are not actively engaged in the decision-making process (Sumner & Tribe, 2008). The processes that lead to the setting of development goals under this thinking of development remains undemocratic; neglecting the voices of communities and alienating people from actively participating in the decision that affects their own development (Semasinghe, 2020).

The seeming contradiction in this model of development is that in one breadth, power is given to technocrats to dictate to the masses what change should be desirable, and in another breadth, admits that development is about people and that people must be actively engaged in decisions that concern their own development (Sumner & Tribe, 2008). In the light of the purported weakness in this model of development, a third emerged, which places power in the hands of communities and fosters collaboration between communities and development technocrats.

2.1.3 Development as a Dominant Discourse of Western modernity

The first two perspectives on development that I have discussed in this section have focused on the long-term, historical view of development underlined by structural change in societies and short-to-medium-term, prescriptive notions of development (Sumner & Tribe, 2008). This third perspective, development as a dominant discourse of Western Modernity, appears to be a more radical perspective that shifts the power to define development to communities (Sumner & Tribe, 2008). Here, the underlining argument is that development has always been a conversation started and defined by the West and imposed on those considered to be underdeveloped (Sumner & Tribe, 2008).

Scholars who subscribe to this model of development argue that after WWII, the West enthroned itself as the custodians of development, dictating to the rest of the world what development is or should be (Sen, 2014). These scholars contend that most of the discourse on development has been Western-centric, promoting Western ideals and values. This third perspective maintain that development is value-laden and that individual communities must be allowed to determine out of their value systems what change is desirable (Sen, 2014).

Under this thinking, development is not defined for communities but by communities. Sumner and Tribe (2008) see development as a social construct and through discourse, we can know what development really means outside Western perspective. The authors observe that the meaning of development cannot be objectively measured or defined. However, the reality of development emerges, is shaped and constantly reproduced through discourse.

This view asserts that the language and imagery used to depict development or poverty has been underlain by Western concepts. Escobar (2015, p. 4) arguing in favour of the need to democratise the definition of development asserts that "development was — and continues to be for the most part – a top-down, ethnocentric, and technocratic approach, which treated people and cultures as abstract concept, statistical figures to be moved up and down in charts of progress." This realisation is what has given birth to the burgeoning school of thought that calls for the redefinition of development as a phenomenon that stems from the bottom, from the people, and cultures which hitherto had been treated as passive subjects (Sen, 2014).

With all of its promises, the view that development is a subjective reality created through discourse faces an inherent contradiction; if development can only be socially constructed, then the first two models of development discussed earlier (development as a long-term process of structural society change and development as short-to-medium-term outcome of desirable goals) cannot be challenged because they are also social constructions (Sumner & Tribe, 2008). To address this inherent contradiction, I hold the view that the need to allow for communities and people to define for themselves what development is, is not to suggest a complete annihilation of the views of development technocrats and experts, it is a recognition that expertise is not resident in technocrats alone but in communities as well. Through discourse, both technocrats and communities share ideas, experience and resources that provide a balanced conceptualisation of development (see Ozili, 2022; Semasinghe, 2020 Sen, 2014).

In the end, discourse breeds a perspective of development that is a hybrid of external and indigenous knowledge. When people and communities are empowered through discourse, indigenous knowledge and resources are deployed for community development that is sustainable (Sen, 2014). Allowing for discourse on development will also lead to empowerment and participation among communities. This is the bedrock of sustainable development.

2.2 Sustainable Development

Development literature and practice over a long time has been rife with the exegesis on sustainability. While the term sustainable development appears almost universal in recent discussions on development, it appears that the term has only become a trite, which we usually chant but find it difficult to define (Mensah, 2019). The necessary first step in attempting a conceptualisation of sustainable development is to first answer the question of what development means, after which the issue of sustainability can be addressed (Mensah, 2019). I have already engaged in the conceptualisation of development from the perspective of community. In my discussion, I indicated as have other scholars (see Ozili, 2022; Semasinghe, 2020 Sen, 2014) that development is people-centred and the best way to conceptualise it is to allow the people and communities for whom development is targeted to define for themselves what change is desirable and worthy of commitment.

With a working understanding of the fact that development is value-laden and that communities when engaged in discourse, present, assert and promote aspects of their values that need change, I adopt the definition of sustainable development as contained in the Brundtland Report. The 1978 Brundtland Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development define sustainable development as that development that gratifies the needs of present generations and does not endanger the ability of future generations to meet theirs (United Nations, 1978). I dwell on this definition because it has enjoyed tremendous referencing from academic researchers and policymakers alike (see Mensah, 2019; Ozili, 2022; Sen, 2014).

Sustainable development researchers have often seeded their conceptualisations of sustainable development in the premise of the Brundtland Report of 1978 (Mensah, 2019). From the definition I deduce two main ideas. The first is that sustainable development meets the needs of the current generation. Secondly, meeting the needs of the current generation should not put the ability of the next generation in achieving theirs in jeopardy. To dwell on the first, I maintain that meeting the needs of the current generation stems from engaging in discourse.

Mefalopulos (2008) asserts that the sustainability or otherwise of development projects hinges on dialogue or the lack of it. He contends that through dialogue, the needs of people and communities are identified, and by engaging in empowering discourse with communities, workable and sustainable solutions are found. He thus contends that:

> The most crucial part of the communication process is no longer exclusively on the channels, audiences, or messages, but also on the facilitation of two-way processes that engage stakeholders, ensure mutual understanding, assess the situation, and identify the best course of action for change (Mefalopulos, 2008, p. 94).

When the UN (1978, 2015) adopts the definition of sustainable development as one that meets the needs of current generation, they admit also, though as a sub silentio, and later expressively that the needs of communities can only be known and precipitate sustainable development by promoting discourse at the level of communities.

The definition of sustainable development by the UN (1978), emphasises the ability of current development to have a holding capacity that ensures that posterity's needs are met also. This implies longevity. By longevity, the UN (1978) contend that development should serve the needs of future generations long after the current is ended. This also demands discourse. According to Mefalopulos (2008), development is bound to last and serve communities' needs intergenerationally based on dialogue with the current generation. This kind of dialogue or discourse serves a number of functions relative to longevity.

First, Mefalopulos (2008) argue that development is made sustainable when communities and people are engaged in dialogue because dialogue makes communities own their development. That sense of ownership burdens communities with the sense of responsibility to maintain and protect gains from development projects (Mefalopulos, 2008). Most development projects that lived a short lifespan have been found to be largely due to the lack of sense of ownership from community members. Mefalopulos (2008) notes that when communities and people feel a sense of ownership, they commit to sustaining development because they feel that, that development is the product of their collective opinions and resources.

Beyond having a sense of ownership, engaging communities and people in development discourse, dialogue unleashes and strengthen indigenous knowledge (Sen, 2014). In what led to the discovery of positive deviance, researchers (O'Malley et al., 2022) found that communities have their own knowledge and resources which provide lasting solutions to social problems and promote sustainability of development initiatives. This can only be found and deployed effectively through dialogue or discourse (Sumner & Tribe, 2008).

In addition to the sense of ownership and promotion of indigenous wisdom and resources for sustainability, engaging communities in dialogue and discourse builds their competence and ability to take future initiatives for their own development. When communities are actively engaged in discourse and are made an integral part of decision making on development initiatives, it builds confidence, competence and initiative among community members (Mefalopulos, 2008). This is a confirmation of Ake's

(1998, p.21) position that "people make development sustainable only insofar as its content becomes an integral part of their lives".

Furthermore, engaging people and communities in development discourse raises their consciousness about the need for responsible consumption that fosters sustainable development (Sen, 2014). Inasmuch as a chunk of my review has been in favour of promoting communities' values and culture, I am also much aware that some of the indigenous values and practices can be counterproductive in the furtherance of sustainable development. Some indigenous values and practices such burning woods for charcoal, farming close to water bodies, hunting endangered species among others are known bottlenecks to achieving sustainable development (Mefalopulos, 2008).

To mitigate the negative impact of such counterproductive local cultures and practices on sustainable development, the need for discourse cannot be overemphasised. When engaged in discourse, community members and technocrats engage in the cross-fertilisation of ideas that result in a consensus on what practices can foster sustainable development (Sumner & Tribe, 2008). Such a discourse raises awareness and consciousness among communities and empowers them to cultivate responsible consumption patterns necessary for sustainable development.

In sum, my conceptualisation of sustainable development picks strength from the recognition that development is about people and that providing a platform for people to be heard through discourse is non-negotiable. My argument has been seeded in the views of the UN (2015), UNDP (2010), Mefalopulos (2008) and other scholars who have also argued in favour of promoting indigenous knowledge, experience and resources for sustainable development. The outcome of this view held by these scholars and agencies has resulted in an emerging paradigm of development that promotes community initiatives known as community philanthropy. In the section that follows, I proceed to discuss the nexus between community philanthropy and sustainable development.

2.3 Community Philanthropy and Sustainable Development

In the preceding discussion, emphasis has been placed on the need to actively engage communities in the development discourse as an avenue to attaining sustainable development. In this subhead, I discuss the theory and practice of development premised on democracy, empowerment and deployment of indigenous resources to tackling social issues. I argue that traditional philanthropy is undemocratic and unsustainable. I further show from empirical review how community philanthropy has proven to be a tool for promoting sustainable development.

2.3.1 Conceptualising Philanthropy

The place and centrality of philanthropy toward the achievement of sustainable development cannot be overemphasised. Discussions about the potentials philanthropy holds toward the advancement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) continues to receive attention from academics as well as policymakers at different levels (Hayman, 2015; Kumi, 2019). Philanthropy as a concept appears polysemic because different authors have conceptualised it differently. Interestingly, the discussion on how to conceptualise philanthropy has often reflected more dissent than consent. Not only have scholars defined the concept differently but the practise of philanthropy in different contexts has made it seem impossible to have a universally acceptable definition of what act (s) or behaviour (s) should count as philanthropic (Khumalo, 2014).

Wiepking (2021) admits that philanthropic behaviour appears to be ubiquitous across all cultures. This universality of philanthropy across cultures makes it difficult to have a globally acceptable definition of philanthropy because different cultures practice philanthropy differently (Wiepking, 2021). Fowler and Mati (2019) posit that attempting a definition of philanthropy from a global perspective is not only subjective but incomplete as well. This does not however imply that philanthropy cannot be defined. Some known scholars provide a useful lens through which we can understand philanthropy.

The conceptualisation of philanthropy in this study is based on the Western and African conceptualisations of the phenomenon. The Western conceptualisation of philanthropy according to Wiepking (2021), is best presented in Payton's (1998) conceptualisation. Payton (1988, p. 7) defines philanthropy as "voluntary action for public good." According to Herzog et al. (2020), this definition connotes some rich, white men/woman being benevolent with their riches. The Western conceptualisation of philanthropy is seen as vertical philanthropy (Kumi, 2019). The Western conceptualisation of philanthropy is considered vertical because its practise is usually characterised by some wealthy individuals and organisations giving to poor people and communities (Hodgson & Pond, 2018). This creates a tradition of top-bottom donor-beneficiary dynamics that put donors in position of power over beneficiaries. Such donor-beneficiary dynamics work against the sustainability of philanthropic interventions because the people for whom philanthropic interventions are targeted do not play any significant active role (Harrow et al., 2016). This seeming power imbalance gives the vertical form of philanthropy an undemocratic outlook; because the people for whom this kind of philanthropy is targeted have little or no say concerning their needs and what will better serve their needs (Harrow et al., 2016).

On the other hand, African philanthropy is conceptualised as the mobilisation of resources from within Africa to addressing Africa's development needs (Fowler &

Mati, 2019). In other words, African conceptualisation of philanthropy "focuses on using resources within the African continent in making the continent self-sufficient" (Kumi, 2019, p. 1088). This conceptualisation is regarded as horizonal and projects the active involvement of communities and people in their own development (Hodgson & Pond, 2018). I adopt both Western and African conceptualisations of philanthropy because Kumi (2019) asserts that African philanthropy is by nature an amalgam of both vertical and horizontal forms of giving.

Whether of vertical philanthropy or horizontal giving, the SDG Philanthropy Platform and UNDP (2017, p. 26) assert that "Philanthropy, no matter where it originates from, is driven by the imperative to meet human needs, alleviate suffering, and tackle the systemic challenges that prevent human development and progress". Settling on this, philanthropic behaviours may include but not limited to giving money (Wiepking, 2021), volunteering (Alias & Ismail, 2014), cooperating in public good games (Henrich et al, 2006), helping strangers (Bennet & Einolf, 2017), and Diaspora remittances (Fowler, 2022).

2.3.2 Philanthropy and Sustainable Development

Philanthropic actors such as foundations, high net worth individuals, religious organisations, corporate societies, and non-governmental organisations have been major contributors to the development drive across the globe (Kumi, 2019). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2018 reported that philanthropic organisations contributed over USD 23.9 billion to financing development across the globe. The report indicates that this amount represented the total contributions from about 147 philanthropic foundations from 2013-2015 (OECD, 2018). The USD 23.9 billion was invested in critical areas of development such as health, education, agriculture, and some others.

The OECD (2021) reported an increase in global philanthropic giving above USD 23.9 billion from 2013-2015 to USD 42.5 billion from 2016-2019. This increase in global philanthropic donations influences development across multiple sectors. This buttresses the argument that philanthropy plays a vital role in financing global development.

Aside the financial contributions of philanthropy to sustainable development, philanthropic organisations stimulate development in other ways that are not financial. Various studies have given credence to the fact that philanthropic behaviours such as volunteering time and skills is a positive driver for development (Educate A Child, 2020; Grant et al, 2020; Hechenberger, 2019; Saunders et al, 2019). Saunders et al (2019) in a systematic review of about 199 articles concluded that volunteer services play a major role in the provision of quality healthcare which is in line with SDG 3.

This finding resonates with earlier studies by Manning et al (2012), Roberts et al (2017), and Vanderstichelen et al (2019). These scholars advance the view that volunteerism is helpful in the attainment of health goals. While Roberts et al (2017) found volunteers to be vital for improving nutritional needs of elderly patients, Fitzsimmons et al (2014) found volunteers to be resourceful in dealing with patients with dementia. The use of volunteers is vital for assisting with the prevention of hospital falls, handling transition from hospital to home, preventing unplanned hospital readmission among other essential health-related functions (Hshieh et al, 2018; Steunenberg et al, 2016).

Another area of development that philanthropic organisations can be found to drive attainment of development goals through the services of volunteers is education. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, UNESCO (2016) assert that a colossal number of 68 million teachers are needed worldwide to attain universal quality primary and secondary education by 2030. This gap according to

Hechenberger (2019) is filled partly by the services of non-governmental organisations who train, resource, and deploy volunteers to augment efforts in providing quality education for underserved and or unreached communities. The Peace Corps (2018) reports the involvement of volunteers in non-financial activities/sectors such as agriculture, education, environment, among others.

While philanthropy has shown the propensity to bring development to local communities and countries or continents at large, its practice has raised critical questions on sustainability (Mediavilla & Garcia-Arias, 2019). Traditional philanthropic practice treats people and communities as passive subjects who are helpless and need external assistance for survival. While I do not discount the necessity of external support for meeting the development needs of people and communities, I argue that for people and communities to achieve sustainable development, their active involvement in every action that concerns their development is paramount. The idea of community philanthropy thus provides solution to the unsustainable and authoritative practice of traditional philanthropy.

2.3.3 Community Philanthropy

Even though evidence abounds on the enormous benefits of philanthropy to societies and the potential of philanthropy in catalysing the attainment of the SDGs, some critical scholars have quizzed the inherent power dynamics that characterise the practise of philanthropy (Hodgson & Pond, 2018; Mediavilla & Garcia-Arias, 2019). Mediavilla and Garcia-Arias (2019) argue that philanthropy, especially the type where large foundations and high net-worth individuals donate for development are inherently hegemonic, placing the donors in the place of authority.

Hodgson and Pond (2018) observe that dealing with external philanthropic donors creates a sort of traditional donor-beneficiary dynamics. Such donor-beneficiary dynamics works against the sustainability of philanthropic interventions because the people for whom philanthropic interventions are targeted do not play any significant active role other than receiving help. The inactivity of local communities and or local people is the result of the docile nature of traditional philanthropy (Harrow & Jung, 2016). On this score, it has been found that shifting power to local communities and local philanthropic foundations is key to ensuring sustainability in philanthropic interventions (Harrow et al., 2016). Emerging body of literature thus argues in favour of community philanthropy (Fowler, 2022; Harrow & Jungs, 2016; Hodgson, 2020).

Community philanthropy has the potential to leverage on local assets for fostering development of local communities in ways that address the express needs of communities from a bottom-up approach (Harrow & Jungs, 2016). Harrow and Jung's (2016) assertion about community philanthropy indicates that as a model and practice, community philanthropy relies on using human and material resources found in local communities to help in addressing communities' needs. From the perspective of Harrow and Jung (2016) it can be argued that community philanthropy is more sustainable because of the bottom-up approach to development. When people for whom development is intended are actively involved in the planning and implementation of developmental interventions, they cultivate a sense of ownership that is necessary for sustaining development (Doan, 2019; Hodgson & Pond, 2018; Mefalopolus, 2008; Serafin & Tennyson, 2019).

According to Hodgson and Pond (2018, p.6), community philanthropy is "both a form and a force for building local assets, capacities, and trust — ultimately, as a way to shift power closer to the ground so that local people have greater control over their own destiny". This idea is reinforced by Doan (2019). Doan (2019, p.9) defines community philanthropy as:

> both a form of, and a force for, locally driven development that strengthens community capacity and voice, builds trust, and, most importantly, taps into and builds on local resources which are pooled together to build and sustain a strong community.

Even though Harrow and Jung (2016) trace the emergence of community foundations to about a century ago, the belief in and practice of relying on community resources and networks to solve community problems has been well and alive across various human cultures (Hodgson, 2020). History attests to the fact that people have always relied on community resources to fulfil the collective needs of society (Hodgson, 2020). This is evident in cultures such as Latin America's *minga* (community day), *bayanihan* (communal unity) in the Philippines, and hometown associations in Mexico (Hodgson, 2020). Inasmuch as the term community philanthropy may not have been used to describe these cultures, the understanding that communities can pool their own resources together to tackle their needs are explicitly imbedded in each of the aforementioned cultural practices.

Whereas literature on philanthropy in Africa appears scanty (Fowler, 2022; Fowler & Mati, 2019), evidence of the belief that African communities can leverage on its people and own resources to address needs cannot be ignored (Kumi et al., 2020; Wilkinson-Maposa, 2017). Concepts such as *harambee* (all pull together) in Kenya, stokvels (informal saving pool or syndicate) in South Africa are some few examples of the manifestation of community philanthropy that exists in some parts of Africa (Hodgson, 2020). In Ghana, the concept of harnessing community strength for collective good can be seen in the Akan culture *Nnobua* (SDG Philanthropic Forum & United Nations Development Programme, 2017).

Beyond the philosophy and promise of community philanthropy, its praxis proves its potency for fostering sustainable development at different levels. In his study, Khumalo (2014) discovered that a local community in South Africa known as Mathulini leverages on its people and resources to provide care services for HIV/AIDS patients and their families. The findings from Khumalo's (2014) study reveal that the Mathulini community and a community-based organisation known as the Mathulini Women's Group were at the heart of different forms of giving towards community members with HIV/AIDS and the families affected by the ailment. The diverse forms of giving identified included care giving, financial donations through savings clubs and associations, labour sharing, emotional support, sharing of information and skills, and sharing of meals among others (Khumalo, 2014). These findings are in consonance with earlier studies such as Alpaslan and Mabutho (2005); Murenha and Chili (2011); Wilskinson-Maposa et al. (2004).

Related to Khumalo's (2014) findings where communities rely on social ties to mobilise members to help each other with labour is the Ghanaian concept nnoboa. Nnoboa is a concept much common among Akans where community members cooperate to help one another with farm work (Ayogyan, 2013). This concept thrives on trust, communality, and reciprocity (White & Dzor, 2019). The purpose of nnoboa is to "reduce problems in accessing labour, especially during the planting season when most rural households are liquidity-constrained" (White & Dzor, 2019, p. 230).

As a manifestation of community philanthropy, nnoboa functions largely in similitude to volunteerism. Members of the nnoboa group volunteer their time, energy and expertise to help others on their farms. Interestingly, Oppong-Afriyie (2015) maintain that nnoboa also takes the form of fundraising where the nnoboa group collectively contribute monies and rotationally give to members. White and Dzor (2019) argue that the nnoboa culture helps in promoting sustainable farming by relying on social capital.

According to Hodgson (2020), there is evidence to suggest that community philanthropy can foster sustainable development in different communities. While community philanthropy may be common in many communities, the form it takes and or how it is practised may differ by context. In what follows, I delve into an emerging form of community philanthropy known as students-run initiatives.

2.4 Nature of Student-run Initiatives

The philosophy and practice of community philanthropy is premised on the knowledge that local communities and their members can solve their own problems by leveraging on their indigenous resources. The idea that the involvement of students in mobilising themselves and pooling needed resources to solving the problems they find around them in the communities where they live is gradually gaining grounds in different communities. While the practice of students founding and spearheading development initiatives is not new, much of academic literature has not dedicated space and attention to the phenomenon (Azhar et al., 2020).

The active involvement of students in promoting sustainable development has evolved over time to a present practice where they are not merely engaged but are initiating development projects on their own. This growing phenomenon has been recognised and widely christened as students-run initiatives (Abuelenen et al., 2020; Drexler et al., 2019; Simmons et al., 2019). Other terms such as students-led, students-operated, students-created and many others have been used in literature as synonymous to students-run initiatives (Nagel et al., 2022). Throughout this study I use the term students-run initiatives for the purpose of consistency.

Nagel et al. (2022) argue that there is no universally accepted definition of the concept students-run initiatives. On the back of that, I do not attempt to define the concept but to provide a comprehensive description of the ideas that inform it, and how it has been practised in different environments. Whereas some scholars note that students-run initiatives refer to development projects pioneered and operationalised by students (Nagel et al., 2022), others argue that students are but under the supervision of faculty or professionals in the practice of students-run initiatives (Drexler et al., 2019; Johnston et al., 2020). This raises the recurring question of who truly runs students' initiatives. This question is what represents the apparent controversy in finding a universally accepted definition for the concept.

I adopt the conceptualisation offered by Nagel et al. (2022). The scholars conceptualise students-run initiatives as "projects and programmes that are initiated and mainly operated by students but operationalised outside of formal academic institutions/curriculum structures to provide health-related service (s) to community members" (Nagel et al., 2022, p. 14). Even though I adopt Nagel et al.'s (2022) definition, my discussion broadens the scope of students-run initiatives beyond health-based programmes. This is because Nagel et al. (2022) failed to acknowledge that students-run initiatives are not always health-based. For example, Azhar et al. (2020) report on a students-run initiative known as the White Coffin Campaign that is environment-based. To provide a more inclusive overview of the students-run initiatives, I conceptualise students-run initiatives as comprising all development projects and programmes pioneered and implemented by students outside of formal academic institutions and or requirements.

Nagel et al. (2022) assert that the nature of students-run initiatives has been a subject of debate among scholars. Some scholars contend that students-run initiatives are independent of academic pursuits. Others argue it is an innovative pedagogy that helps students to practise the concepts they are taught in class (Nagel et al., 2022). To address this confusion, the features of students-run initiatives need to discussed.

2.4.1 Bottom-Up Approach

One of the distinctive features of students-run initiatives is the line of decision-making and communication. Several authors have described students-run initiatives as a bottom-up approach that operates within which students initiate, plan and leade diverse sustainable development projects (Hamann et al., 2021; Murray, 2018; Nagel et al., 2022). Murray (2018) for instance commend students-run initiatives as being uniquely bottom-up and demonstrating the ability to bypass traditional decision-making systems and able to effect change in ways that are not ordinary. This feature of students-run initiatives gives credence to its nature being another form of community philanthropy. I have discussed earlier that community philanthropy operates on a bottom-up approach where communities as against donors determine what social issues require investment and what projects ought to be initiated.

The bottom-up approach denotes democracy in development practice (Hodgson & Pond, 2018). The bottom-up approach creates power balance between external and internal actors in development (Ahmad & Khadse, 2022). Vertical forms of philanthropy put decision making power in the hands of the technocrats who determine which problems need attention and what intervention should be implemented (Ahmad & Khadse, 2022). On the contrary, students-run initiatives as a form of community philanthropy adopt a bottom-up approach and determine which problems are worthy of what intervention.

Adopting a bottom-up approach, students-run initiatives are able to bring sustainable development, maintain students' interest in development projects, foster a sense of ownership and promote creativity and innovation among students (Azhar et al., 2020; Reidy et al., 2015). In their assessment of literature on students-run initiatives, Azhar et al. (2020) found that all the twenty (20) documents that provided evidence on students-run initiatives attested to the students-run initiatives being universally bottom-up. They found a recuring theme of bottom-up approach in students-run initiatives such as the White Coffin Campaign at the Universati Sains Malaysia, the Greening Campaign at the University of Tubingen (Drupp et al., 2012), the Gardening Initiative of Carbondale (Duram et al., 2012), among others. As noted by Azhar et al. (2020), the common denominator of all these initiatives and others that are students-run is that they are all characterised by the bottom-up.

2.4.2 Not-For-Profit

The second feature of students-run initiatives I address in this review is the not-for-profit nature of such initiatives. Usually, students-run initiatives are implemented by a group of students who have common passion for a social issue. These groups are most of the time put together by students to function as a not-for-profit organisation. According to Heaslip (2023), a not-for-profit organisation is one that meets the Internal Revenue Service's criteria for tax exemption because their optimum goal is to promote a social cause to benefit the society and not the organisation.

Students-run initiatives are often run as organisations whose main object is to pursue social causes without any expectation of financial gains. To prove this, Nagel et al. (2022) in their review posited that students-run initiatives are championed by an organised group of students who provide usually free services. The authors observe that what proves that students-run initiatives are not-for-profit is not so much in their organisation but the cost of the services they provide (Nagel et al., 2022). Out of the 222 reviewed articles, 217 (97.7%) showed that students-run initiatives offer different kinds of services. Out of these, 154 (69.4%) explicitly described the services rendered by these students-run initiatives as completely free (see also, Johnston et al., 2020; Palma et al., 2020; Stuard et al., 2019).

Nagel et al. (2022) note also from their review that some of the services offered by students-run initiatives come at a cost. The cost involved in such paid services is not in any way suggestive of a profit-oriented venture. For example, services rendered by students-run free clinics charge a meagre amount for specialty services, diagnostics and vaccines (Forbes et al., 2021; Thompson et al., 2018; Nagel et al., 2022). Examples of these organisations include but not limited to the THORN, which is known as the largest students-run not-for-profit organisation in the world, Refugee Health Partners (RHP), Vote & Vax initiative among others (Dang et al., 2012; Hemba & Plumb, 2011; Weissman et al., 2012).

2.4.3 Not-for-Credit

Not only are students-run initiatives not-for-profit, they are also not-for-credit. The term not-for-credit was used by Nagel et al. (2022) to communicate the idea that students-run initiatives are not in fulfilment of the attainment of an academic degree. This feature is critical in distinguishing students-run initiatives from other forms of students' engagements in sustainable development projects.

Olberding (2009) describes a different scenario of students' involvement in sustainable development projects known as student philanthropy. In that study, the author defines the concept student philanthropy as "a teaching and learning approach that integrates charitable giving with academic study, in order to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities" (Olberding, 2009, p. 465). The main difference between student philanthropy and students-run initiative lies within the fact that the former meets a credit requirement and the latter is not-for-credit. Students-run initiatives is not in any sense pedagogical variant unlike student philanthropy.

2.4.4 Volunteer-Driven

Volunteer-driven refers to efforts, projects, and organisations that are primarily led by individuals who freely contribute their time and expertise to a cause without expectations of monetary rewards (Nagel et al., 2022). This notion captures the critical role that volunteers play in defining and expanding diverse students-run initiatives, demonstrating their dedication to specific causes. Evidence of the heavy dependence of students-run initiatives on volunteers appears omnipresent across literature on the subject (see Nagel et al., 2022; Palma et al., 2020).

As noted by Bloch (2018), students-run initiatives do not have the financial wherewithal to fund their activities. To mitigate this, students-run initiatives rely on the benevolence of some individuals, mostly students who dedicate their time, energy and expertise for that purpose (Khalil et al., 2020). In their study of students-run initiative in dealing with breast cancer, Khalil et al. (2020) found that medical students volunteered their expertise for public education and diagnostic services in Saudi Arabia. This runs through countless analysis of students-run initiatives across the globe. For instance, in Malaysia, students volunteered their services for climate action under the White Coffin Campaign (Azhar et al., 2020) and the Gardening initiative of Carbondale (Duram et al., 2012).

Nagel et al. (2022) identify two kinds of volunteers who are usually engaged in students-run initiatives. Firstly, students and then other professionals. Nagel et al.,

(2022) assert that students who engage in students-run initiatives often do so not seeking any credit reward. However, Nagel et al. (2022) admit that the decision to volunteer for students-run initiatives is sometimes driven by the need to attain a credit score. This is not to mean that the students-run initiative exists for an academic purpose. It means that some of people come on board to volunteer so that they the volunteers will satisfy an academic expectation.

Such instances as service-learning hours or requirement of interprofessional care experience drive students to volunteer for these initiatives (Huang et al., 2021; Sick et al., 2017; Thompson et al., 2018). Some other scholars have found the involvement of various professionals such as doctors, environmentalists, social workers, among others as volunteers in students-run initiatives (see Ginoza et al., 2020; Stuard et al., 2019).

While my discussion on students-run initiatives has not conclusively brought about a definition, I have dedicated attention to bringing clarity on the phenomenon by looking at the nature of the phenomenon and the evidence from many of such initiatives. In order to ensure the continuity of students-run initiatives, a governance system is needed for executive as well as administrative decision-making (Nagel et al., 2022). In what follows, I turn to discuss the nature of governance and communication patterns that entail students-run initiatives.

2.5 Governance Structure and Communication Patterns Within Students-run Initiatives

The issue of governance of students-run initiatives has become a major concern because the sustainability of the initiatives depends partly on the sustainability of the organisations that man them (Dang et al., 2012). Since these initiatives depend largely on student volunteerism, there is the need for sustainable governance structure that preserves the goals of the initiatives and sustains their implementation for different generations of students (Hemba & Plumb, 2011).

Different students-run initiatives have been recorded as having different structures of governance (Nagel et al., 2022). Regardless of the initiative, and the differing portfolios, it appears that generally that students wield a great deal of influence and exercise much control in the administration and of students-run initiatives (Dugani & McGuire, 2011; Hemba & Plumb, 2011; Rogers et al., 2017). For example, a students-run initiative known as Student Health Outreach for Wellbeing (SHOW) that aims to provide healthcare for underserved communities and populations in Phoenix, Arizona operates with students performing most of the leadership functions (Rogers et al., 2017).

Originally initiated in 2013 by three (3) students from the Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University and the University of Arizona, “SHOW’s organisational efforts are coordinated by six student-led committees, guided by an advisory committee consisting of faculty from the three universities, community partners and three executive student directors” (Rogers et al., 2017, p.5). The core committees at SHOW include Clinical Operations, Communications and Technology, Fund Development and Sustainability, Programming and Special Events, Research and Quality Assurance and Volunteer and Human Resource (Rogers et al., 2017).

Rogers et al. (2017) add that the SHOW was led by three student-directors. These were directors for development, operations and programmes. Each student-director has oversight responsibility on two of the core committees. The involvement of faculty in leadership at SHOW was largely tied to advisory roles (Rogers et al., 2017).

Other scholars have described the governance structure of students-run initiative with students performing similar or significantly different roles and responsibilities as reported by Rogers et al. (2017). Writing about the Weil Corneil Community Clinic (WCCC), another students-run health initiative in New York, Riddle et al. (2014) report that students held executive positions while the supervisory roles were held by faculty and other professionals. At WCCC, the governance was organised as follows: clinical directors, executive directors, a faculty medical directors' board, senior clinicians, junior clinicians and attending physician. All these but the faculty medical director was under the leadership and directorship of students (Riddle et al., 2014).

Critical analysis into the governance structure of students-run initiatives provides the understanding by which the communication systems of such initiatives function. The flow of information within organisations are generally contingent upon the organisational structures that exist (Miller et al., 2012).

2.5.1 Patterns of Organisational Communication

According to Markovic and Salamzadeh (2018), communication patterns in organisations take the form of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal information flows. Vertical communication happens between people who are hierarchically positioned and include both downward and upward communication flows (Tariszka-Semegine, 2012). Downward communication within an organisation refers to the flow of information from a higher-level employee to a lower-level employee (Robbins et al., 2017). Tariszka-Semegine (2012) notes that downward communication is more common than upward communication in most organisations. The goal of downward communication is to assign work, issue instructions and directions, tell employees about job processes and policies, identify problems that require attention at various levels, and provide feedback on employees' prior performance (Robbins et al., 2010).

In an organisational setting, upward communication refers to the flow of information, feedback, and messages from employees, subordinates, or lower-level members of an organisation to their superiors, managers, or higher-ranking personnel within the organisation's structure (Tariszka-Semegine, 2012). The fundamental goal of upward communication is to provide individuals in positions of authority with relevant insights, comments, suggestions, concerns, and information that will assist them in making informed decisions, addressing difficulties, and improving organisational procedures (De Vries et al., 2016; Kaplan et., 2010). Kaplan et al. (2010) maintain that upward communication is a tool for employee empowerment and fosters innovation in organisations that adopt it.

Horizontal communication, also known as lateral communication, refers to the exchange of information inside an organisation between individuals or groups at the same hierarchical level (Wheelan, 2010). Unlike vertical communication, horizontal communication occurs between colleagues, peers, or teams at the same level within the organisation's structure. Lateral communications between workers in different functional areas are also becoming more of a concern as more emphasis is placed on enhancing production speed through simultaneous, rather than sequential, work processes (Tariszka-Semegine, 2012).

Diagonal communication is the exchange of information between managers and employees from various functional divisions (Tariszka-Semegine, 2012). Diagonal communication is utilised by two parties with varying levels of authority but no direct authority over the other party (Bartels et al., 2010; Wilson, 1992). It permits the exchange of insights, data, and expertise that would not otherwise be possible through traditional communication methods (Kartz & Kahn, 1978).

Various scholars have studied the patterns of communication across different sectors such health institutions, academic institutions, governmental and non-governmental organisations, religious bodies among others (Berger, 2008; Bergman et al., 2016; Jameson, 2017; Lunenburg, 2010). These studies and many others have established the prevalence of vertical, horizontal and diagonal patterns of organisational communication. For instance, in his studies on communication as a driver for nonprofit organisation's success, Jameson (2017) found that vertical, horizontal and diagonal forms of communication in nonprofit organisations are pervasive and serves different purposes. While downward communication allowed for effective supervision within nonprofit organisations, upward communication facilitated a sense of belonging among nonprofit staff and volunteers alike (Jameson, 2017).

In an analysis of patterns of communication among some student associations in the United States, Freedman et al. (2017) found that the flow of information in the 608 associations was basically vertical. In an assessment of the communication between the associations and their members, it was found that leaders employ social media platforms to share and receive information from their members. The flow of information was either from leaders to members or vice versa as in the manner of vertical communication (Freedman et al., 2017). In another study of the communication patterns at Asahan University, Dailami et al. (2020) found that the Vice Chancelor at the University engaged in downward and upward communication with subordinates, while lecturers communicated among themselves horizontally. Also, diagonal communication patterns were recorded when several units within the University teamed up for a particular assignment.

2.6 Communication Strategies for Resource Mobilisation

Several scholars have underscored the central role communication plays in helping achieve organisational goals. Particularly, not-for-profit organisations thrive on the effectiveness of their communication to foster productive and lasting relationships with donors and volunteers alike (Dzisah, 2019). I have noted earlier that effective communication is crucial to the sustainability of students-run initiatives. This is because students have limited resources (both human and material) for embarking on development projects (Bloch, 2018). This reason, coupled with the competitiveness of access to donors and their funds, makes it critical for students-run initiatives to have it right with their communication strategies (Hommerova & Severova, 2018).

The surest way for not-for-profits to sustain donors'/volunteers' interest in giving is to develop communication strategies that meet the uniquely diverse expectations and or demands of potential as well as existing donors/volunteers (Holloway, 2013; Roback, 2017). Mishra et al. (2014) define communication strategies as the blueprints designed to enable not-for-profit organisations to effectively communicate the object/s of their organisations. Guffey and Loewy (2015) maintain that such effective communication fosters common understanding between not-for-profits and their donors, facilitates change and promotes the exchange of information. Communication strategies for Not-for-profits and students-run initiatives express who their stakeholders are and what the organisations seek to share with their stakeholders for the purposes of resource mobilisation (Dzisah, 2019; Kotler & Andreason, 1996). Some of these strategies are discussed below:

2.6.1 Crowdfunding

With a global presence of about 3.5 billion people, the internet has become a more democratised platform for fundraising through crowdfunding (Kemp, 2017; Sharma, 2014). Crowdfunding is the online method of asking people all around the world for money to support or invest in a project (Ordanini et al., 2011). It is a means by which people, groups, or companies can raise money from a community of supporters, usually referred to as "crowd" who are enthusiastic about a project or cause. According to the 2018 *Global Trends in Giving Report*, about 41% of the 6,057 donors assessed from all over the world donated through crowdfunding (Nonprofit Tech for Good, 2018). The amount of funds raised through crowdfunding hovers around $84 billion and continues to surge (Belyh, 2022).

Through websites such as *GlobalGiving* and *Kiva International*, crowdfunding technology is used to enable significant sums of international charity money to underdeveloped communities globally (Krysic, 2018). Crowdfunding helps nonprofits and the communities they serve to become more financially and strategically independent (Desai & Kharas, 2010). In his study on the use of communication appeals, Krysik (2018) found that crowdfunding is an effective communication strategy for not-for-profits' fundraising when tailored to suit the unique needs nonprofits' target audiences. Through the use of communication appeals, not-for-profits are able to convince their large and geographically diverse crowd of their legitimacy and the worthiness of the nonprofits' cause. Nonprofits achieve this by communicating information about their experience and expertise (Mitra & Gilbert, 2014), situation facts and statistics (Krysik, 2018) and use stories (Freedman & Nutting, 2015).

Through an online survey involving 191 young Portuguese entrepreneurs, Bernadino (2020) found that these young entrepreneurs had a moderate understanding of crowdfunding. As a result, these young entrepreneurs were unable to investigate all inherent benefits crowdfunding. The respondents saw various advantages to using crowdfunding that go beyond the financial rewards, such as increased project communication and more feedback from potential consumers.

Alexandra (2023) asserts that only about 23% of all crowdfunding attempts achieve their target. With such low success rate, crowdfunding is usually characterised by a 'win all or nothing' posture (Alexandra, 2023). This means that when crowdfunding campaigns fail to realise the full targeted amount, the organisation that started the campaign is denied access to the little amount that was raised. This failure to recognise and reward even the smallest of efforts may cause fatigue to organisations who attempt to raise funds from there (Alexanda, 2023).

2.6.2 Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication is a communication strategy that takes into consideration the individual uniqueness and needs of a diverse pool of donors/volunteers and tailored by nonprofits to appeal to and reflect the individual needs or interests of the organisations' stakeholders (Nobile & Cantoni, 2023). According to a recent study, interpersonal communication approaches can enhance resource mobilisation by 40% (Arora & Bawa, 2021). *Nonprofit Tech for Good Report* (2018) indicate that most donors are religious and their giving behaviours are predicated on their religiosity. For instance, 50% of Jews, 45% of Christians and Muslims alike were found to be enrolled on monthly giving programmes (*Nonprofit Tech for Good Reports*, 2018). Those who identify as non-religious also give based on ideologies (*Nonprofit Tech for Good Reports*, 2018). When nonprofits know donors' interests and tailor fundraising strategies to reflect the unique needs of these donors, it increases the probability of nonprofits meeting their fundraising goals (Ibrisevic, 2018).

Interpersonal communications are often conveyed through text messages and emails (Zhang et al., 2017). Varma et al. (2016) assert that text-to-donate is a productive communication strategy for fundraising because text messages are quick, economical, and less likely to be lost. Liu (2014) found from investigating two instances in which Chinese citizens used mobile phones to organise protestors in both urban and rural areas of China for action in favour of environmental issues. A text message was sent across to target audiences and read “For the sake of our future generation take action! Participate among 10,000 people, June 1st at 8am opposite the municipal government building!” (Liu, 2014, p.3). This text message led to the mobilisation of over 20,000 protestors against a local government decision that was considered as detrimental to the environment.

According to Red Cross' aid efforts following the terrible 2010 earthquake in Haiti, text-to-give campaigns was one of the most widely used strategies for resource mobilisation in aid of the populations who were affected by the earthquake (Ibrisevic, 2018). Through a large number of $10 texts to the word "Haiti," the campaign earned millions of dollars, including $32 million for the American Red Cross (Ibrisevic, 2018).

Closely related to the use of text messages for fundraising is the use of emails. While text messages are characteristically short and accessed without internet, email is internet-based and allows for long messages (Ibrisevic, 2018). Ibrisevic (2018) concludes that it takes an average of 90minutes for donors to respond to emails as compared to 90seconds for text messages. Irrespective of this, the use of emails as a fundraising strategy has a proven record of success. Upon an analysis of 50 emails, Majova et al. (2014) found that emails have a high response rate to fundraising, about 86%. In their analysis, the authors found that emails that have religious appeal had the biggest predictor of interest to donate (87.6%), followed by humanitarian appeals

(49.7%) (Majova et al., 2014). Again, the authors found that emails work better when donors refer the emails to their friends (Majova et al., 2014).

Inasmuch as personalisation is an effective strategy for resource mobilisation, it paradoxically impedes resource mobilisation at some times (Nobile & Cantoni, 2023). For example, a study conducted by Wattal et al. (2012) found that personalising emails yield better returns on response to fundraising appeals but personalised mails that use donors' names in the greetings turns to be less effective. Similarly, Song et al. (2016) found from their experiments that when emails are too personalised, donors'/volunteers' perception of risk increases and negatively affects their response to such mails. Song et al. (2016) explain that too much personalisation raises the feelings of insecurity among possible donors, making them think their personal information is not protected from their internet consumption.

2.6.3 Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is a planned, communicative process that creates and shares content on social media platforms with the goal of attaining marketing and branding objectives (Hue, 2017). To achieve resource mobilisation goals, this strategy combines traditional marketing principles with the unique qualities of social media, emphasizing two-way communication, user-generated content, and real-time involvement (Mansur, 2021). Scholars have found the massive use of social media as a vehicle for visibility enhancement among not-for-profits. Mansur (2021) reports that about 72% of the world's not-for-profit organisations have established presence on social media and use same for reaching a larger audience than traditional media can afford them. Out of this, Facebook records the highest percentage with about 92% not-for-profits' online presence. Twitter and Instagram follow with 72% and 39% respectively (Mansur, 2021). Nchabeleng et al. (2018) found that most not-for-profit organisations use social media to effectively reach a large audience and to build a productive relationship with their audience.

Through social media, nonprofit organisations create posts that strategically tell their story. This is used primarily for visibility and credibility building for most nonprofits (Dzisah, 2019). Storytelling is used as a communication strategy that humanises statistics. In other words, Peters (2017) asserts that storytelling adds faces to the facts. As a strategy, storytelling has proven to be effective in resource mobilisation because it is able to draw, sustain attention, and draw action, proves impact beyond figures and gives donors a sense of satisfaction (Peters, 2017). Stories are told through diverse formats on social media such as the use of visuals (Dhanani & Kennedy, 2022), audio-visuals (Peters, 2017), animations (Scafirimuto, 2023) and others.

In her study, Peters (2017) reports on the use of various storytelling formats by Charity Water, a not-for-profit that provides potable water to deprived communities. In their report, Charity Water (2019) indicate that telling stories through the use of videos increased their funds by 59%. The 2018 *Global Trends in Giving Report* found that 77% of donors were moved by stories shared on social media to give (Nonprofit Tech for Good, 2018). In their study on the use of social media marketing for resource mobilisation among for-profit enterprises, Drummond et al. (2020) found that social media can used for resource mobilisation only when it is used actively for building dyadic relationships, collaborations, and information sharing.

With a fundraising feature, *Nonprofit Tech for Good* (2018) found from their study of the of about 6,057 donors across the globe that 29% of donors have given through social media, with 88% indicating readiness to give through Facebook. Social media marketing also involves the creation of other contents that are not directly for resource mobilisation but enhances the chances of nonprofits in resource mobilisation. Some of these contents may be for entertainment, education, awareness creation, advocacy and some others (Scafirimuto, 2023). Even though social media presents enormous benefits for resource mobilisation for nonprofit organisations, social media's reliance on internet demands reliable service provision. In countries where the quality of internet service provision is low, the use of social media for resource mobilisation may be hindered. Thus, social media may reinforce existing social inequalities, where nonprofit organisations working in communities with poor internet connection may remain deprived from enjoying the affordances of social media with regard to resource mobilisation (Nchabeleng, 2018).

2.6.4 Grant Sourcing

Nonprofits' communication strategies for resource mobilisation are not limited to digital strategies alone even though digitisation affords nonprofit organisations more opportunities for resource mobilisation. Other traditional communication strategies such as grant writing have a long history of effectiveness. Grant sourcing is the process of identifying and requesting resources from a government department, agency, trust, or, fundraising organisation. It can also be called a grant proposal or grant submission (Fagan, 2023). As a communication strategy for resource mobilisation, grant sourcing is one of the oldest forms of fundraising in the nonprofit industry (Arhin et al., 2018). Most nonprofit organisations in developing countries like Ghana have a long history of dependence on grants for survival (Arhin et al., 2015). It was reported by Arhin et al. (2015) that funds accessed through grant sourcing constitutes about 70% of the budget of nonprofit organisations in Ghana. Similarly, Kumi (2017a) from his study of nonprofit organisations in Ghana's Northern, Upper West and Greater Accra Regions revealed that about 80% to 90% of the organisations' budget were sourced through grants. Other scholars have attested to the widespread sourcing of nonprofit funds through grant writing (Dugle et al., 2015; Kamstra, 2015; Kumi, 2017).

Grant sourcing has been a key fundraising strategy in most developing counties. The strategy suffers two major setbacks; volatility and unbalanced power relations. For instance, Arhin et al. (2018) reports of a consistent decline in donor funding (see Adams & Atsu, 2014; Kumi et al., 2017; OECD, 2017). It is argued that sourcing funds through grant writing puts more power in the hands of donors, making nonprofit organisations vulnerable to the dictates of donors (Arhin et al., 2018; Velarde, 2018). The volatility and unbalanced power dynamics in grant writing raise issues of sustainability in nonprofit operations. Nonetheless, grant writing remains a potent strategy for resource mobilisation.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

The social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1985) and the four-flows model of organisational communication (McPhee & Zaug, 2000) were used to underpin the study. These theories serve as a basis for analysing and discussing the findings from the current study.

2.7.1 Social Capital Theory

The study was underpinned by the social capital theory. Over the past few decades, social scientists have conducted a great deal of research on social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1985; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993). The theory is predicated on the notion that social networks and ties can give people and groups access to priceless resources, social capital (Lin, 2001; Portes, 1998). Lin (1999, p. 35) defines social capital as a set of "resources embedded in a social structure which are accessed and/or mobilised in purposive action". These resources can be both material and immaterial, such as information and financial capital as well as social norms, trust, and shared values (Putnam, 2000; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000).

According to social capital theory, people and communities can use social networks, trust, and social norms as valuable resources to accomplish shared objectives and enhance their well-being (Putnam, 2000). An extensive array of social and economic phenomena has been explained by social capital theory; these include the connection between social networks and economic development (Fukuyama, 1995), the function of social capital in political mobilisation (Putnam, 1995), and the significance of social networks in health outcomes (Berkman & Kawachi, 2000). Social capital theory has also been utilised by researchers to explain why some groups are more effective than others in reaching their objectives and why some communities withstand economic shocks better than others (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015). (Lin, 2001).

According to Petts et al. (2020), two different kinds of networks can produce social capital; bonding and bridging. While bonding is defined by strong, close-knit relationships, bridging is characterised by weak tie connections between members within a community (Putnam, 2000). These two kinds of networks represent homogeneity and heterogeneity in the kinds of relationships that exist with each community (Petts et al., 2020). According to Petts et al. (2020), these two types of social capital function differently and have different effects on how opportunities are distributed. Bonding has the potential to exclude individuals who do not belong to tightly knit, influential group. However, social capital obtained from bridging by itself might not be sufficient to foster trust (Coleman, 1988). Studies conducted in different settings indicate that the best network structure for promoting wide access and inclusion may be a mix of strong and weak relationships (Petts et al., 2020).

An extensive array of social and economic phenomena has been explained by social capital theory; these include the connection between social networks and economic development (Fukuyama, 1995), the function of social capital in political mobilisation (Putnam, 1995), and the significance of social networks in health outcomes (Berkman & Kawachi, 2000).

The study of community development is one field in which social capital theory has had a significant impact. According to research, social capital can be crucial in fostering social cohesiveness and community growth (Paxton, 2002). Social capital can support beneficial social outcomes and the development of stronger communities by encouraging higher levels of trust and collaboration (Kawachi et al., 1999).

According to some scholars, social capital may also be detrimental to economic growth, especially in situations where the ties between those who have and the less privileged are weak. (Krishna, 2002). In these situations, social capital may serve to uphold current hierarchies of power and restrict prospects for upward social and economic mobility (Halstead et al., 2021). The antidote to this criticism lies in building bridges and fostering networks and collaborations between the different classes in the societies, between the privileged and the disadvantaged populations.

2.7.2 Four-Flows Model of Organisational Communication

The second theory that was used to underpin the study is McPhee and Zaug's (2000) four-flow model of organisational communication. The four-flow model of organisational communication falls under the school of thought known as the Communicative Constitution of Organisation (CCO). The CCO is a theoretical paradigm within the subject of organisational communication that studies how organisations are constantly constructed and shaped through communication processes, rather than just being entities with set structures (Putnam & Fairhurst, 2015). Constitution refers to the continuing process that creates and sustains organisations. It emphasises that organisations are not static entities, but are constantly created and re-constructed through communication (Putnam & Fairhurst, 2015). Central to the CCO perspective is the notion that communication is more than simply a tool or mechanism within companies; it is the fundamental substance that defines and shapes organisations (Schoeneborn et al., 2018). Communication is seen as the key means by which individuals within an organisation make sense of their experiences and coordinate their activities.

McPhee and Zaug's (2000) four-flow model of organisational communication reiterate the view that organisations are dynamic entities that are constantly formed through continual communication. McPhee and Zaug (2000) established the four flows model of organisational communication to provide a useful framework for understanding the complex network of communication activities within organisations. The strength of the model is its capacity to depict the dynamic interplay of four separate but interconnected flows (McPhee & Zaug, 2000). The four-flows govern an organisation's internal and exterior interactions.

Membership Negotiation: The core of any organisation is its members. This flow explores the intricate relationship between individuals and the group. It refers to how people identify their positions, responsibilities, and identities inside an organisation (Blaschke et al., 2012). Onboarding processes, performance reviews, conflict resolution, and even informal discussions become battlegrounds for individuals to negotiate their place within the corporate fabric (McPhee & Zaug, 2000). This constant debate establishes membership boundaries, promotes inclusiveness, and places individual contributions within the larger corporate mission.

Self-Structuring: Organisations are more than just blueprints on paper; they are living organisms that constantly reinvent themselves (McPhee and Zaug, 2000). This flow goes into the intricate methods used by corporations to define their internal architecture. From codifying norms and policies to building procedures and communication channels, self-structuring is an ongoing dialogue that moulds the organisation's make-up. Decisions about hierarchy, leadership structures, and power dynamics all help to shape organisations' sense of order and purpose (McPhee & Zaug, 2000). However, this is not a static process; rather, self-structuring is a reflexive process in which established norms are constantly questioned and renegotiated in response to internal and external forces (McPhee and Zaug, 2000).

Activity Coordination: Organisations exist to achieve objectives, and this flow focuses on the critical component of collaboration. Individuals align their behaviours toward the common aim by communicating tasks, deadlines, and dependencies on a constant basis (McPhee & Zaug, 2001). Meetings, project planning, and ad hoc communication are used to orchestrate members' interdependent efforts. Activity coordination ensures that individual actions blend into a symphony of progress (Bisel, 2009). However, it is more than just following commands; this flow also encourages improvisation and adaptation, allowing members to change course in reaction to unexpected problems and opportunities (McPhee & Zaug, 2001).

Institutional positioning: No organisation exists in a vacuum. This flow connects organisations to their external environment, including the continual communication they have with stakeholders, competitors, and the larger sociopolitical landscape (Putnam & Fairhurst, 2015). This flow takes various forms, including public relations campaigns, lobbying activities, and community participation programmes. Organisations use these external communications to not only shape their public image, but also strategically place themselves within the larger ecosystem in which they operate (McPhee & Zaug, 2001). This continuous interchange of information enables organisations to respond to external forces, secure resources, and, eventually, justify their existence (Putnam & Fairhurst, 2015).

Although the four flows are displayed individually, they interact dynamically (McPhee & Zaug, 2000). Membership negotiation influences self-structuring, which then leads activity coordination. Institutional positioning influences all three internal processes, which in turn shape organisations' external communication. This continual interplay fuels organisational engine, enabling for adaptability, resilience, and growth (Putnam & Fairhurst, 2015). Understanding these four flows allows for a broader view that transcends the static vision of companies as hierarchical structures and into the dynamic world of communication that defines them.

While the model recognises the presence of power inequalities, it shorts fall of a more in-depth investigation of how these dynamics influence communication within NGOs, particularly in donor-recipient interactions and internal hierarchies (Mumby, 2005). The study addresses this seeming weakness of the four-flows model of organisational communication by complementing the model with the social capital theory and the concept of community philanthropy. The thesis of the social capital theory and the concept of community philanthropy focus on collaboration rather than competition. Here, nonprofits resource mobilisation activities are orchestrated by relying on the strength of social capital and resources available in communities. This kind of relationship eliminates the donor-recipient power imbalance and promotes community collaboration aimed at promoting local solutions to local problems (Fowler, 2022; Fowler & Mati, 2019).

2.8 Relevance of the Theories to the Study

The social capital theory is applied to discussing this study primarily because of the communication factor embedded in the theory. Whether of bonding or bridging, social capital is harnessed through communication. Social relationships, which are crucial constituents of social capital, are formed and maintained by individuals with the assistance of communication. Social connections can be made using a variety of communication channels and strategies.

The theory provides a useful lens through which the nature of students-run initiatives can be understood. As noted earlier, students-run initiatives attempt to mimic the idea of community philanthropy, and it is characterised by the dependence on community networks and resource for sustainable development (Fowler, 2016; Kumi, 2019).

The Four-flows model of organisational communication (McPhee & Zaug, 2000) provides the basis for understanding the communication pattern within students-run initiatives as informed by the networks that exist within the organisations understudied. Lastly, the Model makes it easy to understand how students-run initiatives leverage on community networks to pool resources for solving social problems in their communities. While the social capital theory is used to explain the nature of the relationships that exists between the students-run initiatives and their major stakeholders, the four-flows model provides the backdrop to appreciate how the nature of the network informs the culture of communication both within and without the Organisations under study.

2.9 Chapter Summary

The chapter has engaged in the discussion of the various concepts concerned with the study. The chapter has engaged in the conceptualisation of students-run initiatives as a variant of community philanthropy and drawn out how such initiatives translate into sustainable development. The chapter achieved this by analysing through conceptualisations and the presentation of existing findings related to the concepts herein discussed. Underpinned by the social capital theory, and the four-flows model of organisational communication, the objectives of the study were harmonised and explained with evidence from multiple sources.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed description of the approaches adopted by the researcher in data collection and analysis. It reports on the research approach adopted, the design used, sample and sampling techniques, data collection methods, data collection procedures and the ethical considerations that underpinned the study.

3.1 Research Approach

The study adopted the qualitative approach to studying phenomena. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) describe a qualitative study as an interpretive and naturalistic approach to studying phenomena. Researchers attempt to make meaning of or interpret phenomena based on the meaning people ascribe to such phenomena (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). This study sought to ascertain the issues of sustainability with regard to students-run initiatives in Ghana. The study also sought to examine the nature and governance structure of students-run initiatives and the communication processes adopted by the students-run initiatives in recruiting and retaining volunteers as well as the communication strategies adopted for pooling resources to undertake developmental projects.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) notes that the qualitative approach is most preferable when researchers intend to give deeper meaning (s) to phenomena. I adopted the qualitative approach because of its propensity to allow for gaining deeper meanings and allowing for thick-rich descriptions of participants' feelings, opinions, and experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Again, the qualitative approach was most suited for this study because Corbin and Strauss (2015) argue that it enables researchers to construct meaning as shaped by and through culture. Communication strategies reflect to a large extent the culture of the parties engaged in the communication process (Williams & Sweirad, 2019). I paid critical attention to how the culture of the participants influences their communication strategies.

Regardless of the enormous advantages in adopting the qualitative research approach, some authors have raised concerns about some shortfalls of the approach. Notably, qualitative research has been criticised for its inability to make generalisations from findings due to the obviously small number of participants that qualitative researchers employ (Harry & Lipsky, 2014; Thompson & Thompson, 2023). Polit and Beck (2020) opine that when most authors discuss generalisability in research, they oftentimes make it synonymous to statistical generalisability of findings. However, Carminati (2018) argues that it is erroneous for researchers to think that qualitative research lacks generalisability. She contends that even though statistical generalisability is the most popular form of generalisability discussed by researchers, defining generalisability in the strictest sense of statistical probability gives the term a myopic outlook.

Smith (2017) therefore indicates that qualitative research can make generalisations from findings if scholars think of generalisability as transcending statistical definitions and encompassing other forms of generalisability such as naturalistic generalisability (Hays & McKibben, 2021), transferability (Smith, 2017), analytical generalisability (Chenail, 2010; Polit & Beck 2020) and intersectional generalisability (Hays & McKibben, 2021). Transferability is "the extent to which qualitative findings can be transferred to other settings or groups" (Polit & Beck, 2020, p. 572). Analytic generalisability refers to researchers' capacity to apply findings to a pre-existing concept or theory, even when the settings or populations are dissimilar (Hays & McKibben, 2021). Intersectional generalisability is achieved in qualitative research when research is conducted in order to comprehend a community and its intersections (Polit & Beck, 2020).

In addressing the criticism against qualitative studies as lacking generalisability, this study leans itself to naturalistic generalisability. Naturalistic generalisability is also known as representational generalisability (Lewis et al, 2014) and is defined by Smith (2017) as the generalisability that is reached when readers can relate with the findings of study because the findings of the study bears semblance with what readers know or have experienced. In other words, naturalistic generalisability is reached when findings from the study is familiar to the readers' experiences, the environments in which they move, the events they have witnessed or heard about, and the individuals they have spoken with (Smith, 2017). I report the findings from the study with detailed descriptions including direct quotes from participants and images from social media posts of the students-run initiatives. This provides readers with enough details upon which they can resonate with the findings from this study and allows for naturalistic generalisability to be reached (Smith, 2017).

3.2 Research Design

The researcher adopted a qualitative case study design for the study. Yin (2018) maintains that case study is a legitimate method for systematically studying phenomena in bounded systems. This assertion contradicts Stake's (2013) position that a case study is determined by the product (case), deemphasising Yin's (2018) stance on acknowledging case study as a method. This study reflects Yin's (2018, p. 45) recognition of case study as "an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not clearly be evident".

Merriam (1998) cited in Yazan (2015) asserts that Yin's (2018) view of case study as a design distinct from other qualitative designs and Stake's (2013) insistence on case study as a product of enquiry demonstrate case studies' dual quality of being a design and a product of enquiry. Merriam (1998, p.31) asserts that "the uniqueness of a case study lies not so much in the methods they employ (although these are important) as in the questions asked and their relationship to the end product". Her position recognises the legitimacy of case study as a method and the need to emphasise the unit of analysis (the case/product). The position taken by the researcher in conducting this study enjoins both positions taken by Yin (2018) and Stake (2013). This study therefore considers case study as a qualitative design that focuses on studying a case or multiple cases of contemporary occurrence within a bounded system and the process (es) adopted in enquiring into the case (s).

Yazan (2015) argues that the contradicting positions regarding scholarship on case study converge at the point of acknowledging the centrality of the "case (es)" in a case study. According to Merriam and Tisdell 2016), a case could be anything around which boundaries exist. A case then could be inter alia a person, a programme, community, profession, or a policy that is intrinsically bounded. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stipulate that once a study has a phenomenon to fence in on, then a case is established. In relation to this study, students-run initiatives become the cases. For example, *Khays Foundation* constitutes a case distinct from *For the Future*. *Khays Foundation* exists as foundation with its own mission and core values as well as its communication strategies. This is true for all other foundations engaged in this study. On this score, I justify this study as a case study because there is a unique phenomenon that serves to fence in on the initiatives as distinct bounded systems.

Yin (2018) advances that there are two main types of case study; single-case and multiple-case study. I used the multiple-case study design for this study. According to Creswell and Poth (2017), a multiple case study involves studying a single phenomenon from different bounded systems at the same time. The phenomenon for this study is students founding and operating sustainable development projects. The bounded system is the individual students-run not-for-profit organisations that man the initiatives engaged in the study. I adopted a multiple case study because the findings from the three students-run initiatives provide a more convincing and powerful comprehension of the phenomenon under study than would a single initiative (Yin, 2018).

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) notes that qualitative case studies are limited to the sensitivity and integrity of the researcher since the researcher in this case is the primary instrument for data collection. She notes for instance that when case study researchers adopt observation for data collection, some data may be lost either by the researcher failing to capture everything or forgetting some data after they leave the scene. I addressed this weakness by audio recording interviews and transcribing the recordings for analysis. Through audio recording and subsequent transcription of such, the researcher captures wholly what was said by interviewees and allays the fear of the researcher forgetting what was said during the interview. Through this I was able to ensure that data collected through interview and focus group discussions was accurately captured without losing any sensitive data.

Meriam and Tisdell's (2016) critique concerning the lack of integrity regarding qualitative research is built on the practice of the researcher's active role in data collection and analysis. The fear is that the researcher may manipulate or influence the findings. Through direct quotes from interviews conducted and screenshots from the websites and social media posts of the students-run not-for-profit organisations, the study addressed the integrity concerns raised by Merriam and Tisdell (2016). The direct quotes from participants in the interviews and focus group discussions shows that my findings represent the perspectives of the participants and not mine. Also, the screenshots from the websites and social media platforms of the organisations are public documents that can be verified. The integrity of my findings can thus be guaranteed.

Carminati (2018) acknowledged that a major weakness of case studies is the perceived lack of rigour. Yin (2018) contends that issues regarding rigour can be handled by qualitative researchers through triangulation. The study therefore ensured rigour by employing different data collection methods. The study employed document analysis, interview and focus group discussion. Yin (2018) acknowledges that the nature of multiple case studies makes it rigorous. A qualitative multiple case study allows for the collection of data from multiple bounded systems that provide a broad spectrum of views. In the analysis of this broad spectrum of views, the researcher engages in comparative analysis which establishes a pattern most likely thorough and representative (Cypress, 2017). By selecting multiple cases for investigation, I ensured rigour in this study.

3.3 Sampling Technique

Meriam and Tisdell (2016) note that sampling for a case study is significantly different from other qualitative designs because sampling in a case study is normally a sort of two-step approach known as “two-tier” sampling. The first sampling decision made by the qualitative case study researcher is the choice of the “case” and then, except the researcher intends to engage all sample, s/he has to choose from within the “case” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The study employed purposeful/purposive sampling in selecting the organisations to be studied and then the participants from within the organisations from whom data was collected.

Patton (2015) stipulates that purposeful sampling aims at providing in-depth comprehension of case (s) by selecting sample with the richest characteristic (s) of concern to the researcher or the study. The aim of purposeful sampling technique was to assist the researcher in selecting the cases and for choosing from within the case the most information rich sample. Analogous to the term purposeful or purposive, Shaheen et al (2019) use the term criterion-based selection to connote the selection of participants based on their presentation of criterion or criteria most reflective of the goal of the study. In their view, the researcher first needs a list of characteristics that a typical sample should possess and then moves to find the sample that exhibit such features.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) assert that there are different types of purposeful sampling which includes but not limited to typical case sampling, maximum variation, unique, convenience and snowball or chain sampling (Creswell & Cresswell, 2018; Patton, 2015). Typical case sampling is a purposeful sampling strategy used when the normality/typicality of the units is of interest (Patton, 2015). A unique sample is based on the phenomenon of interest's unique, unconventional, and possibly rare qualities or occurrences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Maximum variation sampling is a search for variance in views, ranging from those considered to be normal to those considered to be more extreme in character (Palinkas et al., 2015). Convenience sampling is a method of collecting information from individuals who are easily available to the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

I used the snowball sampling technique to select participants for the study. The snowball sampling technique affords the researcher to locate early key sample that possess (es) the characteristics of interest to the study and then rely on referrals from the early key participants to locate more participants for the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I called the local NUGS Secretary of UEW to find out how many foundations had been nominated for the Best Student-owned NGO category of the NUGS Excellence Award 2022. The secretary furnished me with two foundations that had been nominated for the category; Organisation For Inclusion and Education (OFIE) and *Khays Foundation*. I approached the two foundations and they agreed to participate in the study. *Khays Foundations* referred me to *For the Future* (located at the University of Ghana-Legon).

According to Patton (2015), the snowball gets bigger as early participants refer the researcher to new information-rich cases. As I expanded from the initial two foundations to reach other students-run foundations outside the University of Education, Winneba, I was guided by redundancy for selecting the number of foundations to engage in the study. Redundancy or point of saturation is reached when new interviews or observations provide similar responses to what has been gathered earlier (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). After engaging the fourth case (*For The Future*), I realised I had reached redundancy because I started noticing recurring patterns of responses. I therefore selected three students-run initiatives for the study based on the point at which I reached redundancy.

3.4 Sample

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) maintain that sampling for qualitative case study occurs at two levels; selecting the case (es) and then choosing from the case (es) who or what to be actively engaged. Based on this, the first sampling decision was reached after identifying three students-run initiatives through snowball sampling technique. These were; *Khays Foundation* (from U. E. W), Organisation For Inclusive Education/*OFIE* (from U. E. W), and *For the Future* (from U. G). A total of eighteen (18) participants were selected from the three Organisations under study. Below is a breakdown of the 18 participants;

1. *OFIE*: The Founder, General Secretary, Communications Officer, Programmes Manager, IT Officer and Project Lead
2. *Khays Foundation*: The Founder, General Secretary, Public Relations Officer, IT Officer, Organising Secretary and Deputy Organising Secretary
3. *For The Future*: The Founder, Vice President, General Secretary, Public Relations Officer, ICT Officer and Organising Secretary

3.5 Data Collection Method

I employed three methods for data collection; interview, focus group discussion, and document analysis. Using different data collection methods for a qualitative study ensures credibility of data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2014), maintains rigour (Yin, 2018), and provide an avenue for collection of rich data for analysis (Patton, 2015).

3.5.1 Interview

I used interviews as a data collection method for this study. I conducted three (3) interviews with three (3) founders of the students-run initiatives/not-for-profit organisations engaged in the study. Each of the organisations had a single founder. Stake (2013) maintains that interviews are essential for gaining information that are not readily perceived through observation. Interviews are instrumental avenues through which researchers engage participants in conversations of interest to research questions from participants with the aim of collecting information (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In other words, Yin (2018) asserts that interview is a valuable method for collecting data that cannot be easily observable such as opinions, attitudes and meanings people attach to phenomena.

The study adopted semi-structured interviews for collecting data from participants. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) posit that semi-structured interviews combine elements of structured and unstructured interviews. The authors believe that semi-structured interviews contain more elements of unstructured and less structured questions. Characteristic of semi-structured interviews is the level of flexibility regarding how questions are asked. In using semi-structured interviews, there is a particular question or set of questions that all participants answer yet the order of questions varies from one participant to the other (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The semi-structured interview allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, the respondent's developing worldview, and new views on the subject of inquiry (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

3.5.2 Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussion is an interview with a small group of participants on a particular subject of interest (Patton, 2015). According to Patton (2015), focus group discussion developed out of the recognition that many consumer decisions are made in a social setting, usually as a result of conversations with other people. Focus group discussion is a great avenue for collecting data from a group of people with a common interest and experience on a subject of interest (Mishra, 2016). The interaction between the participants who have common interest, knowledge, and experience in a subject of interest makes the data gathered through focus group discussion rich (Patton, 2015).

Patton (2015) argues that the difference between interview and focus group discussion is that while interviews ensue on a one-to-one interaction between the researcher and respondents, focus group discussion allows other participants to be present to listen and when allowed to comment on other participants' responses. The nature of focus group discussions allows participants to reflect on their initial responses based on what others in the focus group say (Patton, 2015). Patton (2015) and Mishra (2016) believe that focus group discussion is suitable for collecting qualitative data because it is cost effective, enjoyable because of the social interactions among participants, and enhanced data quality due to diversity of participants' experience. I used focused group discussion for collecting data on the communication strategies used by the students-run initiatives for recruiting and retaining volunteers and pooling resources for undertaking developmental projects.

I conducted three (3) focus group discussions for the three (3) organisations engaged in the study. The composition of the focus group for each organisation included the members of the executive body. For example, at *For The Future Ghana*, the Vice President, General Secretary, Public Relations Officer, ICT Officer and Organising Secretary formed a focus group for interaction. The focus group for *OFIE* was made up of the General Secretary, Communications Officer, Programmes Manager, IT Officer and Project Lead. At *Khays Foundation*, the General Secretary, Public Relations Officer, IT Officer, Organising Secretary and Deputy Organising Secretary formed the focus group. According to Nyumba et al. (2018), a focus group of five (5) or more people is acceptable for a qualitative study.

I conducted a focus group discussion because the members of the executive body of the three organisations performed interrelated roles. For instance, at *Khays Foundation*, the President gives information to the General Secretary who drafts the content of all messages that go out to volunteers as well as the general public. When the message is drafted, the graphic designer puts it into a visual product (like flyer) and sends it to through the appropriate channel to the target audience through the Public Relations

Officer. This proves that communicating with volunteers as well as the general public is the complementing role of different individuals within the same organisation. It was on this basis that I adopted focus group discussion as part of my data collection methods.

3.5.3 Document Analysis

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) admit that documents serve as potent sources of data to qualitative researchers. The use of documents and other data collection methods in qualitative research constitute triangulation and helps to improve credibility for qualitative case studies (Morgan, 2022). Morgan (2022) interprets document analysis as the method by which documents are carefully reviewed or assessed. Documents can be defined among others to include text and images, videos, audios or expanded to include other products such as artifacts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Tight's (2019) definition of document was adopted for this study. The author defines documents as social facts generated, disseminated, and used in socially meaning way (Tight, 2019). This definition allows for the appreciation of diverse examples of items that can constitute documents for analysis in qualitative studies beyond mere text and images. Blackstone (2019) asserts that because documents are already existent before studies are conducted, researchers have no place in their creation but only to engage them through careful analysis and interpretation. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) affirm that documents used for analysis are mostly created without prior input or influence from the researcher.

Researchers may find "advertisements, agenda, attendance registers and minutes of meetings; manuals, background papers; books and brochures; diaries and journals; event programmes (such as printed outlines), letters and memoranda, maps and charts; newspapers, press releases, programme proposals, application forms, and summary of radio and television programme scripts, organisational or institutional reports, survey data and, various public records" as useful documents for analysis (Bowen, 2009, p. 28). I used texts, images and videos from the websites and social media platforms of the students-owned foundations for data analysis. These documents were selected for assessing the communication strategies used by the students-run initiatives for recruiting and retaining volunteers and for pooling resources from the community for carrying out developmental projects.

3.6 Data Collection Process

I collected data over a period of seven (7) weeks. I used 2 weeks for interviews, 3 weeks for focus group discussion and 2 weeks for document analysis. Below is a detailed account of how I collected data;

3.6.1 Interview

I conducted three (3) semi-structured interviews with the founders of the students-run initiatives engaged in this study. I contacted all three (3) founders through phone calls for an informal introduction of myself and the aim of the study. All three founders expressed interest in participating in the study. The three organisations through their secretaries requested for prove of my studentship and statement of intent for the study. After the founders agreed to participate in the study, I arranged for face-to-face interview with each of them.

The first two interviews were conduced with the founders of *Khays Foundation* and Organisation For inclusive Education (*OFIE*) in Winneba. These two are students at the University of Education, Winneba. Owing to the nature of their academic work, I conducted the interview on weekends when they had no lectures. Both interviews were conducted in an office space I secured. I conducted the interviews in a private office space I secured because I wanted to have the interview in a serene environment devoid of noise and distractions. I welcomed the founders (*Khays Foundation* and *OFIE*) to the interview session and thanked them for accepting to participate in the study. I started each interview by asking the founders about how they were faring with academic work. This was an icebreaker I used to help the participants settle in for the interview and to pave way for an interactive session with them.

The interviews with the founders of *Khays Foundation* and *OFIE* lasted between 25 to 35 minutes. Both interviews were conducted in the English language as the language for interaction. I held the first interview with the founder of *OFIE*. Since I relied on referrals for selecting my next participant, I asked the founder of OFIE if she knew any other students-run initiatives. She could not refer me to any foundation that met the criteria. I moved on to my next participant, the founder of *Khays Foundation*. *Khays Foundation* referred me to *For The Future*. I left a week between my first interview and the second. I did this on the advice of Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) that when conducting a qualitative study, it is better to engage in data analysis alongside data collection. This allows the researcher to shape his/her instrument before the next observation or interview.

When I got in touch with the founder of *For The Future*, I scheduled another face-to-face interview with the founder. I met with the founder of For the Future in Accra for a face-to-face interview. This interview lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. The interview sessions aimed at answering the research objectives one (1); concerning the nature of students-run initiatives and (2); regarding governance structure of the students-run initiatives. At the interview, I asked the founders about their communication strategies relative to volunteer recruitment and retention and resource mobilisation. Their responses necessitated the focus group discussions with the officers in charge of communication for the respective students-run initiatives.

3.6.2 Focus Group Discussion

I conducted three (3) focus group discussions. Each group was made up of officers in charge of communication at the respective students-run initiative. In conducting the focus group discussion, I relied on the founders of the three organisations as gatekeepers in reaching out to the respective officers in charge of communication. The first two focus group discussions were conducted face-to-face in Winneba and lasted between 30 to 45 minutes. I conducted the focus group discussions on weekends and in a secured private space for convenience and to avoid distraction from outside. At the beginning of each focus group discussion, I briefed the group on the purpose of the study. I also settled on ground rules with the participants in the small group. The groups agreed to respect each other's responses, to not interrupt while others were speaking and to indicate by raising of hands when a participant had a follow-up on another's submission. I repeated this process for the focus group discussion with *For The Future*. I conducted the focus group discussions to find answers to research objective three (3); communication strategies adopted by the students-run initiatives in recruiting and retaining volunteers and the communication strategies used for resource mobilisation.

3.6.3 Document Analysis

I collected documents for analysing the communication strategies adopted by the students-run initiatives from their websites and social media platforms. Specifically, I collected documents from websites, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp platforms of the organisations. These were the widely used channels for sending information to both internal and external publics at the foundations. I collected texts, images, and videos as documents for assessing how the foundations communicate with their volunteers and how they use communication for resource mobilisation. During the interviews and focus group discussions, I requested for the websites and social media handles of the foundations and informed the participants of my intention to visit the sites for data collection. They did not have any reservations because they considered the sites and all information there as public. Upon receiving the handles from the participants, I visited the sites and scanned through for relevant documents for the objectives of the study.

3.7 Data Analysis

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), qualitative data analysis is an inductive process of making meaning from data in response to the object of one's research. This process of meaning making involves breaking data down into themes, concepts, and propositions (Clarke & Braun, 2018). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) believe that the comprehension gained from data analysis represents the findings in research and are direct responses to the question (s) raised by researchers. Due to the intensive nature of data collection under the case study design, large volumes of data are mostly generated, and it behooves the qualitative researcher to carefully organise these data into manageable units that can be analysed (Patton, 2015).

Data analysis was done in accordance with Clarke and Braun's (2018) six-step approach to qualitative data analysis; becoming acquainted with the data, generation of initial codes, looking for themes, rethinking themes, defining themes, and write-up. I personally transcribed the audio recordings from the interviews and focus group discussions because the participants spoke English Language. I read through the transcriptions for corrections and checked the content against the original audio recordings by playing the audio repeatedly. This allowed me to identify the patterns and trends and the frequency associated with these trends and patterns. After this, I discarded all data I found irrelevant to the object of the study. I coded data that I found to be congruent with the purpose of the study.

Coding is the process of assigning notations to bits of data considered relevant in answering research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I did repetitive reading for me to better familiarise myself with the data and to be able to generate codes. These codes were then grouped into categories/themes. These themes represented broader phrases or words under which several codes could be placed to make singular meaning. Themes emerged inductively from the data analysed. These themes were tentative. I read through the tentative themes and looked for themes that carried similar meaning and collapsed them into broader categories that formed the final themes for analysis and discussions. The final themes for analysis were a blend of inductive and themes I developed from other literature related to the study. My analysis of data was not affected by any personal bias. Prior to conducting this research, I had not encountered any of the participants of the study on any business, whether formally or informally. The integrity of the data analysis can therefore be trusted.

3.8 Ethical Issues

The trustworthiness of qualitative studies is largely contingent on the ethics observed by the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Ethics is the philosophical disposition that concerns itself with answering questions relative to morality (Braybrook et al., 2017). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argue that issues of ethics may be stated in policies, institutional guidelines and or associations' statutes or reside in the values of the researcher. In relation to this study on the communication strategies adopted by students-run initiatives in recruiting and retaining volunteers and for resource mobilisation, I observed a couple of widely accepted ethical considerations. The first ethical issue that relates to this study was informed consent. Reid et al. (2018) indicate that the key idea behind informed consent is not merely privacy but the belief that people should decide on their own accord what happens to them.

Before I conducted the interviews and focus group discussions, I sought permission from the participants to record the session to allow for accurate transcription of the sessions. The participants granted me permission before any of the sessions was recorded. In line with recommendation from Creswell and Creswell (2018), I ensured anonymity of participants in this study by using alphanumeric codes instead of the real names of the participants. The respondents were represented with the following codes; KF R1 (Khays Foundation Respondent 1); KF R2 (Khays Foundation Respondent 2); KF R3 (Khays Foundation Respondent 3); KF R4 (Khays Foundation Respondent 4); KF R5 (Khays Foundation Respondent 5); OFIE R1 (OFIE Respondent 1); OFIE R2 (OFIE Respondent 2); OFIE R3 (OFIE Respondent 3); OFIE R4 (OFIE Respondent 4); FTF R1 (For The Future Respondent 1); FTF R2 (For The Future Respondent 2); FTF R3 (For The Future Respondent 3); FTF R4 (For The Future Respondent 4). I ensured that the identity of all the participants was protected.

I ensured the safety of participants during interview sessions by selecting interview sites that did not pose any physical threat to the participants. None of the questions posed a mental health risk to participants and thus I ensured the safety of the participants under the study. According to Reid et al. (2018) it is of ethical value for researchers to ensure confidentiality. I observed confidentiality by keeping personal or private matters that came up during the interviews and reporting those that participants agreed could be shared with the public. Participants in this study were accorded the maximum respect. I informed participants of their right to opt out of the study anytime they personally decided to. Participants' reluctance in responding to certain questions was respected and they were not at any point coerced to do anything against their will.

3.9 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to the degree to which the study's findings meet quality standards (Polit & Beck, 2020). Trustworthiness in research is the quality of the study's methods for collecting and analysing data that makes it worth readers' consideration (Amankwaa, 2016). Various criteria for assessing trustworthiness have been established by different scholars (Neuendorf, 2017; Nowell et al., 2017 Polit & Beck, 2020; Schreier, 2012). Creswell and Poth (2017) maintain that a study must meet at least two (2) of any of the established strategies to be considered trustworthy.

Without any order of importance, the criteria for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative study includes; "corroborating evidence through triangulation, discovering a negative case analysis or disconfirming evidence, clarifying researcher bias or engaging in reflexivity, member checking or seeking participant feedback, having a prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field, collaborating with participants, enabling external audits, generating a rich, thick description, having a peer review or debriefing of the data and research process" (Creswell & Poth, 2017) In this study, I observed triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing and rich thick description to establish trustworthiness.

When qualitative researchers employ multiple and diverse sources, methods, researchers, and theories for data collection, they ensure that evidence is credible and confirmable (Creswell & Poth, 2017). This is known as triangulation (Glesne, 2016). I triangulated my data collection methods by employing interviews, focus group discussion and documents. I conducted interviews with founders of the students-owned foundations and focus group discussions with the officers in charge of communication at these organisations. To corroborate the responses given, I sampled documents from the websites and social media platforms of the foundations engaged in the study. These documents (texts, images, and videos) confirmed the responses given by the participants on the communication strategies they adopt in recruiting and retaining volunteers as well as for resource mobilisation.

The study employed peer debriefing also known as analytic triangulation to ensure trustworthiness (Taquette et al., 2022). Peer debriefing is the act of subjecting one's research methods, data collection approach and analysis to scrutiny by peers throughout the research process. My study was presented during the weekly seminar presentations organised by the School of Communication and Media Studies, University of Education, Winneba for peer review. At this seminar, Faculty members and colleague graduate students scrutinised the study and gave constructive responses. I constantly discussed this work with other graduate/research assistants for inputs and guidance.

Stahl and King (2020) observe that the surest method that guarantees trustworthiness is member checking or respondent validation. Member checking means affirming the research findings and conclusions from the participants from who data was gathered. I availed the findings and conclusions of the study to the interviewees for confirmation of the findings as an accurate representation of the views and opinions they shared. Finally, I ensured trustworthiness by the elaborate reporting of my methods of data collection and analysis to my supervisor. My findings and conclusions were presented in thick-rich descriptions to allow readers' comprehension.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed all issues related to how the researcher arrived at finding answers to the research questions raised in chapter one. The discussion included the justification for all decisions made in relation to research approach, design adopted, sampling techniques, data collection methods and procedure. Issues of ethics related to this work has been discussed in this chapter as well as the strategies adopted by the researcher to ensure that the findings of this can be trusted.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a thorough discussion and analysis of the findings from the study. The data collected through interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis were coded and categorised under broader themes for discussion. The findings were analysed and discussed based on the social capital theory, the four flows model, and extant literature on students-run initiatives. Data collection was underpinned by the following objectives:

1. To investigate the nature of selected students-run initiatives in Ghana
2. To analyse the communication patterns/direction among selected students-run initiatives in Ghana
3. To investigate the communication strategies used by selected students-run initiatives in Ghana for resource mobilisation

4.1 Research Question 1: What is the nature of selected students-run initiatives in Ghana?

The first objective of the study was to gain an understanding into the phenomenon of students-run initiatives in the Ghanaian context. This was on the back of Kumi's (2019) assertion that the philanthropic sector in Ghana is underexplored. This objective sought to assess the nature of students-run initiatives and how they fit into Ghanaian literature on philanthropy and largely, how its nature is similar to or differs from existing global literature on students-run initiatives. By nature, I meant the various characteristics of students-run initiatives. These features are not necessarily tied to the motivation behind these initiatives, they are simply the defining features that set students-run initiatives apart from other forms of philanthropy. The themes that emerged from this objective are discussed below:

4.1.1 Extracurricular

As noted by Nagel et al. (2022), one of the greatest controversies surrounding the definition of students-run initiatives is the degree to which students are autonomous in championing development initiatives. Nagel et al. (2022) note that scholars do not agree on the use of the term 'students-run.' While some scholars maintain that students-run initiatives are completely in the hands of students, others argue that students are the brains and faces of students-run initiatives but faculty performs regulatory and supervisory roles in these initiatives. These dissenting views represent what Nagel et al. (2022) describe as the confusion surrounding the definition of students-run initiatives.

Through the analysis of data collected in this study, I found that the students-run not-for-profits organisations under this study have absolute autonomy over the selection and implementation of sustainable development projects. The first sub-theme under this finding revealed that the students-run initiatives under study are extracurricular in nature. Extracurricular is used in this sense to mean that the initiatives are not undertaken as an obligation in partial fulfilment of any degree. One participant revealed that:

> …It's a full-fledged NGO made up of students from different backgrounds. So, I am a marine engineer, we have one executive at the Ghana School of Law, hopefully she would be considered by next year, another is also in the Ghana School of Law, one is in final year at the pharmacy school in KNUST. The other also did business. So, I think we cut across. We don't, we don't do this for academic purposes (FTF R2)

Another participant from *Khays Foundation* said:

> … if you asked, it's an, it's an amalgamation of students who are passionate about the act of giving, the necessity to help the needy. It is nothing academic (KF RR 3).

I found from the interviews with the founders of the three students-run initiatives that the initiatives' existence was not precipitated by faculty nor influenced by any quest to gain better grades. The founders disclosed that the causes they champion is driven by the feeling of responsibility towards deprived communities and underserved populations. They also revealed that their membership cuts across students from diverse study backgrounds. This showed that the initiatives were not founded by faculty nor its members and did not have any bearing on any academic pursuit per se.

This finding is in sharp contrast to the practise of student philanthropy; the involvement of students in sustainable development initiatives largely because they are taking courses in social work, NGO management, fundraising or other development-related programmes (Olberding, 2009, 2011). In his description of student philanthropy, Olberding (2009, p. 465) defines student philanthropy as "a teaching and learning approach that integrates charitable giving with academic study in order to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities." This phenomenon of students' participation in sustainable development as defined by Olberding (2009) is significantly differently from students-run initiative as revealed in the study. The significant difference is the faculty-driven nature of student philanthropy as against the student-driven quality of students-run initiatives.

Beyond the finding that the students-run initiatives are not driven by the need to meet some academic requirements, the level to which faculty is involved in the activities of students in promoting sustainable development is also an unresolved feature of students-run initiatives (Nagel et al., 2022). It was found in the study that faculty members were not involved in the day-to-day running of the students-run initiatives. There was nonetheless, the involvement of some faculty members in the work of the students-run not-for-profit organisations. The involvement of these faculty members was primarily restricted to advisory roles.

One of the participants observed that:

…We have a Patron; we have a patron who happens to be a lecturer at the Faculty of Educational Studies. I believe that uhm, inasmuch as we, we pride ourselves as controlling the affairs of the Organisation, it is important that we have a father-figure we could also consult, just at the consulting level but not on decision-making tables. We have a patron who helps shape our decisions when we make them (KF RR 3)

It was found that the patron for *Khays Foundation* is a lecturer at the Faculty of Educational Studies, University of Education, Winneba. Interestingly, the founder of *Khays Foundation* is a student at the Political Science Department of the same school. It came to light that *Khays Foundation's* involvement of the patron in their activities was not academically motivated. The Patron's role at *Khays Foundation* was purely advisory. It was indicated that the power to make decisions with respect to what project or community the Foundation dealt with rested solely in the bossom of the all-student executive body.

Unlike *Khays Foundation* that had a single patron performing the advisory role, *For The Future Ghana* has an advisory board made up of different professionals including a faculty member. One participant had this to say:

… FTF is made up of the advisory board. The advisory board is made up of professionals from different fields. We have doctors, we have professors, we have business women, and educationists. So, they advise us. We go to them for advice on issues concerning our kids and the projects (FTF R2).

The phenomenon of faculty members' involvement in students-run initiatives as advisors is in consonance with values of some existing students-run initiatives. For instance, Rogers et al.'s (2017) report on Student Health Outreach for Wellbeing (SHOW), a students-run initiative originally initiated in 2013 by three (3) students from the Arizona State University, Northen Arizona University and the University of Arizona to provide healthcare for underserved communities and populations in Phoenix, Arizona, operates with students acting in executive leadership and faculty members in advisory positions. While this bears semblance with the three initiatives under study, there is a slight difference with the choice of faculty members.

At SHOW, the faculty members who served as advisors for the students-run initiatives were from similar academic domains as the students who run the initiatives. The members of faculty engaged at SHOW had background in health, in for example medicine or pharmacy. Conversely, the case as found in this current study that the faculty members chosen as advisors do not necessarily come from the same field of study as the students who run the initiatives. For instance, the faculty member who serves as the advisor for *Khays Foundation* comes from the Faculty of Educational Studies while the founder is from the Political Science department at the Faculty of Social Sciences Education.

Aside the advisory role played by faculty and its members in students-run initiatives, existing literature also records the supervisory role of faculty in such initiatives. Froberg et al (2018) found that in the administration of students-run clinics, an initiative run by students with the primary aim of providing primary healthcare services for underserved populations, faculty plays supervisory role. While the advisory role may not come with so much power with regard to decision-making in students-run initiatives, the supervisory role is inherently academic, putting some degree of power in the hands of faculty with regard to decision-making in students-run initiatives.

As supervisors, faculty is tasked to assess and re-adjust pedagogy to meet students' professional development needs as faculty is engaged in the administration of students-run clinics. To buttress this, Froberg et al. (2018) posit that students-run clinics are learning environments in which supervisors must modify their clinical teaching in order to reach a higher level of student-centred tuition (Teherani, 2015). The supervisory role played by faculty in existing literature also indicates that the presence of a faculty member or senior professionals is needed before some actions can be taken by students (Nagel et al., 2022). In the instance where drug prescription was made, pharmacy students needed a second opinion from a professional who was a faculty member. This however, was not the case in the three students-run initiatives under study.

Regarding faculty's role in the students-run initiatives, one respondent reiterated:

> …We are not controlled or moved or have any inclusion of a 'big man' or anything of that sort. It's a students' coalition that is championing the cause of the poor (KF R4).

The respondents revealed that their initiatives were non-academic. This means that their initiatives were not in any way tied to any course or programme undertaken at the university. The initiatives were not faculty-driven nor supervised. The role of faculty, where applicable, was advisory and not supervisory.

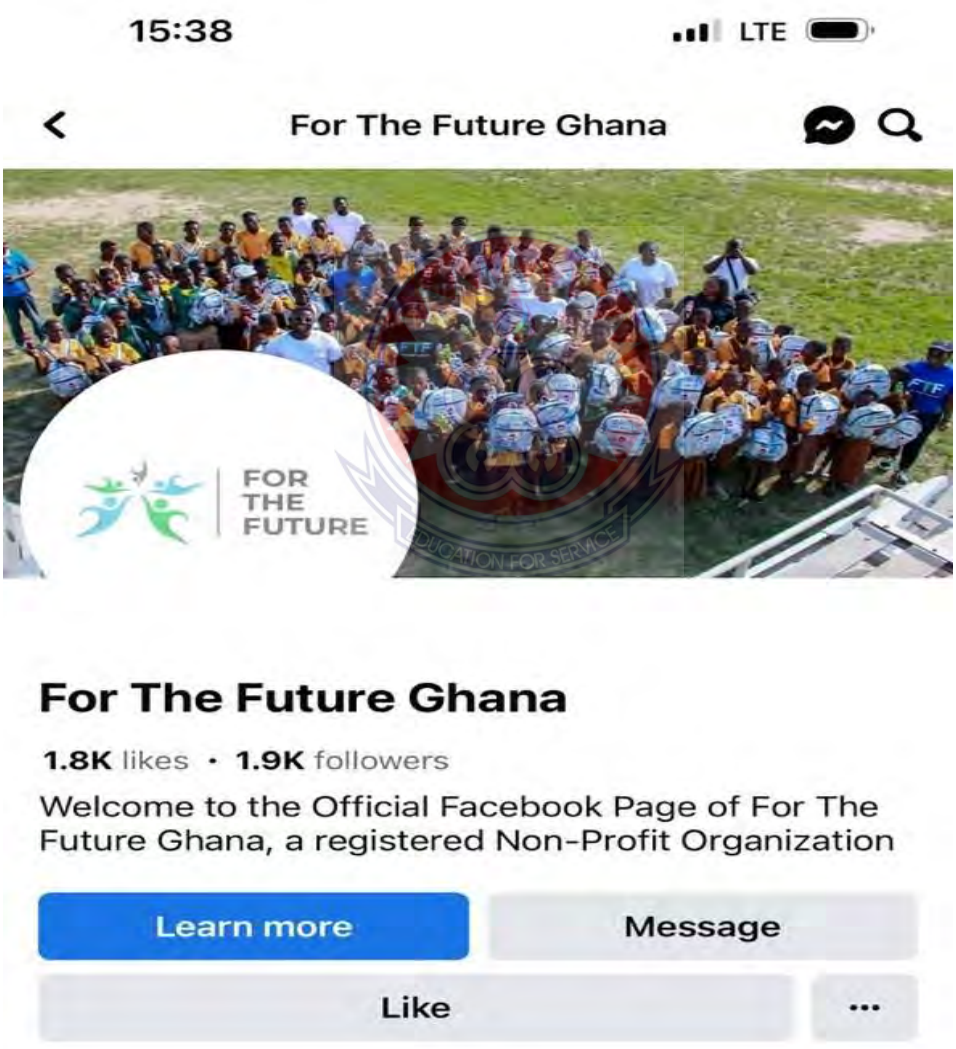
4.1.2 Non-Governmental Organisations

From the interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis, all three organisations; *For The Future Ghana*, *Khays Foundation* and *Organisation For Inclusion and Empowerment* described themselves as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO). All the Organisations had stated on their websites and social media handles that they were NGOs. I have presented below, how the organisations had described themselves on their Facebook handles as NGOs;

On their Facebook page, *For The Future Ghana* had a welcome message that read;

> …Welcome to the official Facebook page of *For The Future Ghana*, a registered Non-Profit Organisation

Figure 1 Screenshot of FTF Ghana's description on Facebook

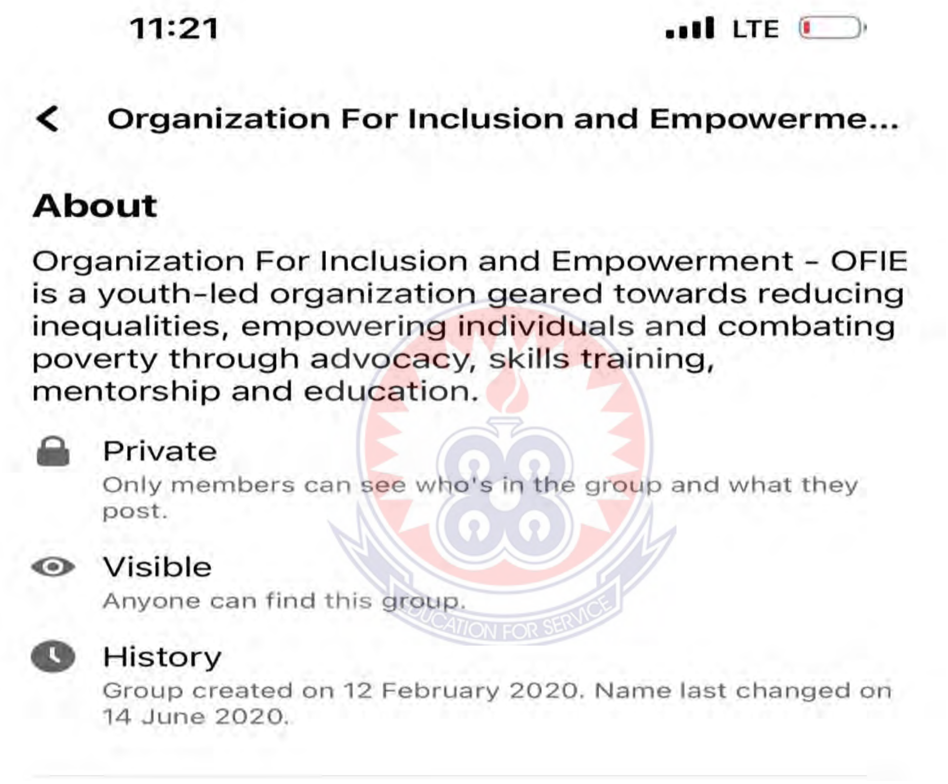


Source: Fieldwork, 2023

The Organisation For Inclusion and Empowerment describes itself on its Facebook page in the terms below:

Organisation For Inclusion and Empowerment – OFIE is a youth-led organisation geared towards reducing inequalities, empowering individuals and combating poverty through advocacy, skills training, mentorship and education

Figure 2 Screenshot of OFIE description on Facebook



Source: Fieldwork, 2023

A participant from *OFIE* indicated that:

We registered OFIE in 2020 but it came up in 2019. We got registered in 2020 at the Registrar's General's Department as an NGO (OFIE R 5)

To be an NGO, organisations are required to be registered under State laws and be given the official recognition as such. Previously, NGO's registration in Ghana was guided by the Companies Act of 1963 (Act 179). There is however an amendment to this Act.

Currently, NGOs in Ghana are registered under the Companies Act, 2019 (Act 992) under the auspices of the Registrar General's Department. Beyond the claim of being NGOs, all three organisations provided proof of their registration. Below is a copy of the registration certificates of the organisations.

Figure 3 Copy of Khays Foundation's Certificate of incorpoation

Reg No. CG022530422 TIN : C0061715298

REPUBLIC OF GHANA

Certificate of Incorporation

I hereby certify that

KHAYS FOUNDATION LBG

is this day incorporated under the Companies Act, 2019 (Act 992) and that the liability of its members is limited by guarantee.

Given under my hand and official seal at Sekondi / Takoradi, this 6th day of April 2022

For: Registrar of Companies

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

This finding is in consonance with Nagel et al.'s (2022) finding that students-run initiatives usually form registered organisations to man the cause which they seek to promote. In this way, the organisations formed are usually non-governmental (Nagel et al., 2022). This means that these organisations are not set out to make profit from the social services they undertake. To substantiate this, Nagel et al. (2022) indicated that about 154 (69%) of the 222 articles analysed in their study made explicit mention that the services rendered by students-run initiatives were completely free. While this finding is in tandem with findings from my study, there is a significant point of departure.

The point of departure lies in the fact that some of the scholars ((Forbes et al., 2021; Thompson et al., 2018) indicated that some students-run initiatives charge some meagre amounts for their services under some special circumstances. This however, does not mean that some students-run initiatives are for-profit. As explained by Nagel et al. (2022), the charges that are sometimes associated with the services of students-run organisations are meagre and highly subsidised. The participants in my study stated explicitly that all their services were totally free. The excerpts below authenticate this;

…As at now, we have primary school children, eleven (11) of them who have benefited from *Khays Foundation Scholarship Scheme*. And let me shock you, we have also contributed significantly to some of the university students in the University of Education, Winneba. Some of them have benefited from *Khays Foundation Scholarship Scheme*. So, in the year 2022, we were able to pay not less than six (6) university students' school fees, of course, not entirely. In all, eleven (11) primary school children and six (6) university students have benefited freely from the *Khays Foundation Scholarship Scheme* (KF R2)

At *For The Future Ghana*, one respondent averred that:

…We have a partner in the UK, known as *School in the Bag*. They also partner with a company in Ghana known as *Trashy Bags* and they make school bags out of sachet water, like recycling. So, they will stuff it with stationery, hygiene kits, a whole lot. So, they do that, they give us the bags then we look for schools, deprived schools in deprived communities, then we go to distribute. So far, we have been able to distribute about four thousand (4000) bags for free (FTF R3)

To prove that their projects were free for beneficiaries, another respondent at *For The Future Ghana* cited their weekend classes for JHS 3 students at Chado, a suburb of Accra. The respondent indicated that:

> …Our kids were just three (3) but we decided to do it for all the kids in the community to also benefit. At least they were also going to write the B. E. C. E, so they could also benefit (for free) (FTF R2)

The excerpts above clearly confirm that the students-run initiatives analysed in this study were non-governmental organisations that offered absolutely free services in the promotion of sustainable development. This finding resonates with that of Johnston et al. (2020). Johnston et al. (2020) in their study found that the *Trinity Health Services*, a student-run initiative engineered by medical and pharmacy students at the University of Witwatersrand offered free primary healthcare services for mainly acute conditions to the homeless population in Braamfontein. Other studies have also established the absolutely free services given by students-run initiatives (Palma et al., 2020; Stuard et al., 2019).

From my analysis, I realise that the discrepancy between the absolutely free services delivered by the students-run initiatives under study and existing ones that charge some meagre amount of money for their services can be explained by the nature of the service delivered. While all students-run initiatives seek to serve underserved populations and communities, the nature of some of the services rendered could demand some financial commitment on the part of the underserved populations. This is quite common in students-run clinics where some of the health services provided by the students-run organisations are quite expensive to be borne entirely by the students.

In instances such as diagnosis, laboratory work, special health services, among others, the students-run organisations subsidise the charges so that the deprived communities they serve can afford their services (Nagel et al., 2022). In the case of my study, the services offered by the students-run initiatives were explicitly free. The organisations under study secure funding from diverse sources to render the free services to the people and communities they serve. The source of funding and strategies for sourcing these funds are later discussed in this chapter.

4.1.3 Bottom-up/Needs-based

One of the points of consensus among scholars on the nature of students-run initiatives is the bottom-up nature of such initiatives (Murray et al., 2018; Nagel et al., 2022). By bottom-up, I mean that development projects initiated and implemented by students-run organisations are informed by the needs of the communities and people they serve. Most of the Non-Governmental Development Organisations in Ghana fashion their programmes on the basis of donor interest, and not necessarily the needs of the communities they serve (Kumi, 2019). Unlike the other Not-for-profit Organisations in Ghana, the students-run initiatives under study disclosed that they collect data on community needs and rely on that to inform the project to embark on and the people to be served.

One participant from *For The Future Ghana* reported in the focus group discussion that their projects were informed by the information provided by the officer in charge of research. He noted:

> …We have an officer in charge of research. So, she finds out, she does the research. Specifically, into the rural areas where we will like to engage. So, she brings out the idea that, oh, these people are in need of this so we should go to this area (FTF R5)

To buttress this, another participant from *FTF Ghana* also said:

Yes, we have someone purposely for research. But some of us, even though we are not in the research committee, we find out, we get to know about certain communities that need help. We suggest it to the group and then we go there to help them (FTF R3)

Another from the same organisation recounted:

…So, me, myself, there was one time we went to the National Orthopaedic Training Centre, that's a place for these disability children. We went there. I found on TV, I was watching TV with my parents and we got to know that they needed support. So, I suggested to my team and we went there to help and spend some time with the disabled kids and gave them some relief items. Yeah, so we have a research team but as executives we are free to suggest places (FTF R2)

I found from the interview and focus group discussion that the Organisations under study do not conform to the traditional philanthropic practice where Non-Governmental Organisations' activities are dictated by the interest of donors and not the exigencies within communities (Kumi, 2019). As revealed through the interviews and focus group discussions, the Organisations under study prioritise the needs of people and their communities. The Organisations use their knowledge and research skills to find out the needs of their target audiences and create social programmes around the needs of the communities.

This phenomenon was not peculiar to *FTF Ghana*. *Khays Foundation* and *OFIE* reported similar phenomenon. A participant from *Khays Foundation* disclosed:

…So, you see, even in Winneba, it's not every community that you can describe as needy. So, we go into the deep parts of the Municipality where there is so much poverty and we go to help eliminate poverty. But before that, there is an assessment accompanied with research over a period of time, then a decision is made concerning where we should go (KF R2)

A participant from *OFIE* affirmed that:

…We identify a need and then do assessment to see if truly the need we have identified is actually a need and then we have discussions with relevant stakeholders within the space we have identified a need and then we come up with the intervention we want to run. So, we have a team of volunteers and we discuss these projects that come up. So, we have an idea, or someone has an idea, or identifies a need, or sees that there is a part that we are not tackling, we all sit down and discuss (OFIE R3)

This finding is consistent with some existing studies about the nature of students-run initiatives (Azhar et al., 2020; Drupp et al., 2012; Duram et al., 2012). The phenomenon of students-run initiatives being bottom-up is in contrast with the practice of traditional philanthropy (Hodgson, 2020). Traditional philanthropy places power in the hands of benevolent actors who use their interest and discretion to determine what they assume to be communities' need. This practice alienates communities' interests and treats people as passive recipients of development. Kumi (2019) observes that most NGOs in Ghana are driven by donor interest. Mediavilla and Garcia-Arias (2019) argue that this type of philanthropy is inherently hegemonic, placing the donors in the place of authority.

Hodgson and Pond (2018) argue that donor-driven initiatives create a sort of traditional donor-beneficiary dynamics. Such donor-beneficiary dynamics work against the sustainability of philanthropic interventions because the people for whom philanthropic interventions are targeted do not play any active role. The inactivity of local communities and or local people is the result of the downward nature of traditional philanthropy (Harrow et al., 2016).

Unlike the alleged counterproductive, unsustainable and unjust top-down nature of traditional philanthropy (Harrow et al., 2016), students-run initiatives are bottom-up, shifting power to communities and allowing them to be active participants in decision-making that affects them (Fowler, 2022). Students-run initiatives like the White Coffin Campaign at the Universati Sains Malaysia, the Greening campaign at the University of Tubingen (Drupp et al., 2012), the Gardening initiative of Carbondale (Duram et al., 2012) have been found to be bottom-up in nature.

The bottom-up nature is also present in student philanthropy. Inasmuch as student philanthropy is faculty-driven and often used as a pedagogy, the actual determination of what communities need attention or what social problems deserve investment is student-led. Students are given the autonomy to collect data from communities and on the basis of that data design interventions for dealing with social issues (Olberding, 2009). With such autonomy, students go to communities and engage them. This means that whatever development initiative undertaken through student philanthropy can be justified as bottom-up even though it is faculty-driven.

Giving more credence to the bottom-up nature of students-run initiatives, one participant expressed:

> … As I have said, our activities keep unfolding as and when the decision-making body of *Khays Foundation* realise the need and urgency of the issue at hand. We take our decision based on urgency. We take our decisions based on the necessities of the people. So, if there is a challenge or a problem, that is when *Khays Foundation* shows up to give support (KF R4)

I found from the focus group discussion with *Khays Foundation* that the initial assessment conducted by the Organisation is not only to know about the challenges that communities and people face. Their needs assessment takes into consideration the cultural factors that exist in communities. This ensures that *Khays Foundation* and the communities they work with establish a mutually understanding relationship upon which both *Khays Foundation* and the communities they work with come to a consensus on the best cause to pursue. To substantiate this, a participant remarked:

…It is the responsibility of our organisers to go out to the communities. They have to go out to the communities to have a conversation with them, understand what the communities are about, understand their culture and how they do their things so we can factor every one of these in our activities even before we embark on them (KF R5)

A similar assertion was recorded during the focus group discussion with *FTF Ghana*. One participant explained:

...One of the things our research team does is to understand the culture of the community we want to engage. We need to know what they believe in and all that. Sometimes, we need to know the appropriate language to use. So, what the research team does is comprehensive (FTF R3)

The background assessment on communities provides a high guarantee of success and sustainability for the students-run organisations under study (Mefalopulos, 2008). In using the term 'sustainability', I refer to the ability of the organisations under study to achieve solvency, while meeting the needs of the communities and people they serve (Hailey & Salway, 2016; Kumi, 2018). The phenomenon of the students-run initiatives having to embark on initial assessment to know the problems of the communities and people they serve, and the organisations' resolve to understand the culture of their audiences feeds into the conceptualisation of sustainable development in this study. I have earlier defined the process of sustainable development as the dialogue between communities and external players such as development practitioners, governments and scholars (Sumner & Tribe, 2008); and through such dialogues, the express needs of communities are noted and the best course of action is chosen by both communities and external parties that seek to promote sustainable development in communities.

Mefalopolus (2008) asserts that when communities are engaged through dialogues, the sustainability of development initiatives can be guaranteed. I find this to be a significant feature about the three students-run initiatives that provides some justification to conclude that the initiatives run by the organisations will bring about sustainable development.

4.1.4 Volunteer-driven

Another quality of students-run initiatives which was uncovered in the study was the active role of volunteers in the activities of the students-run initiatives under study. Volunteer-driven efforts, programmes, and organisations are those that are predominantly directed by individuals who willingly give their time and expertise to a cause without expecting monetary compensation (Alias & Ismail, 2014). This theme was common to all the organisations under study. The students-run initiatives operate solely on volunteerism. None of the initiatives had paid staff. Even the members of the executive committees of the three Organisations worked as volunteers. This phenomenon is consistent with existing literature on students-run initiatives across the world (Azhar et al., 2020; Drupp et al., 2012; Nagel et al., 2022).

The executive members of the Organisations under study disclosed that their involvement in the activities of the organisations was voluntary. They see it as their way of contributing their quota to national development. All three organisations; *Khays Foundation*, *For The Future Ghana* and *Organisation For Inclusion and Empowerment* engage the services of two main categories of volunteers. The first category of volunteers acts in executive positions and were in charge of the administration of the initiatives. The second were casual, temporary and non-executive but were also central to the activities of the Organisations under study.

To establish that the organisations under study are volunteer-driven, one participant asserted:

...Like I said, we are all students and our objective here is to contribute our quota to eliminating poverty. Everyone here is a volunteer. None of us is paid (KF R1)

Another participant also said:

…So, we are all volunteers. None of us is being paid (FTF R2)

Another participant from FTF Ghana added that:

…So, aside that, we have volunteers. We have people who volunteer with and for us within a short time (FTF 5)

The involvement of volunteers in philanthropic activities is not new. Almost all philanthropic organisations make use of the services of volunteers (Nagel et al., 2022). The significant difference between the involvement of volunteers in students-run initiatives and other forms of philanthropic organisations is that students-run initiatives are purely volunteer-driven (Nagel et al., 2022). While other forms of philanthropy make use of volunteers, there is oftentimes a core staff base that is paid. With students-run initiatives, even the core executives are volunteers (Afari-Asiedu et al., 2018; Ahmad & Khadse, 2022; Azhar et al., 2020; Duram et al., 2012).

Volunteer services have been found useful in promoting sustainable development programmes in health, education, environment, youth empowerment, agriculture, among others (Hechenberger, 2019; Steunenberg et al, 2016). The findings from the study, like many others on the subject, attests to the instrumentality of volunteers in achieving sustainable development. Prior studies have documented various roles that volunteers play in promoting sustainable development and this includes inter alia teaching children in rural communities, joining advocacy for environmental protection and assisting patients at the hospital (Hechenberger, 2019; Steunenberg et al, 2016). From the focus group discussions, I found that the volunteers were recruited by the Organisations under study through face-to-face communication and social media.

The Organisations recruited their volunteers by visiting lecture halls, halls of residence and some other social gatherings through face-to-face interactions. The Organisations explain the aims of their organisations to their target audiences. This was usually followed with questions and answers, after which some new volunteers were recruited. Additionally, the Organisations designed 'Call For Volunteers' flyers and displayed them on notice boards and some vantage places on campus and on social media platforms to increase their reach. A respondent from *Khays Foundation* recounted:

> …So, we run a campus tour. Just as I have said, it's a student-based organisation so we go on campus tour yearly where we go to the various universities, the various colleges of education, nursing and midwifery training colleges and then we speak to them. We speak to them about *Khays Foundation*, introduce them to the aims and objectives of *Khays Foundation* and as a result we are able to have volunteers. So basically, that's how we are able to have volunteers (KF R6)

Another participant from *FTF Ghana* revealed that:

> …Well, as for us, we rely much on social media to reach out to our volunteers. We design flyers and share on our social media platforms. People contact us upon seeing them and decide to volunteer with us (FTF R4)

To authenticate this assertion, I searched the Facebook page of FTF Ghana a saw a sample of the 'Call For Volunteers' flyer. Below is the flyer:

Figure 4 Sample of FTF Ghana's call for volunteers flyer

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

When the volunteers are recruited, they play several duties for the Organisations. These includes awareness creation, fundraising, needs assessment, monitoring and evaluation, training and education, among others. When the volunteers are recruited, they are required to spread the word about the Organisations and their activities through any network available to them. The volunteers are also deployed to conduct needs assessment of communities and their people. On the basis of the needs assessment, the Organisations are informed on which projects to embark on.

The volunteers are also engaged as facilitators/teachers in training programmes. This runs through all the three Organisations under study, since they all embark on projects in education. One significant role played by the volunteers was in the area of resource mobilisation. They either gave money to support the Organisations' projects or helped the Organisations to pool resources from other sources.

The duties of the volunteers were described as follows;

> …Most importantly, the work of the volunteers is to be able to get the name of *Khays Foundation* out there. They represent us within the particular space that they find themselves. They do this by wearing our T-shirts and other paraphernalia like our exercise books (KF R5)

A participant from *OFIE* Ghana explained:

> …The volunteers, they help us to know the needs of the children… (OFIE R3)

Another participant from FTF reiterated:

> …Some of our team members including the President and some other members, they also used to go and teach the children to prepare for their exams (FTF R1)

I found that in addition to helping the Organisations to mobilise funds, the volunteers had financial commitments to the Organisations as well. While the organisations did not disclose the exact amount of money paid by the volunteers towards the achievement of the Organisations' goals, Khays Foundation revealed that the amount starts from twenty (20) Ghana Cedis per volunteer monthly.

Even though the study did not explore the volunteers' motivation, it however found that the involvement of the volunteers was not in any way obligatory. Nagel et al. (2022) found from their study that the involvement of volunteers in the work of students-run initiatives sometimes stem from an obligation of an academic programme, where students undertaking courses in social work or some health-related programmes were obliged to take up some hours of volunteerism. This phenomenon was not recorded in this current study. However, the roles played by the volunteers had semblance with other existing studies on students-run initiatives. At *SHOW*, students played many roles including monitoring and evaluation (Rogers et al., 2017). *The White Coffin Campaign* at the Universati Sains Malaysia and the *Greening Campaign* at the University of

Tubingen recruited student volunteers for advocacy and awareness creation (Drupp et al., 2012). Kweku et al. (2020) reports the employment of volunteers for resource mobilisation in community-based health programmes in Ghana.

For research objective one, the themes identified from the analysis of data are in tandem with the tenets of the social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1985; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993) Bourdieu, 1985; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993). The selected students-run initiatives rely on the networks they have to build and sustain the initiatives. Firstly, the formation of each of the students-run organisations started with one student who was regarded as the Founder or President of the initiative. Upon the conception of the idea to start an initiative, the Founders/Presidents assembled a team of students to start the initiatives. This reflects the concept of bonding in relation to the social capital theory (Petts et al., 2020). Petts et al. (2020) describe a type of social network known as bonding, which is explained as a close-knit relationship. Bonding relationships is characterised by regular interactions between members in the bonding network, some shared traits such programme of study, religion, family and many other relationships that may bring people together on a regular basis (Petts et al., 2020).

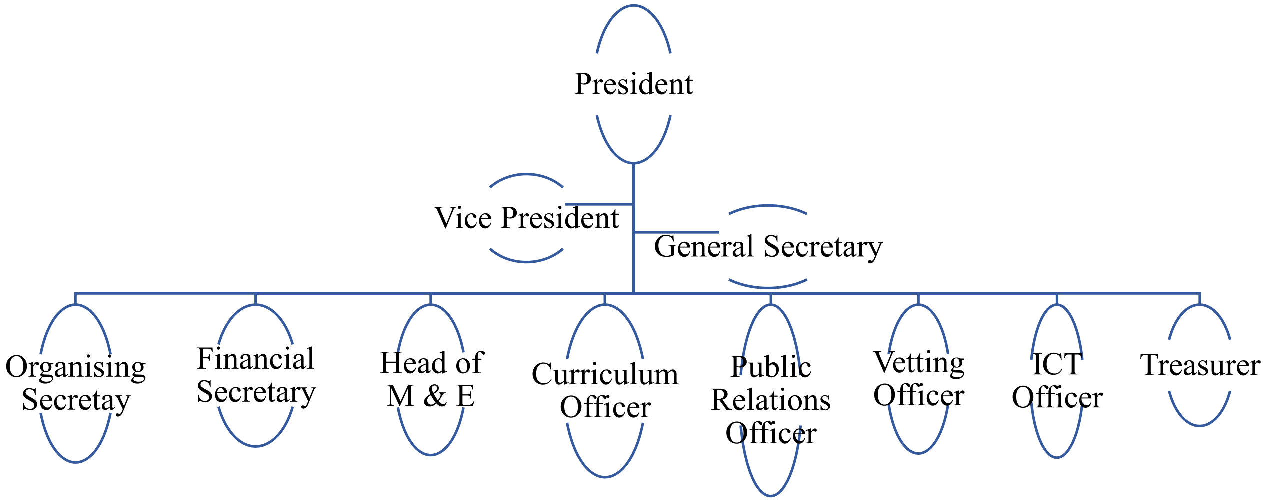
In the context of the study, the bonding network consisted of students. The Founders/Presidents of the students-run initiatives leveraged their close associations with their schoolmates and some close friends to start the initiatives. Once the bonding network was formed, the executive bodies of the students-run organisations were formed and constituted the decision-making body of the initiatives. Upon the formation of the core executive bodies of the students-run organisations through strong, close-knit networks, the initiatives build another network characterised by some weak tie connection. This is known as bridging (Coleman, 1988). The individuals that make the bridging networks usually served in advisory roles as captured in the findings from the study. The students-run initiatives received nonbinding counsel from an advisory board or patrons. The patrons or advisory board were made up professionals from different spheres such as education, health, banking, among others. These professionals were networked for promoting the causes of the students-run initiatives but the strength of this network is not as strong as the bonding network formed with the assembling together of peers in the formation of the core executives of the associations.

4.2 Research Question 2: What are the patterns/direction of communication among selected students-run initiatives in Ghana?

The three students-run initiatives under study present a structure of internal communication that seem significantly similar to other students-run initiatives that exist in literature. Like other students-run initiatives, the present study found that decision-making and administration of the initiatives were solely manned by students. Students acted in different capacities as executives within the Organisations under study. For all three Organisations under study, internal communication was facilitated by the core executive members. Internal communication happens between the core executive members, between the core executive members and the advisory board/patron and between the core executives and other volunteers.

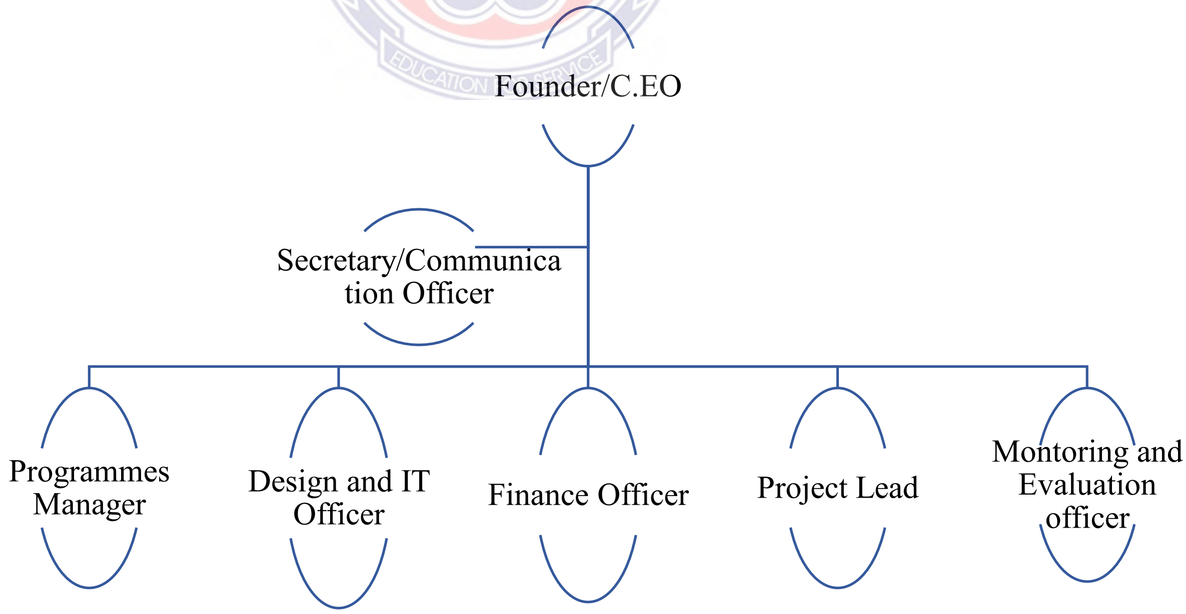
An overview of leadership at the three Organisations under study is provided below:

Figure 5 Structure of Leadership at FTF Ghana



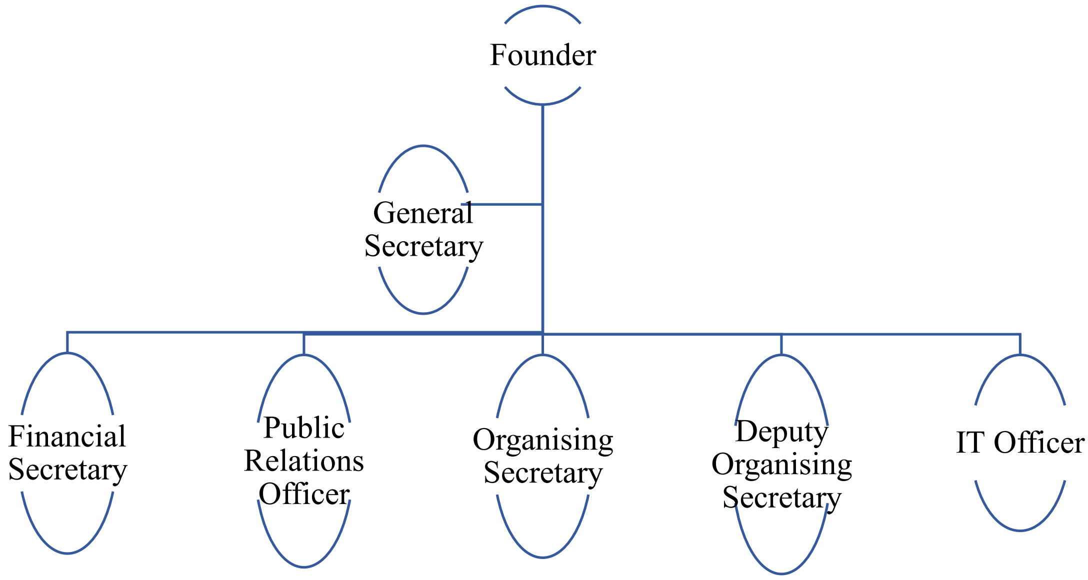
Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Figure 6 Structure of Leadership at OFIE



Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Figure 7 Structure of Leadership at Khays Foundation



Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Decision-making and internal communications at the three Organisations under study were facilitated by the core executive members. These decisions include but not limited to needs assessment of communities and people, project designs and implementation, developing resource mobilisation strategies, among others. At the executive level, the Presidents/Founders/C.E.Os of the Organisations were at the top of the organogram. The next in command was either the Vice President (only in the case of *FTF Ghana*) or the General Secretary. The rest of the executives were horizontally positioned. That is, apart from the President, Vice President and General Secretary, the rest of the portfolios or executive members were placed on the same level of authority.

The three Organisations unanimously preferred to keep an organisational structure and communication that did not conform to superior-subordinate dynamics in the chain of command. However, the Presidents/Founders were considered as the leaders of the Organisations and as such information emanating from that Office were regarded as authoritative. Information flows from the Presidents/Founders through the General

Secretary and then to the rest of the executives. In the case of *FTF Ghana*, information flows from the President through the Vice President to the General Secretary and then to the rest of the executives for deliberation.

Once a decision was made at the level of the executives, the decision was forwarded through the President or General Secretary to the Advisory Board or Patrons for guidance. The recommendations from the Advisory Board or Patrons were communicated back to the Executive body for final deliberations. After a consensus had been reached at this level, the General Secretary and or the Public Relations Officer conveyed the information to the other volunteers who do not serve in executive positions. From the analysis of the communication systems at *FTF Ghana*, *OFIE* and *Khays Foundation*, the themes of downward communication, upward communication, horizontal, and diagonal communications were identified.

4.2.4 Downward Communication

Downward communication involves information flowing from superiors to subordinates (Salamzadeh, 2018). While the phenomenon of downward flow of information was seen across the three Organisations, the Organisations however avoided the use of the term ‘superior’ or ‘subordinate’. The Presidents were located at the top of the organograms and were regarded as the persons vested with most of the Organisations’ authority when dealing with other members of the executive body. The goal of downward communication is to assign work, issue instructions and directions, tell employees about job processes and policies, identify problems that require attention at various levels, and provide feedback on employees' prior performance (Robbins et al., 2010).

To demonstrate the downward communication phenomenon within the Organisations under study, a participant claimed:

…If the President has a message to share, she informs the Vice President and the General Secretary and then we inform the executives and after the executives have been informed, we inform the other members of the Organisation (FTF R3)

Another participant from *Khays Foundation* reports that:

…If there is any information to be given to the other members of the executive body, it moves from the Founder to the General Secretary and then to everyone in the executive body (KF R5)

Another participant from *Khays Foundation* corroborated this:

…Information usually comes from the Founder through the general secretary to the board (KF RR 4)

Beyond giving information, downward communication happens within the Organisations under study when the President, Vice President or General Secretary commissions any of the executives to perform a duty on behalf of the Organisation. For instance, before the Organisations under study undertake any sustainable development project, they engage in some form of grounds preparation ahead of the project implementation. This calls for assigning some members of the Organisations to perform some duties assigned by the Founder. Such a process is characterised by some sort of downward communication. A participant of *OFIE* illustrated this:

…For instance, for the robotic training we had, we were looking at speaking to the teachers, setting up our tablets, and all that. So, I will speak with the Programmes Manager and the Tech Lead. I send them to the school and give them instructions on what to do (OFIE R3)

Another participant at *OFIE* supported this assertion with the claim that:

…. You know, the Programmes Manager is the one who has been dealing with the school mostly. So, in this case, the C.E.O asks her to go to the school and delegates her to perform certain tasks on behalf of the Organisation (OFIE R2)

This was reinforced by a participant from *Khays Foundation*:

… Usually, before we embark on projects, the Founder will tell everybody what they are supposed to do (KF R1)

Another manifestation of downward communication is when the decision-making body of the Organisations have concluded on a particular cause and agreed on an action plan. When a consensus is reached, the information is communicated by the General Secretary and or P.R.O to the non-executive volunteers. At this level of communication, the Organisations pass down information to the volunteer the volunteer group. A participant at *OFIE* recalls:

… Among the executives, if any decision is to be made, we decide on it among ourselves as executives and then decide what information to give out to the volunteers and then we give out that information to the volunteers (OFIE R5)

A participant at *Khays Foundation* revealed that:

… The internal communication is always channeled through the Public Relations Officer and carries its weight around the Board, I mean the executives; the decision-making body. Once a decision has been reached, he disseminates it to the entire group (KF R3)

A similar phenomenon was reported at *FTF Ghana*. A participant remarked:

… So, we make the decisions as the executives and when we are done, we inform the other members of the Organisation. They are not part of the decision-making. So, we inform them after we have made a decision (FTF R1)

Data gathered from the study shows that the three Organisations employ downward communication to disseminate information from top management to members in the lower ranks. This reinforces Robbins et al.'s (2010) assertion that downward communication is used by top management to, among other things, inform or instruct members within the lower ranks of organisations. This finding is also consistent with the communication phenomenon identified at Student Health Outreach for Wellbeing (SHOW), a students-run initiative undertaken by students from the Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University and the University of Arizona. Rogers et al. (2017) indicate that SHOWs Officer in charge of Communications and Technology informs other members of the Organisations of the decisions that are made by the six-member committee of SHOW. This finding of my study is consistent with the second tenet of the Four-flows model of organisational communication. The second tenet of the Model known as self-self-structuring postulates that organisations set their hierarchy and vest power in the established organogram that determines who has power to inform or who is authorised to assign other members to particular tasks.

4.2.5 Upward Communication

Upward communication refers to the flow of information, feedback, and messages from employees, subordinates, or lower-level members of an organisation to their superiors, managers, or higher-ranking individuals within the organisation's structure (Tariszka-Semegine, 2012). Upward communication allows leaders to understand their subordinates'; colleagues, and the institution's perspectives on their work.

Even though the term 'superior-subordinate' was consistently discouraged from being used by the Organisations under study, the recognition that some individuals within the Organisations have more authority than other members was not denied. This provided for some sort of vertical relations and communication. The Organisations reported that members in the executive body below the Presidents/Founders, Vice Presidents and General Secretaries or members in non-executive ranks communicate vertically upwards. The upward communication discovered in this study took the form of non-executive volunteers responding to information or instruction received from the executive bodies. On other instances, non-executive members communicate upwards in order to propose sustainable development projects to the executive bodies for consideration.

A participant from *Khays Foundation* indicates:

…There are times that our volunteers pick some intel and I think when they juxtapose and it makes sense to them, they bring it on board. Sometimes, they do their own analysis and then they can communicate it directly to the President without passing through any channel (KF R1)

Another participant from *Khays Foundation* recounted how upward communication informed the development of a recent project. He recalled:

…I think one of the most recent one was our *Mobile Library Project.* The idea came from one of our volunteers in the northern part of Ghana. You know, the interest in reading over the time is diminishing and she felt that it was also necessary that there was a way we could contribute our quota in that particular area. So, she picked a phone and called the President to discuss with him (KF R5)

Another participant from FTF Ghana remarked:

…Even though we have an Officer in charge of research who usually conducts assessments and informs us on what projects to embark on, there are times when the suggestion comes from other members of the group. Sometimes, some of our volunteers also suggest programmes to the board and we deliberate on it (FTF R2)

The participants in the study revealed that their Organisations encourage volunteers to come up with ideas and projects that can further the cause of the Organisations. In the event when volunteers come up with project ideas, the communication did not necessarily go through the General Secretary or the Public Relations Officer. The volunteers could directly contact the Presidents/Founder to share the ideas with them. Volunteers could directly call, text or send WhatsApp messages to the leaders of the Organisation without having to go through any strict chain of communication. This also applies when volunteers had to report to the executive boards. When volunteers have been tasked to do something on behalf of the Organisation, they had the liberty to directly report to the Presidents/Founders or route their communication through the General Secretaries or P. R. O.s to the executive boards.

A participant from *OFIE* asserted that:

> …When we send some of our volunteers out, and they get to the grounds, they have to report directly to the C. E. O. They could call, they could text but they have to check in with the C. E. O. so that she knows what is going on. If any decision has to be made on the grounds, then she will have to know, and the volunteers communicate to her directly (OFIE 4)

Another participant at *FTF Ghana* recounted that:

…If say a member has to reach the President with an information, given how tight- knit we are as an Organisation, the person can reach out to the President directly or the person can reach out to any of the executives with the information they would like to pass on. When they are unable to reach the President directly, the executive will pass the information on to the larger executive group (FTF R6)

The fundamental goal of upward communication is to provide individuals in positions of authority with relevant insights, comments, suggestions, concerns, and information that will assist them in making informed decisions, addressing difficulties, and improving organisational procedures (De Vries et al., 2016; Kaplan et., 2010). Kaplan et al. (2010) maintain that upward communication is a tool for employee empowerment and fosters innovation in organisations that adopt it. This was evident in the findings of the study. The Organisations under study could easily recall the many times that the empowering nature of upward communication led to innovative sustainable development projects that were designed based on volunteers' suggestion.

Vertical relations and communication (downward and upward) have been recorded at various students-run initiatives. The vertical relations and communication in students-run initiatives was seen usually in the communication between student-executives and faculty advisors or between student-executives who were vertically positioned. SHOW, a students-run initiative that provides health services to underserved communities in Arizona was led by three student-directors who had oversight responsibility over two committees each. As directors with oversight responsibilities, the student-directors were vertically positioned in relation to the Heads of the committees over which they superintend. This made the communication between Heads of Committees and Student-directors at SHOW vertical. That is, the student-directors communicated from a position of authority to the Heads of the Committees, representing a downward communication. The Heads of Committees also communicated with the student-directors from a lower position of the hierarchy, representing an upward communication.

4.2.6 Horizontal Communication

Horizontal communication, also known as lateral communication, refers to the exchange of information inside an organisation between individuals or groups at the same hierarchical level (Wheelan, 2010). Horizontal communication is the most dominating pattern of communication reported by the three Organisations under study. The Organisations preferred to communicate as co-equals and saw themselves as being the same irrespective of positioning on the Organisations' structure of leadership. The Organisations thrive on a close-knit relationship between members of the executive bodies. Largely, the Founders of the three students-run initiatives under study founded the Organisations with some friends and classmates and or schoolmates. Based on that, the Organisations run on a close-knit relationship among the members of the executives and their communication was largely carried out on horizontal basis.

A participant as *FTF Ghana* revealed:

…We are open. We don't really follow chain of command like that. No, no, no. We are all like that. Most of us are age mates and friends. So, we communicate with one another like that (FTF R2)

Responding to a question about how members at the bottom of the Organisational structure communicated with those at the top, a participant at *FTF Ghana* maintained that:

…uhm, we don't like to use the word at the bottom. Say a member… Given how we run a tight-knit Organisation, our communication is not like a superior-subordinate kind of thing (FTF R4)

To illustrate the phenomenon of horizontal communication at *OFIE*, a participant indicates:

… So, for instance, our tech and innovation project, it is usually handled by the Programmes Manager and our Tech Lead and they work together in that regard. One does not have power or authority over the other. They both come together as executives and discharge their duties (OFIE R3)

Another participant at *OFIE* reiterated:

… If we have a programme encompassing tech and all that, the Programmes Manager will be communicating with the Tech and Innovations Lead. So, for the robotics training we had, we were working around speaking to the teachers, setting out tablets and all. It is the Programmes Manager working with the Tech and Innovation Lead.   So, it's the two of them speaking (OFIE R4)

A similar phenomenon was recorded at *Khays Foundation*. A participant at the focus group discussion disclosed:

> … For instance, the P. R. O works hand in hand with the General Secretary since their roles to some extent is to communicate to the board. So, most often they sit together to think in the same direction and bring the information out the way we all want it (KF R2)

The three Organisations thus unanimously indicated a preference for promoting lateral organisational relation and communication. This preference for horizontal communication explains the relationship between self-structuring and activity coordination of the Four-flows Model of Organisational Communication (McPhee & Zaug, 2000). Self-structuring under the Four-flows Model describes organisations' established lines of communication based on the existing organogram. However, activity coordination explains how the culture of members within an organisation can alter the established chain of command and communication. Thus, an organisation may have a policy that demands that employees report directly to their line managers but leaders within the organisation may cultivate an internal culture that makes room for employees to bypass the established line of communication.

Even though the students-run initiatives under study had established structures by which internal communication was engineered, they had created a culture that made it seem as though none of the members in the executive was superior to the other. In that culture, communication between executive members in the three Organisations was virtually lateral. In that regard, communication was based on a system that projected camaraderie over a superior-subordinate kind of communication.

The phenomenon of lateral communication as found in this current study is consistent with earlier studies on students-run initiatives. Rogers et al. (2017) report that the

Student Health Outreach for Wellbeing (SHOW), a students-run initiative originally initiated in 2013 by three (3) students from the Arizona State University, Northen Arizona University and the University of Arizona to provide healthcare for underserved communities and populations in Phoenix, Arizona was led by three student-directors. These were directors for development, operations and programmes. The three student directors had different oversight responsibilities but are placed on the same level of authority within the Organisation (Rogers et al., 2017). Stemming from this, the communication between the three student-directors could be described as horizontal.

At Weil Corneil Community Clinic (WCCC), another students-run health initiative in New York, Riddle et al. (2014) report that student-executives were responsible for the administration of the initiative. The highest level of authority among the student-executives was vested in the Executive Director position. Two MD-PhD students occupied this position and had oversight responsibility over the board of student-executives. The two executive directors communicated with each other in the discharge of their duties. Since the two executive directors were placed at the same level of WCCC's hierarchy of leadership, their communication becomes lateral.

4.2.7 Diagonal Communication

The findings from the study revealed that *Khays Foundation*, *For The Future Ghana*, and *Organisation For Inclusion and Empowerment* adopt diagonal communication in the running of the Organisations. The theme of diagonal communication was evident in the exchange of information between the executive bodies of the three Organisations under study and their Advisory Boards and or Patrons. Diagonal communication is the interchange of information between managers and staff in multiple functional divisions (Tariszka-Semegine, 2012). With diagonal communication, personnel from several departments engage with one another, regardless of their reporting relationship. This sort of communication is unaffected by authority structures (Koontz, 2001; Tariszka-Semegine, 2012).

Data gathered through focus group discussions and interviews revealed that all three Organisations have some group of persons from whom the Organisations receive counsel. *For The Future Ghana* has an Advisory Board, while *Khays Foundation* and *OFIE* had Patrons. The nature of the relationship between the executives of the three Organisations and the Patrons or Advisory Board was such that the executive body was regarded as the highest decision-making body. However, the decisions made by the executive body was usually presented to the Patrons or Advisory Board for counsel. The Advisory Board or Patrons made their input concerning the decision presented to them by the executives and communicate back to the executive body.

After receiving the feedback from the Advisory Board or Patrons, the executives consider the inputs made by the Board or Patrons and decide whether to abide by the suggestions of the Board or Patrons. This implies that the relationship between the executive body and the Advisory Board or Patrons was somewhat vertical. However, there was no evidence that the executives had direct control or influence on the work of the Advisory Board or Patrons. This established that the relationship and communication between the Advisory Board/Patrons and the executives is diagonal. According to Bartels et al. (2010), diagonal communication is utilised by two parties with varying levels of authority but no direct authority over the other party.

To illustrate the phenomenon of diagonal communication, a participant at *FTF* indicated that:

> … FTF has an advisory board. The advisory board is made up of professionals from different fields. We have doctors, we have professors, we have business women,

and educationists. So, they advise us. We go to them for advice on issues concerning our kids and the projects (FTF R2)

At *Khays Foundation*, it was revealed that:

…We have a Patron; we have a patron who happens to be a doctor at the Faculty of Educational Studies. I believe that uhm, inasmuch as we, we pride ourselves as controlling the affairs of the Organisation, it is important that we have a father-figure we could also consult, just on the consulting level but not on decision-making tables. We have a patron who helps shape our decisions when we make them (KF RR 3)

In this regard, a participant from *OFIE* remarked:

…We consult other individuals whom we consider as experts in the field we are trying to go into. We have always depended on people's expertise. We acknowledge that there are people who are experts in the spaces that we are trying to bring solutions to. So, we consult. We have a good working relationship with the Department of Special Education, University of Education, Winneba. Most of the people we consider as Patrons are from that Department (OFIE R5)

From the data gathered, it was revealed that the communication between the executive bodies of the Organisations under study and the Advisory Board/Patrons is facilitated by the Presidents/Founders and in some cases the General Secretaries or Vice President. At Khays Foundation and OFIE, the communication between the executives and the Patrons is handled by the Presidents/Founders. The Presidents/Founders deal directly with the Patrons and present the executives' decisions to the Patrons. Upon interactions with the Patrons, the Presidents communicate back to the executives for a final decision to be made. The phenomenon is similar at FTF Ghana except that in addition to the President, the Vice President or General Secretary can be tasked to handle the correspondence with the Advisory Board.

From his analysis of organisational communication within nonprofit organisations in Minneapolis, Minesota, Jameson (2017) found from interviews and document analysis established the utilisation of diagonal forms of communication within the organisations in his study. Others such as Bartels et al. (2010) and Wilson (1992) have established the presence of diagonal communications within various organisations. The findings of a diagonal relationship and communication between student-executives in students-run initiatives and the Advisory Board or Patrons is however in variance with some existing students-run initiatives. JeffHope is a students-run clinic founded by students at the Jefferson Medical College that provides medical care to homeless and underserved population in Philadelphia, U. S. A. At JeffHope, the relationship between the student executives and the advisory board is vertical. The Jefferson Medical College has an oversight responsibility on the activities of JeffHope and the Faculty Advisor serves as the liaison between the student-executives and the Jefferson Administration (Riddle et al., 2014)0. In this capacity, the Faculty Officer relates vertically with the students-executives at JeffHope.

IMAGINE is another student-run clinic that provide healthcare services to underprivileged people in Toronto. At IMAGINE, students have considerable authority in the administration of the initiative. A group of Faculty Advisors supervise the activities of the student-executives at IMAGINE (Dugani & McGuire, 2011). Such supervisory role connotes a vertical relationship and makes the communication between the student-executives and the Faculty Advisor either a top-down or bottom-up.

The findings in relation to research question 2 reflects the tenets of the four-flows model of organisational communication (McPhee & Zaug, 2000) at two levels; self-structuring and activity coordination. The students-run initiatives under study have established hierarchies and defined lines of communication. This accounted for the presence of upward, downward and lateral forms of communication as found in the current study. However, they have developed a culture that allows for ‘breach’ or redefinition of the lines of communication and results in most of the horizontal forms of communication and diagonal communication as found in this study.

4.3 Research Question 3: What communications strategies do selected students-run initiatives in Ghana use to mobilise resources for developmental projects?

Dzisah (2019) asserts that nonprofit organisations' ability to raise the necessary resources for the realisation of their goals depend on the effectiveness of their communication strategies. Dzisah (2019) holds that a communication strategy is designed by nonprofits to attract both material and human resources/volunteers. The third objective of this study looked at how the students-run organisations under study employ communication to mobilise resources for their activities. While nonprofits such as students-run initiatives may adopt different resource mobilisation strategies, not all these strategies may be communication inclined. For instance, through interviews and focus group discussions I found that the executives of the three organisations pay monthly dues to the organisations. This was one of the main and regular strategies for resource mobilisation by the three organisations. While the amount varies by the organisation, this resource mobilisation strategy was common to all three organisations under study. The current study, however, focused solely on the communication-based resource mobilisation strategies adopted by the students-run organisations under study. I found from my analysis that the students-run initiatives employ three main communication strategies for resource mobilisation, namely social media marketing, personalised communication and grant writing.

4.3.1 Social Media Marketing

Analysis of data gathered from the study showed the universal deployment of social media for resource mobilisation among *Khays Foundation*, *For The Future Ghana*, and *Organisation For Inclusion and Empowerment*. These organisations have established presence on most social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (X), LinkedIn and YouTube. The organisations used these platforms to market themselves to a large pool of audiences from whom the students-run organisations gathered resources for implementing sustainable development projects. The students-run organisations used a mix of communication strategies on the social media platforms for resource mobilisation.

These strategies include storytelling, awareness creation, publishing information on nomination and wards received, and some other personal achievements of the leaders of the organisations to gain the attention and sustain the interest of their online audiences. For the purpose of this study only posts from Facebook are used in the analysis of data. I selected Facebook because Mansur's (2021) study revealed that Facebook is the most used social media site by nonprofit organisations.

Through focus group discussions, I found that the students-run organisations under study used social media to tell stories with the aim of attracting and reporting to donors and volunteers alike. The organisations revealed that social media marketing has been their major communication strategy for resource mobilisation. During the focus group discussion with *For The Future Ghana* a participant noted:

> …Like I said, most of the benevolent people who support our cause are people from social media. You see, we make use of social media to sell ourselves to people and usually we get people coming on board from our social media posts (FTF R4)

At the same focus group discussion, a participant confirmed how *FTF* Ghana used social media marketing to attract volunteers. The participant disclosed:

> …We have most people coming on board to volunteer with us because of our social media posts. So, they come to our DMs and say we have seen the work that you do on social media and we want to volunteer with you (FTF R3)

A similar response was heard during the focus group discussion with *Khays Foundation*. A participant from *Khays Foundation* admitted:

> …Mostly we reach people through social media posts. We usually post our activities on Facebook and other platforms to show to people that we are doing some good work. When people see that the monies and other materials they gave had been put to good use, it motivates them to give more to support our cause (KF R5)

To corroborate what the participants revealed through the focus group discussions, I visited the Facebook pages of the three organisations to ascertain how social media was used as a communication strategy for resource mobilisation. I found from the social media posts of the organisations that videos and photos were the primary means of communicating the organisations activities. While photos were used by all three organisations for the purposes of resource mobilisation, only *For The Future Ghana* and *Organisation For Inclusion and Empowerment* made use of videos. The videos and photos were used to tell stories, create awareness about the organisations and some other social causes they champion.

The social media posts of the organisations showed that they used videos and photos to tell two types of stories. The first type of stories was about the plight of people and communities. With this, the organisations told their social media audiences about the problems faced by the people that the organisations sought to help. In the second type of storytelling, the organisations showed through videos and photos how they had expended donations received from donors and the impact of the projects they embarked on.

I took some screenshots from the social media posts of the organisations to demonstrate how the three organisations used videos and photos to tell stories on their social media platforms. For instance, in a video compiled by *FTF Ghana* to celebrate their 6th anniversary, a member of the Executive Committee of *FTF Ghana* disclosed how the Organisation had employed social media marketing for resource mobilisation over the years. She asserted;

> …We just tell a lot of stories. We come and say this is Prince Kojo, he is a 12year old boy who lives with his stepfather and single mother. Uhm, they are struggling to take care of him. He goes to a government school but the fascinating thing about this boy is that he is able to make toy cars with wood and he does it all by himself. So, I want to help him because I believe this a talent that if we start nurturing now it will actually take him very far and then I come and post and start tagging people… and Ashesi University comes to my DM and says we have seen your post and we want to help him (FTF R1)

FTF Ghana again shared another video on their Facebook page in which a 5year old boy told the story of how FTF Ghana had been of help to him. In the video he said:

> My name is David. I am 5years old. My previous life was one filled with pain, sorrow and hardship. My mother could not pay my Parent Support Levy. Learning was difficult because I had no books, bag, and I always wore an old shoe and torn uniform. Thanks to For The Future Ghana, I really want to thank them for the massive support (FTF Beneficiary)

Figure 8 Screenshot of a story of an FTF beneficiary

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Beyond storytelling, the organisations used their Facebook pages to engage in advocacy and awareness creation about different social issues. The organisations use videos and photos with texts to create awareness and engage in advocacy among their social media audiences. The organisations chose topics or subjects that were in line with their aims and objectives and created posts that sought to enlighten their social media audiences on those subjects. For instance, *OFIE* embarked on a 30-day Disability Awareness Campaign from 3rd November 2021 to 2nd December 2021. Throughout this period, the *Organisation For Inclusion and Empowerment* embarked on a series of education aimed at creating awareness and promoting positive attitudes towards people with disabilities. OFIE designed flyers and shared on their Facebook page as they embarked on the Awareness Creation Campaign. Below is a sample flyer from OFIE's Facebook page:

Figure 9 Screenshot of one of OFIE's 30-Days Disability Awareness Campaign

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Similarly, *Khays Foundation* and *For The Future Ghana* embarked on awareness campaigns and advocacy on menstrual hygiene. Both *Khays Foundation* and *For The Future Ghana* posted photos on their Facebook pages that showed their engagement with adolescent girls on menstrual hygiene. While *Khays Foundation's* Campaign was in collaboration with The *Ladies' Diary* and christened the project *Kye Me Pad*

Campaign, For The Future Ghana embarked on a solo campaign called *EmpowerHer Period Project*. Below are screenshots of the campaigns undertaken by *Khays Foundation* and *FTF Ghana*:

Figure 10 Screenshot of photos from the EmpowerHer Period Project by FTF Ghana

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Figure 11 Screenshot of Khays Foundation's Kye Me Pad Campaign

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

In addition to the communication-based activities that the students-run initiatives under study employ on social media, I found one communication phenomenon that was peculiar to *For The Future Ghana*. From a careful analysis of 27 videos and 606 photos posted by *FTF Ghana* on Facebook, I found 4 posts (photos) that informed *FTF Ghana's* social media audience about some awards nominations that *FTF Ghana* had received. While these four posts could seem insignificant in the face of the total posts on *FTF Ghana's* Facebook, the propensity of these posts to attract more donors and volunteers cannot be overlooked for a qualitative study such this.

Out of these four posts, two highlighted achievements of *FTF Ghana*. This included the announcement that *FTF Ghana* had been nominated by *Women's Choice Africa Awards* in the Agency For Change category (2023). The other announcement was on FTF's feat as the winner of *Pulse Influencer Awards* in the Community Influencer of the Year 2022 category. These are presented below:

Figure 12 Screenshot of award won by FTF Ghana

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Aside these, *FTF Ghana* posted on their Facebook page two photos that highlighted personal achievements of the President and Founder of *FTF Ghana*. One of the posts reported that the President and Founder of *FTF Ghana* had been listed among the finalists for the *Rising Star category* of the 2023 *ORG Impact Awards*. The second post showed an inauguration ceremony performed by the President of the Republic of Ghana, H. E Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo under which the President and Founder of *FTF Ghana* was commissioned together with some other 12 trustees to oversee the *Head of State Awards Scheme* in 2023. This is presented below:

Figure 13 Screenshot of FTF Ghana's President's inauguration ceremony performed by the President of Ghana

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

According to Arhin et.al (2018) the social media marketing strategy adopted by the students-run initiatives can be categorised under visibility-enhancing and credibility-building strategies. Kumi (2017a) asserts that donors and volunteers are scarce and that nonprofits find themselves in great competition with other nonprofit organisations over these limited resources. The ability of nonprofits to have favour with donors and volunteers alike is largely dependent on the visibility and perceived credibility of the nonprofit organisations (Arhin et al., 2018). Kumi (2017a) posits that the high dependency of Ghana's philanthropic sector on external funding makes it very competitive for nonprofits to gain the needed materials and human resources for the attainment of their goals.

To mitigate this challenge, Arhin et al. (2018) contend that nonprofits need to enhance their visibility and build a solid reputation about their organisations. Visibility enhancement strategies are the communication strategies that organisations use to draw attention to themselves (Arhin et al., 2018). These strategies seek to make the public aware of the nonprofits' existence. From the analysis of the data gathered through focus group discussions and document analysis of the Facebook posts on the organisations under study, awareness campaigns and publicising information about nominations and awards won by the organisations and or their leaders were a part of the visibility enhancing strategies. Similar to the observations of Nchabeleng et al. (2018), the study found that the visibility enhancing strategies adopted by the organisations under study enabled them to be easily noticed on social media by a large number of social media audiences.

As noted by Mansur (2021), about 92% of nonprofit organisations across the world have established presence on Facebook. This requires that nonprofits such as students-run initiatives ought to adopt strategies that would make them stand out. According to Arhin et al. (2018), nonprofits in Ghana enhance their visibility through awareness creation campaigns and advocacy. Similar to the findings from my study, Arhin et al. (2018) found that nonprofits in Ghana engage in awareness creation about different social issues in order to gain visibility among their target audiences. This includes but not limited to educating the public about some social issues, publishing articles in newspapers, granting interviews on radio and television. While the findings from my study and the observations of Arhin et al. (2018) establish the use of awareness creation by nonprofits to gain visibility, the latter did not establish social media as a platform used by nonprofits in Ghana for visibility enhancement.

According to Arhin et al. (2018), nonprofits in Ghana enhance their visibility by participating in discussions on social issues on radio and television. Conversely, I found that the students-run initiatives under study enhanced their visibility by designing flyers and sharing on social media for awareness creation and advocacy. Victor (2023) found a similar phenomenon where nonprofits engaged in awareness creation in order to gain attention from their social media audiences for the purpose of fundraising.

I found that the students-run initiatives under study employed storytelling as a step up to the visibility enhancing strategy on social media to establish their credibility. The building of credibility is essential for fundraising because donors and volunteers wanted to commit to organisations that were trustworthy (Hayman, 2016; Kumi, 2017a). By adopting credibility building strategies like storytelling, nonprofits communicated to potential donors and volunteers that the nonprofit organisation is competent and possess a track of delivering on previous projects. According to Dzisah (2019), storytelling serves as both a visibility enhancing and credibility building strategy for fundraising.

According to Peters (2017), storytelling was used for resource mobilisation because it was able to draw and sustain attention and provide donors a sense of satisfaction. The findings of the current study in this regard reflect the observations of Dhanani and Kennedy (2022), Peters (2017), and Drummond et al. (2020). Like Dhanani and Kennedy (2022), I found that students-run initiatives use visuals to tell stories of their activities. The study found that most of the stories told by the students-run initiatives were told with the help of photos shared on Facebook.

While photos have proven to be effective for fundraising activities, Peters (2017) contend that videos are more appealing and effective than photos. This assertion is supported by *Charity Water*'s (2019) position that videos have about 59% more chance of appealing to donors and volunteers than mere visuals. However, the study found that the students-run initiatives under study employed more photos than videos in their fundraising activities. In order to build credibility and maximise fundraising activities, students-run initiatives used social media to publicise information about nominations and or awards received.

Receiving nominations and awards from credible sources boosts the confidence of donors and volunteers concerning the competence of nonprofits. Thomspon (2023) holds that winning awards will encourage prospective donors and volunteers to consider nonprofits as credible. Awards raise awareness of nonprofits existence while providing third-party validation and building industry leadership (Thomspon, 2023). In a related study, *Best Business Awards* as cited in Thompson (2023) asserts that when small enterprises win awards it increases their income by 63% with about 39% improvement in sales. This happens because potential clients begin to trust the authenticity of firms when the firms are validated by credible third parties. As noted by Hommerova and Severova (2018), donors have some high level of scepticism about donating to startup NGOs such as students-run initiatives. Winning awards and receiving nominations from credible sources provide an avenue for students-run initiatives to look more appealing, competent and trustworthy in the eyes of donors and volunteers.

4.3.2 Interpersonal Communication

Apart from social media marketing, the students-run initiatives under study reported the use of interpersonal communication for raising funds and attracting volunteers. Here, interpersonal communication implies any form of communication that targets individuals and is structured by students-run initiatives to suit the individual needs of their audiences (Nobile & Cantoni, 2023). As a communication strategy for resource mobilisation, interpersonal communication recognises the unique needs of donors and volunteers and the peculiar nature of relationship that nonprofits may have with different audiences in order to design communication that reflects such unique needs and relationship.

Through the interviews and focus group discussions, it was revealed that the students-run initiatives relied on their friends, family members and other close associates for fundraising. When dealing with such close associates, the strategy for communication became more interpersonal. The executive members of the students-run initiatives leveraged on their individual social networks to help the organisations to raise funds for their activities. The interpersonal communication took the form of phone calls, text messages, and face-to-face interactions.

A participant at *Khays Foundation* indicated during a focus group discussion:

...Some friends that we have outside the country, we reached them through texts. We sent them details of the project through text and then they were able to help with some commitment. Like the Feed The Street Project, we sent them some text messages and they were able to help (KF R2)

Another participant at *Khays Foundations* also recounted:

…Sometimes we send WhatsApp messages to our family members and some few individuals we know. So, for every project we embark on, we design flyers. So, we send these flyers to these people on WhatsApp and they are also able to support the Project (KF R5)

The effectiveness of the use of text messages for resource mobilisation as reported by the organisations in this study confirms extant studies about the potency of text messages for resource mobilisation. Liu (2014) found similar usefulness of text messages for mobilising people for social actions. In corroboration, Ibrisevic (2018) reports how the *Red Cross* was able to raise about $32 million through text messages in aid of earthquake victims in Haiti.

Both Liu (2014) and Ibrisevic (2018) agree that text messages are able to appeal to a large number of audiences. However, the basic difference between the use of text messages for resource mobilisation as reported by Liu (2014) and Ibrisevic (2018) and the text messages used by the organisations under study is the kind of people who receive the text messages. In the case of Liu (2014) and Ibrisevic (2018), the text messages were sent en masse. However, the organisations under study sent personalised messages to friends, family members and other close associates. The nature of the text messages sent by the organisations under study was individualised. It built on strong, close relations and ensures better yield for resource mobilisation (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015).

Text messages were not the only channel through which the organisations carried out their interpersonal communication. There was evidence that phone calls were made to some close relatives for the purposes of resource mobilisation. The organisations called these close relatives and appealed to them to support the causes of the organisations. At *FTF Ghana*, the organisation recalled how phone calls to family members provided support at the onset of its activities. A participant claimed:

…Initially, all our projects and traveling were sponsored by our family members or friends. Our buses, the fueling and all were sponsored by family members. We encouraged each member of the group to speak to at least two family members. So, that's what we were doing. So, each person would call some family members and friends and that's how we got them to support us (FTF R3)

Another participant from *Khays Foundation* reported a similar claim by saying:

…I think personally I have called some individuals I directly place phone calls to some family members. Someone like my elder brother has been a very great supporter of this particular initiative. Because he is working, he is able to significantly support us financially and I only have to place a phone call to him (KF R6)

This claim was further supported by another participant at the focus group discussion with *Khays Foundation*. He revealed:

…I call my family members; I call my senior brother and some other people I have made encounters with. My bosses, my friends, yes, I call them to assist with our projects and when I call them, they do help (KF R3)

Machhar and Pilot (2018) found that about 74% of respondents in their study were not responsive to receiving telemarketing phone calls. Even though Machhar and Pilot (2018) found that majority of respondents were likely to be convinced over phone calls to purchase goods and services. Customers were usually about 74% of the time, likely to ignore telemarketing phone calls. This finding confirms the effectiveness of phone calls for the purposes of marketing and in the case of my study, for resource mobilisation. The difference however, lies in the attitude of target audiences in answering such calls in the first place. This can be explained in terms of the kind of relationship that exists between the one placing the phone call and the target audiences. In the case of my study, the receivers of the phone calls were both willing to answer and ready to contribute. This was largely because there is a personal relationship between the organisations under study and the people they call on phone.

This is explained by the social capital theory with respect to the kind of relationship between the callers and the receivers of the call. The organisations under study mostly placed calls to friends, family and other close relations who fall under the bonding network. As described by Petts et al. (2020), bonding relations are defined by strong, close-knit relationships, and more likely to yield positive results when relied on for resource mobilisation. In another study, Ochani (2020) found that phone calls' ability to drive sales is significantly weak. While this is contrary to the findings of my study, the basic explanation to this discrepancy lies not so much in the phone calls but the kind of relationship that exists between organisations and the category of people they call. As explained earlier, the organisations under study used phones calls for resource mobilisation when dealing with people with whom the Organisations and their members have personal and strong relationships. This is what accounts for the effectiveness of phone calls for resource mobilisation (Coleman, 1988; Petts et al., 2020)

In addition to text messages and phone calls, the organisations reported using face-to-face communication when dealing with some other audiences for the purpose of resource mobilisation. At *Khays Foundation*, the audiences reached through face-to-face encounters were mostly close relatives. Conversely for *FTF Ghana*, the audiences reached through face-to-face modes were people with whom the Organisation nor its members had no direct relationships with. For instance, at *FTF Ghana*, it was reported that:

…We have face-to-face meeting with some people to explain what we do to them and raise some funds from there. We went as far as the Second Lady's Office. We had the opportunity to meet with the Second Lady and spoke to her extensively about our project and how we wish for her to help us. We had a very positive interaction with her (FTF R4)

Another participant recounted:

…We also do a lot of uhm, I won't say door-to-door but we go to offices, we pitch to people. We don't go solely for money. We also go for resources because some of the things our children need are materials for learning. So, we go to these offices and tell them about what we do and we are able to get some help from there (FTF R6)

A participant at *Khays Foundation* remarked:

…There are some people that I go to directly. Like my bosses, I go to their offices and I ask them for support (KF R2)

A participant at *OFIE* remarked:

…A lot of times I do face-to-face. I have gotten funds from individuals, through individual engagements. Sometimes I come to you and tell you that ok, this the project that we have planned and about to implement. This is our budget and then I will go on and tell you what we have been able to raise on our own, and these are some partnerships or deals we have. And so, I will present to you a very minimal budget and ask for you to support with any amount that you can support us with (OFIE R1)

It was revealed at the focus group discussion with *Khays Foundation* and *OFIE* that recruitment of volunteers sometimes happened through campus tours. The organisations visited different tertiary institutions and spoke to students directly with the aim of getting them to volunteer for them. The students reached through *Khays Foundation's* and *OFIE's* campus tours were not close relatives but people with whom the members of the Organisations shared similar traits. That is, they are all students. It was revealed that:

…We go to Nursing and Midwifery Colleges and then we speak to them. We speak to them about *Khays Foundation* and introduce the aims and objectives of *Khays Foundation* to them and as a result we are able to have volunteers through that (KF 1)

This phenomenon was also found at *OFIE* where it was revealed that the organisation relies on speaking engagements with students in the hope of attracting volunteers and material donations as well. A participant at *OFIE* remarked:

Because it's a campus-based project, our main project is campus-based. We take advantage of organised programmes and speak there. We also go to classes and speak to them and ask them to sign up (OFIE R3)

Another participant at OFIE recounted:

… I have been invited to be a speaker at different programmes on campus. Usually when I'm done, I take the opportunity to talk to the students about *OFIE*.(OFIE R5)

Face-to-face marketing, which includes trade exhibitions, one-on-one meetings, and in-person sales, allow firms to connect with prospective clients on a more personal level (Bui, 2023). According to extant studies, face-to-face selling accounts for 71.2% of all sales (Bui, 2023). In-person interactions provide a unique opportunity for target audiences to obtain a deeper understanding of organisations' motivations and objectives (Bui, 2023). According to survey data from the recently released *Freeman Trust Report* (2023), a clear correlation was found between face-to-face interaction at live events and brand trust, with more than three-quarters (77 percent) of all respondents — and more than eight out of ten millennials — saying they trust brands more after interacting with them face-to-face (Carufel, 2023).

Inasmuch as the findings on the effectiveness of face-to-face marketing has some positive implication for nonprofit resource mobilisation, some scholars have expressed reservations about the use of face-to-face resource mobilisation strategies. For instance, some scholars argue that this strategy may result in a high proportion of disgruntled donors, complaints, and even disengagement (Benett, 2013; Sargeant et al., 2012). Others have the feeling that the face-to-face strategy is obtrusive and unappealing to donors (Waldner et al., 2020). However, the organisations under study reported a positive outcome from their face-to-face fundraising activities. The nature of the face-to-face encounter may explain in part the effectiveness and or suitability of face-to-face marketing. For instance, Waldner et al.'s (2020) scepticism about the face-to-face fundraising strategy was directed at the street variant of the strategy where nonprofits engaged prospective donors on the streets. Similarly, the reservations about face-to-face fundraising as held by scholars such as Benett (2013) and Sargeant et al. (2012) were also in relation to the street kind of face-to-face fundraising. Conversely, the nature of face-to-face interactions employed by the organisations under study was carried out in the offices or the homes of the target audiences with whom the organisations schedule meetings with. In that manner, the face-to-face fundraising was not intrusive but mutual and permissive. In that light, face-to-face fundraising provided a potent tool for resource mobilisation as was recorded by the organisations under study and some existing literature (Bui, 2023; Carufel, 2023).

4.3.3 Grant Sourcing

Grant sourcing is the process of identifying and obtaining funding from a government department, agency, trust, or fundraising organisation. It is also known as a grant proposal or grant submission (Fagan, 2023). While the dependency on aid or grant is highly common to most African countries, Arhin et al. (2018) assert that Ghana has long been considered a 'donor darling' country by bilateral and multilateral donors. There is enough evidence to suggest that most nonprofit organisations in Ghana depend on grants for their survival and or sustainability (Kumi, 2017a). In the analysis of focus group discussions, it became known that the students-run initiatives under study sourced for grants from some individuals and organisations. A participant from *Khays Foundation* remarked:

…So, we reach out. There are some times that the kind of projects we embark on demand some level of financial commitment that the organisation at the moment will not be able to bear. So, as I mentioned earlier, we reach out to some individuals who share in the cause of our organisation and then see how best they could help. We bring out a proposal; a document that indicates the project, how beneficial it will be to the community and the people we seek to help and then as a result we get some positive feedback (KF R2)

Another participant from the *Khays Foundation* confirmed this:

…So, we have written to corporate individuals; people who are in the corporate space, some businessmen as well. We have written to Members of Parliament, Chief Executive Officers as well, and yeah, some Municipal Chief Executive Officers (KF R4)

At *OFIE*, it was revealed that the major grants won were through participation in fellowship programmes that trained organisational leaders and provided some funding for project implementation. It was mentioned that CAMFED and MasterCard Foundation were the most notable sources of grants for the activities of *OFIE*. A participant from *OFIE* averred:

…Most funds we have gotten for projects are from participation in fellowship programmes. There are some fellowship programmes that build the capacity of organisations and then projects. It's like the leader of the organisation applies to be a part of the programme, you go through some training and then they release some grants for projects. We have gotten funds from such, at least two (2) (OFIE R3)

FTF Ghana also hinted of similar process of applying for grants as a communication strategy for resource mobilisation. *FTF Ghana* claimed, just like *Khays Foundation,* that their application for grant was not limited to asking for cash donations alone. Other resources such as school supplies, food items, clothes and others were sourced through grant writing. A participant at *FTF Ghana* posited that:

…I won't say it is unfortunate because they were not willing to give us cash. Most of them gave us some items. So, we wrote to *Bell Aqua*. They supported us with drinks and water. *Promasidor Ghana*, they supported us with uhm, their products; Cowbell, exercise books, and all. So far, all the organisations we have written to in Ghana have supported us in kind but not in cash (FTF R2)

While *Khays Foundation's* and *OFIE's* grant writing had been limited to firms and individuals within Ghana, *FTF Ghana* had made some attempts at applying for external funding with no success story at the time the study was conducted. One participant at *FTF Ghana* indicates:

…So, the reason we went to the U.S was for the ORG Impact Awards. We were to win an amount of $10, 000 from that grant application but unfortunately, we didn't win (FTF RR4)

Even though *FTF Ghana* had been unable to win external grants, the organisation remained resolute in committing more resources into enhancing its chances at wining foreign grant. A participant from FTF Ghana asserted:

…We are currently applying for a grant in the U. S and it's through my uncle. My uncle called a friend of his in the U. S to assist us. He is also into charity work. He has his own NGO. He is guiding us through it. So, in the U. S, when you apply for grant, you need an already existing NGO or charity organisation to back you. So, he is guiding us through it (FTF R2)

Another participant supported this assertion by saying:

…The President and I have met someone who is currently helping us to fill a form for a grant in the U. S. We are on it as I speak (FTF R4)

Earlier studies on nonprofits' funding confirms that grant sourcing is the major source of funding for most nonprofit organisations, especially those in developing countries like Ghana (Dugle et al., 2015). Kumi (2017a) revealed that external donor financing constituted between 80% and 90% of the overall budgets of NGOs in three regions of Ghana (that is, Upper West, Northern and Greater Accra). Only about 10% or less of these NGO's budget were internally generated Kumi (2017a). Even though the students-run initiatives under study reported grant sourcing as one of their communication strategies for resource mobilisation, the students-run initiatives were not highly dependent on funds obtained through grants.

Even so, majority of the grants written by the students-run initiatives were written to individuals and organisations within the communities where the students-run initiatives operate. In this sense, the phenomenon of grant sourcing still feeds into the idea of community philanthropy where local assets, individuals, and corporations were leveraged on for resource mobilisation (Harrow & Jung, 2016). The findings of the study thus align with Khuma's (2014) study. Khuma (2014) found that a local community organisation known as Mathulini relies heavily on local networks such as family, and financial institutions to gather resources to cater for HIV/AIDS patients and their affected family members. This phenomenon feeds into the notion of the social capital theory. The social capital theory asserts that communities can rely on the strength and availability of local resources to solve their social issues (Bourdieu, 1985). By applying to individuals and organisations within Ghana, the students-run initiatives still rely on local networks and assets for resource mobilisation (Fowler, 2022; Hodgson, 2020).

4.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the findings from data gathered through interviews, focus group discussion and document analysis. The data collected were in relation to the research questions that guided the study. Using the social capital theory and the four flows model of organisational communication, data gathered were thematically analysed. In response to research question one, the nature of students-run initiatives as found and discussed in this chapter was non-academic, non-governmental, needs-based and volunteer-driven. The chapter revealed and discussed the pattern of communication within the Organisations under study as vertical, horizontal and diagonal. It was found and discussed in this chapter that the Organisations under study employ social media marketing, interpersonal communication and grant sourcing for resource mobilisation.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarises the study and draws conclusions based on the study’s findings. The chapter includes recommendations based on observations and research findings. This chapter outlines the study's limitations and potential areas for future research.

5.1 Summary

This study sought to investigate the communication phenomenon in three students-run initiatives in Ghana. The study concerned itself with the nature of selected students-run initiatives in Ghana. It analysed the patterns of internal communication and the communication strategies for resource mobilisation among selected students-run initiatives in Ghana. The study was limited to *For The Future Ghana*, *Khays Foundation* and *Organisation For Inclusion and Empowerment*.

Through a thorough review of literature, the key concepts in the study were discussed to provide a scholarly appreciation of existing literature related to the subject of the current study. The reviewed literature provided a basis for discussing the findings of the current study. The study reviewed literature on the concept of development, sustainable development, community philanthropy, students-run initiatives, patterns of organisational communication, and communication strategies for resource mobilisation. Literature was also reviewed on the social capital theory and the four-flows model of organisational communication.

The study adopted a qualitative approach to studying phenomena (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). The multiple case study design (Yin, 2018) was employed to investigate the three organisations in the study. Through purposive and snowball sampling techniques

(Merriam and Tisdell, 2016), a total of eighteen (18) participants were chosen to participate in the study. The study triangulated data collection through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis. Data collected were coded and thematically analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2018). A thick-rich description of the findings was provided in the study.

5.2 Main Findings and Conclusions

In the fourth chapter of the study, the author presented a detailed discussion of the findings from the study. Data were collected in relation to the objectives of the study. The data collected were analysed and discussed in view of existing literature as well as the theoretical frameworks that underpinned the study. The findings from the study informed the conclusion that were made.

Four themes were identified under the first question which focused on the nature of students-run initiatives in Ghana, four themes were identified; non-academic, non-governmental, needs-based and volunteer-driven. The themes, among others, showed that students had outmost authority in the administration of the organisations under study. The initiatives under study were found to be extracurricular in nature. This finding contributes to the ongoing debate on the extent to which students were in control of students-run initiatives. As non-governmental organisations, it was found that the organisations under study rendered absolutely free services. The study found that the development initiatives run by the three organisations were informed by community-needs assessment. Unlike some forms of philanthropy that were donor-driven, the students-run initiatives were informed by the needs of the communities and the people they worked with. It emerged that the students-run initiatives under study run entirely on the services of volunteers who played different roles and acted in various capacities.

The second research question probed the direction of communication within the students-run organisations under study. Four themes emerged from the study in relation to this; downward, upward, horizontal and diagonal communication. The three Organisations under study had established chains of command upon which internal communication is operated. Information flow within the organisations under study was based on the established organisational structure. However, it was found that the culture of communication that existed within the organisations allowed for a close-knit relationship that existed within the executive members of the organisations. The three organisations reported a preference for horizontal relations and communication.

The third research question sought to ascertain how the students-run initiatives mobilise resources for sustainable development projects. In this respect, three themes were found; social media marketing, personalised communication and grant writing. The three organisations used social media to tell stories, engaged in awareness creation and advocacy campaigns to establish their credibility, as worthy of receiving resources from donors. The organisations relied heavily on their close associates such as friends and family members for resource mobilisation. The organisations reached out to these close networks through phone calls, text messages and face-to-face engagements. The study found that the organisations under study relied on other distant networks for resource mobilisation through grant sourcing. The organisations under study were found to employ both vertical and horizontal forms of resource mobilisation. This provided enough basis to justify that the three students-run initiatives fit into Kumi's (2019) conceptualisation of African philanthropy as embodying elements of vertical and horizontal philanthropy.

From the above findings, the study concludes that the nature of students-run initiatives under study was a hybrid of vertical and horizontal forms of philanthropy. Horizontal nature of the students-run initiatives under study was seen in the needs-based phenomenon discovered in this current study. The reliance on local networks and resources for resource mobilisation through personalised communication and grants application to local industries and individuals indicates that the students-run initiatives are horizontal. The organisations' sourcing of resources through external grants application and social media marketing provides enough basis for concluding on the vertical nature of the students-run initiatives under study. This hybrid nature of African philanthropy corroborates Kumi's (2019) conclusion on the nature of philanthropy in Ghana. Kumi (2019) assert that Ghana's philanthropic sector is a hybrid of horizontal and vertical forms of philanthropy.

It can be concluded from the study that the students-run initiatives under study are sustainable. The sustainability conclusion stems from the fact that the students-run initiatives engage communities in identifying needs and relying on local people and resources for solutions (Hodgson & Pond, 2018; Kumi, 2017a, Mefalopulos, 2008).

5.3 Limitations

The author encountered some challenges in the course of the study. These challenges did not affect the credibility of the study. Some of the limitations of the study are reported below:

The rigorous nature of the academic work of the participants in the study made it difficult scheduling a time for interviews and focus group discussions. To mitigate this, I allowed the organisations to select from among their organisational meeting times, when it was most appropriate for interviews and focus group discussions to be held.

The organisations under study felt uncomfortable releasing their certificates of incorporation as non-governmental organisations. My request for proof of registration as non-governmental organisations was initially met with some scepticism. I assured the organisations that the presentation of their certificates of incorporation did not present any harm to them and that it was only for verification purposes. Upon such assurances, the organisations submitted copies of their certificates of incorporation as proof that they were non-governmental organisations.

Using interviews and focus group discussions allowed only for self-reports. This was a methodological limitation that I mitigated with the help of document analysis. Even though I could not substantiate all self-reports recorded through interviews and focus group discussion, the involvement of document analysis provided a cogent mechanism for establishing the credibility of the data gathered.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

The study suggests that future researchers can follow-up on this work with an ethnographic study to provide more understanding into the internal operations of students-run initiatives. Future researchers can further delve into the quality of stakeholder engagements and participation in students-run initiatives. Finally, further studies can also investigate other non-communication-based resource mobilisation strategies adopted by students-run initiatives.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made.

The study found that social media is unanimously utilised by all three organisations under study. It is thus recommended that the organisations should create a portfolio for social media manager. Owing to the rigour of social media marketing, it is not advisable for its management to be the duty of an officer who is already tasked with other responsibilities. I recommend, therefore, the creation of a position at the executive level of the organisations that will be tasked with coordinating all correspondence on social media. The duty of the social media manager may include but not limited to creating content, scheduling posts, and engaging social media audiences. This will enable the organisations to maximise their social media marketing gains.

Owing to the central role of resource mobilisation for the sustainability of the students-run initiatives and their projects, the study recommends the creation of an office for fund development. The fund development officer will coordinate all fundraising activities and design strategies to enhance the resource mobilisation capacity of the organisations.

From my observations on the social media posts of the organisations under study, I found that the Organisations post a handful of videos, I recommend that the organisations under study should tell more stories in video format. Videos have the propensity to convince donors and volunteers more than photos and texts. This will increase the yields from storytelling activities on social media.

The study found that the organisations under study had not won bigger amounts of funds through grants. The organisations also reported unsuccessful attempts at sourcing for funds through crowdfunding. It is therefore recommended that the students-run organisations should seek training for their executives or fund development mangers on the effective ways of mobilising resources through grant sourcing and other internet-based platforms for resource mobilisation.

Finally, the study found that the students-run initiatives under study had little or no relationships with other similar initiatives. The study recommends the creation of a single philanthropic platform that brings all students-run organisations together for the purpose of networking and partnership formation. Arhin et al. (2018) found that when nonprofits join philanthropic networks, it helps them to enhance their visibility and strengthen the perception about their credibility. Such networks help philanthropic organisations to form strategic platforms through which nonprofits form mutually beneficial relationships with other nonprofits and also with various donors.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

I am Emmanuel Darko, an MPhil student at the Department of Development Communication, University of Education, Winneba. I humbly seek your voluntary participation in answering some questions that bother on your involvement in students-run initiatives. The questions are in relation to a study I am undertaking entitled "**Students-run initiatives and sustainable development: A critical analysis of the communication factor**". I will be gladsome if you could assist by providing me with answers that pertain to the object of the study. I assure you of confidentiality and anonymity as regards your participation in the study. Be assured that whatever information you divulge shall be used solely for the purpose of the study. Thank You!

1. What is the main goal or mission of the organisation?
2. How was the organisation founded?
3. What programmes or services do your organisation provide?
4. How do you settle on your Programmes or services?
5. How do you select your target audience/stakeholders?
6. Who are the organisation's main decision-makers and leaders?
7. What are the leaders' responsibilities and roles?
8. How is internal communication among members of the organisation facilitated?
9. What are the regular channels for sharing information or updates?
10. Who are the main donor groups or target audiences that your organisation communicates with?
11. How do you customise your messages for various stakeholder groups or donation segments?
12. How have technological advancements like data analytics and fundraising platforms informed the way you communicate and mobilise resources?

APPENDIX B

OBSERVATION GUIDE

Area of observation	Comment
Social media platforms used by the organisation	
Type of content shared on social media (eg. News, stories, events)	
Frequency of social media posts	
Organisation's level of interactivity on social media	
The use of images, videos and graphics on social media	

APPENDIX C

Certificate of Khays Foundation

Reg No. CG022530422 TIN : C0061715298

REPUBLIC OF GHANA

Certificate of Incorporation

I hereby certify that

KHAYS FOUNDATION LBG

is this day incorporated under the Companies Act, 2019 (Act 992) and that the liability of its members is limited by guarantee.

Given under my hand and official seal at Sekondi / Takoradi, this 6th day of April 2022

For: Registrar of Companies

Source: Fieldwork, 2023