Public Relations and Journalism

Name

Institution

**Public Relations and Journalism**

**Article Comparison**

This paper is aimed at exploring the similarities and differences between two literature pieces based on the significance of ethical and moral considerations and mutual relationship between public relations and Journalism. Needless to say, both professionals spend most of their professional lives dealing people on behalf of their organizations therefore they must be fully knowledgeable about the moral and ethical values and their prospective impact on the public. In order to explore this significance, two research articles will be selected and after dissecting them critically, their prospective similarities and differences will be presented. In the end, rationale of this paper will be defined with respect to my personal perspective.

**Step 1: Study 1 (Place, 2019)**

**Theoretical Perspective**

Four psychological and philosophical theories of ethical and moral development were used to support this research; Piaget’s theory of cognitive development, Kohlberg’s theory of moral development, Aristotle’s philosophy of moral virtue and social learning theory. These theories attempted to clarify the meaning and gradual development of moral attitude in individuals along with the potential factors that affect the acquisition of moral attitude.

Piaget’s theory of cognitive development emphasizes the development of mental frameworks called schemas in the acquisition of moral values. He stated that schemas are complex mental frameworks that enable individuals acquire new information regarding personal and environmental factors, objects, events, and situations and allow us to respond to these stimuli in the most expected way. Schemas are formed in the childhood and are quite rigid hence moral training and guidance at the very early stages of life has long lasting impacts on the future moral development of individuals.

Kohlberg was famous for his groundbreaking theory of moral development. He presented three stages of moral development in his theory; pre-conventional, conventional and post conventional. In pre conventional stages individuals have no sense of morals and ethics and they obey laws because of avoiding punishment and to gain mutual utility. In the post conventional stage, morality is developed and one obeys laws to label him as good boy/ good girl and maintain order in the society. In the last stage, one obeys laws because he realizes their importance that they are aimed at ensuring holistic wellbeing of individuals and he also thinks that laws are breakable if nothing good is being delivered to the society.

Aristotle, in his famous book *Nicomachean Ethics* introduced a term called moral virtue as an innate disposition that enables us to act in socially appropriate manner between the extremes of excess and deficiency. He further stated that moral virtue cannot be attained through reasoning and instructions rather practice is what makes it a habit. He regarded moral virtue as an attitude towards right and wrong, good or bad, pain and pleasure and desirable and undesirable. Hence, one should focus on practicing moral attitude towards daily dichotomous situations in order to nurture moral values.

Social learning theory of Albert Bandura stressed the importance of social and cultural aspects for the moral development of individuals. Bandura was in view that human beings learn certain behaviors from other individuals through observation and modeling. For example, a child will learn to speak truth if he observes his parents speaking truth even in extreme situations and reward him whenever he commits certain desirable action. Hence, observation and modeling coupled with the reinforcement make us learn moral attitudes and behaviors in both personal and professional lives.

**Methodological Perspective**

This study was qualitative in nature in which sample was drawn from the population using snowball and convenient sampling. Sample consisted to 35 Public Relation Officers from various states of US, Mid West, East Coast, and West Coast with typical demographics including age, gender, socio economic status, qualification, experiences, geographical areas, and type of organization. Data was obtained through semi structured interviews and was analyzed using thematic analysis.

**Findings and contributions**

Themes emerging during thematic analysis demonstrated that following factors affect the moral development of Public Relations Officers; duration of job, reflecting upon moral grey areas, dialogue, engagement, organizational culture, leadership style and navigating moral trials by fire experiences. These themes stressed the importance of personal and organizational factors in the development of workplace related moral values in the Public Relations Officers (PROs).

**Critique**

Findings of the study are rightfully based on the social learning theory, cognitive and Aristotle’s philosophy of moral development. Duration of job refers to the duration of practice of moral principles which is the best way to develop moral virtue according to the teachings of Aristotle. Moreover, self reflection and organizational cultures are some implications of cognitive and social learning theory.

**Implication in real life public relations**

This research study contributed to the existing knowledge about the development of moral values and demonstrated that PROs can learn these essential attributes through greater practice time on the job, reflecting upon moral grey areas, dialogue, engagement, organizational culture, leadership style and navigating moral trials by fire experiences. These findings can be used to train PROs by organizational management and to guide other relevant policy issues.

**Step 2 Article 2 (Clementson, 2019)**

**Theoretical Perspective**

This article is aimed at addressing the long-distant tension between two groups; journalists and public relations professionals. From the centuries, a super-colossal fluctuation has been inspected between journalists and public relations practitioners including cooperative or adversarial, hate-love, hostile or mutually dependent, antagonistic or symbiotic, contemptible or uncooperative, and trusting or contentious. These relationships were defined using two types of theories in the literature section; social identity theory and the inter-group deception.

Social identity theory states that when there is seen a competition between two groups, members of the in-group demonstrate negative attitude towards members of the out-group considering them contemptible and inferior. Members of in-group become highly motivated to maintain identification with their group and frequently make active attempts to differentiate themselves from members of the out- group. Hence, negative attitudes of journalists and Public Relation Professionals towards each others can be explained through this theory.

Theory of intergroup deception states that members of two different groups who historically distrust each other will expect deception from each other. Hence, the veracity of the members of in-group is not the matter of concern for them rather out-groups members are expected to threaten the fidelity in professional scenarios. However, when both the groups are subjected to work as an in group, they work collaboratively in order to derive desired outcomes. Hence, it can be said that negative attitudes of journalists and public relation professionals towards each other can be explained using the theory of intergroup deception.

**Methodological Perspective**

It was a quantitative study in which cross-sectional experimental design was used to explore the attitudes of public relations and journalism students towards each other. A simulated interview situation involving crisis scenario of a scandal at a famous national restaurant was filmed and watched by 190 undergraduate students who were selected through random sampling technique. Students belonged to varying study programs, gender, age, ethnicity and region. After making the subjects watch simulated video interview, they were interviewed for 2.5 minutes and made to fill the survey questionnaires using various standardized instruments; Perceived trustworthiness of the spokesperson, Perceived trustworthiness of the organization, Liking the spokes person and journalist and Identification with a psychological group.

**Findings and contributions**

 Study findings indicated that in crisis communication, public relation professionals share affiliation with their counterparts i.e., journalists and dislike malfeasance from their in-group members. This is what we call black sheep effect; besides this, findings of the study also verified the social identity theory but disregarded inter group deception.

**Critique**

Findings of the study were partially consistent with the theoretical perspective presented in the literature review section. Findings supported the social identification theory and black sheep effect whereas theory of deception was disregarded by participants because they did not mistrust the spokesperson that belonged to an out-group. Hence, we can say that this study opened up new ways for the researchers to explore the theory of deception in relation to public relations professionals and journalists.

**Implication in real life public relations**

Findings of the study can be used to guide the management of public relations organizations and journalists to develop various training programs aimed at reducing the negative attitudes of both the professionals during field practice. Various ethical training programs can be used in the field setting in order to minimize the long-standing opposition between two parties that can be subjected to work collaboratively.

**Step 3, comparative analysis**

**Similarities**

 Both of these studies were based on the ethical considerations in public relation professionals. These articles used psychological theories in literature review section such as Piaget’s theory of cognitive development, Kohlberg’s theory of moral development, social identity theory and the inter-group deception theory. It can be said that these articles had strong psychological grounds because moral values are purely philosophical and psychological in nature. Both studies had generalizibility issues because sample was selected from one specific country. Moreover, both of them had implications in the field regarding policy making, guiding practice and training. We can also infer that both of the studies verified the theoretical perspectives presented in literature review. Hence, from the methodological, limitation and implication perspective, we can assume these articles similar in nature.

**Differences**

The first study used qualitative methodology i.e., semi structured interviews in which more in-depth subjective information was obtained regarding the phenomenon of interest. This study also used qualitative tools of data analysis i.e., thematic analysis in which relevant themes were obtained after interpretation. On the other hand, second study used quantitative methodology in which participants were divided into two groups and underwent experimentation and questionnaire survey. Besides this, appropriate statistical tools were used for data analysis such as Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) to obtain results. The second prominent difference between these studies was the method of sample selection; first study used snowball and convenient sampling i.e., researchers included subjects in the study that were referred by other participants or institutions whereas the other one used random sampling technique in which participants were selected randomly without keeping any strict inclusion criteria in mind. Hence, it can be concluded that basic differences lie in the sampling techniques and methodological contexts.

**Rationale of this assignment**

In my view, the basic rationale behind this paper is to make us realize the significance of theory and research in practice. Since, I analyzed these two literature pieces contemplatively and understood the underlying theories before jumping to the methodology; I learned that theory provides basis to the research and research guides practice, organizational decision making and policy making. I can imagine how these articles could have helped the organizational managements to improve moral and ethical development of their employees particularly with reference to Public Relations and journalism. Besides this, for the time being, I attempted to think and behave like a researcher who vowed to analyze each and every component of literature pieces profoundly.

References

Place, R. K. (2019). Moral dilemmas, trials, and gray areas: Exploring on-the-job moraldevelopment of public relations professionals. Public Relations Review 45, 24–34.

Clementson, E. D. (2019). Do public relations practitioners perceptually share ingroupaffiliation with journalists? Public Relations Review 45, 49–63.