

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION WINNEBA**

**THE ROLE OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION IN PROMOTING  
PROFESSIONAL GROWTH: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF  
PERSONS WITH DISABILITY AT THE SENE WEST DISTRICT**



**MASTER OF ARTS**

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PROFESSIONAL GROWTH: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF  
PERSONS WITH DISABILITY AT THE SENE WEST DISTRICT**

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**A dissertation in the Department of Communication and Media Studies,  
School of Communication and Media Studies, submitted to the  
School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the award of the degree of  
Master of Arts  
(Strategic Communication)  
in the University of Education, Winneba**

**JANUARY, 2023**

## DECLARATION

### Student's Declaration

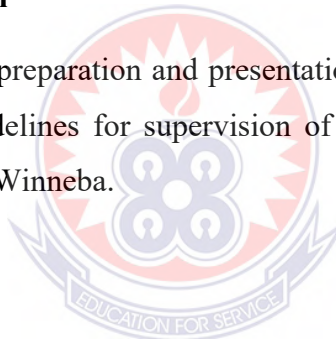
I, **Cletus Yenulom Suuk**, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

**Signature:**.....

**Date:**.....

### Supervisor's Declaration

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



**Name:**

**Supervisor's Signature:**.....

**Date:**.....

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my father, the late Mr. Peter Suuk and mother, the late Ms. Sarah Cynthia Kona. I know this dedication can in no way compensate for the time and other resources spent during the period of this study. However, it is to say that I really appreciate your love and your support.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

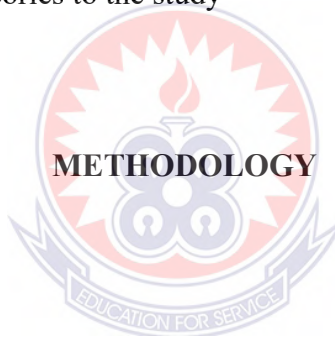
I would give special thanks to Ms. Abena Abokoma Asemanyi for her supervision and frequent demand that the right thing must be done, which is the prime reason for the successful completion of this research project. It is important I appreciate my able Head of Department Dr. Mavis Amo-Mensah and all other lecturers and faculty members of school of Communication and Media Studies who in diverse ways contributed to this success story. Mention must be made of Professor Andy Ofori-Birikorang who motivated me to endure and pursue my dream of becoming a communication person. I would like to express my gratitude to my wife Konlan Victoria Yenumi and my children (Joy, Joachim, Bright and Anita) for supporting and comportsing themselves each time I have to study.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CA - Conversation Analysis

CHRI - Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

GFD - Ghana Federation of the Disabled

GSS - Ghana Statistical Service

ILO - International Labour Organization

PWDs - Person with Disabilities

SHS - Senior High School

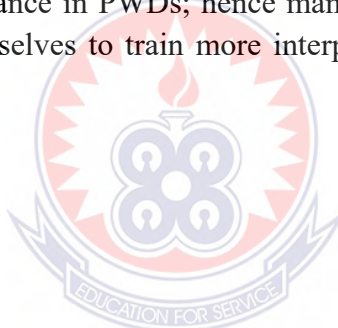
UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

WHO - World Health Organization



## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to assess the role of interpersonal communication in promoting professional growth: a phenomenological study of persons with disability at the Sene West District. The specific objectives of the study were to identify the lived experiences of persons living with disabilities and examine the strategies persons living with disability use in communicating. Qualitative research methodology using the phenomenological approach was employed to attain the research objectives. The participants of the study were ten (10) and were drawn using the purposive sampling procedure. Qualitative data were collected using audiotaping of interviews and using the semi structured interviews. Findings from the study indicated that participants have diverse forms of training that helps them to do their work. It was also found that the PwDs found it difficult to get closer to community leaders to give them information and that they live with very difficult and horrific experiences. The study further revealed that, interpersonal communication has enhanced professional growth of some persons with disability. It is therefore recommended that there must be effective communication skills developed among persons with disabilities that are significant for achieving excellence and increased productivity and performance in PwDs; hence management of various organizations should take it upon themselves to train more interpreters and give all the necessary support to such persons.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0. Background to the Study

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) Article 1 defines a person with a disability as someone who has long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others' (UN 2007, p1.). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 15.3% of global citizens have some form of disability, with 2.9% having severe functioning limitations (WHO and World Bank 2011). The deep-rooted misconceptions of disability are subject to each individual's interpretation of traditional beliefs (Devkota et al., 2019). Within many families, a person with a disability is considered a burden and is disfavoured because disability is perceived to be a result of past life sins (Baral, 2018). The employment rate of persons with disabilities is meagre compared to the typical population (Morris et al., 2018) and is also declining (Friedman, 2020). Persons with disabilities are likely to be financially dependent on the family because of employment constraints (Poudyal et al. 2018). The challenges persons with disabilities face in employment participation hinder the global poverty reduction strategy (Lamichhane et al., 2014; WHO & World Bank, 2011). In addition, social provision for disabled people has been much criticised for reinforcing their dependency, and it seems that many disabled people lead very lonely and isolated lives (Barnes & Mercer, 2010).

People with disabilities are more present and visible in today's society than ever before, yet these individuals continue to have significant communication support needs that remain unmet (Brady et al., 2016). Communication serves as a necessary

requisite to form any relationship without which man; as a social being feels disadvantaged (Firmin, Firmin & Merial, 2013). Leading an equal life means that one's wishes and needs are accounted and done with full satisfaction. As language is very fluid which can be twisted according to human needs, it can also prove to be an important tool of empowerment. Mehrabian (1971) a researcher found out that 70-90 % of a person's communication is based on non-verbal cues in the form of eye contact, body gestures and only a small percentage comprises of the actual words spoken. Communication is both a basic need and a basic right of all human beings (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2014; United Nations, 2008). Any consideration of quality of life must take into account the degree to which individuals can effectively communicate with, and thus be full participants in, the community in which they live. Even individuals who may appear to demonstrate purposeful communication ("unintentional" communicators) can be perceived as potential communicators because their behavior is interpreted by the listener as communicative (Ogletreer et al., 2012; Reichle & Brady, 2012; Sigafos, et al., 2000). Communication may have common or different forms, take linguistic or non-linguistic forms, and take place via spoken or other means. Thus, all persons do communicate in some way; however, the effectiveness and efficiency of this communication vary with a number of individual and environmental factors (Brady et al., 2016). The contention that all people, even those with the most severe disabilities communicate, suggests that every individual can, willingly or otherwise, impact others by behaviors interpreted as expressions of purpose. Some individuals with severe disabilities develop unconventional and highly individualized or idiosyncratic means to communicate (Brady et al., 2016).

Most researchers and practitioners have re-evaluated the critical importance of interpersonal dialogue or communication among Persons with Disability (PWD) in many ways (Job Outlook, 2016). This is especially critical for students, employees, and especially persons with disability. There exists a lot of prejudice in our world today particularly when it comes to dealing with persons with disability. Thus, actions and inactions of individuals are easily miscommunicated and sometimes gets on the nerves of persons with disability (Jones & Pfeiffer, 2008). This is mostly common in our daily lives such as transportation, seeking medical care or relating with others. In all these, studies by Arrey et al., (2018); Wilkinson (2018); Friedman (2020) and Fisher (2021) have determined that interpersonal competence greatly improves a person's competitive advantage in obtaining a position as well as improving the quality of life. A recent study by Malhotra and Singh (2014) noted that relationships and businesses of all kinds place a high relevance on interpersonal effectiveness among PWD because of the centrality of communication skills in the productivity or performance of organizations.

Communication is not just about the words you use, but also your manner of speech, body language, and above all, the effectiveness with which you listen. To communicate effectively, it is important to take into account culture and context. For work and career, technical skills and a related professional degree are crucial for eligibility. Interpersonal communication skills (IPCS) have become essential for achieving and maintaining success in congruence with the current digitalized and globalized world (Prasanna, 2023). Employers actively seek out and hire individuals who not only have the required technical and professional qualifications but are also equipped with good interpersonal skills (Meeks, 2017). Thus, preference is given to qualified candidates with good interpersonal communication skills.

According to Ludlow et al. (2017), communication is the ability to transfer information between different people. It consists of various modes and media involved in communication interchanges. Communication is necessary in personal and professional or business life and, if it is done effectively, it supports organizational growth, survival and future success (Barnes, 2012). According to Namita (2009) communication or dialogue is the main ingredient of business because no business can grow and expand without proper communication channels. Ramsey (2014) states that multinational organizations need effective communication if they want to be successful abroad. Communication skills involve listening and speaking as well as reading and writing. People with good communication always make the things easier and understandable in any relationship whether personal or professional (Silva et al., 2018). To ensure good interpersonal relationship, there is the need to adopt such skills of communication which motivate the associations and organisations toward their learning process and a healthy relationship (Ehinder & Ajibade, 2010). Effective and efficient interpersonal and group communication process is successful when we deliver the message in clear and understandable way. Good communication is considered a strong tool for effectiveness in all relationships (Srivastava, 2018).

Interpersonal communication skills are those verbal and non-verbal skills through which individuals communicate their message to the other party (Bambaeroo & Shokrpour, 2017). Interpersonal communication skill is essential for maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships and the smooth functioning of an organization. That is why the human resources and management department (directly involved in interactions with individuals inside and outside the organization) must be proficient in Interpersonal communication skills (Glomo, 2015; Calanca et al. (2019). An evaluation of the scope of business organization indicates business school graduates

aspiring to succeed in the competitive workforce must be capable of communicating with internal, external, national, and global audiences of the organization in which they work (Fallows & Steven, 2000 cited in Okoro et al., 2017).

Studies (Woodward, Sendall and Ceccucci, 2010; Gray, 2010; Job Outlook, 2016) also indicate that effective interpersonal communication is essential for managerial and executive effectiveness strategic organizational planning and implementation. Shewchuk et al. (2006) noted that sound interpersonal communication skills would aid business executives in presenting and explaining information, including negotiating successfully with counterparts. Indeed, strategic planning and activities involve effective communication in verbal, nonverbal, group, and interpersonal contexts. Additionally, with proficient interpersonal communication skills, small businesses, medium-sized companies, and entrepreneurs could successfully negotiate contracts and compete for big market-share with enhanced credibility (Shewchuk et al., 2006).

As a result of increasing focus on communication competence as a strategic resource, industry analysts and management practitioners have suggested the need for integration of various forms of communication in business education curriculum in order to adequately equip and prepare students for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workforce (Woodward et al., 2010). The communication skills needed for competitive advantage should include cross-cultural, intercultural, nonverbal, listening, and presentation skills for global workplaces (Sahadevan et al., 2021). Additionally, effective and efficient interpersonal and group communication skills are significant factors in evaluating the overall success of all who seek new jobs, travel to new places for businesses or diverse care services.



Singh (2014) noted that organizational recruiters place a higher emphasis on interpersonal communication skills as essential characteristic selecting and interviewing job applicants. As scholars across business and communications disciplines continue to identify and evaluate essential skills needed to achieve the level of productivity, performance, and excellence needed for competitive advantage, competence in oral communication, employers identified writing, speaking, and listening skills as fundamental (Okoro et al., 2017). These skills are the prerequisites for personal and professional success in the current workforce. Scholars have stressed core challenges that disabled persons face, such as cultural stereotypes, discrimination, infrastructure accessibility, communication barriers, and gender imbalance (e.g. Al-Zboon & Smadi, 2015; Kleynhans & Kotze, 2014; Lorenzo & Van Rensburg, 2016; Majiet & Africa, 2015).

Barriers to persons with disabilities' employability relate to accessibility, funding, attitudes, policies and communication (Christoffel Blinden Mission, 2016a). According to Brady (2000); Sevcik and Ronski (2002); Snell and Brown (2010). communication plays a major role in persons with disabilities' employability and communication intervention has to do with the systematic effort of improving how individuals understand the communication of others and express themselves.

### **1.1. Interpersonal communication**

Empirically established components of individual interpersonal communication such as adaptability, conversational involvement, conversational management, empathy, effectiveness of the conversation, appropriateness for the situation, active listening, self-awareness, self-management, social competence, and social awareness are factors associated with the effectiveness of interpersonal communication (Canary et al., 2000; Egan, 2006; Goleman, 1995). This suggests that

the way in which an individual uses interpersonal components is important in determining the success of interpersonal communication. There are four different, yet specific, perspectives from which one can study interpersonal communication (Rubin et al., 2000).

These perspectives are the following: (a) Relational communication is governed by roles of the sender and receiver that are shared by two people simultaneously in order to create meaning; (b) Situational communication occurs between two people in a particular context; (c) Quantitative communication includes person-to-person interactions that consist of impersonal communication; (d) Functional communication is governed by achieving interpersonal goals. For this study, I will not be looking to one specific perspective to define interpersonal communication. Rather, the intention of my study is to better understand how persons with disabilities master interpersonal communication across different interpersonal communication perspectives. Accordingly, it is important to identify and define the different types of interpersonal communication to offer the reader more information and to contextually locate the study's working definition of interpersonal communication. Interpersonal communication is a person-to-person interaction between two or more individuals who bring to the exchange different life experiences, varied levels of communication skills, and diverse perceptual sets regarding communication (Drussell, 2012).

Tarone (1980) adds that communication between two people is the management of messages for the purpose of creating meaning. Tarone highlights the process of meaning sharing between communicating individuals as serving the function of interpersonal need fulfilment. These needs include affection (a desire to express and receive love), inclusion (a desire to be in the company of other people)

and control (a desire to influence the events and people around us) (Schutz, 1966). For example, the conversation we have with a stranger on the bus may not be the result of an explicit goal but may serve to fulfill our implicit need for inclusion. In summary, effective interpersonal communication is herein defined as the purposeful and intentional engagement with others that fosters a shared meaning between individuals while fulfilling individual goals and basic interpersonal needs.

Interpersonal communication is a basic life skill that enables us to navigate our way through the different situations and experiences we face in our lives. Interpersonal communication is defined in many different ways by many different scholars (e.g., Engel & Wysocka, 2006; Goffman, 1967; Gouran & Wiethoff, 1994; Grivas, 2004; Knapp & Daly, 2002). DeVito (2013) stated that interpersonal communication as the verbal and nonverbal interaction between two (or sometimes more than two) independent people. Frymier and Houser (2000) stated that communication skills served as significant predictors of learning and motivation, particularly referential skill and ego support. Communication of teachers and students is relational as well as content-driven. However, the evidence is growing that effective teaching means personal communication between teachers and students as well as expertise and effective delivery of the content. As argued by Fricke et al (2013) and Wubbels et al (2012), an interpersonal impression of classroom management impacted the students' knowledge gains within a specific topic.

Lee (2011) discovered that interpersonal communication was considerably more appreciated by employees, compared to mediated forms of communication. Particularly when sensitive issues were communicated and also throughout the phase of relationship building. This view is shared by others, such as Jo and Shim (2005) arguing that Interpersonal Communication has a positive influence on trust and

relationship-building as well as obtaining a better ability to transfer information. Generally speaking, interpersonal communication is primarily concerned with the transmission of information from one person to another (Grivas, 2004). Different sensory channels (seeing, hearing, smelling, and feeling) used by the sender and the receiver most commonly take two distinct forms: direct and indirect channels (Knapp & Daly, 2002). Direct channels are those that are obvious, verbal and nonverbal, and are easily recognized by the receiver. Verbal channels include ‘words, both written and spoken, and nonverbal channels include, but are not exclusive to, facial expressions, body movements, and sounds all transmitted from the sender’ (Knapp & Daly, 2002, p.145). Indirect channels of communication are often recognized by the receiver on a subconscious level.

Many of the interpersonal communication definitions I have encountered thus far describe communication as verbal projection, and sharing ideas and insights. Ironically, listening, the act of holding one’s spoken words may be the most integral part of communicating with others and it appears as though listening and the importance of listening is minimally mentioned in communication literature. Disability is still strongly linked to the idea of incapacity, in which persons with disabilities are responsible for their condition, presenting a stigmatizing view (Violante & Leite, 2011). Interpersonal communication allows PWDs to connect with others, build relationships, and establish social support networks. This is particularly important because people with disabilities may face isolation or barriers to social interaction. Through effective communication, PWDs can form friendships, seek emotional support, and engage in social activities.

Interpersonal communication allows PWDs to express their experiences, challenges, and perspectives to others. By sharing their unique insights, they can

increase understanding and awareness among others. This can help break down stereotypes, reduce stigmatization, and foster a more inclusive and empathetic society. Many disabilities involve challenges related to speech, hearing, or nonverbal communication. However, interpersonal communication can help overcome these barriers. Assistive technologies, sign language interpreters, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, and accessible communication strategies can bridge communication gaps, ensuring effective interaction between PWDs and others. It is therefore on this background that this study assesses interpersonal communication in promoting professional growth with a focus on persons with disability at the Sene West District.

## **1.2. Statement of the problem**

There is a large body of knowledge dedicated to the examination of interpersonal communication (e.g., Engel & Wysocka, 2006; Guerrero et al., 2018; Burgoon & Hale, 2018; Knapp & Daly, 2018; DeVito, 2019; Berger & Calabrese, 2017; Tardy, 2019; Canale & Swain, 2017; Trepte & Reinecke, 2017; Daly & Scheibling, 2017; Wood, 2017) and communication competence (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2019; Wiemann, 2017; Myers & Booth-Butterfield, 2017; Canary & Dindia, 2018; Witt & Behnke, 2019; Ruben, 2017; Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2018). Given that communication plays a central role in personal relationships and that relationships are assessed by the communication skills of others (Burlinson, 2003), impairment in the ability to effectively communicate may hinder successful relational development in young adults. This can potentially impact an array of life areas such as family relationships, socialization, school performance, and employment.

The role of interpersonal communication of an individual can never be ignored. Studies have also indicated that as persons with disabilities in institutions

increases, problems regarding discrimination and bullying increases (Grimes et al., 2017; Miskovic & Gabel, 2012). Other researches by Naami et al. (2012) discovered that many people with disabilities in Ghana experience challenges and receive hostile treatment from their peers, instructors, and administrators because of some barriers such as communication and cultural perspectives. A study by Nel, Moatoana and Mothibi (2015) in a school setting found that many people including students with disabilities experience discrimination, hate, and negative attitudes from their peers, instructors, and administrators. Akin and Huang (2019) discovered that people with disabilities who experience frequent or high amount of stigma and discrimination may develop lower self-esteem. Furthermore, literature reveals that people with disabilities in institutions in Ghana experience challenges in their daily lives (Braun & Naami, 2019; Morley & Croft, 2011).

Berko et al. (2007) discovered that the communicator's acknowledgment of each other's uniqueness and the form of messages that exhibit a form of perception is the basis of interpersonal communication. Klein et al. (2008) added that interpersonal skills consist of various social skills and competence, face-to-face communication, human relational skills, and soft skills. All these skills help individuals perform better (home, workplace environment) than those who lack them. Literature also indicates that people with disabilities find it difficult to take advantage of important programs that enhance positive outcomes (Boney et al., 2019; Dunn et al. 1994).

People with disabilities are often excluded in work, because of ignorance and prejudice of the society. The most explanation given is their inability to compete on the basis of relevant skills or qualification. To be employed, and have a job is a symbol that you are independent (Pulakos, 2005). One is respected, have confident, communicate very well, have good interpersonal relationship and responsible (Ntibebe,

2011). While there is limited research specifically focusing on the phenomenology of interpersonal communication among people with disabilities (PWDs), some studies have explored communication experiences and gaps in this context (Shafir, 2018; Borg, & Larsson Lund, 2019; Valles & Knibbe, 2021; Ramisch, & Lukenchuk, 2021; Heinemann, & Diller, 2019). These studies utilize phenomenological approaches to explore the lived experiences of individuals with disabilities in interpersonal communication contexts. They shed light on aspects such as the challenges, perspectives, dignity, participation, and unmet communication needs of PWDs. While more research is needed in this area, these studies provide valuable insights into the phenomenology of interpersonal communication among PWDs and the importance of addressing communication barriers and enhancing inclusive communication practices.

The gap therefore is that, even though there have been several works on persons with disability, attention has not been given to interpersonal communication in promoting professional growth of persons living with disability. This study fills that gap in order to understand how interpersonal communication is carried out by studying people living with disabilities to understand their lived experiences and also to examine what strategies they use in communicating. Again, the absence of specific code of conducts or strategies does not foster interpersonal communication skills especially with persons with disability. Therefore, there is the need for this phenomenological study in identifying the role of effective interpersonal communication and professional growth of persons living with disabilities in the Sene West District.

### **1.3. Purpose of the study**

The primary aim of the study was to explore the lived experiences of PWDs at Sene West District in order to understand how the role of interpersonal



communication in promoting professional growth. To achieve the main purpose of this study, the following specific objectives were set to:

1. Explore the lived experiences of persons living with disabilities
2. Examine the strategies persons living with disability use in communicating and how that enhances their professional growth.

#### **1.4. Research questions**

From the objectives of the study, this research study would provide responses to the question;

1. What are the lived experiences of persons living with disability?
2. What strategies are used by people living with disabilities in communicating and how has that enhanced their professional growth?

#### **1.5. Significance of the study**

The importance of this study is critical on many fronts. This is because investigating strategies to enhance interpersonal communication skill helps establish a professional development among people from all walks of life. The study will be of immense benefit to policy makers and institutions to help bring out the best in people, in terms of communication.

This study also highlights some crucial interpersonal communication skills and their role in everyday interactions at the workplace. Generally, individuals have to learn and improve these skills after joining institutes that train them in cliché skills while leaving out the essential aspect of communication: interpersonal communication skills.

Finally, the findings of this can be used as a reference by students, practitioners and academia.



## 1.6. Study area

Sene West District is located in the North-Eastern corner of the Brong-Ahafo Region. The District is located between Longitude 0° 15'E and 15'W and Latitude 7° N and 8° 30'N. It is the largest District in the region and covers an estimated landmass of 4,293.22 square kilometers (km<sup>2</sup>) which is about 10.9% of the region's land area of 39,557.08 km<sup>2</sup>. The Sene West District shares common boundary with Sene East District to the east which is one of the newly created Districts carved out of the then Sene District, to the North-West by Pru District which is well known for its fish market. Atebubu-Amantin District which is directly linked by a primary road from Kumasi and is well known for its yam market is the western boundary; and the district's boundary to the South-West is the Sekyere East District whose main economic activity is farming and small-scale processing of agricultural produce (cottage industries).

The district lies within the Sene-Obosom River basin and the Volta Lake. Three major rivers, Volta, Sene and Pru surround the district. However, only their intermittent tributaries drain the district. In addition to these major rivers, there are streams which have the potential for water transport, irrigation and domestic use especially during the dry season. The district, which falls between the wet semi-equatorial and tropical continental climatic regions of Ghana, experiences two seasons namely: a rainy season and a long dry season. The rainy season normally begins in April and ends in October, giving way to the dry season from November to March. Generally, rainfall ranges between 900mm - 1,089mm. The district is characterized by high temperatures throughout the year with a mean annual temperature of about 27°C. The relative humidity of the area is quite high, averaging over 75 percent. These climatic conditions adversely affect agricultural activities in the district.

The Volta Lake and the Sene River could therefore be harnessed through irrigation schemes to assist farmers and thus raise agricultural production for domestic consumption and export. The vegetation of the Sene West District is predominantly Guinea Savannah Woodland with high undergrowth and scattered trees. The major trees are Shea butter tree, Dawadawa, Baobab, Mahogany, Papao, Senya, Kane, Onyina, Kubre, Kyenkyen, Watapor, Wama and Neem. Some of these trees are of economic and domestic value. For instance, the Shea Butter tree can be used for medicinal purposes, cosmetic skin preparations and food. The Onyina tree serves as timber for carpentry and building purposes. Generally, tall grasses such as the elephant grass and varieties of anthropogenic species coexist with these trees in the district.

Sene District was created out of the then Atebubu District in 1988 by the Legislative Instrument (LI) 1488. The Sene West District was created out of the Sene District by the Legislative Instrument (LI), 2088 of 2012. It has Kwame Danso as the District capital, which is about 245km from Sunyani, the capital of the Brong-Ahafo Region. The Administration of the District as at 2010 is headed by the District Chief Executive (DCE) who is the central government representative at the district level. The DCE is supported by the District Co-ordinating Director and other line management staff. The District Assembly has one (1) Town Council at Kwame Danso and two (2) Area Councils located at Bantama and Kyeamekrom. The office of the District Assembly is the highest authority in the district. The next office in line is the Executive Committee, which performs the executive and administrative functions of the Assembly through its various Sub-Committees. The technocrats, headed by the District Co-ordinating Director, carry out the day-to-day business of the Assembly.

## **1.7. Organization of the study**

The study has been organized into five chapters. Chapter one provides an overview of the background to the study which served as the basis for the entire study. This is followed by statement of the problem as well as the purpose of the study, and research questions to be investigated. The chapter concludes with the significance, scope, delimitation, limitations of the study and organization of the study. Chapter two focuses on the review of related literature. It discussed comprehensively, literature pertaining to interpersonal communication, effective communication, what pertains in Ghana and beyond and growth of persons with disability. Theoretical and Empirical studies were also reviewed.

Chapter three dwells on research methods highlighting research design that has been utilized to execute the research. It also looks at sampling procedures, instruments for data collection, and finally, the analysis of data. Chapter four reports on the results stemming from the analysis of the data obtained from the field work. This is followed by discussion of the results making reference to studies that support the findings of the current study. Chapter five dwell on the summary of the study, conclusions and recommendations. It ends with suggested areas for further research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0. Introduction**

This chapter reviews previous literature on the chosen topic. It starts with the theoretical framework that underpins the study. The chapter further identifies empirical works that others have done in the area under study.

#### **2.1. The concept of interpersonal communication**

Interpersonal communication involves one-to-one conversations between people that are complicated by the various situational, cultural, complementary, contrasting, and/or emotional contexts they take place within. Interpersonal communication can include all aspects of verbal and nonverbal communication, and is either informal or formal, depending on whether it takes place between strangers, friends, family members, co-workers, etc. Interpersonal communication also includes on-line communication as well as face-to-face interactions. Group identity adds further complexity to interpersonal communication. Berger (1986) discusses how uncertainty affects the quality of interpersonal communication, and argues that uncertainty reduces interpersonal communication. Miller (2005, p.183) has highlighted some of the effects of uncertainty on interpersonal communication:

- i. Verbal and nonverbal communication and the level of intimacy are positively related.
- ii. Verbal and nonverbal communication and similarity are positively related.
- iii. The amount of verbal/nonverbal communication and liking are positively related.
- iv. Similarity and liking are positively related.

In 1960s, Homans, Blau and Emerson introduced social exchange theory, drawing the attention of scholars to the dynamics of the processes of human interaction. According to social exchange theory, “the length, kind, quality and quantity of interpersonal communication are based on the benefits individuals expect to earn in relationships” (McDonnell et al., 2006, p. 359). Thus, during our initial communication with other people, we evaluate whether we will gain, or, in contrast, lose something we value if we pursue relationships with them. Theoretically, the stereotypes, positive and negative, we connect to those we communicate with interpersonally weigh in our evaluations of whether to pursue further communication with them (Cook & Rice, 2003, p.53). Symbolic interactionism is another theoretical approach that is helpful in assessing the effects stereotypes can have on interpersonal communication. This perspective, introduced by George Herbert Mead in the 1920s, suggests that our interactions with others are affected by our definitions of various types of people and social groups. Since George Herbert Mead introduced this perspective to American sociologists in the 1920s, it has become a widely accepted theory. Based on this theory, it is correct to assume that we are prone to defining people and groups in ways that eventually coalesce into stereotypes that hold either positive or negative connotations.

Mongeau and Henningsen (2008, p. 367) explain four stages of social interactions: “At first, individuals interact very little. Then, they become more relaxed to communicate more. Later, an open communication between individuals takes place, and finally communication means a more and deeper personal interaction.” It’s not difficult to assume that stereotypes can affect the way these stages unfold for people who are getting to know each other. Another trait of communication relevant to stereotyping is its inescapability. Many assume that if one says nothing, he/she is

not communicating. Many communication scholars, however, argue that we are always communicating, even when we don't think we are, because facial expressions, body posture, gestures, and even the way we dress, are part of interpersonal communication. Moreover, communication is irreversible, meaning that it cannot be taken back. In light of such realities, learning about other cultures and social groups will often mitigate the effects of negative stereotypes.

According to Wiio (1978), if a message can be understood in different ways, it will be understood in the way that harms most, and Hopkins (2011) has written that personal, cultural, and language differences influence interpersonal communication. In addition, Flauaus' (2013) research suggests that one can never be certain how effectively we are as interpersonal communicators, since there are times when those we are talking with aren't really listening to us, even though they might look like they are. When there are no cues for people to know what particular strategy is suitable for a specific interpersonal situation, people often go for a "default strategy" that is more common among most of the people (Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 2010). In addition, people choose a way of interacting, communicating, and maintaining a relationship that matches better with their social class, cultural identification, political view and economical status which can make them fit better into the popular, superior or in-group category of individuals. In general, depending on what kind society an individual belongs to, our relationships, communication, and social interactions differ (Greif, 1989).

In "collectivist societies" peoples' social lives are bounded by clearly defined social interactions. These people and groups have fewer opportunities to fit themselves into other groups and they have less exposure to new social interactions and relations. Now, for any reason, if a member of the collective society is excluded

from his/her current status/ category/ group, it is difficult for him/her to fit into any other alternative status/ category/ group that would accept him/her with one's own beliefs and standards. The cost of being excluded is a lot higher for the individuals living in a collective society compared to an "individualistic society" (Yeung & Kashima, 2012). In comparison, in individualistic society, the person meets more new people and he/she is more likely used to new situations, new relations and different social interactions. Consequently, the individuals are more open to new situations and new people outside their current relations and interactions. The risk of feeling being excluded is less as well (Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 2010).

Western society is an example of individualistic society, and Eastern is a good example of collectivistic society. Western society and individuals are more likely following the default social strategy of "assert yourself clearly and accurately." In a sharp contrast to Westerns, Easterners are more concerned about their society standards and harmony, so they try to be less confrontational and logical reasoning during their interpersonal communication. Trying to be non-offensive is a part of their culture and social interactions (Ting-Toomey, 1985). Such cultural characteristics about Westerns make them seem more direct and logical when interacting with others. So, it is not fair to say that Americans stereotype and offend the others more than non-Americans. Actually, it seems that they assert themselves more logically, clearly and accurately, although the way that they want to uncover the truth is sometimes associated with lack of knowledge and stereotypic images and messages that they have fixed in their minds in order to have shorter and faster ways to conclude and fix something. Schug et al. (2010) added that Westerners are more likely to "self-disclose" rationally and honestly than Easterners. The motive to be accurate and simple is a part of American culture, reflected in communication as well.

To communicate accurately, simply and directly, one should communicate informative information as the default strategy of communication (Hall, 1976). Obviously, people from different social and cultural settings have been exposed to different strategies of communication. Leung and Bond (1982) empirically discussed that Easterners consider maintaining harmony in relationships and integrity in interpersonal communications with others more than Westerners. The participants were asked to give overt responses to an unhelpful target person. The results showed that Easterners were more moderate and less punitive than Americans. More recent studies put more focus on communication differences in collectivistic and individualistic societies (Kim, et al., 1994; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1996). In collectivistic societies (like Easterners), there is stronger interpersonal sensitivity, and group members care about the other individuals' feelings. So, there are fewer offensive social interactions such as negative stereotypes.

Kim et al. (2008) found that Easterners and Westerners have different perceptions of communication: Americans look for more clarity and simplicity, whereas non-American Easterners think about maintaining the communication with less hurt to the person's feeling they are interacting with. Commonality is another factor that influences the way and the aim people communicate with each other. Larrick et al. (2009) reported the results of their empirical social science studies and discussed that people prefer communicating the familiar knowledge, so they would rather communicate with individuals who they have more in common with. Creating stronger social bonds and more connected categories of people with higher percentage of commonality are some of the other remarkable positive outcomes in this field. But what is the negative fact behind this? According to Larrick et al. (2009), stereotypes and classifications will be amplified by such perspective in communication. Their



report explains that seeking social bonds, people prefer to communicate with specific groups of people who have more commonality with them. Such a group making process ends up with classification and categorization that are parts of stereotypic labelling and making in-group and out-group people in society.

### **2.1.1. Key modes of interpersonal communication**

Different sensory channels (seeing, hearing, smelling, and feeling) used by the sender and the receiver most commonly take two distinct forms: direct and indirect channels (Knapp & Daly, 2002). Direct channels are those that are obvious, verbal and nonverbal, and are easily recognized by the receiver. Verbal channels include words, both written and spoken, and nonverbal channels include, but are not exclusive to, facial expressions, body movements, and sounds all transmitted from the sender (Knapp & Daly, 2002, p.145). Indirect channels of communication are often recognized by the receiver on a subconscious level. This includes the interpretation of the sender's body language that reflects possible feelings and motivations around the message and the delivery of the message. For example, the receiver may describe indirect channels of communication as a "hunch", intuition, or gut feeling. The skill of listening to others is an important skill to mention when considering different channels of interpersonal communication (Knapp & Daly, 2002). For example, you are at a dinner party. Someone is telling a story about his or her promotion, someone is complaining about a parking ticket, and someone else is relaying his or her recent trip to Vancouver. Everyone is anxious to talk, and to tell his or her own story.

This type of superficial (low personal investment) communication highlights a "cocktail" type of talking and listening. The party may be a success, but people go home without hearing or knowing each other. This anecdote highlights the importance of both listening and communicating as two essential skills for making and keeping

relationships (McKay et al., 2009). Listening is a commitment to understanding how people feel by putting aside your own beliefs, anxieties, or personal agendas. In a North American context, intentional engagement in interpersonal communication with another person is a compliment because it tells the other person that you care about what is happening to them in their lives by being interested in and validating their experience.

### **2.1.2. Effective communication and channel of communication**

When a satisfactory effect is an outcome of sharing information that is either intentional or unintentional, then it is considered that there is effective communication in the organization. When the top-level management encodes the transmitted message is interpreted by several entities and emulate in a manner that is desirable. However, this effect also ensures that during the process of communication, this message is not obstructed. Hence, it is believed that communication that is effective in serving the main reason as per its intentions. When the effect is not achieved as it was intended, the other factors are evaluated to find out the ineffectiveness of the conversation. These factors include the barriers of communication (Berry, 2011). Modern organizations have many available channels of communication. These channels have various levels of use and effectiveness. In an organization, disclosure takes several channels, including the written, mediated pathways such as mobile phones computers, and face to face form. The written form of communication dominates in most organizations. For organizations to adapt to the ever-changing business environment and get a competitive edge in the market, it needs to take advantage of the communication as the central part of its activities. There is a high chance that an organization is likely to have lousy performance if it has poor communication. On the other hand, if the process of communication is excellent, then the effectiveness and

the overall organizational performance are likely to be right in the end. The medium that is being chosen in an organization for communication depends on its effectiveness, efficiency, and costs (Câmpeanu-Sonea & Sonea, 2012).

According to Bain et al. (2014), Effective communication helps us better understand a person or situation and enables us to resolve differences, build trust and respect, and create environments where creative ideas, problem solving, affection, and caring can flourish. This is important not only in personal relationships but professional and organizational relationships as well. According to Frenkel and Cohen (2014), effective communication in organizations involves first establishing a baseline for performance, then identifying areas for improvement, then implementing improvement actions and then measuring again. A well thought out organizational plan can improve the daily functions of a department and should focus on effective communication and listening. According to Mascle (2013), for current communication channels to be utilized properly academics and practitioners agree that good written communication skills are essential because professional ability and performance are strongly linked with communication competence. Many employers specifically identify communication skills as a job requirement (Mascle, 2013).

According to Coiera (2006), communication systems are the formal or informal structures that organizations use to support their communication needs. A communication system involves people, the messages they wish to convey, the technologies that mediate conversations, and the organizational structures that define and constrain the conversations that are allowed to occur. A communication channel is the 'pipe' along which a message is conveyed. There are a wide variety of communication channels available, from basic face-to-face conversation, to the telephone or e-mail, to the medical record. Channels also have attributes like capacity

and noise, which determine their suitability for different tasks. When two parties exchange messages across a channel at the same time, this is known as synchronous communication. It is the nature of synchronous communication that it is interruptive, and these interruptions may have a negative impact on individuals who have high cognitive loads.

For example, a busy clinician may forget to carry out a clinical task because he or she has been interrupted by a telephone call while he or she was busy. In contrast, when individuals can be separated in time, they may use an asynchronous channel to support their interaction. Since there can be no simultaneous discussion, conversations occur through a series of message exchanges. This can range from notes left on a colleague's desk, to sophisticated electronic messaging systems. A communication system is a bundle of different components, and the utility of the overall system is determined by the appropriateness of all the components together. If even one element of the system bundle is inappropriate for the setting, the communication system can underperform (Coiera, 2006).

Communication means sharing information among different parties. For one to communicate successfully in a team or with others, at home, school, work or in the community, we must understand the different communication environments and the various barriers which prevent messages from being sent and received successfully. A communication barrier is anything that prevents us from receiving and understanding the messages others use to convey their information, ideas, and thoughts (Rani, 2016). There are different barriers to effective communication. Empathy is important for overcoming barriers to communication based on culture. Language barriers occur when people do not speak the same language, or do not have the same level of ability in a language. There are many environmental factors affecting the effective

communication process. Four types of barriers: are process barriers, physical barriers, semantic barriers, and psychosocial barriers (Eisenberg, 2010).

Messages can be blocked by environmental factors, such as the physical setting or the situation where communication takes place. A suitable choice of media can be overcome by distance barriers between people. Any number of physical distractions can interfere with the effectiveness of communication, including a telephone call, drop-in visitors, distances between people, walls, and static on the radio. People often take physical barriers for granted, but sometimes they can be removed. The ability to communicate effectively enables people to maintain personal relationships (Mumba, 2019). Within an organizational structure, it is vital to have team spirit and individuals should work in coordination with each other and be cooperative towards each other. Formal and informal means of communication occurs within an organization. One of the crucial factors is proximity within an organizational structure. There is a system of hierarchy and those individuals who are placed at the higher levels of the hierarchy have closed doors, offices and cabins and are physically placed at the distance; their subordinates are in this way unable to communicate with them and this is a physical barrier to effective communications. Other examples include Time, space, place and medium used.

Language is the means which is said to be the most effective means of communication with others. The language provides understanding of the content that an individual is willing to express or communicate with the others. When two persons or groups of people are involved in communicating with each other and if a common language is used that is understandable to all individuals, then their objectives will be fulfilled, and the process of communication will be made effective. Usually, barriers often go hand-in hand with cultural differences, posing additional problems and

misunderstandings in the workplace (Morris, 2002). Thus, language barriers can easily give impact in the work performance because messages can easily be misconstrued. Language barriers occur when people do not speak the same language, or do not have the same level of ability in a language. However, barriers can also occur when people are speaking the same language. Sometimes barriers occur when we use inappropriate levels of language or we use jargon or slang which is not understood by one or more of the people communicating. Often the situation in which the conversation is taking place, and whether people have prior experience of the matter being discussed, can also contribute to such barriers being formed. Within an organization, it is vital to develop a common language to communicate appropriately.

A common cause of communication breakdown in a workplace situation is people holding different attitudes, values, and discrimination. An example of this is differing perceptions people have of power and status. When it comes to attitudinal barriers, looking at them as those behaviours or perceptions that are divisive in nature, sullen disagreement or even overt conflict is a better understanding. They all interfere with and undermine communication.

## **2.2. Interpersonal effectiveness as a strategic resource**

Consistent with the emphasis on interpersonal communication competence, Fallows and Steven (2000) noted that in view of the challenging economic recession and financial difficulties nowadays, it is inadequate for college graduates to possess the knowledge and skills of their academic discipline and training, graduating students and other job seekers should endeavor to acquire the essential/soft skills that would place them at a competitive advantage. This emphasis was also echoed by the recent study in the 2016 Workforce-Skills Preparedness Report, which clearly highlighted the soft skills employers seek of new college graduates. An evaluation of the scope of

business organization indicates business school graduates aspiring to succeed in the competitive workforce must be capable of communicating with internal, external, national, and global audiences of the organization in which they work. Studies also indicate that effective interpersonal communication is essential for managerial and executive effectiveness strategic organizational planning and implementation.

Shewehuk et al. (2006) noted that sound interpersonal communication skills would aid business executives in presenting and explaining information, including negotiating successfully with counterparts. Indeed, strategic planning and activities involve effective communication in verbal, nonverbal, group, and interpersonal contexts. Additionally, with proficient interpersonal communication skills, small businesses, medium-sized companies, and entrepreneurs could successfully negotiate contracts and compete for big market-share with enhanced credibility. As a result of increasing focus on communication competence as a strategic resource, industry analysts and management practitioners (Woodward et al., 2010; Job Outlook, 2016) have suggested the need for integration of various forms of communication in business education curriculum in order to more adequately equip and prepare students for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workforce. The communication skills needed for competitive advantage should include cross-cultural, intercultural, nonverbal, listening, and presentation skills for global workplaces.

As Noll and Wilkins (2002) stressed, soft/essential skills such as group writing, team work and presentations, group project management, and development interpersonal relationships would enhance the quality of graduating students, because workforce is increasing diverse and students who are inexperienced with heterogeneous or diverse work settings would be challenged with consequence of under-performing. The need for understanding communicating and working in groups has become so



important that some universities, such as Howard University, have developed a separate course in business, management communication, and strategic at undergraduate and graduate levels, focused on teaching interpersonal and group relationships, delivering presentations, critical thinking and analysis, and leadership communication. The Hart Research Associates survey conducted for the Association of American Colleges and Employers -NACE (2016) identified communication apprehension, stage-fright, or nervousness as a single most important factor affecting many employees as well as college graduates. Therefore, the inclusion of oral presentation skills across business education curriculum would improve the standards of presentation and team work for new college graduates (Luthy & Deck, 2007).

### **2.3.Disability**

The concept of disability has shifted from individual impairment to a more social phenomenon. Thus, disability is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives. Disability is a "multifaceted experience covering impairment, activity limitations, and participation restrictions, referring to negative aspect of the interaction between an individual (with health conditions) and that individual's contextual factors (environmental and personal factors)" (WHO/World Bank, 2011 p.4). In this explanation, impairment is considered as a problem in the body function (health conditions); the challenges experienced by an individual in performing a task are considered as activity limitations (environmental limitations); while participation restrictions refer to difficulties PWD encounter in their involvement in life situations. Thus, disability is not only a health issue but a multifaceted phenomenon showing the interaction between the personal characteristics of an individual and the characteristics of his or her social and physical environment.



Disability is, therefore, seen as an outcome of an individual's association with his or her health condition, physical environment and other external factors which represent the circumstances in which the individual lives (WHO, 2001). The emphasis placed on health, environment and external factors create assumptions that every individual has or can have some sort of disability. This description suggests that disability is recognised as a universal human experience which can affect anybody irrespective of time of life, colour, sex, ethnicity or social class (Baffoe, 2013; WHO/World Bank 2011). Overcoming the challenges students with disabilities experience necessitates transformation that could remove attitudinal, social and environmental barriers. In general, understandings of disability in sub-Saharan Africa are influenced by different models of disability including the medical/individual, superstitious/religious, charity and social model (Anthony, 2011).

These models have differently influence people in their perception of individuals with disabilities in society. According to WHO/World Bank (2011), there must be a balancing approach of medical and social models of disability in order to better support individuals with disabilities in society. The concept of disability has shifted, to a large extent, from the medical perspective to the social model. Thus, more emphasis is placed on the perspective that disability is created when social structures that help people to function are not in place, rather than being created by individual impairments (Kaufman, 2011; WHO, 2011). In Ghana, the common understanding of disability is that a person is unable to perform an activity because he or she has a problem with part(s) of the physiological makeup or the mind (Avoke, 2002). The Disability Act 2006 (Act 715) describes a person with disability as: An individual with physical, mental or sensory impairment including a visual, hearing or speech functional disability which gives rise to physical, cultural or social barrier that

substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of that individual (Republic of Ghana, 2006, P.17).

The above definition indicates that disability occurs when there is negative interaction between a person and his or her social environment. During the 2010 National Population Census, the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) defined disability as: A condition which limits the ability of a person to perform specific tasks/activities due to loss or non-function of some parts of the body as a result of impairment or malformation (GSS, 2014). For the GSS, a person is said to be disabled when he or she is unable to or is restricted in the performance of specific tasks or activities due to an impairment. The GSS definition focuses on the impairment as the reason for the failure to perform a certain role rather than society's inability to provide support to the persons with disability to function well. Generally, disability in Ghana has negative connotations, with widespread perception that PWD are unproductive and unable to contribute to the socio-economic development of the society; a phenomenon which has been seen as a recipe for marginalization, stigmatization and discrimination (Al Tarawneh, 2016; Anthony, 2011; Baffoe, 2013; Kitchin, 1998; Wolbring, 2011). In this study, however, the phrase "person with disability" is understood as someone who has difficulty in performing certain functions due to barriers created by the institution of learning.

### **2.3.1. Model of disability**

The understanding is that the physical impairment, activity limitations and participation restrictions are created by lack of support for PWD. According to Llewellyn and Hogan (2000), a model denotes a particular kind of theory which describes phenomena in reference to an abstract system and mechanism. Within concepts of disability, models are used to define impairments and this influences the

mechanisms societies arrange in meeting the needs of persons with disabilities (Rialland, 2006). This means models do not explain the nature of disabilities but rather they facilitate the understanding and perceptions of issues of disabilities. Thus, models of disability are frameworks which describe different understandings and perspectives of disability issues (Rialland, 2006). In African contexts, different models including medical, superstitious, charity and social models of disability influence the understanding of the concept (Anthony, 2011). The medical model of disability places the source of disadvantage experienced by individuals with disabilities as a medical condition and considers such individuals as “abnormal” (Hosking, 2008; Oliver, 1996). The underlying issue within this model is that disability is located within the individuals themselves and they have to be cured in order to restore them to function in an acceptable or “normal” way (Anthony 2011).

This model draws attention to the person’s impairment rather than focusing on the needs and abilities of the person. The model depicts a cycle of dependency and exclusion rather than social justice and equality (Avoke, 2001). The medical model positions the individual to adapt to the environment that surround them in order to fit into the mainstream paradigm. In effect, the medical model does not question the lack of society’s response to the needs of people with disabilities as the cause of disability. It stipulates that people with disability need rehabilitation to make them normal (Hammel et al., 2015). The model has been criticised for contributing to the discrimination and marginalisation against PWD because of the distinctions it makes between “normal” and “abnormal” (Degener, 2016).

Critics of the medical model assert that classifying people according to normality and abnormality connotes lack, limitation, tragedy and deficit (Ferri et al., 2005; Mercieca & Mercieca, 2010; Roets & Goodley, 2008; Shakespeare, 2006). This

assertion sees people with disabilities as lacking and unable to play their full roles in society (Dewsbury et al., 2004). The medical model's attention to individual functional limitations eventually legitimises the social exclusion of people with disabilities (Anthony, 2011). In addition, PWD have criticised the medical model for failing to connect their lived experiences to their world, a situation that makes it difficult to meet their needs (Riddell & Watson, 2014). Moreover, the model has been criticised for its emphasis on medical professionals and other experts who determine how disabled people should live their lives (Hodkinson, 2015). It has, therefore, been argued that reliance on these professionals affects the empowerment of the disabled, stressing non-disabled people's domination in the lives of people with disabilities (Brett, 2002).

A related model is the superstition-based-model which is similar to the medical model of disability in many respects. In most African communities, individuals' attitudes towards PWD are shaped by beliefs and fears that such persons have wronged deities or gods who are considered to influence law and order and, who are capable of exacting punishment to those who stray away from the norms of society. This belief is so intense that even with the introduction of Christianity and Islam, people still persist with the idea that disability is retribution from the 'gods' for offences committed by the individual with disability or by their families against the society. Parents and children are therefore blamed for bringing 'disability' upon themselves (Avoke, 2002). According to Obeng (2007), this model is accepted when the people are superstitious and fatalistic. The superstitious model of disability is prevalent in African societies as a result of lack of education and ignorance of the causes of disability together with a combination of superstition and beliefs (Chataika et al., 2012). The superstitious model influences Ghanaian understanding of disability.

In several societies in Ghana, people feel justified to maltreat and use pejorative labels against persons with disabilities because disability is strongly attributed to superstitious forces (Anthony, 2011; Avoke, 2002; Botts & Evans, 2010; Gadagui, 2010).

The influence of this model is seen in avoidance and stereotyping attitude against people with disabilities. The charity model of disability also recognises PWD as individuals who cannot fend for themselves. It positions PWD as individuals who cannot contribute to society but rather take from others in society (Shakespeare, 2009). Such people are, therefore, perceived as being handicapped by their impairment and need to be pitied because they need assistance (Avoke, 2002; Manset-Williamson & Nelson, 2005). In sub-Saharan African contexts, this model is used to clarify and identify persons with disabilities. The dominant belief in sub-Saharan Africa is that persons with disabilities need special services and charity rather than being in the mainstream of social life. Understanding disability through the charity model reduces PWD to beggars in the streets to fend for themselves in most African countries (Devlieger, 2018; Kassah, 2008; Namwata et al., 2012; Ndlovu & Walton, 2016; Rugoho & Sizaba, 2014). The charity model has, therefore, been criticised for causing low self-esteem, emphasising the disability rather than the person and positioning PWD as imperfect (Harris & Enfield, 2003).

In recent times, there has been a paradigm shift from medical and its related models (such as the superstitious and charity models) of understanding disability toward the social model of disability (Lindsay, 2003). The social model interprets disability as a barrier created by discriminatory attitudes of society and the physical environment but not intrinsic features that 'disable' the individuals and prevent them from participating fully in society (Anthony, 2011; Brown & Boardman, 2011;

Kinsella & Senior, 2008). This model states that the social, cultural, economic and environmental challenges to participation and accessibility that people with impairments experience are created by the society and not their individual deficits (Baffoe, 2013; Burchardt, 2004; Rocco, 2011; Thomas, 2004). The assumption is that when these barriers are removed, people with disability would be less restricted in performing their daily activities (Baffoe, 2013). Therefore, the social model has been seen as an emancipatory approach capable of transforming repressive societies and educational systems through human rights and values that welcome diversity (Anthony, 2011). This model provides a powerful ground through which many people with disability, academics, movements and international policy advocates champion issues of disability (Thomas, 1999). However, the social model has been criticised for ignoring individual experiences of impairments and presenting people with disability as a single group when, in reality, different factors such as race, gender and age influence disability (Hosking, 2008; Oliver, 2013; Smith & Bundon, 2018).

### **2.3.2. Disability policies in Ghana**

A number of international declarations and conventions have sought to protect the fundamental human rights of persons with disabilities, including the UN Declaration on Human Rights (1948), the UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993), the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and the African Decade of the Disabled 2000–2009. At a national level, the Fourth Republican Constitution of 1992 guarantees certain basic rights to persons with disabilities: the rights to live with their families or with foster parents and to participate in social, creative, or recreational activities. There is also the right not to be subjected to differential treatment with respect to their residence other than that

required by their condition or by any improvement they might derive from treatment (1992 Constitution: Article 29(1)(2), in UNDP, 2007).

Although this leaves much room for interpretation, under the Fourth Republican Constitution, persons with disabilities are also guaranteed protection against all exploitation and discriminatory, abusive, or degrading treatment (1992 Constitution: Article 29(4), cited in UNDP, 2007: 130). Persons with disabilities who are engaged in business and employers who work with persons with disabilities are guaranteed some special incentives under the 1992 Constitution (Mensah et al., 2008). However, even though the constitution provides an exhaustive guarantee of the rights of persons with disabilities, these rights were deferred for about 14 years in absence of the legislation needed to give meaningful provision (Mensah et al., 2008).

Another legislated policy that secures the rights of persons with disabilities is the 2006 National Disability Policy. This document seeks to address disability related needs including appropriate training, adequate technical aids, and necessary support services (Mensah et al., 2008). The policy's long-term goal is to mainstream disability in the development process. One of its major objectives is to improve the lives of persons with disabilities by equalising opportunities by 2020. In the short to medium term, the policy seeks to raise awareness of disability and to destabilise disabling attitudes within society. In doing so, the intention is to create an inclusive environment where persons with disabilities are treated respectfully as equal members of society (Mensah et al., 2008). In line with the 1992 Constitution, Mensah et al. (2008) note that the National Disability Policy's has not fully achieved its goals due to the lack of legal support and the inability of civil society to compel the implementation of the policy document (Mensah et al., 2008).



After a long process of lobbying and advocacy work by civil society groups such as the Ghana Federation of the Disabled (GFD), the Persons with Disability Act was finally passed by Parliament in 2006 (GFD, 2011). The Act guarantees persons with disabilities access to public places, free general and specialist medical care, education, employment, and transportation. According to the GFD, the Act also regulates the commitments and other responsibilities of public and private service providers (GFD, 2011). Another outcome has been the establishment of the National Council on Persons with Disabilities, whose main objectives are to propose policies and strategies that enable persons with disabilities to enter and take part in the national development process (UNDP, 2007). The council consists of high-ranking representatives from a number of key ministries as well as from disabled people's organisations and other institutions working on disability-related issues.

Despite its obvious advantages, the Persons with Disability Act has major limitations. The first criticism relates to its lack of equality or non-discrimination provisions (UNDP, 2007). The Act does not include a gender dimension despite the fact that women with disabilities face more discrimination and prejudices at the household and community level than men (Naami et al., 2012). Another criticism relates to the limited scope of sanctions incurred by practices that violate the economic, social and cultural rights of excluded groups, which have to be considered punishable offences (UNDP, 2007). The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) reminds us that the existing provisions in Ghana offer very little actual protection against discrimination (CHRI, 2007). According to Whyte (2010), changes in both the physical (e.g., improving the accessibility of buildings) and social environment (e.g., removing disabling attitudes) must occur before the Act's aims are realised.



### **2.3.3. Employment and persons with disabilities**

The general consensus is that persons with disabilities are severely disadvantaged in the employment market, even when they have completed some form of training (O'Reilly, 2007; Ingstad & Eide, 2011). Disabling attitudes on the part of potential employers and a generally disabling work environment are the main factors contributing to the economic exclusion of persons with disabilities (Ingstad & Eide, 2011). If employed at all, persons with disabilities often end up in low-paid and insecure positions and earn less than their colleagues without disabilities (Ingstad & Eide, 2011).

Despite the lack of reliable data on the employment of persons with disabilities, Ghana's labour market clearly reflects the above situation. According to UNDP report (2007), the employment rate of persons with disabilities in Ghana is, at 69 per cent, significantly lower than the rate of the general population (80 per cent). Naami et al. (2012) notes that low social expectations and disabling social and physical environments are the main contributors to the economic exclusion of persons with disabilities in Ghana. Based on their exclusion, persons with disabilities are often forced to engage in petty trading and street begging as the only economic options available (Kassah, 2008; Naami et al., 2012).

### **2.4. Receptive and expressive communication in individuals with disabilities**

Receptive communication refers to the ability of an individual to understand what is being communicated to them by an external stimulus. There are documented differences in aspects of language comprehension and information processing between individuals with disability and matched typical peers. It has been suggested that at least some of these differences are due to deficits in working memory, attention span, symbolic thought, verbal information, and processing resources (Kail, 1992;

Koul & Clapsaddle, 2006; Merril & Jackson 1992a). Despite these deficits in receptive communication when compared to typical peers, research has shown that adults with profound disability tend to have stronger abilities in receptive communication than in expressive or written forms of communication (Belva et al., 2012). Receptive communication is often better than is perceived by the casual or even professional observer, as is born out in extensive clinical experience over 17 years by one of the consultants (Schalick et al., 2012).

Receptive communication is important for individuals with disabilities in that it constitutes the individual's "understanding" of what is being communicated to them. Regression analyses have also shown that receptive vocabulary was one of the best predictors of performance on a Social Resolution Task for individuals with disabilities and that the influence of receptive vocabulary level was much stronger in those with disabilities than in typical peers (Hippolyte et al., 2010). Therefore, it may be of great importance to assess the degree of receptive communication that is possible for an individual with disabilities, as it represents both what is likely to be their strongest area of communication as well as an area of communication predictive of abilities in other related domains. It is equally important to remember that receptive communication skills may be stronger in some contexts than in others for a given individual: Context is important. Some individuals with disabilities demonstrate an awareness of familiar people, events, and routines, but a formal examination of receptive communication behaviors shows that they cannot be said to necessarily understand all of the communicative acts directed toward them in all contexts.

In a research setting, these individuals are shown to comprehend basic repetitive and context-dependent communicative actions (e.g. single-step in-context directions, association of objects with specific daily routines, and responding to one's own name)

more often than more abstract or symbolic communications (e.g. identification of photographs of familiar people and common objects in a magazine) (Oetting & Rice, 1991). This warns against taking the word of a caretaker or close family member who may suggest that an individual with disabilities “understands everything said to him/her” as generalizable to novel situations or more symbolic messages. With respect to financial knowledge and services, an example of the variation in comprehension and perceived comprehension by researchers is suggested by Mansfield & Pinto (2008).

Their study examined understanding of basic financial tools like credit cards among individuals with consequential disabilities. Of an initial sample of 72 individuals, 28 declined to participate and 3 were excluded because they could not identify a picture of a credit card as a credit card. Of the remaining 46, 95% received income from social security. 100% responded, “yes,” when asked if they knew what a credit card is. However, on follow-up questioning none of the participants could offer a completely correct description of a credit card and only 76% provided even a partially correct answer (“It’s a rectangle;” “Plastic with money on it;” “You go to a store and buy stuff with it.”). Had the researchers only communicated with a yes/no response mechanism, they would have come away with a rather incomplete perception of the participants’ comprehension. Consequently, improving communication, receptive (and expressive), is key to the activities of researchers and service providers alike. Amongst those efforts to improve communication is the individualized functional approach.

Once an individual’s level of receptive communicative capacity has been assessed, there are some methods that have been shown to improve comprehension in both individuals with disabilities and their typical peers. For example, it appears that

an inverse relationship exists between the understanding of an external stimulus and complexity of the stimulus for both these groups (Oetting & Rice, 1991). This effect is greater in those with ID, perhaps due to neuropsychological deficits mentioned above. Repeated listening experiences have also been shown to play a significant role in the perception of synthetic speech on the part of individuals with mild-to-moderate intellectual disabilities as well as in typical participants (Koul & Clapsaddle, 2006).

The type of stimulus presented may also have a significant effect on receptive communication in this population. Individuals with disabilities who were successful at identity matching tasks were better at matching pictures to objects than at matching icons, pantomimes, or speech to objects and that delayed matching tasks were most successful using spoken names (Brady & McLean, 1998). Slowing down both the pace of communication as well as the pace at which new concepts are introduced has also been suggested as a means of improving receptive communication for individuals with ID (Oetting & Rice, 1991; Gallagher, 2002). Interestingly, no differences in receptive communication were observed in one study when individuals with disabilities were grouped according to sex, age, concurrent mental illness, or concurrent pervasive developmental disability (Casella 2004). This point also supports the idea that an individualized assessment of receptive communicative capacity may be most appropriate in devising a communication strategy for a given individual, as common demographic information such as age, sex, and concurrent diagnoses have not been shown to be reliably predictive of increased or decreased communicative capacity.

In contrast to receptive communication, expressive communication is the area of communicative acts in which an individual attempts to relay information directed externally. Expressive communication is often thought of as speech in typical adults,

but in both typical and disabled persons expressive communication comprise a number of complementary non-speech acts as well. This is important because individuals with disabilities often fail to develop speech or develop only limited speech and language abilities (van der Meer, et al., 2011); the study of non-verbal communication is consequently all the more critical in the disability's population (Purcell et al., 1999; Ypsilanti & Grouios, 2008; Caselli et al., 2008; Iacono et al., 2009; Carvajal et al., 2012). In one study of adults with severe disabilities, expressive communication methods most often observed included reaching gestures, body orientation, facial expression, leading gestures, eye gaze, and vocalizations (Casella 2005). There is a wide range of abilities in expressive communication among individuals with disabilities: some individuals with severe disabilities may not produce any intentional expressive communication while others with severe disabilities are capable of intentional communication and also some, albeit limited, symbolic communication (McLean, Brady, & McLean, 1996; McLean et al., 1999; Casella, 2005).

These results indicate that at least some subset of adults with profound disabilities possess communication skills that allow them to affect the environment, state choices, and express some needs (Casella, 2005). Levels of expressive communication can be grouped from lowest to highest into the categories of intentional-contact gesture, intentional-distal gesture, single symbol, and combined symbols (McLean et al., 1999). Given the aforementioned heterogeneity that exists among individuals with disabilities with respect to their communicative capabilities, the severity of disabilities in a given person is not necessarily indicative of the level of expressive communication that they can achieve. In characterizing the expressive communication of individuals with disabilities, it seems clear that there is a

significant reliance on non-verbal communication, often to a greater degree than a typical adult would require. Despite these limitations, individuals with severe disabilities have been observed to convey an emotional state, make a choice, request a desired object or person, and to convey protest (Casella, 2005).

These observations are the basis of self-determination mechanisms within active treatment models in group, institutional and personal homes across the US (Coehlo & Kelley, 1993; Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 42§483.440). It has also been observed in multiple studies that in this population proto-imperative communicative acts are more frequently initiated than proto-declarative communication acts (McLean et al., 1991; Brady & McLean, 1995; McLean et al., 1999; Casella, 2005). Proto-imperative acts are those meant to request an object, request an instrumental action, or to express rejection of some type; proto-declarative acts are those meant to request attention toward another or toward the self (McLean et al., 1991; McLean et al., 1999). In terms of relative abilities in expressive communication among individuals with disabilities, it has been shown that distal gesture (in which the hand gesture does not come in contact with any other person or object, like pointing towards a toy) and symbolic communicators demonstrate similar communication rates and functions, whereas contact gesture (in which physical contact is made with another person or an object) communicators demonstrate significantly more restricted communication systems.

There is also evidence that among non-verbal individuals, intentional contact gesture communicators have less robust communication behaviors and tend to communicate for a more restricted range of functions than distal gesture users (McLean et al., 1999). In one study, contact gesture users were also found to be significantly worse in identity object matching than distal gesture users or symbolic

participants (Brady & McLean, 1998). One development, with recently increasing technological complexity, in improving expressive communication for individuals with disabilities is the use of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) technologies. These technologies include simple vocalizations, gestures, American Sign Language, low-tech communication boards, picture-exchange systems, and speech generating devices (SGDs) and can facilitate expressive language abilities (ASHA, 2002; Bondy & Frost, 2001; Cheslock et al., 2008; Lanconi et al., 2007; van der Meer et al., 2011). Symbolic forms of communication with individuals with severe disabilities may also rely on AAC (ASHA 1992).

It has been suggested that AAC systems are effective because they remove the pressure to speak and reduce auditory short-term memory and processing demands (Cheslock et al., 2008). It has also been suggested that delayed matching to sample could be a helpful instructional format when learning to use a selection-based communication system to communicate about absolute referents (Brady & McLean, 1998). AAC has been shown to produce gains in communication among individuals with severe aphasia (language impairment) in controlled treatment contexts (Jacobs et al., 2004). For non-verbal adults with severe disabilities, more recent literature has recommended that language intervention include the use of AAC systems to improve communication and interaction with others (Cheslock et al., 2008). It has also been shown that the use of SGDs by individuals with moderate to profound disabilities results in an increase in communicative interactions with support personnel and more efficient acquisition and use of graphic communication symbols (Adamson et al., 1992, Schepis & Reid, 1995; Schlosser et al., 1995).

In some studies, SGDs appear to be a more effective means of expressive communication than gestures or vocalizations (Ronski & Sevick, 1994; Koul &



Clapsaddle, 2006). One case report followed the implementation of an SGD as a compensatory strategy to facilitate communication and language abilities in a 30-year-old woman with diagnoses of moderate disabilities and a severe language disorder; it resulted in both improved communication and social changes (Cheslock et al., 2008). As with the importance of an individualized assessment of communicative abilities at baseline, it has also been proposed that a preference assessment approach be used to determine the best AAC options for individuals with disabilities who may benefit, given the variety of AAC and the difficulty of predetermining whether any given communicative option is viable for a given individual. Allowing for the individual's abilities and preferences to be taken into account may also be one way to enable them to exert some control over their lives and participate in this clinical decision (van der Meer et al., 2011). Keeping in mind the preferences of the individual, one argument favoring the use of SGDs over other types of AAC in this population is the fact that the addition of voice output to visual-graphic symbols was found to result in more efficient learning than the use of visual-graphic symbols alone (Cheslock et al., 2008). Individuals with severe to profound disabilities have historically been given few to no opportunities to make basic choices (Stancliffe & Abery, 1997; Cannella et al., 2005), yet research has shown that these individuals are often capable of making and communicating choices (Lanconi et al., 1996; Cannella et al., 2005).

Choice can be defined as “the act of selecting an item or activity from an array of options at a particular moment in time” (Romaniuk & Miltenberger, 2001). Research studies on using and developing accurate and concise preference assessments are few but increasing (Kearney & McKnight, 1997; Lohrmann-O'Rourke & Browder, 1998; Cannella et al., 2005). Of the few studies comparing preference assessments, at least two have found a paired stimulus format to be more



valuable to other preference assessment formats when considering consistency of response as well as the efficiency of the assessment (DeLeon & Iwata, 1996; Roane et al., 1998; Cannella et al., 2005). The incorporation of preference assessment may be an important means both for facilitating communication and also for improving the efficacy of various interventions or communicative strategies for individuals with disabilities. In one study, preferred stimulus conditions produced higher response rates than did baseline or nonpreferred stimulus conditions; this result suggests the importance of assessing the reinforcement value of preferences for individuals with limited behavioral repertoires (Pace et al., 1985). It has also been documented that preferences change over time and may need to be reassessed periodically, if not frequently (van der Meer et al., 2011).

Using the potential for choice interventions and preference assessments to lead changes in the overall protocol for providing services to individuals with severe to profound developmental disabilities is of great importance, and it remains an important area of needed research to develop a way of determining who the best candidates for choice making interventions would be and which choice making strategies would be best suited to these candidates. It is likely that some individuals with disabilities would benefit more than others from choice making interventions, but thus far no criteria exist for identifying these individuals (Cannella et al., 2005). Regardless of preferred communication mode, it is also important to be aware of potential adaptive response sets that the individual with disabilities may rely on. An example of this would be acquiescence, in which an individual answers affirmatively to questions that they do not understand regardless of question content (Sigelman et al., 1981; Mansfield & Pinto, 2008). Such response sets do not necessarily represent

the ideas or desires of the individual but instead reflect a learned adaptation and often a lack of understanding.

Assuming a more active role on behalf of the communicator attempting to elicit a response from the individual with disabilities can also facilitate improved expressive communication. Specific best practices in this area include increased prompting, suggesting possible responses, and rephrasing the ideas expressed by the individual with disabilities with greater frequency (Booth & Booth, 1996; Gallagher, 2002). Thus, expressive communicative abilities among individuals with disabilities are heterogeneous and widely varied. Nevertheless, many of these individuals are able to make choices and communicate preferences, and the elicitation and incorporation of these preferences into the individual's life is an important potential context for expressive communication. The use of AAC, particularly with SGDs, has been shown to assist individuals with disabilities with successful expressive communication.

## **2.5. Communication-based approach to competitive advantage**

In the work environments, much communication is required in order to accomplish personal and group tasks and projects because employees need to communicate with co-workers, supervisors, directors, other internal and external stakeholders of the organization. Soft skills, which are also identified as essential skills, are the critical skills that demonstrate interpersonal competence and organizational communication effectiveness which are essential for managerial or administrative success. The centrality of communication skills in workforce performance and productivity in organizations have been validated by numerous studies in the past decade (Morreale et al., 2000; Alshare & Hindi, 2004).

As noted in a recent survey in the Workforce-Skills Preparedness Report, PayScale (2016), it is now required that college graduates entering the workforce for

the first time should communicate with confidence, express themselves competently, and be proficient in public speaking in group settings. The survey cautions that poor communication skills could severely prevent students and anyone aspiring to managing or administrative position from achieving the goal or expectations. Evidently, business organizations at all levels are willing to recruit and promote job applicants who have a comprehensive background in oral, written, and presentation skills. Therefore, well-trained college graduates and other job-seeking candidates should endeavor to acquire these soft skills that will significantly enhance their competitive advantage in the job market. The use of proper language, decorum, and professional words/phrases to express thoughts during business and social meetings, group interactions, and presentations creates favorable impression in considering a job application for employability.

In their analysis of “the knowledge-based approach to sustainable competitive advantage,” DeNisi, Hitt, and Jackson (2003, p 3) noted that organizations are competing in a challenging global context that requires the acquisition of essential skills that would enable their workforce to outperform their competitors. Additionally, Hitt et al. (1998) had expressed the view that business organizations must identify new sources of knowledge, broaden their competitive landscape, and develop a workforce that is capable of performing tasks differently in order to be successful and benefit from globalization. DeNisi et al. (2003) identified knowledge-based resources as referring to skills, abilities, and learning capacity, which could be developed through formal or informal training. Some of these essential skills, otherwise known as soft skills, which are required by today’s employers include the ability to effectively communicate orally, the ability to work effectively with others in teams and in diverse groups, the ability to effectively communicate in writing, and ability to

demonstrate critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills (DeNisi et al., 2003). These skills are critically needed by organizations of new college graduates and of people wishing to advance their career in competitive organizations (Association of American Colleges and Universities, AAC&U, 2015).

Recent scholars and practitioners have consistently emphasized the need for higher education to prepare graduating students with the soft/essential skills that would enhance their competitive advantage in employment and for advancement. According to DeNisi et al. (2003, p. 9) “knowledge-based resources include all the intellectual abilities and knowledge possessed by employees (and graduating students), as well as their capacity to learn, develop, or acquire additional knowledge that would enhance their levels of performance. As the authors explained, “knowledge-based resources are the skills and capabilities which job applicants and candidates possess, mastered, and their potential for adapting new knowledge and skills” (DeNisi et al., 2003). Indeed, the impact of interpersonal communication competence on organizational effectiveness has been the subject of much discussion and analysis, because of the emphasis which employers of labor have developed for recruiting and evaluating job applicants, especially new college graduates. The essential/soft skills which business organizations require has been expanded to include critical thinking, problem solving, comprehension and attention to details, leadership and teamwork skills (Workforce-Skills Preparedness Report, 2016).

### **2.5.1. Interpersonal effectiveness as a strategic resource**

Consistent with the emphasis on interpersonal communication competence, Fallows and Steven (2000) noted that in view of the challenging economic recession and financial difficulties nowadays, it is inadequate for college graduates to possess the knowledge and skills of their academic discipline and training, graduating students

and other job seekers should endeavor to acquire the essential/soft skills that would place them at a competitive advantage. This emphasis was also echoed by the recent study in the 2016 Workforce-Skills Preparedness Report, which clearly highlighted the soft skills employers seek of new college graduates. An evaluation of the scope of business organization indicates business school graduates aspiring to succeed in the competitive workforce must be capable of communicating with internal, external, national, and global audiences of the organization in which they work. Studies also indicate that effective interpersonal communication is essential for managerial and executive effectiveness strategic organizational planning and implementation.

Shewchuk et al. (2006) noted that sound interpersonal communication skills would aid business executives in presenting and explaining information, including negotiating successfully with counterparts. Indeed, strategic planning and activities involve effective communication in verbal, nonverbal, group, and interpersonal contexts. Additionally, with proficient interpersonal communication skills, small businesses, medium-sized companies, and entrepreneurs could successfully negotiate contracts and compete for big market-share with enhanced credibility. As a result of increasing focus on communication competence as a strategic resource, industry analysts and management practitioners (Woodward et al., 2010; Job Outlook, 2016) have suggested the need for integration of various forms of communication in business education curriculum in order to more adequately equip and prepare students for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workforce.

The communication skills needed for competitive advantage should include cross-cultural, intercultural, nonverbal, listening, and presentation skills for global workplaces. As Noll & Wilkins (2002) stressed, soft/essential skills such as group writing, team work and presentations, group project management, and development

interpersonal relationships would enhance the quality of graduating students, because workforce is increasing diverse and students who are inexperienced with heterogeneous or diverse work settings would be challenged with consequence of under-performing (Luthy & Deck, 2007) suggested in their research the teaching of oral presentation skills in many business and management education courses.

Culture impacts on behaviour, morale, and productivity at work, and includes values that influence company attitudes and actions (Harris et al., 2004). The primary reason for global business failures is a lack of understanding of foreign cultures and the right communication does the cornerstone to improve such understanding (Kanungo, 2006, p.26). Apart from that, different technology standards in different countries can have an influence on building business relationships. Rishel and Burns (1997) explain that strong relationships also depend on the technology standard used by organizations. A study was done at the Computer world's premier 100 IT leaders conference in 2005 regarding the main obstacles to global strategies for IT companies. These were cultural issues (32%), lack of globalisation plans (30%), political issues (29%) and technological issues (9%). Clearly, therefore, organizations should pay more attention to cultural issues. According to Namita (2009) communication is the main ingredient of business because no business can grow and expand without proper communication channels. Ramsey (1994: 45) states that multinational organizations need effective communication if they want to be successful abroad.

## **2.6. Review of related literature on Interpersonal Communication**

Tanyel et al. (1999) expressed that with globalization, interpersonal communication skills would play a significant part in cross-cultural awareness. Njumbwa (2008) explained because of limited classroom time, instructors leaned towards the technical skills, not soft skills. Christie (2012) cited the lack of specific

strategies to assist instructors in enhancing the interpersonal communication skills of their students. Mastracci et al. (2010) noted that instructors must pay attention to people skills or soft skills, as well as technical skills, and specific strategies must be in place.

Levinas (1967) says it is better to view the other as a subject rather than an object. Being said so, the voice needs to be listened by being subjectified, and to attain that subjectivity one has to communicate in the context of the social system. Communication is not just physical, mental and economic but meaningful when articulated in the right way. Kovac and Sirkovic (2017) completed two quantitative studies that measured the communication competency and the frequent use of these skills in managers in the Greater Gulf Coast area. They found listening skills, conversational skills, giving feedback, communicating with the public, meeting skills, presentation skills, conflict and negotiation skills, and others were ranked highest among managers.

Romaniello (2014) declares that closer and more frequent communication between people fosters tighter and more successful relationships. However, both partners' support must encourage the creation of a positive relationship. Evenson (2010) indicates that building a positive relationship begins when your business partner gets a first impression of you and your company. Bilanich (2009) nominates three things that should be done for building strong and positive relationships. First, get to know yourself, second, give with no expectation of return and, third, resolve conflict positively with minimal disruption to your relationships. DeVito (2016) shared five significant points in order to create effective interpersonal communication such as (a) Empathy makes the communicator understand the other person's feelings as well. Because each party tries to feel that the other is feeling the same. (b)



Openness, the ability to open the door to others and the desire to react honestly to the stimuli received, (c) Support can be provided by nonverbal signals such as smiles, nods, blinks and applause, (d) Similarity, that is, similarity of thoughts, views, ideas and (e) Positive and positive attitude to respect others.

Persons with disabilities are more likely to experience social exclusion, unemployment and abuse and other forms of discrimination (Kavanagh et al, 2013) which can lead to disparities in socioeconomic status. This, in turn, can lead to dependency which can ultimately expose persons with disability to various forms of violence and discriminations. Although all groups of socioeconomic status are exposed to violence and discrimination, persons with low socioeconomic status are at an increased risk (Santiago, Wadsworth, & Stump, 2011). It has been found that both Discrimination and low socioeconomic have long-term effects on individuals' psychological well-being (Huynh & Fuligni, 2010).

In a meta-analysis of 17 studies on violence and disability, Jones et al. (2012) confirmed that violence and discrimination are more common among children with disabilities as compared to those without disabilities. In like manner, Hughes and his colleagues conducted a meta-analysis of 27 studies and found that experience of violence in the past year was high among adults with disabilities when compared to adults without disabilities (Hughes et al., 2012). Hughes et al. (2012) also found that persons with mental disabilities are at more risk of violence when compared to persons without a disability. Despite this finding, there are few studies that have attempted to identify the specific type of violence experienced and the effects of factors such as the specific type of disability, visibility and the severity of a disability. Some disabilities are obvious to see while others are not so apparent.



There is a tendency for persons with very visible disability to be exposed to disability related discrimination (Dammeyer & Chapman, 2018). Safi lios-Rothschild (1970) argued that the more visible a disability is, the more likely it is to trigger a negative attitude. He also pointed out that the more severe a disability is, the more likely it will be negatively perceived. Researchers have identified gender as a predictor of several forms of abuse. The effects of disability on women are disproportionately higher WHO (2015). According to the World Health Organization (2015), women and girls are at increased risk of experiencing double discrimination, which includes gender-based violence, abuse and marginalization. For example, Dammeyer and Chapman (2018) found that there was a significant difference in the type of violence or discrimination experienced; while men with disabilities are more likely to report physical violence, women are more likely to report sexual violence, humiliation and discrimination.

Kassah et al. (2014) also found that women with disabilities in Ghana are faced with different forms of abuse such as social, physical, verbal and sexual abuse. They argued that this could be attributed to cultural beliefs. A similar qualitative study by Opoku et al. (2016) in Ghana which found that most the women who participated in the study had experienced sexual violence and this experience was coupled with other challenges such as poverty, social isolation and unemployment. According to Opoku et al. (2016), sexual violence often results in unwanted, pregnancies, divorce and rejection which further compound the challenges facing women with disabilities. Gartrell et al. (2017) found that the rights of women with disability in rural areas are unduly undermined by several socio-cultural, physical and psychological factors within their environment. These factors include gender, impairment, poverty,

unemployment and rurality and lack of social support when compared to their peers in urban areas.

Bock (2015) also found that in rural communities, women with disabilities are faced with several challenges such as lack of employment opportunities, educational opportunities, lack of social services, social isolation as well as traditional challenges associated with gender. In contrast, a study by Fiasorgbor and Ayagiyire (2015) in northern Ghana found that perception and attitudes towards persons with disabilities among rural residents were favourable. This was in spite of the several challenges facing persons with disability in rural. These findings suggest that persons with disabilities in rural areas are at an increased risk of violence and discrimination as compared to their colleagues in peri-urban and urban communities.

Tijm, Cornielje and Edusei (2011), in a qualitative study conducted in the Kumasi metropolis, wanted to understand what goes into the daily lives of individuals with physical disabilities and to also assess their needs. It was a cross-sectional qualitative study. The researchers found that participants had challenges with access to toilets, public buildings, transports. They also identified that generally, the participants struggled to cater for themselves. They also found discrimination as one of the challenges facing persons with disability in their everyday life. The study though done on a small sample size still gives us insight into what persons with disabilities goes through in their daily lives. Nevertheless, the findings cannot be generalized due to the fact that it was done in an urban city of Ghana with few participants.

Anum (2011) explored four families with who had a child with disability about their experiences including challenges they face and how they manage to cope in living with a child who has a disability. The researcher adopted a semi-structured

interview guide, informal conversations, participant observations and narrative analysis for the exploration. The researcher found that families experience stigma, pressure on family finances and family relationships, and lack of institutional support. Anum (2011), concluded that the stigma the families faced were mostly due to lack of knowledge on the part of most Ghanaians on disability.

Naami, Hayashi and Liese (2012) conducted a study that sought to understand unemployment among women with physical disabilities in Tamale and issues associated with it. A qualitative approach through in-depth interviews for ten women with disability and two focus group discussions with 14 stakeholders. They found that employment was high among women with disability in Tamale and most of the women were not aware of the opportunities that were available to them. The researchers also observed that unemployment among women with physical disabilities was also associated with exclusion from education and funding as well as attitudinal issues and lack of funding opportunities.

The study also pointed out that most government officials lacked knowledge about disability issues which reflect in their attitudes towards persons with disability. The study also identified that most participants felt that Ghanaian perceived persons with disability as incapable or doubted their abilities fit into or do most jobs. The study found that due to most Ghanaians superstitious beliefs, especially about the causes and reasons for disability, attitudes towards them are mostly negative. The study suggests that as much as the perceptions about disability is negative, some Ghanaians are very sympathetic towards them. This study just like most studies among persons with disability has limited generalizability, however, it gives useful information about the unemployment situation among persons with disability and especially women with disability.

In 2006, Ghana's parliament enacted Persons with Disability Act to protect individuals with disabilities (Naami & Hayashi, 2012). The United Nations General Assembly approved the Convention of Persons with Disabilities in 2006 to secure the fundamental human rights for individuals with disabilities (United Nations, 2006). The government of Ghana gave formal consent to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007 to improve the civil rights for individuals with disabilities (Naami & Hayashi, 2012). However, many human rights activists and policy makers have criticized the poor implementation of the 2006 Persons with Disability Act (Sossou & Yogtigba, 2016). Research has demonstrated that many postsecondary students with disabilities in Ghana are unaware of the 2006 Persons with Disability Act (Gavu et al., 2015). Most public and private postsecondary institutions in Ghana have no policies protecting students with disabilities (Gavu et al., 2015).

Many postsecondary institutions across the globe help students with disabilities (Lombardi et al., 2018) by teaching them and addressing their needs. About 88% of postsecondary institutions in many parts of the world have indicated that they service students with disabilities in order to meet their academic goals (Raue & Lewis, 2011). Research suggests that less than 50% of postsecondary students with disabilities register with disability services, whilst more than 50% of college students with disabilities fail to declare their disability status (Lombardi et al., 2018, Newman & Madaus, 2014). Most postsecondary institutions' campuses in Ghana do not favor students with disabilities (Tudzi et al., 2017). On the other hand, many postsecondary students with disabilities in Ghana have expressed positive encounters with their instructors, peers, and administrators, but others have expressed negative experiences

regarding poor facilities, prejudices, academic challenges, and lack of institutional support (Morley & Croft, 2011).

The World Health Organization (2001) classified disability as biopsychosocial construct of identity which has many issues related to inclusion, equality of opportunity, and respect. Disability “can limit one’s ability to engage in physical activities and learning process” (Cudjoe & Alhassan, 2017, p. 2). Individuals with disabilities have been examined from different perspectives. Postsecondary institutions have reported enrolling individuals with specific disabilities such as physical impairment, learning disability, and attention deficit disorder (Costello-Harris, 2019). Students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions encounter negative reactions from their peers (Akin & Huang, 2019) and feel they are treated unfairly by their instructors (Layman et al., 2016; Stein, 2014). For example, individuals with disabilities in postsecondary institutions who use wheelchairs experience awkward and difficult situation due to their condition (Akin & Huang, 2019).

Higher education institutions support students with disabilities by providing suitable accommodations. Many postsecondary students with disabilities need accommodations in order to engage in academic activities (Bialka et al., 2017), but most postsecondary students with disabilities find it difficult to apply for academic accommodations (Murray et al., 2014). College accommodation is one of the viable academic determinants for students with disabilities (Lombardi et al., 2012; Mull & Siltington, 2003). Faculty members’ stance regarding accommodation may enable students with disabilities to seek assistance. Colleges provide accommodations such as PowerPoints, lecture notes, waivers, and course substitutes to help the students with disabilities to persist (Tsagris & Muirhead, 2012).

Waner (2015) found that listening effectively, importance in effective usage of telephones, maintaining eye contact, asking appropriate questions, and using tone of voice effectively were ranked the highest by the business professionals. Maes et al. (2017) and Tanyel et al. (1999) are often cited in the recent literature. Maes et al. (2017) completed two quantitative studies that measured the communication competency and the frequent use of these skills in managers in the Greater Gulf Coast area. They found listening skills, conversational skills, giving feedback, communicating with the public, meeting skills, presentation skills, conflict and negotiation skills, and others were ranked highest among managers.

Similar to Waner (2015), Tanyel et al. (2019) completed a study comparing faculty members to prospective employers and found that interpersonal skills ranked third in importance in both groups behind responsibility and ethical values. In a more recent study, Shrivastava (2012) integrates several concepts defining interpersonal communication skills from Covey (2019), Maes et al. (2017), and Tanyel et al. (2019) and gives mention to emotional intelligence in defining interpersonal communication skills. Shrivastava (2012) definition included the following: active listening, building relationship and trust, rapport building, emotional intelligence, and understanding other cultures.

## **2.7. Theoretical framework**

The study is underpinned by the Communication Theory and the disability theory. Communication theory provides a valuable point of reference for explaining how communication can affect people's perception and attitudes as well as how community members can be effectively engaged.

### 2.7.1. Communication Theory

Communication theory defines the amount of transmitted information between source and receiver in terms of the conditional probabilities between events that occur, or might have occurred, at these two places (Littlejohn, 1983). A "communication theory" is an attempted explanation of how and why humans communicate meaningfully with each other. At its core, a communication theory is generally devoted to providing an explanation of how, exactly, one individual is able to communicate meaning to another and the degree to which the speaker and the listener can understand each other (Littlejohn, 1983). The search for who is doing what in a communication process and with what effects, to paraphrase Lasswell (1948), is the basic question of every communication theory, although it might be studied from different angles or by looking at different facets. There has never been agreement on what "communication" or "to communicate" means. Even in classical Latin, *communicare* meant "to share with," "to share out," "to make generally accessible" or "to discuss together" (Glare, 1968,).

Rosengren (2000) suggests that, above all, communication concerns the process of meaning creation: questions concerning how people create meaning psychologically, socially, and culturally; how messages are understood intellectually; and how ambiguity arises and is resolved. For Littlejohn, "communication does not happen without meaning, and people create and use meaning in interpreting events" (Littlejohn, 1992). Thus, the crucial question concerns our understanding of "meaning" and how the process of meaning creation works (Littlejohn, 1983). In communication theory, there are at least three different lenses with which to view how this process works: communication as a one-way process of meaning construction, in which the sender attempts to construct or reconstruct the meaning developed by the



receiver; communication as a two-way process of meaning construction, in which two or more people construct new meanings together; and communication as a omnidirectional diachronic process of meaning construction, in which the focus is on the continuous development of meaning itself.

Communication theory highlights three approaches by which to conceptualize the communication process: one-way (linear); two-way (interactive); or transactional (Van Ruler, 2018). In each approach, the sender attempts to produce an attitudinal change in the receiver (Van Ruler, 2018). Feedback is important for many reasons, such as to signal reception of the message and to ensure that the communication has the intended effect (Vertino, 2014). Including feedback in a one-way or linear approach facilitates the effectiveness of the communication (Van Ruler, 2018). Moreover, it is important to identify whether the communication is formal or informal, even in an organizational context. Awad and Alhashemi (2012) found that the formal context is likely to embody a one-way communication channel, especially if the communication is occurring through an official path, such as email, meeting, or text: this suggests a working arrangement that may limit the interactive approach, especially between managers and employees, because of a strict hierarchy within the organization (Morrison-Smith, S., & Ruiz, 2020). In addition, there may be an emphasis on written communication that requires answers to specific queries, and does not welcome engaging with other issues (Rudeloff, Pakura, Eggers & Niemand, 2022). This leads to an “ask-and-obey” approach to communication between managers and employers (Rudeloff et al., 2022).

Early theories of mass communication were focused on communication as a one-way process in which a sender does something to one or more receivers. However, the identity of this something remained a matter of debate. Some theories



viewed communication as a process of dissemination, a flow of information in which a sender disseminates a message to receivers by revealing its meaning within this message. In this case, the focus is on the flow of information, where this information is seen as objective, as in the mathematical communication theory developed by Shannon (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). In this model, reaching the receiver is sufficient to make the communication successful. In relation to this one-way transmission perspective, other theories view communication as an attempt by a sender to produce a predefined attitudinal change in the receiver; that is, a change in the meaning of the situation as perceived by the receiver. One well-known theory of this type is Two-Step Flow (Lazersfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948), which stipulates that the mass media informs certain people, who in turn influence the meanings perceived by others. There is also the personal influence model of Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), which considers that responses to media messages are mediated by interpersonal communication between members of one's own social environment. This theory uses a lens through which communication is seen as a process directed from a sender to one or more receivers, in which the meaning construction of the receivers is mediated by certain influential others, or by peers.

Although the one-way approach might be convincing in relation to information giving and persuasive communication, more recent approaches to the concept of communication view it as a fundamental two-way process that is interactive by nature and participatory at all levels (Servaes, 1999). This involves the paradigmatic change from the sender/receiver orientation into an actor orientation, in which all actors may be active and take initiatives. This implies that sharing meaning is not so much seen from a perspective by which the receiver should be willing to share the meaning originally expressed by the sender, as is the case in the one-way perspective. The

emphasis today is much more on communication as a process in which meanings are created and exchanged, or even shared, by the parties involved.

When looking through the two-way lens of communication, interaction is vital. However, there are different interpretations of what “interaction” means in this context. The term comes from Latin and not only means “direct reciprocal dialogue,” but also “to act upon each other and have influences on each other” (Neumann, 2008). Thus, the term may refer to feedback processes as well as to direct interaction between people, but it can also refer to a more abstract concept of interaction concerned with how people relate to other meanings in developing their own meanings. In interpersonal communication theory, interaction is usually seen from the angle of person-to-person interaction or group interaction, as in Bales’ interaction process analysis or Fisher’s interaction analysis (Littlejohn, 1983), in which people respond to each other.

This notion can also be found in relational communication theory as constructed by Bateson, who concluded that every interpersonal exchange bears a message that contains the substance or content of the communication, as well as a statement about the relationship itself. Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967) called this latter part of the message “metacommunication.” Watzlawick et al. (1967) also claimed that relationships emerge from the interaction between people, with many kinds of interaction rules being set that govern their communicative behaviours. By obeying the rules, the participants sanction the defined relationship. In these models, interaction is focused on how people engage in conversations with each other and literally converge in creating meaning. Thus, from this perspective on interaction, the focus is on interpersonal conversations, whether mediated or not. In some instances, the concept of dialogue is used, in this respect, to mean: focusing on the acts of

turning toward the other, and listening to each other with respect to differences in order to enhance the quality of the communication (Broome, 2009).

### ***Communication as an omnidirectional diachronic process***

There is yet another approach to communication. Through this lens of communication, interaction also plays a key role, but in a different way to the approach previously discussed. In two-way models, the notion of interaction is normally narrowed to a consideration of the concrete interactions of those who are literally engaged in conversations with each other. Through a lens of communication as omnidirectional diachronic process of meaning development itself, interaction is seen as a dynamic interplay between actors in their roles as senders and receivers, which influences the consequences of the communicative transactions at a fundamental level (Stappers, Reijnders, & Möller, 1990). Through this lens, interaction is focused on the social acts of all those engaged in a relationship with the communicative process itself and not so much focused on their relationship with each other. This is to be seen as a virtual process occurring at the level of the interpretations made by senders and receivers, which influence the meanings they give to a message and consequently the effects of the message. Seen through this lens, actors are not necessarily related or in proximity to each other.

In his seminal book on the process of communication, Berlo (1960) explained that a communication process is not a sequence of events, one following the other, but a continuous and simultaneous interaction of a large number of variables that are moving, changing, and affecting each other. Thus, interaction means that the sender plays a role in the interpretation of the receiver in the context and situation in which the communication is taking place but does not necessarily entail a conversation. This view is rooted in constructivism (Lindlof, 2008) and echoes Thomas Theorem. As

Lindlof argues, “if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences,” which can be said to be a typical constructivist explanation. This perspective on communication considers that “communication is the chief means by which the social world is created, understood, and reproduced across time and space” (Lindlof, 2008, p. 947). For Burlison and Bodie (2008, p. 953), “constructivism assumes that humans actively interpret the world, construct meaningful understandings of it, and act in the world on the basis of their interpretations.” In this context, a distinction is made between “constructivism” and “constructionism,” where the focus is often more on how people construct meaning in their interactions. However, to avoid discussion about constructivism and constructionism, I prefer to call the approach under examination here an omnidirectional diachronic lens on communication.

The lens on communication as an omnidirectional diachronic process of meaning development itself can also be found in the ritual model of communication as developed by Carey (1975, 2009). Influenced by theorists such as Dewey, Innis, and McLuhan, Carey made the distinction between transmission and ritual models of communication that occur in society. Transmission models are classic sender-receiver models, yet a ritual model sees communication as a symbolic process, whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed, over and over again, in a very dynamic and uncontrolled way. Carey’s ritual model reflects the diachronic view of communication, which, as Thayer (1968, 1987) argued some years earlier, stipulates that communication can best be seen as an ongoing and complex process of learning in which meanings develop. By using the concept of the diachronic—which means developing over time—he focused on ongoing meaningcreation over time, instead of focusing on the transmission or the effectivity of messages, or on the interaction between actors as people involved in communicating.

Krippendorff (1994) mentions the recursiveness of communication: it is an ongoing social process of deconstructing and reconstructing interpretations. This is not exclusively done in direct conversations, but is an ongoing process, insofar as people orient themselves toward others, and again, not necessarily toward their interaction partners (alone). This is why Faulstich (1992) and other German mass communication scholars state that “Öffentlichkeitsarbeit” (which is often translated as “public relations” in the sense of organizational work with and for publics and in public, e.g., as a part of strategic communication, BvR) is not so much about interaction between individual human beings, but rather concerns societal action itself.

### **2.7.2. Disability Theory**

Disability theory primarily focuses on disability challenges (Wieseler, 2018). Many philosophers and theorists often emphasize on the dominant narratives about students with disabilities rather than exploring their experiences (Wieseler, 2018). Due to the negative stereotypes and beliefs associated with disabilities (Siebers, 2011), many people who think all disabilities need to be treated often maltreat and discriminate against individuals with disabilities (Pothier & Devlin, 2006). The disability theory enables researchers to explore sources of discrimination against individuals with disabilities (Mertens, Sullivan, & Stace, 2011) by viewing disability as a cultural, historical, or social phenomenon rather than as a medical problem to be treated. Researchers use critical disability theory to explore the different perspectives of individuals living with disabilities (Glynne-Owen, 2010). Generally, students with disabilities experience love, bullying, physical assault, and harassment on college campuses (Findley, Plummer, & McMahon, 2015). College students with disabilities may experience discrimination and social exclusion from their peers (Aquino, 2016).

Researchers try to learn first-hand accounts of students with disabilities in order to understand the stigma and challenges they experience in their lives (Aquino, 2016).

The critical disability theory enables researchers to understand individuals with disabilities' experiences, perspectives, limitations, and knowledge about the world (Hosking, 2008). Within the social construct, students with disabilities interact with their peers, teachers, and administrators. Postsecondary institutions support students with disabilities by addressing their needs, whilst encouraging instructors and administrators to show positive attitudes towards individual with disability (Dukes, Madaus, Faggella-Luby, Lombardi, & Gelbar, 2017). Instructors' knowledge about students with disabilities helps to improve the students with disabilities learning outcomes (Dukes et al., 2017). Critical disability theorists view disability as reality in which the experiences of individuals with disabilities are considered important within the social and political environment (Reaume, 2014). Robinson (2016) utilized critical disability theory in his research by given students with disabilities the opportunity to voice out their experiences.

## **2.8. Relevance of the theories to the study**

Communication theory provides a framework for understanding the processes, dynamics, and effects of communication. It offers insights into how individuals exchange information, convey meaning, and create shared understanding. When studying interpersonal communication among PWDs, communication theory helps researchers analyze the factors that influence communication interactions, such as verbal and nonverbal communication, listening skills, message encoding and decoding, feedback, and contextual factors. It helps in examining how communication competence, communication apprehension, or communication styles may impact interactions between PWDs and their communication partners.

Disability theory examines the social, cultural, and political aspects of disability, challenging traditional perspectives and promoting a social model of disability that emphasizes the role of society in creating barriers. It recognizes disability as a social construct and focuses on understanding the experiences, identities, and rights of PWDs. When studying interpersonal communication among PWDs, disability theory provides insights into the unique challenges and barriers that individuals with disabilities may face in communication interactions. It highlights the importance of inclusive communication practices, accessible environments, and the need to address societal attitudes and structures that may hinder effective communication for PWDs. Disability theory also emphasizes the empowerment, self-advocacy, and agency of PWDs in shaping their own communication experiences.

By integrating communication theory and disability theory, researchers can gain a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of interpersonal communication among PWDs. This combined approach helps identify communication barriers, explore communication strategies and adaptations used by PWDs, examine the impact of societal attitudes and structures, and suggest interventions and improvements to enhance communication experiences and outcomes for individuals with disabilities. It also highlights the significance of inclusive communication practices that promote equality, respect, and dignity for all individuals, regardless of their disabilities.

## **2.9. Chapter summary**

Theoretical bases, conceptual review, as well as, empirical studies visited, have provided evidence that there is a correlation between the plight of the PwD and interpersonal communication as they tend to use the various channels of communication to get across the communication goals. However, there were some contradicting views on PwDs communication processes and how they are viewed in

the communities they live in. There seems to be no work done locally towards the role of interpersonal communication in promoting professional growth of persons with disability at the Sene West District and this has necessitated the study. The next chapter looks at methodological aspect of the study.





## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0. Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology and design employed in the study. It gives details on population, sampling process, sample, data collection and data analysis. The researcher applied the qualitative research approach of in-depth interviews to know the role of interpersonal communication in promoting professional growth of persons with disability at the Sene West District.

#### 3.1. Research approach

A qualitative research design is used in this study to know the role of interpersonal communication in promoting professional growth of persons with disability at the Sene West District. The researcher attempted to capture the voice of the participants to understand how they feel and think, and to provide a clear description that comes from their unique points of view. Contrary to quantitative research, where variables are identified and measured, a hypothesis is tested, and statistics provide evidence of findings, qualitative research is descriptive in its approach, using the rich details of the contextual setting to shed light on the phenomenon being investigated (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Ary, et al. (2006) reported that, qualitative inquiry seeks to understand human and social behavior not from the etic or outsider's perspective, but from the emic or insider's perspective, that is, as it is lived by the participants in a particular social setting. The data collected in a qualitative study are termed soft, using rich detail to describe the setting being investigated (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The gathering of qualitative data in educational research has several positive outcomes.

Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) shared six advantages of using qualitative research in a phenomenology study: 1) It provides natural occurring information that furthers the understanding of a phenomenon. 2) The contextual setting is taken into consideration since the data collection methods are personal and up close (example: interviews, direct observations). 3) It reveals the complexity of the environment and addresses the phenomenon holistically. 4) Data collection occurs over a long duration of time allowing for longitudinal analysis of processes. 5) It is often based upon the live experiences of people allowing researchers to interpret data with respect to the meanings people bring to them. 6) It takes into consideration the intercultural negotiating that occurs between individuals and groups as they seek solutions to problems.

Each of these characteristics of qualitative research compliment quantitative research in the sense that they are able to interpret the social context of Persons with Disabilities in ways that quantitative research cannot. According to Ary et al. (2006), while qualitative researchers broadly specify aspects of a design before beginning the study, the design continues to emerge as the study unfolds. This emergent design is necessary because it gives the researcher the flexibility to dig deeper into the setting where needed, in order to better understand what is taking place. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) claimed that, the qualitative research approach demands that the world be examined with the assumption that nothing is trivial, that everything has the potential of being a clue that might unlock a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied. Consequently, this study falls under the qualitative approach because I want to examine the role of interpersonal communication in promoting professional growth of persons with disability at the Sene West District.

### 3.2. Research design

A research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data. Research design constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measuring and analysis of data (Kothari, 2004). This study adopts a phenomenology as the research design. The purpose of the phenomenological approach is to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation (Wise & Stanley, 2003). According to Ary et al. (2006), a phenomenological study is designed to describe and interpret an experience by determining the meaning of the experience as perceived by the people who have participated in it. In the human sphere this normally translates into gathering ‘deep’ information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions and participant observation, and representing it from the perspective of the research participant(s) (Lester, 1999).

Conducting research with the intent of capturing the voice of students is what Van Manen (1990) described as obtaining a grasp of the very nature of the thing. The researcher collects data directly from the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, Hanson et al., 2007). Phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual, ‘bracketing’ taken-for-granted assumptions and usual ways of perceiving (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008). Ary et al. (2006) stated that, from an analysis of the interview data, the researcher writes descriptions of the participants’ experiences and how those experiences were perceived. The procedures used in this phenomenological study mimicked those suggested by Moustakas (2004). First, a phenomenon to study was identified, in this case, the role of interpersonal communication in promoting professional growth of persons with disability in Sene West District of Ghana. Second, the researcher had to “bracket out” one’s own

experiences assuming that nothing was known about what the students are experiencing, specifically regarding their attitudes and perceptions (Moustakas, 2004). Third, data was collected from numerous participants using in-depth interviewing and student focus groups. Fourth, data was analyzed utilizing specific 44 quotes or statements made by the participants involved. Common themes were then categorized and shared using rich and descriptive detail. The phenomenological approach, using qualitative research methods, therefore, was the premise for the research design.

Lived experiences and essences are two constructs in phenomenological research (Vagle, 2018). Lived experiences, as the participant describes them, are used to define the universal structures (i.e., essences) of the phenomenon (De Chesnay, 2014). Lived experiences are the ways in which people live in relation to a phenomenon. Vagle (2018) used the following example to distinguish between other qualitative data and lived experiences. Other qualitative traditions might describe how a tree looks (e.g., the bark, the branches, the leaves). Phenomenologists would be more concerned with how an individual experiences the tree, the personal meaning they associate with it. The concept of essence found in phenomenological theory and research is described as the universal qualities of a phenomenon under investigation. It is the essential structures of a phenomenon (Vagle, 2018). Essences may be loosely analogous to “themes” generated from data in other qualitative methodologies. However, phenomenologists view essences as universal truths that transcend social context rather than trends generated from specific research questions.

Using the phenomenology approach to this study will help me as a researcher to use in-depth interviews or observations to explore professionals' lived experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of interpersonal communication in their professional

lives. By adopting a phenomenological perspective, I aim at uncovering universal themes or essences that transcend my specific research questions. It will also help in identifying common patterns, insights, or understandings that emerge from the experiences of professionals across various contexts. These insights can contribute to the development of a deeper understanding of how interpersonal communication influences professional growth, potentially identifying key factors, processes, or practices that contribute to positive outcomes.

In summary, while the statement you provided focuses on the view of phenomenologists regarding universal truths, it can be related to a study on the role of interpersonal communication in promoting professional growth by adopting a phenomenological approach to understand the essence and subjective experiences of professionals in their communication interactions and their impact on professional development.

### **3.3. Sample and sampling procedures**

Sampling is the process of selecting a sufficient number of elements called sample from a given population in such a way that by studying the sample, and by understanding the properties or characteristics of the sample subjects, it would be possible to generalise the properties or characteristics of the population (Cavana et al., 2001). Sample is thus the segment of the population that is selected for investigation (Bell & Bryman, 2007). To be selected for this study, participants needed to meet a variety of criteria. Cohen et al. (2000) state that the whole population should be shared into homogenous groups, each group having comparable features. In this respect, it is assumed that the PwD's have similar characteristics, hence their inclusion in the study.

This study therefore employed the purposive sampling method to select the study sample. The decision to select these respondents, purposively, was supported by Masaiti & Manchishi (2011) when they stated that respondents could be selected as such because of their roles, experiences and characteristics in the area under study. According to Saunders et al (2000) purposive sampling methods provide a range of alternatives in terms of techniques that can be used by the researcher. Purposive sampling seeks information-rich cases which can be studied in depth and breadth (Patton, 1990). Ten (10) persons with disability (Miriam, Kweku, Yaw, Mansah, Yacobo, Francis, Gilbert, Dominic, Daniel, and Awo – pseudonyms) were purposively chosen to participate in this study. This number is justified because it provided the opportunity for having detailed information with the participants about the research under study (Yin, 2013). They are in different professions such as trading, carpentry, sewing, and administrative works.

#### **3.4. Data collection methods**

In order to explore the role of interpersonal communication in promoting professional growth persons with disability at the Sene West District, the study largely employed interview guide as a research instrument. Bryman (2008) posit that interviewing is probably the most widely employed method used in qualitative research. Yin (2003) describes an interview as an oral asking of questions by the interviewer and oral responses by the participant or a selected group. This was concurred by King and Horrock (2010) who stated that interviews can take different forms in a qualitative study. Creswell (2002) discusses different types of interviews, such as structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews, and their applications in qualitative research while Yin (2003) notes interviews as one of the data collection methods commonly used in case study research.

The data was collected through in-depth interviews and a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) after a purposeful sampling of 10 PwD's. in the Sene West District The open-ended questions contained general questions about participants lived experiences as person living with disability and strategies of communicating as persons living with disability.

Focus groups refer to a “nondirective technique that results in the controlled production of a discussion of a group of people” (Flores & Alonso, 1995, p. 84); a moderator typically facilitates the discussion. Participants in focus group discussions constitute a “purposive” sample of the target population (Lederman, 1990), and the number of participants in a focus group can range from 6 to 12 people. Focus groups can be used alone or in combination with other methods. Compared to surveys and interviews, focus groups can provide richer and more in-depth information because they allow interaction both between the moderator and participants and among participants themselves (Lederman, 1990). They also enable “the members of the target population to express their ideas in a spontaneous manner that is not structured according to the researchers’ prejudices” (Bertrand, Brown & Ward, 1992, p. 199). For the focus group discussions, I prepared a short list of questions concerning interpersonal communication but encouraged the participants to discuss anything they believed to be relevant. I audiotaped the focus group discussions while taking detailed notes. After the focus group session, I listened to the tapes and expanded the notes independently (Bertrand, Brown & Ward, 1992, p. 202).

The researcher met the participants face-to-face and asked questions relating to the topic and responses were recorded by the interviewer, transcribed and data analysed (Creswell, 2014). The research depended on in-depth interviews as a suitable means of gathering qualitative data. This technique, although time-consuming,



provides the chance to obtain qualitative data in a manner that has the benefit of providing an overall question framework and a focus for the interviewer, whilst also providing the opportunity for the participants to express their views. Additionally, the interview was not restricted to questions that the interviewer initially intended to demonstrate: in other words, issues that occurred during the interview process and were considered relevant to the research issues was followed up. The uses of in-depth interviews are, therefore, appropriate to this research because they allow the opportunity for in-depth debate with a variety of relevant participants within a focused framework.

The interview was recorded with the use of a recorder. The aim of the interview was to collect data through verbal communication or through interpersonal communication between individuals or a group. The advantages of the interview abound. People are more willing to talk than to write, the secure relationship between the interviewee and the researcher, certain information might be gained from an interview that an individual will not be willing to put down on paper (Best & Kahn, 1986). In the same context, the in-depth interviews ensured that the interview had a clear direction and idea, having in mind that there will also be opportunities for participants to express their views, explain individual perspectives and expand on answers (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The interviews were conducted by the researcher himself at the same time as the field surveys in January and February 2023. He expected the interviews to run for at least 30-50 minutes, but the length of the interviews varied from a minimum of 30 minutes to 1 hour and 20 minutes. This was due to certain limitations that the researcher encountered during the interviews, such as the respondent who chose to be questioned for a limited period. In addition, certain respondents were not ready or able to share their views on the questions asked.



Despite the challenges encountered by the researcher, he considers the interview results to be accurate and, although the interviews were interrupted, he finished them as soon as possible in order to prevent any prejudice. In addition, the researcher had to make use of all interview data even though the length of certain interviews was limited due to time limitations and difficulty in getting users who were able to be interviewed.

### **3.5. Data collection procedure**

Conducting research needs access to data. The nature of the data depends on the nature of the research. Some require quantitative data; others need qualitative data. This research required qualitative data. Hence, access was required to spoken interaction with the participants. An introduction letter was taken from the head of the Communication Studies Department to show to the participants that the study is purely for academic purposes. A copy of the letter was also given to the President of the PwD's Association in Sene West District for the data gathering exercise. The implementation of recording even varies considerably from institution to institution, often due to financial constraints and technological developments. This means that, there was little or no access to a file of a pre-existing data source or audio data regarding interpersonal communication amongst PwD's in the Sene West District.

Similarly, the researcher faced lack of access to the recorded data in the research sites. Hence, he was expected to seek new recordings than seeking readymade audio recorded research data which was not accessible. This made him do his own audio recordings of the interactions. The data collection process was therefore as follows:

- i. the selection of target places (institutions) and participants from the institutions was done.

- ii. The audio recording materials were prepared in advance.
- iii. The selected institutions were approached for permission to access data requesting access to record the interviews conducted through audio taping.

It was not easy to access the data; however, after exhaustive explanation of the research objectives and guarantying the confidentiality of the study, they responded to the researcher's approach letter positively and allowed him the access. Each participant was given the interview guide (See Appendix A) prior to the collection of data to have enough time study it and know the areas which they are to answer.

### **3.6. Data processing and analysis**

The data collected was analysed and interpreted qualitatively using the thematic methods. The data collected from research becomes meaningful only when it is organised, summarized and observations explained in order to determine its essential causes, statistical relationships, pattern and trends (Dane, 2011). The process requires the researcher to analyse the data that have been collected (Leary, 2004). From the interviews, considerable text data that were generated were organised, transcribed, edited and coded to ensure that all assuming portions are complete and contain accurate information.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) defined qualitative data analysis as “working with data, organising it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesising it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned and deciding what you will tell others” (p. 54). The recorded interview was thus transcribed. This provided the basis of data processing, analysis and presentation. The transcripts were read through with research questions to be answered in mind. Similarities and differences of the responses from the participants were identified for analysis. The

analysis began by coding every item of information so that the differences and similarities between the items could be recognised. A list of relevant and important ideas was categorised after reading, comparing and grouping the transcribed data. The resulting ideas were examined for commonalities, differences and patterns. For each interview, a list of points made by each respondent was developed. A phrase most frequently mentioned was also integrated into the title of the individual profile for each respondent.

### **3.6.1. Transcription and Translation of the Spoken Data**

All the interviews were recorded (audio-taped), and later transcribed using transcription conventions. Transcribing audio data according to Chafe (1980), addresses the peculiar features of the oral texts. Some features of the audio taped oral texts, according to Burnes (2005), include intonation, pause, connectives, etc. Intonation can be raising or falling. Comma marks the rising intonation, whereas period marks the falling intonation. Liddicoat (2007) state that transcripts of talk are only ever partial representations of the talk that we record but they allow the analyst to see the transient and complex nature of talk captured in an easily usable, static format. According to Liddicoat (2007), transcriptions are not substitutes for the original recordings but they are additional tools which can be used to analyze and understand these recordings. On the other hand, recordings are essential means in discourse research, but are not sufficient by themselves for the systematic examination of interaction. It is simply impossible to hold in mind the transient, highly multidimensional, and often overlapping events of an interaction as they unfold in real time.

This has made transcripts invaluable. They provide a distillation of the fleeting events of an interaction, frozen in time, freed from extraneous detail, and expressed in

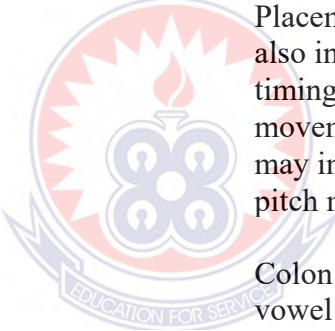
categories of interest to the researcher (Edwards, 2007). In this study also an attempt has been made to represent the oral data with written transcript. Mayr (2008) states that without a written representation, talk is very difficult to analyse systematically. It will therefore be good to discuss several aspects of transcription. Roberts (1997) remarks that ‘if talk is a social act, then so is transcription’. As one transcribes data, one relies on one’s own social evaluations of speech in deciding how to put it down on paper. Therefore, transcribers should use or develop a system that can best represent the recorded interactions.

### 3.6.2. Transcription Conventions

Transcription is the use of symbols to represent sounds or sound sequences in written form (Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, 2002). It is merely the representation of the data collected. The transcription conventions used in this study were derived from the Jeffersonian system (Jefferson, 1984) used in Wooffitt (2005) with slight modification (adaptation). The conversion of spoken data into a written format is a highly problematic process.

**Figure 1:** Jefferson Transcription Symbols for Conversational Analysis

SYMBOL	DEFINITION AND USE
[yeah] [okay]	Overlapping talk
=	End of one TCU and beginning of next begin with no gap/pause in between (sometimes a slight overlap if there is speaker change). Can also be used when TCU continues on new line in transcript.

SYMBOL	DEFINITION AND USE
(.)	Brief interval, usually between 0.08 and 0.2 seconds
(1.4)	Time (in absolute seconds) between end of a word and beginning of next. Alternative method: “none-one-thousand-two-one-thousand...”: 0.2, 0.5, 0.7, 1.0 seconds, etc.
Word [first letter underlined] Wo:rd [colon underlined]	Underlining indicates emphasis. Placement indicates which syllable(s) are emphasised.
wo::rd	 <p>Placement within word may also indicate timing/direction of pitch movement (later underlining may indicate location of pitch movement)</p> <p>Colon indicates prolonged vowel or consonant.</p>
↑word ↓word	One or two colons common, three or more colons only in extreme cases.
↑word ↓word	Marked shift in pitch, up (↑) or down (↓). Double arrows can be used with extreme pitch shifts.
.,_i?	Markers of final pitch direction at TCU boundary: Final falling intonation (.) Slight rising intonation (,) Level/flat intonation ( _ ) Medium (falling-)rising intonation (i) (a dip and a rise) Sharp rising intonation (?)

SYMBOL	DEFINITION AND USE
WORD	Upper case indicates syllables or words louder than surrounding speech by the same speaker
°word°	Degree sign indicate syllables or words distinctly quieter than surrounding speech by the same speaker
<word< td="" style="border: 1px solid black;"></word>	Pre-positioned left carat indicates a hurried start of a word, typically at TCU beginning
word-	A dash indicates a cut-off. In phonetic terms this is typically a glottal stop
>word<	Right/left carats indicate increased speaking rate (speeding up) Left/right carats indicate decreased speaking rate (slowing down)
.hhh	Inbreath. Three letters indicate 'normal' duration. Longer or shorter inbreaths indicated with fewer or more letters.
Hhh	Outbreath. Three letters indicate 'normal' duration. Longer or shorter inbreaths indicated with fewer or more letters.
Whhord	Can also indicate aspiration/breathiness if within a word (not laughter)
w(h)ord	Indicates abrupt spurts of breathiness, as in laughing while talking

<b>SYMBOL</b>	<b>DEFINITION AND USE</b>
£word£	Pound sign indicates smiley voice, or suppressed laughter
#word#	Hash sign indicates creaky voice
~word~	Tilde sign indicates shaky voice (as in crying)
(word)	Parentheses indicate uncertain word; no plausible candidate if empty
(( ))	Double parentheses contain analyst comments or descriptions

Source: Jefferson (1984)

According to Wood and Kroger (2000 cited in MacLeod, 2010), in converting speech to writing, “a literal rendering is impossible”. It is nevertheless the creation of a transcript that makes it possible for the researcher to attempt any kind of analysis. While it has been suggested that transcription should be comprehensive, due to the impossibility of knowing in advance the importance of certain features (Schiffrin, 1994; Wood & Kroger, 2000), it is also important to ensure readability. Thus, it has been suggested that “too much detail can be as unsatisfactory as too little” (Cameron, 2002, p.39). Gibbons (2003) and Walker (1990 in Haworth, 2009) state the difficulty of changing speech to writing.

The fundamental problem stated by Gibbons (1990) is that of all the features that distinguish writing from speech, the one which is potentially the most significant in transcription, is the inability of our writing conventions to express some of the para and extralinguistic signals that speakers rely on to get their meaning across. Paralinguistic features such as intonation, breathiness, emphasis, high and low pitch,

long, drawn out sounds and of extralinguistic features such as raised eyebrows, outflung arms, nods, sneers, and smiles, which can convey meaning on their own or alter the significance of the words they accompany are some examples.

### **3.7. Ethical considerations**

Ethical issues were highly considered in this study in order to protect the rights of the research participants. There are many ethical issues in relation to participants of a research activity (Kumar, 2005). The principle of voluntary participation was required of the people and they were not to be coerced into participating in the research (Neuman, 2006). Closely related to the notion of voluntary participation was the requirement of informed consent. Essentially, this means that prospective research participants must be fully informed about the procedures and risks involved in research and must give their consent to participate. Ethical standards also require that researcher would not put participants in a situation where they might be at risk of harm as a result of their participation. Harm can be defined as both physical and psychological (Adusah-Karikari, 2008).

It is imperative and important for any researcher to take care of the ethical problems that control science. This is because social studies need to plan themselves for any ethical problems in the design of the research in order to develop a sound ethical practice (Neuman, 2006). In this research, the privacy of the participants were protected by obtaining their permission to select whether or not to participate first, since one of the concepts of social science includes the active involvement of the participants. In this regard, reasons were given for the aims of the research, as well as its relevance in improving the voluntary participation of participants. There is a belief that subjecting participants to answering questions in a questionnaire could cause physical and emotional damage to them. Thus, the statements in the questionnaire



were framed in a manner that provided the participants with a range of choices and free will, so that they could choose the things relevant to them.

Participants were ensured of confidentiality. The researcher disclosed her identity to the research participants in order to rid their minds of any suspicions and deceptions regarding the research and also to guarantee that they do not disclose the knowledge they have with others. As far as anonymity is concerned, participants were not asked to include their identification on the questionnaire. In order to prevent intellectual fraud in science, known as plagiarism, the thesis specifically followed the prescribed norms of scientific activity in order to avoid plagiarism.

### **3.8. Trustworthiness of the Study**

In order to validate and make trustworthy the study, this research was founded on the criteria of trustworthiness accorded to reflexivity, adequacy of data, and adequacy of interpretation (Morrow, 2005). Invariably, this involved an understanding of the researcher's experiences and his/her world and how it could affect the research process. In line with reflexivity, I was aware of my assumptions, predispositions and personal experiences about research and made them overt to the self and others through bracketing (Fischer, 2009). The recorded interviews were played back to the respondents and transcripts of the interview were given to the respondents. The themes generated from the analysis of the interview data were also checked by participants, what Creswell and Creswell (2018) termed as "member checking". This was done to ensure the correction of necessary mistakes and present a valid data. The researcher also took time to give thick, rich description of the steps leading to the collection of data, analysis and interpretation.

It also relates to the long duration of the interview and follow-up interviews in anticipation of technology failures with reference to the tape recorder used for the interview. Thus, the failure of the tape recorder to record the voice. The researcher paid attention to relevant plagiarism rules for the conduct of research by ensuring that authorities that were sourced or quoted in the study were duly acknowledged and referenced using in-text citation and a list of references. Also, based on the postulations of Lincoln and Guba (2000), in preserving the credibility of the research, I adopted two of the stated means in achieving trustworthiness comprising persistent peer scrutiny of the research project. Peer and academic scrutiny of the research was employed through the period of the study and was achieved through constructive feedbacks offered by my supervisor, peer researchers and other academics. These fresh perspectives and additions to the study enabled me to fine tune and present stronger arguments for the study.

My association with the PwDs proved beneficial because the participants were those I have known in the district. It was easy to approach my interviewees and they also asked severally if I needed any input from them. They treated me as their colleague. As I analysed the data, I reflected on my involvements with the views of minimising biases that might influence my interpretation. Another validity check is prolonged engagement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation of data sources through extensive document analysis and interviews gave the researcher opportunities to ask and validate the question on crisis communication and crisis management.

### **3.9. Chapter summary**

This chapter focused on the process and study design that used a quantitative approach, primarily a descriptive survey. It addressed in depth methods of data collection and interpretation, as well as stressed statistical techniques, without failing

to note the reason for using those tools in drawing the study's conclusion. Furthermore, the researcher addressed the ethical questions that bind the thesis.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.0. Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the study. The analysis hinges on the objectives of the study, relevant literature, and theoretical framework that support the study. Qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis were used as analytical tools for the presentation and discussion of the findings. The analysis was done and discussed based on the Research questions of the study.

#### 4.1. *Background characteristics of participants*

The participants were assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity and to maintain confidentiality. The following names were chosen: Miriam, Kweku, Yaw, Mansah, Yacobo, Francis, Gilbert, Dominic, Daniel, and Awo. All of the study participants were Persons with Disabilities. Each PwD was asked in the face-to-face interview to tell me about their background as a professional.

The study requested the participants to indicate their background characteristics since these attributes could influence their responses. From the interviews with all 10 participants, the results showed that seven of the participants were males and the remaining three were females. In terms of their highest academic qualifications, most of them had a senior high education while the other did not have any education.

It was revealed that most of the PwDs were farmers, cobblers, bakers and traders. On training before working, they indicated that no formal training is needed to do some of the works they undertake while others also need a little training to master a trade.

*“I studied Agricultural Science at Kwame Danso Senior High\Technical School. We have a youth group at the back of my house where one of them is an agric teacher at SHS so he shares the farming techniques with us”*

**(Interview session with Yaw)**

Gilbert during the interview said *“I learnt the shoes making at Mampong from a private person”* However, participant 4 indicated that *“I have No formal training”*.

This goes to indicate that most of the PwDs need a little form of training before they can work. The general consensus is that persons with disabilities are severely disadvantaged in the employment market, even when they have completed some form of training (Ingstad & Eide, 2011; O’Reilly, 2007). Disabling attitudes on the part of potential employers and a generally disabling work environment are the main factors contributing to the economic exclusion of persons with disabilities (Ingstad & Eide, 2011). If employed at all, persons with disabilities often end up in low-paid and insecure positions and earn less than their colleagues without disabilities (ibid). Despite the lack of reliable data on the employment of persons with disabilities, Ghana’s labour market clearly reflects the above situation.

## **4.2. Analysis and results of the research questions**

My data collection method was structured face-to-face interviews of individual participants. I interviewed 10 PwDs in the Sene West District. I was able to categorize data and provide a graphic description of responses.

### **4.2.1. Research Question 1: What are the lived experiences as persons living with disability?**

This research question was concerned with the lived experiences of the PwDs in relation to their interpersonal communication in relation to their personal growth.

#### 4.2.1.1. Lived experiences as persons living with disability

Concerning the lived experiences as person living with disability, most people need to be informed that, disability is not inability. Communication on the rights of PWD is important so that care providers do not lock us up because we are disabled. It came from the study through participant that:

*It's important to note, however, that my experiences won't be identical to others who have disabilities, as it's a very diverse group with varying conditions and personal stories. One aspect I've found to be common is the daily challenges we face that often go unnoticed by those who don't share our experiences. Accessibility is a constant issue. Whether it's a building without a ramp or an elevator, a website without a screen reader-friendly design, or a social event in an environment that's too noisy or crowded, accessibility can be a hurdle in the most ordinary situations. Most organizations don't invite us to meeting so that we can add our voice to issues tabled for discussion on health, security, community issues"*

**(Interview session with Yaw).**

Other participants also indicated that;

*There's also a significant amount of social stigma and misunderstanding surrounding disability. I have faced instances of discrimination and exclusion, which were*

*hurtful. And then, there's the 'invisible work' of constantly educating others, explaining, and advocating for our rights and needs. There's a strong sense of community among us, and I've built meaningful relationships based on shared experiences and mutual support. Also, I've developed unique problem-solving skills and adaptability, as my daily life often requires thinking outside the box.*

**(Interview session with Francis)**

Braithwaites (2007) point out that the persons with disabilities use distinctive communication models that implicate specific models of personhood, society, and strategic actions that are qualitatively different from the models used by the able-bodied people. The research literature indicates that negative public perceptions about people with disabilities negatively affect people with disabilities' motivation, academic success, program choice, and social interaction (Akin & Huang, 2019).

*I would say that living with a disability has definitely been a journey filled with both challenges and triumphs. My life might be different from those who are able-bodied, but it doesn't mean it's worse. I face daily challenges, from the physical, like navigating a world not always built with me in mind, to societal perceptions and attitudes towards disability. For instance, some public places still aren't as accessible as they could be, and I often find people are awkward or uncomfortable around disability. It feels as though they see the disability before they see me.*

**(Interview session with Gilbert)**

Participants' responses revealed some of the people without disabilities hold negative perceptions about disability. Some of the people without disabilities think people with disabilities should not engage in other activities because of their disabilities. This negative perception may affect people with disabilities' emotions, academic integration, and persistence. There is the need to create disability programs to educate people without disabilities about the impact of discrimination, stereotype, name calling, and negative perception.

In addition, participant 9 (Daniel) clearly stated that;

*“Ones I am able to talk, communicating with my parents and relations is very cordial and that relationship with community members is very cordial too. I am called Honourable in this community because they say I talk too much. Feeding myself is a challenge without my father's help who is also aging. It is not a good experience to lose your sight and so people should be careful what they say about PWD” (Interview session with Daniel).*

People with physical disabilities encounter numerous other problems with their families and society. They often are unable to utilize their talents due to structural barriers in our wider society and the families of some tend to fail in caring for them in the absence of special rehabilitation and care centres, thus being deprived access to basic human rights such as the rights to health and education. People living with disabilities should be encouraged to live independently and participate in all aspects of life. A participant had this view to share on how society can be inclusive for all.



*There's a lot that can be done. For starters, designing infrastructure with accessibility in mind from the ground up, rather than as an afterthought. But beyond physical access, we need to foster an attitude of inclusion. This can be done by teaching about disabilities in schools, showcasing more disabled individuals in media, or encouraging businesses to hire more people with disabilities. It's about creating a society that doesn't just accommodate people with disabilities, but values and includes them. (Interview session with Kweku).*

#### **4.2.1.2. Interpersonal space and distance**

The use of interpersonal space and distance possibly signals the communicators' mutual closeness, intimacy and availability or avoidance psychological distance.

*That is to say, we only allow the people whom we share intimate relationships to get close to us. Conversely, to the unknown or out-group members, our distance, comparatively speaking, is longer. when our space is invaded, we will react in one way or another our response is a manifestation not only of our unique personality, but also our cultural background (Interview session with Awo).*

Being treated as a special group, persons with disabilities in most cases could not stand very close to the nondisabled people, especially to the unknown ones, to have conversations even they would like to.

*“Nondisabled people always keep a long distance when they talk with me and when I go forward to get closer, they often retrieve or move backward to that large space”*

**(Interview session with Miriam)**

The statement provided by Miriam goes to confirm the disability theory which stipulates that people with disabilities may experience discrimination and social exclusion from their peers (Aquino, 2016). Still a lot of other disabled persons have the similar experience. For the persons with disabilities, they see such behaviours of the nondisabled people as unwilling to talk with them. This really hurts them a lot. Identically, nondisabled people also expressed their feelings, which state that they feel uneasy to communicate persons with disabilities (Li, 2016). Furthermore, they do not know what should talk and how to behave. To some extent, nondisabled people's longer distance might be understood as their psychological distance with the persons with disabilities. On such occasions confusions and miscommunications arise. In another case, the deaf people should be taken into consideration. Studies have shown that 'many deaf people now proclaim, they are a subculture like any other' (Chen & Starosta, 2007, p.12). Sign language is their unique cultural feature. When such language is carried out, a number of body movements, specifically hand movements are performed. Then an appropriate distance between such group of people and the nondisabled people is required.

**4.2.1.3. Social exclusion experienced by people with physical disabilities**

Participants viewed their physical conditions as an objective fact that they needed to accept. Even though having physical disabilities caused challenges and difficulties and left regrets in participants' lives, they encouraged themselves to be positive. Support from others also helped participants cope with their physical

conditions and negative experiences. All participants used the word ‘inconvenience’ (Braithwaite J., & Mont, 2009) to describe the impact of their physical conditions.

*Disability absolutely has a great impact on me. PWDs face a lot of restrictions when they go to school or work or have a romantic relationship. People without disabilities have a lot more options. But for us PWDs, we were restricted from going to university. We were not allowed to go to university at that time. We couldn't meet the criteria physically. As for employment, employers didn't want PWDs. So, we face a lot of restrictions, and we are not able to do many things. (Interview session with Yaw)*

The physical disabilities they had not only resulted in physical limitations and restricted mobility but also exclusion from social activities. Being excluded from education, labour market, and interpersonal relationships was a common negative experience shared by the participants (Brunello & Paola, 2004). Although the public's attitudes toward PWDs had become more positive, participants were still misunderstood or even discriminated against. The disability-related negative experiences led to negative emotions, such as a strong sense of loneliness, lower self-esteem, and a feeling of unfairness.

PWDs were more likely to face challenges related to education, work, and relationships. Social exclusion caused restrictions for them to go outside, and the participants stayed at home most of the time. Due to the limited opportunities for social activities, the participants tended to have limited social contacts and small social networks. Participant 2 pointed out that, “*many PWDs have little contact with society, and they have few opportunities to go outside.*” Participant 1 described her daily life:

*My life is pretty dull and boring. These days I've become a little more positive and started reading. I sometimes hang out with my friends. But because it is inconvenient for me to go out, I usually just stay at home. (Interview session with Miriam)*

Because of their physical conditions, participants felt it was difficult to maintain relationships with friends and colleagues. For example, Participant 6 (Francis) often could not go to gatherings with his colleagues after work:

*"My colleagues sometimes have gatherings after work, but I rarely go with them. My colleagues feel that I am always like this, always do not participate in the activities. It is not appropriate if I don't join them. But they can understand me because I'm disabled." (Interview session with Francis)*

Miriam had similar experience. She explains that because of the difficulties in maintaining relationships with her friends, she became self-isolated gradually and was not willing to go out, which had negative impacts on her mental health and general well-being:

*I used to call my friends and hang out with them. Gradually, I started to feel uncomfortable. I just felt that they did not have disabilities but I do, and it was inconvenient for me but why I always went to see them instead of them coming to see me. I felt I was the one who tried to maintain our friendship. I started to complain about them. And then I didn't want to go outside and meet anybody. I just stayed at home. I was pretty upset then. But I started reading books every day, and I feel better these days. (Interview session with Miriam)*

Because the participants often stayed at home and did not have many social contacts, they tended to have a strong sense of loneliness. Participant 4 (Mansah) also

commented that PWDs were lonely because they were more likely to be excluded from society. People without disabilities did not have the experience of being excluded and might not understand the loneliness held by PWDs.

Although the participants experienced physical limitations caused by their disabilities, they wished to be treated equally and did not want others to feel sorry for them or pity them. However, they were always seen as pitiful and deserving of sympathy. Participants hoped to be respected and treated equally. As commented by Mansah: *Some people still look down on PWDs, So I think society should give PWDs more care and encouragement on the mental level.*

Their answers also revealed the basic needs of PWDs and the support PWDs wanted. In line with previous research findings, participants with physical disabilities faced personal barriers (e.g. physical limitations and low expectation of self.) and environmental barriers (e.g. lack of physical access, economic barriers, sociocultural and institutional inequalities, and people's attitudes) (Stewart et al., 2009; Susinos, 2007; Swain & French, 2000). Most of the participants had difficulties and barriers when they looked for a job. PWDs are more likely to be excluded from the labour market due to their health conditions, and their capability of doing various jobs is underestimated. The "able-bodied" society also has assumptions of the types of job which are suitable to PWDs. Previous research suggests that PWDs face multiple challenges whether they have a job or not. PWDs who do not have a job face challenges such as lower working skills and limited employment opportunities. Those who are employed face the challenges of low income and limited opportunities for promotion and career development (Yu & Tao, 2017). The restricted opportunities for education and employment reflect that the social environment is not fully inclusive for PWDs in China (Shang et al., 2011; Xiong et al., 2011; Yang, 2018).

PWDs tend to have fewer social contacts with people without disabilities. The two groups have different experiences and have little in common to talk about, and it is difficult for PWDs to build and maintain a relationship with people without disabilities. Although PWDs can understand each other and are willing to build a connection, they do not have enough opportunities to gather together. Previous research exploring the meaning of being socially excluded for PWDs concluded that being shut out of society” means being denied equates to a denial of human rights (Morris, 2001). The rights include to be part of the community, to be free from prejudice and discrimination, to communicate and interact with others, and to have choices and decision-making power in their lives. Being disabled does not necessarily result in being dependent or being unable to make a contribution. Rather, the social environment in which people with disabilities live is a crucial factor (Morris, 2001). The social model of disability emphasizing the disabling social environment may help reduce environmental barriers, create support, and improve inclusiveness for the disability community. Social connections are related to people’s well-being (Veenhoven, 2008). Based on the need theory, social participation is rewarding in itself because it allows contacts with other people and fosters a sense of being part of society and having control.

Social participation creates social capital that can provide support and positively influence one’s well-being. Notably, disability is a complex phenomenon. Age of onset, type of disability, severity, presence of multiple disabilities, visibility of disability, and the progressive or episodic nature of the conditions influence the experiences of disabled individuals (Kattari et al., 2017; Stewart et al., 2009; Zapata, 2020). Previous research on the transition to adulthood for youth with physical disabilities suggests that youth who had congenital disabilities experience more

challenges in their transition experiences compared with their peers who had acquired disabilities in their teenage years (Stewart et al., 2009).

Exclusion and discrimination generate negative emotions, such as loneliness, a feeling of inferiority, and a lower level of self-esteem/confidence, which have negative influences on the well-being of PWDs. Social support serves as both an independent contributor to an individual's well-being and a buffer against adverse events (Lin, 1986). PWDs are predominantly supported by their families (Campbell & Uren, 2011), and they can obtain tangible support from the government. As participants mentioned, they received tangible support, such as allowance and mobility aids and equipment from the local Disabled Persons' Federation. The local Disabled Persons' Federation also organizes training seminars for PWDs and posts employment information on its website. The government serves as a crucial source of tangible and informational support. However, PWDs need more emotional and belonging support to help them cope with disability.

#### **4.2.1.4. Discrimination against persons living with disability**

On the stance on discrimination against persons living with disability, participants share diverse thoughts. According to Dominic (participant 8):

*“In 2009 we had an opportunity to learn computer software programme at Yeji, but our Social Welfare Director did not register us yet asked us to go so when we went we were turned back and he insulted us. On another occasion we were asked to go to Sunyani. Our District Director of Social Welfare did not register us, again we turned back, meanwhile ten (10) people from Sene West were to participate but he instructed two (2) us to go and we were given five hundred Ghana cedis each (GH 500.00) where as one thousand Ghana cedis*



*had been allotted to each of us for the said programme. We were disgraced. Distribution of common fund items has become politics that some get it every year but I being the organizer have not gotten it for 6 years now, it is discrimination” (Interview session with Dominic)*

This is supported by empirical studies. According to Freitas (2016), there are still several obstacles to the hiring of PwD's, namely economic fragility, scarcity of incentives, little maturation and lack of sensitivity of society and the business fabric. Many employers still have a negative and pessimistic view on the inclusion of PwD's in companies (Bonaccio et al., 2019). Poorly built stairs, exits, walkways, ramps, and hostels frustrate people with disabilities (Gavu et al., 2015). This research supports Gavu et al.'s (2015) findings which revealed people with disabilities find it difficult to access lecture halls and administrative buildings because the buildings lack lift, and the stairs are poorly built. Five participants complained about the school's hostels, lecture halls, roads, and administrative offices. Institutions should build ramps next to stairs on first floor and elevators to assist students with disabilities. This will enable people with disabilities to access buildings without thinking about how to attend lectures, seminars, and participatory programs. Some institutions support people with disabilities by providing their needs and giving them assistive technologies (Asselin, 2014).

This research adds to the literature regarding institutional support. Some participants expressed having troubles reading, writing, and seeing lectures notes. Institutions should provide more projectors to departments in order to solve lecture irregularities. Personal factors such as economic support, study skills, and sense of belonging help students with disabilities to persist (Herbert et al., 2014; O'Neil et al., 2012). People with disabilities apply sense of belonging to relate with their peers and



instructors (Vaccaro et al., 2015). In this research, participants revealed that they apply sense of belonging, motivation, and self-awareness to overcome challenges.

*“Health, Police, Education don’t invite PWD for our inputs to the district development. We felt neglected during the covid-19 pandemic because we were never involved in conclusions relating to the pandemic by the health service; Education office do recruitment and PWD are not considered, we only hear about it when the recruitment is over and that is not fair. PWD did CS and the doctor who did it didn’t do it well and we lost her but being a disabled person nothing she could be done because your life might be at risk if you dare report as a PWD leader/communication unit. It was painful but we didn’t know whom to trust with these issues” (Interview session with Kweku)*

Finally, it was indicated that:

*“PWD share of the common fund are used by able people and that is more done discrimination yet nothing happens auditors came but nothing happens. No accountability of district common fund on the part of duty bearers to PWD and that is discrimination. I only know that, I am supposed to have freedom of movement and nothing more. Able people make comments like of forget he has no sight who is he. Sometimes they also convert and condemn PWD for forgetting that. I am affected by what they say (Interview session with Yaw)*

This clearly suggests that there is a high level of discrimination against persons living with disability. Concerning which policies and cultural practices do you consider discriminating as person living with disability, participants indicated that;

*“Toilet facility to be provided in communities by some duty bearers, but PWD were denied and that is painful*

*and discouraging*". Others sadly asserted, "*we have accepted our fate as people who cannot become Odikro, Asafoakye etc because that is what tradition says*"  
**(Interview session with Yacobo) .**

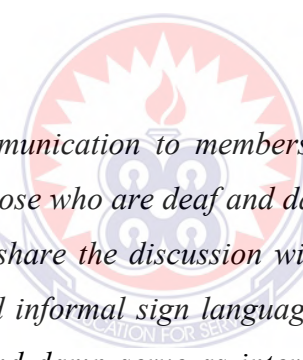
It does not come as a surprise that the law has not been able to fully give effect to the rights of PWDs contained in the Constitution of Ghana (Oduro, 2009). Smith et al (2008) has argued inaccessible environment restricts the movement of PWDs and thus negatively affecting their health, self-esteem and life satisfaction, three factors critical to successful living. This social barrier of inaccessibility in the built environment and its associated consequences is what the social model of disability seeks to address (Kadir & Jamaludin, 2012). Ironically, most, if not all, disability legislations and conventions are based on the social model that proposes a more inclusive and accessible society rather than one that treats PWDs as defective (Harpur, 2012). The participants said they knew about institutions that provide social protection services to PWDs in Ghana. The participants went ahead to affirm that some of these institutions were operating in the Sene West District. In addition, majority agreed that the social protection service institutions in the district were made up of both Government institutions and non-governmental institutions. This suggests that Non-State Actors are significantly complementing the efforts of the Government in the provision of social protection services to vulnerable groups as indicated in Abebrese (2011) and Kumado & Gockel (2003).

**4.3. Research Question 2: What are the communication strategies employed by persons living with disability and how has that enhanced your professional growth?**

The participants were also asked to indicate the strategies in communicating and how it has enhanced their professional growths. Therefore, three main themes were deduced from this research question, namely, strategies of communicating as persons living with disability, interpersonal communication enhanced professional growth, and discrimination against persons living with disability.

#### **4.3.1. Use of word of mouth and phones for communicating by PwDs**

From the data and analysis, it came out that most communication strategies are by word of mouth, phone and sign language but lack of qualified interpreters during PwDs meetings is the challenge we have because deaf and dumb people do not get the discussions and most of them are not educated in the sign language. According to participant 7,



*“our communication to membership is verbal, mobile phone. Those who are deaf and dumb who can read and write we share the discussion with them by writing on paper and informal sign language. Parents/care givers of deaf and dumb serve as interpreters for them via a common sign language they use at home. Members in this category are often cut off during meetings when we do not have someone to interpret to them” (Interview session with Gilbert)*

Furthermore, the data revealed that there were other strategies of communication also. Some participants for the study indicated that word of mouth was their main strategy when communicating with each other at a work place. A participant stated:

*“I am able to identify people by their voice” (Interview session with Miriam).*

Word of mouth communication has been recognized as a valuable communication strategy. For persons with disabilities (PwDs), this can be particularly important in sharing their experiences, needs, and insights with their communities and beyond. An important theory of communication to consider here is the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT). According to Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973), the UGT is an approach to understanding why and how people actively seek out specific media to satisfy specific needs. In the case of PwDs, word of mouth can be a medium of communication that provides them with the gratification of self-expression, social interaction, and possibly, information exchange. In the context of PwDs, word of mouth can take on a powerful role. As a means of communication, it enables them to share firsthand experiences, both the challenges and triumphs, with others in their community (Kaye, 2000). This form of communication can challenge prevailing stereotypes and misconceptions about disabilities and foster a more inclusive and understanding society.

Moreover, according to the Two-Step Flow Communication Theory by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), word of mouth communication does not flow directly from the mass media to the general public. Instead, people form their opinions under the influence of opinion leaders who interpret media messages and pass them on. Therefore, PwDs, as opinion leaders in their own right, can use word of mouth to influence perceptions about disability and advocate for inclusivity and accessibility. The success of this strategy would depend on the nature of the messages being communicated and the network within which they are being shared. Strong, supportive social networks can facilitate the successful dissemination of these messages (Granovetter, 1973).

*Word of mouth is an incredibly powerful tool for communication for me and many others with disabilities. It allows us to share our experiences, educate others about disability issues, and combat misconceptions. By sharing our personal stories, we can connect with others on a deeper, more empathetic level. I once shared my difficulties navigating a local shop that had not been designed with wheelchair accessibility in mind. By communicating my challenges to friends and family, it spurred them to advocate for better accessibility with me. The shop eventually took notice and made improvements. This change wouldn't have happened without interpersonal communication. (Interview session with Francis)*

Another participant, Dominic had this to say:

*With the advent of smartphones, I've been able to use various apps to convert speech to text. As someone with a hearing impairment, this has made a world of difference in my ability to communicate with others. For example, I can have a conversation with a friend in a noisy environment by using my phone to convert their spoken words into text. While technology offers great tools, the power of personal stories should not be underestimated. They both work hand-in-hand in aiding our communication and*

*advocating for inclusivity. (Interview session with  
Dominic)*

When businesses have the knowledge and tools to provide effective communication, they can ensure they meet the needs of their workplace and diverse customer base. Taking an accessibility-first approach will help create a culture of commitment to providing effective communication and will ensure that equitable access and opportunities are provided for all individuals (Moodley, 2006). Symbolic communication is expressed with symbols such as objects, pictures, icons, speech, text, and manual signs (Rowland, 2011). Symbolic communication relies on a shared meaning of symbols between the sender and the receiver of the message. Rowland (2011) described concrete and abstract symbols used in language.

Communicative functions include requesting and rejecting items, gaining someone's attention, confirming or denying in response to a question, demonstrating knowledge, asking questions, and commenting. Individuals with severe disabilities typically express regulatory functions (i.e., requests and protests; Ogletree et al., 1992). Light and McNaughton (2014) described communicative competence as "the attainment of knowledge, judgment, and skills to meet communication goals and participate in key environments" (p. 2). The pursuit of communicative competence should be at the forefront of all efforts to assess and improve the communicative abilities of students with severe disabilities.

From the opinions regarding the professional growth of participants, diverse views were shared. First, a participant (Yacobo) indicated that;

*“My sight vision has hindered the growth of the petty  
trade I am doing. I could sell a lot more products but I  
am limited to only this because some people may steal*

*of the items. It is my ability to talk that has sustained this petty trade I am doing otherwise will have collapsed'* **(Interview session with Yacobo)**

Interpersonal communication, particularly word of mouth, is a powerful tool among PwDs, allowing them to share experiences, advocate for change, and combat societal misconceptions (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Sharing personal narratives allows PwDs to connect with others on a deeper level, facilitating mutual understanding and empathy (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). Moreover, the spread of firsthand disability experiences can influence public perceptions and policies, emphasizing the power of interpersonal communication in disability advocacy. The advent of technology, particularly smartphones, has dramatically altered the communication landscape for PwDs. Smartphones provide tools such as text-to-speech and speech-to-text apps, assistive touch, and video calling, significantly improving accessibility (Copley & Ziviani, 2004). This technological revolution allows PwDs to interact more freely and independently, enabling wider sharing of their narratives (Light & McNaughton, 2014). Societal attitudes significantly impact the communication experiences of PwDs. Misconceptions and prejudices often act as barriers, hindering effective communication and leading to the exclusion of PwDs (Pilling, Barrett, & Floyd, 2004). However, the literature suggests that through sharing personal experiences, PwDs can challenge societal attitudes, promoting greater inclusivity and understanding (Hall, 2018).

The study revealed that interpersonal communication has enhanced professional growth of some Persons with disability. Participant 9 asserted that the;

*“ability to exchange information builds my confidence and also draws my clients closer to me. I am unable to communicate with clients at a low tone and sound very*



*convincing to keep them coming to my shop. Having all my five senses working it's a privilege which enables me to do and promote my profession as a cobbler"*

**(Interview session with Daniel).**

The findings emphasized the important role of work-oriented communication in the improvement of affective commitment and normative commitment. This result is consistent with the findings from the relevant study of Postmes, Tanis and Wit (2001). Their research explored the relationship between horizontal social-emotional-oriented communication and affective commitment. The affective commitment questionnaire they employed was fairly similar to the one that was used in the current study. A high degree of affective commitment indicates that the PwDs want to associate with people around them, especially those who have strong affective commitment to growth. Ansari (2012) argues that interpersonal communication skills (verbal and non-verbal) are important for maintaining interpersonal relationships, and for effective functioning in a work setting.

According to the participants' statements, most were able to grow professionally and personally when directed by others and when respected individuals used the controlling style in times of crisis. By contrast, fewer respondents strongly agreed that they grew both professionally and personally when encouraged to take action by their superiors or when placed in a challenging situation by a superior's request. Sethi and Seth (2021) note that the controlling style is used to direct others and gain their compliance and can be effective when used on occasion by respected individuals, particularly in times of crisis. The controlling style is a one-way communication approach, used to direct people. Minimal or no feedback is required when using the controlling style, and individuals employing this approach use power and manipulation to underpin their message (Dwyer, 2019). Although the controlling



style can be effective, it is also a style of communication that can intimidate the receiver, raise communication barriers, and alienate others in normal situations (Dwyer, 2019). However, this style can be effective in times of crisis or emergency.

A few participants reported that they grew professionally and personally when they were encouraged to take action, or when they were placed in a challenging situation by a superior's request.

*Interpersonal communication has played a pivotal role in my professional growth. It's the channel through which I have built relationships, showcased my abilities, and clarified misconceptions about my disability. Early in my career, I noticed that colleagues would sometimes hesitate to assign me tasks that they assumed I would find challenging due to my physical disability. Through open and honest discussions, I was able to communicate my capabilities and the accommodations I needed to perform effectively. As a result, they grew more comfortable including me in a wider range of projects, allowing me to showcase my skills and grow professionally. (Interview session with Awo)*

Another participant said:

*I believe in being open and proactive. I don't shy away from initiating discussions about my disability if I think it's necessary. I also use active listening to ensure I understand others' perspectives and respond effectively. I've found that being transparent about my needs and*

*abilities helps foster trust and mutual understanding. Technology has been a game-changer. Assistive technology like speech-to-text apps help me participate in meetings effectively. Platforms like emails and messaging apps allow me to communicate seamlessly with my team. And of course, video conferencing tools have made remote work feasible and inclusive. (Interview session with Miriam)*

A dynamic style is a two-way form of communication that permits several actions between the sender and receiver, such as the use of inspiration to motivate action (Dwyer, 2019). The dynamic style can be effective in times of crisis, but can be ineffective when the receiver has inadequate knowledge and experience. This may explain why participants indicated that they were unlikely to grow professionally and personally when this style was employed (Parakhina, & Bannikov, 2021). Fewer participants agreed that they grew professionally when a manager restricted their influence in discussion, or when the manager was unwilling to participate in a discussion. Typically, when employing this style, the sender avoided using their influence and legitimate power while communicating, leaving the receiver to attempt to interpret the message. This indicated indifference and unwillingness to participate or forward the communication, highlighting why it is often an ineffective managerial communication style (Wrench, Punyanunt-Carter & Thweatt, 2020).

#### **4.3.2. Patience and Persistence in communication by PwDs**

Patience is key in interpersonal communication, particularly for PwDs who may require more time to process or respond to information. Persistence is also important when seeking to ensure one's communication needs are met.

*Patience and persistence are two cornerstones of effective communication for many of us with disabilities. They're key not just for us, but for those we're communicating with. I have a speech impairment, and it sometimes takes me a bit longer to articulate my thoughts. Patience on my part means not rushing or feeling pressured to speak quickly. On the part of my communication partner, it means giving me the necessary time to express myself. I've had many situations where this patience has led to much more meaningful, productive conversations. Persistence also plays a role. For instance, in professional situations, I have had to persistently remind colleagues to provide enough response time in meetings or to use clear language that speech-to-text software can easily transcribe.*

**(Interview session with Gilbert)**

However, a participant, Awo said:

*It's been a journey of self-acceptance and advocacy. I've learned to accept the pace at which I communicate and to value the content of my communication more than the speed. For persistence, it's about standing up for my communication needs, no matter how many times it takes to make others understand and respect those needs. Yes. For patience, my advice is to not compare your communication style or speed to others. Everyone has their pace, and it's important to respect your own. As for*

*persistence, remember that you have every right to communicate effectively and be understood. Don't be afraid to assert your communication needs. (Interview session with Yaw)*

Communication theory offers valuable insights into the role of patience and persistence in the communication practices of PwDs. Communication is viewed as a dynamic and iterative process involving encoding, transmission, and decoding of messages (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). PwDs often require additional time and repetition in these processes, thus necessitating patience and persistence. The Transactional Model of Communication (Barnlund, 2008) further emphasizes the bidirectional nature of communication, where patience and persistence become essential to facilitate effective exchange and understanding. Disability theory underscores the significance of patience and persistence in communication for PwDs.

The Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 1986) posits that 'disability' is a societal construct, and barriers can be mitigated through adjustments and accommodations. For PwDs, practicing patience with others who may not initially understand their communication needs, and persisting in advocating for these needs, are important strategies for addressing these societal barriers. Empirical studies have validated the importance of patience and persistence in PwDs' communication. For example, research on PwDs in professional contexts found that patience in explaining their needs and persistent advocacy for accommodations led to improved communication experiences (Morgan & Roberts, 2010).

Further, studies on interpersonal relationships of PwDs identified patience and persistence as key factors in facilitating understanding and empathy (Hall, 2018). These qualities are essential for overcoming societal barriers, promoting inclusivity,

and fostering understanding. Future research should delve further into specific strategies that PwDs can employ to cultivate and apply patience and persistence in various communication contexts.

#### **4.4. Chapter summary**

This chapter discussed the data collected and it was corroborated with existing literature. It emerged that persons with disabilities use distinctive communication models that implicate specific models of personhood, society, and strategic actions that are qualitatively different from the models used by the able-bodied people. The next chapter talks about the conclusions and proffered recommendations.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION**

#### **5.0.Introduction**

This chapter deals with the summary, conclusions and recommendations from the findings in this study. This section provides the summary of the whole thesis including the key findings which emerged from the study. The conclusions which are drawn from the findings are captured. Some recommendations were made and also future studies were suggested.

#### **5.1.Summary of study**

This study explored the role of interpersonal communication in promoting professional growth of persons with disability at the Sene West District. In conducting the study, the following research questions were formulated as guides:

1. What are the lived experiences of persons living with disability?
2. What strategies are used by people living with disabilities in communicating and how has that enhanced their professional growth?

Related literature was reviewed under three broad areas, namely, conceptual review, empirical review and a theoretical framework. Specifically, the literature review looked at the Concept of interpersonal communication, effective communication and channel of communication, interpersonal effectiveness as a strategic resource, disability and employment and persons with disabilities.

A qualitative research design was employed in the study. A qualitative design was chosen for the study because it provided a depth of understanding which cannot be achieved from a structured questionnaire. Ten persons with disabilities were

purposefully chosen to participate in the study and were interviewed at separate times at the participants' convenient times. An introductory letter was obtained from the School of Communication and Media Studies, UEW which encouraged the participants to grant me interviews. Ten days was used to collect the data, and another one and half months for data transcribing, analysis and report writing.

### **5.1.1.Key findings**

Based on the analysis of data and discussion of the results, the following are the key findings. These findings are presented in relation to the two research questions. The study set out to identify the lived experiences of persons living with disabilities, examine the strategies persons living with disability use in communicating and how that has enhanced their professional growth, identify target persons understanding of Act 2006, (Act 715) with regards to policies, environment and how it has enhanced their professional growth and to assess the relationship between interpersonal communication and professional growth among persons with disability.

From the results, it came forth that participants have diverse forms of training that helps them to do their work. This research has contributed to the deepening of the knowledge that PwD's have about their emotions in the workplace and the way they communicate those emotions to their colleagues. This study also allowed us to know and analyse the PwD's communicative interactions in a working context.

Concerning the lived experiences as person living with disability, most people need to be informed that, disability is not inability. Communication on the rights of PWD is important so that care providers do not lock us up because we are disabled. From the study, it came out that most communication strategies are by word of mouth, phone and sign language but lack of qualified interpreters during PWDs meetings is the challenge we have because deaf and dumb people do not get the discussions and

most of them are not educated in the sign language. The study revealed that interpersonal communication has enhanced professional growth of some Persons with disability.

## 5.2. Conclusions

The study revealed that persons with disabilities use distinctive communication models that implicate specific models of personhood, society, and strategic actions that are qualitatively different from the models used by the able-bodied people. Participants' responses revealed some of the people without disabilities hold negative perceptions about disability. Some of the people without disabilities think people with disabilities should not engage in other activities because of their disabilities. This negative perception may affect people with disabilities' emotions, academic integration, and persistence.

Also, it was concluded that people with physical disabilities encounter numerous other problems with their families and society. They often are unable to utilize their talents due to structural barriers in our wider society and the families of some tend to fail in caring for them in the absence of special rehabilitation and care centres, thus being deprived access to basic human rights such as the rights to health and education.

Being treated as a special group, persons with disabilities in most cases could not stand very close to the nondisabled people, especially to the unknown ones, to have conversations even they would like to. This is confirmed by the disability theory. However, participants viewed their physical conditions as an objective fact that they needed to accept. Even though having physical disabilities caused challenges and difficulties and left regrets in participants' lives, they encouraged themselves to be positive.



Additionally, it was concluded that PWDs face multiple challenges whether they have a job or not. PWDs who do not have a job face challenges such as lower working skills and limited employment opportunities. Those who are employed face the challenges of low income and limited opportunities for promotion and career development. It is concluded that indeed effective interpersonal dialogue is critical for the success of individuals in the question for both personal and professional success particularly PWDs. The concerns about inadequate academic and informal preparation and skills deficiency in communication for performing major tasks have been found to limit a lot of people. It was revealed that the impact of inadequate communication skills among employees and staff have the tendency to limit their chances to success. It is important to add that the level of discrimination against PWDs needs to be stopped as soon as possible.

### **5.3.Recommendations**

1. It is recommended that there should be the need for effective concentration on communication among PWDs because of discrimination for them to communicate effectively and efficiently.
2. It is also recommended that for effective communication skills which are significant for achieving excellence and increased productivity and performance in PWDs, management of various organizations must ensure that the needs of PWDs are met.
3. Again, it is recommended that there should be an obvious need for interpersonal skills for communities and families alike seeking equal opportunities for PWDs.

#### **5.4.Suggestion for future study**

1. A future study or research should be conducted using a quantitative approach to know their understanding of the role of interpersonal communication in promoting professional growth among the youth and PwDs at the Sene West district.
2. Examine how assistive technologies can enhance interpersonal communication and consequently, professional growth for PwDs. This could involve exploring the lived experiences of PwDs using different forms of technology in various professional settings.
3. Investigate the impact of disability awareness and communication training on the professional growth of PwDs. It would be particularly interesting to study changes in workplace dynamics and PwDs' career trajectories post-training.
4. Conduct longitudinal studies on the professional growth of PwDs, with a focus on the evolution of their interpersonal communication strategies over time. This would provide a more nuanced understanding of the complexities and temporal aspects of their experiences.
5. Conduct a cross-cultural study of PwDs' experiences, comparing how different cultural perspectives and societal norms influence the use and effectiveness of interpersonal communication in promoting professional growth.
6. Explore how organizational policies and workplace culture impact the ability of PwDs to use interpersonal communication as a tool for professional growth. Such studies could inform the development of more inclusive workplace policies.

7. Investigate the role of peer support networks, both within and outside of the workplace, in facilitating effective interpersonal communication and professional growth for PwDs.
8. Examine the intersectionality of disability with other identities (e.g., gender, race, and socioeconomic status) and how these intersections influence interpersonal communication and professional growth among PwDs.

Each of these areas provides unique perspectives to broaden our understanding of how interpersonal communication facilitates the professional growth of PwDs. Through these studies, we can work towards more inclusive, accommodating, and effective communication practices in professional environments.



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## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Tell me what you do for a living?
2. What kind of training did you receive to enable you do this work?
3. What are your lived experiences as person living with disability?
4. What are your strategies of communicating as persons living with disability?
5. What have been your experiences with your trainers\administrators?
6. What have been your experiences with your colleagues?
7. What is your opinion regarding your professional growth?
8. How has interpersonal communication enhanced your professional growth?
9. How do you communicate with people in Church?
10. How do you communicate with health care providers (nurses)?
11. How do you communicate with bus drivers and conductors at lorry stations?
12. What is your stance on discrimination against persons living with disability?
13. What do you know about laws regarding persons living with disability in Ghana?
14. What do you know about the disability Act, 2006 (Act 715)?
15. What is the bearing of the disability Act, 2006 (Act 715) to your professional growth?
16. What are your environmental challenges as person living with disability?
17. Which policies and cultural practices do you consider discriminating as person living with disability
18. What are your expectations going forward?