



Addis Ababa University

School of Journalism and Communication

**The Role of Public Relations in Promoting the
Significance of Micro and Small Enterprises' Businesses
with Focus on the Federal Urban Job Creation and Food
Security Agency of Ethiopia**

**A Thesis Submitted to Addis Ababa University School of
Journalism and Communication in Partial Fulfilment of
Master of Arts Degree**

**By
Abozenech Negash**

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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Abozenech Negash, entitled: The Role of Public Relations in Promoting the Significance of Micro and Small Enterprises' Businesses with focus on the Federal Urban Job Creation and Food Security Agency of Ethiopia and submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Public Relations and Strategic Communication complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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Abstract

The Role of Public Relations in Promoting the Significance of Micro and Small Enterprises' Businesses with focus on the Federal Urban Job Creation and Food Security Agency of Ethiopia

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Addis Ababa University, September 2021

This study aimed to assess the role of public relations in Micro and Small Enterprises businesses promotion in the Federal Urban Job Creation and Food Security Agency of Ethiopia. Specific objectives of the study were (1) to review the functions of public relations in promotion of the MSEs businesses in the target organizations; (2) identify the dominant public relations model(s) reflected in the MSE sector promotion; (3) to point out the tools widely used in MSEs promotion; and, (4) to draw attention to the challenges practitioners are facing (if any). To this end, a quantitative research design was used. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants from all relevant units. A total of 64 participants from Federal and Addis Ababa job Creation and food security agencies engaged in this research. Both primary and secondary data were collected and analysed using a quantitative method. Based on the data analysis, the finding of the research indicated that the MSEs promotion practices of the PRs practitioners were limited more to using the traditional media than the new internet based tools, and this in turn affected its effectiveness coupled with the existing challenges of resource constraints. The press agency was the most dominant public relations model employed in the sector's PRs promotion undertakings; and, in the course of the MSEs promotion, the PRs widely use very limited tools – both in variety and richness, featuring accessibility and quality limitations. Moreover, the PRs in the Federal Urban Job Creation and Food Security Agency of Ethiopia is constrained by multifaceted challenges- structurally, it was downsized from an independent department to a small-sized team, and regarding resources, both human and financial resources are very limited. In line to these conclusions, the researcher has recommended practitioners themselves to have a strategic communication plan so as to get buy-in of their promotion plan; go through self-initiated skill development programs to create better demand of their PRs business itself and call for their success in market, and owe sufficient support. Moreover, the PRs should use a combination of the different models in public relations, and where situation permits, employ a combination of existing models for effective promotion of their businesses. Regarding the executive management of the Agency, they should give a due attention to tackle the challenges of the PRs unit while the PRs themselves outsource the functions they cannot execute with the existing resource and focus on the roles and functions worth benefiting their key public achieving core missions of the agency.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CSR Corporate Social Responsibility

PRs Public relations

OSC one-stop-centre

MSEs Micro and Small-Scale Enterprises

IPR Institute for Public Relations

FDRE Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Poverty in Ethiopia is a widespread phenomenon due partly to lack of economic opportunities and inadequate basic household income. Various suggestions were given by different scholars for addressing the persistent unemployment and poverty problems. Scholars (e.g. Lukács, 2005; Olomi, 2006 and Geleta, 2013) confirmed the crucial role of MSEs in employment creation and poverty reduction..

MSEs are important vehicle for addressing the challenges of unemployment, poverty and economic growth. They provide means of living to a large proportion of the population (Berhanu, 2005; Lukács, 2005). According to Olomi (2006), MSEs are major drivers of growth and development because they are labor intensive that are suitable for low skill wage laborer. Thus, they are a means to absorb the cheaply available labor force, making them preferable than big industries (Ageba & Amha, 2004; Amha & Ageba, 2006; Olomi, 2006).

Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) are important not only for strong economic development of a country but they are also sources of job opportunities and social movement. When their investment increases, they also raise the number of employers, suppliers and customers that help the government administration and generally the public (Sceulovs & Gaile-Sarkane, 2012). Micro and Small Enterprises are also important for successful job opportunity and source of income (Carl & Donald, 1987).

The expansion and strength of small and micro enterprises positively increase the way of life of the society by increasing job opportunities. Though these enterprises hire small number of employees at individual level, as a sum it is a lot. Mostly the work forces of the enterprises are not only the employees but the owners too, and this raises their income that leads to increases the salary of the employees and profit share. (Strategy of Micro & small enterprises development, 2012)

The strategic expansion of small and micro enterprises has a general importance not only at a country level but also for the city and the city's inhabitants. More than any

developmental organizations, small and micro enterprises have played the greatest role in sustaining the country's development and social security in economic affairs in Ethiopia. That is why the government has given priority for those enterprises more than any organization (Ethiopia Industry Development Strategy and Revolutionary Democracy, 1999).

The promotion of MSEs is justified on the grounds of enhancing growth with equity, creating long-term jobs, providing the basis for medium and large enterprise and promoting exports. In Ethiopia, establishing and being engaged in MSEs has become one of the livelihood activities pursued by many Ethiopian poor (Bekele and Muchie, 2009; Garoma, 2012). Such integrated intervention has to be supported by a well-designed public relation and communication undertakings.

The importance of public relations is widely promoted in academics. According to Harlow (1976) cited in Tench and Yeomans (2006:4-5), public relations is defined as follows:

... a unique management function which helps found and maintain shared lines of communication, considerate, acceptance and collaboration between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public options; define and emphasize the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management to keep abreast of and effectively utilize change; serving as an early warning system to help expect trends; and uses research and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools.

However, the public relations practices in developing nations like Ethiopia has enormous limitations. In spite of the fact that every organization has PR department with some practitioners, the PRs activities are being executed non-professionally. Nationally, there is lack of professional skilled persons in the PRs departments. Consequently, as the studies in different times have revealed, Ethiopia is "at risk in light of the nature and status of Public Relations in Africa" (Skinner & Mersham, 2009:303). Thus, the student researcher aimed to assess how the PRs are promoting the MSEs enterprises in the case of a selected federal government organization, namely, the Federal Urban Job Creation and Food Security Agency.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

In Ethiopia, the Micro and Small Enterprise is an emerging sector which is hoped to lay a fertile base for the economic transition of the country from agriculture-led to industry-led development. Established in 2011, the Ethiopian Federal Job Creation and Food Security Agency has been working towards achieving the goal of enabling the MSE sector to contribute to the economic growth of the country and to serve as the base for the next industry-led economy in the country. (Strategy of Micro & small enterprises development, 2012)

According to Tarawneh (2015), public relations (PRs) plays vital roles in any organization. It supports the organization's activities while reinforcing the image of good institutions. Further, it provides many services to the community by communicating with external publics such as customers and shareholders. PRs is generally the centre of communication inside and outside the institution.

The success of the organization depends on delivery of target public services and satisfactions gained through plans and programs offered by Public relations practitioners. Public relations practitioners must feed the public positive facts about an organization's services, in the process also persuading the public, employees, investors, and other stakeholders to form an opinion of a company and its guiding principles, products or services, and leadership (Basu et al., 2007; Botan & Taylor, 2006).

According to Grunig et al. (2002:553), the public relations professionals add value to an organization when they develop communal relationships with all publics affected by organizational behaviours, not just those who give the organization something in return. Apart from all the other activities of the public relations function, such as community relations, fundraising, crisis communication, and corporate social responsibility, communal relationships are important if organizations are to be socially responsible and to add value to society as well as to clients. Public relations also plays a societal role in that it helps organizations survive in their social environments by working on relationships with publics in order to bring about social and economic change and development.

Grunig et al. (2002:280) also added that the public relations' function supports other organizational functions, such as human resource management (relationships with employees and unions), lobbying (governmental communication), and financial management (investor relations and other financial relationships with stakeholders such as analysts and shareholders).

Nowadays, public relations is the central department in the heart of all government organizations in Ethiopia, and it deals with everyone inside and outside the organizations. The case of MSEs sector is no different. Since, the MSEs are the fast growing economic sectors, and thus have drawn attention of multiple stakeholders, the PRs and Communication functions are supposed to play vital roles in promoting the sector. Despite the fact that the researcher has not come across any academic research that has assessed the subject at hand in the case of the Federal Urban Job Creation and Food Security Agency in particular, available documents show up limitations of the public relations and communication practitioners in playing their own roles in propping out the essences and roles of the MSEs in the Ethiopian national economy in general. Moreover, lack of human and material resources are predominantly cited as the bottlenecks that constrain effectiveness of the practitioners' day to day activities in the PRs sector in all sectors in Ethiopia. In this regard, this study aimed to investigate the role of public relation activities in promoting the significance of the MSEs.

1.3. Objective of the Study

1.3.1. General Objective

The general objective of this study was to assess the roles public relations has been playing in promotion of the significance Micro and Small-scale Enterprises in Ethiopia.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

The study has the following specific objectives:

- 1.3.2.1. Review the functions of public relations in promoting the essence and roles of the MSEs businesses in the target organizations;

- 1.3.2.2. Identify the dominant Public Relations model(s) reflected in the MSE sector promotion;
- 1.3.2.3. Point out the tools widely used in MSEs promotion; and,
- 1.3.2.4. Identifies to the challenges practitioners are facing (if any).

1.4. Research Questions

This thesis answered the following research questions; these were:

- 1.4.1. What roles is the public relations function playing in promoting the essence and roles of the MSEs businesses in the target organization?
- 1.4.2. Which public relations model(s) is dominantly reflected in the MSE sector public relations promotion practices?
- 1.4.3. Do the MSEs promotion tools the PRs widely use support the MSEs promotion endeavours?
- 1.4.4. What are the challenges constraining the MSEs business promotion practices?

1.5. Significance of the Study

The finding of this study has multiple importances to the PRs and communication discipline in general and to the MSEs promotion practices in the target organization in particular. Some of such crucial significances are the following:

1. The findings of this research will provide vital information in creation of awareness in relation to promoting the MSEs development;
2. The result gained from findings of this study will help practitioners to identify the effectiveness of the communication tools in promoting the MSE businesses and thus take corrective actions based on the drawbacks identified;
3. The findings of study also will potentially serve as an additional reference for future researches in related topics of study;
4. Further, the finding of this research will also lay basis for the extensive researches the roles the PRs are playing in promotion of the MSEs at national level.

1.6. Scope of the study

This research is delimited to the public relations practices in line to promoting the MSEs business at the FDRE Job Creation and Food Security Agency. While the agency has separate marketing and public relations units which, in ideal cases, execute related activities, and even promotion is one of the mixes of marketing (Belch & Belch, 2003:16), this study takes into account only the public relations promotion practices in its scope. Thus, in this research, the term public relations is deemed to be distinct communication discipline which also uses its tools and techniques in promoting services and products of an organization.

Focusing on the PRs and Communication team of the Agency, the study assessed what the practitioners do to promote the MSEs, the communications model(s) guiding their practices, the effectiveness of PRs promotion tools used, and the challenges constraining the practitioners' day to day activities. Since the study focuses on the case of a specific agency, mainly the current practices in a specific department were taken into account.

1.7. Definition of Operational Terms

- **MSEs** are enterprises operating with 5 people including the owner and/or their total asset not exceeding Birr100, 000 (One Hundred Thousand) (Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, 2012).
- **Public relations (PRs)** is a strategic communication process that functioning in the specific organization.
- **Promotion** generally refers to the entire set of PRs activities, which communicate a product, brand or service to the user in general and propping out the essence and roles of the MSEs businesses in this context

1.8. Limitations of the study

The researcher has identified the following potential limitations this study has. First, the fact that the study took into account the case of one organization limits generalizability of its findings to the roles of the PRs and Communication functions at other organizations

and administration tiers. Second, due to the large size of the city administration of Addis Ababa and the resource limitations the researcher has faced, it was hardly possible to include as many number of the sample MSEs as required. Thus, future researchers should take into account these limitations for better result in the study area.

1.9. Structure of the Thesis

This research paper consisted five chapters. Chapter one presented the introductory section which embraces background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope of the study, limitation of the study, among others. The second chapter dealt with review of related literatures and studies. The third chapter was dedicated to methodology of the study. In chapter four, data analysis and discussions were presented. The last chapter, chapter five, presented summary, conclusions and recommendations. In appendices, data collections tools and consent form were attached.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITRATURES

This unit presents review of literatures and studies relevant to the research topic.

2.1. MSE Sector in Ethiopia: An Overview

The history of Micro and Small Enterprises Sector development in Ethiopia dates back to 2010. It begun with the establishment of a federal government organization, namely, ‘Federal Micro and Small Enterprises Development Agency’ that leads such enterprises at the time. The agency was formed based on the regulation No. 374-2008.

Formal establishment of the organization laid a solid foundational ground for the emerging of the MSEs sector. “Creating competitive and convenient base for industry development” is the goal of the sector.

In 2011, the Agency formulated short, medium and long-term plans and strategies for the development of the sector in Ethiopia. The short-term plan, for instance, aimed is to ensure fast development the Ethiopian economy by saving capital and thereby benefiting the society from the development. In the meantime, the medium and long-term plans targeted at serving as source of investors and time for entering to sustainable and fast growth cycle by strengthening technology and capital” (Strategy of MSE development of Ethiopia, 2010:15).

Guided by the national MSE strategy in the national development plan, the current “Federal Job Creation and Food Security Agency” was originally established with a title ‘Federal Micro and Small Enterprises Development Agency.’ The main objective of the then strategy is to create job opportunities for urban dwellers, ensure equitable distribution of wealth, increase the living standard of the community and provide and reduce poverty.

The Federal Job Creation and Food Security Agency has a structure which goes from the federal level to the lower kebele structure. Job seekers register and get support from the sector at one stop center (OSC) which is established at wereda or kebele levels. Regional states are the actual implementers of the sector, and they are doing the practical activities of job creation. On the other hand, the federal Agency supports the regions by developing strategy, directives and manuals for implementation, providing capacity building

trainings. And, it is the federal government which leads the sector at the national level through implementing support and follow up schemes and supervision programs.

2.2. Public Relations: the Concept

Public Relations, also referred hereafter to as the PRs, is an emerging industry that is at the heart of all communication. It was once a new profession globally, and many misunderstand the concept as well as its roles. Nowadays, the field of PRs has advanced much. It is widely accepted that Grunig and Hunt's (1984) definition provided grounds for the re-conceptualization of public relations. They defined public relations as "the management of communication between an organization and its publics" (p. 7). In a similar manner, Cutlip et al. (2000) defined public relations as the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the public on whom its success or failure depends.

According to Seitel (2004:3), public relations is a planned process to influence public opinion, through sound character and proper performance, based on mutual satisfactory two way communication. Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman and Toth (2004:5), on the other hand, define public relations as a leadership and management function that helps achieve organizational objectives, define philosophy, and facilitate organizational change. Johnston and Zawawi (2004) add that public relations is the ethical and strategic management of communication and relationships in order to build and develop coalitions and policy, identify and manage issues and create direct messages to achieve sound outcomes within a socially responsible framework. Focusing specifically on the South African context, the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA) (2005) defines public relations as the management, through communication, of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organization and its internal and external stakeholders.

Moloney (2000:6) suggests that public relations can be defined differently as a 'concept' (communication management by an organization with its publics), as a 'practice' (mostly dealing with the media) and in terms of its effects on society (a category of persuasive communication undertaken through the mass media or through private lobbying by groups to advance their material or ideological interests).

Some recent definitions of the PRs however has shown the concept is more advanced. Tarawneh (2015) believed that PRs is the central department in the heart of any company which *deals* with everyone inside and outside the company. This means that there are a lot of concepts in the field of PR has changed and expanded interest in PR from government installations, especially to the use of PR campaigns at the level of states and governments and PR that the traditional disciplines.

As to Banik (2006) public relation is an effort to inter policies and programs of an organization which establishes a bridge of understanding and good rapport between institution and its publics. Rincon, et al. (2018) point out that communication can be conceptualized as the process that allows the harmonious generation of relationships to obtain common benefits for an individual or organized groups, which requires the formulation of communicative strategies that adapt to the corporate, institutional and association nature.

Public Relations academics and practitioners attempted to define the term Public relations in different ways, and numerous definitions are still emerging. In literature, the term has no universally accepted definition (Grunig, 1992; Coombs & Holladay, 2007). Confirming this, Toledano, McKie & Roper (2003: 60) stated “the search for a universal definition is likely to be unsuccessful not because of the lack of clues to the real hidden meaning but because competing conceptions of the definition itself mean that contestation will be ongoing ... theorists are fighting about the status of public relations.”

In 1987 Association of Public Relations (IPR) provides a definition of public relations, which is still used. In this definition, PRs is planned and continuous efforts to establish and maintain goodwill and understanding between an organization and its target audience (Skandari, 2004).

Gilaninia, Taleghani, & Mohammadi (2013) conceived public relations as a vital artery and permanent and brain and engine of organization. Thus, they assume the public relations to be a trusted advisor of manager and all personnel; so, it is essential that managers and employees can have “trust on the public relations practitioner” (p. 2).

Some assume that public relations was an established management function, with growing credibility and influence, but needing to substantiate its role in the face of

internal questions about its efficacy and value in the context of the constant undermining effect of negative media portrayal.

In summary, as Sterne (2011) stated, definitional frameworks of public relations tended to cluster according to the specific fields of experience and backgrounds of those who held them (p.169). Accordingly, Public Relations and Communication practitioners, educators and texts preferred to define Public Relations as two-way communication, while management practitioners, educators and texts showed a preference for Strategic Communication. Similarly, scholars from marketing and media sectors tended to define the term Public relations in line to publicity and media relations respectively.

2.3. Theories and Models for MSE Sector Public Relations

2.3.1. Theories of Public Relations

There is no one theory that fully satisfies every explanation for public relation practices. Public relations practitioners have to consider various theories when they make decisions about how they can build successful relationships with their publics” (Lattimore, 2012:51). According to Lattimore (2012), the public sphere Social Theory and Excellence Theory, for example, are commonly used as the two major domains of theories for public relations. Both are discussed in detail here below.

2.3.1.1. Social Theory

Public sphere social theory refers to ideas, arguments, hypotheses, thought-experiments, and explanatory speculations about how and why human societies – or elements or structures of such societies come to be formed, change, and develop over time or disappear (Harrington, 2011). The theory helps acquire insights to make sense of public relations at the societal, organizational, and individual levels. This study tried to associate approaches and activities of the health sector public relations section with a particular view in social theory, which is mainly concerned with citizen groups, their fabrics and dynamics.

According to most authors, the central problem to be addressed in social theory is the relationship between the individual and society (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009: 703). The research exploits the idea of Habermas's 'Public Sphere' and points out potential hubs where MSE sector communication could be constantly carried out and developed. Hence public relations practice in the MSE sector needs to be perceived in relationship to societal (macro), organizational (meso), and individual (micro) characteristics. The societal oriented approach of the concept of public sphere in particular can be cultivated for the MSE sector public relations. The idea was first developed by a German philosopher and sociologist Jurgen Habermas. For Habermas, the public sphere provides a space for rational and critical debate. For this to happen, problems and issues must be identified and thermalized, solutions developed, and the issues dramatized to the extent that they are taken up by the political structures (Heath, 2005:712). Public sphere is a public realm "a space for communication, which in principle is available to all" (Ihlen et al., 2009:10).

The public sphere here is important because it "emphasized the ethical obligation of engaging in dialogue and the crucial function of dialogue in the public sphere to discover truth through discussion" (Ihlen et al., 2009:207). Though face-to-face interaction in assembly is considered to be a primary medium of participation in the public sphere, however, with the rise of the new media there is every means to utilize available social, electronics, audio-visual and print means of communication in this modern age. "The concept of the public sphere, as developed by Habermas, is important for both the field of public relations and for our notion of a democratic civil society. A space where issues can be rationally discussed critical opinions formed, and that is inclusive in scope is an ideal worth striving for and lends legitimacy to the system" (Heath, 2005:712).

2.3.1.2. Excellence Theory

Excellence theory is another well-known theory in the field of public relations. Conducted by a team of researchers, who wondered how Public Relations must be practiced and the communication function organized for it to contribute most to organizational effectiveness (Grunig, 2000), the excellence study identified the value of excellent public relations to the larger society as well as to specific organizations. By the year 1984 James E. Grunig, a public relations theorist, led an international research team

consisting of six public relations academics and as a result that team proposes the Excellence Theory, which provides insight as to “how public relations excellence is achieved in an organization” (Waddington, 2012:2). This theory deals with internal structures and external variables as performance determiners for a given public relations section. Properties addressing excellence theory provide a model for the maturation of public relations theory in international contexts. As originally conceived, and based on an examination of public relations practice only in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, there were fourteen fundamental principles in three general areas: (1) empowerment of the public relations function; (2) communicator roles; and (3) organization of the communication function and its relationship to other management functions (Freitag & Stokes, 2009:35). The thesis mainly consults various aspects of two models; Strategic Communication Framework and Development Communication. These will serve as major theoretical backgrounds and outcome of the analysis could be easily adopted and potentially be able to guide public relations activities in the Ethiopian MSE sector. The introduction of some elements of these models to the MSE sector in Ethiopia will extend professional attribute to public relations practices and helps to tackle ineffectiveness in the area. Generally, the PRs practices are guided and influenced by various models and theories.

2.3.2. Models of Public Relations

According to Wilcox and Cameron (2006:63), “the most widely discussed theoretical model of public relations communication is that formulated by James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt (1984). Through time, however, scholars of public relations have identified and widely developed the four typical models of public relations Grunig and Hunt introduced. The models of public relations Grunig and Hunt proposed are (1) the press agency model, (2) the public information model, (3) the two-way asymmetric model, and, (4) the two-way symmetric model.

2.3.2.1. The Press Agency /Publicity/ model of public relations

According to Tench and Yeomans (2006:269), the press agency model of public relations serves as a propaganda function. Practitioners spread the faith of the organization involved, often through incomplete, distorted or half-truth information. Wilcox and

Cameron (2006:63) also added that this is essentially one-way communication that beams messages from a source to a receiver with the express intention of persuading the recipient into action. Such an approach is most associated with “propaganda”- the dissemination of messages to persuade public support for positions or action without seeking feedback. Lubbe and Puth (2002:8) also suggest that this model describes public relations as being a little more than a publicity function that is striving for coverage in mass media. The sole purpose of this model is to promote an individual, an organisation, or a product, therefore, encouraging a one-way flow of information to the public.

Furthermore, the model of press agency describes propagandistic public relations that seek media attention in any way possible. Practitioners of this model use a one-way, source-to-receiver communication model. The practitioners strive to provide accurate information to the public, but they do not disclose unfavourable information voluntarily.

2.3.2.2. The Public Information Model

This is another one-way PRs model designed not necessarily to persuade but rather to inform. The public relations practitioner in this model communicates objective information designed to enlighten the public. Seitel (2004:56) states that this model focuses on the technician role of public relations. Here, the public practitioner’s role is to report information objectively about the organisation. According to Gruning (1995), the public information model characterizes public relations as practiced by journalists-in-residence who disseminate what generally is accurate information about the organization but do not volunteer negative information.

In summary, both of the above two models are one-way models in that practitioners who follow them give information about the organization to publics but do not seek information from publics through research or informal methods (Gruning, 1995).

2.3.2.3. The Two-way Asymmetric Model

In the two-way symmetrical model, public relations communication is balanced in that it adjusts the relationship between the organization and its publics through negotiation and compromise. The practitioner of this model uses planned communication to manage conflict and to improve understanding with publics.

The two-way asymmetric model uses research to facilitate understanding and communication rather than to identify messages most likely to motivate or persuade publics. In the symmetrical model, “understanding is the principal objective of public relations” rather than one-sided persuasion (Grunig & Grunig, 1992: 289). The two-way asymmetrical model is characterized by unbalanced, one sided communication. Moreover, practitioners of this model use social science theory and research on attitudes and behaviors to persuade publics to accept the organization's point of view or to behave as the organization wants.

Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier (2002) further explained that symmetrical public relations also can be described as mixed motive public relations. The mixed motive model, according to Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier (2002) refers to the phenomenon of public relations people being motivated by both their loyalty to their organization and by the publics affected by behaviors of the organization that employ them. In sum, Grunig & Grunig (1992) argued that the two-way symmetrical model of communication is the normative model and is an ethical approach to organizational effectiveness more than other models of public relations.

2.3.2.4. The Two-way Symmetric Model

The two-way symmetrical model describes public relations efforts in terms of “its research based description as the use of communication in improving understanding with strategic publics” (Lattimore et al, 2004:58). Seitel (2004) argues that the two-way symmetric model differs from two-way asymmetric model in that mutual understanding rather than persuasion is the purpose. In this way, this approach is more ‘balanced’ and, therefore, symmetrical, with the public relations communicator serving as a mediator between the organisation and the publics. However, all four models are used in public relations work. Wilcox & Cameron (2006:63) also mention that it is clearly more advisable, whether attempting to persuade or inform to seek two-way communication. Feedback, in other words, is critical for true understanding. Rensburg & Cant (2009:28) state that traditionally the role of public relations in an organisation was to focus on communicating with stakeholders. Today, public relations takes on a broader role. Public relations aims to establish and nurture a positive image of an organisation in the eyes of its publics.

The two-way asymmetric model has been presented as a more sophisticated version of communication involving the careful study of audiences to determine their needs and wants so that communication can be executed more effectively (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). It is two-way because it requires listening to feedback from target audiences in order to shape messages and tune messages to their needs. This model sits well with the Marketing approach whereby customers and potential customers are systematically researched to ascertain needs which can then be met successfully to produce profitable outcomes (Kotler, Keller, & Burton, 2009). Yet some argue that all four models of communication are actually present in excellent organisations (Botan & Hazelton, 2006).

Generally, as summarized by Theaker (2008), the Press Agency/Publicity model is mostly used in show business, celebrity PR, where the main aim is promotion through media coverage. The Public information model provides information to the public. The two-way asymmetric PRs model is commonly used to introduce the idea of two-way communication. Nevertheless, it is asymmetric because the intended change is in the attitudes or behaviour of the audience rather than the organization's practices. Finally, the two-way symmetric PRs model, which is also referred to as the 'ideal' model of public relations, describes a level of equality of communication where each party is willing to change their behaviours to accommodate the needs of others. Hence, in line to this research, attention is given to the extent to which the public relations practitioners use the two-way symmetric model of public relations in their endeavour to promote the businesses of the micro and small enterprises.

2.4. Major Roles and Functions of PRs in MSE Sector

There are a variety of activities that are basic and endemic to the public relations practitioners. Lubbe & Puth (2002) pointed out that public relations practitioners are involved in a variety of work assignments or functions which may include research, strategic planning, counselling, internal education, evaluation, media relations and placement, organizing, writing, editing, production, speaking, and training.

According to Cutlip et al. (2000), PRs can begin with someone simply answering letters from customers or members; with someone writing annual reports, handling visitors,

conducting tours or even someone arranging the annual meeting, or in some other cases as a as a product and service publicity, as a 21 news support for an advertising campaign or fundraising”. Davis (2004:21) reinforces that public relations “covers the routine of daily exchange of information to manage all corporate communication including marketing activities.”

Ströh (2007:1) argues “ public relations should be the umbrella function that manages the communication between an organization and its publics to build and enhance healthy relationships to the benefit of all parties involved.” Therefore, this view of relationships, being at the centre of the function of public relations, can be seen as one of the most important ingredients for an effective organization. Wilcox et al. (2009) further postulate that apart from playing a managerial role, public relations plays operational, reflective and educational roles within an organization.

Grunig et al. (2002: 280) further maintain that the public relations’ function also supports other organizational functions, such as human resource management (relationships with employees and unions), lobbying (governmental communication), and financial management (investor relations and other financial relationships with stakeholders such as analysts and shareholders).

According to Murray and White (2005), the public relations role is primarily media relations and internal communications. Yet they added that good PRs should be “coaching and advisory to top management” (p.16). Similarly, Dozier & Broom (2006) identified four generic Public Relations practitioner roles: the communication technician (one who implements communication plans at an operational level); the communication facilitator (one who acts as a go-between to create conversation between stakeholders and the organization); the problem-solving, process facilitator (one who acts as a communication solution-finder); and the expert prescriber (one who gives advice to the dominant coalition).

In the construct of the Excellence Theory, the Public Relations practitioner serves “as a communication manager in the dominant coalition ... to contribute to the overall effectiveness of the organization” (Heath & Coombs, 2006, p. 199). On the other hand, the Public Relations practitioner acts as a boundary spanner, assimilating and communicating information across the organization as stipulated in management

approaches. Their function is to listen, to interpret, to respond to interests and needs, and to facilitate positive relationships (Heath & Coombs, 2006). As a co-creator of meaning, the boundary-spanner is also expected to create dialogue to build understanding and mutuality (Grunig, 2008). Public relations also plays the roles of Reputation Management (Kotler et al., 2009), Situational Crisis Management (Lerbinger, 2006), credibility or trust building (Callison, 2004), managing media (Lerbinger, 2006), which may involve spin doctoring to secure positive media coverage in order to enhance and protect the brand (Ries & Ries, 2000; Kotler et al., 2009).

Issues and Crisis Management approaches emphasize Public Relations' role in environmental scanning, proactive communication and strategically managing media statements in the light of these (Coombs, 1995; Grunig, 2006). There has also been a strong emphasis on theorizing about Public Relations as Relationship Management (Grunig & Hon, 1999; Heath & Coombs, 2006; Coombs & Holladay, 2007). Contingency Theory conceptualizes Public Relations as the over-arching tool that organizations use to change the minds of their publics (Shin, Jin, Cheng, & Cameron, 2003).

In the MSE sector in particular, PRs can take a wide range of “managerial” and “operational” roles. The managerial functions include “programming and planning with other managers, determining needs, prioritizing, defining publics, setting goals, and objectives, developing strategy and tactics, administering personal budgets and managing programs,” (Cutlip & colleagues as cited in Tench & Yeomans, 2006, 31). “Media relations, internal communication, communication technology (intranet and internet), crisis communication,” (p. 540), writing and editing, research, special events, production, training, contact/ liaising, counselling,” (p. 31) are among key operational functions of PR, most of which are listed by communication affairs directorate.

One common practice is dealing with internal and external stakeholders, maintaining healthy relationship between the sector and its internal as well as external stakeholders. Public relations are thought of here as the communication and action on the part of an organization that supports the development and maintenance of mutually beneficial relationships between the organization and the groups with which it is interdependent, (Lamb & Kathy, 2005:1). In planning stakeholder relations, public relations' role is intelligence gathering.

In principle, public relations do have a potentially useful role to play in the process of business planning, bringing different stakeholder perspectives to the attention of senior management and thereby helping to ensure that management have a balanced view on the likely impact of policy decisions before committing themselves to any particular course of action, (Heath, 2005:821). Internal stakeholders' communication is "one of the most important specialties of public relations. Without internal communication, organizations would not develop structures and cultures. Internal communication, therefore, is the force that produces the context in which a public relations department must function" (Grunig & Dozier, 2002:495).

Counselling is also identified as the essential role of the senior PRs manager. As counsellor, the PR manager is responsible for scanning the turbulent external environment, directing efforts to identify and monitor concerns of the institution's diverse and action-oriented publics to the institution's management and leadership. In essence, the PR manager speaks for the external publics during management's decision making, ensuring that their needs and concerns are considered and understood (Lewton, 1995:16). As counsellor's PR people can also provide mainly on the job trainings that can bridge gaps of professional trainings in the area; train others, "coaching others in writing and communication skills. Helping introduce change in culture, policy, structure and process" (Tench & Yeomans, 2006:31). PR in the form of media relations manages connections with the media, to bring matters to the public's mind which involves "contacting news media, magazines, supplements, trade publications and freelancers to get them to publish material about the organization, responding to media requests" (p. 31).

PRs also provides written and edited input for various purpose including "print and broadcast news releases, feature stories, newsletters, correspondence, website/online media, shareholder/annual reports, speeches, brochures, AV scripts, advertisements, product and technical materials" (p. 31). Another function that a MSE sector public relations section should allot ample space to exercise is public relations research. "Effective public relation is a process, and the essential first step in the process is research. Today, research is widely accepted by public relations professionals as an integral part of planning, program development, and evaluation process" (Wilcox & Cameron 2009:128). "As research solves practitioners' problems, the practice of public relations should become more effective" (Heath, 2005:695).

PRs research can be conducted “to achieve credibility with management, to define audience and segment publics, to formulate strategy, to test messages, to prevent crisis, to monitor the competition, and to sway public opinion” (Wilcox & Cameron, 2009:129). Serving as a contact person and representing the organization in various forums is another function for a PRs occupation. Getting in touch and liaising with “community, internal and external groups. Listening, negotiating, managing conflict, mediating, meeting and entertaining guests and visitors, speaking, gaining speaking platforms, coaching others, and speaking to groups” (Tench & Yeomans, 2006:31). Staying visible on the web highway using online technologies where people use to share content, opinions, insights, experiences, perspectives is becoming is one role of PRs. “Facilitating or, even to some extent, orchestrating this process of community building will become an important strategy in public relations” (Wilcox & Cameron 2009:198). Similarly, Gilaninia, Taleghani & Mohammadi (2013) stated duties of public relations are now classified into three main categories: 1- informing 2- advertising and encourage 3- seeking cooperation, integration and optimizing affairs (p. 3). These literatures generally indicate that public relations has diverse roles and functions to play in an organization without which organizational success is questionable. In the MSE sector, where the enterprises need publicity among wide spectrum of consumers and stakeholders, the PRs has non-replaceable position to play the promotion roles.

2.5. Public Relations Communication and Promotion Tools

The main objective of public relation is to convey information that will impact individual stokes (Rubere, 2010). The reason behind this assumption considering PRs as a tool to aware and save the public within the domain for mutual agenda. That’s why PRs is defined as deliberate, planned, performance based keep public interest pursuit two-way communication and part of measurement function.

According to Belch & Belch (2003:23), the purpose of PRs is “to establish and maintain a positive image of the company among its various publics.” In order to attain its purposes, Public Relations uses a variety of other tools such as publicity, advertising, special publications, participation in community activities, fund-raising, sponsorship of special events, and various public affairs activities (Belch & Belch, 2003).

According to Palmer (2009:440), public relations employ certain tools such as Press releases, Press conferences, Lobbying, and Sponsorship. Similarly, IPR (2020) lists some of the most common public relations tools such as attendance at public events, press releases, newsletters, blogging, and social media marketing.

Nowadays, many firms are making PRs as an integral part of their marketing and promotional strategies. Moreover, PRs firms are increasingly touting Public Relations as a communications tool that can take over many of the functions of conventional advertising and marketing (Register & Larkin, 2003). To carry out an effective promotion, it should be noted that an organization has to combine the promotional-mix elements, balancing the strengths and weaknesses of each.

2.7. Practices of MSE Sector Public Relations

Public sector public relations lean to practice reactive approach than the proactive one. Maintaining organizations ongoing communications with its publics will inevitably on a largely reactive basis. However, this approach limits the ability of public relations to be a force for change . . . reactive public relations is perhaps most suited to fairly stable environments in which the principal aim is simply maintain the status quo, (Mersham & Skinner, 1995:13).

Working in the public sector in many ways is demanding for public relations profession and for its practitioners. The challenges in public sector public relations comprise involvement of a greater range of stakeholders, insufficient budget, national governmental policy over which public relations practitioners may have limited control. “The way in which communications is organized carries important strategic and political dimensions and is also crucial for the effective support and integration of communications activities” (Cornelissen, 2004:126). An effective streamlining of communications activities is just as important to organizations within the public sector as in commercial firms. The public sector involves many different types of organizations, including nationalized companies (e.g. utilities), government agencies and departments (e.g. the Ministry of Defence), and public service organizations (e.g. hospitals and schools).

The larger organizations in the public sector (as opposed to, for instance, small government agencies) traditionally have a strong presence close to senior management and policy making of 'public' communications disciplines (e.g. media relations, publicity) that are used to inform the general public, and traditionally little marketing communications (Massresha, 2018).

Another area in the PRs practice of any public organization is the issue of competence. It might be very early in Ethiopia to debate on what constitutes competence, and what mechanism could be employed in identifying the competences needed but it is important to mention at least the need of preparation. "Communications practitioners need a thorough preparation for their roles, a preparation that should be as rigorous and demanding as the preparation expected of professionals in other management areas" (Cornelissen, 2004). PR as a profession needs to offer services of the highest possible quality in the area. If not there are two major risks: malfeasance and incompetence. Malfeasance is providing services that should not be provided. Incompetence means that the practitioners undertaking the work do not have the necessary knowledge or experience to undertake the work to the highest professional standards (Tench & Yeomans, 2006). Social accountability is emerging as a new variety in public relations, which the health sector PRs has to take on.

Tench & Yeomans (2006) further provides with what PRs deals with public relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinions; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change; serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools (p. 5). According to Theaker (2004:4), public relations is the art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organization leaders and implementing planned programs of action which will serve both the organization's and the public interest."

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is an integral part of a research undertaking. In this part of this research, therefore, methodological issues such as the study setting, the research approach, method and sources of data, the research population, samples and sampling techniques, method and procedures of data collection, and ethical considerations are incorporated.

3.1. Physical Location of the Research

This research focused on a federal government organization, namely, the Federal Urban Job Creation and Food Security Agency. The Agency is located on the way from Mexico Square to Kera in Kirkos Sub-city, Addis Ababa. The MSEs proposed to include in the study were also those operating in the city administration of Addis Ababa. More specifically, the MSEs in Kirkos Sub-city of the city administration were the centers of this study. Therefore, the physical location of this study was mainly Addis Ababa city.

3.2. Research Design

This research aimed to assess the roles PRs in promoting the importance and roles of the MSEs in the Ethiopian national economy. To this end, the survey approach of the quantitative method was used. According to Kothari (2004), the quantitative research method enables to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations of all parties that involve in an issue. Hence, the researcher preferred this design to get a deep insight of all parties that involve in the execution of public relations in government organizations in Ethiopia.

3.3 Population, Samples and Sampling Techniques

3.3.1. Population of the Study

A population is a group of potential participants to whom a researcher wants to generalize the results of a study. Welman, Kuger, and Mitchell (2005) states the population is “the

study object and consists of individuals, groups, organizations, human products and events, or the conditions to which they are exposed.” Based on this understanding, the population of this research incorporated the top and middle management of the target organization, and the practitioners at the core departments in the same organization. Meanwhile, management and key personnel from the Addis Ababa city administration were also part of the population. Each of these organizations was selected for their significance to this study as stated in the problem statement section.

Structurally, the federal government organization at which this research focused was headed by a director. There were also two vice directors, each lead certain number of directorates within the agency. The middle management and senior staff in their respective departments, which incorporates directors of nine directorates and four employees from each were also part of the study. And, each directorate was composed of a team leader and experts, whose number varies across various departments. The PRs and Communication had six personnel..

The Agency was overseeing the Urban Job Creation and Food Security Institution in 10 regional states and two city administrations. The Urban Job Creation and Food Security Agency in the city government of Addis Ababa was the one among these. The Agency was also assumed to be direct beneficiary of the federal government organization’s promotion undertakings. This Agency was also one of the key publics for the federal Agency.

In order to study the case at hand more deeply, Addis Ababa City Administration Urban Job Creation and Food Security Agency was also included in the population. Participants from the agency were top management, PRs department heads and practitioners, and the MSEs development Directorate staff.

3.3.2. Sampling Technique and Size

The entire population of the Federal Urban Job Creation and Food Security Agency is too large to include in this single study. Thus, the researcher took a sample of participants who would represent the whole population. As Swetnam & Swetnam (2000) suggests, a sample is “the subset of a population selected to participate in a research study.”

Regarding the techniques, there are generally two methods: probability and non-probability sampling methods (Kothari, 2004). In this research, however, the researcher used a non-probability sampling method. In line to this, a purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants from each unit of population discussed above.

The principal reason for choosing the purposive sampling method is that it helps a researcher so as to gain an in-depth understanding with relevant information regarding the subject of the study during the research season. According to Natasha (2005:6), “in purposive sampling technique, we decide while designing the study how many people with which characteristics to involve as a participant.” In line to this, first, the three PRs practitioners (both department heads and experts) in the federal Urban Job Creation and Food security Agency were taken into the sample group. Similarly, two of the three top heads of the Agency, directors, team leaders and 4 experts in each of the nine core processes of the Agency were also taken as part of the study participants. From the same agency of the Addis Ababa city administration as well, the three PRs and Communication team practitioners, and two heads of the agency whom the student researcher purposively included in the study sample were involved.

Because these participants have been primarily involved in the MSEs businesses apart from the lower level employees all the directors and experts of the nine core directorates, a total number of sixty four (64) individuals composed the sample.

3.4. Method, Tools and Procedure of Data Collection

3.4.1. Data Sources

There were two data sources, namely, the primarily and secondary data sources. The primary data sources were the management and line staff of the federal and Addis Ababa City Administration Jobs Creation and Food Security Agencies. In the interest of resources, the MSEs who were involved in the business were excluded from the sample.

The secondary data sources were organizational plans and reports, magazines, leaflets, and web-based platforms. There were no prior researches about the public relations in line to its role and tools in the agency this study focused. However, there were various

publications prepared by the PRs practitioners narrating about the agency. Thus, these documents were used as a secondary data source in this study.

3.4.2. Method and Tools of Data Collection

With regards to tools, semi-structured questionnaire, Key Informant Interviews, and document analysis were used. The questionnaire and interview were employed to collect data from the primary sources while the secondary data were gathered through document analysis. These tools were selected taking into account each tool has its own pros and cons, and therefore consulting more than one source and employing diverse tools helps a researcher to triangulate the findings (Flick, 2011).

3.4.2.1. Semi-structured Questionnaire

A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data from all primary data sources. According to Hargreaves & Seale (2006), the semi-structured questionnaire is used where there is a need to accommodate a large range of different responses from participants, and it enables a mix of qualitative and quantitative information to be gathered. The questionnaire was developed based on the main concepts, theories and models discussed in the chapter of literature review. As Kothari (2004) clearly stipulated, structured questions were in the same wording and order to all respondents, and the questions were simple to administer in expense to analyse.

3.4.2.2. Key informant interview (KII)

Key informant interview is one of types of methods of interview widely used to collect information from a wide range of participants. While it is applied mostly in researches of qualitative nature, according to Creswell (1997), KII is a useful instrument to gain a deep insight of participants and to collect information from a wide range of people who have first-hand knowledge about the issue at hand. Since this research study incorporates qualitative data to some degree to triangulate the findings, thus, the Key Informant Interviews were employed to gather data from selected participants with deep knowledge about the subject in the target organizations.

The most important advantage and reason for choosing such interview tool in this study was due to the fact that it was supposed to be a flexible method of data collection. When using this tool, the researcher can explain and expatiate on questions in case the participants are not clear to participants of the study.

3.4.2.3. Document Content Review

The document content analysis has been used as a popular method in researches (Bowen, 2009). It focuses on analysing and interpreting its content so as to assess what had been applied in the actual promotion situation. According to Deacon, et al., (1999) “content” refers to words, meanings, symbols, pictures, ideas, themes and any messages that can be communicated. In this case, therefore, content review of the documents prepared by the PRs practitioners for promotion purpose was fundamental part of data collection. Such tools were used in this research so as to further strengthen the findings of primary data while triangulating the data.

The main documents of focus are the following: annual plans and reports, monthly newsletters, and brochures. Besides this, contents of organizational websites and social networking pages (particularly the website and Facebook pages) will be included in the review.

Inclusion or exclusion of each document in analysis depends on validity of its content. Regarding content validity, Bloor and Wood (2006:59) suggested that validity of any document depends on the four criteria: authenticity (Is document original and genuine?); credibility (Is it accurate?); representativeness, (Is it typical of its mind?); and meaning (Is its intention clear?).

3.4.3. Procedures of Data Collection

Data collection begun by obtaining relevant documents and statistical data from the sources mentioned above. The data collection was delimited to the thematic areas pre-determined based on the research objectives. Original questions, particularly the structured questionnaire) was prepared in Amharic, and then it was translated into English so that the participants can fill in based on their preferences.

The data collection tools were administered by the researcher herself. In order to avoid the fear of coronavirus, emailing survey questionnaires and phone discussion were used as available alternatives for the practitioners. In most occasions, the interview questions were personally administered by the researcher face-to-face as preferred by the participants.

The participants were briefed beforehand on the objectives of the study both in the introduction section of the questionnaire and during the interview. The researcher also requested their willingness to record the oral interview on audio tape recorder.

The data collection was carried out concurrently. While the questionnaires were distributed, interviews were held until the participants return the questionnaires. In each organization, a willing manager was assigned to monitor and collect the questionnaires so as to minimize loss and delay in returning.

3.5. Method of Data Analysis

Despite this study incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data, a quantitative method was employed for analysis. The analysis of data obtained through questionnaire was carried out using the SPSS (version 21) so as to generate the out puts, and present the results visually. As measurement tools, numbers and per cent, with summation in some cases where justifications were available, used.

The qualitative data gathered through interview and document analysis were used to triangulate the responses. Meanwhile, the findings of past researches sources were used to further consolidate the result of the quantitative data analysis. Regarding content analysis, an interpretive document analysis approaches were used.

3.6. Reliability and Validity

At the levels of both data collection instrument development and analysis levels, reliability and validity were addressed properly. In line to the suggestions of Kothari (2004) reliability of the survey questionnaire items was tested, and thus mainly the items that were found to be powerful to elicit the required data were presented in the questionnaire.

In order to address the issues of validity, the researcher used techniques of data triangulation to check how valid the result of analysis when compared to the findings of earlier researches. Eventually, limitations of the thesis were reflected so that further studies can get into the subject deeper to enhance the validity of the findings.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are important elements in establishing trust and credibility during data collection in research. Hence, the student researcher has followed the ethical rules in two ways- gaining an informed consent, and keeping confidentiality of information.

Regarding the formal consent, the researcher made respondents conscious that the goal of the study was not beyond the academic study, and asked their willingness to take part in the research. Hence, all participants signed the consent form for their will-based agreement to engage in the study.

On the other hand, the participants were informed about confidentiality of any information they disclosed during data collection. According to Abiy et al (2010:108) cited in Gebreselassie (2011:36), confidentiality is a key element of research ethics that the researcher needs to know which types of information can or cannot be shared with a third part with or without consent of the study participant. In this regard, the information that researcher obtained from respondents was kept confidential.

The ethical issues do not stop with data collection and analysis. They also extend into actual writing and disseminating of the final research report. Discuss how the research will not use language or words that are biased against persons because of gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic group, disability, or age (Creswell, 2004), therefore, a researcher is responsible to present unbiased language to acknowledge participants.

Generally, the researcher took all appropriate steps to maintain ethical principles in research, and thus keep the participants' personal privacy, apply the Ethical principles during data collection and publication of the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents analysis of the data gathered from the participants. The result is discussed, and then compared to the literature review. The analysis incorporates responses of 60 survey participants (100% response rate) along with the oral responses of the four interviewees. Analysis of the data gathered from all sources was presented as follows.

4.1. Presentation and Analysis of Demographic Data

Demographic data is crucial in understanding whether the given sample of the respondents in a specific research study represents sufficiently the target population. The demographic data also enables the researcher to find out the suitability of the respondents in providing answers to the research questions for the purpose of generalizing the results of the study. The gender, age, level of education and work experience data are presented and analysed in this sub-section.

4.1.1. Gender of participants

Gender was one of the demographic data this research incorporated. Table 1 below presented summary of participants' gender.

Table 1: Gender of research participants

	PRs Practitioners		Internal Public		Executive Management		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Female	2	33.3	23	42.6	0	0	25	39.1
Male	4	66.7	31	57.4	4	100	39	60.9
Total	6	100	54	100	4	100	64	100

Source: - Prepared by the researcher from the data gathered through survey, 2021

Table 1 showed that the majority of the respondents (60.9%) were male whereas 39.1% of the respondents were female. Unlike to the findings of some researchers conducted in various countries that revealed public relations is a gendered field in which female practitioners have a dominant place (Rea, 2007 in Kilu & Akrong, 2014), there were fewer females in the target organization. Some other researchers showed gender has an impact on decisions (Agarwal, et al. 2009 qtd in Abraham, 2020) in different businesses. Based on this, therefore, an out-numbered men staffing in the organization was likely to affect the PRs decision in promotion roles of the MSEs business.

4.1.2. Level of Education

Level of education was another issue this study addressed. In this regard, the majority of the respondents (about 57.8%) were undergraduate degree holders. The next highest number (39.1%) refers to graduate degree. 3.1% of the participants were at the education level of diploma or equivalent and none found to hold PhD (Table 2). As a key management function, the practices of public relations in promoting the MSEs businesses certainly requires adequate skill which in most cases can only be gained through formal education. In line to this, the given data here implied most of the participants of this research attained an undergraduate degree and above (96.9%) and so educational background cannot constrain their practices.

Table 2: Highest level of education the PRs hold

Level of Education	f	%
PhD	0	0
Graduate degree	25	39.1
Undergraduate degree or equivalent	37	57.8
Diploma or equivalent level	2	3.1
High school complete and/or below	0	0
Total	64	100

Source: - Prepared by the researcher from the data gathered through survey, 2020

4.1.3. Field of study for the PRs most attained level of education

Regarding the field of study from which the PRs practitioners were graduated, some researchers found that the practitioners did not study relevant field in past times (Zemedkun, 2014). After a decade since then, however, it seems the human resource quality in the public relations sector is much enhanced. As depicted on Table 3 below, an equal number 33.3%, which could be considered as the majority, studied language and/or literature, and other social sciences? Those who studied Journalism and Communication were only 16.7%, and the same number of participants came from even other fields of study different from those mentioned above. Yet, none of the PRs respondents with graduate degree came from Public Relations fields of study, which in turn revealed further actions should be taken to enhance accessibility of the PRs field of study to attract more trainers from the public sector.

Table 3: PRs practitioners field of study, N=6

Field of Study	f	%
PRs and/or Communication	0	0
Journalism and/or Communication	1	16.7
Language and/or Literature	2	33.3
Other Social Sciences	2	33.3
Other	1	16.7
Total	6	100

Source: - Prepared by the researcher from the data gathered through survey, 2021

Most of the PRs functions require technical skills including writing contents fit to the media. To this end, fields of study that can equip with practitioner with such skills are often required. With this regard, some scholars advise Journalism and/or Communication fields are preferable (Zemedkun 2014). In the target sector, there were public relations practitioners whose field of study is less relevant to efficiently execute their day to day activities. In this regard, short term trainings are helpful to equip with basic skills. However, 5(83.3%) of the PRs practitioners at both federal and Addis Ababa city administration levels reported they did not engage in any technical training (and certified for) directly relevant to their day to day PRs functions execution in a year's time until the

date this data were collected. The remaining 1(16.7%) stated to have been studying PRs and strategic communication, and that was relevant to gain contemporary knowledge and skills relevant to the PRs plan implementation. Public relations is a profession with a growing body of knowledge. It is a combination of art and technology to communicate properly with people. Having the capabilities and talent to execute the Public relations roles at a time is not sufficient for a manager. Because the roles of Public relations also change, the practitioners should update themselves through education as well as training.

4.1.4. Work Experience of the participants

It has been more than a decade since the Federal Jobs Creation and Food Security Agency established in Ethiopia. In this time, the roles and responsibilities of the agency changed widely adding new roles in line to the emerging local and international issues. As a result, the participants' stay in the same sector is crucial to get acquainted with the trends and thus comment on the issue at hand.

Table 4: Participants' work experience in the current organization

	PRs		Internal		Executive		Total	
	Practitioners		Public		Management			
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
0 to 3 years	3	50.0	19	35.2	3	75.0	25	39.1
4 to 6 years	2	33.3	23	42.6	1	25.0	26	40.6
7 to 9 years	1	16.7	7	13.0	0	0.0	8	12.5
10 years and above	0	0	5	9.3	0	0.0	5	7.8
Total	6	100	54	100	4	100	64	100

Source: - Prepared by the researcher from the data gathered through survey, 2021

Table 4 depicted the work experience of all participants of this research as it was supposed to make sure the participants can reflect on the other items about the subject at hand. Accordingly, 3(50%) of the participants from the PRs sampling unit had work experience in years 0-3 in PRs and Communication team. Those who had 4-6 years' experience accounted 2 (33.3%). Meanwhile, 1(16.7%) of the PRs participants had 7-9

years of work experience as the PRs while none had 10 ears and/or more experience in executing the PRs sector. In order to execute the public relations promotion endeavors successfully, it is undeniable that work experience is a crucial element. In this regard, the participants of this study were too diversified, had experiences from none to high. This would certainly provide opportunities to learn from each other on condition that effective Learning and development chance created at organization level.

4.2. Micro and Small Enterprises Promotion Plan and Availability of Resources

Public relations in general and promotion in particular is a planned communication activity. The plan helps to focus on the mission of the organization and thus identify the major activities that lead to meeting the goals, allocate resources required, and measure successes of the plan at the end (Jethwaney & Jain, 2012). Thus, a plan is an important tool for any communication campaign. With this supposition, the Public relations practitioners were given items about availability of the MSE promotion plan. The responses were summarized on Table 5.

Table 5: Responses on PRs strategic plan

Does the department have a strategic plan covering PRs activities covering more than a year?	Yes		No		Total
	f	%	f	%	
	2	33.3	4	66.7	100

Source: - Prepared by the researcher from the data gathered through survey, 2021

Table 5 depicted 4(66.7%) of the PRs practitioners from both federal and Addis Ababa City Administration had no strategic plan while the rest (33.3%) had such a strategic plan. With these responses, one might question whether the PRs departments did not have a strategic plan, or the plan was not communicated well with the whole staff. In this regard, the student researcher attempted to collect the strategic plan but the PRs teams were not

able to deliver it in any format (hard or soft copy) except the ‘incomplete’ annual plan. Thus, it was concluded that the MSE business communication was not being executed based on properly designed plan. A look through the annual plan also indicated that all resources required to execute the promotion of MSEs was not foreseen by the PRs.

Availability of resources was primarily measured focusing on the human resource, because execution of any plan depends on this essential resource. The present status of all departments at the public organizations in Ethiopia was determined by the reform initiative named as Job Evaluation and Grading. The reform initiative caused restructuring of business processes irrespective of the type of organization and administrative tier (federal or regional/city administration), and now it was fully implemented at all levels. Thus, the number of personnel allocated for the PRs department, perhaps it was organized as a team at all levels, and the exact number of personnel on job was assessed in this study.

Table 6: Number of staff in the Public Relations teams

Staff Size	Federal Urban Job Creation & Food Security Agency PRs				Addis Ababa Urban Job Creation & Food Security Agency PRs			
	Allowed		On Job		Allowed		On Job	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1 to 3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4 to 6	3	100	3	100	3	100	3	100
7 to 9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10 and more	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	3	100	3	100	3	100	3	100

Source: - Prepared by the researcher from the data gathered through survey, 2021

As Table 6 above depicted, the organizations at both federal and Addis Ababa city administration levels were allowed only 4 to 6 staff. With regards the exact number of personnel currently working at the study organizations, each organization has equally four employees. Further investigation into the personnel profile revealed the PRs teams in

each organization were composed of a team leader, two junior experts and a cameraman. The interview with executive management of the target organizations pointed out that the public relations team has very few personnel with which it was impractical to suppose the team can carry out the MSEs business promotion as intended.

Interviews with the executive management also confirmed inadequacy of the human resource bottlenecked effectiveness of the public relations practices in the given organization. For the question: what issues are challenging the practices of public relations promotion in the agency, a participant answered the following: “While the existing PRs effort to promote the MSEs with limited human resources should be appreciated, size of the business process as it is organized as a team unlike other processes and allocation of few positions- four in our case, is a serious bottleneck” (KII1). Similarly, another participant stated the following:

On condition we take into account the preceding organizational structure, the Public Relations department was downsized from a department to a team, causing the number of allocated staff from more than ten to four, which is even less than half. For the MSEs as new and less known sector, and their products are facing high competition in market, promotion is of paramount importance; however, how can we conclude a team composed of few personnel (of these even one is a cameraman?) can carry out promotion effectively and efficiently?” (KII2).

The responses generally indicated the PRs teams had the human resources at all permitted posts but the size of staff so insufficient to execute the PRs roles and functions effectively. Taking into account the roles MSEs play in national economy and the importance promotion for the enterprises, therefore, it was too difficult for the PRs team to execute their functions effectively.

4.3. Positions participants hold in their respective organizations

A further look into the resources in the PRs team leads to comparison of the positions held by the personnel in the team and other departments in the same organizations. Table

7 below illustrates comparative data about the positions held by the personnel across various departments in the sample organizations.

Table 7: Job position of participants

Job position	PRs Practitioners		Internal Public	
	f	%	f	%
Department Head/ Director/	0	0	9	16.7
Team Leader	2	33.3	12	22.2
Senior expert- Level IV or V	0	0	15	27.8
Junior expert- Level III	4	66.7	7	13.0
Beginner expert- Level I or II	0	0	11	20.4
Total	6	100	54	100

Source: - Prepared by the researcher from the data gathered through survey, 2021

Based on the recent Public Service Organizations reform in line to the recent Job Evaluation and Grading, employees in all organizations held either the director/team leader or expert levels based on grades ranging from I to IV on competitive basis. These positions match directly to their experiences on job and salary proposals. As Table 7 depicted, the PRs units were organized at team level while there were director levels in other core departments. As a result, a practitioner with sufficient work experience to hold the director position was not able to hold such position as there was no equivalent position, and so missed the promotion opportunity. Further, some departments had more than one teams, each of which were composed of employees holding grade levels IV to I. Nevertheless, the PRs teams in both agencies at the federal and Addis Ababa City Administration levels were not given even a senior expert position, but only the junior. This in turn implied, the junior level experts do not have an opportunity for career development, and this is too discouraging for them. This also implied the public relations practitioners work experience did not contribute to the level they were holding in their respective team, and thus might affect their motivation to effectively execute their day to day activities when compared to the other functional units in their respective organizations.

4.4. Presentation and Analysis of Data relating to the PRs Roles and MSEs Promotion

The landscape of public relations is steadily growing. In line to the emerging changes due to globalization, social structure, internet and the like, the roles of the PRs is transforming at an alarming rate (Grunig, 2001) while the basics are kept same. Unfortunately, according to PR Intelligence (n.d), “many PR professionals are yet to come to terms with what these new roles are, let alone master them. Taking this into account, the participants of this research responded to a bunch of selected items in line to major expectations from the MSEs sector PRs. This part of the survey aimed to assess the degree to which the practitioners are trusted to execute their roles independently and freely. In this regard, Table 8 presented to what extent the PRs execute their roles and functions independently.

Table 8: Major roles of PRs practitioners in carry out MSEs promotion (n=60)

(Responses 1= Almost always; 2= Often; 3= Sometimes; 4=Seldom; 5= Never)

Roles and functions		1	2	3	4	5
Research (gathering information about public opinion, trends, emerging issues, political climate, media coverage, concerns of consumer and environmental special-interest groups, and so forth)	f	0	0	4	9	47
	%	0	0	6.7	15.0	78.3
Media relation (contacting the news media, magazines, freelance writers and trade publications with the intention of getting them to publish; or broadcast news and features about the organisation; or responding to media requests, ...)	f	56	4	0	0	0
	%	93.3	6.7	0	0	0
Organizing (arrange media conferences, conventions and exhibitions, to open-house days, anniversary celebrations, events, contests, awards programmes, ...)	f	59	1	0	0	0
	%	98.3	1.7	0	0	0
Writing (news releases, newsletters, correspondence, reports, booklets, texts, radio and television copy, film scripts, ...)	f	60	0	0	0	0
	%	100	0	0	0	0
Production (creating communication using multimedia including art, photography, and design for brochures, booklets, reports, corporate advertisements, and occasional publications) or producing web content	f	37	4	9	7	3
	%	61.7	6.7	15.0	11.7	5.0

Source: - Prepared by the researcher from the data gathered through survey, 2021

As presented on Table 8 above, some of crucial roles the public relations team was supposed to carry out. Public relations practitioners can only gather information about the MSEs and the publics' attitude towards their businesses, among others, through scientific research. It is also mainly based on the information they gather and conclusions they drive that practitioners carry out successful promotion while they assist the executive management the Enterprises themselves take effective decisions, which in turn helps the practitioners gain recognition in their jobs. In this regard of research, none of the participants tended to practice it almost always or often. While 4(6.7%) sometimes do research, 9(15%) do seldom. Moreover, majority (78.3%) reported never doing research.

Public relations and media are two important factors of informing in community that can together help the free flow of information and organization reputation and trust of people. In order to take more advantage of potentials in the media, public relations should always be proactive with media (Gilaninia, Taleghani, & Mohammadi, 2013:5). Media relation, which is about contacting the news media, magazines, freelance writers and trade publications with the intention of getting them to publish, or broadcast news and features about the organization; or even responding to media requests (Castelli, 2007), is done by majority 56(93.3%) of the participants almost always. The remaining 4(6.7%) of the participants often do media relations.

Arranging events such as media conferences, conventions and exhibitions, celebrations and other corporate programmes is among the key function areas of the PRs (Cutlip et al. 2006). Among the participants of this research, most (98.3%) almost always carry out the organizing of corporate events and programs, 1(1.7%) do often. Moreover, none of the participants marked sometimes, seldom, or never for the given item.

According to Cutlip et al. (2006), writing is another key function area of the PRs. PRs spend much of their time engage in writing news releases, newsletters, correspondences, reports, booklets, radio and television copy, film scripts, and the like. In this regard, all participants (100%) reported the PRs team was doing the writing function.

PRs communication requires creating multimedia such as art, photography, and design for online and offline prints. This area of function might need additional skill development training, but in no ways it can be escaped. Thus, the participants of this research were asked how often the PRs do perform production activities. Accordingly, the participants

reported the PRs do production functions almost always (61.7%), often, seldom (11.7%), and never (5.0%).

Table 9: Major roles of PRs practitioners in carry out MSEs promotion (n=60)

Roles and functions		1	2	3	4	5
Media monitoring	f	2	23	31	1	3
	%	3.3	38.3	51.7	1.7	5.0
Lobbying	f	0	3	2	22	33
	%	0	5.0	3.3	36.7	55.0
Paid advertisement campaign for a product and/or service publicity	f	58	2	0	0	0
	%	96.7	3.3	0	0	0
Relationship management	f	4	20	13	21	2
	%	6.7	33.3	21.7	35.0	3.3
Manage corporate social responsibility activities	f	0	0	38	15	7
	%	0	0	63.3	25.0	11.7

Source: - Prepared by the researcher from the data gathered through survey, 2021

Table 9 above presented the responses of participants about their roles and functions in regards to the MSEs business promotion continued from the earlier section. It presented the Responses of participants on how often they do carry out functions such as media monitoring, lobbying, advertising, relationship management and the corporate social responsibility activities.

Public relations practitioners pass messages about a subject through their speeches or in the form of framed speeches they prepare and deliver for the senior management to speak to audiences in certain circumstances (Aula & Mantere, 2008). According to Jethwaney and Sarkar (2015), the public relations either speaks oneself or arranges for others to

address meetings or media. In the case of this research, all participants (100%) reported it was the PRs that render speech to address any event. Another area of PRs role in an organization is media monitoring. This role is often aimed to get an insight and adjust the PRs activities plan (Cutlip et al., 2006). The responses of participants indicate, 2(3.3%) almost always, 23(38.3%) often, 31(51.7%) sometimes, 1(1.7%) seldom, and 3(5.0%) never do media monitoring. Even though it has an aversion to the negative association with propaganda (Grunig & Hunt, 1984), lobbying is a key area of Public relations as a persuasion activity.

In terms of lobbying, which is a key role of PRs to convince the consumer public buy the products of MSEs, none almost always, 3(5.0%) often, 2(3.3%) sometimes, 22(36.7%) seldom, and 33(55.0%) never execute the role. Advertisement management is one of the roles of PRs. The PRs often arrange campaigns to promote product and/or service of their respective organization (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Regarding this kind of publicity, significantly large number of participants (96.7%) reported the PRs team always placed paid advertisement on various media. Similarly, 2(3.3%) showed the PRs do paid advertisement often.

Public relations increases organizational effectiveness by building stable, high-quality, long-term relationships with strategic constituencies (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000). Murray and White (2005) argue that there is “an increasing burden on PR practitioners to educate management in 37 the role of communication in relationship building” (p. 24). In view of this, the participants of this research showed 4(6.7%) almost always, 20(33.3%) often, 13(21.7%) sometimes, 21(35.0%) seldom, and 2(3.3%) reported the Public relations team in their organization never did effective relationship management.

Organizations operate within a society. Therefore, they are required discharge their corporate responsibility in some ways, which in turn enables to build a trustworthy relationship with the society. As a result, engaging in such initiatives is a powerful and cost-effective tool to promote a product or service (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). In this regard, the Public relations team was not reported to engage in the corporate social responsibility roles neither almost always nor often, but the participants of this research replied they discharge corporate social responsibility roles sometimes 38 or 63.3%, seldom (25.0%), and never (11.7%).

In sum, this part of data focused on to what extent the public relations teams in the target sector were performing key functions which lead to effective promotion. Some of the tasks were supposed to yield proper data for promotion planning, some were useful for product marketing and others for execution of the actual promotion. As illustrates in Table 9, significant majority of the practitioners focus on function areas such as writing, event organizing, and media relations.

On the other hand, priority areas of the public relations such as research, relation management, management of advertisement and corporate social responsibilities were discharged to a lesser extent by majority of the public relations practitioners. Thus, in order to develop, maintain, grow and nurture mutually beneficial relationships between your organization and its significant publics, the PRs should rather focus on key roles such as relationship management, research and consumer lobbying to effectively promote the products of MSEs while buying in the sector's policy ideas.

Content analysis of the Public relations team 2020 annual report of the Federal Urban Jobs Creation and Food security Agency also revealed similar result in terms of the PRs key function areas. As extracted from the annual plan-performance report of the given year, the PRs team at the federal agency achieved above average on activities such as press release (81%), organizing events and exhibitions (86%), and placement of paid advertisement (90% regarding budget utilization. On the other hand, the team's performance was low in major function areas such as delivering training (48%), video production (49%). Most similarly, the agency at Addis Ababa City Administration performed well in publications, press releases, photo exhibitions, and providing information for inquirers (ranges between 69 and 85 per cent respectively). In the reports of both organizations, activities that reflect functions of research, corporate social responsibility and promotions strategies that direct to target customers and stakeholders were not visible.

Moreover, insight into the specific areas which the PRs departments performed below their plan also indicated functions such as publication of research manuscripts, media visit, responses to information inquiries, placement of advertisement, and getting more followers on social networking pages. With the PRs roles of routine oriented and of generic nature, the effectiveness of PRs roles in promoting the MSEs remained limited.

4.5. Relationship between the PRs Team and the Other Functions

The relationship between the PRs functions unit along with the others was measured using two criteria. One was how the PRs relate with the organizations top management structurally and functionally. The other was how the PRs team collaborate with the other core business units. Responses were presented on Table 10 below.

Table 10: Work relationship across business functions

Relationship with Executive management	f	%
Top most senior official in your organization	4	66.7
Second top head official	0	0
Head of Office of the senior official	0	0
Management board	0	0
Other	2	33.3
Total	6	10

Source: - Prepared by the researcher from the data gathered through survey, 2021

According to the excellence theory discussed in literature review section, the public relations can function best when the team is accountable to the senior decision making body in an organization. Accordingly, Seitel (2004) also positions PRs professionals should “enjoy enough autonomy to deal openly and honestly with management”. In line to this, responses of the participants about the working relationship among functional units in the given organization, the responses summarized on Table 10 above showed the public relations team was directly reporting to top most senior official in your organization (66.7%). The remaining 33.7% reported to managers at other levels different from the top management. This was perhaps due to the fact that the public relations unit at both federal and City Administration of Addis Ababa Jobs Creation and Food Security Agencies had the team-level structure in which there were only team leader who directly report to top management and other related core function as required. Hence, this cannot

be challenging for effectiveness of the MSEs promotion plan. However, the issue of collaboration among the public relations and the other business units with in each of the agencies should be taken into considerations for it has significant impact on the PRs function effectiveness. In this regard, the participants from all other core processes provided the responses presented below on Table 11 below.

Table 11: Collaboration between the PRs and other departments

Item		f	%
Do you think the PRs have been working in collaboration with other departments to gain sufficient support in MSEs promotion?	Yes	12	24
	No	38	76

Source: - Prepared by the researcher from the data gathered through survey, 2021

Table 11 above indicated responses of research participants from business units different from the public relations. The responses indicated that most of the participants (76%) perceived the public relations practitioners' collaboration with the others has not been enabling to carry out the MSEs business promotion as intended. However, the agencies at both federal and Addis Ababa city administration level has the business function units including the marketing department, and lack of sufficient collaboration with such functions was a challenges that bottleneck the PRs functionality.

4.6. Public Relations Models Reflected in MSEs Sector Promotion Activities

The items about the Public Relation practitioners' roles and functions in the MSEs promotion served on one hand to identify the public relations key function areas. On the other hand, the public relations models reflected can be grasped from the responses as both are directly related and intertwined (Van der Wolf, 2007). In this regard, the quantitative data illustrated on Table 8 and 9 above implied the activities performed by the public relations teams most often were media relation, organizing events and exhibitions, writing (speeches, media notes, website and social media contents, and so

on), and informative paid advertisements. The public relations team does not go beyond acting as a liaison between the organization and the media. These typical functions often characterize the press agency or public information model (Grunig, et al., 1995). In line to this, the practitioners out of the public relations team also rated the contribution of the PRs and Communication team in promoting the MSEs. Responses were summarized on Table 12 below.

Table 12: Public relations performance in MSEs promotion

Items	Res- ponses*	1	2	3	4	5
To what extent do you think the Agency's MSE promotion is being effectively executed?	f	27	19	2	2	4
	%	50	35.2	3.7	3.7	7.4
How do you rate the contribution of the PRs team in promoting the MSEs	f	15	11	22	5	1
	%	27.8	20.4	40.7	9.3	1.8

*Responses: 1= Far below 2= Moderately below 3= Met expectations 4= Moderately above 5= Far above

As Table 12 above depicted, the extent to which the participants thought the Agency's MSE promotion was being effectively executed rated by majority of the participants (85.2%).as below the expectations. While 2(3.7%) rated this as met expectations, the remaining 6(11.1%) rated it as above the expectations.

On the other hand, the contribution of the PRs team in promoting the MSEs was rated by the participants out of the PRs circle as 26(48.2%) as below the expectations, 22(40.7%) as met the expectations and 6(11.1%) as below.

It was learnt during the document content analysis that some key works in the objectives of Public relations teams at both federal and Addis Ababa city administration level was "to get favourable publicity for the MSEs and agency..... build image... promote the products of MSEs so that the enterprises get sufficient market..." (Reports 2019/20). In order to attain this objective, the PRs predominantly engage in media relations and informative advertisement activities.

On the other hand, the public relations of both organizations do not engage in the functions that lead to two-way communication, such as research, surveys, media monitoring and evaluation, and so they were unlikely to determine how effective their promotion endeavours had been.

This study found that the Public relations functions in the Federal Urban Job Creation and Food Security Agency of Ethiopia is guided by the press agency or public information model. The executive management as well as the staff in core business processes of the agency associated the success of Public relations largely with gaining publicity. Perhaps, this was sourced from major functions the Public relations practitioners have been doing and the perceptions the staff developed, because the participants appreciated the practitioners' effort in media liaison, gaining media coverage, and securing positive publicity for the agency. Nevertheless, scholars in the PRs discipline show that PRs departments contribute most to organizational effectiveness when they practice on the professional continuum (roles and functions ranging from persuasion to two-way symmetrical communications) and emphasize the symmetrical model more than the asymmetrical (Grunig, et al., 1995).

4.7. PRs Tools and their Uses in MSEs Promotion

Public Relations is generally the process through which an environment can be created for effective communication. Such communication with both internal and external public and stakeholders can be done using various tools and techniques. In this part of data analysis, the PRs practitioners reported how often they were using a set of tools so that the student researcher can deduce whether their choice was affected by the reform in any manner. The participants rated their responses from "Far below" to "Far above" (Table 11).

Table 13: The use of public relations promotion tool widely used

Items	Res- ponses	Far below	Slightly below	Met expectations	Slightly above	Far above
Local Radio	f	0	3	49	3	5
	%	0	5.0	81.7	5.0	8.3
Local Tv	f	11	8	39	2	0
	%	18.3	13.3	65	3.3	0
Print media	f	2	3	21	29	5
	%	3.3	5	35.0	48.3	8.3
International broadcast media	f	48	10	2	0	0
	%	80.0	16.7	3.3	0	0
House journals/publications	f	0	0	19	35	6
	%			31.7	58.3	10.0
Outdoors	f	1	4	26	25	4
	%	1.7	6.7	43.3	41.7	6.7

Source: - Prepared by the researcher from the data gathered through survey, 2021

Table 13 illustrates that the participants seemed to use different types of media tools to carry out MSEs promotion. As the above table depicts, the participants responded the use of local radio stations as met expectations (81.7%), above expectations (13.3%) and below expectations (5.0%) in sum. In the same vein, 39(65.0%) participants rated the use of local TV stations as “met expectations,” 31.6% below expectations, and only 3.3% above expectations in sum. The practitioners rated the use of international broadcast media (96.7%) below the expectation while only 2(3.3%) as expectation was met. Meanwhile, local print media were also rated to be used by 56.6% as above the expectation while house journals were used above expectations as rated by 68.3%. These responses indicated that the public relations practitioner predominantly use traditional media such as radio (81.7% met expectations), print media (48.3% higher than they are expected to), and even house journals (58.3% above the expectations). Based on this, it can be concluded there has been a higher tendency of the use of traditional media by the agency’s public relations practitioners for whom the reasons needed further investigations.

4.8. The Use of Internet-based media for MSEs Promotion

The emergence of new type of audience is an important development in relation to today's media, which in turn created opportunity for the public relations practitioners to promote their organization's products and services. The new type of audience demand the public relations communication endeavour to add the internet based media to reach the new audiences. As a result, the public relations find themselves use social networking channels. In this regard, the use of organizational website was rated as to be used above the expectation (81.67%), and, from social media types, LinkedIn and Instagram 59.0% and 96.67% respectively were used below the expectations (50% is the average in this case). While this can be challenging in cases the public relations practitioners lack adequate resources, however, it is an opportunity to execute the promotion tasks at lower cost.

Table 14: Internet-based promotion tools use

Items	Res- ponses	Far below	Slightly below	Met expectations	Slightly above	Far above
Organizational website	f	0	0	11	48	1
	%	0	0	18.33	80	1.67
Twitter	f	30	29	1	0	0
	%	50	48.3	1.67	0	0
Facebook	f	0	3	7	39	11
	%	0	5.0	11.67	65.0	15.9
Instagram	f	52	6	2	0	0
	%	86.67	10.0	3.3	0	0
LinkedIn	f	50	9	1	0	0
	%	83.3	15.0	1.7	0	0

Source: - Prepared by the researcher from the data gathered through survey, 2021

4.9. Issues Challenging the MSEs Promotion

In this part, responses of the participants about the issues affecting the MSEs promotion were presented. The responses were summarized in Table 15 below.

Table 15: Issues affecting MSEs promotion

Issues	Res- Ponses*	Degree of Impact				
		5	4	3	2	1
Inconsistency in clearly defining the roles and functions of Public Relations team	f %	24 40.0	13 21.7	17 28.3	3 5.0	3 5.0
Existence of other departments that share major PRs roles	f %	32 53.3	3 5.0	8 13.3	10 16.7	7 11.7
Negligence to recognizes PRs as a critical function that supports all other management functions	f %	17 28.3	20 33.3	11 18.3	7 11.7	5 8.3
Denial to involve Public Relations department heads in decision making activities	f %	20 33.3	24 40.0	9 15.0	0 0	7 11.7
Lack of professional and technical skill among the PRs practitioners	f %	30 50.0	18 30.0	6 10.0	4 6.7	2 3.3
Lack of national strategy for MSEs promotion	f %	12 20.0	29 48.3	10 16.7	3 5.0	6 10.0
Absence of PRs strategy and guideline at national level	f %	4 6.7	33 55.0	7 11.7	16 26.7	0 0
Structural problem that downsized the required manpower	f %	26 43.3	20 33.3	12 20.0	0 0	2 3.3
Lack of professional manpower in the department	f %	18 30.0	24 40.0	18 30.0	0 0	0 0
Insufficient budget to execute department plan	f %	24 40.0	22 36.7	9 15.0	3 5.0	2 3.3
Lack of adequate working equipment	f %	12 20.0	17 28.3	18 30.0	6 10.0	7 11.7
Mistrust from other departments and staff	f	7	9	14	9	21

on the PRs department	%	11.7	15.0	23.3	15.0	35.0
Intension of the executive management to use the public relations function more for the purpose of propaganda than professional activities	f	8	11	8	16	17
	%	13.3	18.3	13.3	26.7	28.3
Loose relationship between the PRs team and other departments in the agency	f	32	10	16	1	1
	%	53.3	16.7	26.7	1.7	1.7
The shifting of public to rely on the information sourcing from the social activists	f	17	10	23	5	5
	%	28.3	16.7	38.3	8.3	8.3

* Responses: 1= Very Low; 2= Low; 3= Medium; 4= High; and, 5= Very High

Source: - Prepared by the researcher from the data gathered through survey, 2020

On Table 15 above, it was attempted to depict the responses of PRs practitioners about the factors affecting their functioning in promoting the MSEs business at both the federal and Addis Ababa City Administration levels. In order to easily identify the impact of each issue on the practices of the public relations promotion endeavours, responses above and below the middle response, i.e. medium, is summed up where needed. Concerning inconsistency in clearly defining the roles and functions of public relations team, 37(61.7%) replied it had high impact, 17(28.3%) medium, and 6(10.0%) low. Regarding the existence of other department(s) that share major roles of the public relations, 58.3% of the respondents replied the impact was high while 13.3% replied medium and 18.4% as low.

Responses about “negligence to recognizes PRs as an important function,” 37 (61.6%) in sum replied it had high impact, 11(18.3%) medium, and 12(20.0%) indicated the impact of this issue is low in sum. Similarly, to the item about denial to involve PRs process heads in organizational decision making, 44(73.3%) in sum replied it had high impact and, among the rest, only 9(15.0%) medium and 7(11.7%) affirmed the issue has low impact on their business.

Lack of professional and technical skill among the PRs practitioners was another issue in the list. While 48(80.0%) replied the issue had high impact, 6(10.0% in sum) replied the

issue affected medium, and 6(10.0%) replied low. In similar vein, the impact of “lack of information about the national communication strategy/direction” got 41(68.3%) for high, 10(16.7%) for medium, 9(15.0%) low.

Absence of public relations strategic plan was rated to have 37(61.7%) high, 7(11.7%) medium, and 16(26.7%) low. The other two items were about lack of resources. Thus, insufficient budget to execute department plan, and structural problem that downsized the required manpower were analysed. Regarding the budget, 46(76.7%) replied high, 15(25.0%) medium and 11(8.3%) low; in terms of man power, 42(70.0%) high, and the remaining 18(30%) medium. None of the participants rated it as low impacting issue. For the issue of structure, 46(76.6%) replied high, 20(18.0%) medium and no response for low.

In the other category of the issues, non-existence of the PRs association, and lack of collaboration between the PRs team and other departments in the Agency were examined. As an external factor, the item of lack of PRs association received 34(56.6%) high, 15(25.0%) medium and 11(18.3%) low. Regarding PRs team and other departments, 42(70.0%) high, 16(26.7%) medium and 2(3.4%) low responses obtained. Mistrust of other departments and their respective staff on the PRs team, and intension of the top management in instrumenting the PRs process for propaganda were also in the list of issues. 16(26.7%) high, 14(23.3%) medium, and 20(50.0%) low responses were observed. For the impact of top management intension, 19(31.6%) high, 8(13.3%) medium and 33(55.0%) low. Finally, the shifting of public to rely on the information sourcing from the social activists more than the PRs gained 27(45.0%) high, 23(38.3%) medium and 10(16.6%) low in the responses.

In winding up the responses of this section, one can grasp from the analysis of the issues the participants thought to have impacted their functioning, the issues were diverse in range. Weighing the degree of impact each item in the set of issues revealed, the most severe issue relates to the management and staff within the organization the PRs operated. As replied by more than 80%, the top management intension and mistrust from other department staff were ranked on top of the impacting issues. Perhaps, the day to day activities of PRs practitioners in any organization requires cooperation of the staff in their organization itself. Regarding this, Jethwaney (2015) notes that one of the hardest and

most important tasks of a public relations department is for the practitioner to explain and convince top management of the relevance of public relations in advancing effective corporate communications. He further notes that the latter requires the expertise of a well-trained practitioner who understands the profession and can effectively articulate the strategic communication issues, roles and contributions of public relations to management. Thus, the challenges of public relations emanated from the internal environment. Issues such as inconsistency in defining the process's roles and functions (61.7%), lack of practitioners' skill (80.0%) were identified as challenges having low impact on the public relations functioning.

The issues ranked next were also directly related to the internal environment. Receiving 78.15 and 74.79% high responses respectively, denial to involve the public relations in decision making and refusing to the process's importance recognized to be other serious challenges. Similarly, absence of PRs strategic plan, fading collaboration between the organizational PRs and that of the other departments held the next level of severity in impacting the PRs functioning effectiveness. Then, one can see from the data that resource issue including budget and staff size were identified to have constrained the public relations functioning.

The interview with the top management also confirmed that the recent organizational reform after implementation of job evaluation and grading affected the public relations process in the form of downsizing, and causing the move of some staff to other departments in the agency or even out of the agency in some cases.

In addition to this, lack of resources and suspect by organizational management to let the practitioners carry out their functions independently are also other obstacle. From this, one can learn that the reform was unplanned and incomplete as it did not bring solution to the challenges in past times. Moreover, as Chala (2017) states, the public relations practitioners are still supposed to carry out technical functions rather than managing actively participating in key decisions at the highest level of the organization. With such limited functioning, therefore, it would not be possible for the practitioners to excel in their role of promoting the MSEs business by any means.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the preceding chapter, data collected from diverse sources have been analysed. In this chapter, summary of main contents of the study, conclusions drawn from the data analysis and recommendations are presented.

5.1. Summary and Conclusions

The small and medium business sectors are recognized as an integral component of economic development and a crucial element in the effort to lift countries out of poverty. The dynamic role of micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in developing countries as engines through which the growth objectives of developing countries can be achieved has long been recognized. Even though in the past decades the focus of Ethiopian government was mainly on large organizations, particularly on manufacturing sector, the recent wave of private sector development initiatives however shifted the policy efforts to MSEs. Following this shift, the policies and strategies designed to promote aspects of MSEs are being implemented at different levels. However, Policies and strategies alone cannot warrant success in promoting the importance of SMEs and assist the policy buy-in. Effective communication is thus an important tool in this regard. Thus, this study aimed to assess the role of Public Relations in promoting the significance of SMEs business promotion. More specifically, the study was meant to:

1. Review the functions of public relations in promotion of the significance of MSEs businesses in the target organizations;
2. Identify the dominant Public Relations model(s) reflected in the MSE sector promotion;
3. Point out the tools widely used in MSEs promotion; and,
4. Draw attention to the challenges practitioners are facing (if any).

To this end, a quantitative research design was used. The study primarily engaged the public relations practitioners, executive management, middle management and senior practitioners of the core departments in the Federal Urban Job Creation and Food Security Agency of Ethiopia (FUJCFCA). Meanwhile, management and key personnel from Addis

Ababa city administration Urban Job Creation and Food Security Agency were involved in the study.

Using a purposive sampling technique, all PRs practitioners in the agencies at the federal and Addis Ababa city administration levels, department heads and senior experts of all functional departments/business units which have direct interventions in MSEs business development were involved in providing data for this study. Further, an agency director and vice-director of the business units in each of the federal and Addis Ababa city administration Federal Urban Job Creation and Food Security Agencies were purposively involved in the study for they were supposed to be key information sources about both the PRs activities and the SMEs promotion issues. In sum, Sixty Four participants involved in this study.

Primary data from the sample participants were gathered through semi-structured questionnaire and key informant interviews. A document content review was also employed to collect further data in line to the research objectives from on line and off line PRs communication tools. The data were analysed quantitatively. Based on the data analysis, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The practices (functions) of the PRs practitioners were limited more to routines than the key PRs communication functions. As a result, the role of PRs in promoting the MSEs businesses has been ineffective. The PRs promotion endeavours were delimited to regular press releases, organizing, and placement of advertisement along with in house publications while the presence of PRs content on internet-based pages was also delimited to less frequently updated website and Facebook.
2. Based on analysis of the data about how the MSEs businesses promotions were being undertaken, data shown data showed press agency was the most dominant public relations model employed in the sector. The fact that non-interactive, one way communication tools like the in house publications were primarily used and the PRs functions which facilitate two-way communication (such as research) practiced rarely implied the promotion activities are being undertaken in a 'traditional' unplanned and non-strategic way, which in turn leaves excellence of the PRs communication questionable.

3. In the course of the MSEs promotion, the PRs widely use very limited tools – both in variety and richness, featuring accessibility and quality limitations. Irrespective of the fact that the PRs regularly arrange press releases, organize networking events, use web-based pages, have regular in house prints, and air MSEs focused weekly radio program, the contents across the media platforms lack artistic quality, mainly sector policy and executive management wish based rather than the fact on the ground collected from primary stakeholders; nor analysed scientifically. Presentation was also of same format, exclusively interview-based, and focusing on trainings and group events at which the executive management predominantly speaks out to the media.
4. The Public Relations in the Federal Urban Job Creation and Food Security Agency of Ethiopia is constrained by multifaceted challenges. Structurally, it was downsized from an independent department to a small-sized team during the recent Job Evaluation and Grading structural reform. However, the functions remained the same as the former large department used to perform. Lack of adequate recognition internally from executive management and other staff remained more prevalent. The PRs is still not seen as a vital tool by the management, and thus the function is not part of the decision making coalition in the organization. Having had no representative to justify why and how much resource is required to effectively play the PRs roles in promoting the MSEs business during executive management resource allocation meetings, the PRs team are left voiceless and mere recipient of what comes from the management. Due to delay in decision and approval of resource requests to carry out the key functions, they team is meant to focus on the routines that do not need them get approval to proceed with. Hence, it is concluded that the PRs are unlikely to play their roles effectively to promote the MSEs businesses due to limited resources at large and the skill gap the practitioners personally have.

5.2. Recommendations

1. Practitioners themselves should have a strategic communication plan, get buy-in of their plan by first promoting themselves to the key public in general and to the organizational executive management who make decisions in particular. Playing

their roles in the MSEs business promotion program professionally, with tangible result gained, they should gain attention of the key stakeholders.

2. The PRs practitioners should go through self-initiated skill development programs so that their stakeholders need them, call for their success in market, and owe sufficient support. The PRs should also train themselves, at least within the given resource limit, to interact directly with the primary public their promotion initiative benefits, with those who need direction and guidance from them, and base their day to day PRs communication activities immediate needs of these beneficiaries, more than the interests of the politically-tuned political managers and policy makers. For this purpose, the PRs practitioners should balance between the promotion content they send and the receivers' feedback, and implement regular auditing of effectiveness of their promotion plan.
3. Public relations professionals are likely to use a combination of the different models in public relations, but, where situation permits, it is recommendable to employ a two-way symmetrical model while having a public relations strategies that reflect a contingency of varying approaches
4. With the growing importance of the MSEs business in Ethiopia, the public to whom the promotion plan needs to address are too diverse with divergent background and need. In order to address such needs and assist the MSEs get adequate market, the PRs should diversify the number and type of the PRs communication and promotion tools. With this regard, they should take into account the strengths and weaknesses of each tool the use, and align it with the challenges the MSEs are facing in the market.
5. The executive management of the Agency should give a due attention to tackle the challenges of the PRs unit in general and the practitioners in particular have. This can be addressed from the practitioners side by self-learning, training, experience sharing from model nations (include PRs during such best practices benchmarking trips); and from the management side by optimizing the combination of human, material and financial resources.
6. Since some of the challenges bottlenecking the PRs functioning in general and the MSEs promotion in particular source from both external and internal the organization as well as the PRs team, executive management of the Federal Urban Job Creation and Food Security Agency should recognize the importance of the

Public Relations communication in promoting the MSEs businesses, and thus allocate adequate budget for the program. In the meantime, the PRs should outsource the functions they cannot execute with the existing resource while focusing on the roles and functions worth benefiting their key public achieving core missions of the agency.

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Appendices

Appendix I: PRs and Communication Practitioners' Questionnaire

Introduction

Dear participant,

I am a graduate student in Addis Ababa University, Schools of Journalism and Communication. I am studying “Public Relations and Strategic Communication [PRSC] in the school.

With the dissertation topic, “The Role of Public Relation in Promoting Micro and Small Enterprise’s Business with focus on the Federal Urban Job Creation and Food Security Agency of Ethiopia,” I am working to assess the roles of the Public Relations and Communication in promoting the MSEs.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect primary data from the sample participants. I require 30 minutes of your time to fill in this questionnaire. You are given the assurance that your responses will be confined to the use of the study and confidentiality will be strictly observed at all times.

In the meantime, your response to this email will be considered as an informed consent to take part in this research.

If you have any inquiry regarding this questionnaire, please do not hesitate to contact me by Email: abozenechdesita@gmail.com or Cell phone: 0911 10 74 55.

I would like to thank you for your invaluable time and information.

Abozenech Negash

Part I: General Questions

1. Your gender:
 - a) Female
 - b) Male

2. Your work experience in the PRs/Communication process/Department:
 - a. 0 – 2 Years
 - b. 3 – 5 Years
 - c. 6 – 9 Years
 - d. More than 9 Years

3. Does the public relations department have a strategic plan that also covers promotion activities lasting more than a year?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

4. Number of the PRs/communication positions in your department is based on the current structure:
 - 4.1. Allowed: a) 1 - 3 b. 4 – 6 c. 7 – 9 d. 10 or more
 - 4.2. Actual working: a) 1 - 3 b. 4 – 6 c. 7 – 9 d. 10 or more

5. Your current position/grade/rank:
 - a. Department Head/Director (Either assigned or delegate)
 - b. Senior expert- Level IV or V
 - c. Junior expert- Level III
 - d. Beginner expert- Level I or II

Part II: Questions relating to the PRs/Communication Practices and Roles

6. The following roles define the everyday activities the PRs/Communication practitioners assume. How do you rate the degree you have been executing each of the following functions independently and free?

1= Almost always 2= Often 3= Sometimes 4= Seldom 5= Never

S.No.	Roles and functions	1	2	3	4	5
6.1	Research (gathering information about public opinion, trends, emerging issues, political climate, media coverage, concerns of consumer and environmental special-interest groups, and so forth)	1	2	3	4	5
6.2	Media relation (contacting the news media, magazines, freelance writers and trade publications with the intention of getting them to publish; or broadcast news and features about the organisation; or responding to media requests, ...)	1	2	3	4	5
6.3	Organizing (arrange media conferences, conventions and exhibitions, to open-house days, anniversary celebrations, events, contests, awards programmes, ...)	1	2	3	4	5
6.4	Writing (news releases, newsletters, correspondence, reports, booklets, texts, radio and television copy, film scripts, ...)	1	2	3	4	5
6.5	Production (creating communication using multimedia including art, photography, and design for brochures, booklets, reports, corporate advertisements, and occasional publications) or producing web content	1	2	3	4	5
6.6	Provide speech for others to address meetings					
6.7	Media monitoring	1	2	3	4	5
6.8	Crisis communication	1	2	3	4	5
6.9	Lobbying	1	2	3	4	5
6.10	Advertisement campaign for a product and/or service publicity	1	2	3	4	5
6.11	Relationship management (develop, maintain, grow and nurture mutually beneficial relationships between your organisation and its significant publics)	1	2	3	4	5
6.12	Manage corporate social responsibility activities	1	2	3	4	5
6.13	Counselling	1	2	3	4	5

7. Who do you directly report to?

- a. top most official in your organization (eg. Minister, CEO, ...)
- b. Second top head official (eg. Deputy minister)
- c. Head of Office of the Minister
- d. Management board
- e. Other (Please specify) _____

Part III: Questions relating to the reform, opportunities, challenges and Prospects

8. What **issues are affecting your PRs/communication?** Please mark on the following scale about the impact of each issue as indicated.

Issues	Degree of Impact				
	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Inconsistency in clearly defining the roles and functions of Public Relations team					
Existence of other departments that share major PRs roles					
Negligence to recognizes PRs as a critical function that supports all other management functions					
Denial to involve Public Relations department heads in decision making activities					
Lack of professional and technical skill among the PRs practitioners					
Lack of national strategy for MSEs promotion					
Absence of PRs strategy and guideline at national level					
Structural problem that downsized the required manpower					
Lack of professional manpower in the department					
Insufficient budget to execute department plan					
Lack of adequate working equipment					
Mistrust from other departments and staff on the PRs department					
Intension of the executive management to use the public relations function more for the purpose of propaganda than professional activities					
Loose relationship between the PRs team and other departments in the agency					
The shifting of public to rely on the information sourcing from the social activists					

9. How often do you use each of the following PRs/Communication tools to provide updates to your public? Comparing to your annual plan, rate how you have been providing information to your public using the scales. Please UNDERLINE or CIRCLE your responses as:

1= Far below 2= Moderately below 3= Slightly below 4= Met expectations

5= Slightly above 6= Moderately above 7= Far above

S.No.	Items	Responses				
		1	2	3	4	5
10.1	Organizational website	1	2	3	4	5
10.2	Twitter	1	2	3	4	5
10.3	Facebook	1	2	3	4	5
10.4	Instagram	1	2	3	4	5
10.5	LinkedIn	1	2	3	4	5
10.6	Broadcast media (Radio & Tv)	1	2	3	4	5
10.7	Print media	1	2	3	4	5
10.8	International broadcast media	1	2	3	4	5
10.9	House journals/publications	1	2	3	4	5
10.10	Outdoors	1	2	3	4	5

Part IV: Final Remarks

10. Finally, can you tell me a little about yourself?

11.1. Your highest level of education _____

11.2. The field of study for your most attained level of education _____

11.3. Any technical training you engaged and certified for in this year _____

===== Thank you =====

Appendix II: Agency Top Management Interview Guiding Questions

1. What does your Agency do to promote the MSEs?
2. What roles does the PRs department play within the umbrella MSEs promotion agenda?
3. Do you think the department is efficiently playing its roles regarding promotion of the MSEs?
4. What strengths and/or drawbacks do you think does the department/practitioners have in this regard?
5. If you have noted weaknesses, what do you think are the major causes of the limitations?
6. What is your organization doing to support the PRs department and practitioners execute their roles effectively?
7. Do you have any suggestion for the PRs department/practitioners to contribute its best in promotion of the MSEs?

Appendix III: Survey Participant Consent Form

Purpose and Procedure: This questionnaire designed to collect data for the thesis to fulfill the requirements of MA- Public Relations and Strategic Communication.

The information gathered is solely for the academic use, and all respondents will be kept confidential and anonymous. It would be appreciated if you would take a few minutes of your time to complete this survey. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at +251 911 107455 or email: abozenechdesita@gmail.com. Thank you!

Voluntary Nature of the Study/Confidentiality: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to complete the study at any point during the survey. Your personal information or name will not be revealed or shared.

Contacts and Questions: You may ask questions regarding this study at any time. If you have further questions or would like to know the results of the study, please leave your email address below.

Email: _____

Statement of Consent: I state that:

- I have read the above information
- Any questions and concerns, regarding survey, have been addressed.
- I give consent to participate in this study
- I understand that this study will not involve any greater risk than those ordinarily occurring in daily life.

Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____