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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM & COMMUNICATION
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Gender related challenges Women Public Relation Professionals in
Ethiopia Encounter: Case of Selected Women in Federal and NGO
offices in Addis Ababa

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Gender Related Challenges Women Public Relation Professionals in
Ethiopia encounter: Case of Selected Women in Federal and NGO offices
in Addis Ababa

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SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION

Department of Public Relations and Strategic Communication

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Hawi Serbessa entitled — Gender Related Challenges Women Public Relation Professionals in Ethiopia encounter: Case of Selected Women in Federal and NGO offices in Addis Ababa, is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Arts Degree 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

Women, in public relation professional development have significant contribution, however their contribution is not properly recognized and acknowledged. Globally, the public relations profession is attributed feminine characteristics as the profession in many countries is dominated by women. Though women have the largest share in the professionals count, but they hold only one third of the leadership positions. This research aims to examine gender related challenges women in PR professions experience throughout their professional journey. For this research, selected women from federal offices and Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are targeted. The research has employed qualitative research method to acquire relevant information as the subject under study is social issue; behaviors, attitude, norm and practice. Accordingly, the researcher has conducted 8 in-depth interview and 1 FGD with purposely selected PR practitioner women from 9 federal offices and 4 NGOs. According to the information from research participants, women are naturally gifted with communication qualities and are more privileged for the profession given their talent. However, their number in the profession is low in government offices, but better in NGO sectors. In both government and NGO environment, women's representation in leadership positions is very low. The research findings revealed that, women in PR in general and women working in the targeted government offices and NGOs, in one way or another, face gendered challenges throughout their journey in the profession. These challenges include; stereotypes that hamper their career development, being undervalued, expectation of extra commitment by women leaders which is not usually expected from the men leaders. Moreover, the research participants reported that many women in the profession experience sexual harassment which is considered as normal by their colleagues.

Key words: Public Relations, Women, Gender, leadership, government, NGO

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

PR

Public relation

NGOs

Non- Governmental Organizations

FGD

Focused Group Discussion

Declaration

I, Hawi Serbessa, declare that this thesis entitled “Gender Related Challenges Women Public Relation Professionals in Ethiopia encounter: Case of Selected Women in Federal and NGO offices in Addis Ababa,” is my own original work. I have conducted it independently with the guidance and suggestions of my research advisor Abdulaziz Dino (PhD). And it has not been presented in Addis Ababa University or any other Universities. And all the sources of materials used for the thesis have been accordingly acknowledged.

Hawi Serbessa _____ (The Researcher) Signature

Letter of certification

This is to certify that **Hawi Serbessa** has carried out his thesis on the topic “Gender Related Challenges Women Public Relation Professionals in Ethiopia encounter: Case of Selected Women in Federal and NGO offices in Addis Ababa,” under my supervision. This work is original in its nature and is suitable for submission in partial fulfillment of the requirement to earn Master Degree in Public Relations and Strategic Communication.

Abdulaziz Dino (Phd)

(Advisor)

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Background of the study

Public relation is defined by many PR and other field professionals at different times from its beginning. Given its young age, the profession as field of study, is still under extensive research concerning its concept and functions. American Association for Public Relation define PR as “a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics” (Michael, 2012).

Grunig & Hunt (1984) also defined public relations as “management of communication between an organization and it’s publics”.

“Public relation is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance, and cooperation between an organization and its publics” (Harlow, 1976).

The core elements of all definitions revolve around similar concepts; i.e., the profession’s feature as **mediator** between the organization and the public, relationship building role and some recognized its **management function for communication** creation and flow in an organization.

Tesfaye (2018) on his article stated that the emergence of the practice of modern public relations in Ethiopia came as a result of the establishment of the Ministry of Pen in 1940’s. The then media organizations such as Radio, News Agency and Television services, were organized and administered under the ministry of Pen. After serving for some time, the ministry was replaced by the then Ministry of Information and Tourism in 1950’s with similar task of administering the media

organizations in addition to carrying out the responsibility of culture and tourism related issues.

Currently, public relation activities are mainly being considered very crucial in developmental, humanitarian and business environments. Accordingly, in majority government offices, non-governmental organizations, private sectors and other companies there is public relation units or at least individual practitioner.

Gender roles and responsibilities defined by a certain society and given to male and women as attribute and characteristics are taken gradually through socialization. These gendered classification of roles and responsibilities, highly affect the professional life of male and women across the globe. There are occupations and roles with in certain profession that are considered as women's or men's space. As a result, some field witnessed when they are dominantly occupied and handled by women and some others by male. In many professions, the managerial or leadership roles are mainly occupied by male while women are confined to technical and expertise positions. The factors for this are multiple.

In researches like Fatima, U., et al. (2018) it is stated that nursing, teaching and other occupations connected to caring are considered to be women's work domain while roles that demand managerial skill are mainly given to male.

Public relation is also among the professions that are regarded as women's 'sector of work (Katherine, 2014, Fitch, & Third, 2010, Victoria, 2008). It is connected with the communication skill women naturally possess and other justifications also mentioned. Though the profession is feminized, but the fact is that women who are majority of members of the profession, are confined mainly on the

technical roles. In the Western world, the PR profession is significantly represented by women practitioners.

According to Richard (2015), 72% of PR professionals are women, but their positions are mostly confined on the technical and expert levels. Though their number is few compared to women, the men PR professional largely hold the managerial/leadership positions.

Salt, cited in Shepherd (2012) claims the gender imbalance in the industry, that is the “pink ghetto,” (as PR profession is regarded as solely women’s area of expertise) led to the failure for public relations to be taken seriously. This statement by itself tried to indicate from the gender perspective that occupations that are ascribed to women are given low attention. Elizabeth, (2017) also argue that the divide exists between men and women in public relations is created due to gender issues.

In Ethiopia, according to Haimanot (2018), number of women in PR profession in federal government offices is very low and their representation in managerial positions is very insignificant. However, Haimanot’s research doesn’t figure out gender issues specifically exist in the PR profession, rather it revealed general gender related challenges that women face in any profession or life sphere. Hence, this research figures out what gender related challenges women in PR profession face at different level.

Though discrimination against women in public relations cannot be separated from the organizational and societal systems that institutionalized gender biases in other sectors, this paper, in its scope, try to show the practical gender issues in the

public relations arena in particular. It tried to demonstrate gendered challenges women in the profession of PR in the selected sectors face.

1.2. Statement of the problem

Several researchers and scholar like Liz & Fabiana (2016) and Kate & Amanda (2010) have conducted research on women's role in public relation, focusing on gender inequality that persist in the profession while it is widely feminized field of work. In the past three decades, the public relations industry has experienced a process of 'feminization' (Kate & Amanda, 2010). Women have dominated the profession in US and Australia as well.

Kate & Amanda (2010) point out "in many respects, this process of feminization reflects large-scale transformations in the gendering of work in the Western world, partly attributable to the rise of second wave feminism and the consequent entry of increasing numbers of women into the workforce."

So far, majority of these researches are targeting the western world. In Ethiopia, though there are researches about public relations profession from different angles, but so far, the gender dimension of PR is not studied and gender issues in the profession are not revealed. However, like other work types in the country, PR profession is also subject to gender issues, there is gap in knowledge of the gender related challenges in the profession.

The gender classification of roles and responsibilities and stereotypes attached with is the biggest challenge for women to actively participate in the fields they prefer and assume leadership positions they deserve. Existence of gender inequality in the profession negatively affect growth of the profession by abandoning already available skills and knowledge on the area due to gendered

classification of roles and responsibilities. Moreover, the gendered classification of roles and responsibilities in the profession and gender related challenges hamper career development of one of the other sexes, in this case women professionals in the field.

According to Himanot, (2018), proportion of women in government sectors communication department is significantly low. In her research Haimanot revealed that in targeted governmental offices, male accounts 76.7% while women represent only 24.4. Only few women are on the leadership positions. The above research targets only government offices. But since the PR practice is becoming common in other non-governmental, it is equally important to understand the share in other sectors as well. Moreover, the major findings of Haimanot (2018) have focused on very general gender related challenges women in any field might face than specific gender issues in PR profession in the targeted offices.

Consequently, my research focuses on specific gender issues in the profession in the targeted offices and organizations in Addis Ababa.

1.3. Research Objectives

1.3.1. General objective

General objective of this research is to assess gender related challenges women in PR profession experience throughout their journey in PR profession in federal level government offices and non-government organizations in Addis Ababa.

1.3.2. Specific objectives

- To identify numerical representation of women PR professionals in the targeted offices,

- To examine if gender disparity in the managerial positions of PR in federal level government offices and NGOs,
- To assess gender related challenges women in PR encounter,
- To find out if there is pay gap among women and men PR professionals for the same value of work
- To figure out driving factors to the gender disparity in PR profession and,

1.4. Research questions

- What is the composition of women PR practitioners in the profession in these offices?
- Is there gender disparity in the managerial positions of PR in federal level government offices and NGO sectors in Addis Ababa?
- Which sex is dominant in technical expert level and Leadership positions?
- What is the gender related challenges that women in PR as experts and leaders encountering?
- What are the factors that drive any forms of gender disparity in the profession?

1.5. Scope of the study

This research, despite of the wideness of the issue in concern as a whole country, addressed selected women PR practitioners in certain federal offices and NGOs in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It focused on gender issues that are specific to public relation profession, by targeting only women PR professionals to learn what they are experiencing as women in the profession.

1.6. Significance of the study

The result of this research is expected to reveal the gender dynamics exist in PR profession in federal offices and NGO sectors in Addis Ababa. Accordingly, the findings will inform organization and office leaders to look inward and solve challenges related to public relation practices and gender dynamics in their offices. It will also help gender equality promoters as evidence regarding gender in the profession and take input for their advocacy effort.

This research will also contribute to the larger effort being made by the country to narrow gender inequality in different sectors by revealing the actual gender context in PR profession and come up with possible recommendations.

Moreover, this research is significant in contributing to literatures in the area of women in PR and will serve as data source and reference for other researches in the area.

1.7. Limitation of the study

During this research, the study process has faced some challenges. Difficulty to directly access very relevant literatures and consequently forced the researcher to use some secondhand citations was among major challenges. The other limitation was that there is no enough literature related to women in PR in Ethiopia case. Moreover, conducting the interviews and organizing FGD as per the standard for this study was so challenging due to tight schedule of the contacted research participants and Covid-19.

1.8. Organization of the study

This research paper encompasses six chapters. The 1st chapter focusses on introduction of the research, the 2nd chapter is review of relevant literatures, chapter three illustrates the methodological structure of this research, chapter four presents major result of the research, chapter five discusses major findings revealed from the data collected and, chapter six deals with conclusion and recommendations forwarded by the researcher. Moreover, this research paper has followed all standard formats of academic research paper.

Chapter Two: Review of related literature

2.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present review of related literatures. In this chapter the researcher tried to review different literatures related to women in public relations; gender issues in the profession and factors that limit women from assuming leadership positions while it is claimed by many researchers like Elizabeth (2017) and Richard (2015), that their numerical representation is significantly high in the profession.

Women in public relations occupied more share in the profession, but mostly confined in the technical levels only. Women account 72% of the professionals and hold 30% of the leading positions in PR industry (Richard, 2015).

In different literatures like Victoria (2012), it is frequently mentioned that women are naturally talented with communication skills and relationship maintenance, and this contributed to their level of enrolment in the public relations industry

2.2. Conceptual Definition

Feminization: Wikipedia define feminization as “shift in gender roles and sex roles in a society, group, or organization towards a focus upon the feminine. It can also mean the incorporation of women into a group or a profession that was once dominated by men”. For this research, ‘feminization’ refers, the situation in which PR is regarded as women’s work domain, due to the reason that number of women in the profession overweight by far from their male counterparts.

Gender: refers to the socially given attributes, roles, activities, responsibilities and needs connected to being men and boys (masculine) and women and girls (feminine) in a given society at a given time, and as a member of a specific community within that society.

USAID defines **gender** as the socially constructed roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours, values, relative power and influence that society ascribes to sexes on a differential basis. Gender is relational and refers not simply to women or men, but to the relationship between them.

Gender dynamics: Gender dynamics refers to the relationships and interactions between and among boys, girls, women and men. Gender dynamics are informed by socio-cultural ideas about gender and the power relationships that define them. Depending upon how they are manifested, gender dynamics can reinforce or challenge existing norms (USAID). Gender dynamics in this research specifically refers gendered situations women go through in PR profession compared to their men counterparts.

Glass ceiling: The U. S. Department of Labour defines glass ceiling as "those artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization into management-level positions.

Bailey (2019) defines glass ceiling as a metaphor for the evident but intangible hierarchical impediment that prevents minorities and women from achieving elevated professional success (Bailey, 2019). In this study 'glass ceiling' is conceptualized as hidden constraints in the work system that obstacle women from assuming leading positions in PR profession.

Glass cliff: 'glass cliff as conceptualized by Helen (2014) is a metaphor used to describe a phenomenon when women are appointed to precarious leadership roles associated with an increased risk of negative consequences like fall of organizations. In this research 'glass-cliff' means invisible constraints that hinder women PR leaders from efficiently exercising their leadership roles.

Gender stereotype: According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) gender stereotypes is conceptualized as a generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by, women and men. In this research gender stereotype is understood as labelling that are attached on women for their characteristics, roles and responsibilities and abilities.

2.3. Theoretical review - Feminist theories

Feminism is often defined as the organized movement of moral philosophies, social theories, economic, and political thoughts, that are concerned with social, political, and economic inequalities and practices that discriminate against women. Feminist theory is used in this study to understand the inequality between men and women in different spheres of life.

Yet, like gender theorists, feminists often disagree over the reasons of inequality, how to achieve equality, and the extent to which gender and gender-based identities should be questioned and critiqued. Modern feminist political activists commonly campaign for women's human rights to bodily integrity and autonomy on matters such as reproductive rights, including the right to abortion, access to contraception and quality prenatal care; for protection from violence within a domestic partnership; against sexual harassment, street harassment, and rape; for workplace rights, including maternity leave and equal pay; and against all other forms of sex-based discrimination (Deborah, 2010)

As this research has tried to examine gender disparity in PR profession, it is found very relevant to use feminist theories as feminists are among major groups that is exploring the inequality pattern between women and men at all levels and spheres.

Accordingly, the following two main perspectives of feminist theory and role congruity theory are used to structure the theoretical framework of the research.

2.3.1. Liberal feminism

Liberal feminism is an individualistic form of feminism theory, which focuses on women's ability to prove and maintain their equality through their own actions and choices.

The primary goal of this theoretical perspective is to gain equality for women by increasing their social and political participation, achieving freedom for every woman, and considering them as full individuals. Liberal feminists recognize male domination as “unjustified male monopoly” which hinders women becoming equal. Liberal feminism is tightly connected to the theory of empowerment, especially self-empowerment (Liz, 2016).

Liberal feminism prioritizes personal relationship between men and women a prerequisite to facilitate effective transformation in the society into a more gender-equitable and just place. According to liberal feminists, all women possess the ability to demonstrating their potential in achieving equality and working to attain it, therefore, change may happen without changing the structure of society (Deborah, 2010)

The liberal feminists' theory includes *Judith (1989)*, the claim that the abolition of gender exclusion of occupational roles is necessary in order to achieve equality between men and women. Judith, (1989) further explained that for the attainment of gender equality, all domestic consumption work and all child-care work-as well as the responsibility for their performance must also be freed of gender stereotyping and must be divided equally between partners.

Liberal feminism in PR advocates for equal opportunity for male and women for work of equal value with comparable pay. It also indicates, women's ability in the field.

As gender-based classification of roles discriminate one sex over the other, in fact against women, in order for women get equal access to a the rigid gender roles that societal norms encourage and reinforce. (Liz, 2016).

Jaylah (2019) claims modern liberal feminist theories of gender equality are based on the assumption that in order for women to achieve equal status, all stereotyped social roles for men and women have to be abolished.

Separately freeing women from the deep-rooted societal challenges will not be possible and is not the best solution to bring equality among men and women, rather empowering both women and men to escape from these constraints in collaboration will bring the aspired change of justice.

2.3.2. Radical feminism

Radical feminism explicitly emphasizes the difference between women and men, promoting the basis for many of the ideas of feminism. Usually, radical feminists want to free both men and women from the rigid gender roles that societal norms encourage and reinforce. (Liz, 2016).

According to Echols (1990) cited by Deborah (2010) Radical feminism also considers capitalism as an obstacle to fighting oppression, because capitalism succeeds on the ability of a person to profit at another person's expense. Most radical feminists argue that feminism is about ending domination or elitism in

society, and therefore, there is no option other than the total uprooting and subsequent reconstruction of society in order to achieve their goals.

Separately freeing women from the deep-rooted societal challenges will not be possible and is not the best solution to bring equality among men and women, rather empowering both women and men to escape from these constraints in collaboration will bring the aspired change of justice.

2.3.3. Role Congruity Theory

A theory to explain the scarce number of women in top-level management, considering a perceived incongruity between the attributes of a strong leader and attributes assigned to women's gender roles. Role congruity theory is grounded in social role theory's treatment of the content of gender roles and their importance in promoting sex differences in behavior. (Alice, & Steven, 2002).

According to Deborah (2010), congruity theory deals with three key schemes: first, it assumes that the majority of beliefs about the sexes pertain to 'communal' and 'agentic' attributes: 'Communal characteristics', which are ascribed more strongly to women, describe primarily a concern with the welfare of other people for example, affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturing, and gentle. On the other hand, agentic attributes are ascribed as men's behaviors; primarily an assertive, controlling, and aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, self-sufficient, self-confident, and prone (Deborah, 2010).

Second, role congruity theory argues, women's and men's behaviour as a leader should be consistent with their gender roles so as to be effective in getting acceptance by their teams. Third, Women in leadership positions may face

challenges related to conflict between their socially ascribed gender roles and the managerial role they hold.

The above propositions by congruity theory directs to two different perceptions. One is that due to the ascribed characteristics of women as emotionally intelligent and supportive, it indicates that women are great leaders if they apply their natural qualities; though it seems as mixed (natural and social) and well fit for communication works. On the other hand, it leads to the conclusion that if women's leadership characteristics do not align with their ascribed behaviours, then they may not succeed in their leadership roles, which clearly shows the gender dynamics in professions.

Alice & Steven (2002), explains the prejudice towards women leaders as it is connected with incongruity that many people perceive between the characteristics of women and the features anticipated from a leader.

Role divergence is stated as disparity between social role and leadership role. Role congruity theory deals with the interconnection between women's gender role and their managerial behaviors. As a result, as one of the major focusses of this study is women in PR leadership, it is found relevant to use this theory to understand the situation regarding women in leadership in the targeted offices and organizations. this study.

2.4. Empirical review of related topics

In many researches like Tina (2019), it is clearly indicated that PR profession worldwide is dominated by women. Women comprise 70%-75% of the workforce

of the profession but hold only 22-30% of the leading positions, which seems paradox.

Like other professions initially dominated by men due to gender and other factors, women slowly joined the PR profession but dominated in number if not in leadership.

According to Taylor (2013), the change occurred in the leadership position for many professions also paved the way to PR as well. When Anne W. Wheaton assumes presidential position at Dwight D. Eisenhower's associate press secretary in 1957, it drew nationwide attention and highly contributed to recognize a capacity of women for the profession and became potential career for women. Several other women, like Lorena Hickock and Doris Fleischman, started their careers during this time period and became key players in the continued development of the field.

According to a study published in the *Public Relations Review*, "...women comprise nearly 75% of the jobs in the public relations industry, but history does not reflect this and instead is flooded with biographies of men and few women only" (Jaylah, 2019).

Long-time Public Relations Practitioner, Professor and founder of the Museum of Public Relations, Shelley Spector addressed the disparity at the museum's International Women's Day Celebration hosted in March of 2019. On the live streamed event via Facebook, Spector acknowledged women public relations pioneers Ida Tarbell, Doris Fleischman, Muriel Fox and Inez Kasie (Jaylah, 2019).

Jaylah (2019) citing West (2018) explained about the unpacked legacy of women in public relations.

In the history of PR development, women have significant role. However, it is only through in-depth research that women pioneer like Vira B. Whitehouse, the nation's first women public diplomat, CPI Director for Berne, Switzerland, was discovered.

Whitehouse's determined advocacy for women's rights is un deniable. When societies claimed that "women's place was in the home," Whitehouse launched a campaign where she courage women to choose their desired job. She sought to change the perspective of society with this command, stressing the significance of women having the right to do what they choose. As women were expected to fulfil household chores, being confined in their homes prevented them from accessing and accomplishing professional tasks.

There were few men who support women's participation in the professional society and political sphere and who joined the movement of women's suffrage, and Creel was one of them. He became familiar with Whitehouse's experience in working with publicity campaigns and secretly appointed her to serve on the CPI. Whitehouse faced many difficulties in her profession because of her sex. As she stated in her book 'A Year as a Government Agent' that she was denied access to a diplomatic passport and had arrived in Switzerland for six months before she received clearance to implement and execute working orders on behalf of the CPI (West, 2018, cited by Jaylah, 2019)

Nonetheless Whitehouse persisted and continued with her duties that soon became known as public diplomacy. And eventually, society evolved (i.e., woman suffrage) and women began to take on new roles that they actively fought for.

Bernays' wife Doris Fleischman is an example of that transition as she is reportedly the first woman to formerly practice modern public relations (Museum of Public Relations, 2019). Born in 1891, Fleishman was a journalist recruited to work for Bernays' firm. The two married in 1922, and Fleischman became an equal partner in the Bernays firm.

Regardless of women's effort (like Whitehouse, and others), their role in and contribution to the PR profession is overlooked in many researches and books stating the history of PR.

Public relations scholars know very little about the women who participated in formal public relations before the 1970s, not even about such women as Jane Stewart, who served as vice president and then president of Group Attitudes Corporation, an independent consulting firm that became a subsidiary of Hill and Knowlton of New York in 1956. Stewart was influential at Group Attitudes Corporation because she was not afraid to stand up to men. She talked firmly and was assertive in meetings. She was remembered for meeting men, even the steel industry leaders who were known for having less than progressive attitudes toward women executives (Miller, 1997, cited in Jaylah, 2019)

Martina, et al. (2019), criticised that while the number of articles on women in public relations is on the rise, however, if looking at journals and published works, public relations scholarship is still predominantly focused on crisis and risk

communication, digital media, public relations practice, relationships, strategic communication and strategic management and media relations, thus leaving the exploration of women in the industry as a marginal issue.

Jaylah (2019) acknowledged that there is a deficit of women in public relations history narratives that warrants proactive attention from publishers. The profession has received significant contributions from women that are rarely documented. Public relations today, is mostly comprised of women who deserve more accurate depictions of themselves in the profession's findings. He calls for both researchers in the field and the PR professionals to impact change in the history narratives that they should advocate for accurate accounts of the history of public relations. These narratives would provide motivation for current and future women professionals equipping them with additional motivation to execute and succeed.

It is crucial to take a brief detour and acknowledge that women are largely contributing to the development of the field.

2.4.1. Feminization of PR profession

Public relations and associated roles are still considered most suitable for women. An article in Forbes, identified the 12 best jobs for women, based on annual salaries and projected hiring and drawing on US Bureau of Labour statistics (Naomi, S. 2014). The list included public relations manager, advertising and promotions manager, market research analyst, and event planner along other professions. The criteria for inclusion were: stress, physical demands, and the percentage of women working in the field. Suggesting the existing numerical

dominance of women in these areas led to the assumption that these occupations were therefore “good” for women is a bit odd (Kate, F. et al, 2015).

Kate & Third (2010) claim about the significant consequence feminization of the Profession has on the industry’s professional status and its working environment. According to them, ‘feminisation’ of public relations was charged with lowering the reputation of the profession, bringing about a decline in both salaries and status, and excluding public relations.”

Ana & Edna (2020) also argue that feminization of any workforce causes different side effects that negatively affect the professions and calls for serious action. These according to Ana & Edna (2020) include gendered perceptions about the profession and perpetuating bias which lead in turn to pay differences, discriminatory practices, career progression obstacles.

Another writer, Janice, M. also stated on her article that PR and corporate affairs are seen as a softer skillset (and the “gender imbalance” in the industry, that is the “pink ghetto,”) led to the failure for public relations to be taken seriously. Women themselves are responsible for a part of this softening; women are more likely than men to accept downgraded positions and less money, partly for lack of skills in negotiating salary and position, partly because of the tendency of women to undervalue themselves professionally (Janice,1996).

Another study supported the conclusion by Janice, M. and other researchers that women feel that technician level jobs suit their level of commitment to their work. Technical level positions help maintaining work-life balance as they are still responsible to other domestic duties. This belief offers itself to the corporate

cultural ideology that women are not capable of committing to the demands required for managerial or leadership positions (Victoria, 2012)

According to Deborah (2010), women prefer the profession due to flexibility in its work arrangement and they think that promotion prospects are more promising than other fields. She continued explaining that PR is also attractive to women because traditionally feminine skills in communications empathy, networking, and multi-tasking are encouraged and appreciated. But she argues saying that these qualities and competence of women in the area is taken for granted and exploited. Katerina (2015) reported that interviewee on her research argued that women are great communicators; in addition, this work requires attention to detail and a step-by-step ability to follow through with a plan, which is woman's qualities.

The gendered stereotype of women as better communicators, serves a woman well, but also overlooked the need for other skills required to succeed in the profession, such as management skills and critical thinking. An example of this accepted theory (women as better communicators) being employed was recently demonstrated at a college recruitment program; where a leading public relations agency in New York informed undergraduate students that women are many times simply better at doing the work, because of the way women communicate (Victoria, 2012)

Taylor (2013) also argues, women in public relations are confined in technical roles, openly or hiddenly denied having the opportunity to use their talents and abilities succeed in their profession.

Alice & Steven (2002) Leadership has been predominantly a male prerogative in corporate, political, military, and other sectors of society. Although women have gained increased access to supervisory and middle management positions, they remain quite rare as elite leaders and top executives.

Cited in Tyler (2013), Froehlich (2004) argues that having good communication skills is a particular biologically determined feature that women possess which makes them especially suited for a communication profession such as public relations. With these ideal qualities, it is said, women can rise to challenges typically found in these professions.

Kate & Amanda (2015) argue that whilst women constitute a majority within the industry today, this feminisation of public relations does not equate to a dismantling of the gendered structures of power in the industry. Rather, in 'postfeminist' times, gender inequalities persist, often in a form that is difficult to pinpoint and therefore difficult to challenge.

Elizabeth (2017) also state the inequity between men and women in the industry "With the number of women in public relations continuing to grow, it is important to look at the number of women in leadership positions in the field. Considering that women make up the majority of employees, one might expect them to hold a majority of top leadership positions". Given this, the gendering of public relations demands further research and critical attention.

Other researchers like Kate et al (2015) also argue that there is little research that adopts a truly critical perspective in terms of challenging the hegemonic assumptions around gender in public relations.

2.4.2. Factors contributing to gender disparity in PR field

Brenda (2005) contends that the public relations industry suffers from the Queen Bee Syndrome. Wrigley contends because of increased competition, and the reality that most women do not advance, Queen Bees do not want other women to have it easier. Queen Bees gain special privileges such as high visibility, male favour, and authority which other women employees detest. Queen Bees get along with male executives because they practice the same behaviour they too discriminate against women (Victoria, 2012).

Data shows it is possible to hold and perform in a leadership position as a woman in the PR industry, but there are constraints that hinder women to go forward and progress in the profession and hold power; glass ceiling (Binh, 2016).

Some researchers like Emilia (2015) believes that there is gender disparity when it comes to earning by the PR professionals. In the PR industry specifically, women make up more than 64% of PR professionals, but earn 6% less on average than their male counterparts. Only 31% of the highest paid PR professionals are women.

In similar talk, Elizabeth (2017) confirms that though women make up more than half those employed in PR sector, they are still earning less than men for different reasons.

Ranbir (2011) on his blog argues the above statement referring research report by researcher Jim Hultton, from Fairleigh Dickinson University, which is inspired by PR week's 2001 Salary Survey report. "At first glance, the report confirmed that statistical pay disparity exists. According to Jim Hutton, assuming that the salary

differential is the result of gendered discrimination is completely illogical. The research showed that 'years of experience' accounted for 26% of the difference in salaries. Another important point raised was that on average, men tend to work longer hours than women, which accounted for 4% of the salary gap.”

Other explanations for the salary gap included the type of organisation the employee worked for - the survey showed that men more often than women, work in corporate PR where pay tends to be better. Men also tend to work in better-paid areas such as crisis or reputation management, which accounted for another 2% of the gap.

Liz (2016) acknowledging the significant gendered pay gap between women and men PR practitioners at different levels argues, that in every position in PR, men are appears to get paid better than their women counterparts. This information is supported by statistical evidence across Europe. He also persists on the needs for further research to genuinely understand the situation and improve it.

2.4.3. Women in PR profession in Ethiopia

There is lack of studies in Ethiopia about women in public relations. However, when it comes to work related gender dynamics, PR practitioner women in Ethiopia cannot for no reason be free from gender constraints like other professions in the country.

Haimanot (2018), in her thesis research that focused on Ethiopia’s federal institutions, reported that in the study year i.e., 2018, there were 499 PR professionals in these sectors and out of which men comprises 377 and women account 122.

According to Haimanot (2018) majority of the women in the profession, are confined on the expertise/technical levels while the majority men are heads and managers. The factors that contribute for low number of women in the profession in general includes, culture, attitudinal setup, women's multiple role burden, unstable and unsupportive leadership, challenges related to competition and promotion etc.

According to salary survey 2021, Male employees in Ethiopia earn 11% more than their women counterparts on average across all sectors. When it comes to PR, the pay gap become even bigger; women employees in Ethiopia who work in Public Relations earn 19% less than their male counterparts on average.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The main purpose of this study is to examine gender issues in PR profession in selected federal offices and NGOs in Addis Ababa focusing of women PR professionals in these sectors. This chapter deals with the methodology used to address the research questions and attain the objectives stated by the researcher. The research design, types and source of data, data collection methods, the sampling procedures, and method of data analysis employed are discussed as follows.

3.2. Research Method and Design

Research design according to Prabhat & Meenum (2015) is the blue print for collection measurement and analysis of data. It is a map that guide the research.

The research design should indicate how the research setting will be arranged in order to harvest the desired data.

Case study research method is an intensive study of a particular case (Mahesha & Sara, 2011). Case study can focus on single case or small number of multiple cases.

Qualitative research is a form of social action that stresses on the way people interpret, and make sense of their experiences. Qualitative researchers are interested in people's belief, experience, and meaning systems from the perspective of the people (Haradhan, 2018)

Mahesha and Sara, (2011) explains qualitative research as an appropriate method to deeply know human behavior, experience, attitude and practice for better understandings about the world around them.

This research mainly focuses on social aspect of the PRs profession. It seeks to understand the experience and practice of women PRs professionals in government and NGO sectors. As qualitative research technique allows the researcher better investigate the issue under study, this research used qualitative case study method focusing on selected women in 13 government offices and NGOs.

3.3. Source of Data

This research employed both primary and secondary data sources. For the primary source, In-depth interview and FGD was used to acquire first-hand information. As far as the secondary data is concerned, document review was utilized to enrich the research findings. To check the data accuracy, triangulation was done among the data found from different sources using different tools.

3.4. Sampling technique

Sampling is selection of small group to represent the whole population in a particular domain with the objective to obtain accurate and reliable information about the population with minimum of cost, time and energy. Mahesha and Sara, (2011).

There are variety of sampling techniques in research. In this research both for target organizations, interviewees and, FGD participants, purposive sampling technique was used. This particular sampling technique is opted by the researcher

due to the reason that this research mainly targets women PRs professionals (both technicians and leaders).

Hence, federal offices and non- governmental organizations that have structured PR unit with women leaders and/or experts were identified and contacted. For government offices, the researcher has used the long list of PR personnel of federal offices which was compiled by the then government communications office and selected 9 offices that have women PR experts and/ or leaders. Regarding NGOs, the selection was again made purposively

after exploring organizations with PR and communication unit and 4 NGOs were selected. Likewise, 13 PR practitioner women, both leaders and technical experts (1 from each organization) were purposively selected for the in-depth interview and FGD from these selected federal offices and NGOs. The selected research participant women were contacted through phone and email for their consent to participate on the in-depth interview and FGD.

3.5. Data collection method

Qualitative research methods typically include interviews and observations, but may also include case studies, surveys, and historical and document analyses (Haradhan, 2018). Coorpley (2015) also explained the aim of qualitative as a method to describe and analyse the world as it is experienced, interpreted and understood by people in the course of their everyday lives.

As this research focuses on the social behavior, experience and practice; gender dimension of PR, using qualitative method is found very relevant and appropriate. Accordingly, qualitative data collection tools; in-depth interview, FGD and document review were employed to collect data for this research.

3.5.1. In-depth Interview

Such research; focusing on social impact on behaviors, attitude and practice benefit from in-depth interview, as the tool helps deeply dig and understand the situation under study. The researcher used semi-structured interview which gives a chance to be flexible and use probing questions for detailed understanding of the situation under study.

This research focused on women PR practitioners' journey in the profession from gender perspective. Hence, this tool helped the researcher to understand the opinion, belief and practical experience of interviewees. Interviews were conducted face- to- face, via phone and using online communication platforms; Skype, Zoom and Microsoft team. On the interviews, 9 individuals from federal offices and NGOs have participated.

3.5.2. Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Focus group discussion is used as qualitative data collection tool to gain an in depth understanding of the situation under study and aims to obtain data from purposely selected group of individuals rather than from statistically representatives' sample of a broader population (Tobias et al.(2018) . In this research, 5 individuals (2 from federal office and 3 from NGOs) were participated in the FGD held through online platform; Zoom. The discussion was moderated by the researcher.

3.5.3. Document review

Document review is a way of collecting data by reviewing existing documents. It can be internal to organization such as records of different programs, or may be documentation for external include reports, funding proposals, meeting minutes,

newsletters etc. For consumption of this research, list of PR practitioners in federal offices which was compiled by the then government communications office in 2018 was analyzed to extract sex-disaggregated data of PR practitioners in the aforementioned offices.

3.6. Data collection procedure

The researcher established a contact with the targeted organizations for the primary data collection. Orientation was given to the individual targets on the overall objective of the research and appropriate date and time was agreed for interview and FGD with the participants. Accordingly, Interviews were conducted with selected women PR professional with different positions and then FGD was held so as to get additional data and/or strengthen the data obtained from the interview responses. All the interviews and FGD was conducted by the researcher.

3.7. Data Analysis Methods

Data analysis is actually a dynamic process weaving together recognition of emerging themes, identification of key ideas or units of meaning and material acquired from the research (Haradhan, 2018).

After data saturation is maintained through both in-depth interview and FGD, thematic analysis method was used to analyses the findings of the research as this analysis method is appropriate for qualitative research. Accordingly, major themes were identified and categorized based on the findings and the findings were summarized and grouped under their respective themes. In order to avoid the researcher's bias and influence on the finding, it was tried to focus solely on the data and the data collected was transparently provided by supporting with direct quotes of the research participants.

3.8. Ethical consideration

In this research took maximum care of ethical issues. Primarily, consent from in-depth interviewees and FGD participants was secured to use the data obtained from them for reporting of the research. Anonymity of individual participants in the research is ensured. Inclusion of individuals was based on their free willingness.

3.9. Bibliography of respondents

The research participants are comprised of different roles. In this research, 4 directors, 5 team leaders and 4 technical experts have participated in the in-depth interviews and FGD. Their work experience ranges from 3 to 15 years.

Chapter Four: Data presentation, Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Introduction

This chapter addresses the main part of the study; discussion of research findings. The discussions are categorized under three major themes; Women in PR sector; as leader and technical expert, challenges women face in PR sector in Ethiopia, factors contributing for the gender disparity in the profession and Gender pay gap.

As the central focus of this study is understanding experience of women PR practitioners throughout their journey in the profession, the analysis of this research has paid attention to gender dimension of their experience both as a leader and technical expert in the profession. Accordingly, 13 individuals were contacted through in-depth interview and FGD to inform this research. All research participants in this research were women in the PR profession in 9 federal offices and 4 NGOs. The respondents were comprised of 4 PR directors, 4 Technical experts and 5 team leaders. The data was collected in May, 2021.

Towards the end of the data collection process, the researcher realized that data saturation was attained when no new information was being presented by the participants of both the in-depth interview and FGD.

Moreover, for the consumption of this study, the researcher tried to refer a document with list of PR practitioners at federal offices, which is compiled by the then government communications office of Ethiopia, in 2018. The document is organized per sector and shows number of PR experts and leaders. The document referred for this purpose was accessed through Association of Ethiopian PR Professionals.

4.2. Presentation of findings

4.2.1. Numerical representation of women in PR

Regarding numerical representation of women in PR, the information obtained from majority of the in-depth interview informants from federal offices have revealed that, despite women's unique qualities in communication and relationship building, their number is very few in the profession compared to men and it is even fewer on leadership positions. The FGD participants and interview informants from NGO sector have also agreed on the fact that there are few women in the top leadership positions of PR. But they argue that as experts' number of women is more than that of men.

Data from the document analysis also supports the perception of the interviewee participants, but it was found opposite to the global data when it comes to numerical representation of women in the profession.

The above data from the reviewed document shows that number of women in PR section of the federal offices is very few compared to men; there are 640 PR and communication professionals in the federal level government offices, out of which women accounts only 140 which is 22%. It also shows that the women in the profession are more located in expert level while the men on the other hand hold the leadership positions.

From different view, interviewee E from one of international NGOs said that from her observation in NGOs environment, there are more women PR and communications practitioners than that of men.

Another interviewee from NGOs sector has also strengthened the above view, saying;

From my observation with in my circle, number of women PR practitioners is more than that of men. There is a PR and communications network among communications professional with in some stakeholder NGOs, and majority of the members are women. Interviewee F (May 31, 2021)

This according to her opinion means women are preferred by the organizations due to their better communication skill.

Interviewees addressed the question raised by the researcher if any distinct opportunities for women or men to enrol in the PR profession. Accordingly, majority of the interviewees said that they believe women are naturally gifted with communication qualities such as; better understanding skill, socialization power, patience, persistence, commitment and persuasion skills.

PR is about building and maintaining strong and positive relationship between the organization and its public, and women are better in achieving these goals using their naturally granted qualities of communication. The profession, given its requirements is in favour of women Interviewee A (May 25, 2021)

Another interviewee, (interviewee B) from government office argues that there is no distinct opportunity for women and men to enter into the PR sector. Sharing the fact that women are better in communication, she explains her belief saying; both women and men have equal opportunity to enter in the sector as far as they fit to the competency required by the profession. She added saying;

For me there are no unique opportunities for women or men to enrol in the PR sector, but it is obvious that men are privileged for the leadership positions just like other professions and this is due to the deep-rooted gender inequality in the country.” Interviewee B (May, 25, 2021)

The respondent believes best achievement of PR and communication work depends on personal strength and weakness regardless of sex difference.

As perceived by another interviewee, (interviewee F) from NGO sector, professional requirements of PR quality privilege women to enrol into the profession, because women are best communicators in nature; they are emotionally intelligent (have good understanding of people...), patient, persistent and, good listeners.

Interviewee E from NGOs sector said, “*women possess better communication skills by nature than men*”, but she believes, having these qualities can’t give distinct opportunity for women to enter in to the profession as other technical skill and knowledge is also required.

4.2.2. Women in PR leadership

All the research participants (100%) described male and women leaders differently. They described male leaders as risk takers, bold, aggressive, controller, strategic thinkers and, business-oriented, while women leaders are perceived as; emotionally intelligent, persistent, risk avoider, believes in shared responsibility than controlling and people-oriented.

For the question raised by the researcher regarding women’s representation in the leadership positions of PR profession, all interviewees from government offices

and NGO sector believes that women are not fairly represented on the leadership position of PR profession. They argued that just like other professions, there are only few women on top leadership positions of PR. Interviewee A evidenced the above information saying;

In our office, there are 4 women and 4 male PR team members, and except me, 3 of the women are at clerk positions, whereas all the men are in senior team leader and expert levels. I also witnessed other government offices that women are dominantly positioned at expert and clerk levels. Interviewee A (May 25, 2021)

According to interviewees and FGD participants from NGOs sector, though there are many women in the PR and communications sector, but their representation in top leading positions is very insignificant.

FGD Participants reported that, in NGOs unlike government offices, the PR and communications unit is not equipped with much human resource, usually it is comprised of 1 to 3 people per organization. But, in many NGOs where there are more structured staff, usually the top leaders are men.

Interviewees who are already on leadership positions were asked ‘how it likes to be on leading position of the profession as a woman; what is the good part and what is challenging’. Interviewee A from federal office responded for this question saying;

Not because I am women leader, but the position itself grants an opportunity to access top information, to show your talent and boost your professional network, this is the best part of being a leader in PR works. What is challenging for me as women leader in PR is, you are expected to

go extra miles than men to proof yourself as a leader. Interviewee A
(May 25, 2021)

All interviewees were asked their opinion and belief if they think ‘women and men leaders have different leadership quality and style’. Majority of the interviewees have acknowledged the difference between men and women leaders and explained that women are more human centered leaders; they consider human element of the issue under decision making process to make fair decision while men consider only the fact on ground and evidence on hand.

An interviewee from NGO sector expressed women leaders as; detail and quality oriented, deep involved to routine activities, sympathetic, and human centered. She also compared her two managers; a male and women one;

I had an experience working with both male and women PR leaders; and the women was friendly and supportive while the male one is bossy. When we work with the women leader, our team stays motivated and deliver our responsibilities on time without compromising the quality. Of course, I have learnt best things from both but, I prefer the woman due to her human element attitude. Interviewee E (May 31,2021)

An interviewee who is on the leadership of the PR department at government office confirmed the above idea saying;

Women face many challenges to get to every next step of their professional ladder in any field, the same is true in PR. The natural talent women possess in communication may help them to be picked at entry level, but when it comes to leadership levels, their recognized communication quality can work against them. Though they get the

leading position they still are expected to spent their time and energy on the technical function of the PR work, which negatively affect their managerial responsibilities. This is due to the perception that women are better in communication works. Interviewee C (May 26, 2021)

The above challenge is referred as ‘cliff ceiling’ challenge, which hiddenly hamper women from effectively handling their leadership roles. According to some interviewees on PR leadership positions, they usually are expected to deal with routine activities in addition to their managerial roles which usually is not expected from men leaders. This according to them is due to the label given to women as only better communicators than leader.

As a PR leader I have certain managerial roles which the position requires from me. But in addition to those roles, I am expected by the head of the office to deliver other routine communication activities and this undermines my managerial role” Interviewee A (May 25, 2021)

Majority of the in-depth interview informants stated that gender stereotype is highly affecting women’s opportunity to enter into PR Profession and those women who are already in the profession to lift their career up. These stereotypes include; women are good communicators especially as technical experts, women are weak in management/leadership; they are more nurturing not decision makers and, they are not risk takers.

FGD participant stated, a very practical stereotype especially in government sectors; she strongly believes gender stereotypes are working against women PR practitioners in Ethiopia to lift their career up to the higher levels. She believes that the profession itself in government offices is highly attached with political

works (usually serves the political wing of the organizations goal). She explained this saying that;

It is assumed that women are not actively participating and are not strong enough in their political position as men do, so they cannot resist the pressure in the politics zone and stand still in favour of the goal they are supposed to serve. Hence, such stereotypes significantly are contributing for women in PR to get confined in routine technical works of PR than assuming leadership positions. It also hiddenly block the way for women to enrol in the profession.

Referring role congruity theory, Diborah, (2010) explains that women leaders are ascribed as friendly, supportive, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, which is tied with socially given characteristics of women, the research participants have also described women leaders similarly. Also, the participants of this research have described women leaders are more human centered and are preferred by majority of the research participants for their better understanding skill as leaders.

Role congruity theory argues that women leaders' characteristics should align with their socially ascribed role so as to be effective on their leadership roles. This reality was also mentioned by some research participants that women PR leaders are expected to be soft, extremely affectionate, engaged on routine activities.

The data obtained from some of the research participants shows, women who are already on the leadership roles in the profession are preferred by their subordinates due to their human-centered leadership characteristics.

They are supportive, detail and quality oriented, determined and they do and show than just commanding and controlling. However, due to several societal influences which have already institutionalized and systematized in work environments, women are exposed to discrimination from top leading positions.

4.2.3. Gender related challenges women face in PR profession

Majority of the research participants have acknowledged that there are many challenges in the profession both for men and women. The major challenge is less attention given to the profession by government offices and other organizations which limits its growth. But there are more challenges that women face disproportionately.

Interviewee C indicated that women in PR profession are exposed to sexual harassment. She justified her argument with the fact that PR and communications work requires field works which the team has to spent nights out of their home, it also requires to work late in night in the office to meet deadlines, stay extra time with male bosses to finalize works, especially during event organization and report production. According to her, the above situations expose women professionals to sexual harassment.

One of the FGD participants shared her experience saying;

From my own experience and, information I heard from other women, sexual harassments are the regular challenge women in the profession is facing. Though the case is known, it is considered as normal and no solution so far.

The testimony from some of this research participants also shows that, sexual harassment on women PR professionals is common in this profession. As the

nature of the profession expose the professionals to multiple communications and contacts with different people, it has likelihood of exposing the women to harassment. It might be significant reason for women not to significantly enrol or continue in the profession after they joined.

The other challenge, women in PR face according to interview informants is, women's reproductive role is considered implicitly as a weakness as they may not be able to travel far due to their responsibility for their children.

Before I have children, I used to travel to every corner of the country to get input to produce communication materials for my office, or organize events, but now I can't travel to distant areas as I supposed to be around my kids. However, this is being taken against our career development, which should not be, as we are supposed to handle our reproductive role as well. Interviewee C (May 26, 2021)

Interviewee G mentioned during the interview that lack of trust on women PR leaders from the management to handle big responsibilities is one of the challenges women in PR leadership face.

Like the radical feminist theory argues, the findings from the research participants have also claimed that the gender challenges are systematized in the society as well as in work environments. Hence, so as to eradicate the gender related constraints women face in their professional life, strongly working on societal system is vital.

Liz, Y. (2016) on her research referred different studies made on the feminist perspective of PR and picked liberal feminist viewpoint to express some of the

factors that influence inequality for women; “balancing career and family, the social processes that perpetuate inequalities, such as gender stereotyping, the ‘glass ceiling’ effect and the ‘friendliness trap’.

The research has also revealed that among gender related challenges women in PR profession encounter is work family balancing challenge. According to the information obtained from the participants, giving birth and other household responsibilities highly affect the career development of women in the profession.

4.2.4. Factors contributing to gender disparity in PR profession

The research participants; both in FGD and in-depth interview have addressed the research question regarding **factors contributing for gender disparity in the PR profession**. Consequently, they figured out four major factors that contribute for low engagement of women in the profession both at technical expert and leadership roles; Gender stereotypes, Labelling of PR as tool for government political propaganda, Masculine feature of PR, Academic competency of women and gendered socialization of women.

a. Gender stereotypes

The research participants have mentioned gender stereotypes as factors that limit women’s participation in the profession. These stereotypes are related to; women’s reproductive roles; time poverty, recognizing women as only good communicators than leaders and, underestimation of women’s leadership potential.

According to the in-depth interview informants, women who are already on leading positions of the PR profession usually face challenges which is referred as

‘glass cliff’ effect. The research participants said that women are usually expected to deliver extra commitment to handle routine communication activities beyond their leadership roles.

Considering women as only better communicators with basic communication skills constrains women’s ability to grow to top level leadership positions. This according to the research participants, unfairly consume their time and energy and limit their potential to handle their leadership roles.

According to FGD participants, if woman in leadership position for some reason fail on certain task, then there is high likelihood of concluding that it is due to her incompetence, which is not usually said for men.

According to some interview informants, women’s reproductive role, in addition to their community and productive role, is seen as limitation and puling factor to enhance their participation in professional works. As PR responsibilities require more time and are challenging so that women are not a choice for many government offices leaders.

Interviewee D argue about the significant impact gender stereotypes have on women’s career progress saying;

Due to any form of gendered stereotype women face, women on leadership positions usually make effort to proof themselves as competent person to the position and good leader in different ways than focusing on their regular duties as a leader. Interviewee D (May 28, 2021)

Under the assumption that women have these two views of women; society’s view and their personal view, it makes sense that women leaders in public relations feel the pressure of stereotypes and expectations to act a certain way (Elizabeth 2017).

This research has found out that women PR leaders are expected to go extra miles to convince their managers that they are competent enough for the position which usually is not expected from their men counterparts. This data shows, women in the profession, particularly those on the leadership roles face ‘glass cliff’ effect which constrain them from properly exercise their leadership role and in turn, blaming ‘the women’ follows for ‘under achievement’ on leadership positions.

Gender stereotypes have continued to negatively affect women’s career development while some gender biases and barriers decline (Nazanin & Bhabani, 2021). Gender stereotypes have significant effect in obstructing women’s progress in any sphere. From their experience the research participants have reported that women in general and Ethiopian women in particular are seen as soft, passive, unassertive, shy to speak in public and confront criticisms and this indicates that women usually are considered as unfit for PR works which has exposure to public works and needs more boldness.

b. PR as a tool for Political Propaganda

Multiple interviewees from the government offices said that, in general, PR is not given enough attention as a profession, and its importance is highly linked with its political purpose.

According to interviewee A, the attachment of PR as a tool for government political propaganda limits the potential of the profession to grow and makes

women less preferred for the profession as women are less active in politics than men. Interviewee B also strengthened the above idea with her argument;

Since the PR function's temperature, especially in government offices goes with the political situation in the country, even the women themselves are not that much interested to join.

c. Masculine feature of PR in government offices

Some interviewees from the government offices said that, PR is usually imaged in Ethiopia as masculine characteristics which demands more labour, more time, political commitment and other socially ascribed masculine characteristics. According to the respondents for the in-depth interview, as a result of this presumed features for PR, men are more privileged to enter into the profession in government offices and are preferred for the leadership positions in the profession as well.

Interviewee I criticized the unfair division of labour in the profession saying;

Regardless of the professional requirements and qualities, which both women and men can possess, it is assumed that men have active involvement and better commitment in politics, so that, leaders of government offices prefer to assign men in leadership positions of PR and communication units. Interviewee I (May 27, 2021)

Interviewee A added on the above; *“The process in which position are assignment is taking place in places where women usually do not go, ‘men’s club’, Hotels and bars”*

On similar talk, the information found from research participants from federal office shows that different ‘masculine’ activities linked with PR functions like;

stage preparation and carrying heavy equipment and travel long distance on foot, are considered difficult for women to perform by themselves so that men are preferred over women by the offices.

The researcher believes that though versatility is important in different professions but this doesn't have to be a barrier on women's professional life.

Another interviewee explains the other issue related to masculine characteristics of the profession saying;

Sometimes, PR experts are supposed to do laborious activities like stage preparation for events, travel long distances on foot, to carry production equipment and other things. Hence, it is thought these activities are difficult for women and organizations prefer to have more male PR professionals over women than having specialized personnel. Interviewee C

d. Academic incompetence

Some of the research participants have mentioned academic incompetence as an obstacle for women to succeed in PR Field. They said that more men are academically competent to the profession than women. According to them, socio-cultural barriers women face to achieve higher educations is the factor for low educational competence of women.

FGD participants have stated the fact that majority of the PR and communication practitioners are from different academic background like language and teaching. This is true for both women and men, but according to her, there are more men with non-PR academic background working in the field. Tara, (2014) explained about the trend that men apply for any job when they feel they meet only 60% of the

qualifications, but women apply only if they meet 100% of them. In this case, men from other educational background have more courage to apply for PR positions than women.

Moreover, lack of role model women on leadership positions is also among mentioned factor that contribute for gender disparity in the PR profession. All interview informants and FGD participants agreed on the fact that gender inequality exists in all professions at all levels and PR is not an exception from this.

4.2.5. Gendered Pay gap in PR profession

Assessing if there is gender pay gap among women and men PR professionals for the same value of work was among the objectives of this research. Accordingly, for this question, all the research participants have reported and that, they do not witness any pay gap among women and men PR professionals for the same value of work. According to the research participants, salary in government offices is scale based, there is no pay gap between male and women PR practitioners for equal value of work. When it comes to NGO environment, and project base government positions, sometimes there is salary difference and this might be due to the bargaining power of the individuals; mostly women.

Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

As this research aimed to assess gender related challenges women in PR face, it can be concluded as follows based on the findings of the research.

- The literatures reviewed in this research tells that the profession is globally feminized due to the reason that more women are enrolled in the field than men.
- The research finding on the contrary shows that number of women in the profession is fewer than that of men in Ethiopian case. PR professional women working in federal offices in Ethiopia are few in number compared to their men counterparts.
- Their number is even fewer when it comes to leadership positions of the profession. In the case of NGOs sector, women dominate the expert level of PR and communication personnel, but leadership positions here also are dominated by men just like in other professions. There persist gender disparities in the profession in both sectors.
- women in PR and communications profession encounter several challenges, which majority of them are connected with gendered constraints. These challenges include; stereotypes that oppress their potential for better career development, being undervalued, expectation of extra commitment from women leaders which is not usually expected from the men leaders.
- Many women in the profession regularly experience sexual harassments due to the reason that the behaviors of the profession expose them to sexual

harassments as it demands to travel far with different team and need to spend extra time with their male bosses.

- PR in government sectors is primarily considered as a tool for political propaganda by the government. In general, the profession is not seen seriously or not considered as essential profession contributing for organizations' success or the country's wholistic development than political propaganda works.
- This practice in federal offices block the opportunity for women to join the field and grow in the profession for the reason that men are hunted in the profession as it is believed that political activities are easier for men than women for the reason that women's political participation and interest seems low.
- Glass ceiling effect that hider women of different professions from assuming leadership positions and glass cliff that hiddenly constrain women leaders from effectively handling their leadership roles exist in PR profession as well.

5.2. Recommendation

Based on the research findings, the researcher has recommended the following for future action.

- Women given their natural talent with communication skill, if the gender related challenges are solved, they will be more effective and contribute for the growth of the profession,
- Linking PR work with political work in federal offices impacted women's job opportunity and career development in the profession. Hence, depoliticization of

the profession is very essential to create conducive work space for both male and women PR practitioners,

- More researches and action for improvement in this area (women in PR; gender dynamics of the profession) is required as the issue has large impact on women's professional life and on the profession's growth as well,
- Experience sharing and knowledge exchange among PR practitioners has to be facilitated by concerned office. This will boost the morale of the practitioners and magnify the importance of the profession and,
- Well organized, sex disaggregated and compiled data regarding PR practitioners in Ethiopia is important by the responsible body.

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Annexes

Annex 1: Interview questions

Interview Guide

I am conducting interviews for my thesis research. The research topic is **Gender Related Challenges Women Public Relation Professionals in Ethiopia encounter: Case of Selected Women in Federal and NGO offices in Addis Ababa**. The interview is expected to take about an hour and will include questions about women practitioners in public relations, women leaders in PR, and perceptions of women leaders in PR, gendered challenges faced by women professionals and factors contributing for the gender disparity (if any) in the profession. If at any time during the interview you wish to not answer a question, you are free not to answer. Your name will not be used in any way when the findings are reported. Quotes used from the interview will be represented by a number or letter and not by the name of the participant.

The interview questions will be divided into four sections surrounding composition, women in PRs leadership, pay gap and, factors for gender disparity. There are no wrong responses, I am just trying to understand your thoughts, ideas, and experiences.

Leveling the ground

I am Hawi, can you tell me your name? --- it is nice to meet you, and thank you for being willing to spent some time with me and assist me on my thesis work!

How many years have you stayed in the profession?

Are you on the technical expert or leadership role? Now let us get in to the main interview. **Themes**

A. Composition of male and women PR practitioners

1. As technical expert; ____F and ____M
2. At leadership level; ____F and ____M
3. If there is significant gender disparity, what is the reason behind?
4. Are there unique opportunities for women or men to enroll in PRs profession?
5. Do you think that there are exceptional qualities required for PRs profession? Are they different for male and women?

B. Women in PR leadership

1. How do you examine leadership? What kind of leadership style do you prefer?
2. Do you think women and men leaders are different? Do they have different leadership style?
3. Do you think women/ women/ are represented in the PR leadership?
4. Have you ever had women manager/leader?
5. What does it like to be in leadership role as a woman? What is good and what is challenging?
6. What are the challenges women leaders face in the profession?
7. Are there special acts or behaviors that you (women leaders) are expected to act as a women leader?
8. Do you think there are glass ceiling factor for women to assume leadership positions? if yes what are they?
9. Do you think there are cliff ceiling factors for women in leadership positions in the profession? If yes, what are they? Have ever faced these challenges as a leader in the profession?

C. Factors that contribute for the gender gap in the profession

1. Do you think male and women PRs practitioners possess distinct quality in the profession? As technical expert and leaders?
2. Do you/women PR actioners/ face gendered challenges in the profession because of your /their/ sex?
3. What do you think are the main factors for a smaller number of women/men in the profession?
4. What do you think are the constraints for women to hold leadership positions in the profession?
5. Do you think women and men PRs practitioners are given the same chance in hiring, promotion and other opportunities?

D. Pay gap

1. Is there a salary difference for the same value of work between male and women practitioners of PR profession in your organization? Or other organizations?
If yes, what do you think is the main reason/ factor for the pay gap?

Thank you!

Annex 2: FGD checklist

FGD guideline

I am collecting data for my thesis research. The research topic **women in public relations: case of selected PR practitioner women working in federal level government offices and NGOs**. One of the instruments I use to generate data is FGD. The Discussion is expected to take about 30 minutes and will include questions about women in public relations, women leaders in PR, and perceptions of women leaders in PR, gendered challenges faced by women professionals and factors contributing for the gender disparity (if any) in the profession. Your name will not be used in any way when the findings are reported. Quotes used from the FGD will be identified by a number or letter and not by the name of the participants.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Themes

E. Women in PR profession

10. Which sex do you think have dominated the PR profession? Male or women?
11. Do you think that there are exceptional qualities required for PRs profession?
Who is possessing these qualities male or women?
12. Do you think women and men PRs practitioners are given the same chance in hiring, promotion and other opportunities? (L&E)

F. Women in PR leadership

1. Do you think women/ women/ are represented in the PR leadership? (L&E)
2. What does it like to be in leadership role as a woman? What is good and what is challenging? (L)

G. Factors that contribute for the gender disparity in the profession

6. What do you think are the main factors for gender disparity in the profession? (L&E)
7. Do you think women PR actioners face gendered challenges in the profession because of their sex? (L&E)
8. What do you think are the constraints for women to hold leadership positions in the profession? The glass ceiling factors?
9. What are the challenges women in PR leadership role face? (L)

H. Pay gap

2. Is there a salary difference for the same value of work between male and women practitioners of PR profession in your organization? Or other organizations?
If yes, what do you think is the main reason/ factor for the pay gap? (L&E)

Thank you!