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**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**

**COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES ARTS AND HUMANITIES**

**SCHOOL OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION**

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND STRATEGIC  
COMMUNICATION**

**ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES AND  
CHALLENGES: THE CASE OF YEKA- SUB CITY ADMINISTRATION  
COMMUNICATION OFFICE**

**BY**

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**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**ASSESSING THE PRACTICE AND CHALLENGES OF PUBLIC  
RELATIONS: THE CASE OF YEKA SUB- CITY ADMINISTRATION  
COMMUNICATION OFFICE**

**BY: WUBAREG MISGANAW**

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**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

## DECLARATION

### Addis Ababa University School of Graduate studies

This is to declare that the thesis entitled on the assessment of the practice of public relation: the case of Yeka sub city administration communication office prepared by Wubareg Misganaw and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of master in public relations and strategic communication. I also declare that this thesis is my original work, and that all sources of the materials used for this thesis have been properly acknowledged.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS/ ABBREVIATION**

AAU.....Addis Ababa university

PR.....Public relations

PRSA.....Public relations Society of America

SPS.....Statistical Package for Social Sciences

## ABSTRACT

*The overall goal of this study is to assess the public relations practice and challenges of Yeka Sub-City Administration Communication Office in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The study used a descriptive research design. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were applied. Data were collected through questioners and in-depth interview. Since the sample included all (45) PR officers of Yeka sub-city administration and Weredas under it, census sampling technic was utilized. Whereas, four PR managers from the communication office of Yeka sub- city were selected for the in-depth interview by purposive sampling technique. This sampling technique helps the researcher to find those informants who have available knowledge, experience and are willing to take part in this research. Questionnaires were distributed to all those participants. Quantitative data from questionnaires were tabulated and statistically analyzed, whereas qualitative data from interviews and open-ended questions were examined through narration and descriptive analysis. The findings indicate deep gaps in the current communication competence of the PR department, with low effectiveness ratings and ineffective stakeholder participation. Based on these findings, it is recommended that management implement certain ongoing professional development programs to enhance strategic communication skills. Further, investment in modern communication devices and channels is essential to facilitate more effective internal and external communication. Regular communication and collaboration between PR departments support unified efforts aligned with the administrations mission. Lastly, developing a long-term resource plan that invests in people, training, and technology is necessary for long-term enhancement.*

**Key Words:** *Public Relations, Practice and Communications*

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

Public relation is the management of communication between an organization and its publics. Grunig and Hunt (1984). Therefore, it helps an organization and its public adapt mutually to each other. PR broadly applies to organizations as a collective group, not just business and publics encompass the variety of different stakeholders. Public relations is a distinctive management function, establish maintain between an organization and publics, it is helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion, emphasizes the responsibility, serve the public interest(Kayode, 2014 ).

Public relation is a broad set of communication efforts used to create and maintain favorable relationship between an organization and its stakeholders. An organization communicates with varies stakeholders, both internal and external, and public relations efforts can be directed toward any and all of these firm stakeholders can include customers, suppliers, employees, stockholders, the media, educators, potential investors, government officials, and society in general (pride, 2005)

The managements of institutions need to understand the attitudes and values of their publics in order to achieve institutional goals. The goals themselves are shaped by the external environment. The public relations practitioner acts as a counselor to management and as a mediator, helping to translate private aims into reasonable, publicly acceptable policy and action (Public Relations Society of America, 2009).

According to Brands, (2007) Public relations practice is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain good will and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics. Any organization has big or small, governmental or non-governmental need to have public relations staff so as to achieve its goal successfully. Public relations activities are crucial not only for profit earning organization but also for awareness creation about publics in order to achieve their objectives. The complex and fast evolving communication landscape public

expectations towards government: transparency, accountability, and responsiveness have significantly increased. As a result effective public relations is no longer a luxury but a necessity for public institutions at all levels. In the context of Ethiopia's decentralized governance structure sub-city administrations like Yeka sub-city play a frontline role in delivering public service and interacting with citizens. The ability of such administrations to communicate effectively and build positive relationships with their communities can have a profound impact on public trust and governance outcomes.

These days, many Ethiopian organizations have established their own public relations departments. Among them is the Addis Ababa Yeka sub-city administration communication office, which was created to inform and raise awareness within the community. It also plays a key role in enhancing communication and understanding between the administration and the public. Therefore, assessing the practice and challenges of public relations in the sub-city is essential.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Public relation is very relevant in organizations today since it has become the most powerful tool to express the image of an organization to the public. There are studies conducted on the topic assessing the practices of public relations. For instance, Ashagrie Molla (2021) conducted a research on assessing the community relation practices and challenges of public relations department in the selected sub-cities of Addis Ababa city government. The study recommended PR departments need to have a new PR structure that solves the limitation of skilled manpower and helping practitioners emphasizing professionalism of practitioners. PR can be taken as good strategies for improving practitioner efficiency and creates a system that enables the department communicating with community members, so that information flows appropriately.

Tesfaye Bezabih Gezihagne (2018) also conducted a research on the topic the Practice and Challenges of Public Relations in Ethiopia in the case of government universities and concluded most of PR practitioners have not perceived the management function of Public Relations. Therefore, the PR office has not involved in creating mutual understanding with the external publics regarding the mission of the universities towards the external communities.

Yeka sub-city is one of the thirteen sub-cities that form the administrative divisions of Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. It was established as part of the broader administrative restructuring aimed at decentralizing governance and improving public service delivery in the city. It is characterized by rapid urban development, increasing population, and expanding infrastructure. These changes have placed greater demands on the sub-city administration to effectively communicate with residents and other stakeholders. Despite of the growing need for strong public relations practices, there are indications that the communication office of Yeka

Sub-city administration faces several challenges. These may include limited organizational capacity, inadequate strategic planning, lack of professional staffing, and weak integration of modern communication tools. As a result, the office may not be fully achieving its intended role in facilitating effective public communication, engaging stakeholders, or managing the sub-city's public image.

This concern is further supported by the researcher's personal observation and experience. While seeking services and information from the sub-city administration communication office, the researcher encountered delays, lack of clear communication, and limited access to timely and accurate information. This practical experience highlighted the gap between the expected public relations functions of the office and its actual performance. It also raised critical questions about the effectiveness and professionalism of public relations practices in the sub-city.

Therefore, this study aims to assess the current practices and challenges of public relations within Yeka sub-city administration communication office. It identifies the challenges faced, and explores potential areas for improvement. The finding will provide insights that can inform policy reforms, enhance communication capacity, and ultimately contribute to improved public service delivery and strengthened citizen trust.

### **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.3.1 General Objective**

The general objective of the study was to assess the practices and challenges of PR in Yeka sub city administration communication.

### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To explore opportunities for effective communication and public engagement, as well the challenges faced by PR officers in Yeka sub-city communication office;
2. To examine the roles and responsibilities of PR practitioners in Yeka sub city administration communication office?
3. To investigate the contributions of PR department with regard to facilitating communication within the internal and external publics of the organization.

### **1.4. Basic Research Questions**

This study tried to answer the following questions:

1. What are the challenges of public relations in communication office of Yeka Sub city?
2. How do PR practitioners carry out their duties and responsibilities of PR in their organization?
3. What are the contributions of the PR department with regard to facilitating communication within the internal and external publics of the organization?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Public relations play a key role in helping organizations function effectively by fostering mutual understanding among different groups and institutions. It serves to bring private and public policies into harmony. This study depicted the public relations practices within Yeka sub city administration communication office. The findings may support the organization in enhancing its PR efforts and providing better service to the public. Additionally, the study can serve as a useful reference for PR practitioners to evaluate their daily work in light of public relations theories and principles. It may also encourage other researchers to explore the topic further and conduct more in depth studies in this area.

## **1.6. Scope of the Study**

Although there are thirteen sub- cities under the Addis Ababa city administration, this study was conducted in only one: Yeka sub- city. The focus of the research was to assess the public relations practices and challenges within the communication office of Yeka sub-city administration in the year 2025. Yeka sub- city was selected due to its proximity to the researcher, which facilitated easier access to data collection processes.

## **1.7 Limitations of the study**

This study has faced to certain limitations. The findings are based on data collected from only Yeka sub-city administration communication office, which may not fully represent the practices of public relations in other sub-city administration or government offices. Additionally, time constraints, and limited access to some key informants may have affected the depth of the data collected. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the current state of public relation practices within Yeka sub-city.

## CHAPTRE TWO

### 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of literature related to the practice and challenges of Public relations, particularly within government organizations. It examines the roles, functions and challenges of public relations with an emphasis on how it supports effective communication and fosters relationships between organization and the public. The chapter also discusses theoretical perspectives with particular focus on system theory, which highlights how organizations interact with environments and adapt through communication. This framework is used to understand the dynamic relationship between Yeka sub-city administration communication office and its stakeholders. Furthermore, the chapter explores existing studies and findings relevant to the Ethiopian context, offering insights that inform the current research.

#### 2.2 Definitions of Public Relations

There are many definitions of public relations that have been documented by many scholars. In this study, it is important to only focus on some definition of public relations. Public relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and co-operation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; 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 (Harlow, quoted in Wilcox et al. 1992: 7).

Public relations is essentially about positively and systematically using actions and communications to influence people's attitudes, opinions, belief, interest and behavior in a given or desired direction (e.g. Adopting good environmental behaviors as well as building lasting credibility and reputation for individuals and corporate entities like profit or non-profit organizations and even nations, states, local government or communities (Nwosu and Uffoh, 2006).

Public relations is concerned with the promotion of rapport and goodwill between persons, firms or institutions, and other persons, special publics or the community at large, through the distribution of interpretative materials, the development of neighborly interchange and assessment of public reaction(Webster, 1992).

Public Relations is the ethical and strategic management of communication and relationship in order to build and develop coalitions and policy, identify and manage issues and create messages to achieve sound outcomes within a socially responsible framework (Johnston and Zawawi,2004).

The definitions were considered working definitions for discussing public relations practice because of their conceptualization beyond the context of corporate organization. It implies that public relations practice is not strictly restricted within the corporate framework or context alone. It extends to building coalition and relationship within and outside, government circulation at various levels, community level, social institutions and faith based organization.

### **2.3 The Functions of Public Relations**

Public relation involves a diversity of functions. The people who do the work of public relations, that is PR practitioners, do different kinds of work, and they are a multitude indeed. Nevertheless, these functions are interrelated and are directed towards the achievement of a singular goal: the creation of mutual understanding between organizations and their publics.

According to the public relations society of America (2009) in its official statement on public relations”, PRSA goes on to clarify the functions of public relations as follows: Public relations help our complex, pluralistic society to reach decisions and function more effectively by contributing mutual understanding among groups and institutions. It serves to bring private and public policies into harmony. Public relations serve a wide variety of institutions in society such as business, trade unions, government agencies, voluntary associations, foundations, hospital, schools and colleges and religious institutions. To achieve their goals, these institutions must develop effective relationships with different audiences or publics such as employees, member’s customers, local communities, shareholders, and other institutions and with society at large. The management of institution needs to understand the attitudes and values of their publics in order to achieve institutional goals.

The public relations practitioner acts as a counselor to management and as a mediator, helping to translate private aims into reasonable, publicly acceptable policy and action (PRSA: 2009a). And the followings are the most salient fair terms provided at all levels;

**a) Human relations:** the job of communication is to help and promote human relation making use of it among other things, in the media be if print or electronic. There can be no mutual understanding in human relations without communication (Ibid).

**b) Empathy:** it is a feeling with the other person expressed by speech. Sympathy is feeling sorry for a person expressed by words.

**c) Persuasion:** is a process of convincing and motivating to get things done. Speech is one of the methods to a sense of human interest towards the person who is being persuaded will understand and appreciate the cause and effect of his action.

**d) Dialogue:** is a process of conversation or speech with a purpose. If involves exchanges of ideas and subsequently influencing behavior reconciliation and compromise are also generally involved (Ibid). Dialogue is a democratic, civilized and constructive weapon. It takes the form of discussion, others viewpoints should be considered and there is no place for monopoly of the conversation in dialogue.

**e) Information:** in the new information of the word, information transmission is the process of getting things done. In complex business organization, effective decisions depend up on collections, storage and supply of information. Information taking and information giving is a continuous process in an organization.

**f) To influence:** the objective of transmitting information is to change the behavior of the recipient. Communicator is aimed at influencing, persuading, motivating or activating people towards desired goals.

**g) Understanding:** the main cause for conflict in an interpersonal situation is lack of mutual understanding. The problems of communication pertain mainly to the problems of understanding people. The most important managerial function to bridge the gap is possible (Ibid).

**h) To discourage miss-information:** the objective of communication is not only to pass and exchange policies, rules, orders, procedures, and but also to avoid distortions in communication. This function includes discouraging the spread of miss-information, rumors, gossip, and release of emotional tensions by the workers and so on (Ibid).

**i) Suggestions and Complaints:** another objective is to encourage ideas and suggestions from subordinates for improvement in the product and working conditions for the reduction in the time or cost involved and for avoidance of waste of raw material

## 2.4 Public Relations Practices

Public relations are doing different activities in government and nongovernment organizations. It is management function, consultant, media relations and includes media interviews, press releases and editorials, workshops, seminars, social media marketing, special events, and public speaking engagements , produce features either news or stories in magazines, radio programs, newspapers or television. In addition to, distribution press release different media house, websites, relevant blogs (Bennett, 1996).

Therefore public relation scholars are always expected to develop the new tactic concerning the organizations communication towards to the public. According to, Oliver (2004), advised to achieve the result of PR professional four strategies. These are Research, action plan, communicating and evaluating.

**1. Research:** it is practitioners should define the problem they have to analyze and solve the conditions based on the information found. Detail observation and listening are primary methods to defining the cause. In addition, the interpreted information guides to validate the statement of the problem, and the analysis shows the way of the plan.

**2. Action plan:** it is defining the goal and objective, preparing plan of action will make in order to achieve the plan. Identifying target audience, preparing key message and media strategy, including time, budget and other essential resources should incorporate in the action plan.

**3. Communication:** it is to communicating the message in a smart process is fundamental to get a successful outcome. Hence, internalizing the objective, fitting with the need and expectations of our audience, the message plan and being aware of the situation in which the

communication takes place. Remember that, the goal is to change the thought and behavior of the target audience.

**4. Evaluation:** it is the effectiveness of the effort has been done to achieve the plan will be measured. Main points are awareness of target audience which is expressed by attitude and behavior change. The criterion and evaluation methods must be determined as the program is planned and as it evolves. Interview, questioner etc. with target audience will be methods of data gathering for the evaluation process.

## 2.5 The Roles of Public Relations Officers

Public Relation is not an all comers affair. It is a highly skilled area of knowledge and practice. The practitioner therefore needs to be conversant with the qualities required to practice the profession in addition to possessing them. To effectively practice public relations in Ethiopia therefore, the practitioner needs to attain at least the minimum technical qualities. In general, public relations professionals can be the communication managers who organize and integrate communication activates or they can be communication technicians who primary write and construct messages.

According to Broom and Smith (1979), there are four roles of public relations (PR), these are:

**1. Expert prescriber:** is similar to the role a doctor performs with a patient. These professional's mission are to diagnose PR problems and prescribe solution.

**2. Production Technician:** this role requires executing strategies with the communication tactics of newsletters, position papers, media placements, website content, speeches, blogs and social media message. Practitioners in this role are usually not involved in defining problems and developing solutions, but base their factices on the technical skill of writing.

**3. Communications facilitator:** practitioners in this role or mediators between the organization and its various publics. Their task is to promote two-way interactions so the lines of communication remain open.

**4. Problem solving facilitator:** these practitioners are part of the management function team and collaboration with other team members in tackling PR issues. Example, crisis managements, they

guide other members of the team in systematically addressing PRs matters to help the management in the preparation, interpretation, adoption and evaluation of public relations programmers and policies to undertake personal relations research that will keep the management continuously informed so that sound decisions may be made on matters to public relations policies, design an effective performance appraisal system for the use of the management to provide a current inventory of media relating to public relations in organization, undertake a programmer of education, training the staff of the public relations department to develop them, develop an effective internal and external communication system for timely integration, establish the mechanism for the administration of personal services that is delegated to the public relations department, control the PR department and presenting and implementing, all public relations policies and activities, convey and interpreting to the management information on public attitudes and views, about the company it serves, and link with the personal department on all matter relating to disseminating of internal information and the company's employee publications. (K.R. Balan).

## **2. 6 Public relations in government organizations**

Government public relations as an aspect of public relations practice are very crucial in the entronement and sustenance of good governance. As, Canel and Sanders (2011) explained government communication refers to the goals, role and practice of communication and public relations implemented by executive politicians and officials of public institutions in the service of a political rationale, and that are themselves constituted on the basis of the people's indirect or direct consent and are charged to enact their will.

Organizations goal at acquiring legitimacy for their activities, and therefore need to be willing to participate in dialogue with stakeholders and be held accountable for the decision they would make (Luoma-aho, 2013). Public relations service interventions are the desired course of actions planned the organization to achieve public relations goals. Banik, (2004) stated the need for public relations service interventions in government is required to achieve the organizational goals. In addition to, public relations in public and private sector, the public relations management has to enlist the perception and support of its workers to realize its objectives wining confidences and trusts of its shareholders, clients and suppliers and the public at large thereby full filing its internal and external obligations.

Public relations in government settings differ significantly from corporate PR, given its emphasis on transparency, accountability, and service to the public interest. Government PR is tasked with fostering public trust, facilitating dialogue between authorities and citizens, and promoting participatory governance (Lee & Lin, 2009). Effective government communication involves more than information dissemination; it requires creating genuine relationships with various publics, encouraging two-way interactions that shape both policy and service delivery. However, in many developing countries, including Ethiopia, public sector PR remains largely instrumental, with limited strategic orientation (Asnake, 2019).

## 2.7 Government public relations tools

Public relations tools implemented by the government public relations departments serve as to have two-way communications with the target audiences or customers. Based on the very nature of activities and different target group, various tools can be used (Banik, 2004). So, there are different kinds of public relation tools. Some of are:

**1. Mass Media** (newspaper, radio and television): are among the most tools used by PR professionals, because they can enjoy many people easily (Jefkins, 2004). PR professionals should always know exactly which mass media use as a tool for what message. By the way, the electronic media holds a strong impression of both the illiterate and the community that can read and write. However, the budget and focus groups need, the message prepared to communicate determines the selection of channel for PR professionals.

**2. Social Media:** now a day the world is symbolize as a small village because of internet expansion. Globalization and growth of social media played a key role in the fastest socio-economies growing (Quesinberry, 2009). Facebook is one of the main social media having nearly seven million members worldwide. Many people, especially young generation, spend their long time on this social media. They write and discuss what they see and hear in the community. Developed world PR professionals wisely utilize the social media as a primary tool to smarten up their business. Some ways are, making the news release and article readable through interesting headlines, concise and jargon free words and active voice with keen proofreading before posting. PR professionals should network themselves with social media friends particularly with mass media persons without waiting request for friendship (Polarde, 2010). This eliminates the budget

and cost of spending used by ordinary media. A systematic PR expert follows the cost-effective way of communication, social media is one of the easiest ways to achieve organization's goal.

In addition PR expert use Webpage, it is one of the expansion of internet worldwide, many organizations and individuals use own web page to communicate with stakeholders. Website potentially enables to distribute information globally within a fraction of seconds, to delivering information has been simultaneously accessing video, audio and text message with low cost. Websites with attractive format tend to be more readable than any newspaper, radio and television station. Quite busy audiences who cannot access the information from the regular mass media announce time can find the information easily anytime (Jefkins, 2004).

PR professionals are also becoming increasingly popular among those who use the web page for strategic communication. Many business enthusiasts also have a web page specialist and reporters who are keenly interested in photography and video clips along with the short and clear text. As a result, websites are widely used by different business organizations and companies particularly in civilized countries.

**3. Speech:** is one way of communicating a message to the target audience. PR professionals apply the speech in two ways, delivering it on different occasion on behalf of their organization and preparing it for those who speak out on different events. Persuading based on truth rather than demagogue and propaganda is one of the basic characteristics of responsible speech. Always considering honesty, accountability, good faith, commitment to the public interest and truthfully with a genuine concern for the well-being of listeners is liable nature of verbal communication. Identifying the need for diverse listeners, understanding the demographic and psychological background and examining own motives and commitment to respectful dialogue are critical for ethical speakers (Esenwein, 2005). Speakers carefully research topics and present their motives accurately before they deliver to the audience. Honoring the rights of the listeners to raise questions, suggest alternatives, or even disagrees based on the past and coming conditions are highly advisable for delivering a successful speech.

**4. Press Release:** is fundamental in the day to day activity of PR. News release predominantly intended to get non paid space on newspapers and an airtime on radio and television stations as well as on web page of famous national and international media. News releases are news written

by the PR that information about the organization's success, promotion, new product and other events prepared to different media. In fact, media editors reject most news releases, because they are either more exaggerated or self-promoting than having news value (D.Smith, 2002). An energetic PR produces their news release which facts and supported by memorable photograph and video. Irrelevant, overloaded, boring, and wrong addressed news release is always make the PR to lose the non-paid publicity. Relevant and newsworthiness, therefore, seem to the central requirement of the press release (Jefkins, 2004).

A well-prepared news release can catch the editor's attention and has the opportunity to publicize as prior news of the night on a television station. As the result, the organization can communicate with its targeted group of people to achieve its goal and objective. To the contrary, a weak news release cannot be used by any mass media. Rather, it will reject by the news editor and it is wasting time for the PR professional. It does not add any value to an organization business. Thus, critically understanding each media nature, the news style has been use and the work pressure of journalist is highly expected from the PR professionals to prepare best news release.

**5. Magazine:** is immediacy and frequency than newspapers. Stories written until when the magazine is distribute to audiences. Magazine producing style varies from posters and brochures. The information to be extract is different from daily quotation and designed to contain a broad range of concepts. In addition, this is one of reasons magazine retention from newspapers (D.Smith, 2002). Magazine produced within a week and one-year intervals. Mostly PR agents' magazines are not prepared in attractive ways because of its artwork, decoration and other relevant information. However, allocating enough budgets, assigning qualified human power and material needed to develop the magazine in eye-catching way. Moreover, it should focus more on imperishable information rather than timely news and news

**6. Lobbying:** is monitoring public policy making for the whole people interest; building a case in favor of that interest; and putting it privately with varying degree of pressure to public decision makers for their acceptance and support through favorable intervention. It is a modern business expression of the right to petition the independent and to seek remedy, and if done ethically and within the law, it is extremely acceptable for organizational communication. If an organization faces problem on practicing the PR advised to try persuading the government to make policy against its core values. PR lobbyists should seriously understand how specialized and extensive

their knowledge is in the areas and to persuade where the government to makes strategy adjustment (Oliver, 2004).

## 2.8 Public relation challenges in Ethiopian government organization

The challenges of public relation in government organizations are wide; one goal is that of settling what kinds of institutions count as governmental in the diverse settings of politics (Sanders, 2011). Furthermore, the complex and organizationally diverse nature of government communication is a crucial factor in the complexity of understanding government communication needs, goals and resources. There are some challenges facing that diverts the PR professions to act against the mutual benefit of the organization and the public. Some of these are;

**1. Social Media:** now a day, number of social media users is increasing continuously worldwide. In addition, information posted on social media becomes more complex and controversial than ever (Quesinberry, 2009). Scholars agree that it happened due to the diversity of attitude, knowledge, and demographics of the social media community. It is very complicated to measure the impact of social media on PR professionals.

**2. Budget:** it is also mostly challenging setback during implementing PR activities. Adjusting the need for budget ahead of starting implementing the plan and lay down pragmatic expectation based on applied programs. Also looking to external budget sources is an action of wise PR (Joseph, 2017).

**3. Lack of Credibility:** in any part of the world, the PR profession steel seen as a “propagandist” or “spin doctor” Even in our country context both the employer and the professionals themselves takes PR activity stands only to the organization`s side. In reality, public relations communicate based on truth with key audiences who affect business results, such as customers, shareholder, media analysts, policymakers, policy influencers etc. PR professionals should work to change the public`s wrong perception on PR by showing practically they stand equally for their organization and public mutual interest (Johnston, 2017).

**4. Managing Crisis:** the world is dynamic, different events happen within a minute interval. It is difficult certainly to predict why, how, and when crisis will happen in an organization. However,

PR professionals should never sleep to save their company from disasters by predicting their consequence earlier than the problem happened (Peter, 2008).

## **2.9 Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework of this study is Systems theory. The theory states that mechanical, organic and social systems (including organizations) can be defined by their interactions with their environment. There are three main systems perspectives that are usually applied in the business context mechanistic (sometimes known as closed), organismic and adaptive (the last two being examples of open systems). All three provide public relations with valuable insights Cutlip, Center and Broom (1994).

Systems theory provides a useful theoretical underpinning for thinking about the role of public relations because it stipulates that an organization's well-being (or otherwise) is dependent on establishing and maintaining relationships both within itself and with its environment. It has to adjust and adapt as both it and its environment change. Specifically, organizations are part of a social system which consists of individuals or groups of individuals (publics), such as employees, pensioners, suppliers, distributors and so on, who are all involved with it. The role of public relations is to develop and maintain relationships with these groups in order for the organization to meet its goals (Alison Theaker, 2001).

According to White, J. and Dozier, D. M. (1992) the open systems mode enables practitioners to fulfill a functional or management role where they plan and manage communication programmers systematically, counsel and are part of the dominant coalition, making policy decisions. They put it that the dominant coalition needs information to help make decisions. That information is often provided by boundary spanners, individuals within the organization who frequently interact with the organization's environment and who gather select and relay information from the environment to decision makers in the dominant coalition. Communication managers and public relations practitioners are among organizations' designated boundary spanners. Therefore, Proper application of system theory enhances public relations practice.

For public sector communication offices, such as that of Yeka sub-city administration, Systems theory emphasizes the need to maintain dynamic relationships with various stakeholders

including: citizens, media, civil society organizations, and other government bodies. Effective PR practice, therefore, involves not only the dissemination of information but also the active listening and incorporation of public input into decision-making processes. This theoretical framework is particularly pertinent in the Ethiopian context, where government institutions are under increasing pressure to demonstrate transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to citizen concerns.

While systems theory offers a valuable theoretical lens for evaluating PR in public institutions, there remains a lack of observed research on how Ethiopian local government communication offices apply (or fail to apply) open-systems principles in practice. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the PR activities of Yeka Sub city administration communication Office, assessing to what extent its communication processes reflect the adaptive, interactive characteristics of an open system.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the research design and methodologies including: research design, source of data, data collection tools, target population, sampling design and techniques, data collection method, methods of data analysis, and ethical considerations.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

A research design refers to a plan, blue print or guide for data collection and interpretation, a set of rules that enable the investigator to conceptualize and observe the problem under study, Adams and Scheveneldt (1985). In this study, descriptive research design was used. A descriptive study used more specific data gathering techniques involve various comparison groups in its attempt to produce specific and clear information regarding the problem. The rationale for this decision stems from the way in which the approach permits a cost-effective and timely research process. A descriptive research design is also valued in identifying patterns, strengths, and areas for improvement thereby, providing a solid foundation for practical recommendations and informed decision making. According to Kumar (2006) descriptive research design serves as direct sources of valuable knowledge concerning human behaviors. Furthermore, a natural way to address the study's research questions involved using a quantitative survey.

#### **3.3. Sample and sampling Techniques**

The target population of the study included all employees working within Yeka Sub-City Administration, specifically those who are engaged in public relations, media coordination, information dissemination, and related functions. Then the researcher decided to use a census sampling method due to the manageable size of the population. A census method involves collecting data from every member of the population rather than selecting a sample. This technique is particularly useful when the population size is small and accessible, as it allows for complete coverage, thus eliminating sampling error and enhancing data accuracy (Kothari,

2004). According to Zikmund et al. (2010), a census method is appropriate when the population is small and when high precision is required in understanding the entire group's characteristics.

Therefore, all (45) PR officers working in the administration office were included in the study. This method ensured that every relevant perspective within the office was captured, contributing to a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of public relations practices in the sub-city administration. Whereas, four PR managers in the communication office of Yeka sub-city were selected for the in depth interview by purposive sampling techniques because, this sampling technique helps the researcher to find those informants who have available knowledge and experience that the investigators need, are capable of reflection, are expressive, have time to be interviewed and are willing to take part in this research. And it is where the researcher includes cases or participants in the sample because the researcher believes that they warrant inclusion (Hamed, 2016).

### **3.4. Sources of Data**

Both primary and secondary sources of data were used to collect data. Primary data were collected through questionnaires distributed to respondents and interview from key informants whereas Secondary data was obtained from academic journals, books, proceedings, and the like.

### **3.5. Data Collection Tools**

Qualitative research method strives to collect, integrate, and present data from a variety of sources of evidence as part of the study Robert (2011). And it allows representing the views and perspectives of the participants in the study. Capturing participants' perspectives is a major purpose of a qualitative study.

Therefore, in order to validate the result of the research, questionnaire, in-depth interview, and document analysis were used as tools of data collection. Questionnaire surveys were presented to the selected publics and in-depth interviews were made with the selected PR managers and officers.

### 3.5.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are doubtless one of the primary sources of obtaining data in any research endeavor. However, the critical point is that when designing a questionnaire, the researcher should ensure that it is “valid, reliable and unambiguous” (Richards & Schmidt, 2002).

Therefore, both close ended and open ended questioners were distributed for each PR managers and officers of Yeka sub city administration communication office to gather information. Those data on the questionnaire has been analyzed, summarized and interpreted quantitatively.

The items of the questionnaires were mainly developed based on the research objectives and research questions. The questionnaires developed were based on a five-item Likert scale. Responses were given to each statement using a five-point Likert-type scale, for which 1: strongly agree to 5: strongly dis -agree. The responses were summed up to produce a score for the measures.

### 3.5.2 Interviews

Interview is one of the important research tools which were employed in order to get in-depth information from the respondents. According to Shneiderman and Plaisant (2005), interviews can be very productive since the interviewer can pursue specific issues of concern that may lead to focused and constructive suggestions.

In order to obtain more relevant data from the interviewee, the researcher prepared and asked questions according to the focus of the study. To this end, Flick (2006) proposes that “the different types of questions allow the researchers to deal more explicitly with the pre suppositions they bring to the interview in relation to aspects of the interview.

Therefore, the researcher made in-depth interview with the PR manager of Yeka sub city administration communication office and other three public relation officers with high contributions in the office. And additionally qualitative data analysis and interpretation have been used on the data obtained from conducted interview with managers and officers and from open ended questioners as well.

### **3.6. Target Population**

The study's target demographics were selected PR practitioners of Yeka Sub City Administration Communication Office. As a result, the study focused on assessing the practice of public relations in Yeka Sub City Administration Communication Office in focus.

### **3.7 Method of Data Analysis**

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 was used to analyze the data collected quantitatively. Tables were created from the data gathered. Representations using tables used to ensure easy and quick interpretation of data. In order to examine respondents' opinion descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage, mean standard deviation, T value and P-value respectively have been thoroughly used. Qualitative data from interviews were transcribed and analyzed thematically. This combination allowed for a richer interpretation of the findings.

### **3.8 Validity and reliability**

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, several measures were taken. The content and face validity of the questioner were established through experts reviews and a pilot test with 10 participants, which helped refine the clarity and relevance of the items. The reliability of the questioner was confirmed with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.85, which indicates high internal consistency. For the in-depth interviewees credibility was enhanced through triangulation on with questioner data, peer review of the interview guide, and member checking where the four interview participants verified the accuracy of their responses.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

Above all the student researcher tries to conduct the study based on professional as well as the basic principles of research. The researcher identified or presents the respondents personal details and response with their consent and agreement. Ethical issues grouped into informed consent procedures, dishonesty, confidentiality towards participants or sponsors and protecting the anonymity and privacy of research participants (Sarantakos, 2005). Based on the basic principles, the researcher proposed a set of ethical and moral procedure and informed the

participants just before in depth interview and filling out the questionnaire. The participants were informed that information obtained from them remains confidential.

Besides the respondents further informed that their names will not be written or exposed on report and will used in connection with any of the information they reveal. The researcher will convey the purpose of the study to the proposed respondents as per standard research requirements. The researcher avoid deceptive practices and respect indigenous cultures as well as discloses sensitive information. In sum, the researcher tries to be honest, genuine and free from unnecessary bias as long as problem solving and relevant research undertaking is concerned (Creswell, 2011).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter intends to reveal the findings and statistical analysis used to evaluate the research question that has been established in earlier chapters. Subsequent to the data screening process and also the chapter reports the results of the screening for errors in the sample and the procedural check on the instruments utilized. With the help of the preliminary and analysis of the results, the researcher tries to investigate on the topic entitled “Assessment of the Practice of Public Relation: The Case of Yeka Sub -City Administration Communication office”. Therefore, this chapter has two parts: the first part deals with the characteristics of the respondents and the second part presents the analysis and interpretation of the main data.

To this end, both quantitative and qualitative data obtained through questionnaire, open ended of the questionnaire items and interview were used to answer the basic research questions. Due to their large size, respondents were selected purposely and included in the sample. Accordingly, all 45 PR officers of Yeka sub city administration communication office and from different Weredas under the sub city were participated in the study. The number of participants involved in the study and sampling proportion was statistically representative and adequate to make the analysis and inference as well. The respondents were provided with 45 questionnaires (both close& open ended). Accordingly, 41 (91.11%) of them scientifically selected from the sample respondents and returned the questionnaire just in time while the remaining 4 (8.89 %) of the respondents did not returned back the questionnaire for various reasons.

The collected data were analyzed by both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage, mean, standard deviation, T value and P-value, respectively were also undertaken by using the “Statistical Package for the Social Sciences” (SPSS) version 25 software. Since the objective of this study was to understand the issues related to the practice of public relation: The Case of Yeka Sub- City Administration Communication office in focus. Initially the responses to questionnaire with the sample respondents were quantitatively analyzed whereas, responses gained from open ended items and interview were

qualitatively analyzed and the central themes mentioned in the questionnaire as open items in concerning the research questions were identified.

## 4.2. Respondents profile

The profiles of the respondents in this research were included gender composition, age composition, educational level, and work experience. In this study, 45 respondents were participated. But 41 respondents fill the questioner return and the interview as well. The rest 4 participants didn't respond the questioner by their own different reasons.

**Table 1: Gender Composition of Respondents**

<b>Gender Composition of Respondents</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Male	35	85.4
Female	6	14.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Survey Data 2025

The gender split of the respondents from Yeka Sub City Administration indicates gender imbalance towards male representation, where males accounted for 85.4% (35 respondents) compared to only 14.6% (6 respondents) for females. In order to more effectively promote inclusiveness and meaningfully address the interests of all segments of the society, it is essential that the Sub City Administration go out of its way to make its respondent population more representative in future public opinion polls and public outreach efforts so that male and female opinions are brought into communication planning, policy-making, and overall public relations activities.

**Table 2: Age Composition of Respondents**

<b>Age Composition of Respondents</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
26-30 Years of Age	29	70.7
31-35 Years of Age	9	22.0
36-40 Years of Age	3	7.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Survey Data 2025

The age of the respondents was just 26 years and older, whereas none of the participants was below 26 years old. That is, individuals aged younger than 26 were excluded from the study or were not among the respondents. Because 70.7% of the respondents were aged between 26 and 30, it can be safely assumed to be adequate sampling of the young adult market within this range, but no information is available regarding the opinions or activity of the younger cohort under 26. The question left is: were there simply no active under-26s in the industry, or was this a product of sampling limitations? The fact that 70.7% of them belong to the very young adult age group is of utmost importance. It means a youth workforce which can carry with it innovative thinking, information literacy, and contemporary social awareness which can help in innovative communication strategies in the trade.

This youth dominated trend among respondent's means that the current practice of public relations can be youth-dominated to a very large extent. While this can be responsive and innovative, it would be much better with the incorporation of mature wisdom. Experience will often result in strategic thinking, insider wisdom, and advanced comprehension, all of which are critical for effective public relations and outreach in the community. Therefore, the industry needs to balance the blend harnessing the innovative thinking of youth with the strategic acumen of experienced professionals. The blend can create more powerful communications strategies and

broader social engagement. In sum, the dominance of the 26-30 age groups among the sample identifies the youth's significant contribution to the sector but also indicates the potential limitations with the absence of mature, experienced practitioners.

**Table 3: Educational level of Respondents**

<b>Education and Training</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Diploma	16	39.0
BA/BSC	19	46.3
MA/MSc & above	6	14.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Survey Data 2025

The data represent the educational level of the communication practice staff of Yeka Sub City Administration, indicating a comprehensive team and comprised primarily of staff with a higher education background. With 46.3% possessing BA/BSC and 39.0% with a diploma, the majority of members in the communication team possess a foundational knowledge foundation regarding rules of communication, crucial for effective public relations. Specifically of interest is the fact that only 14.6% hold an MA/MSc or higher, demonstrating a potential shortcoming in highly developed strategic communications competencies which would support the administration's public relations effort. This breakdown represents the necessity of ongoing education and training in public relations practice so as to better equip communication practitioners with the present-day knowledge sets and skill competencies, consequently guiding the administration's public relations interactions with stakeholders more effectively.

**Table 4: Work Experience of Respondents**

<b>Work Experience</b>		
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Below 1 years</b>	6	14.6
<b>2-7 years</b>	28	68.3
<b>8-14 years</b>	4	9.8
<b>Above 15 years</b>	3	7.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Survey Data 2025

The distribution of work experience among the communication practitioners in Yeka Sub City Administration reveals an over 68.3% majority concentration of those with an experience of between 2 and 7 years, representing a relatively experienced but still developing category of professionals most likely very conversant with the operational complexities of the industry. This middle-range experience means that the communications office is favored with an employee base who, can understand and steer public relations activities effectively, in addition to reacting to new trends and technology. The realization that the relatively low proportion of under-one-year-experienced respondents (14.6%) signifies a conservative or selective hiring practice, possibly with respect to quality and experience with local government nuances. Conversely, the relatively low percentage of highly experienced personnel with over eight years' experience (17.1%) could point to problems such as retention, senior vacancies, or a potential brain drain that could influence the long-term strategic capacity of the office. Generally, such an experience distribution emphasizes the requirement of life-long professional development and strategic talent holding to ensure public relations practice in the local government is sustainable and efficient, especially since communication plays a big role in ensuring transparency, trust, and public engagement.

### 4. 3. Main Questions

**Table 5: One- sample statistics on the contributions of PR departments with regard to facilitating communication within the internal and external publics of the organization**

Contributions of the PR departments to the Publics of the organization	One-Sample Statistics			Test Value = 3					
				T	Df	p-value	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation					Lower	Upper
PR practitioners utilize effective communication tools to effectively convey information.	41	2.07	1.127	11.782	40	.000	2.073	1.72	2.43
The practitioners actively seek public suggestions	41	2.10	.917	14.652	40	.000	2.098	1.81	2.39
The PR department is assessing its promptness in addressing public comments, suggestions, and complaints and taking corrective action.	41	2.00	.742	17.268	40	.000	2.000	1.77	2.23
The PR department works towards creating common understanding with its publics.	41	2.17	.738	18.826	40	.000	2.171	1.94	2.40
Your organization has adequate information centers that provide timely information to external publics.	41	2.05	.999	13.135	40	.000	2.049	1.73	2.36

Source: Survey Data 2025

The function of the PR department in facilitating communication within internal and external publics can be addressed through a critical analysis of the Yeka Sub City Administration statistics. The low average scores of the respondents, for example, 2.07 when rating the effectiveness of communication tools and 2.10 on the active soliciting of public suggestions, indicate a broad area for improvement. The results show that the PR practitioners cannot convey information and engage the public in a meaningful way. This reveals a potential gap between the organization and the stakeholders, indicating that the intention to communicate may be present, but the communication itself is less than adequate. The high p-values (all less than 0.001) also contribute to the validity of these findings, suggesting that these limitations on communications strategies are not anecdotal in nature but a real deficit that needs strategic development.

Furthermore, the assessment of the responsiveness of the department in terms of handling public comments, suggestions, and complaints gave a mean score of 2.00, which is quite alarming. This result calls for an even more active attitude towards the handling of public relations. The organization appears not to be adequately evaluating and considering community feedback that, if unaddressed, may result in dissatisfaction and lack of trust from its stakeholders. Good public relations preferably constitute a two-way dialogue where the public also gets heard and valued, yet the results show high disparity in these expectations. The lower mean score suggests a lack of timely and appropriate action according to public feedback, indicating a fundamental flaw in the operational framework of the PR department that needs to be enhanced for greater community engagement.

Finally, while a somewhat higher average of 2.17 was produced by the PR department's efforts to build mutual understanding with its publics and information centers which received a score of 2.05, these percentages still indicate a lack of effective communication programs. The slightly above-average scores indicate that some form of engagement exists but also the failure of the current communication infrastructure to meet the informational demands of external publics. The capacity of the organization to provide timely and accessible information is critical in building trust and credibility dimensions central to successful public relations. It is therefore necessary that Yeka Sub City Administration makes a general review of its PR activities with an aim to consolidate communication channels, be more sensitive to public feedback, and make

information dissemination effective and efficient to foster enhanced relations with all concerned stakeholders.

**Table 6: One-Sample Statistics on duties and responsibilities of the PR practitioners**

Activities of the PR practitioners	One-Sample Statistics			Test Value = 3					
								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	p-value	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
PR professionals play a vital role in promoting mutual understanding and benefits for both internal and external publics within an organization.	41	2.15	.792	17.342	40	.000	2.146	1.90	2.40
The PR practitioners actively working to establish a positive image in the minds of the external public.	41	2.49	1.028	15.501	40	.000	2.488	2.16	2.81
PR practitioners play a crucial role in establishing relationship between managements and the community.	41	2.15	.654	21.006	40	.000	2.146	1.94	2.35
The public relations activities	4	2.80	1.145	15.68	40	.00	2.80	2.44	3.17

with public interest are ensured.	1			6		0	5		
PR practitioners attempts to correct misunderstandings about the communication office and goes to gain the favorable opinion of the community.	4	2.66	.883	19.26	40	.00	2.65	2.38	2.94
	1			9		0	9		

**Source:** Survey Data 2025

The function and work of PR practitioners, in this case of the Yeka Sub City Administration, play a significant role in enabling understanding and communication between an organization and its publics. The results from the statistics show that PR practitioners are perceived to play a major role in fostering mutual understanding, yet the mean score of 2.15 suggests that there is a bit of room for improvement in the degree to which this function is perceived to be carried out. A t-value of 17.342 and a p-value of 0.000 indicate that there is a statistically significant difference from the test value of 3, and this indicates that the current practices may be lagging behind stakeholders' expectations in terms of creating mutual understanding. A standard deviation of .792 indicates variation in the responses, which means that while some believe that there is a significant role played by PR practitioners, others may not be so certain of these contributions.

In addition, the evidence supports that PR practitioners are involved in building a positive public image, as indicated by the mean score of 2.49. The strong statistical support with the t-value of 15.501 and p-value of 0.000 indicates the importance of this function. However, the mean score below the expected value suggests perceptions of their performance can be improved. This could indicate difficulties on the part of PR practitioners to project messages that appeal to and positively affect the external public in a consistent manner. It is important for these practitioners to plan their messaging and outreach activities so that they are attuned to public values and perceptions in order to maximize their overall effect.

Aside from creating a good image, PR practitioners are also tasked with developing relationships between society and management, as well as explaining misunderstandings that may arise. The

average rate of 2.15 for the function in developing relationships confirms the issues faced, which are consistent with average rates for other responsibilities as well. Interestingly, the highest mean score (2.80) is the one that concerns their activities in maintaining public interest at the center of their activities, suggesting that while there are inherent challenges, the commitment to public interest exemplified through these activities is welcome. Therefore, enhancing the strategic direction of public relations and community engagement operations and addressing the gaps in perception uncovered could lead to a more favorable attitude towards the communication office among the citizens, and the practitioners' mandate would be more effectively fulfilled.

**Table 7: One-Sample Statistics on challenges of PR practitioners in the communication office**

Challenges of PR practitioners	One-Sample Statistics			Test Value = 3					
								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	p-value	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
The PR department faced difficulties in establishing and maintaining connections with significant stakeholders and influencers.	41	1.98	.689	18.366	40	.000	1.976	1.76	2.19
There is a problem with the resources and budget allocated for PR activities.	41	2.34	1.334	11.236	40	.000	2.341	1.92	2.76
Aligning PR efforts with the	4	2.22	.690	20.60	40	.00	2.22	2.00	2.44

overall organizational goals and objectives can be challenging.	1			7		0	0		
PR practitioners face difficulties in effectively managing and integrating their activities with other marketing and communication functions.	4 1	2.17	.738	18.82 6	40	.00 0	2.17 1	1.94	2.40
PR practitioners have encountered challenges in effectively utilizing social media and digital platforms for PR purposes.	4 1	2.46	1.120	14.08 1	40	.00 0	2.46 3	2.11	2.82

**Source:** Survey Data 2025

The analysis of the Yeka Sub City Administration communication office data reveals several critical issues facing Public Relations (PR) practitioners. The mean ratings of the items show prevalent perception of difficulty in several areas of PR practice. For instance, the query on difficulties in establishing and maintaining relationships with significant influencers and stakeholders registered an average of 1.98, a far cry from the neutral value of 3. This indicates there is general consensus among practitioners that connecting with key stakeholders is an unresolved issue that hinders effective communication strategies. The high t-value and significant p-value (both  $p < 0.001$ ) also indicate the necessity to overcome these relationship-building issues, since establishing strong relationships is a key to the success of any public relations campaign.

The second major challenge that is evident is the inadequate resource and budget allocation for PR operations, which has a mean score of 2.34. The score indicates that practitioners report a serious lack of required support, which is very essential in attaining successful PR campaigns. Poor resources and funding can potentially stifle innovative and strategic possibilities, where

practitioners cannot meet their communication goals. The statistical analysis reveals a very high degree of significance ( $p < 0.001$ ) for this question, observing that budget constraints are not only a problem but a fundamental limitation hindering the overall performance of the communication office. Practitioners have less ability to reach others and promote the goals of the organization when they do not have sufficient resources.

Also, the problems in coordinating PR activities with overall organizational goals, as shown by the mean score of 2.22, and the difficulties in effectively coordinating with other marketing and communications functions (mean score of 2.17) indicate systemic issues within the communication system. These rankings suggest a prevailing trend of detachment, where PR initiatives are unable to seamlessly interface with organizational objectives or marketing strategies, hence diluting their aggregate efficiency.

A mean rating of 2.46 how hard it is to harness social media and online channels also show the increasing imperative of PR specialists acquiring enhanced digital competency. In most cases, the message conveys that in order for the Yeka Sub City Administration's communications office to achieve effectiveness, it must overcome all these intricate issues from stakeholder engagement and limited funds to alignment with strategy and integration with technology.

#### **4.4. Interview Data Analysis**

In the following section, the data secured through interviewee and the row data were thematically, organized in themes and analyzed in the form of narration. Key informants from sample respondents were asked to answer or give their suggestion.

##### **1. How do you define the duties and responsibilities of the PR profession in your sub-city?**

According to the participants (R1 & R3) April, 2025, the duties and responsibilities of the PR profession in their sub-city are presented as follows based on their view and of course their practice.

*The PR field is an important in linking government and the public. Some of its duties involve spreading information, identifying issues within society through public opinion, obtaining people's trust through effective communication, announcing the agendas of*

*governments, producing news releases based on publics and government opinions, and making complete reports and reviews of work performance.*

*(Personal Interview participant 1&3, April 2025)*

Other Public relation officers (R2 & R4) said the following:

*As we Public relation officers highly involved as abridge, that connects two parties the government and the public. Therefore doing action research is our duties that help us to easily discover the problems of the public and to deliberate it with the concerned bodies, that helps to build trust and prepare nomination news mostly sourced from the government.*

*(Personal interview participant 2&4, April 2025)*

From the above results, we can understand that there are different points of views on duties and responsibilities which enable PR practitioners to achieve a functional or management role where they plan and manage communication programmers systematically. The information is often provided by boundary spanners, individuals within the organization who frequently interact with the organization's environment and who gather select and relay information from the environment for decision makers in the dominant coalition. Communication managers and public relations practitioners are among organizations' designated boundary spanners. Therefore, Proper application of system theory which is selected as theoretical framework of this research enhances public relations practice in the organization.

## **2. How do you perceive your efforts and contributions to communication in PR concerning establishing and maintaining relationships with the organization's publics?**

In relation to perceiving efforts and contributions to communication of PR concerning in establishing and maintaining relationships with the organization's publics, the first respondent (R1) who is a PR coordinator in the sub –city communication office said the following during personal interview.

*In this case, our communication skill and activity is important for identifying major public issues, enlightening government tasks, disclosing issues related with bad*

*governance, and addressing administrative matters in advance. It also ensures the public to recognize what is happening during the planning and implementation phase, to engage the public in policy implementation process and the government development plans.*

*(Personal Interview participant 1, April 2025)*

Public relation manager (R2) added that:

*All our activities and efforts rely in establishing and maintaining reputable relationship with the organization's publics. Therefore, it is well-known that professional practice of PR brought various opportunities especially in creating positive images of the sub city by involving in any activates of the government that builds trust and sustainability to the public.*

*(Personal Interview participant 2, April 2025)*

### **3. What challenges do public relations practitioners encounter in your office?**

To explore the particular challenges of public relation practice in yeka sub city, the above question was asked for each of the public relation managers.

Then, PR coordinator (R1) of the communication office reflects the following:

*Challenges include lack of practical experience, political influence, lack of proper responsiveness to public concern, lack of trust, blending of administration duties and political agendas, lack of qualified PR experts in all fields, primarily top down communication (one-way communication) and inconvenient working environments are major issues we face as drawbacks.*

*(Personal Interview participant 2, April 2025)*

Other PR managers (R2 &3) shared similar ideas as follows:

*PR managers have faced countless challenges in exploit different tasks. For instance, shortage of resources, negative attitude of the public, destructive attitude of management bodies to the PR practitioners, lack of professionalism, imbalanced distribution of benefits, opposition from the public to share information due to fear, and incapability to change administrative attitudes which reduces trust and loyalty by the public.*

*(Personal Interview participant 2, &3 April 2025)*

Regarding to the challenges of PR practitioners, the last interviewee (PR4) has also said the following:

*Apart from theory, some administrators and other staff members of the organization do not understand the professional roles of PR practitioners. They considered PR practitioners as only messenger or information provider to the directors and outsiders respectively. The profession itself considered to be none-core process in organizational placement. Therefore, PR practitioners considered to be impractical profession.*

*(Personal Interview participant 4 April 2025)*

The study also highlighted the influence of organizational culture and political considerations on PR practice. Communication activities are often directed by higher-level officials, with an emphasis on promoting positive images of government performance. As one interviewee observed, “Sometimes we are told what to say or publish, regardless of what citizens are actually saying or experiencing.” This top-down culture discourages open dialogue and limits the scope for transparent, citizen-centered communication. Moreover, fear of political repercussions may inhibit staff from actively seeking or addressing public criticism.

#### **4. What mechanisms does your department use to build relationships with the public and stakeholders?**

In this regard all the respondents in the interview session agreed with the following mechanisms commonly used as a key communication methods which, has been already implemented by and also the researcher checked it through document analysis at the time of interview:

*We keep relationships intact by ensuring mutual comprehension and effective communication. This includes preparing timely work training, taking online courses, and sharing -experiences with both external and internal publics. We employ various instruments of communication like websites (Telegram, Facebook, YouTube), printed media (broachers, magazines, newspapers), and mass media (AMN, EBC, FANA...) in order to communicate with various categories of target populations. We disseminate information in popular formats, engage with public complaint and respond back, and collect data from various sources.*

*(Personal Interview participants 1, 2, 3 & 4 April 2025)*

The study also found that although Yeka Sub City Administration has established official social media accounts, their use remains limited and largely unidirectional. Posts typically consist of event announcements or government messages, with little effort to engage citizens in dialogue. One interviewee noted, “We do post on Facebook, but we don’t have a dedicated team to manage comments or respond to public questions.” The absence of an interactive digital strategy undermines the potential of these platforms to serve as effective tools for two-way communication and environmental scanning, key elements of open-system PR.

#### **5. How effective are your current public relations activities in maintaining good relationships with your publics?**

As it is explained by the first participant (PR1);

*The current public relations activities in maintaining good relationships with the publics of the organizations is so effective especially in building common understandings through using different public relations communication tools like websites, printed medias ,and mass*

*medias. In this way, we build sustainable interactions with the public confidently. And also the PR practitioners are now highly minimizing human man power and budget to address information's to the public.*

*(Personal Interview participant 1 April 2025)*

On the other hand the rest of the respondents (R2, R3 &R4) revealed their views as follows:

*The success of our PR efforts is heavily reliant on the particular issue at stake. Certain efforts effectively facilitate communication and enhance the sub-city's reputation among internal and external publics. Others are not as effective because of government intervention, the requirement of qualified staff, budget limitations, and other reasons. It should be noted that although PR practitioners seek to balance the government and public's interest, mostly practitioners tend to find themselves in support of governmental issues and agendas.*

*(Personal Interview participants 2, 3, & 4 April 2025)*

## **6. How does your department address complaints and comments from the external public?**

In addressing complains and comments from the public, all participants (R1, R2, R3 &, R4) indicated that, the communication office built illustrious system for all sector offices in a distinguished way, and the researcher also observed it during the interview time.

Above all the following are clear reveals from the respondents;

*We have established some techniques of gathering feedback from both internal and external publics. They involve conducting surveys to ascertain public interest and opinions, using our websites for commentaries, which is highly helped us to get publics suggestion in unrestricted and without frustration, developing suggestion boxes in all the offices in the sub-city, and consolidating meetings for public debates.*

*(Personal Interview participants 1, 3, & 4 April 2025)*

The interview analysis clearly indicates that the Yeka sub-city administration communication office predominantly employs a one-way communication approach, focusing on disseminating information rather than engaging in interactive dialogue with its publics. According to Systems Theory, organizations function optimally as open systems that maintain continuous feedback loops with their environment. This two-way communication is essential for an organization to adapt to changing stakeholder needs and foster mutual understanding. The Communication office's reliance on one-way messaging reflects a closed-system tendency, limiting its capacity to respond to citizen feedback or environmental changes effectively. This finding suggests that the office is not fully leveraging the adaptive and dynamic nature of open systems as described by Systems Theory, which may undermine its ability to build trust and legitimacy among its constituents. Addressing this gap by institutionalizing feedback channels and promoting two-way communication could enhance the office's responsiveness and align its practices more closely with the principles of effective public relations.

**7. What is your assessment of your department's activities in relation to the interests of your internal and external publics with major weaknesses and challenges?**

Two of the Public relations managers (PR1 & PR 4) have said the following during personal interview:

*In relation to the department's activities to the interests of their internal and external publics, can be considering as weaknesses and challenges. PR officers and practitioners in our department are from the area of language and literature, journalism, public relations, and communications backgrounds, which make them capable of carrying out*

*various tasks. And also now a day's technology plays a vital role to improve performance in working areas. Therefore, they can handle tasks by updating their awareness to fit to the position they are working in.*

On the other hand other respondents (R3&R4) come up with the challenges as presented below:

*However, graduated from related areas and being familiar with the tasks and duties of PR activates give opportunities, the difference between theoretical and practical implementation, especially in Africa, proves to be problematic. Lack of veteran professionals and a structured working environment slows down effective utilization of PR activities of a practitioner. Additionally, there is no individual PR expert usually in each office; instead, tasks are typically assigned to departmental executives who may be far from the area.*

*(Personal Interview participants 1, 2, 3, & 4 April 2025)*

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the summary of major findings of the study, the conclusion drawn based on the major findings, and recommendations that are forwarded based on the conclusions arrived at.

#### 5.2 Summary of findings

This study tries to assess the practice and challenges of public relations in the case of Yeka sub city administration communication office. In this regard the status, opportunities and challenges of PR practitioners are specifically examined. Most of the data reported is based on the findings of the research. Accordingly, the sample respondents were forwarded their opinions and data was analyzed accordingly.

As to the major findings of the study, as many issues raised during discussion as well as responses from the data collection instruments the sample respondents were forwarded the following views.

The analysis of the Yeka Sub City Administration's public relations unit illustrates significant demographic observations, such as gender balance, age diversity, and level of educational achievement. There is a significant gender imbalance with an overwhelming majority of male respondents, which underrepresents female perspectives that are crucial for addressing the diversity of needs in the community. Furthermore, the group is biased towards youth made up mainly of young professionals who introduce fresh ideas and understanding of the digital environment that are beneficial, though too often wanting in the sage advice necessary to maintain constructive formative debates. This demographic setup requires a more balanced arrangement that allows for greater female input and experiences across different ages to optimize the effectiveness of the group.

The findings further indicate that even though the academic qualification of the communication team is strong, with the majority having bachelor's degrees and diplomas, there exist a significant

gap in higher-level strategic communication abilities. The predominance of middle-level experts with medium experience levels suggests a strong foundation but presents space for concern regarding maintenance and development of higher-level staff in the administration. Addressing these talent dynamics through initiatives that encourage further education, enable professional growth, and diversify the demographic composition of the team will be essential to the improvement of the effectiveness and inclusivity of public relations efforts.

The results of this study reveal several structural and operational challenges that hinder the practice of effective public relations within Yeka sub-city administration. Main among these are inadequate financial and human resources, as the communication office is often understaffed and lacks specialized PR professionals. Furthermore, political considerations frequently influence communication priorities, leading to a focus on promoting favorable images of government officials rather than facilitating open dialogue with citizens.

In addition, areas of major deficits are present within the PR function's communication competency, as revealed by low mean scores across all survey items. Ineffectiveness has been identified, as reflected by respondents, in communication materials as well as soliciting the public's views. This manifests incongruity between the organizations' communication plan and its enactment. With failures identified in fostering relationships with influencers and problems facing resource allocation, these findings confirm strongly a rethink of strategy, which the organization desperately needs to undertake. By enhancing organizational goals alignment and collaboration among departments, the PR team can more efficiently serve the public by ensuring its outreach is both effective and aligned with stakeholders' interests with whom it intends to connect.

This study has demonstrated that while Yeka sub-city administration communication Office undertakes various PR activities, its practices remain largely transactional and media-driven, with limited emphasis on two-way, adaptive communication. The office faces significant challenges, including resource limitations, political influence, and cultural barriers, which hinder its ability to function as an open system in line with Systems Theory. Addressing these gaps is essential to enhancing the effectiveness of government communication and fostering stronger public trust.

In conclusion, the study shows an imperative need for the Yeka Sub City Administration PR department to reform its communication strategies, budget distribution, and organizational alignment. By addressing the issues, the department will improve its effectiveness in public communication with internal and external publics, which in turn will have a positive impact on the overall perception and trust towards its activities.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The following conclusions were made based on the findings of the study and the evidences allow us to conclude that, the practice of public relations: The Case of Yeka sub city administration communication office were analyzed and concluded as follows.

In conclusion, the findings of the research indicate areas of change for the Yeka Sub City Administration's public relations department. Demographic imbalances observed in the gender gap and age representation indicate that there is indeed a need for a more inclusive approach that employs a wider range of thought. Furthermore, the gaps in more mature strategic communications and veteran worker retention show that inclusive recruitment and professional development ought to be priorities. By fixing these demographic deficits, the government can ensure it uses its public relations campaign at an optimal rate, with representation by diverse groups of voices included and engaged within communications strategy.

Also, the study indicates deep gaps in the current communication competence of the PR department, with poor effectiveness ratings and difficulties in motivating stakeholders. To bridge the gap between intentions and outcomes in communications, there needs to be a strategic overhaul by focusing on aligning PR functions with broader organizational goals. By investing in the capabilities of PR professionals through training and resources, the administration can build a better-functioning and more robust system of communications. This transformation will not only improve the outreach of the administration but also trust and participation from the community, ultimately resulting in a more responsible and responsive public service.

## 5.4. Recommendations

The findings of this study are believed to offer several recommendations for practice. The implications may highlight areas for intervention aimed at assessment of the practice of public relations: The Case of Yeka Sub City Administration Communication Office. As we think of improving the practice of public relations and the following recommendations are made on the basis of the research findings and the conclusion.

- ❖ The management should implement targeted initiatives for increasing the number of women in the public relations team. Some of these are mentorship programs, leadership training for women, and active recruitment targeting gender equity. With a more gender-equitable team composition, the management can be certain of a broader representation of opinions that better responds to the interests of the community.
- ❖ In order to fill the gap in high-level strategic communication competencies, the management should create continuous professional development opportunities for the PR team. This can be through workshops, training, and certification in high-level communication strategies, stakeholder relations, and crisis communication. By sponsoring staff members to pursue higher education qualifications or specialized training, their competencies will be enhanced and the competency of the entire team will be enriched.
- ❖ Invest in new communication equipment and channels that allow the administration to communicate more effectively with internal and external stakeholders. Establish routine feedback mechanisms, such as surveys and focus groups, to allow the team to access community attitudes and opinions so that communication activity is responsive and effective.
- ❖ To strengthen PR practice in Yeka Sub City, several concrete steps are recommended. First, the administration should invest in professional training for communication staff, equipping them with the skills necessary for strategic, interactive PR. Second, the office should develop a comprehensive communication strategy grounded in Systems Theory

principles, emphasizing feedback collection, environmental scanning, and adaptive messaging. Third, leveraging digital platforms more effectively can provide new opportunities for two-way engagement with citizens. Finally, promoting a broader organizational culture of transparency and responsiveness will be critical to aligning PR practices with the expectations of an open, democratic society.

- ❖ PR team success relies on its alignment with the overall organizational objectives of the Yeka Sub City Administration. Establishing regular communication lines and joint projects between the PR team and other departments will promote an integrated approach that supports the overall mission of the administration. This can include joint planning sessions, shared objectives, and cross-functional teams for combined outreach activities.
  
- ❖ To effectively bridge the resource gaps in the PR department, the management must develop a long-term resource allocation plan that will involve investing in people, training, and technology. Generating additional funds or reallocating available resources in the direction of developing competencies within the department will allow the team to develop impactful messaging and productive engagement with the target stakeholders. Regular assessment of the resource needs will ensure that the PR team can grow and thrive in a continuously changing communications landscape.

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Experience            < 1 years             2-7 years             8-14             >15 years           

**Part II: Survey Questionnaire**

The questionnaire focuses on evaluating the practice of public relations in Yeka Sub-City Administration communication office.

Please put a “√” mark in the box which reflects your agreement.

1: Strongly agree      2: Agree      3: Neutral      4: Disagree      5: Strongly disagree

**A. Questionnaire related to contributions of the PR department with regard to facilitating communication within the internal and external publics of the organization.**

No	Contributions of the PR departments	SA	A	N	DA	SD
1	PR practitioners utilize effective communication tools to effectively convey information.					
2	The practitioners actively seek public suggestions					
3	The PR department is assessing its promptness in addressing public comments, suggestions, and complaints and taking corrective action.					
4	The PR department works towards creating common understanding with its publics.					
5	Your organization has adequate information centers that provide timely information to external publics.					

**B. Questionnaire related to duties and responsibilities of the PR practitioners**

No	Activities of the PR practitioners	SA	A	N	DA	SD
1	PR professionals play a vital role in promoting mutual understanding and benefits for both internal and external publics within an organization.					
2	The PR practitioners actively working to establish a					

	positive image in the minds of the external public.					
3	PR practitioners play a crucial role in establishing relationship between managements and the community.					
4	The public relations activities with public interest are ensured.					
5	PR practitioners attempts to correct misunderstandings about the communication office and goes to gain the favorable opinion of the community.					

**C. Questions related to challenges of PR practitioners in the communication office**

No	Challenges of PR practitioners	SA	A	N	DA	SD
1	The PR department faced difficulties in establishing and maintaining connections with significant stakeholders and influencers.					
2	There is a problem with the resources and budget allocated for PR activities.					
3	Aligning PR efforts with the overall organizational goals and objectives can be challenging.					
4	PR practitioners face difficulties in effectively managing and integrating their activities with other marketing and communication functions.					
5	PR practitioners have encountered challenges in effectively utilizing social media and digital platforms for PR purposes.					

**Open ended questionnaires**

1. What obstacles do you face in staying up-to-date with the latest PR trends and best practices?

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2. What measures do you take to continuously evaluate and improve your PR practices??

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## APPENDIX II

**Addis Ababa University  
College of Social Sciences Arts and Humanities**

**School of Media and Communication  
Department of Public Relations and Strategic Communication  
Interview items responded by key informants  
Dear public relation managers,**

These interview questions are prepared basically to solicit information from the public relation managers aims to gather information on the practice of public relations in Yeka Sub City Administration communication and give possible recommendations after assign the public relation activities and practices. The information will be used academically and kept confidential.

### **1. Personal biography**

- A. How long have you been working in the sub city?
- B. How long have you been working in your current position?
- C. Have you ever assumed any other position in the department other than your current position?
- D. What is your level of education?

### **2. Interview questions**

- 1. How do you define the duties and responsibilities of the PR profession in your sub-city?
- 2. How do you perceive your efforts and contributions to communication in PR concerning establishing and maintaining relationships with the organization's publics?
- 3. What challenges do public relations practitioners encounter in your office?
- 4. What mechanisms does your department use to build relationships with the public and stakeholders?
- 5. How effective are your current public relations activities in maintaining good relationships with your publics?
- 6. How does your department address complaints and comments from the external public?
- 7. What is your assessment of your department's activities in relation to the interests of your internal and external publics? Please identify any major weaknesses and challenges.