



ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION

*Assessing the Role of Media Relations in Public Mobilization: The Case of the
Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam*

By: Alemseged Zewdu

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirement for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Public Relations and Strategic Communication**

Addis Ababa. Ethiopia

June, 2020

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Advisor: Dr. Amanuel Gebru

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DECLARATION

I, Alemseged Zewdu, hereby declare that the thesis work entitled, *Assessing the Role of Media Relations in Public Mobilization: The Case of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam*, submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Communication to Addis Ababa University School of Journalism and Communication, Department of Public Relations and Strategic Communication, is the outcome of my own effort and study and that all sources of materials used for the study have been duly acknowledged. The matter embodied in this thesis work has not been submitted for any degree in this or any other university to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Alemseged Zewdu, entitled *Assessing the Role of Media Relations in Public Mobilization: The Case of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam*; and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Communication complies with the regulations of the University and notes the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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Examiner _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Advisor _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Chair of Department or Graduate Coordinator

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ABSTRACT

Media relations is basically working with media. It is a specialized branch of public relations aiming at building relationships with media in seeking coverage of news. Similarly, journalists need public relations officers or directors as the source of their news package. And this relationship is crucial in pursuing their job well on both sides. The main focus of the study is to assess the media relations role of the National Council for the Coordination of Public Mobilization for the Construction of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam Public Relations and Media Communication Directorate. The study employed mixed method of research to give an answer for the research questions in the study and assess the role of media relations in the construction of GERD. The data were collected from 43 journalists and PR director of the National Council purposefully to meet the objectives of the study. The findings were compared with the literature review and theory. The researcher revealed that the National Council has developed relationships with key journalist and the media based on a shared news agenda and is serving as a trusted source of information for journalists. The study concluded that MR practices of the office are not making the journalists' job easier in delivering news packages on time and the PR tools used by the office have lack of quality. Finally, the study forward recommendations for the National Council Public Relations and Media Communication Directorate to enhance and maximize its media relations practices in building tight relationships to influence the media agenda in the construction of the GERD.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

GERD	Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam
INSA	Information Network Security Agency
IPRA	International Public Relations Association
MR	Media Relations
MRO	Media Relations Officer
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Science

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Ethiopia has been begun constructing the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on Abay River (Blue Nile River) since 2011 in Guba, near to Ethio-Sudan border. It is the biggest dam in Africa and has a capacity of generating 6000 MW of hydropower. The cost of the dam is about 4.8 billion US dollar, which supposed to be covered by government bond sales and citizens donation.

The project is built on a trans-boundary river and it's likely to be a source of conflict among the riparian countries. From its beginning, the lower riparian countries have been complaining on the flow of the water. Egypt, one of the riparian countries, has been considering the dam as jeopardize of her water share from the river Blue Nile. Nonetheless, Ethiopia believed that it benefits all riparian countries socially, economically and environmentally. The project by its nature needs strong partnership among the riparian countries. In this regard, it requires sustainable discussion among Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt, effective public diplomacy and public relations efforts to raise awareness of the international community on the fact that the GERD has significant contribution for the regional development. The realization of the project depends on participation of citizens, riparian cooperation and diplomatic successes. Considering these key factors, the Council of Ministers has established The National Council for the Coordination of Public Mobilization for the Construction of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam with two core missions. The basic objectives of Council are:

- enhancing and ensuring the continuity of the ongoing all round public participation in the construction of the GERD and promoting culture of saving and the spirit of self-reliance
- creating conducive environment for citizens and friends of Ethiopia to be engaged in public diplomacy aimed at raising awareness among the international community, in particular, the neighboring and the riparian countries on the fact that the construction the GERD is beneficial not only to Ethiopia but also to all lower riparian countries, and thereby secure their cooperation (Establishment Proclamation No. 244/2011).

In this regard, the project needs strategic public relations practices and media relations to have effective communication with the target public. A positive and sound relationship between PR practitioners' and journalists is crucial for the success of the project. Today, media (both main stream and social media) are a source of power. Hallahan as cited in Zefass, Verčič, & Wiesenberg (2016, p. 4) public relations has been intertwined with the mass media. Communication departments use mass media to monitor news and public opinion, source content for internal news services, evaluate media coverage, and cooperate to produce quality content or create topical platforms on Internet.

“Media coverage of an organization can have a significant influence on the reputation of organization. It may often have an ‘amplifying’ effect on a company’s reputation when ‘good’ or ‘bad’ news is reported. While media coverage does not strictly determine a company’s reputation or the way in which stakeholders think about an organization, it does have an impact in terms of highlighting an issue or increasing the already held positive or negative view of an organization” (Cornelissen 2014, p. 207).

Media relations can be viewed as a key part of an organization’s stakeholder relationship management. The media (reporters, editors and producers of print, broadcast and online channels and publications) are both a trusted channel to other stakeholder groups (internal and external) and a stakeholder group in their own right with a legitimate right to question those in power and authority (Tench and Yeomans 2017, p. 270 -271). In this regards, media relations has crucial role for effective communication activities and work with target stakeholders.

The main focus of the study is about the role of strategic media relations practices of The National Council for the Coordination of Public Mobilization for the Construction of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. The project needs to mobilize the public to fund it, create awareness of the international community. In this regard, the media have a significant role to create awareness about the benefits of the dam for the lower riparian countries and engage Ethiopians in active and sustainable public diplomacy efforts. According to McQuail (2009, p. 75) media are sought out by institutional advocates as channels for reaching the general public (or chosen groups) and for conveying their chosen perspective on events and conditions. Accordingly, public relations practitioners or communicators need to have good skills and

knowledge of media relations to work together with media in mobilizing the public. As Grunig (1984) states that media relations considered only one of several important public relations programs aimed at specialized publics.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Communicators need media (either mainstream or social media) for mobilizing the public, promoting services or products and managing crisis. On the other hand, journalists need credible and exclusive newsworthy information from public relations practitioners to deliver it on time for the general public or their audience. So their relationship is crucial for delivering messages of the organization to the stakeholders. It needs professional and ethical relationships with journalists and mutual understanding to get the desired or ultimate goals.

A project like GERD needs effective media relations to be successful because as Tench and Yeomans assert that media relations can be viewed as a key part of an organization's stakeholder relationship management (p. 270). It must have a trusted channel for citizens to be engaged in participating in all round support to the dam and convincing neighboring countries that the dam benefits all riparian countries. Nevertheless, in Ethiopia public relations is a young field with limitation of media relations practices and understanding of its impact in promoting the organization's mission and vision. There are cases raised by the general public and journalists that communicators or PR practitioners of The National Council for the Coordination of Public Mobilization for the Construction of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam not be able to communicate effectively, withhold information or not be available in time for rebuttal. Research in media relations for such national project is very important to fill the gap between practitioners and journalists in delivering the right message to the target audiences timely and effectively.

Therefore, this study is crucial and timely in revealing the limitations, problems and to come up with key solutions for media relations in Ethiopia's public relations practices in promoting national projects.

1.3 Objectives of the study

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study is to assess the media relations role of The National Council for the Coordination of Public Mobilization for the Construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam PR directorate.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are:

- To assess the strategic communications and media strategy of the National Council for the Coordination of Public Participation on the Construction of the Grand Renaissance Dam
- To evaluate media relations practices and its effect
- To explore tools and techniques used to obtain media coverage

1.4 Research Questions

The study gives answers for below basic research questions:

- What is the role of the media relations practices on the active participation of citizens in GERD construction?
- How do PR practitioners and journalists evaluate their relationships in seeking and replying to their inquiry of information and access to media respectively?
- What is the practitioners' role in supporting journalists to do their job?
- What kind of media tools and techniques are used frequently?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Media have the function of mobilizing the public and providing information to the society. Public mobilization and awareness creation among the international community need sustainable communication, effective public relations practices and sound relationship with the media. Messages should reach out to the target audience or stakeholders on time and appropriately by engaging editors, reporters and bloggers using broadcast, print and new media.

Media relations is one of the key practices of the public relations and need much attention of the managers or practitioners. Therefore, the study can contribute essential points for Ethiopians' communicators. In this perspective, the research has five major significances.

- 1. Theory significance:** The study indicates effective theories and models in mobilizing the public and raises their awareness using mass media, both traditional and new media for public relations practitioners.
- 2. Practice significance:** The study stresses on how positive and strategic relationships should be established between PR practitioners and journalist and comes up with aspects of effective media relations.
- 3. Research significance:** Since the study involves both public relations practitioners and journalists, it may motivate to be conducted further research on media relations by researchers from either of professions for strategic media relations.
- 4. Policy significance:** It opens discussions among academicians, journalists and practitioners come up with policy options of the role of strategic media relations in all other nation building endeavors and to give primacy to media relations.
- 5. Training significance:** It can be considered as academic reference for giving trainings in the relevance of positive relationship with media and aspects of effective media relations.

1.6 Scope of the study

The basic purpose of this study is to explore and examine the relationships (media relations) between public relations practitioners and journalists. The research conducted in The National Council for the Coordination of Public Mobilization for the Construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam media relations practices. The study majorly focused on strategies, tools, techniques, application of PR models, influence of practitioners and journalists on agenda setting and framing of news coverage and effectiveness of the strategic PR plan towards achieving the two major missions of the council.

1.7 Limitation of the study

The study is limited to the media relations practices of the council with selected journalists working in public, commercial, news agency and international media correspondents in Addis Ababa since it's difficult to include all media houses operating in Ethiopia.

1.8 Organization of the Research

The study organized in five chapters. The introduction part is the chapter that explains the problem and the way it investigated. Related literature review is the second chapter that discusses relevant and related published and unpublished findings with the study topic. Methodology is the third chapter that discusses the method used in the research. Presentation and analysis of the data is the fourth chapter, which deals with how the data logically analyzed. The last and the fifth chapter is the conclusion part which summarizes the research findings following the data analysis and gives recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

This chapter basically reviews related literatures that help as a relevant framework for the research. The main focus of the study is about the role of media relations in strategic public relations practices.

It consists of media power, purpose and role of media relations, effective and best practices of media relations, tools, tactics, the impact of new media, strategic media relations guidelines and theoretical framework and its application in media relations.

2.2. Media Relations

Elsbeth (2005) defines media relations is as specialized sub-branch of public relations primarily dealing with the process of recognition. She considers public relations as a three-step process that organizations listen to and understand public expectations, matches those expectations and publicly recognized as responsible (p. 145).

Media relations is a tactic of public relations – a means to an end, rather than the end in itself. So positive media coverage should be viewed as an ‘output’ of public relations, not an ‘outcome’ (Tench and Yeomans, 2017). According to Cultip et al. as cited in Tench and Yeomans states that organizations seek to maintain good relationships with the media and hope to gain favorable coverage because the media is an influential channel to reach groups ‘on whom its success or failure depends’(p. 271).

Conversely, scholars like Coombs and Holladay make the logical argument that media relations has a narrower focus than public relations since it is concerned with just one public, the news media. ‘Media relations is the relationship between the organization and members of the media’ (ibid).

According to Grunig and Hunt (1984), relations with the news media are so central to the practice of public relations and many practitioners believe that PR is nothing more than media relations. They further indicate that media relations should be considered as one of the important

public relations programs aimed at specialized public. MR occupies a central position in public relations because the media serves as “gatekeepers” controlling the information that flows to other public in the social system (p. 223). Similarly, John and Helio (2007, P.68) agree that media relations is one of the core disciplines in public relations and corporate and organizational communication, and it is often one of the most visible. Conversely, they stress its difficulty to understand even by senior management staff.

Media relations consists of the ability to build long term relationships with reporters, manage ad hoc contact, process of seeking media coverage and responding to reporters, develop procedures to measure, monitor and manage the contact between and organization’s employees and reporters in order to interact with news media (John and Helio, 2007, P.69).

Ronald (2003) clarifies the relationships between journalist and public relations practitioners as *Symbiosis* which two organisms living together in a mutually beneficial relationship, helping each other to survive. Journalists and public relations practitioners have such a symbiotic relationship. They need each other to do their jobs well (p.159). It is believed that both practitioners and journalists have a common sense in delivering information to their respective audiences even though they have different objectives.

Media relations as sub branch of PR, it has some specific task steps to follow in doing day to day activities in building relationships with media. As quoted in Tench and Yeomans (2017), Stephen Waddington (2015a, 2015b) highlights six distinct steps in media relations. These six steps are:

1. Research target media (publications and individual reporters and editors) to understand their interests, emphasis, readers/viewers, frequency, etc.
2. Research and identify potential issues, stories and media spokespeople from within your client or organization.
3. Develop relationships with key journalists and editors based on a shared news agenda (see Figure 1).

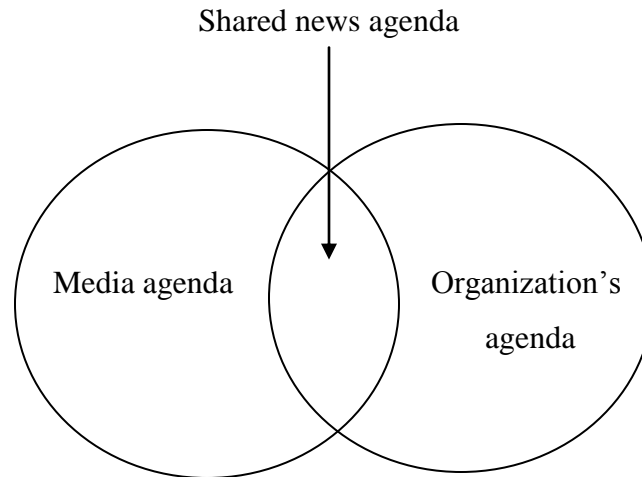


Figure1. Shared news agenda (adopted from Tench and Yeomans, 2017, p. 274)

4. Offer specific news packages to priority journalists, using media relations techniques as appropriate (e.g. news release or briefing, embargo or exclusive).
5. Follow up with journalists to facilitate publication or broadcast, or to understand the reasons why the offered package was not used.
6. Monitor media coverage; include in coverage reports and in media evaluation.

2.3. Purpose and Role of Media Relations

According to Paul et al. 2004, the public relations department often has one or more specialist press or information officers and in diverse organizations there may be several press officers each covering special parts of the industry. Harrison (as cited in Paul et al., 2004), the press office, whatever its size or specialization, is there to act positively, or proactively, on behalf of the organization and this means taking the initiative in contacting the media rather than simply reacting to calls (p.161).

Paul et al. (2004) argue that press officer may or may not be an ex-journalist; he or she does need to be able to write a news release in a form that resembles a newspaper report. Nevertheless, for Harrison (as cited in Paul et al., 2004), the ability to produce and transmit properly written and

targeted news releases and the kind of temperament to get on well with journalists is crucial (p. 162).

Paul et al. (2004) state that media relations officer needs to be both proactive and reactive. They identify that the media relations officer has two primary responsibilities to initiate media coverage and supply information on demand by the media (ibid).

Bland et al. stress that the purpose of press relations is not to issue press releases, or handle enquiries from journalists, or even to generate a massive pile of press cuttings. The true purpose of press relations is to enhance the reputation of an organization and its products, and to influence and inform the target audience. Likewise, Shel Holtz goes further and states that the role of an organizational media relations department is not to make the company look good in the press, nor is it to keep the company out of the newspapers . . . Ideally, the job of the media relations department is to help reporters and editors do their jobs. The objective is entirely consistent with the broader goal of public relations, which is to manage the relationship between the organization and its various constituent audiences (cited in Ronald & Smith: 2008, p 300).

Paul et al. (2004) insist on that media relations officer has to create a two –way relationships in order to have maximum coverage and satisfy the organization’s objectives. This enable them to be welcomed, accepted and the media come to him or her and find them helpful, sympathetic and efficient (p.162). Detweiler (as cited in Grunig & Hunt, 1984) asserts that the key to good press relations strategy is to make the news man’s job easy by giving him or her news of substance, conveniently packaged and delivered in good time. “If you practice two-way symmetric media relations, you must take a chance on the accuracy and responsibility of the news media. The more open you can make your organization; the greater is the likelihood of fair and accurate media coverage (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 227 - 229).

In order to initiate coverage, media relations officer must have good newsworthy story, know where to publish, familiar with the editorial requirements, and illustrate by way of pictures, photo-opportunities, sound bites and video/CD ROMs clips is crucial. To develop a ‘newsworthy story’ the press officer needs good lines of internal communication so as to encourage a flow of news from people in the organization (Paul et al., 2004, p.163).

Media relations has a worth mentioning role in any public relations department day to day activities. Michael, Alison and David (2005, p. 55-56) highlights the importance of public relations and media relations as:

- improving company or brand image;
- higher (and better) media profile;
- changing the attitudes of target audiences (such as customers);
- improving relationships with the community;
- increasing their market share;
- influencing government policy at local, national or international level;
- improving communications with investors and their advisers;
- improving industrial relations.

Macnamara (as cited in Zerfass, Vercic and Wiesenberg 2016, p. 6) developed a taxonomy of public relations roles and their relationships with the media. He does not consider media relations only as relationships with journalists, but all relationships that public relations professionals have with the media (listed in table 1).

Role	Inbound and Outbound	Main Function	Usage of Mass Media
Journalist in residence	Inbound & Outbound	Preparing content for internal and external news and information	Content source and information/news distributor
Organization gatekeeper/ boundary spanner	Inbound & Outbound	Central contact point, communication manager	Monitoring, evaluating, control
Trusted source	Inbound & Outbound	Issue information, interact with senior journalists, counseling and advising, two-way flow with media	Joint production and interrelation, influence the media agenda
Publicist	Outbound	Promotion, production, content, generate publicity	Influence gatekeepers, the media agenda and stakeholders, spread information
Spin doctor	Outbound	Persuasion, lobbying, and partisanship	Influence gatekeepers, the media agenda and stakeholders

Table 1. Different roles for media relations (taken from Zerfass, Vercic and Wiesenber, 2016, p. 6)

The typology stated above, organizations use mass media for supporting internal processes (inbound) and for reaching the public sphere (outbound). Typical interactions with the mass media for inbound reasons include: sourcing content for internal news services; monitoring news and public opinion; and evaluating media coverage of the organization, its products or services.

Key outbound practices are: spreading information about the organization, its products or services; influencing gatekeepers, the media agenda, and stakeholders; and jointly producing quality content and/or creating topical platforms (Zerfass, et al., 2016, p. 6).

2.4. Effective and Best Practices of Media Relations

According to Tench and Yeomans, a media relation is the most visible and still one of the most widely practiced public relations activities. According to the 2016 State of the Profession report from the UK's Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR), media relations has been replaced by content creation as the activity practitioners spend most time on (72 per cent for media relations against 81 per cent for content creation). Yet media relations remains the area that commands the largest budget (2017, p. 270).

The quality of press relations is even more important than the quantity. Success may lie sometimes in not having press coverage at all. Truly effective press relations start with effective targeting (Michael et al. 2005, p. 56 -57). Success in media relations depends upon building solid relationships with the press. Success as a communicator will be in direct proportion to one's skills as a communicator, one's conviction, the quality of the product, position, or story one is selling to the press, and one's preparedness (John and Helio, 2007, P.89).

According to Heath (2013, p. 556), modern media relations experts to have positive and effective relationships with media whether they are in agencies, groups, corporations, or nonprofit organizations use some techniques like:

- Distribute videos to websites and broadcast outlets.
- Ask journalists periodically about their information needs.
- Make sure journalists' names are on listser (messages sent by electronic mail to keep interested individuals informed about an organization's activities).
- Prepare media packets (collections of leader profiles; information about the organization, group, service, or product; statistics; reports; news clippings; and similar materials).

He further states that modern activity includes preparing managers to interact with journalists in interviews or news conferences. This helps spokespersons to communicate more effectively and journalists because sources are prepared. He notes that the overarching principle in effective media relations is that practitioners provide accurate, relevant, fair, timely and complete information to media. The best practitioners try to ensure that their organizations' interests are consistent with the public's interest because they think that's the right thing to do, and failure to do so nearly always lead to unfortunate consequences (ibid).

Heath emphasize that practitioners must be able to write and to speak well. Professionals must master language elements such as grammar, punctuation, spelling, and style in order to have effective relationships. Good writing must be reflected in everything, written and verbal, that a practitioner produces (2013, p. 557).

Academicians come up with best practices following serious observations and researches. Accordingly Ronald (2003) suggests the following positive practices in area of media relations:

- Rely on news value alone to get your information used by the media.
- Become familiar with the media by knowing what they report as news of interest to their audiences.
- Get to know the gatekeepers. Look at your organization with a reporter's eye, asking yourself if people outside your organization might be interested in what is going on.
- Generate newsworthy activities for your organization and create opportunities to get your message out.
- Learn media deadlines and respect them.
- Ask reporters how they prefer getting information from your organization or client. Some will want releases, which they may prefer to obtain by mail, fax or e-mail. Others may prefer fact sheets. A rare few may want phone calls. Do your best to accommodate the wishes of the reporters (p. 160 – 161).

Similarly, Patricia (2007) suggests four pillars of ethical media relations to have trusted relationships with media. These are:

- adopt a policy of *honesty and accuracy* in all our dealings with the media
- being *judicious* about when and how you use the media
- responsiveness to the media
- Finally, acting in a professional and *respectful* manner (p. 93- 94).

2.5. New Media and Media Relations

According to Tench and Yeomans, public relations researchers and practitioners have greeted new forms of digital and social media with great enthusiasm. Hazelton et al. (quoted in Tench and Yeomans) claim that public relations is ‘undergoing a revolution’ because of social media. Solis claims that with the shift to social media ‘monologue has given way to dialogue’. Similarly, Cornelissen (as quoted in Tench and Yeomans) states that social media create new ways of reaching and engaging with stakeholders. He adds that the development of new media ‘provides an organization with the opportunity to engage in conversations and to tell and elaborate its story or key message to stakeholders or the general public in an interactive way’. Duhé and Wright claim that social media provide opportunities for stakeholders to engage in discussions on participative platforms that open up new opportunities for dialogue and Swerling et al. also claim that ‘it is now generally recognized that we are undergoing a major transformation to a new era for communication, one in which transparency and actual dialogue with stakeholders play key roles’ (2017: p. 45 – 46).

Online has a different rhythm to the conventional news cycle. Media relations used to be orchestrated to the predictable and regular tempo of content production deadlines, and the ability to deliver messages at the optimum time was a sophisticated and effective tactical weapon. Timing was everything for mainstream media relations but now online changes that. News has rhythms but the edges are blurred. Most news organizations are now comfortable with breakings news online (Theaker 2012, p. 257).

In today's media relations, Theaker identifies that the challenge is to provide the information on a whole range of formats, and anticipate needing since most newspaper websites carry sound and video, radio stations offer listen again and downloadable podcasts, TV programs have red button interaction, and all can be complemented by often extensive websites. The other challenge for online is to attract audiences, which can be more difficult. Good social media builds relationships with those stakeholders who know of an organization's existence and have some understanding of what it offers, but are less good at bringing it to the attention of those who aren't looking. She adds that identifying online portals that provide a marketplace for information is also a challenge. One way is to treat Google as a news or media aggregator, but again this needs prior awareness, for people to have at least begun to look for relevant or related information (p. 258 - 263).

The new media have brought for both actors in today's information dissemination to the target public. Observing the impact of social media, Tench and Yeomans assert that one of the most serious concerns raised in relation to social media is that content bypasses the 'gatekeepers' who operate in traditional media who verify sources and confirm the veracity of statements and claims made. Notwithstanding concerns that traditional media gatekeepers often fail in their role, social media are open to anyone with internet access and rely on what Jenkins calls a 'self-correcting adhococracy'. Keen also disparagingly describes social media users, particularly 'citizen journalists', as a 'pyjama army' engaged in presenting opinion as fact, rumor as reportage and innuendo as information(2017, p.43).

The other very serious concern is that social media will be colonized by commercial and other vested interests and blatantly exploited for marketing and propaganda. Gibson et al. (2010) & Macnamara (2014) as quoted in Tench and Yeomans argue that political parties in many countries have flocked to social media to garner support for their policies and causes. Moreover, practitioners may face serious problems related to posted contents. Quoting the salutary saying 'What happens on the internet stays on the internet forever' they urge communicators to bear in mind about the posted content in social media. Even if the content removed from live pages, many servers and computer connected and will continue to distribute (p.44). Thus, it has a visible impact on every day MR practices.

2.6. Tools and Techniques of Media Relations

PR practitioners use different tools and techniques to get media coverage. These include press releases, press conferences, media briefings, embargoes, exclusives, non-attributable, off-the-record, surveys, news agencies, media monitoring and media research (Tench and Yeomans, 2017, p. 275-276 & Cornellisen 2014, p.213 -217).

- 1. Press release:** The aim of press releases is to transfer news to journalists so that it can be made public. Press releases are more likely to be used and placed in a news medium when they refer to newsworthy events or items that are current and have a human interest or appeal, when the release is written in a factual (as opposed to judgmental) manner and with a clear heading and lead (first paragraph) into the topic.
- 2. Press conferences:** Outside crisis management situations, large set-piece press conferences are now much less common than the public might imagine from watching television news. The key question with press conferences is ‘who benefits from holding one?’ If it’s being arranged to satisfy the vanity of a boss or client, this may lead to problems. If it’s being arranged to suit the demands of the media, then this is the right approach. There are (rare) times when the media demand for timely information is so overwhelming that a press conference is the best way to make this access possible.
- 3. Media briefings:** A good alternative to set-piece press conferences is to arrange briefing meetings with individual reporters. If these can be detached from specific news announcements, then they are a good means of developing relationships with key members of the media and developing your media relations beyond a tool for one-way publicity.
- 4. Embargoes:** Public relations news is often worked on for weeks or months before the agreed launch date. An embargo is a media relations technique for giving journalists the story in advance, to help them prepare and schedule their reports or packages, on the understanding that publication or broadcast will be held until the agreed launch date.
- 5. Exclusives:** This is when a ‘story’ is offered first to one media outlet, while others are excluded from access to the story. An exclusive does not usually require a news blackout

but is usually a question of timing. One outlet could be offered the story early – with all others being offered the story a day later. An exclusive is a useful tool for adding value to a PR-led story, but there are problems with using them. While one publication might welcome being offered your exclusive, you risk annoying or alienating the others.

- 6. Non-attributable:** Most often used in political communication, a non-attributable briefing is given on the understanding that the source's name will be kept out of the story. This enables a journalist to write an informed piece of speculation using phrases such as 'sources close to the prime minister confirmed ...' It benefits the public relations practitioner by enabling them to preserve their good relationship with key members of the media while keeping their job and avoiding becoming the story.
- 7. Off-the-record:** It is possible to mount a defense of off the-record briefing as ethical and professional, but the simple rule should be to avoid using this technique. Only discuss those things with a journalist that you would be prepared to see made public.
- 8. Surveys:** Commissioning research and identifying newsworthy findings is a well-established technique for achieving media coverage.
- 9. News agencies:** Smaller editorial teams mean ever more reliance on 'wire stories', so news agencies such as Press Association, Reuters etc... should be included in media lists and should seek to develop relationships with the appropriate reporters and photo editors.
- 10. Media monitoring and research:** The most common type of media research consists of monitoring media relations efforts. Two of the most commonly used monitoring techniques are gate-keeping research and output analysis.
 - i. Gate-keeping research:** A gate-keeping study analyzes the characteristics of a press release or video news release that allow them to 'pass through the gate' and appear in a news medium. Both content and style variables are typically examined.
 - ii. Output analysis:** The objective of output analysis is to measure the amount of exposure or attention that the organization receives as a result of media relations.

Several techniques can be used in output analysis. One way is to simply measure the total amount of news coverage (i.e., total number of stories or articles) that appears in selected mass media. In addition, it is also possible to examine the tone (positive or negative) of stories or articles. Many communication practitioners systematically collect press clippings (copies of stories or articles in the press) and record the degree of exposure in terms of column inches in print media, the number of minutes of air time in the electronic media or the number of cites on the web.

11. Online newsrooms: In order to connect different platforms and media content, corporate communication practitioners have also increasingly developed online newsrooms, as a dedicated part of the company's website. These newsrooms are a one-stop shop for media relations; they typically include standard reports, speeches and press releases, but also tend to host dynamic content including videos, news feeds, widgets, podcasts and searchable archives of content. The general advantage of these newsrooms is that they provide journalists with information when they need it; they also help drive traffic to the company's website.

2.7 Relationships of Public Relations Practitioners and Journalists

Grunig and Hunt state the relationships between PR practitioners and journalist as media relations is a field of battleground. Journalists feel besieged by hordes of press agents and publicists – “flacks”, as they call PR people – who dump unwanted press releases on their desks and push self-serving stories that have little news value.

Public relations practitioners, on the other hand, feel they are at the mercy of reporters and editors who are biased against their organization, who know little about the complexities of their organization (1984, p. 223 -224).

According to Cornelissen, the relationship between communication practitioners and journalists has often been described as adversarial. Journalists often have a negative opinion on the fact that communicators think about the needs of their companies first rather than what journalists need. On contrarily, communication practitioners are less negative about journalists and are often eager

to work with them. However, communication practitioners also realize that journalists have their own agenda and may frame news about the company in line their news routines and the ideology of the news organization that they work for (2014, p. 210).

Even though both communication practitioners and journalists have different agendas and thus different angles on news related to a company, they do realize that they are interdependent. Journalists need and often use information provided by communication practitioners, and, equally, practitioners and the companies that they work for often need the media as a conduit to generate coverage on the company and to reach important stakeholders (Cornelissen 2014, p. 211).

In the exchange between PR and journalism, PR provides an information subsidy. The significance of this subsidy for Fengler and Ruß-Mohl 2008 as quoted in Tench and Yeomans is that the information subsidy provides a framework for exploring how PR is able to reduce the amount of time it takes for journalists to identify topics and research stories; in exchange the journalist's media outlet supplies public attention to the information and messages that the PR practitioner would wish them to see (2017, p. 22).

As quoted in Tench and Yeomans, Turk (1985: 12) summarizes that public relations practitioners use information subsidies to systematize their attempts, on behalf of the organizations and institutions for which they work, to influence media content and the opinions of those who rely upon the media for information (p. 22).

PR practitioners can be seen as boundary spanners who attempt to harmonize and reconcile the logic of their own organizations to that of the media. Because media coverage is frequently seen as a vital component in any issue campaign or branding exercise, PR is at the forefront of accommodating the logic of news values, editorial routines and journalistic techniques for storytelling. Quoting Blumler and Gurevitch (1996) Tench and Yeomans assert that in many modern societies the ability to secure media attention is a vital component of potential influence, so PR practitioners across various sectors, but particularly those who wish to influence public opinion on issues and policies, place a high value on publicity initiatives and building relationships with journalists (ibid p. 29). Thus, implies that there should have good relationships with journalists in order to secure publicity.

As quoted in Tench and Yeomans (2017, p. 31), Bentele and Nothaft summarize that there exists in some form a mutually influential relationship between PR practitioners and journalists, although caution is required as there is no reason to believe this in any way translates into constituting a balanced or mutually beneficial relationship, or indeed, one that might meet normative expectations of producing media content that informs or empowers citizens in a democracy.

Recent study finding of Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford indicates that a more considered view of the changing relationship between journalism and public relations. According to Lloyd and Toogood, PR still needs journalism, which has always acted as a ‘third party endorsement’ of its claims. But now it has other, often more powerful allies. In other words, the independent media remains important to public relations, but is no longer the only or even necessarily the primary channel for public communication (as quoted in Tench and Yeomans 2017, p. 273 -274).

A study from the takes a more considered view of the changing relationship between journalism and public relations. Avoiding the standard hacks versus flacks discussion, this book looks instead at the business models of both industries and how they’re adapting in the digital age. ‘PR still needs journalism, which has always acted as a ‘third party endorsement’ of its claims. But now it has other, often more powerful allies’ (Lloyd and Toogood 2015: vii). In other words, the independent media remains important to public relations, but is no longer the only or even necessarily the primary channel for public communication (as quoted in Tench and Yeomans 2017, p. 273).

2.8 Strategic Media Relations Guidelines

Many communication scholars agree that there should be mutual beneficiary relationship between practitioners and journalists. So there must be some strategic media relations guidelines for practitioners to build good relationships with media. Hunt and Grunig (1994) quotes in Paul et al., 2004 clearly state that the job of PRO is to build open and trusted relationships with reports and editors so that they keep the media channels open to your publics (p. 131).

Center and Jackson (2003) have produced a number of media relations guidelines that are widely followed (as quoted in Paul et al., p. 132-133):

- Start with a sound working knowledge of the methods and the technology involved in gathering potential news, evaluating it, processing it editorially, and putting it into the best format and mode for newsprint, magazine, broadcast and electronic media. Be able to fit into the process.
- Be sure that the company has a designated spokesperson available at short notice.
- Have spokespeople be as candid as possible in response to inquiries within the limits of competitive and or national security and of compassionate consideration.
- Play the percentages. In a long successful partnership take instances of bad news in your stride, together with a record of good news coverage achieved.
- Continuously educate and train employees on how to handle themselves when in contact with the news media.
- Generate good news situations as a track record to offset instances of undesired news. Do not simply wait defensively for bad news.
- Advocate the organization's views on public issues among the organization's natural constituencies and in the news media receptive of them.
- Expect the unexpected and be prepared for it. In particular, have a crisis or disaster plan for every foreseeable circumstance.

2.8. Theoretical Framework

2.8.1 Four Public Relations Models

Gruning and Hunt (1984, p. 21) have chosen the word "model" to describe the four types of public relations that they believe have evolved through history, in order to emphasize that they are abstraction. In scientific usage, a model is a representation of reality. They proposed a typology of four models of PR, arguing there are four types of practices in the industry, and

emphasizing that not all four models give equal importance to publics (Tench and Yeomanss, 2017, p. 151 -152).

- i. **Press Agency(Publicity) Model:** The goal is to get as much publicity as possible, and uses selective information to persuade people to act in certain ways and to get as much media coverage as possible. Grunig and Hunt (1984: 21) linked this type of activity directly to propaganda by saying ‘Public Relations serve a propaganda function in the press agency/publicity model. Practitioners spread the faith of the organization involved, often through incomplete, distorted or half-true information’.

The flow of information is one way, from the organization to the publics. Practitioners of this model view communication as telling, not listening. They don’t always feel obligated to present a complete picture of the organization or product.

- ii. **Public Information Model:** The purpose is the dissemination of information, not necessarily with a persuasive intent. The practitioner functions essentially as journalist in residence, whose job is to report objectively information about his organization to the public. The focus on the necessity of informing the public is founded in the work of Ivy Lee, often considered as the first PR practitioner (IPR 2012). Even though the public is informed about activities of the organization, this model is considered as unsatisfactory because it is a one-way communication with an intention to inform. The only difference between the first and the second model is there is no attempt to deceive the public because the information is not selected in a way that can cause misinterpretation, since the model is based on honesty in communication.

- iii. **Two-Way Asymmetry:** The purpose can be best described as scientific persuasion. They use what is known from social science theory and research about attitudes and behavior to persuade publics to accept the organization’s point of view and to behave in a way that supports the organizations.

Instead this model uses persuasion in a different way, and it does not rely on manipulation and deceiving, but on behavioral change supposed to be achieved for the purpose of the client. The only intention is to improve the message to achieve either

sales of a product or to foster behavioral change, and the persuasive element is found in feedback the company gets from the public. This feedback is then used to persuade the public to support the organization. In this sense, this is a two-way communication because publics are communicating with companies, and this model is the most commonly used model among PR practitioners who work for a client.

- iv. **Two-Way Symmetry:** Practitioners serve as mediator between organizations and their publics. Their goal is mutual understanding between organizations and their publics. These practitioners too, may use social science theory and methods, but usually use theories of communication rather than theories of persuasion for planning and evaluation of public relations. In contrast, it consists more of a dialogue than a monologue. If persuasion occurs, the public should be just as likely to persuade the organization's management to change attitudes or behavior as the organization is likely to change the public's attitude or behavior. Ideally, both management and publics will change somewhat after the public relations effort.

2.8.2. Theory of Excellence

Organizations strive for autonomy from their publics. Organizations also try to mobilize publics that support their goals and thus increase their autonomy. Having the autonomy to pursue their goals is important for organizations because effective organizations choose appropriate goals for their environmental and cultural context and then achieve those goals. No organization ever achieves complete autonomy, although it may be an idealized goal. Organizations work toward this idealized goal by managing their interdependence with publics. Therefore, building relationships-managing interdependence-is the essence of public relations. Good relationships make organizations more effective because they allow organizations more freedom to achieve their missions. Ironically, however, organizations maximize their autonomy by giving up some of it to build relationships with publics (J. E. Gruning et al., 2002, p. 10).

The Excellence theory has four major categories that help the PR department to achieve its goal at maximum level (p. 13 - 15).

1. **Empowerment of the Public Relations Function:** For public relations to contribute to organizational effectiveness, the organization must empower communication management as a critical management function. Empowering the public relations department will contribute to strategic management by scanning the environment to identify publics affected by the consequences of decisions or who might affect the outcome of decisions, involve in key organizational decisions making and be diversified in gender, racial, ethnic and cultural background.
2. **Communicator Roles:** Public relations units must have at least one senior communication manager who conceptualizes and directs public relations programs, or this direction will be supplied by other members of the dominant coalition who have little or no knowledge of communication management or of relationship building. Senior executive must have the knowledge needed for the managerial role. It must give an equal opportunity for both men and women to occupy the managerial role.
3. **Organization of communication function:** Organizations must integrate all public relations programs into a single department and should be a management function separate from other functions.
4. **Models of public relations:** A two-way symmetrical public relations attempt to balance the interests of the organization and its publics, is based on research, and uses communication to manage conflict with strategic publics. Symmetric practitioners are loyal both to the organization and to the public.

2.8.3. Mass Communication Theories

Tench and Yeomanss (2017: p. 155) state that theories of mass communication help in understanding how media work, the role of the mass media in setting the public agenda, as well as media framing. There are two main theories in the field of mass communication relevant for PR that are agenda setting theories and media framing.

2.8.3.1. Agenda Setting Theory

Agenda setting theory was first developed by McCombs and Shaw in 1972. Tench and Yeomans (2017, p. 156) quoting Wu and Coleman, 2009 & McCombs 2014 define agenda setting as the phenomenon of the mass media selecting certain issues and portraying them frequently and prominently, which leads people to perceive those issues as more important than others. Freeland (2012) as quoted in Tench and Yeomans (2017, p. 156) describes agenda setting as little more than the creation of public awareness and concern about issue.

Cornellisen (2014) noted that the basic idea behind agenda-setting theory is that news media communicate a wealth of information when they report on organizations, politics, the economy or issues of social and human concern. In doing so, they also signal to their viewers, readers or audience which issues are salient for these topics. Repetition of the same issues now and then will be lodged in the public's mind. And then the public will use the input from the media to decide which issues are important. Therefore the news media set the agenda for the public (p. 208).

2.8.3.2. Framing Theory

Cornellisen (2014) describes framing theory that has been used to understand and investigate communication and related behaviors in a wide range of disciplines including psychology, speech communication, organizational decision-making, economics, health communication, mass communication and political communication (p.211). It focuses on how messages are created in such a way that they connect with the underlying psychological processes of how people digest information and make judgments (ibid).

Framing is important in shaping the perception of the public since they cannot attend each and every detail of information about the world around them (ibid). It involves processes of inclusion and exclusion of information in a message as well as emphasis. The communication scholar Entman (as quoted in Cornellisen 2014, p. 211) summarized the essence of framing as follows:

Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in the communicating text, in such a way as

to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.

Framing theory promotes organization's interest and decision through communication practitioners' press release, reports on company's website, in speeches of spokesperson or CEO. Journalists and editors, on the other hand, may interpret and represent the same decision, issue or event in a different way. News framing refers to the way in which news is selectively portrayed by the media in an effort to explain news or ideas about organizations in familiar terms for a broader audience (ibid).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a research methodology employed in the study. It explains the research design, target population, data collection methods, sampling techniques and methods of data analysis and interpretation.

3.2 Research Design

Research design is defined by stressing systematic methodology in collecting right the information, for interpretations with economy and procedure (Akthar, 2016, p. 68). Zikmund (quoted in Akthar) defined it as “a master plan specifying the methods and procedure for collecting Research in Social Science: Interdisciplinary Perspectives and analyzing the needed information”.

In line with the study objectives, the researcher employs descriptive design since it is appropriate to describe the state of practices and relationships between PR practitioners and journalists. As Kothari (2004, p. 2) asserts the purpose of descriptive research is a description of the state of affairs exists as it exists at present.

3.3 Research Approach

The worldviews, the designs, and the methods all contribute to a research approach that tends to be quantitative, qualitative, or mixed. These three approaches have their own advantage and disadvantage in collecting, analyzing and interpreting data. To have a complete understanding of a problem and avoid bias, researchers use both quantitative and qualitative approaches in a single study. The collection of both quantitative and qualitative data neutralized the weaknesses of each form of data (Creswell 2014, p. 43).

Mixed method claims pragmatic worldview knowledge on the assumption that collecting diverse types of data best provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative data alone. The method employs both open- and closed - ended questions to collect detailed views from participants (ibid). Therefore, the researcher employed a

mixed method in order to have more complete representation of data collection, analysis and interpretation.

3.4 Target Population

In this research, the researcher purposely selects the participants because they have symbiotic relationships in media relations practices. Thus, there are a total of 50 target populations, i.e. journalists from different local media institutions and international media correspondents residing in Addis Ababa and National Council for the Coordination of Public Participation for the Construction of the Grand Renaissance Dam PR directorate.

3.5 Sampling Technique

Researcher must select a sample design which should be reliable and appropriate for his research study (Kothari, 2004, p. 55). In line with the research objectives, the researcher used purposive sampling. The basic assumption of purposive sampling is selecting cases that are typical to a problem in focus or subjects important for the particular research aim (Derbisa 2018, p. 203). Therefore, the researcher selected the participants based on their experiences on media and media relations practices in order to meet the aim of the study.

3.6 Instrumentation

The study uses two types of data gathering methods as this research employed mixed method i.e questionnaire and interview. Structured survey questionnaire applied to collect the numerical data (quantitative data) from the research participants. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions which primarily focused on professional relationships between journalists and PR practitioners and theories of public relations and media. It consisted of 20 questions that prepared in English. For convenience and return of questionnaires, it distributed to journalists and collected personally and via email by the researcher.

Secondly qualitative data collected from the PR practitioners of National Council for the Coordination of Public Participation on the Construction of the Grand Renaissance Dam using in-depth interview to come up with immerse perspectives of the day to day media relations activities. The interview consisted of open-ended questions which focused on media relations

practices, strategies and theories in English. However, the interview conducted in Amharic to grasp in-depth knowledge and later translated into English.

3.7 Techniques of Data Analysis and Interpretation

After collecting the data, it should be analyzed in line with the research objectives. Kothari (2004, p. 122) quoting Giles defines analysis as to the computation of certain measures along with searching for patterns of relationship that exist between data-groups. Thus, in the process of analysis, relationships or differences supporting or conflicting with original or new hypotheses should be subjected to statistical tests of significance to determine with what validity data can be said to indicate any conclusions.

Hence, the researcher applied percentage in analysis of the numerical data collected from the participants, which supposed to be the right for the purpose of the study using Package for Social Science (SPSS version 20) software. Graphical and tableau is applied in the presentation of the quantitative data.

Equally, the qualitative data that collected during the interview translated, categorized and coded in the way that give meaning, analyzed and presented in text form.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethics is the very important issue of any scientific research in order to build trust with individual participants and organizations and to have reliable scientific results. It needs much attention of the researcher during each process of the study, i.e. prior to the study, at the beginning, during collecting and analyzing data and reporting the result. Accordingly, the researcher considered all necessary ethical issues in conducting this study including the right of privacy, consent and acknowledgements.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the research methodology employed for the study. Now, this chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from journalists and PR practitioner from National Council for the Coordination of Public Participation on the Construction of the Grand Renaissance Dam PR directorate. The findings are compared with the literature review and theory to determine the media relations practices of the office.

4.2 Data Presentation and Analysis

In the survey, 43 journalists and PR practitioner were participated from broadcast, print media, news agency and international media correspondents residing in Addis Ababa and National Council Office respectively. From the total participating journalists 76.7percent were male and 23.3percent were female. Respondents' age category was consisted of 16.3percent between 20 – 25, 44.2 percent between 26 – 30, 25 percent between 31 – 35, 7 percent between 36 – 40 and 7percent were above 40. Regarding their educational background, 4.7 percent diploma, 74.4 percent BA Degree and 20.9 percent were MA degree holders.

4.2.1 Journalists survey result in terms of general attitude towards the PR directorate

4.2.1.1 A shared news agenda with the council

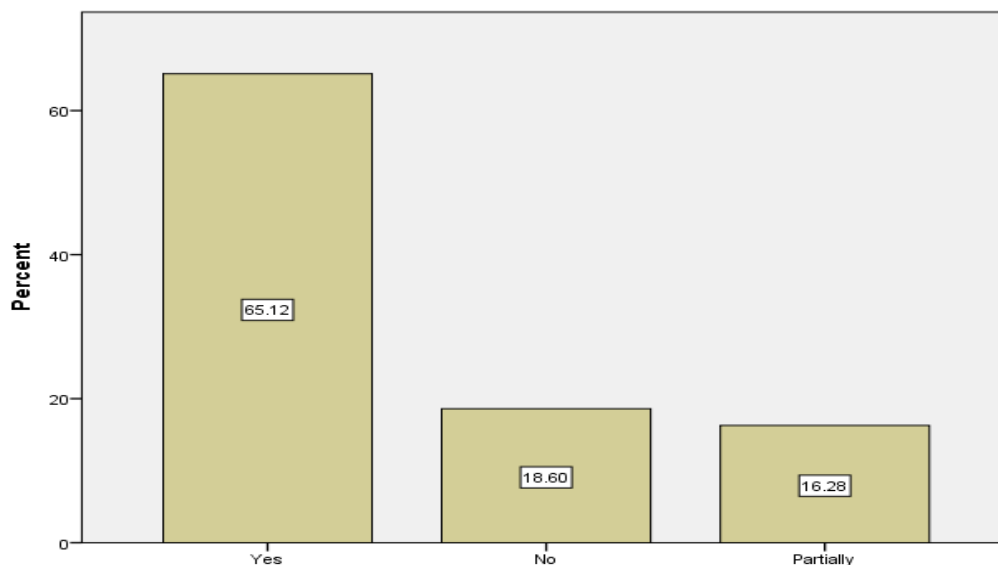


Figure 2. Have a shared news agenda

The chart above indicates 65.2 percent believed that they have shared news agenda with the National Council. 20 percent of the journalists replied that they don't have shared news agenda whereas 17.8 percent have partially shared news agenda. The data implies that journalists have shared news agenda with the council. This confirms Stephen Waddington (2015a, 2015b) who argues that media relations as brunch of PR that develop relationships with key journalists and editors based on shared news agenda (as quoted in Tench and Yeomans 2017, p. 274).

4.2.1.2 Trusted source of information

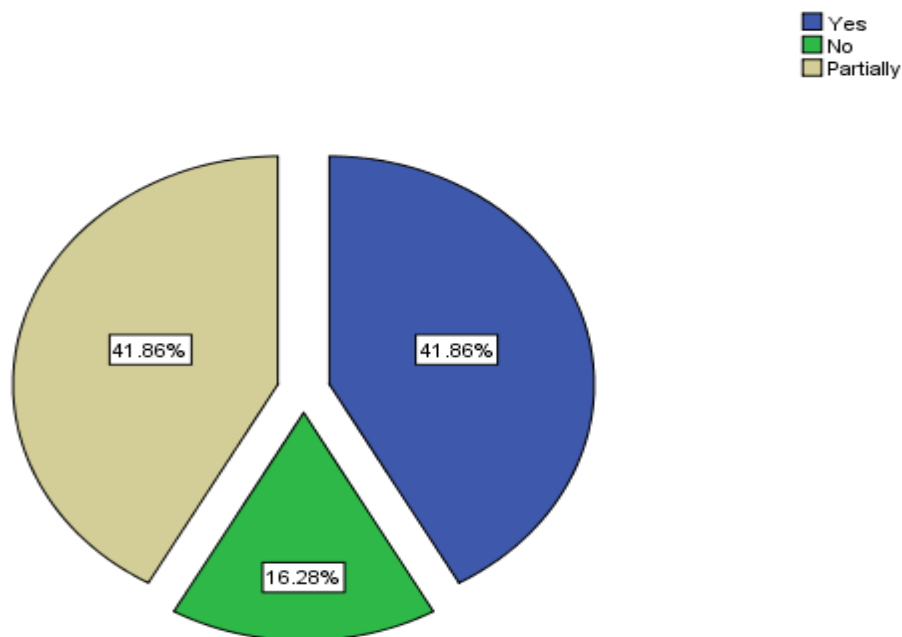


Figure 3: PR as Trusted source of information

41.86 percent of the journalists indicated that they trust the office as source of information regarding the awareness creation and public participation in the construction of GERD. Other respondents, 41.86 percent believe partially as their source. On the other hand, 16.28 percent of the respondents said the PR directorate is not their trusted source of information on creating awareness and public participation. This indicates us that the council is serving as a trusted source of information for journalists regarding the awareness creation and public participation in the construction of GERD. These views supported by Macnamara (as cited in Zerfass, Vercic and Wiesenber 2016, p. 6) the role of MR officer should be a trusted source of information.

4.2.1.3 Created conducive environment

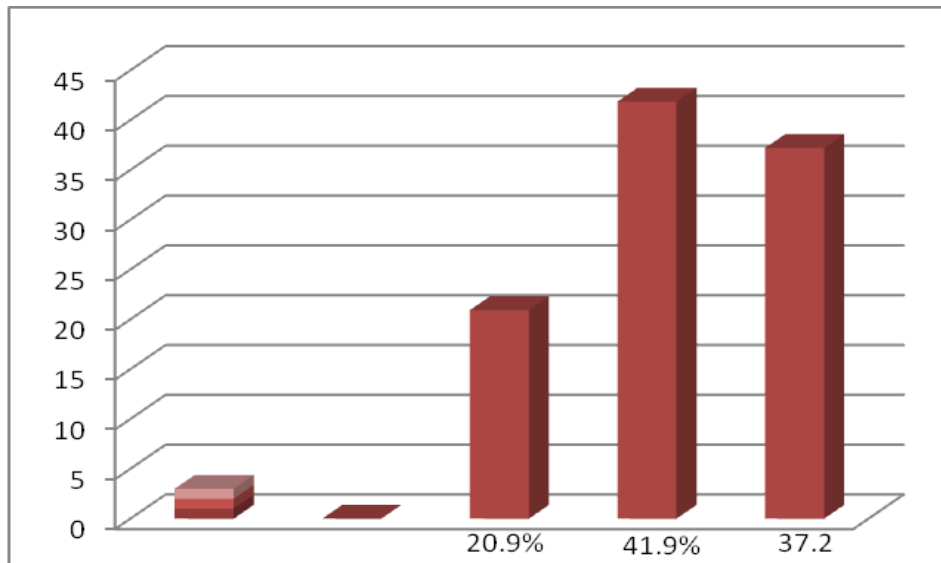


Figure 4: Created conducive environment

The finding on the question “In your opinion, has the National Council created conducive environment for citizens and friends of Ethiopia to engage in public diplomacy aimed at raising awareness among the international community on the beneficiary facts of the dam for Ethiopia and all riparian countries?” as indicated above in figure 4, 41.9 percent of the respondents indicated that the office doesn’t create a conducive environment for raising awareness among the international community mutual beneficiary facts of the dam. Other journalists 37.2 percent feel that he National Council partially created conducive environment. 20.9 percent of journalists believe that the National Council creates a conducive environment for citizens and friends of Ethiopia to engaged in public diplomacy. The responses indicate there have no conducive environment for both citizens and friends of Ethiopia to play their role in public diplomacy.

4.2.1.4 Information about the current status of the construction of the dam

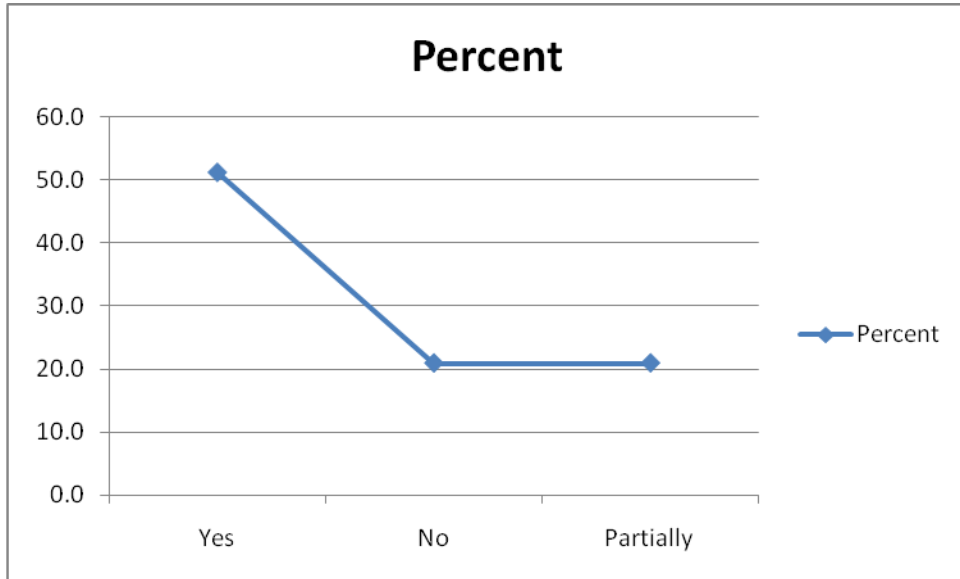


Figure 5: Information about the current status of the construction of the dam

According to figure 5, 51.2 percent of the journalists revealed that they have enough information about the current construction status of the dam. 20.9 percent of the respondents don't have enough information about the status of the dam. And similarly, another 20.9 percent of journalists have partial enough information. This shows that the journalists have sufficient information about the status of the dam. As Zerfass, et al. (2016, p. 6) indicates that the MR plays its key outbound role in spreading information about the construction of the dam.

4.2.1.5 Priority for any news coverage on the construction of GERD

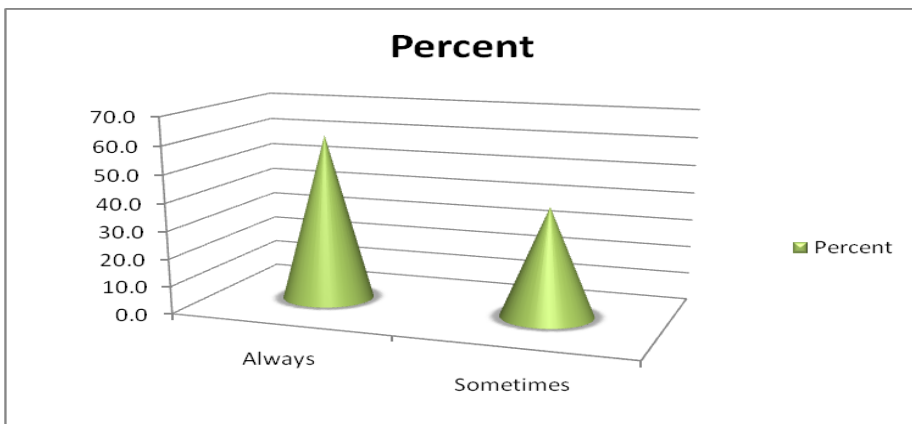


Figure 6: Priority for any news coverage on the construction of GERD

Figure 6 highlights 60.5 percent of journalists and their respected media give always a priority for any news coverage on the construction of GERD. The remaining 39.5 percent of respondents and media houses give sometimes priority for any news coverage on the construction of GERD. This shows that the journalists and their media give priority for any news coverage on the construction of GERD which is a great opportunity for the council to reach its target audience at large.

4.2.2 PR practices of the National Council for the Coordination of Public Participation for the Construction of the Grand Renaissance Dam

4.2.2.1 Making journalists job easier

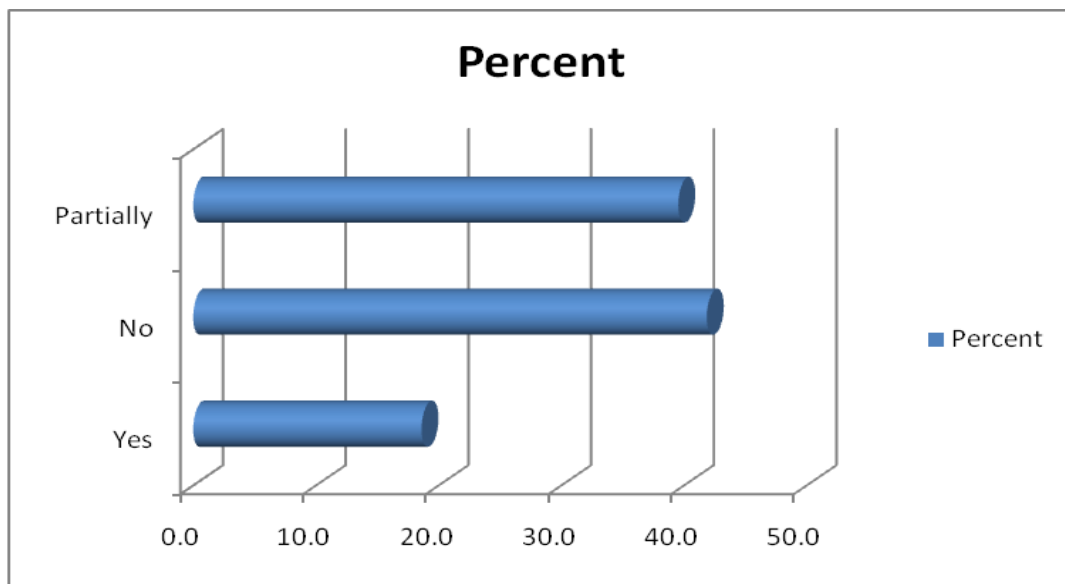


Figure 7: Make journalist job easier in inquiring information

Depicted in figure 7, findings revealed that 41.9 percent of the respondents revealed that the directorate doesn't make their job easier in inquiring information. 39.5 percent stated that it makes their job easier partially. Whereas, 18.6 percent of the journalists believe that the PR practitioners make their jobs easier. It indicates that the council isn't making the job of journalists easier in inquiring information. These findings don't comply with Shel Holtz (in Ronald & Smith: 2008, p 300) argument that the job of the media relations department is to help reporters and editors do their jobs.

4.2.2.2 Familiar with media deadlines

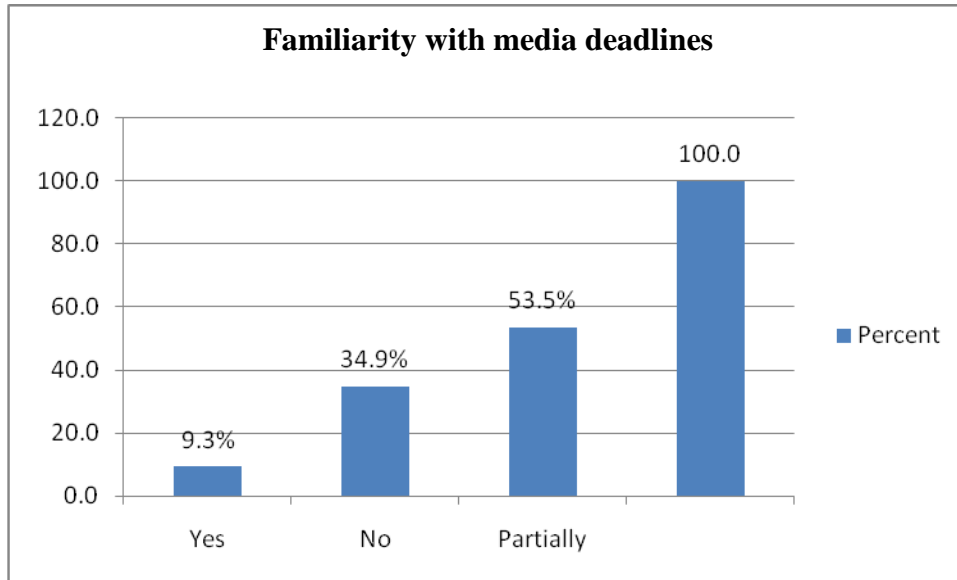


Figure 8: Familiarity with media deadlines

Detweiler (as cited in Grunig & Hunt 1984, p.227) asserts that the key to good press relations strategy is to make the news man’s job easy by giving him or her news of substance, conveniently packaged and delivered in good time. On the contrary of the claim, 9.3 percent of journalists agreed that MR Officers are familiar with media deadlines in delivering news packages on time. 34.9 percent of them observed that practitioners are not familiar with newsroom deadlines while, 53.3 percent revealed that MR Officers or managers are partially familiar with deadlines. These findings show that MR Officers or managers are not familiar with media deadlines.

4.2.2.3 Providing newsworthy information

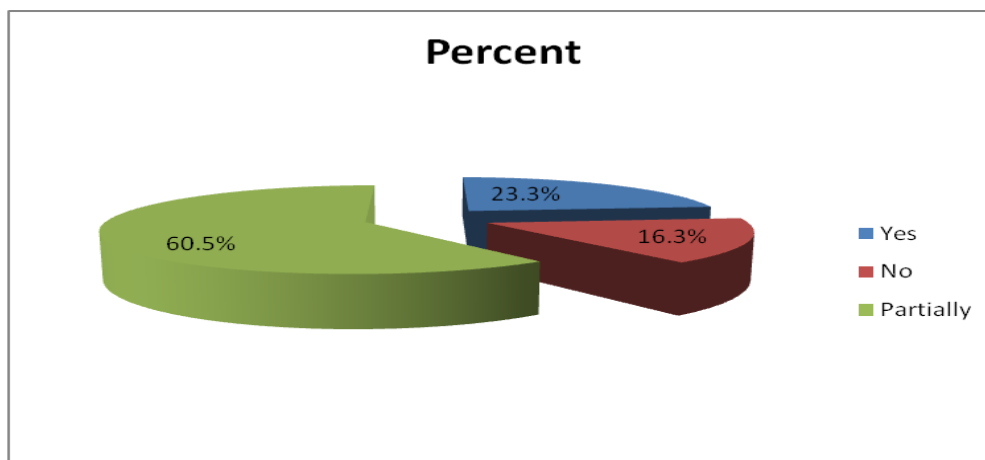


Figure 9: Providing newsworthy information

Figure 9 indicates that 60.5 percent of reporters and editors partially provide a newsworthy item. 23.3 percent of the journalists agreed that the office provides newsworthy information. The rest 16.3 percent of respondents indicated that it doesn't provide newsworthy information to them. These findings point out that the majority of journalists MR practices of the office do not provide newsworthy information to their news coverage in line with their editorial. Stephen Waddington (2015a, 2015b) proposes the MR should research and identify potential issues, stories and media spokespeople from within your client or organization (quoted in Tench and Yeomans 2017, p. 274). This proposition would help the office to provide potential issues and stories to get news coverage and build relationships with the media.

4.2.2.4 Mediate between the council and the public

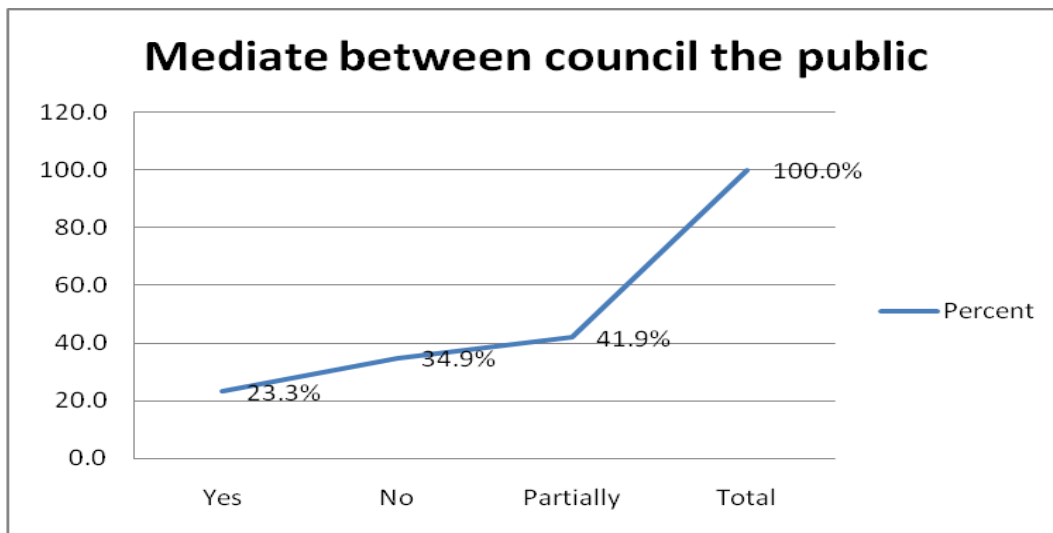


Figure 10: Mediator between the council office and the public

The line chart above depicted that 41.9 percent of them partially think that it mediate the office with the public.. Whereas, 34.9 percent doesn't consider it as playing a mediator role and 23.3 percent of the respondents believed that the MR functions as the mediator between the council office and the public. This implies that the MR is not functioning as mediator between the council and the public.

4.2.2.5 Selection of news angle

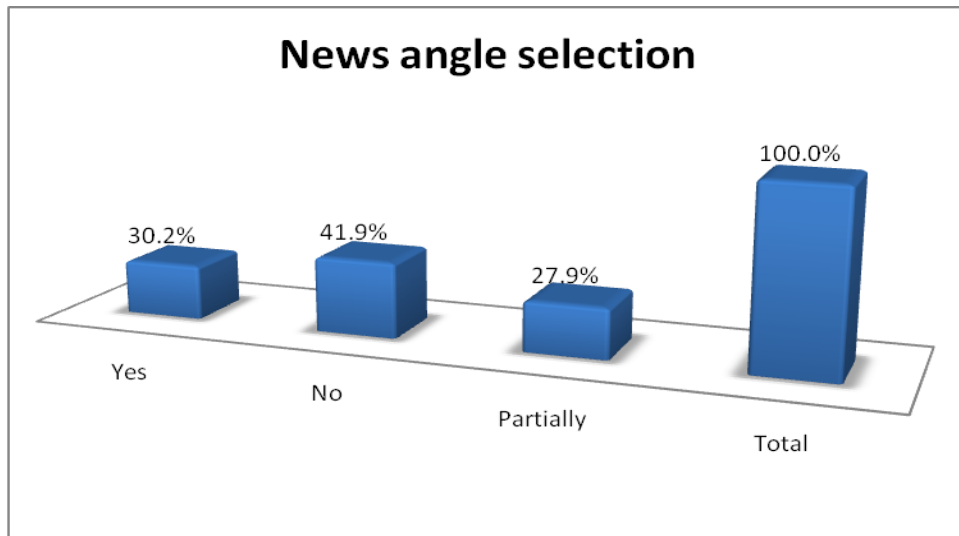


Figure 11: Influence of MR officers or manager on news angle selection

Regarding the selection of news angle in public diplomacy, 41.9 percent of the respondents replied the MR officers or manager don't influence their news coverage angle. 30.2 percent of reporters and editors confirmed that the office influence their news angle selection. The rest 27.9 percent accepted partially the influence of MR officers or manager. The response indicates that the MR of the council is not influencing in news angle selection.

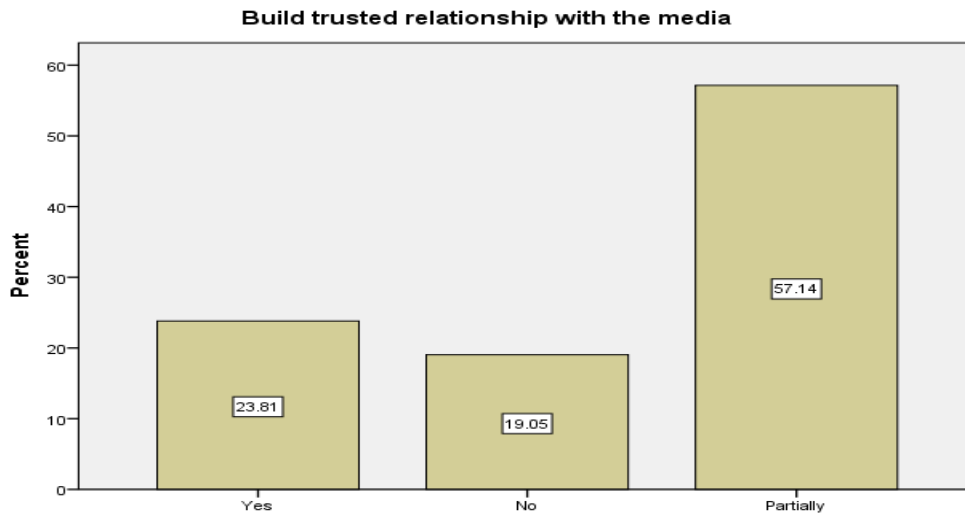


Figure 12: Building trusted relationships the media

As shown in figure 12 above, the majority of respondents, 57.14 percent revealed that they had partially trusted relationships with the council. 23.81 percent replied the office built a trusted relationship with them and their respected media house; however 19.05 percent of the journalists indicated that there were no trusted relationships with the office. These findings indicate that MR practices should enhance building relationships with journalist and the media to have favorable news coverage of the construction of GERD to create awareness on public diplomacy.

4.2.2.7 Availability of MR officers or manager

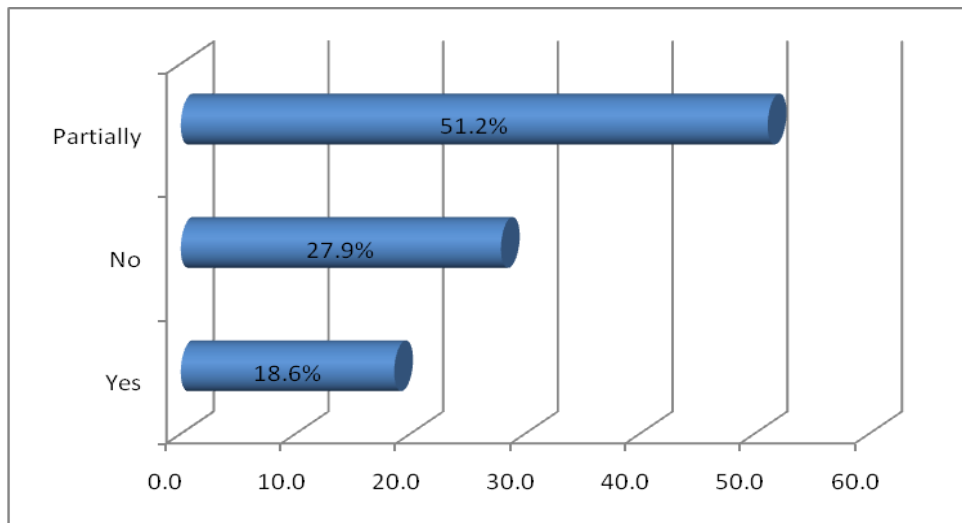


Figure 13: Availability of practitioners for media inquiry

According to the chart above, 51.2 percent indicated that they answer their call partially, 27.9 percent of respondents revealed that either officers or manager answer their call and the rest 18.6 percent of journalists indicated that practitioners of the office replied their call whenever they need them. The findings above supported the literature and revealed that practitioners (MR officers or manager) should be ethical and available anytime for journalists inquiry of information. Patricia (2007: 94) suggests one of the four pillars of ethical media relations in building relationship is responsiveness that is taking media calls and returning media calls may seem like just a good, strategic approach to building the relationship, but it has enormous impact on that all-important trust.

4.2.2.8 Providing relevant, accurate, detailed and timely information

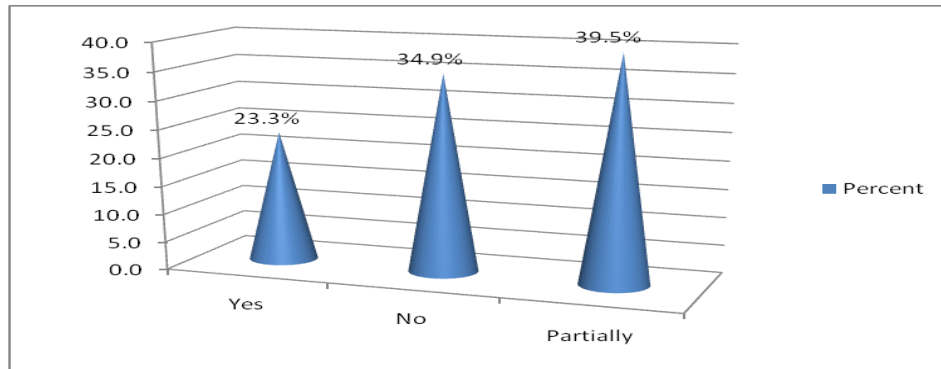


Figure 14: Providing information

As depicted in the chart above, 39.5 percent of respondents indicated that practitioners provide relevant, accurate, detailed and timely information partially. 34.9 percent of them pointed out that they don't provide relevant, accurate, detailed and timely information. 23.3 percent of journalists replied they get relevant, accurate, detailed and timely information from practitioners of the office. Therefore, from the data we can conclude those journalists are not getting appropriate information for their news coverage.

4.2.2.9 Two – way Communication

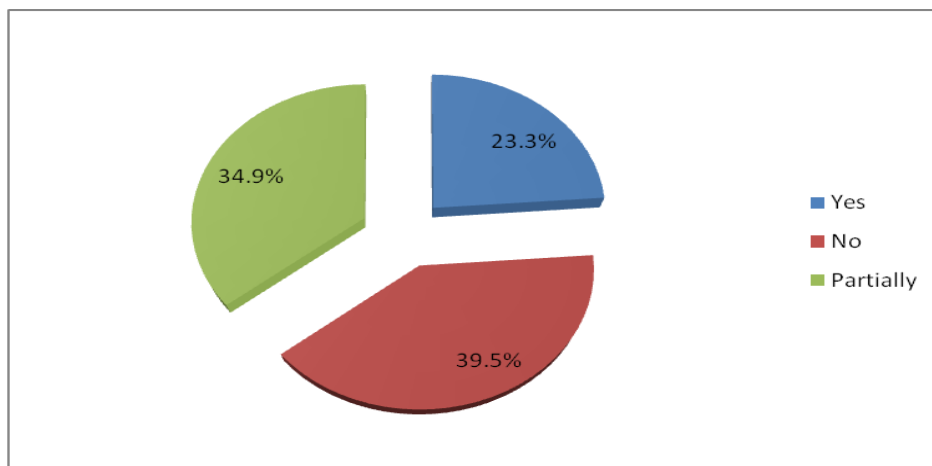


Figure 15: Two-way communication

According to figure 15 above, 39.5 percent pointed out that they are partially open for a two-way communication. 34.9 percent indicated that they are not open for a two-way communication. A further 23.3 percent of respondents revealed that practitioners are open for a two-way

communication. Therefore, the findings indicate practitioners are not playing their role of mediator between the council and the media. The communication between the journalists and practitioners is monologue rather than dialogue.

4.2.3 PR Tools

4.2.3.1 Press Release

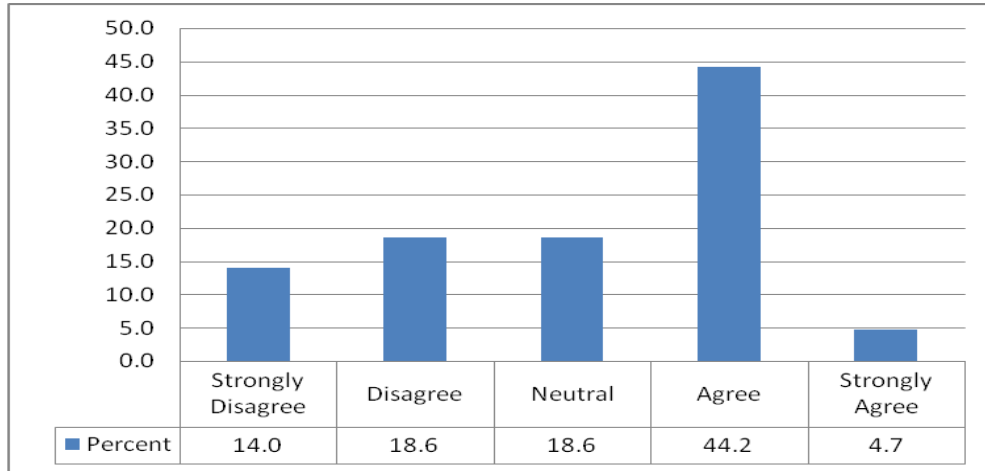


Figure 16: Follow similar news writing format

As depicted in figure 16 above, for the question “is the press release of the PR directorate follow similar news writing format?” 44.2 percent of respondents agreed and 4.7 percent strongly agreed that the press release follows similar news writing format. On the other hand, 18.6 percent disagreed and 14 percent strongly disagreed that the press release follows similar news writing format. A further 18.6 percent are neutral. These findings revealed that the press release sent to the media doesn’t follow similar news writing format.

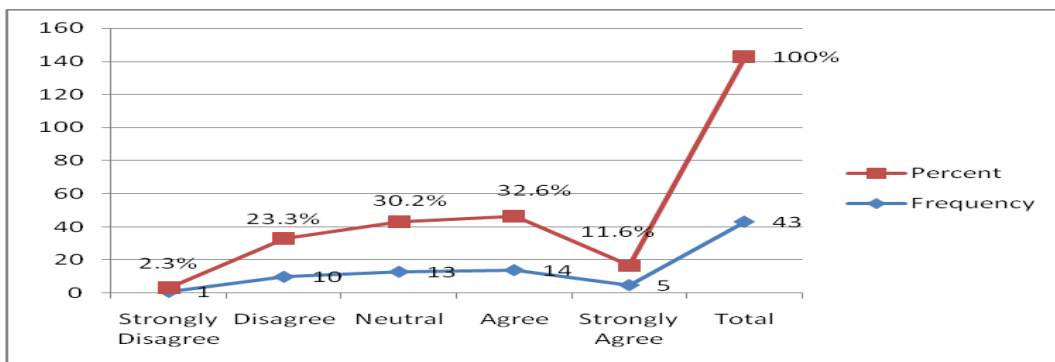


Figure 17: Written directly for target public

As the line chart above, 11.6 percent of the journalists strongly agreed and 32.6 percent agreed that the press release prepared are written directly for the target public, whilst 26.6 percent indicated that the press release not written directly for the target public. A further 30.2 percent are neutral. From the above, it is clear that media relations officers don't write directly to the target public.

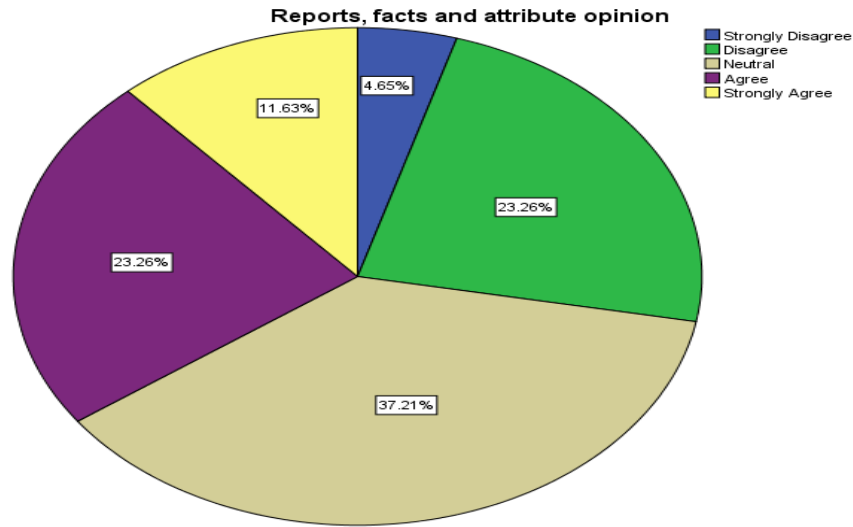


Figure 18: Reports, facts and attribute opinion

As depicted in the figure 18, the findings have revealed that the press release doesn't include reports, facts and attribute opinion. 65 percent of journalists indicated that they don't find reports, facts and attribute opinion in the press release of the national office send to them. 34.89 percent of respondents revealed that they find in the press release reports, facts and attribute opinion.

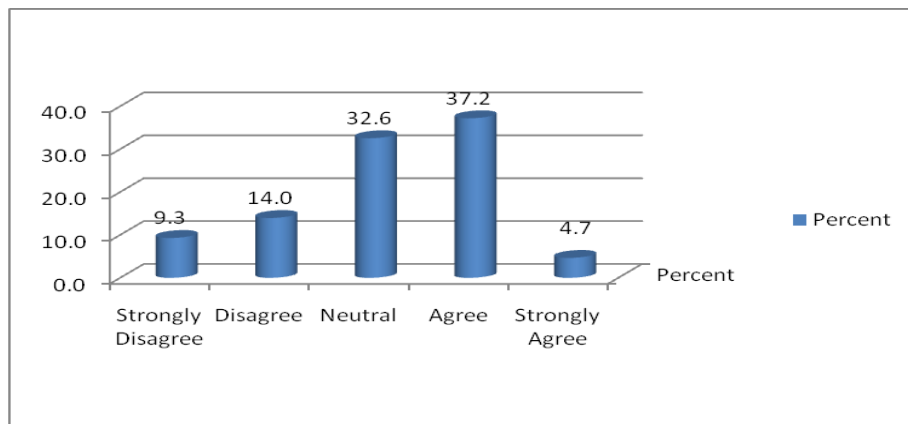


Figure 19: Presented accurately (in terms of facts, spelling, punctuations names...)

The findings have revealed that 41.9 percent of (as in figure 19) journalists agreed on the accuracy of the press release in terms of facts, spelling, punctuation, names..., whilst 32.6 percent are neutral and 23.3 percent of respondents the disagreed on the accuracy of the press release. Therefore, the press releases sent to the media weren't meeting the standards of writing skills.

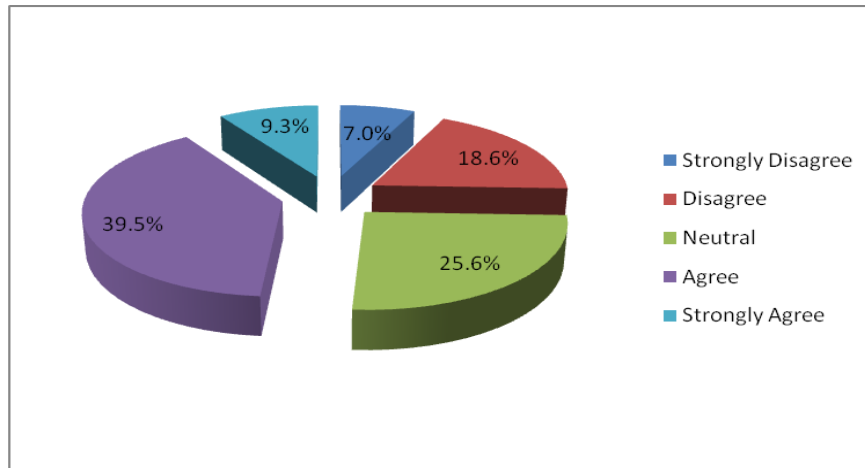


Figure 20: Provides newsworthy information

As depicted in figure 20 above, the findings indicated that 39.5 percent of journalists and 9.3 percent of them agreed on the newsworthiness of the press release of the office. More than 50 percent of journalists don't agree on the newsworthiness of the press release send to their media.

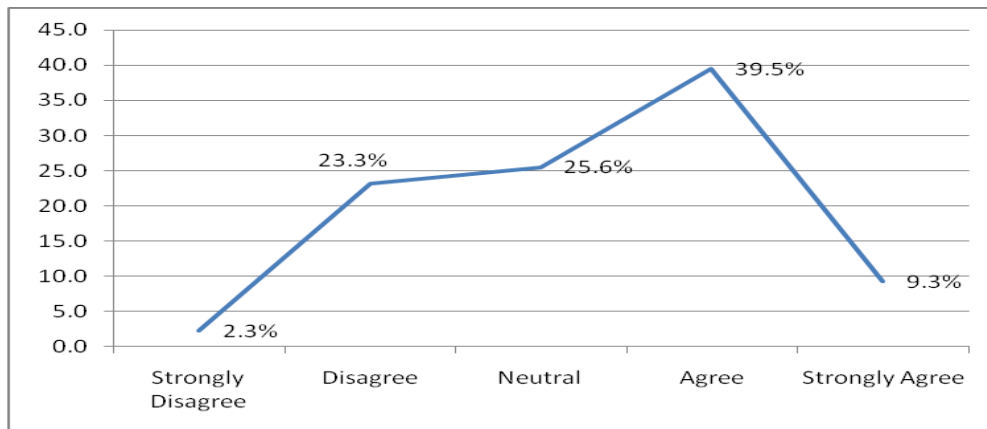


Figure 21: Includes letterhead, contact, and date of intended use

As depicted in the line chart above, 48.8 percent of the respondents agreed that the press release includes letter head, contact and date of intended use. Whereas, 25.6 percent of journalists

revealed that the format doesn't include letterhead, contact and intended date use. The rest 25.6 percent are neutral about the format of the press release.

4.2.3.2 Press Conference

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	6	14.0	14.0	14.0
	Disagree	11	25.6	25.6	39.5
	Neutral	8	18.6	18.6	58.1
	Agree	15	34.9	34.9	93.0
	Strongly Agree	3	7.0	7.0	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Media advisory send ahead of time

As shown above in the table, 41 percent of the journalists revealed that they receive media advisory ahead of time. And 39.6 percent of respondents indicated that they don't receive the advisory ahead of time, whilst the rest are neutral. These findings indicate that there is a gap in informing journalists ahead of time.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	5	11.6	11.9	11.9
	Disagree	5	11.6	11.9	23.8
	Neutral	16	37.2	38.1	61.9
	Agree	11	25.6	26.2	88.1
	Strongly Agree	5	11.6	11.9	100.0
	Total	42	97.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.3		
Total		43	100.0		

Table 3: Press kit that includes background information

Table 3 above indicates that 37.5 percent of reporter and editors agreed that the press conference has press kit that includes background information. 37.2 percent not sure that the kit includes

background information, whereas 23.2 percent disagreed to the press kit includes background information.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	16	37.2	37.2	37.2
	Disagree	11	25.6	25.6	62.8
	Neutral	6	14.0	14.0	76.7
	Agree	7	16.3	16.3	93.0
	Strongly Agree	3	7.0	7.0	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Send audio or video feed or schedule interview

The findings revealed that 23.3 percent of the editors and reporters agreed that the National Council Office sent them audio or video feed or schedule interview whenever they didn't attend the press conference. However, 62.8 percent disagreed that the practitioner didn't send audio, video or arrange interview schedule whenever they weren't able to attend the conference. The above findings, therefore, revealed that the press conference prepared by the National Council Office has lack of inclusiveness and standard to get news coverage.

4.2.4 New Media

4.2.4.1 New Media in disseminating messages to target public

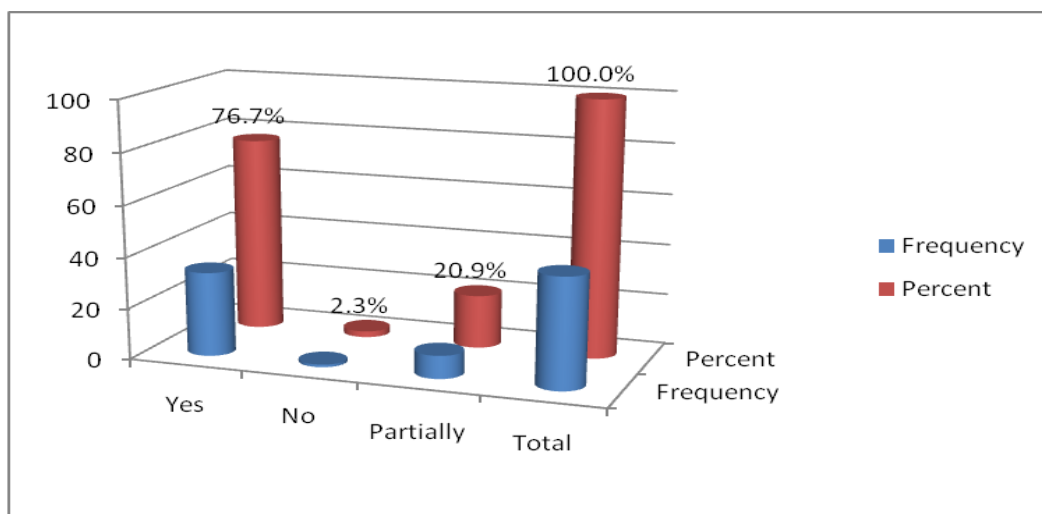


Figure 22: New media and target public

The graph as depicted above reveals that 76 percent of the journalists believed that the new media ((Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, websites...) are important in disseminating messages to target public. This confirms Cornelissen’s (as quoted in Tench and Yeomans) arguments that social media create new ways of reaching and engaging with stakeholders. The development of new media ‘provides an organization with the opportunity to engage in conversations and to tell and elaborate its story or key message to stakeholders or the general public in an interactive way’.

4.2.4.2 Visit websites for searching information about GERD

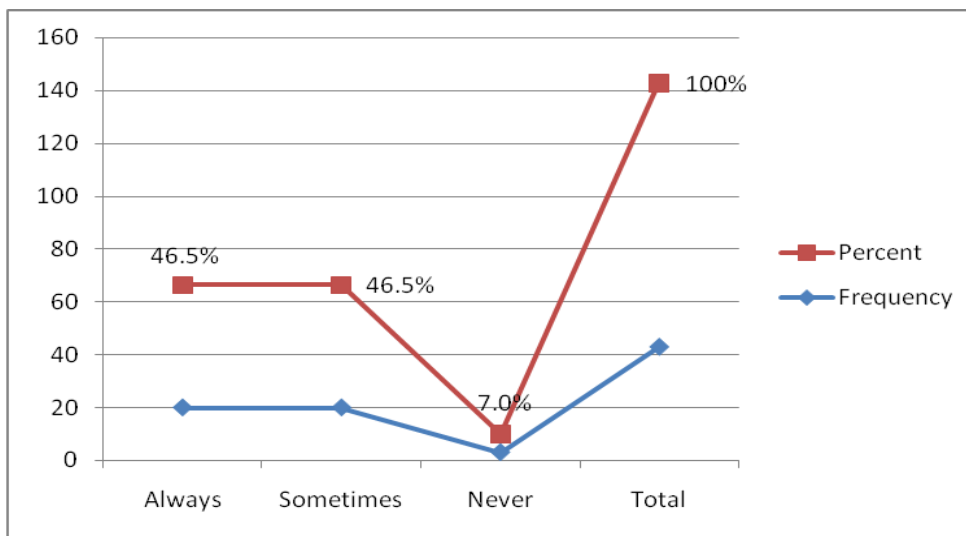


Figure 23: Searching information on websites

Most journalists indicated that they visit websites for searching updates on GERD. 46.5 percent of them visit always for searching information about the GERD construction and 46.5 percent also sometimes visit websites on searching new development of the construction. Only 7 percent never visit for searching updates. These findings support Theaker’s argument that timing was everything for mainstream media relations but now online changes that and most news organizations are now comfortable with breakings news online (2011:45-46).

4.2.4.3 Social media engagement

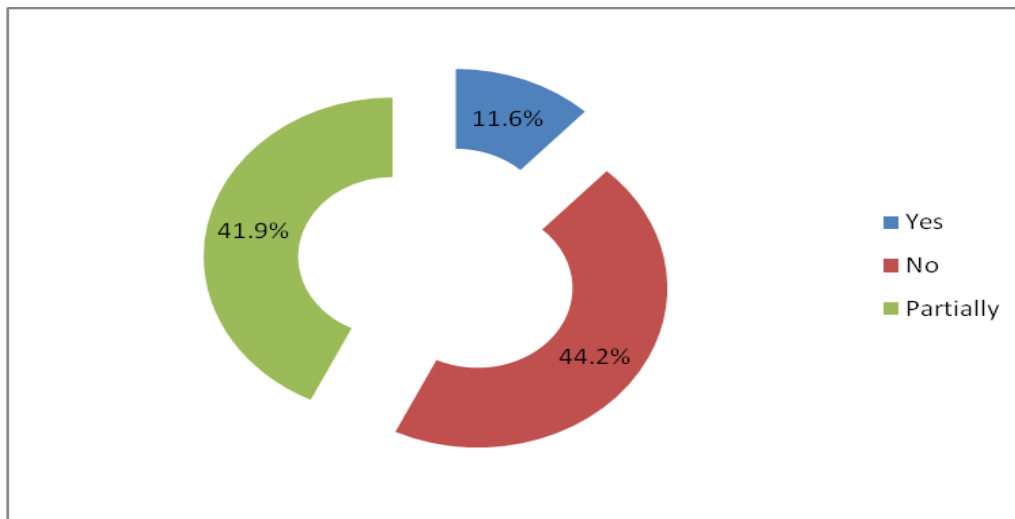


Figure 24: Engagement in social media

The majority of journalists (86.1 percent), shown in figure 24, indicated that the office is not actively engaged in social media and hasn't used in media relations practices. Only 11.6 percent of them revealed that the practitioners use the new media. These findings indicate that there is a gap in opening new opportunity for dialogue with target public.

4.2.4.4 Social media as reliable source in news writing

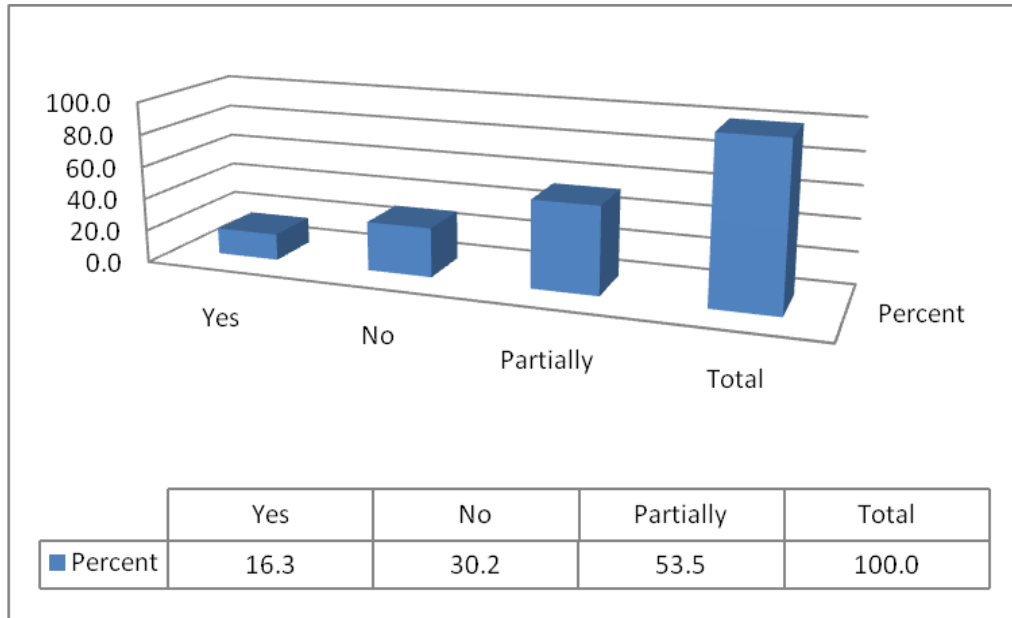


Figure 25: Social media as source of news writing

As shown in figure 25, 16.3 percent of reports and editors use social media as source of their news writing. 30 percent don't use social media for their source of news writing and the rest 53.5 partially use social media for writing news. The findings confirmed that social media can be used for news writing depending the source or writer of the message.

4.3. In-depth Interview

The main purpose of this in-depth interview is to have a full picture on the media relations practices of the National Council office. In-depth interview usually conducted face to face. However, due to the pandemic of COVID 19 the interview was conducted via email with the Director of Public Relations and Media Communication. Structured questions were prepared and sent for the director to give his response using email.

4.3.1 In terms of public relations tools

The Director of Public Relation and Media Communication stated that regarding usage of PR tools and techniques as follows: “We use almost all types of PR tools and techniques such as press releases, press conference, media tour, organizing events (stakeholders meeting, concerts, exhibition, sporting races...) radio and TV advertisement (which is produced and broadcasted

freely because stakeholders have a sense of ownership), documentary, media monitoring and researching. We publish annually magazines and prepare booklets to reach the Diaspora community. We do not use media advisory and send invitation letter a day before the press conference day.”

From the gathered information, the directorate have no a photographic library that help reporters for their news story. The director confirms that they are working on organizing archives for the future generation.

4.3.2 Media relations strategy

According to the director, the National Council doesn't have strategic plan rather has an annual plan depending on the tasks of the office. He said, “Our media relations strategy is to engage all media houses without any discrimination to create awareness about the construction of GERD and public participation. This enables the office to reach the target public.” He added that depending the issues, the directorate selects media houses. The office usually encourages and offers media tour to the site of the dam for reporters and editors to have depth knowledge and updated facts about the current status of the dam because it’s their dam. And it helps them to produce quality news then in return motivate Ethiopians to contribute their share to the realization of the dam.

The director said they selected news story angles for public by its importance and advantage for the public motivation and they also respected the right of the people to access information.

4.3.3 Relationships with media

The director believed that the office has a good relationship with the media because they are always nearer to them. From the data gathered, as much as possible, they try to invite all of media houses without any discrimination. To build a relationship with media said the director we are also monitoring media coverage every day, even we have very limited manpower. Based on the research and monitoring, he added that they have a consultation meeting with journalist once per year and have a media forum that enhances our relationships with journalist and media. He also confirmed that they have up to date media contacts for effective communication with editors.

He said that he always prepared in the office for either good or bad news by presenting the result of media monitoring, gathering opinions from online and mainstream media outlets and then purified the news. Whenever journalists needed urgent information and keep newsroom deadlines he revealed that they contact the editors or reporters through telephone.

According gathered information, the office monitoring and evaluating each news coverage about the office and the dam. If there is distorted message, the office solves the issue by discussion with the editor.

4.3.4 New Media

Regarding the new media, the director said the office have no standard portal but now trying to develop a website for the office with the help of INSA. Currently, National council has no website even if the project needs more interaction with different stakeholders including local and international media houses.

According to the director, the office has its own social media platform like facebook, tweeter, YouTube which is always new updates. He added that they are using facebook to update the followers with news, articles, press releases, photographs and video.

4.4 Discussion and Research Findings

The sample was taken from Tv stations, radio stations, print media, news agency, international media correspondents, and the National Council for the Coordination of Public Participation in the Construction of the Grand Renaissance Dam. It was taken from Addis Ababa. Hence, the interpretations and findings of the study represent only this sample size. So to represent all media operating across the country, generalize and find out the role of media relations practices of the National Office the researcher suggests further study since the project has an impact on our political, economic and social interaction within citizens and riparian countries.

4.4.1 Relationships with Journalists

Journalists and PR practitioners have symbiotic relationships that mean they need each other to do their jobs well (Ronald 2003, p. 159). In media relations practices, building a good relationships and having a positive attitude of the media towards your organization give an

advantage to get a favorable news coverage for the organization and for the reporters and editors have an opportunity to access information easily. According to data gathered, 65.1 percent of journalists have a common understanding on mission and develop relationships with the National Office based on shared news agenda. This finding confirms that PR and Media Communication Directorate of the office performs one of the six distinct day to day activities of media relations of Stephen Waddington (2015a, 2015b) as cited in Tench and Yeomans (2017).

Having a shared news agenda, journalists and the media give priority for any news coverage on the construction of GERD and broadcast advertisements of the office free of charge. Therefore, building relationships based on shared news agenda gave a favorable ground for practitioners of the office to disseminate messages to their target public easily.

The data indicate that the directorate is serving as a trusted source of information for journalists regarding the awareness creation and public participation in the construction of GERD. This implies that the practitioners of the office have been issuing information and interacting effectively with media. This finding supports the argument of Macnamara taxonomy of PR roles and relationships with media as a trusted source in issuing information and interaction with journalists (cited in Zerfass et.al. 2016, p. 6).

4.4.2 Media Relations Practices

As Grunig and Hunts' (1984, p. 22) model of public Relations, PR managers or officers should serve as a mediator between organizations and their public. Journalists revealed that the directorate is not playing its role of mediator between the council and the public. The data indicated that there is no conducive environment for citizens and friends of Ethiopia to engage in public diplomacy aimed at raising awareness among the international community and neighboring countries on the beneficiary facts of the dam for Ethiopia and riparian countries.

Helping reporters and editors' job easier is the major activity of the media relations department or practitioners (Ronald 2008, p. 300). However, more than 70 percent of the respondents in the research revealed that MR practices of the office are not making the journalists' job easier in delivering news packages on time. Knowing newsroom deadline is very important in building relationships with reporters and editors.

Patricia (2007, p. 93 -94) argues that taking and returning media calls is one of the four pillars of ethical media relations to have trusted relationships. Regarding ethical practices of media relations, journalists have reservation on practitioners in responding their call whenever they need information in writing news. This kind of unethical practice can adversely affect the relationships and objectives of the office.

Paul et al. (2004) asserts that to initiate coverage, media relations officer must have a good newsworthy story, know where to publish, familiar with the editorial requirements, and illustrate by way of pictures, photo-opportunities, sound bites and video/CD ROMs clips is crucial. However, the PR and Media communication Directorate of the Office don't have a photographic library. The data gathered indicated that the MR practices have a gap in providing relevant, accurate, detailed and timely information for the media.

4.4.3 Public Relations Tools

Public relations tools and techniques are important in building relationships and getting media coverage. The director indicated that practitioners use almost all PR tools including press release, press conference, media tour, events, newsletters, media monitoring and researching etc.... Conversely, the findings show that press releases sent to the media had lack of quality. Following news writing format, including reports, facts and attribute opinion, presenting accurately and providing newsworthy information are some of the problems identified by the journalists. It indicates that practitioner's writing skill has a gap. Heath asserts that good writing must be reflected in everything, written and verbal, that a practitioner produces (2013, p. 557).

According to information gathered from the director, the office usually sends media invitation letter a day before the press conference day. The directorate doesn't send a media advisory. The Journalists claim that press conference isn't arranged to suit the demand of the media. If they are not being able to attend the press conference, they won't get audio or video feed or schedule for the interview. Tench and Yeomans (2017) & Cornellisen (2014) argue that if press conference arranges to suit the demand of the media, then this is the right approach.

Lack of new media usage is the one of the findings of the research. The director confirmed that the office doesn't have a website. They are trying to develop a new webpage with the help INSA. Since the objectives of the council, using new media has been essential to create awareness and

engage citizens and friends of Ethiopian in public diplomacy in the form of dialogue with stakeholders.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the data analysis and interpretations of data gathered from the survey and interview. All the findings from the data answered the research questions. This chapter presents the conclusion of the study and forwards possible recommendations for the future media relations practices of the PR and Media Communication directorate.

5.2 Conclusion

The main focus of the study is to investigate the role media relations practices of the National Council for the Coordination of Public Mobilization for the Construction of GERD. The objectives of the study are to assess the strategic communications and media strategy of the National Council for the Coordination of Public Participation in the Construction of the Grand Renaissance Dam, to evaluate media relations practices and its effect and to explore tools and techniques used to obtain media coverage.

The findings indicate that the media strategy of the National Council is not defined clearly. The directorate doesn't have a strategic media plan. The director reasons out for not having a strategic media plan is due to the National Council is a project office and the directorate use annual plan.

Evaluating the media relations practices of the National Council and the nature of the project, the researcher concluded that the relationships between the media and the office is based on the shared news agenda and 41.86 percent of journalist preferred as a trusted source of information for their news coverage in creation of awareness and the public participation in the construction of GERD.

Even though the office established media forum and consultation platform once per year with the media, the finding indicates that practitioners aren't mediator between the National Council and the public. The communication is still one-way rather than two-way.

Regarding ethical media relations practices, from the gathered data the researcher concluded that the responsiveness to the media, one of the pillars of ethical media relations practices in building relationships with reporters and editors, practices badly.

In terms of PR tools, the directorate has major problems in writing press releases and inviting media for the press conference. It is usually sent a day before the press conference. Therefore, the researcher concluded that the reporters or editors couldn't have time for preparation and for editors to assign a reporter.

5.2 Recommendations

- To maintain and improve the relationships to a higher level with the media, the National Council should develop a strategic media relations plan till this national project successfully completed.
- The new media enables the National Council to create a dialogue with stakeholders and the international community in order to mediate the interest of the government and the public. The project isn't only a national project but also it becomes an inter regional project in terms of water politics. Therefore, for persuading and lobbying, the directorate should consider all sorts of social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blogs...) and online newsroom in its day to day media relations practices.
- The directorate should produce newsworthy information that includes new facts, research findings, and documentaries for local and international media as its daily media relations practices.
- The media relations officers or director should respond or available to the media inquiry of information to minimize negative news coverage, to avoid distorted messages and to give up-to-date information on the participation of citizens and public diplomacy efforts.
- The PR and Media communication directorate should use the established media forum for influencing gatekeepers, the media agenda (in local and international media) and stakeholders by providing new research findings and facts about the research.

- The directorate should maintain two-way relationships in order to achieve the objectives of the National Council and to have favorable news coverage in local and international media houses.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Questionnaire for Journalists

The following questionnaire is prepared for fulfillment of Master's Degree in Journalism and Communication (Public Relations and Strategic Communication). The objective of the research is to assess the role of media relations practices of National Council for the Coordination of Public Participation on the Construction of the Grand Renaissance Dam.

I believe that your genuine response is valuable for the success of the study as well as for professional development of strategic PR practices in Ethiopia. The data is only collected for academic purpose.

I thank you in advance for your kind cooperation!

General Instruction:

- i. Please don't write your name
- ii. Put "X" in the boxes correspond to your choice
- iii. For multiple choices kindly circle your choice

I. Background

Sex: Male Female

Age: 20 – 25 years old 26 – 30 years old 31 – 35 years old
36 – 40 years old above 40 years old

Educational Background:

Diploma BA Degree MA Degree PhD

Attitude

1. Do you believe that you have a shared news agenda with the National Council for the Coordination of Public Participation on the Construction of the Grand Renaissance Dam?
A. Yes B. No C. Partially
2. Do you think that the National Council is your trusted source of information regarding the awareness creation and public participation in the construction of GERD?
A. Yes B. No C. Partially
3. In your opinion, has the National Council created conducive environment for citizens and friends of Ethiopia to engage in public diplomacy aimed at raising awareness among the international community on the beneficiary facts of the dam for Ethiopia and all riparian countries?
A. Yes B. No C. Partially
4. Do you have enough information about the current status of the construction?
A. Yes B. No C. Partially
5. How often do you or your media give priority for any news coverage on the construction of GERD?
A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never

II. Public Relations Models and Theories

The questions below are concerned about the PR practices of the National Council for the Coordination of Public Participation on the Construction of the Grand Renaissance Dam.

6. Are the PR officers or managers making your job easier in inquiring information?
A. Yes B. No C. Partially
7. In your observation, are PR practitioners or managers familiar with media deadlines?
A. Yes B. No C. Partially
8. Are they providing you newsworthy information?
A. Yes B. No C. Partially

9. Do you think the practitioners (managers) are mediated between the council and the public?

- A. Yes B. No C. Partially

10. Regarding selection of news angle in public diplomacy or awareness creation, do they influence your news?

- A. Yes B. No C. Partially

11. Do you think that National Council build a trusting relationship with you and your media?

- A. Yes B. No C. Partially

12. Do they always answer your call or available whenever you need information?

- A. Yes B. No C. Partially

13. Do they provide you relevant, accurate, detailed and timely information?

- A. Yes B. No C. Partially

14. Are they open for two-way communication?

- A. Yes B. No C. Partially

III. In terms of PR Tools

Questions from 15 – 16 are concerned about Press Releases and Press Conferences prepared by the PR Directorate of National Council for the Coordination of Public Participation on the Construction of the Grand Renaissance Dam. Please put “X” to show your degree of agreement or disagreement on each statement in the table.

	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
15.	Press Release					
A	Follow similar news format writing					
B	Written directly for the target public					
C	Reports facts and attribute opinion					
D	Presented accurately (in terms of facts, spelling, punctuations)					

	names...)					
E	Provides newsworthy information					
F	It includes letterhead, contact, and date of intended use					
16. Press Conference						
A	Media advisory send to you ahead of time					
B	It has press kit that includes background information.					
C	If you or your media are not be able to attend the press conference, they will send you audio or video feed or schedule interview.					

IV. New media

17. Do you think the new media (Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, websites...) are important in disseminating messages to target public?

A. Yes B. No C. Partially

18. How often do you visit websites for searching information about GERD?

A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never

19. In your opinion, does the Office of National Council actively engage in social media?

A. Yes B. No C. Partially

20. Do you think social media is a reliable source for your news writing?

A. Yes B. No C. partially

Thank you!!!

Appendix B

Interview Questions (For PR practitioners of the Office of National Council)

1. Could you tell me your responsibility in the Office?
2. Can you tell me your educational background and field of study?
3. Your work experience, please.
4. What type of PR tools and techniques do you use?
5. Do you have a strategic media relations plan? Explain your media relations strategy.
6. How do you evaluate your relationships with the media?
7. Do you always prepare your office for news either it's good or bad to handle in the most effective way? If you say "yes" how?
8. Do you have up-to-date media contacts?
9. How do you select your news stories for target public?
10. How often do you keep deadlines?
11. When do you call journalist for a press conference and how do you handle it?
12. Have you ever offered research or other insight to media to maintain relationships?
13. Do you have a photographic library for journalists' demand?
14. Do you have a website and social media platform? How to often maintain and keep up to date with background information including press releases, photographs, articles and features materials?
15. Do you make follow up to ensure the story reaches to the right media?

Source: Questions 7 – 15 are adopted from Bland, Theaker & Wrangg (2005, p. 87 -88)