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Addis Ababa University
School of journalism and communications

**An Assessment of the Practices and Challenges of Community
Relations: The Case of Sher Ethiopia PLC Batu Branch.**

By: Workineh Abiyo,

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

Advisor: Yohannes Shiferaw (PhD)

July, 2024, G.C.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this Thesis paper, entitled “An Assessment of the Practices and Challenges of Community Relations: The Case of Sher Ethiopia PLC Batu Town Branch,” and submitted to the School of Journalism and Communications in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts Degree in Public Relations and Strategic Communications, is my original work. All sources are referred to, information derived, and cited have been duly acknowledged and accurately reported. This document has not been previously, in its entirety or part, submitted to Addis Ababa University or any other university to obtain academic qualifications.

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Workineh Abiyo, entitled “An Assessment of the Practices and Challenges of Community Relations: The Case of Sher Ethiopia PLC. Batu Town Branch ” and submitted to Addis Ababa University, School of Journalism and Communication, specializing in Public Relations and Strategic Communications, complies with the regulations of the university and meets the accepted standards concerning originality and quality.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the methods and problems of community relations and practices at Sher Ethiopia's Batu branch. Community interactions are crucial for developing long-term commercial operations and reciprocal advantages for businesses and nearby communities. This study uses a mixed-methods research approach that includes or adopts a combination of qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys to explore Sher Ethiopia's approaches in interacting with the community, evaluating the effectiveness of these approaches, and addressing the obstacles encountered in maintaining positive connections. Qualitative interviews and quantitative survey questions to investigate the strategies used by Sher Ethiopia to engage with the community and foster their relations with the surrounding community, the perceived effectiveness of these strategies, and the challenges encountered in maintaining positive relationships. In any firm, establishing strong relationships with the community is essential for fostering sustainable business operations and mutual benefits for both companies and residents. Key findings emphasize the significance of cultural sensitivity, communication tactics, and the influence of socioeconomic variables on the surrounding community's attitudes. The study analyzes hurdles to the effectiveness of their community relations practices, like as distrust, competing interests, and communication gaps, and also gives recommendations for improving its community relations practices to enhance socioeconomic growth and long-term sustainability both for Batu Town and comparable to the surrounding community and environments. This abstract encapsulates the statement of the problem, scope, research questions, and limitations of the study, organization of the thesis, literature review, methodology, key findings, and implications of the thesis on community relations at Sher Ethiopia's Batu branch. The challenges of the company include diverse matters which are not effectively perceived by the company. In addition, although promotive activities are under the company's hand, other major activities are performed in collaboration with the newly recognized government institute. Finally, taking the above, it is suggested that the company and the regional government should work abdoninally to minimize the negative impacts of the enterprise to improve the capacity of the community. The company should design and rethink its overall community relations activity and practices in a way it fosters its relations with the surrounding community and even to secure its employees safety and a good working environment.

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ListofAcronyms

AAU-	Addis Ababa University
PLC-	Private Listed Company
PR-	Public Relations
CR-	Community Relations
IDH-	Sustainable Development Trade
PPE,	provisions of personal protective equipment
CBA-	Collective Bargaining Agreement
UN-	United Nations
CBA-	Collective Bargaining Agreement
FSI-	(Floriculture Sustainable Initiative)

CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

In Ethiopia, a surge of investors has been observed across different sectors, especially in the Flower industry. Nonetheless, multinational organizations face challenges. These challenges stem from social unrest caused by strained community relations. Specifically, since November 2015, sixty, including Sher Ethiopia PLC, Companies have encountered social unrest in their operating communities. These communities have expressed their perceptions, boycotted factories, opposed construction projects, burned companies, and demanded changes or even termination of the company's operations due to its poor firm-community relations practices. Such issues span across the country and impact also the regional level as well as local companies. Thus, this study seeks to investigate Sher Ethiopia Plc's community relations practices. The insights gained will assist the company in rectifying firm-community relation problems and benefit the company and involved stakeholders. Understanding the analysis results is vital for addressing these concerns to foster these gaps.

In a country like Ethiopia, where 80% of the population still relies on agricultural activities, and there are not many industries, Industrialization like Sher Ethiopia PLC significantly contributes to economic development by creating jobs, reducing poverty, increasing income levels, and fostering underdeveloped economic growth, and most importantly Generating foreign currency for the country. Despite these positive outcomes, companies face various challenges when starting their ventures. One major hurdle is community relations, crucial for organizations' stability, productivity, and continuity. Hence, many firms prioritize community relations programs to maintain positive ties or amicable relations with the community. In the manufacturing sector facing diverse challenges, failure to fulfill social responsibilities can lead to business disruptions like production delays, financial losses, and economic crises that damage sustainability growth which is also true for Sher Ethiopia PLC. Therefore, the researcher is motivated to study the community relations practices of this company by defining the term in the next background part that follows.

1.1. Background of the study

"No man is an island," as has been said by a famous poet called Patricia Swann,(p. 538) once wrote—and likewise, an organization will not be able to succeed by itself if left to its own devices. Organizations constantly interact with and depend on all types of people groups: customers, employeemembers, government officials, other businesses, suppliers, educational institutions, and many others, (Patricia Swann, 2014). Business companies must satisfy investors, produce goods consumers want, and ensure a safe workplace for employees. However, when these companies focus solely on making money, they can be seen as harming the environment, contributing to climate change, and lacking social responsibility. This leads to a strained relationship between businesses and the community, creating a gap that needs to be closed for survival. Without community support, a business's operations could face challenges from an enraged environment that ultimately puts the organization's health at risk.

It's becoming increasingly clear that businesses must go beyond following laws and ethical guidelines to truly be successful. They need to show they are making positive contributions to society and improving people's quality of life. Managing relationships with the community and other external stakeholders is crucial for long-term success. This involves communicating effectively with the community, meeting their needs, and minimizing negative impacts. For these, it is worth to explain about community relations according to scholars.

Swann (2014) indicates that the traditional definition of community has always included groups that are loosely or tightly associated due to a shared characteristic or issue, such as ethnicity, politics, gender, employment, or geographic location. Almost every organization, no matter how large or small, acknowledges its responsibility to the community and realizes that to earn trust and support, it must maintain positive community relations (Seitel, 2017, p. 299; Swann, 2014, p. 538).

To achieve organizational goals and conduct ongoing activities, communication, in particular public relations, is crucial to the planning and execution process. Among its many benefits are relationship building, messaging, and identifying and articulating organizational goals. According to Felkins, it is impossible for an organization to convince the public that it is legitimate and worth supporting without effective communication (Felkins&Croteau-Chonka, 2014).

Public relations serves as a crucial management function. It involves identifying, establishing, and maintaining relationships that are beneficial to both the organization and the public on which it relies for success. According to Cutlip, Center, and Broom (2006), public relations is a strategic communication process that aims to develop mutually advantageous connections between corporations and their audiences (Broom, 2008, p. 46). Public relations relies heavily on community relations because it is a planned activity aimed at establishing an environment in which the organization as well as the community can benefit (Wilcox, 2014). Fresare describes community relations as a special aspect of public relations that is aimed at spreading messages and promoting the organization's image within the community (Seitel, 2017, p. 42). The importance of community relations for the success of any company is emphasized, emphasizing the need for structured communication to maintain healthy relationships among the community and organizations (Seitel, 2017). Specializing in community relations is common among corporate public relations practitioners. This specialization allows practitioners to focus on specific functions within public relations. The researcher has chosen to assess the company's community relations practices based on data indicating a decline in its relationship with the community provided by regional or city administrative investment offices. No previous research has addressed this issue, highlighting the need to fill this knowledge gap through this study. Successful organizations prioritize public relations (PR) and effective communication as key elements integrated into strategic management to achieve organizational goals (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002).

When we discuss organizations, it is evident that there are always individuals in the organizations and the communities around them that have contributed to the organization's existence and the reasons for its continued development; this is why it is important to define the community before any other aspect of it can be considered. Because community relations primarily deal with organizations, the researcher chose Sher Ethiopia. Ethiopia is one of the oldest nations in the world and has abundant natural resources, a vast amount of uncultivated land, and abundant freshwater resources. In addition to its fertile land, Ethiopia also has abundant freshwater resources, which attract companies from all over the world. Thus, Sher Ethiopia PLC is one of them.

As it is accessed on Sher Ethiopia PLC, (2023) the largest rose farm in the world, the organization produces and cultivates flowers and exports them on a large scale to European

markets in Ethiopia, and it is exported to European markets on a large scale. A majority of the roses sold by Sher are grown in Ethiopia. Sher Ethiopia PLC is the largest rose grower in the world, located near Lake Ziway, 1650 meters above sea level, approximately 2 hours from Addis Ababa. As indicated on company's profile, Sher Ethiopia PLC is the largest rose farm in the world. The organization produces and cultivates flowers and exports them on a large scale to European markets from Ethiopia, which is exported to European markets on a large scale. A majority of the roses sold by Sher are grown in Ethiopia. Sher Ethiopia PLC is the rose grower, which is located near Lake Ziway, which is 1650 meters above sea level, approximately two hours drive from Addis Ababa.

Currently, the entire project has approximately 450 hectares of greenhouses. Approximately 150 hectares of land are rented to other growers, while approximately 300 hectares are used for flower production by Sher Ethiopia PLC. First of all, it is necessary to define what community is before discussing further about community relations. The construction of Sher Ethiopia PLC began in June 2005, and it was officially opened on July 1, 2006. Sher Ethiopia lies near Lake Ziway, which is located 160 km south of the capital, Addis Ababa. Therefore, the next part is explained and clearly explained because it was the driving force of this study, which is the statement of the problem.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The working environment for the employees of the company is not attractive, which includes several things. Hardship allowance, unhealthy working situations, and others are challenges for relations between the company and the Surrounding community of Batu Town. Further, the discharges from the company to the Lake without any treatment polluted the water quality of the Zewai Lake, which is the source of the surrounding community, as well as the farmlands and grazing fields of the community. The present study, therefore, intends to critically assess the root causes of practices and challenges to the Company's reputation and community relations within and without the surrounding community.

Business companies are both involved in the production of goods and services for stakeholders, shareholding and cash flow creation for shareholders. They are also engaged in community relations, community empowerment, and the creation of community-based activities and services. According to the researcher's observations from the company's profiles, in Oromia Regional State, specific to Batu town, community relations as several practices for revitalizing

the local community and different challenges. With the above overview, the Sher Ethiopia PLC Building Materials and Distribution Batou Branch was considered for the purpose of this study. Because the research applied a mixed qualitative method of interview, using a deductive approach, this research attempts to assess community relations, best practices, and major challenges in all of the nine dimensions that have been derived from the seven other areas based on the information obtained during the interview.

The role of communities in preventing, managing, or responding to many organizational, social, and economic problems has long been recognized. In the theory of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), engaging business with related communities and other stakeholders is seen as a way of preventing the negative consequences of, or the demand for legal regulation or moral condemnation of, a company's core activities. Engaging in these corporate interactions is a critical first step in ensuring the success of community conflict resolution in business. Honest corporate engagement does not just build trust, it creates open channels for early detection and resolution of community concerns; it identifies opportunities for business-community partnerships that improve community well-being and local value and reduce the risk of unrest, litigation, or shareholder annulment of conflicts with the local communities.

According to Swan (2014, p. 539), issues such as pollution, working conditions, hiring practices, compensation, and the economic impact of the organization on other businesses—even traffic, noise, and other quality-of-life issues—all can grow into major controversies. She argues that an organization can develop a good-neighbor approach to the community that balances the needs and concerns of community partners with its mission. Next, an organization needs to get acquainted with the community and its challenges (Swan 2014, p. 539).

A recent study by BerihuGerezihir and Yohannes Shiferaw (2021) reveals that community relation practices in Ethiopia lag behind those in developed nations. Ethiopian corporate studies focus on CSR within the local context, overlooking community engagement and relationship-building aspects. Issues and challenges surrounding community relations at Sher or similar costudy were notably underscored, and in this study, the researcher also explored what a Sher Ethiopia PLC has played in community relations activity and is carrying out as for CSR in Ethiopia, with a particular focus on the people and the environment in general.

Another study, by Afework G/Hiwot (2019) highlighted a significant decline in fish productivity over the past decade, impacting the livelihoods of local fishermen who rely on fishing for sustenance. The deteriorating water quality in Ziway attributed to extensive irrigation activities has contributed to this decline. The use of various agrochemicals, including harmful substances like indosulfan and DDT28, further exacerbates the situation.

The study emphasizes the adverse impact of the flower company on the environment, suggesting a need for further investigation into community relations to uncover existing challenges. Despite this, detailed information regarding Sher Ethiopia PLC's community engagement practices and factors influencing relationships with the local community remains insufficient, necessitating a deeper understanding for improved comprehension. Therefore, conducting additional research is vital to enhancing relationships between Sher Ethiopia PLC and the surrounding community, fostering mutual collaboration, and achieving common goals effectively.

1.3. Objectives of the study

General Objective

The general objective of this research paper is to analyze the practices and challenges of community relations practices at Sher Ethiopia PLC with communities inside and outside of the company.

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To identify whether there are amicable community relations practices between Sher-Ethiopia PLC and the surrounding community.
2. To investigate strategies followed by Sher Ethiopia PLC to implement community relations practices
3. To identify challenges affecting the community relations practices of Sher-Ethiopia PLC.
4. To study the discharged social responsibilities by the Company for the within and the without communities?

1.4. Research Questions

This study is expected to address the following questions:

1. What type of relationship is practiced amongst the surrounding communities of Batu Town and Sher Ethiopia PLC?
2. How does Sher Ethiopia PLC. Practice community relations among the community and the company?
3. What challenges do exist that bottleneck the company's relations with the surrounding communities?
4. What are the discharged social responsibilities of the company for the within and the without communities?

1.5. Significance of the Research

The significance of this study lies in the pivotal role host communities play in a company's success - securing a smooth operation free of conflict while supporting governance efforts. The influence of host communities on a company's image is undeniable despite lacking explicit legal rights over corporations. Therefore, the practices and challenges of community relations in Sher Ethiopia PLC. Which may contribute to improving the practices of the company and its relations with the surrounding community of Batu Town. The suggested recommendations would help the company undertake improvement measures to promote productivity as well as amicability of relations that are of paramount importance for the company. Researchers in the field and other concerned bodies can also make use of the study as a secondary source of data. Moreover, other companies engaged in flower production can use it to improve their practices. The study can also serve as a policy guide for policymakers to make decisions based on the findings. Lastly, but more importantly, the study would benefit scientific communities and academic fora.

1.6. Scope of the study

The scope of this thesis is centered around Sher Ethiopia PLC Batu Branch factory focusing on community relations and its practices within this specific case and relying primarily on new data collection contrary to secondary data analysis from the gathered datas. Zewai has lovely environment for farming of different types of flowers. Farming flowers is a lucrative business in Ethiopia today. Ethiopian-grown flowers are greatly wanted in European markets, and the country gains hard currency, which investors like to consume more of. To harness the bonanza of

the zone, many investors have come. With the arrival of several investment groups, new job opportunities have been created for locals and others who have come from different corners of the country. To study the practices and challenges of community and company relationships among all firms farming flowers is about impossible in the interest of time, money, and labor. Hence, the scope of this study is limited to critically assessing the within and the without practices and challenges of community relations in the Sher-Ethiopia PLC in Zewai Zone in Oromia Region with its within and the surrounding communities in Batu Town. Data collection took place between the months of April and May.

The researcher opted for Sher Ethiopia PLC as the study's focal point for various reasons. Situated in a multifaceted society with varied interests, Sher Ethiopia PLC stands out as one of the rare sectors producing flowers on a large scale as globally competitive goods, attracting a keen local and regional community interest in its job creation activities. Nestled within a developing country office as part of the privatization initiative, Sher Ethiopia PLC Batu Branch commenced its plantation of the company and the flowers in Ethiopia with Agricultural Mechanization in its infancy stages. Playing a vital role in the socioeconomic activity in Ethiopia, particularly in the Oromia region near Batu town, the company actively engages in corporate social responsibilities within its host community, where ample attention and opportunities abound in order to create good neighbors. Investigating into the concept of community relations extensively, it sheds light on organizations increasingly acknowledging and addressing the needs and concerns of their operating Surrounding communities to maintain operational legitimacy and foster relationships. Although the above mentioned activities tried by the company, While many companies invest significantly in cultivating positive community ties, the specific actions of Sher Ethiopia PLC Batu Branch remained inadequately scrutinized. Thus, this study endeavors to bridge these gaps to be filled.

1.7. Limitations of the study

This study is the first of its type. There is no previously undertaken study on this problem. Hence, there is critical data scarcity that is moderately affected but not seriously enough to be a stumbling block. The researcher, therefore, primarily relied on primary qualitative and quantitative sources to study the practices and challenges between the employee, the hired

company, and the communities surrounding the farm. Further, the farm does not have archives that keep records of the company and only online sources when the researcher asks for documents. The communication office of the company is poorly organized, and there is secrecy about not availing of the wanted documents. The limitations include the limited timeframe and sole focus on one company within a designated area without representing diverse industrial sectors or industries across regions. The last and most deterring issue in this study is the current security issues that are worrying the whole country and the region. Those are some of the limitations faced by the researcher.

1.8. Organization of the study

This thesis is structured into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, research questions, the scope of the study, and the limitations of the study. Chapter two of the study dealt with a review of pertinently related materials available at the Kennedy Library of Addis Ababa University, School of Journalism and Communication, and other relevant educational institutions in the capital. Chapter three is about the methodology that the study has followed as the main guide. They used a mixed methodology as a guiding principle to gather the data needed for the study. Thus, qualitative data for the study are gathered from primary sources through face-to-face interviews with purposively selected samples from within PLC and the surrounding communities in Batu Town. In similar way, quantitative data are gathered through questionnaires that were distributed to samples selected in similar way from the PLCE and communities surrounding the farm. Chapter four presents the analyses undertaken. Data gathered from primary sources through qualitative and quantitative methods were categorized and, lastly, triangulated and ground analytically. The last part of the study is chapter five. It summarized and concluded the study, perhaps coming up with pertinent recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This part of chapter two is devoted to presenting works of other's, from existing literature, facts, theories, and models on PR and community relations practices. The definitions of PR, CSR, and their relations with community relations are discussed as well the challenges of community relations in an organizations.

2.1. Public Relations Functions

Public relations differs from marketing and advertising in many aspects. While marketing and advertising promote a product or a service, public relations promotes the whole organization. The role of modern public relations include managing relationships and solving organizational problems using strategic communications. Seitel (2017) lists about fifteen different functions of public relations (p. 42-43). These include:

- Writing
- Media relations
- Social media interface
- Planning
- Counseling
- Researching
- Marketing communications
- Community relations
- Consumer relations
- Employee relations
- Government affairs
- Investor relations
- Special public relations

- Public affairs and issues

Crisis communication

One of the functions –community relations- is the focus area of this study.

2.2. Defining PR & Community Relations in Relation with CSR

According to Cornelissen (2014), community relations along with corporate social responsibility form an important area of activity in corporate communication (p. 280). There is no consensus on the extent to which companies should engage with the societies in which they operate.

According to Tench & Waddington (2021), it has been acknowledged that both individual people and groups within the community are gaining recognition as significant stakeholders in ensuring companies' long-term stability and prosperity (p. 69). Community relations include the establishment of a mutually beneficial connection between a corporation, organization, or similar entity and the residents in the geographical region where it conducts its operations, to enhance the welfare of the beneficiaries.

Society's awareness of environmental, food safety, and animal welfare issues means positive community relations (Partnerships & Information, 2004). Tench & Waddington argued that CSR is always associated with 'enlightened self-interest'. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to an organization's explicit obligation to its community and other stakeholders.

According to them, there are three levels of impact of an organization on society. Corporate responsibility may be categorized into two levels: fundamental compliance with social laws and regulations, and societal contributions aimed at enhancing the communities in which a corporation works (p. 69–70). According to Neff (2005), community relations refers to the role of public relations in managing the communication networks between organizations and the public. This management aims to benefit both parties involved (p. 174). Kadek and Bayu (2015) observed that the fundamental concept of community relations is that a corporation, by acknowledging its civic duty and showing genuine concern for the welfare of its community, may reap several enduring advantages such as community support, loyalty, and goodwill (p. 3). This is what every company should do and know before even fully engaging in the business.

2.3. The Scopes of Public Relations in Organizations and its Practices

Modern public relations has a vast scope of practice. Some of the activities that come under the umbrella of public relations include web relations, employee communications, video communications, donations, interactive public relations, and several other diversified activities (Lee, 1975). According to Gilaninia et al. since millions of information units are transmitted globally each second, current and reliable information is essential for people. Identifying the duties and responsibilities of government, respecting the rights of citizens, believing in transparency and accountability, controlling the right people to work, and finding the right people to critique as well as evaluating the programs and practices of the organization are all aspects of PR that help an organization achieve its goals”, (Gilaninia et al., 2013:p3).

2.3.1. Community Relations

According to Cornelissen, Corporate citizenship and CSR involve multiple stakeholders and both social and environmental responsibilities. He added Community relations form a specific part of a company’s CSR and relate primarily to communications and engagement with the local communities in which the company resides with its facilities. Whilst community relations is a specialized area of activity within corporate communication, it can have significant consequences for the reputation of an organization if poorly managed.

According to Cornelissen (2014:p370), individuals often like to reside in communities that are clean, ecologically secure, amicable, and socially united.

Various individuals, such as local councilors, shops, and social agencies, collaborate within communities to achieve these common goals. Upon a company's entrance into a community, many people and groups may acknowledge its economic goals, although they will also anticipate a just and helpful benefit for the community. The expectations between companies and communities is thus defined with this implicit ‘psychological contract’. Companies commonly create and assess community support and engagement initiatives based on how they are influenced by the community (Cornelissen, 2014: p.371).

2.3.2. Community Relations Objectives

Research on community relations suggests that gaining community support for an organization is a challenging task. Some individuals express challenges in establishing a harmonious relationship with neighborhood residents, who anticipate assistance from the corporation but oppose any kind of control it may exert in communal matters. An explicitly defined community relations strategy, which articulates the management's ideology and its commitment to the

community, is advantageous for companies. Common community relations aims might encompass the following:

- The purpose is to disseminate information to the community on the firm's activities, including its goods, employee count, growth, and involvement in community programs.
- To rectify misconceptions, respond to criticism, and alleviate any discontent that may arise within the adjacent community.
- To garner community support, particularly during strikes and labor unrest, by clearly articulating the company's position on the relevant topics.
- The purpose is to inform workers and their families about corporate activities and advancements, enabling them to spread positive information about the firm to their friends and neighbors, so favorably influencing views of the organization.
- The objective is to communicate with local government officials about the firm's positive impact on the community and to get their support for legislation that will benefit the business environment in the town.
- The objective is to ascertain the opinions of residents on the organization, including their preferences or criticisms of its policies and procedures, as well as their level of knowledge about its policies, operations, and challenges.
- To foster a personal rapport between management and community leaders, including extending invitations to leaders for plant and office visits, facilitating meetings with management, and providing opportunities to see workers in action.

Our goal is to run a lucrative enterprise that creates employment opportunities and offers competitive salaries, so boosting the community's spending power and enhancing its economy.

- The objective is to collaborate with neighboring companies in promoting economic and social well-being by implementing collaborative community relations initiatives (Seitel, 2017, p.307); (Lee, 1975).

2.4. An Overview of Community Relations and CSR

As stated by Seitel (2017), regarding corporate social responsibility, in the pre-1990s corporations prided themselves on their social responsibility.

Their underlying belief was that due to the significant advantages they enjoyed, companies had an obligation to contribute to society by actively engaging with and financially supporting non-profit organizations dedicated to addressing society's most urgent issues, ranging from impoverishment to educational opportunities to cultural and health advancement (Seitel, F. (2017). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and community interactions have lately become a distinct and specialized field of operation.

It involves CSR communication, reporting and initiatives towards community engagement. The overall aim of these activities is to build strong and lasting relationships with the communities (GarcíaCarballo, 2019). The notion of corporate social responsibility, which involves contributing to one's neighborhood and society at large via voluntary actions and financial aid, is mostly seen in the United States and has been rather sluggish to gain popularity elsewhere (Seitel, 2016, p. 303). Osborn (2007) defines community relations as the deliberate cultivation of mutually advantageous connections with specific groups, with the ultimate goal of establishing a positive reputation and fostering trust (p. 210). Community relations include the actions undertaken by enterprises to build and sustain a mutually advantageous relationship with the communities throughout which they conduct their operations.

The underlying principle of community relations is that when a company accepts its civic responsibility and takes an active interest in the well-being of its community, then it gains several long-term benefits in terms of community support, loyalty, and goodwill, (Kadek&Bayu, 2015, p. 3). Community relations is specifically focused on how organizations build mutual relations with the group of people (community) surrounding them (Kadek&Bayu, 2015, p. 4).

CSR on the other hand is an organization's defined responsibility to its society (ies) and stakeholders. Organizations are integral components of societal infrastructure and, thus, must carefully assess their influence on it (Ralph & Liz, 2009).

The term 'corporation' is derived from the Latin words 'corpus' meaning 'body' and 'corporation' meaning 'formation into a body'. These phrases highlight a united approach to both internal and external communication disciplines. According to Van Riel, corporate communication is a management tool that aims to effectively and efficiently coordinate all intentional ways of

internal and external communication. Its main goal is to establish positive relationships with the groups that the company relies on.

2.4.1. What the Community Expects

Communities anticipate real benefits from organizations, like job opportunities, earnings, and tax money. Seitel (2017) also states that communities have expectations for intangible contributions.

- Physical characteristics. The community anticipates that the company will have a significant impact on the standard of life in the neighborhood via the enhancement of amenities and the diligent maintenance of the grounds and buildings. Community residents are increasingly expressing their opposition to plants that emit smoke and contaminate water and air.
- Involvement. Organizations are expected to appropriately engage in many community concerns, including civic operations, recreational and recreational activities, education, welfare, and assistance for religious institutions. Communities want a steadfast institution that will expand with the region. A stable firm that maintains a consistent level of business activity, workforce size, and tax obligations. Failure to do so may hurt the community by burdening municipal services, overloading schools, straining public buildings, and reducing tax revenues.
- Arrogance. Communities want companies that take pride in being part of the local population. For example, when most Americans think of Battle Creek, Michigan, they associate it with cereal; Armonk, New York, is often associated with IBM; and Hershey, Pennsylvania, is still mostly associated with chocolate. Organizations that contribute to the development of the community sometimes gain a respected status as emblems of pride (Fresar and Seitel, 2016).

According to Neff (2005), public relations focuses on the management of the various communication channels between the public and organizations. In addition to the communities themselves governments, businesses, charitable organizations, and educational institutions can all benefit from the community engagement. This entails that cultivating connections, creating communications, and controlling interactions is vital to accomplish particular goals for the organizations and the community at large, (Hendricks, 2023).

2.4.2. What the Organization Expects

When dealing with society, like the community itself, organizations have also their own expectations. The individuals anticipate receiving sufficient municipal services, including equitable taxes, favorable housing circumstances for workers, a reliable labor pool, and a suitable

level of assistance for the firm and its offerings. If certain standards are not fulfilled, firms may relocate to locations where these advantages are more easily accessible. Given the current Internet-driven company landscape that emphasizes portability and productivity, the tax rate imposed by the government is becoming an increasingly crucial factor for firms (Seitel, 2016). States actively strive to attract businesses by enhancing facilities cost of living, and business regulations about taxes, innovation, and technology (Seitel, 2016).

2.4.3. Community Relations and Corporate Social Responsibility.

According to Robert L Heath, although CSR is often seen as a single idea with a uniform definition in academic works and best practices discussions, the truth is that it is an intricate patchwork made up of several elements. They said that a business enhances its operational standards to handle concerns and effectively resolve issues, such as minimizing its environmental footprint. This endeavor might be mostly voluntary, influenced by activist pressure, or the consequence of legal action. The implementation of CSR in a company might vary, depending on whether it is primarily used as a marketing strategy or whether it is more focused on building community relationships.

The aforementioned observation implies that marketing and community relations are not intrinsically distinct in their objectives. However, addressing the grievances of the community differs from endorsing a benevolent non-profit linked to a marketing theme.

According to his statement, the scope of CSR initiatives should include a wide variety of oil technological services and drilling firm activities that strive to meet CSR criteria related to health, safety, and environmental requirements. Community relations provides a valuable environment for analyzing corporate social responsibility (CSR) as it serves as a platform where firms, NGOs, and government agencies strive to showcase their commitment to being responsible members of the community and their ability to provide targeted community assistance. These kinds of activities may be beneficial regarding reputation, but their value extends beyond that aspect. Beyond only improving marketing, and community ties, effective CSR initiatives can have a number of other beneficial effects. It is conceivable that the near neighbors of a particular industrial concern may not constitute a substantial component of its market, therefore making it unnecessary for the concern to prioritize being a "good neighbor."

CSR views organizations as either harming profits or increasing them through good deeds. Higher CSR standards may lower profits or dividends but generate social capital with other benefits (Heath and Lan Ni, 2010).

2.4.4. Business Ethics (Corporate Citizenship) and CSR

Corporate citizenship and corporate social responsibility (CSR) include a wide range of activities that engage many stakeholders and encompass both environmental and social obligations.

Community relations form a specific part of a company's CSR and relate primarily to communications and engagement with the local communities in which the company resides with its facilities (Cornelissen 2014: p.370). CSR and relations with the community have emerged as distinct areas of focus in recent years, including CSR communication, reporting, and efforts to connect with the community. The primary objective of these actions for an organization is to establish robust and enduring partnerships with the local populations (Cornelissen, 2014, p.359).

2.4.5. Corporate citizenship (Business Ethics)

Organizations are recognized as legal entities that possess both rights and responsibilities, essentially functioning as citizens inside the states in which they conduct their operations. Corporate citizenship encompasses the range of actions that corporations engage in to satisfy their considered responsibilities as participants in the community (Cornelissen, 2011, p.362).

Corporate citizenship refers to expressions of involvement of an organization in matters concerning society as a whole. There is no text provided. The fundamental concept is that individual people have certain entitlements and obligations within society. Corporate citizenship encompasses voluntary tasks, corporate volunteering, donations to charities, the backing of belonging healthcare and educational initiatives, and environmental programs. While not legally required, these responsibilities have become customary expectations of corporate citizens (Cornelissen, 2011).

Corporate citizenship, as defined by the World Economic Forum, refers to the impact a corporation has on society via its primary business operations, social investments and philanthropic initiatives, and involvement in public policy. The effect of a corporation is determined by how it handles its economic, social, and environmental interactions with many stakeholders, including shareholders, workers, consumers, suppliers, governments, and

communities.

CSR, or Corporate Social Responsibility, refers to the ongoing dedication of businesses to enhance economic growth and improve the well-being of their employees, their families, and the broader community and society as a whole (World Business Council for Sustainable Growth, 2002). CSR, in its strictest sense, refers to the acceptance of non-financial obligations that a corporation is required to fulfill under a specific agreement with stakeholders in society. This contract primarily functions as a moral agreement, requiring the fulfillment of social and environmental obligations to stakeholders, to be recognized as a responsible corporate entity. By doing so, the company not only gains a positive reputation but also obtains permission to operate.

2.5. On the Role of Community Relations in Public Relations

Community relations can be defined as the various forms of activity and communications used by companies to set up and keep mutually beneficial relationships with the communities in which they run.

2.5.1. On the Community Relations' Expectations

For an organization to maintain peaceful coexistence with the community, it must possess three essential skills: (1) assessing the community's knowledge and perception of the organization, (2) effectively communicating the organization's perspective to the community, and (3) engaging in negotiation or mediation when there is a notable disparity between the organization's position and the community as well as its members. Every company strives to cultivate favorable responses among its community.

This becomes increasingly difficult in the face of protests from and disagreements with community activists. Community relations play a crucial role in analyzing the community, gaining insight into its composition and expectations, and effectively and consistently communicating the organization's narrative (Seitel, 2016, p.303).

2.5.2. An Evaluation of corporate communication activities

For an organization to peacefully coexist within its community, it must possess three specific skills: (1) assessing the community's knowledge and opinions about the organization, (2) effectively communicating the organization's perspective to the community, and (3) resolving

any major conflicts or differences between the organization and the community and its members. Every company strives to cultivate favorable responses among its community. This task gets more challenging when confronted with opposition and discord from community activists. Community relations are crucial for analyzing and understanding the community's composition, and expectations, and effectively communicating the organization's narrative without interruption (Lee, 1975; Seitel, 2016, p.303).

2.5.3. What the Community Relations Expectations are?

For an organization to peacefully coexist within its community, it must possess three specific skills: (1) assessing the community's knowledge and opinions about the organization, (2) effectively communicating the organization's perspective to the community, and (3) resolving any major conflicts or differences between the organization and the community and its members. Every company strives to cultivate favorable responses among its community. This task gets more challenging when confronted with opposition and discord from community activists. Community relations are crucial for analyzing and understanding the community's composition, and expectations, and effectively communicating the organization's narrative without interruption (Lee, 1975; Seitel, 2016, p.303).

2.5.4. Evaluation of corporate communication, challenges, and activities

An accurate estimation primarily revolves around the final goal of the user and the eventual attainment of objectives. The achievement of pictures, identities, and reputations will be evaluated by customers, other interested parties, and the public. The purpose of this review is to highlight the various options available in the management of knowledge and information that can be utilized to enhance corporate communication activities. By using these tools and processes, organizations can achieve positive outcomes such as problem-solving, client satisfaction, reputation restoration, favorable public perception, and improved organizational capabilities (Oliver, 2004).

2.5.5. Organizational Responsibilities to the Stakeholders

Shareholder analysis is a method used by companies to identify and define the groups and people who have a meaningful connection with the company.

Organizations have particular duties towards partners, including their obligations and commitments to those with a vested interest. Partner investigation points to recognize and get it these bunches, which incorporate representatives, clients, providers, financial specialists, communities, and controllers. This investigation is significant for adjusting organizational procedures with partner desires and should construct feasible connections and guarantee long-term victory.

Key partners in for-profit organizations are outlined in Tench & Waddington (2021) and ordinarily drop into inside or outside categories, each with one of a kind interface and impacts. Representatives are an essential inside partner bunch whose well-being straightforwardly impacts organizational execution. Companies must give reasonable compensation, secure working conditions, proficient improvement openings, and a positive work environment. Locks in representatives in decision-making forms and recognizing their commitments cultivates dependability and boosts efficiency.

Clients are imperative to any for-profit organization, requiring high-quality products/services, reasonable estimating, amazing client benefit, information security, and protection security. Suppliers play a basic part within the supply chain by keeping up reasonable connections, convenient installments, moral sourcing hones, and considering environmental/social impacts. Speculators & shareholders anticipate budgetary returns & maintainable development requiring straightforward announcing & vital arranging for steadiness. Reliable communication & moral hones construct believe.

Communities where organizations work are pivotal partners requiring bolster for neighborhood economies, minimizing natural affect & locks in in CSR activities such as instruction & healthcare ventures. Compliance with laws/regulations is key obligation guaranteeing adherence to industry measures whereas locks in in moral campaigning is imperative. Adjusting stakeholder interests includes key administration & moral contemplations to realize commonly advantageous results in the midst of clashing needs. Procedures incorporate customary communication through reports/meetings/digital stages tuning in to criticism/ reacting to concerns locks in partners in decision-making CSR exercises advancing societal well-being tall moral benchmarks straightforwardness responsibility astuteness administration systems. Stakeholder analysis is a methodical approach to identifying and categorizing the organizations and people who have a substantial connection with a business. They might be characterized as individuals who have a

personal stake in the organization's activities. Figure 5.3 illustrates the primary stakeholders found in for-profit firms, as described by Tench and Waddington (2021, p. 104). Stakeholder analysis is a methodical approach of identifying and delineating the groups and people who have a substantial connection with an organization. They might be characterized as individuals who have a significant stake in the organization's activities. Figure 5.3 illustrates the primary stakeholders of for-profit firms, as described by Tench and Waddington (2021, p. 104).

Definition: Key stakeholders encompass individuals, groups, or entities with a vested interest in the outcomes, activities, or decisions of an organization or initiative. Characteristics: Stakeholders can be internal or external to the organization. They possess varying degrees of influence, power, and interest in the organization's affairs. Stakeholders may include employees, investors, customers, suppliers, regulatory bodies, community groups, and more. Retrieved from (Who are Key Stakeholders, How to Identify This is keys, & Their Roles (9cv9.com) As stated on Tench, (2021) Stakeholder analysis is a clear way of defining those groups and individuals who have a significant relationship with an organization. According to the author, considering corporate social responsibility (CSR) from the viewpoint of stakeholders may help the organization establish stronger relationships with them and enhance the exchange of information and mutual understanding (Grunig and Hunt, 1984; Tench& Waddington, 2021, p. 104).

2.5.6. Corporate responsibility and irresponsibility

Tench (2021) presents the CSI-CSR model as a conceptual instrument that facilitates the transition from a pyramidal or level-based approach (as proposed by Carroll) to a more flexible corporate framework for communication. The model is presented, explained, examined, and used for this purpose (p108). He said that firms not only want to achieve success by engaging in ethical practices, but also some are motivated to do so out of a sense of moral obligation. He emphasized that not all firms effectively communicate their CSR activities. A CSI-CSR audit may assist firms in identifying their strengths and areas for development in terms of their social responsibility procedures. Such an activity may serve as an effective means of communication (Tench& Waddington, 2021:109).

Kotchen and Moon (2011) conducted an empirical study using a comprehensive 15-year panel dataset that includes data from around 3,000 publicly listed firms in the USA. Their findings

support the argument that corporations participate in corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities to counterbalance their corporate social irresponsibility (CSI). CSI, or Corporate Social Innovation, is a complex and intellectually stimulating alternative to CSR, or Corporate Social Responsibility. It is extensively examined as a subject of study in a collection of articles published by Tench et al. (2014). As previously said, there is a growing recognition that implementing a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy may be a morally upright and financially advantageous method of corporate management. Ethics and profit are not mutually incompatible concepts but rather have a mutually beneficial connection known as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). It further expanded by including

The concept of businesses taking on a greater responsibility for creating and balancing both economic and social value, known as the 'higher ambition' (Beer et al. 2011), is gaining more acceptance. This is happening at the same time as the negative effects of economic recession on consumer and societal confidence, as well as trust in businesses and other institutions, are increasing. The sources cited are Ralph and Liz (2009), Tench and Yeomans (2017), and Tench and Waddington (2021).

2.5.7. Global aspects, The Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact

Corporate sustainability begins with a company's core values and a strategy to doing business based on principles. This entails conducting operations in a manner that, at the at least, fulfills the essential obligations of the organization in the domains of human rights, labor, environment, and anti-corruption. Ethical firms consistently uphold their beliefs and principles throughout all locations, recognizing that positive actions in one region cannot compensate for negative impacts in another. According to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, companies can ensure long-term success by integrating the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact into their strategies, policies, and procedures, and by fostering a culture of integrity. By doing so, companies fulfill their fundamental obligations to both people and the planet.

The Ten Principles of the United Nations Global Compact are based on several key documents, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Labour Organization's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and the United Nations Convention Against Corruption. This information was obtained from an online resource.

Human rights

Principle 1: Businesses must uphold and honor the safeguarding of human rights that are globally recognized and declared; and Principle 2: Businesses must ensure that they do not participate in or support any acts that violate human rights.

Work

Principle 3: Businesses must support the freedom of individuals to join together and negotiate as a group; Principle 4: Businesses must eradicate any instances of forced or mandatory labor;

Principle 5: Businesses must effectively put an end to child labor; Principle 6: Businesses must eliminate any form of discrimination in relation to employment and occupation.

The natural surroundings or conditions in which living organisms exist.

Principle 7 states that businesses should use a cautious approach when dealing with environmental difficulties. Principle 8 emphasizes the need of taking action to promote greater environmental responsibility. Principle 9 encourages businesses to assist the development and spread of environmentally friendly technology.

Principle 10 of the UN Global Compact states that businesses should actively combat corruption in all its manifestations, such as extortion and bribery. Obtained from (The Ten Principles | UN Global Compact).

2.5.8. Corporate relations in the view of community engagement

Corporate relations programs focus on an organization's public image and reputation. Their main goals are to persuade or convince the public to perceive the company in a positive light. According to Wells et.al. (2003), the public relations expert Fraser has said that "it takes a great deal of time to build a favorable image for a corporation but only one slip to create a negative public impression." The goal of reputation management in a corporate relations program is to strengthen the trust that stakeholders have in an organization. Since corporate reputation is a perception, it is earned through deeds, not created by advertising. (Cornelissen, 2014); (Cornelissen, 2011).

2.5.9. Corporate Social responsibility (CSR)

As Garcia Carballo (2019) mentioned in his book, Corporate Social Responsibility, which is mostly abbreviated as CSR, involves actions that go beyond financial implications of

organizations. These actions are expected by society and often relate to environmental and social issues (Cornelissen, 2011:p186) (GarcíaCarballo, 2019).

Considering a Stand for Society as an entire Engagement crucial area of focus for professionals in the corporate world is the same as participating in the organization's CSR programs. Public relations which play the vital and executives role in this area as they various stakeholders whose opinions and behaviors impact the company's performance and reputation. They are key decision-makers in developing, implementing, and communicating CSR initiatives (Broom, 2008).

CSR is there for often referred to as corporate citizenship or corporate responsibility which is a social responsibility activity. Officially the Business leaders and stakeholders agree in the basis that these programs of corporate social responsibility practices significantly influence a company's reputation. Research by the Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship shows that only ratings of products and services have a higher impact on reputation than CSR initiatives, (Broom, 2008).

Public relations professionals must be well-versed not only in social media but also in analytics tools to understand attacks and respond appropriately. Additionally, they can assist companies in crisis preparation to effectively manage potential threats, (Hill & Knowlton, 2020).

2.5.10. Challenges in the practical engagements with the stakeholders

According to (Cooper, 2024), trying to uncover and hide what the community publicly wants and truly desires, as a result, various obstacles can arise and hinder your efforts. In organizations dealing and facing challenges is obvious, in facing the common challenges in community engagement and, more importantly, how to overcome this! There are certain points mentioned as follows. So buckle up as we guide you on steering clear of typical community engagement consequences.

2.6. The establishment of the Sher Ethiopia PLC Near Batu Town

According to the information which is obtained from the company's website, in Sher Ethiopia plantation dates back to 2005GC. This company is primarily established for the production of flowers like roses. The base formation of Sher Ethiopia PLC is centered around rose cultivation, which is facilitated by greenhouses which are built with steel frames and plastic coverings. As of

the data retrieved, Approximately 12,500 workers across three farms are involved in the cultivation, harvesting, grading, and packaging of the roses, with a daily output ranging from 2.5 to 4 million roses. These roses are then transported to the Addis Ababa airport by Ethiopian Airlines for distribution in Europe, solidifying Sher Ethiopia's position as a leading rose provider in Europe and the world. The fertile soil, favorable climate, abundant rainfall, and optimal altitude in Ethiopia create ideal conditions for rose production, contributing significantly to the country's horticultural sector, excerpted from, (*Social Responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia*, 2022); (Social responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia).

2.6.1. Sher Schools

Sher Ethiopia also extends its social responsibility through educational initiatives, providing education to over 6,500 children at three different locations, offering free schooling to children of employees and the local community. The curriculum of schooling at Sher Schools aligns with the Ethiopian government's standards, emphasizing native languages like Amharic and Afan Oromo alongside English, resulting in consistently high-quality education recognized by the Ethiopian government, Excerpted from the, (*Social Responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia*, 2022).

Furthering its commitment to social welfare, Sher Ethiopia established the Barnhoorn Scholarship in 2021, honoring Mr. Gerrit and Mrs. NelBarnhoorn for their instrumental role in expanding Sher Schools and enhancing educational opportunities for thousands of children. This scholarship supports four students annually, aiding in covering living expenses and educational costs at Ethiopian institutions.

Operationalizing ethical standards, Sher Ethiopia upholds the Ethical Trading Initiative Base Code, ensuring fair labor practices and offering a range of benefits to its employees, including a tangible contract, competitive salaries, pension plans, attendance bonuses, and free medical care. The company's holistic approach extends to the healthcare sector, exemplified by Sher Hospital, which caters to the healthcare needs of thousands of individuals in the Ziway area.

Emphasizing community welfare, Sher Ethiopia invests in projects like providing clean drinking water to nearby villages and promoting sports through its football stadium. Additionally, the company actively engages in social activities such as fostering religious harmony by supporting the construction of Orthodox churches.

Based on the information available on the company's websites, 1,200 kindergarten students receive a free hot meal every morning. Along with 215, there are also 155 support staff members who handle administrative tasks, cleaning, cooking, maintenance, and security. The majority of funding for Ziway and Adami Tulu schools comes from Sher and Fairtrade. Annually, two new classrooms are built in Adami Tulu as per (Social responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia).

The curriculum for the children is determined by the Ethiopian government. Sher school's curriculum mirrors that of the government. Most of the teaching is done in Amharic and Afan Oromo, in line with English standards. This approach has proved its effectiveness over time and contributes to maintaining a high level of education. Government evaluators assess our schools based on criteria like class size, facilities, and teaching quality. Our schools have consistently been recognized as among Ethiopia's top educational institutions for many years.

As retrieved from (Social responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia).

‘Barnhoorn Scholarship’

The company, Sher Ethiopia PLC has also a school called Sher-Schools which was established by Mr. Gerrit and Mrs. NelBarnhoorn. In 2006, with only four classrooms and a few teachers, the school began its journey. According to them, it boasts four locations and around 7,000 students, ranging from four to eighteen years old. None of this have been achievable without the unwavering support of Mr. Gerrit and Mrs. NelBarnhoorn. Thanks to their dedication and hard work, thousands of children now brighter prospects in life. We deeply value their contributions. To honor their 50th wedding anniversary and in of all they have done, we introduced the "Barnhoorn Scholarship" in 2021. This scholarship has a fund which comes from companiesprofite as it is retrieved, (Social Responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia).

Every year, two male and two female fourth-year students are awarded this scholarship. It assists them in covering some living expenses and educational fees at any Ethiopian educational institution of their choice. The main aim of this scholarship is to support exceptionally gifted students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Retrieved from Social responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia



Fig:1. Picture of the scholarship awarded students from Sher Ethiopia School students,Retrieved From the [Social responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia](#)

John Barnhoorn was pleased to present the initial four scholarships in 2022 to TensaeMinase, YidnekachewMasresha, Aziza Suleman, and KalebJemal. In a statement from his parents, he expressed their delight at the transformative of Sher School since its inception in 2006 GC.

Sher values its employees' commitment to social responsibility. They adhere to the Ethical Trading Initiative Base Code based on International Labor Organization (ILO) guidelines the organization provides various benefits for its employees, including long-term, competitive salaries, pension plans, attendance bonuses, and healthcare coverage. Moreover, employees are encouraged to join unions, and their children receive free education at Sher School under the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), As retrieved from ([Social responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia](#))&Excerpted from the,(*Social Responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia, 2022*).



Fig:2. Part of CSR of Sher Ethiopia's Hospital built for the community and employees.Excerpted from the [Social responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia](#)

Established in 2007, Sher Hospital serves approximately 600,000 people in the Ziway area annually. The hospital treats around 100,000 patients each year with a dedicated team of 75 health professionals and 90 support staff members ensuring quality care. Sher Hospital offers free healthcare to locals, students, and employees while requiring others to contribute a nominal fee towards medical expenses. Excerpted from the, (*Social Responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia, 2022*).

Sher Ethiopia emphasizes community relations and corporate social responsibility. However, there is a need for further research to understand the impact of these practices fully. The company operates with a focus on corporate social responsibility within the Zeway town section of the Oromia region, excerpted from (*Social Responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia, 2022*), ([Social responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia](#)).

Through endeavors such as health training programs for new hires, safety inductions, and provisions of personal protective equipment (PPE),

Sher Ethiopia aims to maintain a safe work environment for all employees.

A structured system is needed to meet society's needs. The researcher chose to study community relations in Sher Ethiopia, with a focus on Sher-Ethiopia in the Zeway town area of the Oromia region. The company's goal is community relations, operating with a motto of corporate social responsibility. Yet, there is not enough researched data available no examination or investigations of its practices, and no identification of factors impacting interactions between the surrounding community and organizations, as excerpted from (*Social Responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia*, 2022), ([Social Responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia](#)).

2.6.2. The contributions of the Sher Ethiopia on the issues of COVID 19

The COVID-19 awareness initiatives launched by Sher Hospital have been instrumental in educating communities about preventive measures against the pandemic. Vaccination campaigns were conducted successfully in collaboration with local authorities.

In conclusion, Sher Ethiopia places great value on its workforce by ensuring fair labor practices and providing essential benefits to all employees while fostering positive relationships within the community through corporate social responsibility initiatives, as excerpted from (*Social Responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia*, 2022),

2.6.3. Social Responsibility

Sher highly values its workers. The company has adopted the Ethical Trading Initiative's Base Code, which is derived on the criteria set by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

All Sher workers have direct and indirect benefits:" Retrieved from, ([Social responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia](#)) performing work-related tasks.", Retrieved from, ([Social responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia](#)).

Workers at a farm in Ziway Sher Ethiopia PLC may use the clubhouse not just for their lunch and supper breaks, but also for commemorating entertainment of their special occasions.



Fig:3. Picture of the Sher Ethiopia Employees cafeteria.Retrieved From the [Social responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia](#)

Sher is very grateful to its staff. Based on International Labour Organization (ILO) standards, we have implemented the Ethical Trading Initiative Base Code. There are direct and indirect rewards for all Sher employees:

Sher Ethiopia places significant importance on community relations and corporate social responsibility. Further research is required to comprehensively understand the impact of these initiatives. Operating primarily with a focus on corporate social responsibility in the Zeway town area of the Oromia region, Sher values its employees greatly. By adhering to the Ethical Trading Initiative Base Code, which aligns with the International Labour Organization (ILO), all Sher workers receive both direct and indirect benefits.

As noted in the company's profile on their website, every employee at Sher Ethiopia holds a permanent contract, eliminating the need for seasonal or daily workers. There is no text provided. Working at Sher offers many advantages, such as a pension scheme, complimentary healthcare, and a competitive salary package with extra incentives.

Employees are also allowed to join a union without facing any legal repercussions. Furthermore, a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) is in effect. Children of workers are provided with free admission to the Sher School, beginning at the age of four.

All new hires undergo training on health and safety protocols on their first day and are provided with essential personal protective equipment (PPE) to mitigate risks within the workplace.



Fig:4. Pictures that show the entertainment area of the employees, obtained from (Social Responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia, 2022).

2.6.4. Water Supply Situation in Ethiopia

It is well known that our country, Ethiopia, faces challenges with regards to access to clean drinking water, especially in rural areas. Regrettably, a significant number of wells in these areas contain water that above the acceptable amounts of fluoride.

As a result, Sher Ethiopia has taken steps to support communities in villages like Bochessa and WorjaWashgula by installing water taps and expanding water pipelines. The next community on the list for this project is AlutoGulba (Source: Social Responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia, 2022).



Fig: 5. Drinking water service to the surrounding community which is part of CSR. Retrieved From the [Social responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia](#)

2.6.5. Sports Initiatives

Sher Ethiopia boasts its own football stadium where staff football matches are held regularly. Noteworthy is the fact that the Ethiopian national team, Bunna, has also had the privilege of playing at our stadium (Reference: Social responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia).



Fig6: part of the CSR of the Sher Ethiopia, standard Football stadium near the Lake view

Retrieved From the [Social responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia Social responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia](#))

2.6.6. Contribution to Religious Organizations

Ethiopia is rich in religious history with various churches scattered around Zeway. The majority of people in this area follow Orthodox Christianity. Among the many churches in the region, St. Gabriel Spiritual College near Lake Zeway stands out for providing spiritual courses and religious teachings. In line with its commitment to social responsibility, Sher Ethiopia has contributed significantly to building a beautiful Orthodox Church (Source: Social Responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia, 2022).



Fig7: Part of the CSR of the Sher Ethiopia’s contribution to the St Gabriel church,

Retrieved From the [Social responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia Social responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia](#)) (*Social Responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia, 2022*).

2.6.7. Impactful Social Responsibility Efforts

Being the largest producer of Fairtrade roses globally, Sher Ethiopia prides itself on employing 116 individuals with disabilities among its workforce. With employees from over 36 districts across Ethiopia, it plays a significant role in contributing approximately 4% of all foreign currency inflow into the country, (Reference: Social responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia).

2.6.8. Collaboration with IDH

The cooperation projects with IDH focus on implementing efficient waste management, reforestation activities, land restoration initiatives, providing training on Good Agricultural Practices to smallholder farmers, and preserving the water hyacinth (Source: Social responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia).

2.6.9. Role of IDH in Sustainable Trade

The Sustainable Trade Initiative, sometimes referred to as IDH, collaborates with diverse stakeholders including corporations, governments, and civil society groups to advance sustainable trade practices throughout global value chains. Their work spans across different industries and regions including Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Focused on achieving Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 through gender equality initiatives and addressing issues like deforestation and climate change (Reference: Social Responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia).

Collaborating with organizations like IDH, Sher Ethiopia aims to promote sustainable trade in international value chains, prioritizing gender equality, environmental preservation, and economic empowerment to advance the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Through these multifaceted initiatives, Sher Ethiopia continues to play a pivotal role in the sociocultural and economic landscape of the region. Excerpted from the, (*Social Responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia, 2022*).



Fig8: Part of the CSR of the Sher Ethiopia’s engagement on planting treesto concerve the environment.Picture is Excerpted from the [Social responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia](#)

The FSI (Floriculture Sustainable Initiative) unites leaders in the floriculture industry and supply chain, to achieve a minimum of 90% sustainability in their flower and plant cultivation endeavors. This expanding consortium of firms and stakeholders collaborates to exchange information and promote environmentally friendly manufacturing and commerce. The pictures were sourced from the Social Responsibility - Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia, 2022. Obtained from the Sher Ethiopia Ethiopia's Social Responsibility

2.7. Theoretical Framework

This study focused on three areas of PR concepts: the general PR theory, Corporate Social Responsibility Theory and Community Relations Theory in particular. Thus, the study relies on the combination of Relationship Management PR Theory, PR Communication Models, and Community Relations Theory.

2.7.1. Communication theories in public relations

Debating communication theories in public relations means seeing PR as a form of communication “Many different definitions of public relations have been offered, but it is generally accepted that public relations is strategic communication between an organization and

its publics” (p. 324). Indeed, contemporary public relations theories mainly focus on management/the organization as one actor in the public relations process and the public/target groups/stakeholders/ contributors as the other actors, (Tench& Waddington, 2021:p104-124).

2.7.2. Corporate Social Responsibility theory (CRS)

According to Tench (p.49) “Building relationships with community groups is an important issue in corporate and communications strategy. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to the strategic planning and effective management of an organization's interactions and connections with its important stakeholders. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to an organization's explicit obligation to its society and stakeholders (Tench&Yeomans, 2014, p.49). Seitel (2017) defines CSR as the management of business processes to create a positive impact on society. It suggests that all social institutions, from small families to large corporations, are responsible for the actions of their members and can be held accountable for any wrongdoing. Social responsibility encompasses all aspects of corporate operations, including marketing, recruiting, training, and work standards (p.145). According to the European Union, CRS refers to the practice of firms incorporating social and environmental considerations into their company's activities and relationships with stakeholders voluntarily. This is done because corporations are becoming more conscious that behaving responsibly contributes to ethical business practices.

According to Swan, this definition goes beyond voluntary efforts such as corporate philanthropy and foundation grants (Swan, 2014, p. 57).

An organization can develop a good-neighbor approach to community relations that balances the needs and concerns of community partners with its mission. This approach, called corporate social responsibility, recognizes an organization’s obligation to contribute to society in some way because it’s the right thing to do, (Swan, 2014, p. 539). Successful community relations strategies need more than just verbal or visual communication. Engaging in corporate social responsibility, which involves using an organization's resources to advance morally beneficial outcomes for important stakeholder groups, may be considered the most powerful instrument for public relations. Engaging in volunteer work and making donations are powerful ways to show genuine dedication to improving and sustaining relationships (Richardson & Hinton, 2015, p.34). Those in the CSR movement propose that maximizing profit can be done while taking into account the “social and moral obligations firms have toward the larger society,” according to Amaeshi et al. Social responsibility can include sustainability, sustainable development,

environmental management, business ethics, philanthropy and community investment, worker rights and welfare, human rights, corruption, corporate governance, legal compliance, and animal rights, (Swan, 2014, p.57).

2.7.3. Relationship Management Theory

According to Abebe (2020), this theory is developed by the contribution of many prominent scholars such as Hon and Grunig, Grunig and Huang, Bruning and Ledingham, Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (p. 28).

The widely acknowledged notion posits that public relations involves skillfully overseeing the interactions between companies and the public, based on shared interests and aims, to foster cooperation and benefit over some time. This method entails evaluating PR techniques and tactics based on their impact on the connection between a business and its audience, rather than only considering the advantages they provide to the organization. When planning a PR campaign, it is essential to consider many factors that have an impact on all relationships. These factors include the historical backdrop, the individuals or organizations involved, and the social environment of the connection. By broadening the viewpoints utilized to design and assess PR plans and tactics, focusing on relationships necessitates increased engagement from businesses. Involvement refers to engaging in authentic discussion, which might be inherently difficult. Discussion often falls short of participants' expectations, and engaging in dialogue necessitates sharing information that may expose the owner to vulnerability. Advocates for more engagement with the public must acknowledge, elucidate, and handle the possible hazards for both organizations and the public they engage with (Tench&Yeomans, 2014, p126, 127). Relational Maintenance Theory (RMT) delineates the components that contribute to a favorable connection, including control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment, exchange relationship, and communal relationship. Contrary to the organization-centered viewpoint of systems theory approaches to public relations, this perspective focuses on the public and its influence. This shift may be attributed to cultural and technical changes that have given more power to the public and enabled global communication and collaboration. Relationship theory places audiences at the forefront, viewing public relations professionals as navigating intricate relationships within and outside of client or employer organizations (Hon &Grunig; Leitch & Neilson Jahansoozi; Ledingham&Bruning, as cited in Tench&Yeomans, 2014, p. 224). Organization-public relationships are successful to the degree that the organization and the public trust one another,

agree on who has rightful power to influence, experience satisfaction with each other, and commit themselves to one another, (Grunig and Huang; Broom et al., as cited in Rhee, 2004, p. 42,43).

The types of relationships identified include exploitive relationships, contractual relationships, manipulative relationships, covenantal relationships, and symbiotic relationships. The exploitive relationship is one in which one side takes advantage of the other. In contractual relationships, interactions between parties are limited to agreed-upon terms of the relationship. A manipulative relationship arises “when an organization, with the knowledge of what publics want, applies asymmetrical or pseudo-symmetrical approaches to communicate with publics to serve its interests”. In a covenantal relationship, both sides commit to a common good, openly exchange opinions, and provide opportunities for input and criticism. A symbiotic relationship occurs when organizations realize “their interdependence in the environment [and] work together with certain publics with the common interest of surviving in the environment”, (Hung, as cited in Rhee, 2004, p. 44).

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design and Approach

The purpose of this thesis is to explore Sher Ethiopia PLC Batu Branch's community relations through mixed-methods research. By merging quantitative validation with qualitative insights, evaluating expected versus actual outcomes of practices, and establishing relational patterns within various variables, a comprehensive view of community relations can be attained. Employing mixed methods allows for an enriched understanding of subjects under research by incorporating multiple perspectives and ensuring reliability through cross-verification.

Mixed-methods research includes clarifying results from qualitative and quantitative investigations, combining results to enhance accuracy, and leveraging both qualitative and quantitative research strengths. Two main approaches to mixed methods are concurrent and sequential designs, with this study focusing on the sequential exploratory method.

Research designs play a crucial role in conducting studies by providing a framework for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. These designs can be broadly classified into qualitative and quantitative research designs based on their specific methodologies. While qualitative research is often inductive with smaller sample sizes, quantitative research tends to be deductive with larger samples—a balance that mixed methods also maintain. Each type of study has its own unique steps and differences that researchers must acknowledge to ensure clear conclusions. Through a blend of qualitative and quantitative analyses involving stakeholder theory, corporate responsibility theory, public relations strategy evaluation, trust dynamics, community engagement strategies, life stories methodology for data collection, and key image quality assessment - the aim is to bridge vital gaps between best practices among firms.

The purpose of this study is to assess the strategies that Sher Ethiopia PLC includes in its operation to sustain an appropriate community relation practices and to find out the challenges of the enterprise in its operation to sustain the strategy. The data of the study were collected from primary and secondary sources. To investigate the questions, describe the practice, and determine the challenges, interviews, and questionnaires are used. The major findings reveal that Sher Ethiopia PLC is practicing several activities to sustain community relations with Batu town,

which indicates its role as a cognizant entity. The study is based on descriptive research design which according to Newman (2014) presents a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting, or relationship and focuses on “how” and “who” questions (p.38, 39). Descriptive research is a form of research that gathers information in such a way as to paint a picture of what people think or do, (Michaelson & Stacks, 2014, p.220). According to Newman, it presents a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting, or relationship and focuses on “how” and “who” questions, (Neuman, 2014, p.39-39).

According to Croucher, (2018) At the most fundamental level, a mixed methods study draws upon strategies of data collection originating from two or more research approaches. The most common pairings are quantitative and qualitative data, (Croucher & Cronn-Mills, 2018, p.239).

On the other hand, mixed-method research is used. The mixed method is an approach to inquiry involving collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data, and using distinct designs, (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This “mixing” or integrating of data provides a stronger understanding of the problem or question than either by itself (p. 345). The advantage of this method is its strength of drawing on both qualitative and quantitative research and minimizing the limitations of both approaches (p.349). Moreover, mixed methods research offers a potentially valuable alternative for undertaking multi-dimensional investigation, which generates new ways of understanding the situated complexities of social experience, (Daymon & Holloway, 2005:p350).

As indicated by (Vinet & Zhedanov, 2011), this approach is a problem-centered approach and appropriate when the purpose is to describe, explain, or evaluate, and is particularly useful for studying complex problems or issues (p.164). In such cases, (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) advised to use mixed methods because collecting diverse types of data best provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative data alone (p. 62).

Mixed method research also has some limitations. Its disadvantage is its complex and time-consuming nature (Daymon & Holloway, 2005). It also requires great effort and ability to adequately study a phenomenon with two separate methods, ((W John, 2009, p. 249). With this awareness, the researcher has made preparations in advance to minimize the difficulties.

Agreeing upon a location for an interview makes participants feel more comfortable about the entire interview process (Patton, 1990). Second, semi-structured and unstructured interviews are

similar since the interviewer has developed an understanding of the setting or context to allow the majority of the questions to be open-ended in nature. The questions are written to allow participants to answer in a variety of ways. An interviewer will, for example, ask a few questions requiring a “yes” or a “no” response. This is where the similarities end.

Researchers who conduct semi-structured interviews combine techniques of structured and unstructured interviews. The interviewers typically prepare a flexible interview guide to help guide the conversation with their participants. The guide (or list of questions) is flexible to allow the interviewer to follow the flow of the conversation (e.g., if something is important to the participant, the interviewer can spend more time on the subject than something else on the guide).

Individuals who prefer to use unstructured interviews generally do not have an interview guide (a prepared series of questions). The researcher will instead spend time building rapport and allowing each participant to shape how they want to talk about the subject of the study (Briggs, 1986).

Patton (1990) said building rapport during the interview process is important. He defined rapport as showing “respect [for] the people being interviewed so that what they say is important because of who is saying it” (p.317). The building of rapport can be done in many ways. When Stephen was conducting research in Montreal among Chinese shopkeepers, he spent a great deal of time browsing the participants’ shops before he began the interviews (Croucher&Cronn-Mills, 2018). Stephen used the information he gained from browsing the shops, what they sell, prices, etc. . . .to establish rapport at the beginning of the interviews. Asking the interviewees about their business showed them he was interested in their stories as immigrants and shopkeepers, and their business. Stephen also tried (and continues to try to this day) to appear professional but not too formal, because the latter may intimidate his interviewees.

3.2. Methods of Analysis

The analysis is made separately for the two methods and finally triangulated from both methods. This is the analysis that consists of integrating the two databases. This integration consists of merging the results from both the qualitative and the quantitative findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:p353-54)

3.2.2. Quantitative Method

To analyze the collected data, quantitative data analyses were carried out using simple and relevant statistical methods such as average, percentage, and frequency distributions. Tables and graphs are also used to demonstrate results. Microsoft Excel is used to generate charts and graphs.

3.2.3. Qualitative Method

The information from interviews is transcribed into text data for each category separately. Each interview verbatim is transcribed to preserve a complete record of the interview, (Leavy, 2017:p142). The transcriptions from each question are labeled and collected together for analysis. Finally, analysis is made by organizing the information using summaries and direct quotations.

3.2.4. Integration (Triangulation)

The researcher collected both quantitative and qualitative data and analyzed them separately.

3.2.5. Validity and Reliability

Specifically, to maximize validity and reliability, the contents of the questionnaire are extracted from many studies. Moreover, the use of mixed-method research by itself is another way of ensuring the validity of the research. Triangulation of data in the mixed method is used to ensure validity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:p341).

3.2.6. Sources of Data

The study relies on both primary and secondary data sources. The primary sources are members of the community surrounding the company and PR officers from the company. Secondary sources used include written materials both published and unpublished as well as online resources which include books, journal articles, thesis, and other documents.

3.4. Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample frame refers to the surrounding communities of Share Ethiopia.

The total size of the population is estimated to be 600,000. Due to unavailability of a complete list of the residents and their address, the researcher used convenience sampling method. Then questionnaires are distributed to residents in the town randomly. For in-depth interviews, the PR practitioners are purposely chosen as key informants. They include the company's PR head and other PR practitioners.

3.4.1. Data Collection Instruments

Data used in the study are collected using questionnaires and in-depth interviews only due to the explained limitations.

3.4.2. Questionnaire

For questionnaires, different statements are formulated and categorized under some topics. Then, detailed variables are formulated.

12 close-ended and a few open-ended questions are used in the questionnaire. Respondents were requested to rate their attitudes towards the variables against two categories of questions: a dichotomous question, and multiple choice.

According to Leavy (Vinet&Zhedanov, 2011), the vast majority of surveys opt for multiple choice, dichotomous, checklists and scales (p. 104). The dichotomous question usually involves a “yes” or “no” alternative.

Secondly, multiple-choice questions with three options are employed to rate perceptions on relationship matters. 200 hundred copies of the questionnaire were distributed of which 160 copies were successfully returned. The advantage of questionnaires as compared to interviews is that they protect the privacy and identity of respondents who responded and are not exposed to the researcher.

3.4.3. In-depth Interviews

The study is complemented with in-depth interviews to obtain detailed explanations that help address the research questions of the study. These interviews involve largely open-ended and few close-ended questions that are intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018: p.373). This is possible by exploring the what, how, and why questions in more detail (Tashakkori& Creswell, as cited in (Daymon& Holloway, 2005: p352).

The key benefit of the in-depth interview is the opportunity to probe, to encourage people to expand on their answers (Watson, 2008: p68).

To guide the interview, a checklist of 12 questions is prepared. According to Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2015, p.158), the interview checklist is flexible to allow the interviewer to follow the flow of the conversation. Thus, few semi-structured questions and predominantly open-ended questions are used to combine techniques of structured and unstructured interviews. The interview is 45 minutes long and all of it is recorded by smartphone for later analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Chapter of this portion presented the analysis part of the thesis which was undertaken. The Data gathered from primary sources through qualitative and quantitative methods were categorized and lastly triangulated and ground analytical

4.1. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Demographic Information

This analysis compiled data from questionnaires and the findings of explorations from in-depth interviews which are presented in line with the different categories selected for analysis. To proceed to data presentation and analysis, first, the demographic information and profile of questionnaire respondents are provided below in Table 1.

Table 1. *Demographic information & profiles of questionnaire respondents*

No	Group	Category	Community n=160	
			Fre q.	%
1	Age	20-25	40	25
		26-35	50	31.25
		36-45	50	31.25
		> 45	20	12.5
		No Response	0	0
2	Gender	Female	60	37
		Male	85	53

		No response	15	9.38
3	Field Of Study	College students & Teachers	60	37.5
		Laborers& Other social & Natural Sciences students	70	43.75
		Illiterate members of the respondents	20	12.5
		No response	10	6.25

According to the data from the Table 1 above, From the surrounding community of Batu Town respondents 37 percent of the total sample are females while 53% are males and the remaining percent is unknown or not identified. Among the respondents' age groups, 40 out of the 160 respondents or 25% were labeled under 20-25 ages and 50 out of the 160 respondents which can be put 31.25 % were labeled under 26-35 ages. From the respondents shown under table 1; 50 respondents out of the 160 respondents, which can be put in percentage 31.25% were labeled under 36-45 ages and the last one is out of the 160 respondents, 20 of the or 12.5% were aged 45 and above. This implies almost 63% of the respondents can be labeled from 20-45 age group

From the respondents, 60 out of the 160 were College students and teachers which counts 37.5% of the whole respondents and 70 out of the 160 respondents which can count 43,75 % of the whole respondents were Laborers, social and natural science students. 20 out of the whole 160 respondents were illiterate members of the surrounding community of Batu Town residents which counts as 12.5% and 10 out of the 160 respondents didn't specify their status which accounts for 6.25% of the respondents. This implies the 130 out of the 160 respondents which can be shown in 81.25% of the whole respondents including College students & Teachers, Laborers& Other social & Natural Sciences students which implies they were productive age groups.

4.1.1. Community Relations Practices and Challenges

Below is the data compiled from the questionnaires regarding the questions formulated for analysis; For each question on the questionnaires it is analyzed as follows.

Table 2: Responses of the surrounding community of Batu Town on their perception and relationship level with Sher Ethiopia’s result.

	Perceived levels on Trust level, n = 160	Yes		No		Don't know	
		Fr eq.	%	Fre q.	%	Fre q.	%
1	Is there any mutually beneficial relationship between the surrounding community and Sher-Ethiopia?	109	68.13	51	31.9	0	0
2	If there is a practiced relationship between the surrounding community and the Sher-Ethiopia, is it a friendly one?	84	53	74	47	0	0
3	Did Sher-Ethiopia PLC bring to the community of Batu Town any outstanding opportunities?	139	87	21	13		
4	Have you ever participated in or benefited from any of Sher Ethiopia PLC community programs or initiatives if there are?	76	47	84	53		
5	How satisfied are you with the level of communication between Sher Ethiopia PLC and the local community regarding their activities and initiatives?	55	34.4	45	28.13	60	37.5
6	As a surrounding community member, how much are you satisfied with Sher-	27	16.9	52	32.5	81	50.6

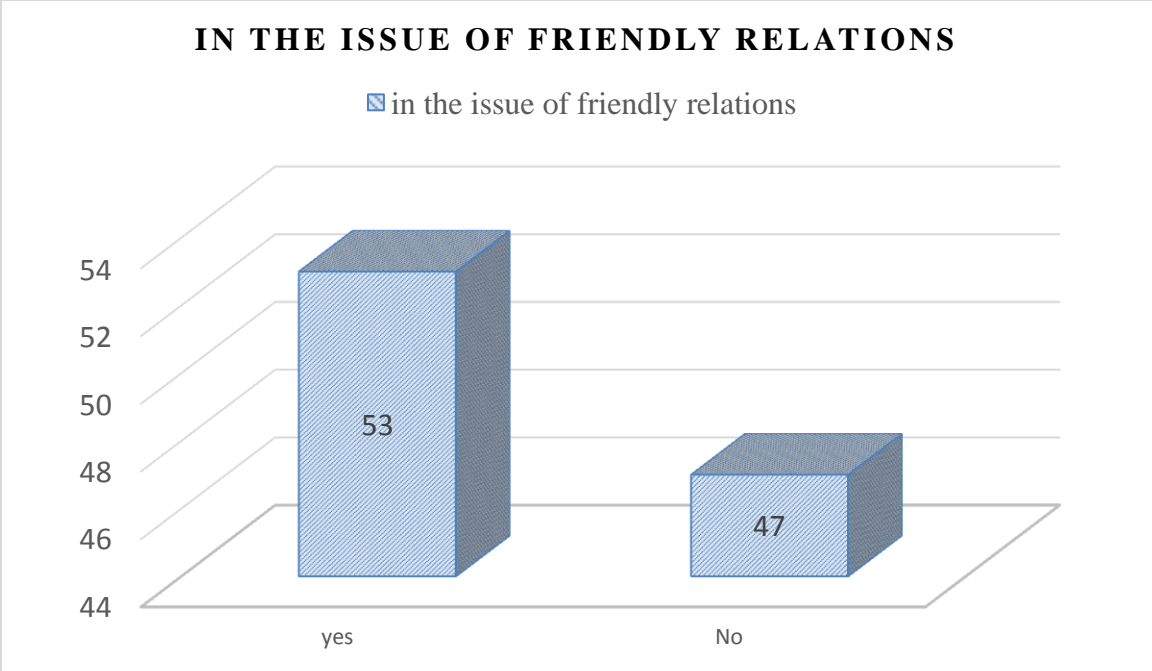
	Ethiopia PLC Company?						
7	If you are not satisfied what are your reasons	58	36.3	102	63.7		
8	Do you observe challenges caused by the company in the surrounding community of Batu Town?	129	80.6	31	19.4		
9	Do you think that Sher-Ethiopia PLC is a threat to the surrounding community?	114	71.3	46	28.8		
10	How would you rate Sher Ethiopia's transparency in its community relations practices?	31	19.4	52	32.5	77	48.13
11	Have you noticed any changes in Sher Ethiopia's community relations approach over time?	79	49.4	81	50.6		
12	How would you rate Sher Ethiopia PLC's overall community relations efforts?	32	20	50	31.3	78	48.8

4.1.2. On the issue of the existence of mutually beneficial relationship

According to the data taken from table2, 68% responded in favor and 32 % responded against. This implies that there exists reasonable community relations practices in the company.

4.1.3. On whether the existing relationship is a friendly one or not

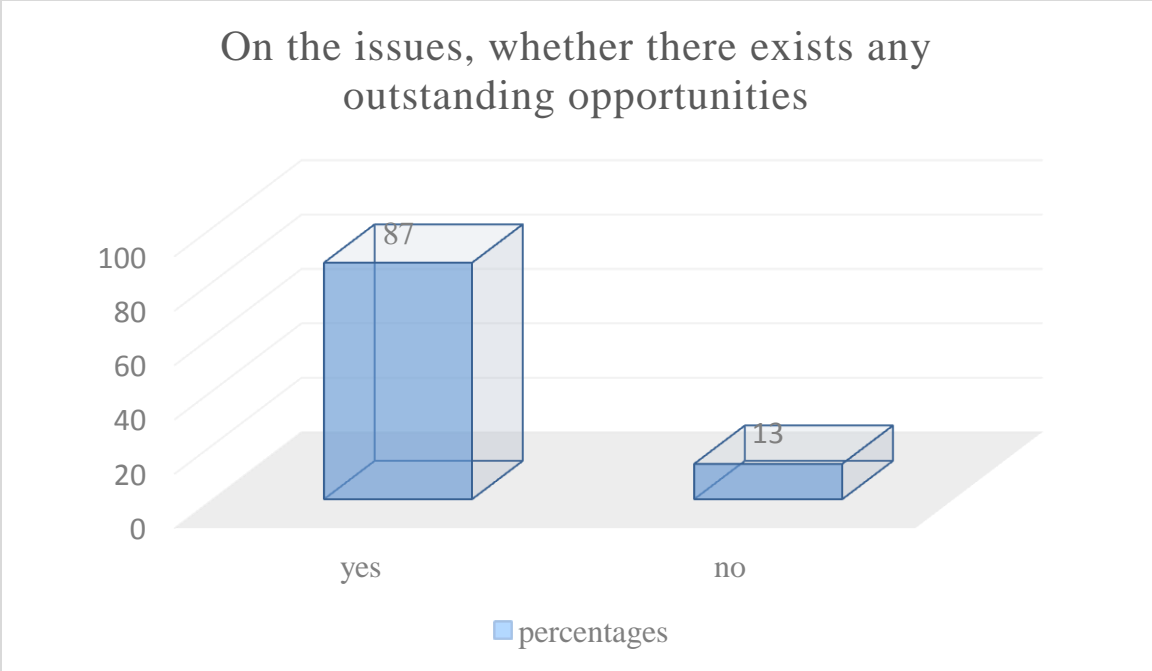
The graph below shows that 53% agreed that the r/ship is positive and 47% disagreed that the r/ship is negative. This implies that there is no friendly relationship between the Company and the surrounding community of Batu Town.



Graph. 1: Perceptions on the issues, whether there are friendly relations with Sher Ethiopia Plc.

4.1.4. On the issue of whether Sher Ethiopia PLC.

Brings any outstanding opportunities for the surrounding community of Batu Town or not, below is the data compiled from the questionnaires regarding the questions formulated for analysis.



Graph. 2: Perceptions on the issues, whether there exist any outstanding opportunities from Sher Ethiopia Plc.

According to the data taken from the table, 87% responded in favor and 13 % responded against. This implies that Sher Ethiopia PLC. It brought outstanding opportunities for the surrounding community of Batu Town. According to the researchers, the lion share of this opportunity is the job opportunity that made about 13000 jobless people make money by being employed in this company.

4.1.5. An Assessment Of the Issues of whether respondents benefited from any of Sher Ethiopia PLC community programs or not

initiatives can be analyzed as follows with the sources from Table 1 the compiled lists of respondents.

The table3 below shows the difference between the respondents' in favor and against more clearly

Perceived Levels of Participation	Yes		No		Don't know	
	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%

		q.		q.		q.	
4	Have you ever participated in or benefited from any of Sher Ethiopia PLC community programs or initiatives if there are?	76	47	84	53	0	0

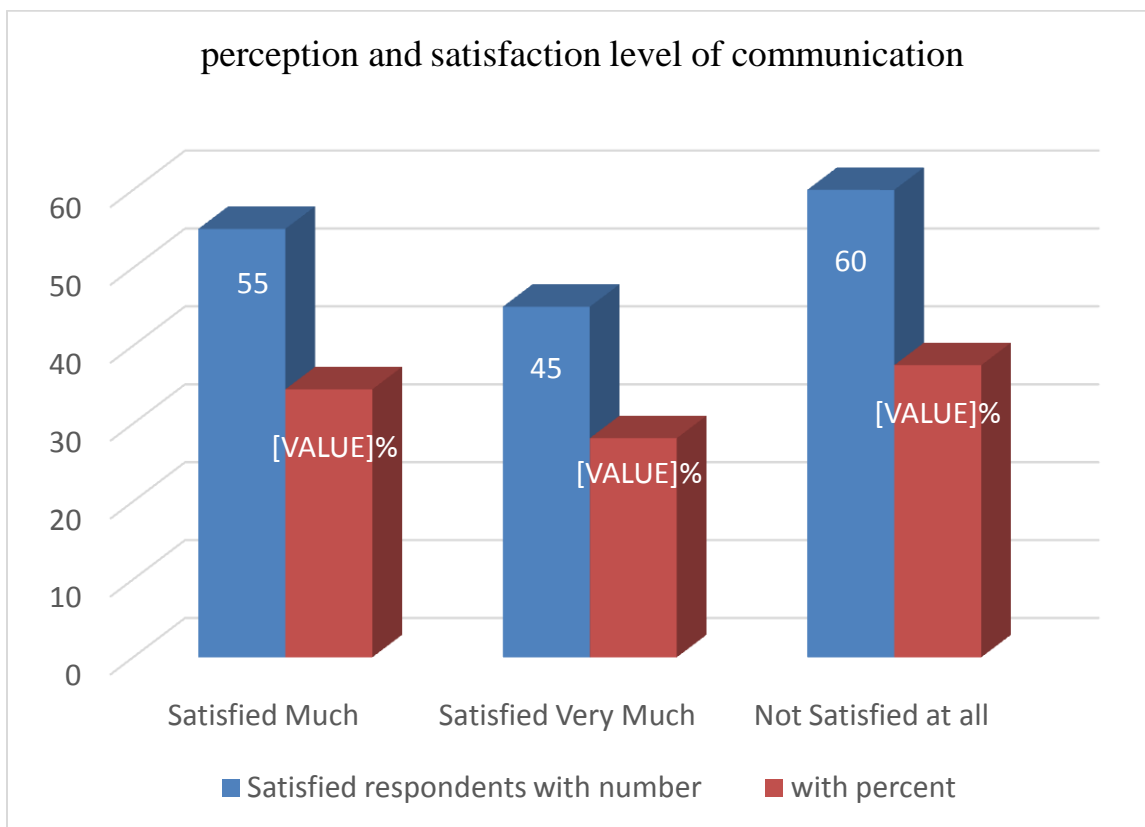
According to table2.2:from the respondents on the questioner,76 respondents out of the 160 which accounts for 47% of the whole respondents benefited from the Sher Ethiopia community programs or initiatives directly or indirectly. This implies that 47% of the respondents are favored while 53% of the total respondents were against or did not participate or benefit from the Sher Ethiopia PLC community programs or initiatives directly or indirectly. This implies that 53% of the respondents had no relations directly or indirectly.

Table: 4 below shows data on the issue of perception and satisfaction level of the communication between Sher Ethiopia PLC and the local community regarding their activities and initiatives

5	How satisfied are you with the level of communication between Sher Ethiopia PLC and the local community regarding their activities and initiatives?	Satisfied very much		Satisfied		Not satisfied at all	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	%	
		55	34.4	45	28.13	37.5	

4.1.6. Concerning the issue of perception and satisfaction level of the communication between Sher Ethiopia PLC and the local community regarding their activities and initiatives.

According to the data obtained from Table 3 which is also extracted the Table 1; above, Among the 160 total respondents, 55 respondents which count 34.4 % of them were satisfied much and again out of the whole 160 respondents, 45 of them which can also be shown in percentage of 28.13% were satisfied very much, while again out of the 160 respondents 60 which in percentage counts 37.5 % were not satisfied with the level of communication between the company and the surrounding community of Batu Town. This implies that there are huge challenges of community relations services between Sher Ethiopia and the surrounding community of Batu Town. This can be more clarified by the chart below.



Graph. 3. Perceptions on the issue of satisfaction level of communication Sher Ethiopia Plc has with the surrounding community.

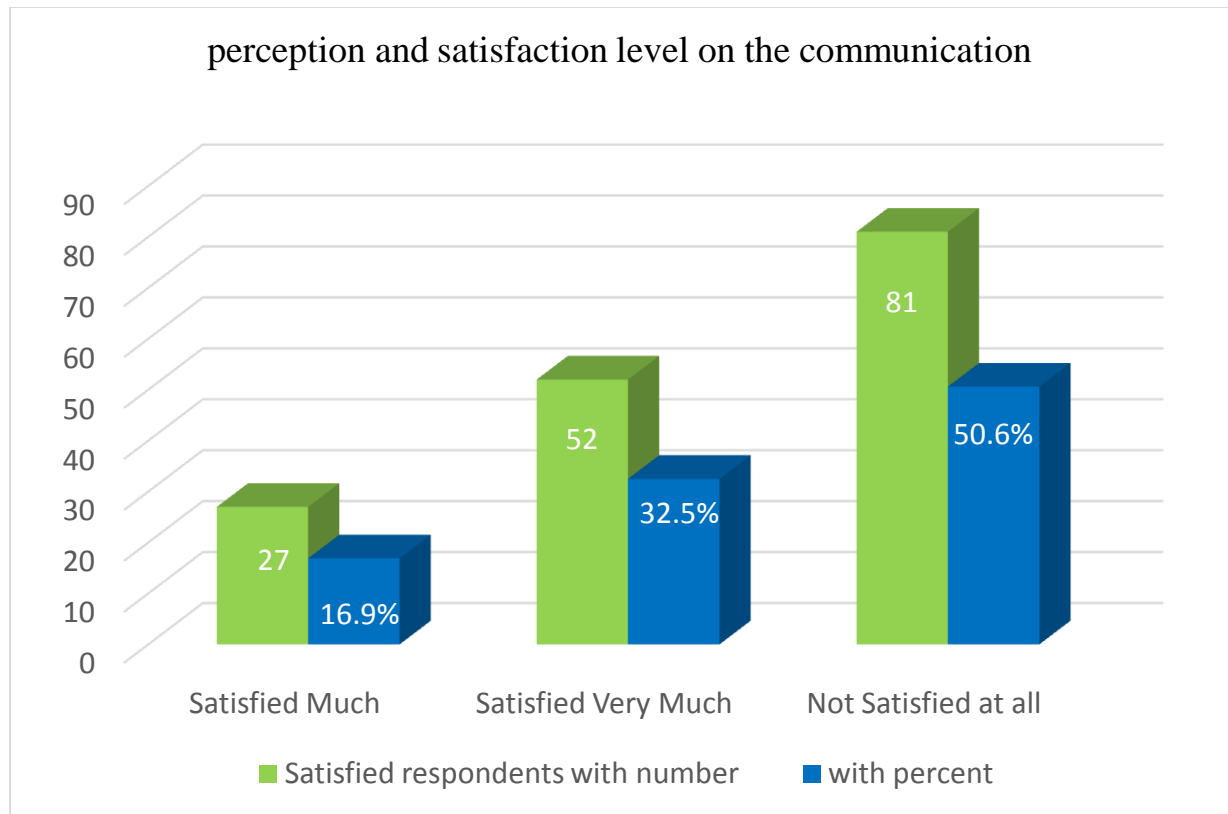
Table 5: On the issues of the satisfaction level of the community with Sher-Ethiopia PLC

6	As a surrounding community member, how much are you satisfied with Sher-Ethiopia PLC Company?	Satisfied much		Satisfied very much		Not satisfied at All	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
		27	16.9	52	32.5	81	50.6

4.1.7. Referring to the table2, on the issues of satisfaction level of the community with Sher-Ethiopia PLC the researcher analyzed as follows:

According to Table: 2 and the survey results, concerning the issue of perception and the satisfaction level of the community with Sher-Ethiopia PLC. Regarding the existence and overall activity of the company.

According to the data obtained from Table 1 of data above, Among the respondents out of 160, 27 respondents which count 16.9% of the respondents were satisfied much and again out of the 160 respondents, 52 of them, or 32.5% were satisfied very much while out of the 160 respondents, 81 in number which counts 50.6% were not satisfied with the company at all. This implies that there are huge challenges in community relations between Sher Ethiopia and the surrounding community of Batu Town. This also implies that there is a lot of work to be done by the company to narrow these gaps and lack of distrust and misperception that is created in the community.



Graph 4. Perceptions on the issue of satisfaction level of communication Sher Ethiopia Plc has with the surrounding community.

4.1.8. On the issues of the satisfaction level of the community with Sher-Ethiopia PLC the researcher analyzed as follows:

According to Table 2 and the survey results, concerning the issue of perception and satisfaction level of community with Sher-Ethiopia PLC. Regarding the existence and overall activity of the company. Respondents wrote their reasons why they were not satisfied with the company. Some said they were not happy with the company because of the discharges from the company that is polluting Lake Zeway and even spoiling the sea food, and water as a result they cannot use the lake water for any purposes even though the company denies that and they are using the biological methods to protect the lake from the pollution. The researcher will analyze the In-depth interview with the PR heads of the Sher Ethiopia PLC. Some respondents told or wrote their reasons why they were not happy with the company that there is corruption, and even most employees in the admin and office area are recruited by the connection and relationships of the company's influential managers. Because of this from the 160 respondents, 58 of them had

positive perceptions which counted 36.3% of all respondents while from the whole respondents of the 160, the respondents who were against the company were 102 in number which counts 63.7%.

This implies that the majority of the respondent’s perception of the company shows there are a lot of gaps to be narrowed and bridges to be built between the Sher Ethiopia PLC and the surrounding community. This view of the respondents can also lead us to the community relations level of Sher Ethiopia PLC is facing challenges and needs to be mentioned to grow together in mutually beneficial ways.

4.1.9. On the issue of whether there are existing challenges observed which is caused by the company in the surrounding community of Batu Town.

According to Table 6: Which shows the results table of the respondents, the data gathered from the surrounding community is analyzed as follows.

This table is extracted from table 2 above.

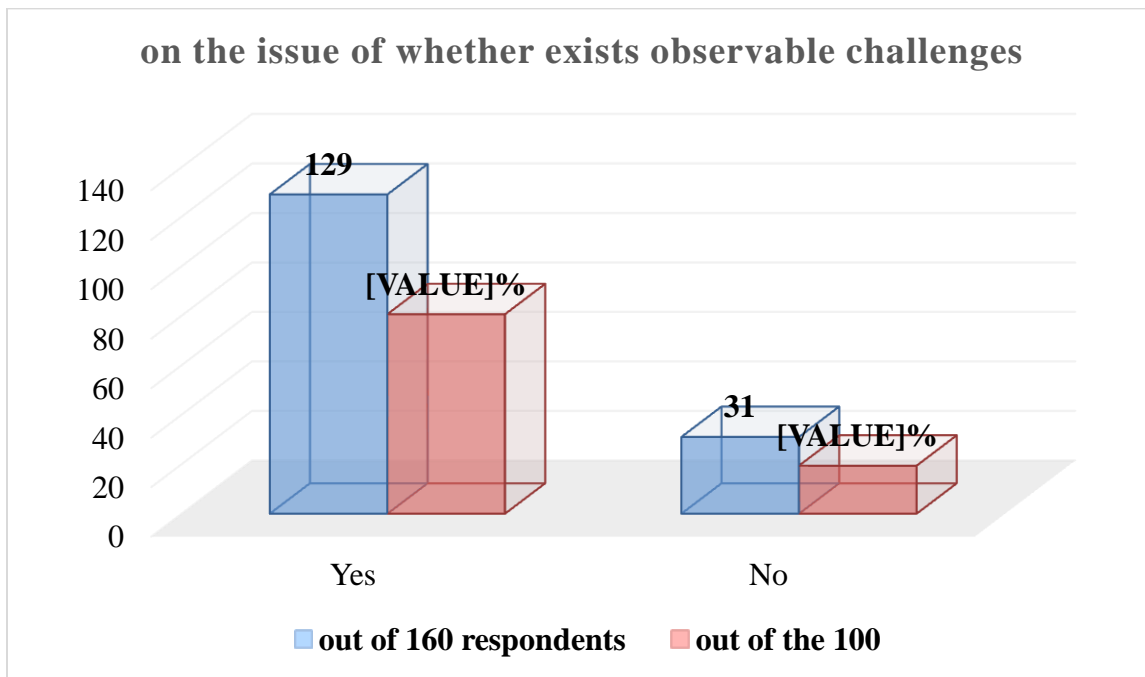
Table 6: Perceived Levels of Participation

	Perceived Levels of Participation	Yes		No		Don't know	
		Fre q.	%	Fre q.	%	Fre q.	%
8	Do you observe challenges caused by the company in the surrounding community of Batu Town?	129	80.6	31	19.4	0	0

From the respondents out of the selected groups, 160 questionnaires were filled out completely, from this, 129 respondents out of the 160 respondents answered yes or believed that they have observed challenges caused by the company to the surrounding community of Batu Town and the environment in general. These counts 80.6% of the respondents fully agreed that they observed their existing challenges caused by Sher Ethiopia PLC, while out of these 160 respondents, 31 of the respondents didn't observe challenges caused by the company to the

surrounding community. This counts 19.4% of the respondents believed that there is no challenge they observed that is caused by the company. As that data gathered implies, the majority of the respondents , 80.6% observed their existing challenges which are caused by the company to the surrounding community of Batu Town. So the result of the data speaks that there are observable challenges that Sher Ethiopia is causing to the surrounding community of Batu Town.

This can be more explained by the graph below.



Graph. 5. *Perceptions on the issue of whether observable challenges exist by the company to the surrounding community.*

4.1.10. On the issue of the community’s perception about whether Sher-Ethiopia PLC is a threat to the surrounding community.

The researcher analyzed the respondent's views as follows. According to the results obtained from Table 1: out of the total hundred sixty respondents, one hundred fourteen of the respondents agreed that the company is a threat to the surrounding community. This can also be elaborated by percentages which show that 71.3% of the total respondents agreed that the company is a threat to the surrounding community. On the other side, out of the total respondents, 46 of them disagreed that it is not a threat to the surrounding community this means 28.8% of the respondents believed that Sher Ethiopia PLC is not a threat to the surrounding community, to

conclude my arguments for the discussions on this particular issues, depending on the results obtained from Table 2 and the data analyzed, the result of this issues implies that Sher Ethiopia is a threat to the surrounding community of Batu Town. This can be viewed in the following Pie chart below.

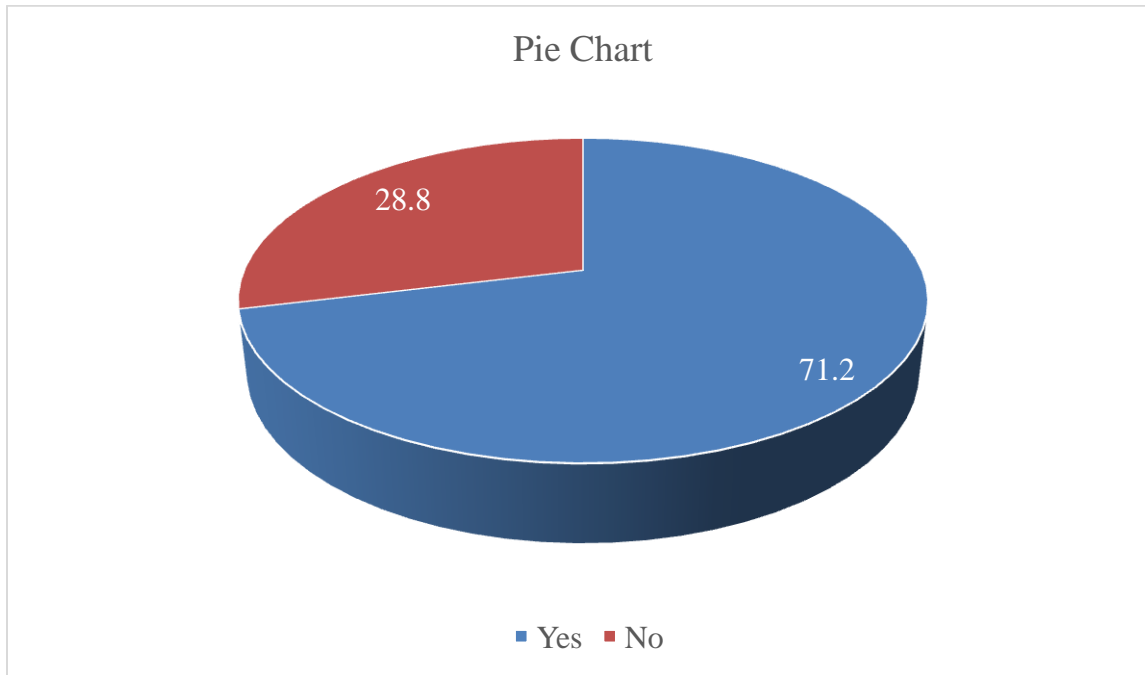


Chart 6. *On the issue of the community's perception about whether Sher-Ethiopia PLC is a threat to the surrounding community,*

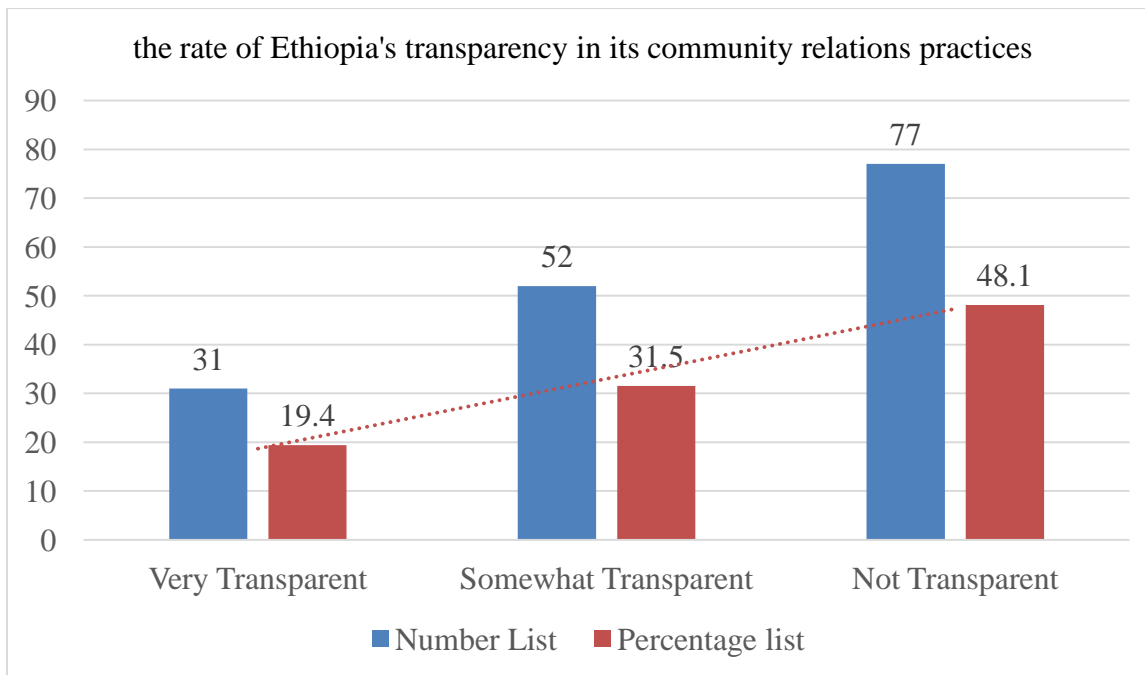
Table 7: Perceptions on the level of Sher Ethiopia's transparency in its community relations practices.

1 0	How would you rate Sher Ethiopia's transparency in its community relations practices?	Very Transparent		Somewhat Transparent		Not Transparent	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
		31	19.4	52	32.5	77	48.1

4.1.11. Referring to the data obtained from the Table above, which is also extracted from Table 1,

On the issue of whether Sher-Ethiopia PLC has the transparency in its community relations practices, the researcher analyzed the data as follows:

According to the responses that show the results which are obtained from the above table4, the respondents, out of the 160 selected groups, 31 of them which counts 19.4% filled out the questionnaire agreeing that Sher Ethiopia is very transparent in its community relations practices. 52 respondents from the total one hundred sixty believed that Sher Ethiopia is somewhat transparent. This can be shown in percentage as 32.5%, while 77 respondents from the total one hundred sixty were responded against. This counts the 48.1 percent which indicates the majority of the respondents believed that there is no Transparency in Sher Ethiopia community relations practices. From this the data analyzed on these issues implies that there is no transparency in the community relations practices in Sher Ethiopia. The chart below gives us a better understanding about this issue.



Graph 7. On the issue of the rate Sher Ethiopia's transparency in its community relations practices

4.1.12. On the issue of whether the respondents noticed any changes in Sher Ethiopia's community relations approach over time

Regarding the issue of whether the respondents noticed any changes in Sher Ethiopia's community relations approach over time, the researcher analyzed the data which is obtained from the Table above as follows.

According to the data obtained from the Table 1, which is the respondents perception, out of the one hundred sixty total number of respondents, 79 respondents which counts 49.4% are believed there is changes in Sher Ethiopia's community relations approach over time, while out of the one hundred sixty respondents 81 of them which accounts 50.6 percent of the respondents disagreed that they have not noticed changes in Sher Ethiopia’s community relations approach over time. This implies that there are no changes in community relations approach over time in Sher Ethiopia’s.

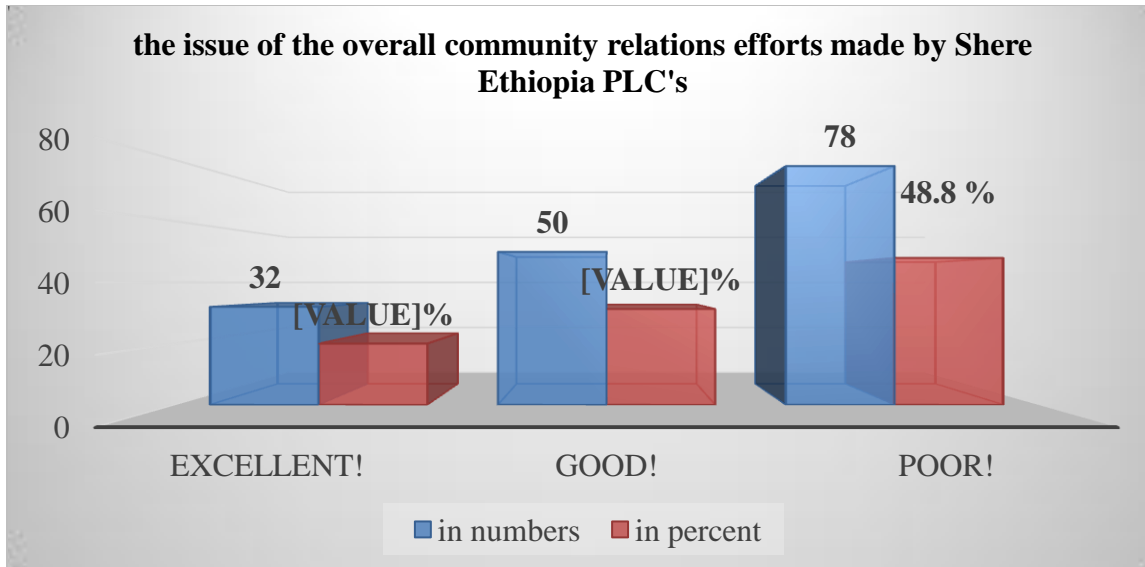
4.1.13. On the issue of the overall community relations efforts made by Sher Ethiopia PLC

Regarding the issue of the overall community relations efforts made by Sher Ethiopia PLC the researcher

Table 8. How would you rate Sher EthiopiaPLC

1 0	How would you rate Sher Ethiopia PLC overall community relations efforts?	Excellent!		Good!		Poor!	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
		32	20	50	31.3	78	48.8

Referring to data from Table 14 above it can be seen on the data that 32 respondents out of the total hundred sixty rated Excellent on the overall community relations efforts made by Sher Ethiopia this counts 20 percent of the total respondents and 50 out of the one hundred sixty respondents, rated good on the overall community relations efforts made by Sher Ethiopia which is 31.3% of the total and lastly 78 respondents out of the total one hundred sixty rated Poor. This counts for 48.8 % of the total respondents. This implies a large number of the respondents' rates are the result of low efforts made by Sher Ethiopia; the researcher believed using a chart would elaborate the findings and would best explain to give a clear understanding and view for the readers.



Graph 8. On the issue of the overall community relations efforts Sher Ethiopia PLC

4.2. Data Analysis from In-depth Interviews

Data provided by the key informants from Sher Ethiopia PR practitioners Head, is presented below. The data is analyzed for each question separately. The analysis is made by organizing and articulating the responses given on each topic. Summaries and direct quotations are used where they are appropriate.

4.2.1. Views on initiatives undertaken to foster community relations

Concerning the practice of the specific initiatives or programs that Sher Ethiopia PLC. Undertake to foster community relations, she answered that, “Sher Ethiopia tries its best to apply the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact as much as possible and tries to update its activities each year.” This implies that the company is attempting to practice community relations principles. Whether it is fully materialized or not has to be verified by a full scale investigation

4.2.2. Views on the contributions of the company to the community

On the issues of the contributions the company made to the surrounding community of Batu Town, the key informant said that her-Ethiopia has made lots of contributions to the surrounding communities. For instance, it has planted hospitals for the employees as well as for the surrounding communities, which have been in service for about 17 years, and this hospital gives services by discounting charges 50% off because the company covers the other 50% to support

the surrounding community and give the service to the employees free of charges. After all, it covers the fee from its profits. The other contributions that Sher-Ethiopia made to the surrounding communities were the schools. The school provides services for about 6,500 students, and these students are from kindergarten up to the preparatory grade 12 level. Sher Ethiopia accepts students from the kg level, the student's age is 4 years, and after grade 12, the opportunity of a school is given 50% from employees and 50% from the community for the communities. The financially weak communities are not able to pay, or the financially weak communities are not able to pay for the school fees if the conditions of the parents are supported by a letter from the government that shows this community is low-income and needs support. Respondents of the study believed that a lot of the contributions have been made by the company to the surrounding community of Batu Town. The company has a common goal of serving the public, she added that one cannot exist without the other. So as she said, the company with the actors of the PR practitioners is working for common goals. The other issue she put was that there was a problem. One of the problems was poor implementation, not contradicting roles. So there is a problem of fully implementing the parts of corporate social responsibility which is a wider part of community relations.

4.2.3. Views on whether the company Brings opportunities to the surrounding community.

According to the key informant from the Sher Ethiopia PR practitioner, The Company provided a lot of opportunities to the community in different ways and kinds to the different levels of the community accordingly. She believes that in doing so the company follows its own ways of selections, goals and ethics they apply.

Sher Ethiopia PLC. Even though it gives a job opportunity for about 13,000 employees it also gives opportunities for others who are not employed for instance more than 300 job seekers created jobs like selling the discharges and providing stationery materials for the company so these members of the community provide stationary materials for the company. The other one is also the water service repair, which has constructed pure

water services for the surrounding communities in selected areas, such as at which location.

(The Sher Ethiopia PR Head, Personal Communication, April 2024).

In addition, the informant listed the other opportunities Sher-Ethiopia created for the surrounding community was in sport fields. Worldwide sport is one of the best weapons for creating harmony among the society, advocates the company, increases the individual's health and plays a major role for economic and social effects and also increases the productivity of the company. This is why Sher Ethiopia participated in sports activities and provided a sporting opportunity for the surrounding community of Batu Town. This as she said fosters its corporate social responsibility and specifically its community relations engagement with the community. She added the company as shown on the picture4 on the review of literature that the company built standard stadiums with full facilities.

For instance, the Ethiopian Football Federation uses this stadium for the players for different competitions and also for practices because it is one of the most attractive stadiums in the country. And these are some of the contributions that Shirley made to the surrounding community of Batu Town.

(The Sher Ethiopia PR Head, Personal Communication, April 2024)

4.2.4. Views on the challenges the PR practitioner faces in fostering its community relations.

Explanations by the key-informant tell that the Sher Ethiopia PR practitioners have faced many challenges which is the key reason even for this study.

According to the PR practitioner, the biggest challenges that this company has faced since its establishment or plantation was that of the environmental issues that this company encountered and even cost them a lot in many ways. One was the chemical mixed liquid discharge flower from the greenhouse flower companies to Lake Zeway. The Liquid discharges mixed with the chemicals which directly flow to the lake without treatment spoiled the lake water and affected the ecosystem and the livelihoods of the surrounding community and this resulted in the complete cut of tap water. The surrounding community stopped using the tub water for drinking purposes. This act of the company's reluctance and negligence once killed many fishes near the

lake and affected the livelihoods of the surrounding environment. It also hears from those who drink water from the lake and the people who use tap water that is purified from the lake water source for drinking. Due to this, as a result of this situation, the surrounding community of Batu Town was not happy with the presence and activity of the Sher Ethiopia PLC.. In the past, the company's reputation shows that this was the main area of challenges that still needs time and great efforts to fix these challenges and maintain or foster their relationships. In fact conflicts used to happen in this area and many lootings took place in this company due to the lack of effective community relations activities and this is a data from the key informants and the observation of the researcher and the community's view. Starting from those points of the problems. She added that the company has tried to implement different tactics to deter and fix the community's complaints that brought challenges that occurred between the company and the surrounding community of Batu town. Some of the methods this company uses to solve the problem and maintain the relationships are based on the misunderstandings and perceptions of the surrounding community.

As the key informant on the interview stated, their company also investigated the issues addressed by the surrounding community, then tried to study and investigate the matters thoroughly, and then applied different strategies to be applicable. She continued that One of these was, instead of the spring chemicals, they started using biological methods, which is a modern system and more scientific, safe and effective methods. She said, "This is one of the methods that we used to control diseases on the plants or flowers. The other thing that our company used was a communication gap, so the company started working on that to create a Conducive environment let a common understanding between the company and the surrounding communities of the Batu Town

(The Sher Ethiopia PR Head, Personal Communication, April 2024)

According to the PR practitioner, in order to create safe and better relations, they employed the "Abagada", the elderly people to mediate among the community and the company, which is an old democratic system of government among the great nation of Ethiopia, the Oromo people to foster communication and cultural reconciliation system. They also had the same important mediator institutions as equal to that of the "Abagada" who are called "HadhaSinquee". They are females with thin stick used as the hammer of court judge. This "HadhaSinquee" of Oromo, who

played a great role in establishing reconciliation and in addressing individuals and the community, speaking to the company on behalf of the community, and resolving issues that arose between the company and the surrounding community by acting as a mediator and intermediary. These have played a key role in maintaining the company's reputation, managing the conflict before it escalated to the other level of threat. By doing this conflicts resolved before it reach to the police and security of the government institutions.

She said that in the first place, the company should respect the culture of the residents or the indigenous communities; she added, however, this company is a foreign investor, it should obey and respect the culture of these indigenous communities and understand how to communicate with the community and how to address issues is related to the surrounding community. That's why whenever something happens, especially misunderstandings and conflicts, the company faces such challenges because it has already established a communication system of control and manage such issues and use its systems explained above to communicate any issues with the the surrounding community.

According to the key informant on the interview, they communicate with this selected group, this group includes the elderly "Abagada men" and "HadhaSinquee" women and also the youths from the "Qeerroo groups" representatives from the community, who also benefited from the company by Providing the Stationary materials and take wastes from the company and sell it for recycling factories. This three bodies discuss directly with the company. This is one of the most effective way of communication. It is through these methods that we resolved the issues of the community such: resentment, grievance, complaints, disagreements, or any form of disappointment with the company that was a barrier to their communication. This is how we also take feedback from the community through these representatives and always work tirelessly to try our best to solve any issues addressed by these people. She added, they also sometimes come to the company to pay visits, to the greenhouse, and to the hospital to examine and check how the company is working to foster its communication.

(The Sher Ethiopia PR Head, Personal Communication, April 2024)

4.2.5. Views on areas for enhancing its community relations practices.

The key-informant of the study acknowledged that their relationship is based on cooperation and conflict. Most of the areas that need improvement in the community relations of the company are mainly in corporate social responsibility. According to the data obtained from the community,

they informally talk about road, fresh and treated drinking waters, and the like however the key informant viewed the following:

According to the informants, in the past, there was a shortage of PR practitioners. Now, the office is organized in a new form, and the company employs two more PR practitioners and one PR practitioner for each site. There are three locations. The QoqaAfrifloraSher's Ethiopia, the ZewaySher Ethiopia And the AdamiTullu branch of Sher Ethiopia, which is located about ten kilometers to the south of Zeway. Because each has PR practitioners, they are effectively communicating, taking feedback, trying to solve problems, and fostering the relationship between the company and the community in that particular area. The misunderstanding and the communication gaps that happened between the company and the surrounding community, and the company is also taking this as a reference and working hard to maintain its relationship, which is getting better.

The key informant also said they were doing this to fill the gap that was found after the investigation they made, and this is one of the ways and systems they installed to create a better communication and engagement of community relations service.

Employing two additional practitioners created an opportunity to solve problems early because these practitioners discussed any matters and issues that created any kind of confusion or ambiguity that was created among the company and the surrounding community through discussion and dialogue, and sometimes these selected community members harassed their backyards, and the outcome was tremendous

(The Sher Ethiopia PR Head, Personal Communication, April 2024)

4.2.6. On the issue handle conflicts or disagreements

The key-informant of the study said the following in the issue of conflict. When it comes to answering this question, as she said the first thing they do is determine what is the cause of the misunderstandings or the conflicts that have arisen between the surrounding community and the company? Once this is done, a communication system between the community and the company is established.

Before the matter is taken to the highest level, we attempt to find solutions for these elderly people who live in Bugatti in Harrison. However, there are situations in which the elderly people are unable to assist the children, in which case the patient may be handled

by law enforcement. Sometimes there are cases she added in which they defame the company's overall activities just by posting fake news on Facebook to create confusion between the company and the surrounding community, and those cases are a little bit difficult to handle, she said. In my case, as a practitioner, I suggest that whatever happens, there must be immediate news releases from the practitioners to address the issues and provide information to the surrounding communities that may solve a problem.

(The Sher Ethiopia Personal Communication, April 2024)

4.2.7. Views on the on addressing any challenges it faces

Sher Ethiopia PLC intends to improve its engagement with the surrounding community of Batu Town and address any challenges it faces in its community relations initiatives?

If the community came in person and visited how this company produces flowers, how it is packed, how it is taking over all activities, how many workers are accommodated, and what people are benefiting from this company, they may better understand more about the company after seeing it. Instead of listening to rumors about the flower company, it is a harmful company for the community as well as for the environment, and this will avoid such rumors and create a common and mutual understanding between the company and the surrounding community. This, in general, creates a conducive environment for all. We're also preparing different events to advocate for our company. This company is using more advanced technologies and different modern methods of preventing water pollution and avoiding chemical discharges to the lake, and this will create a good understanding of our company.

(The Sher Ethiopia PR Head, Personal Communication, April 29, 2020)

Visitors from a variety of backgrounds and offices have visited the business thus far, and she added that they can tell that to each and every one of them who are satisfied with what they see in their visits and hear on the inside, which differs from what is being said outside about the organization. The Elderly "Abagada men" and "Hadhasinqee," who are their best partners in fostering communication and maintaining the relationships between the surrounding communities, represent their right hand in hand on this situation.

After we developed the possibility to create, let, or engage the senior representatives from the community. As she informed in the interview, “this really benefited us a lot and also maintained our contact with the community”. She continued by saying, “we were grateful to the Batu Town environmental protection authorities for their excellent advice and close collaboration with our business.” She came to the conclusion that since they are collaborating with the neighborhood, I cannot leave the community.

4.2.8. Views on the issue of community engagement strategies

The key informants believes that Sher-Ethiopia executed its community engagements and uses all types of effective community engagement strategies, the surrounding community of the Batu Town, almost thus:

Community engagement strategies are all about creating a consistent set of processes to nurture members and invest in their personal development. Engaging communities leads to stronger customer relationships and higher member retention, which directly impacts loyalty and lifetime value as a general rule. Community engagement requires the initial efforts of content seeding and the community. Management activities over time the back of engagement is organic depending on the life cycle of the community engaging the community however requires diligence careful planning and grits, so in her reply, she listed that the thing community engagement strategy is;

- *Warmly welcome every new member.*
- *Give members reasons to get involved.*
- *Use seed content to connect with subgroups.*
- *Replace social media with your private community.*
- *Engage your disengaged members.*
- *Incentivize participation*
- *Be responsive*
- *Keep it fun.*
- *Ask for feedback; almost all of this*

(The Sher Ethiopia Personal Communication, April 2024)

4.2.9. Views on the effectiveness in its community engagement efforts

The informant states that Sher Ethiopia's community engagement initiatives are among the instances they can provide.

The public relations practitioner team and the health officers' team educated the population about COVID 19, which posed a threat to both the nation and the world during the virus's expansion. COVID-19 was a major concern in the nation as well as the entire world during this time, and as a result of the awareness we raised, the local community has halted this threat. The staff members are cautious and knowledgeable about COVID-19, and they are effective in stopping the virus. Our test is that our business was consistently exporting goods without any issues, and our employees were consistently working to maintain.

(The Sher Ethiopia Personal Communication, April 2024)

4.2.10. Views on the Issues of community relations activity

In addition to the above listed activities of community relations, the key-informants of the study said that Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives, or CSR projects, are implemented in Sher-Ethiopia through community relations engagement activities.

According to her, the company also gives sponsorship of community events or rewards. In this instance, she continued, Sher-Ethiopia provides financial help to the four selected outstanding students who completed high school and are going to join the universities. This is three thousand Ethiopian birr every month for about top until their college studies are finished and other than offering money, Sher Ethiopia also provides laptops individually for these four students. This is what Sher Ethiopia does every year for the students that fulfill the requirements.

Workers offer their time to programs offered by the Environmental Protection Bureau. Furthermore, we inform the Environmental Protection Bureau that our staff enjoys clearing the road. Removing weeds from the lake.

There are alliances with neighborhood associations or local energy providers. These are the community relations activities Sher Ethiopia PLC engaged in. In the form of points, she listed the following:

To promote community relations, Sher-Ethiopia, for instance, constructs churches for the nearby communities.

In the field of education, Sher Ethiopia PLC opened a school for the surrounding community, which now holds up to 6,500 pupils. This implies that the company is playing its role in applying CSR activities. She listed the following points that Sher Ethiopia PLC engaged in the community relations activities;

- a. Corporate social responsibility projects
 - b. Sponsorship of local events or initiatives
 - c. employee volunteer programs
 - d. partnerships with local NGOs or community groups
- educational initiatives (e.g., scholarships, training programs)

CHAPTER FIVE

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter will conclude the study by summarizing the key research findings about the research aims and questions as well as discussing their value and contribution. The findings of the study covered community relations perceptions, practices, and challenges in Sher Ethiopia PLC, as well as the engagement of PR practitioners with the community to reach the surrounding community of Batu Town the finding or the result of the research shows that there is really a gap created between the two parties, and there were also challenges that faced the company that grew to suspicion and mistrust between the Sher Ethiopia PLC and the within and without the surrounding community of Batu Town. The study aimed to investigate how the company's working environment is. Whether it is unattractive, with harsh pay and unhealthy conditions. The release or discharges from the company also polluted the Zewai Lake, affecting the surrounding community's water health and farmlands. This study aimed to evaluate the root causes and challenges. The researcher used the theory of Public Relations (PR) which emphasizes managing organizational-public relationships based on shared interests and goals. In comporting this, which suggested that PR strategies should be evaluated based on their impact on the relationship, considering factors like history, background, and social context. As the researcher believed, this approach fosters mutual understanding and benefits for both organizations and the public of the surrounding community of Batu Town.

5.2. Conclusion

The finding shows that there is an amicable relation between the two. According to the research results, the majority of the respondents (68%) and the key informant agreed that community relations practice exists and that the relationship according to them is amicable/smooth (53%). This implies that the company is attempting to practice community relations principles. Whether it is fully materialized or not has to be verified by a full-fledged study. The research finding shows the researchers success that met his expectations and intention and the study disclosed that there is no amicable, fostered, smooth, mutually beneficial relationships between the organization of the Sher Ethiopia and the surrounding community of Batu Town

Moreover, the vast majority of the respondents (87%) believe that Sher Ethiopia PLC has brought outstanding opportunities for the surrounding community. However, concerning the level of satisfaction with Sher-Ethiopia PLC, half of the respondents replied that they are dissatisfied. Some respondents said they were not happy with the company because of the waste discharges from the company that is polluting Lake Zeway and even spoiling the sea food, and water as a result they cannot use the lake water for any purposes even though the company denies that and they are using the biological methods to protect the lake from the pollution.

As a result, 71.3 percent, believe that their company poses a threat to the surrounding community of Batu Town. This implies that there is much more work to be done to foster these gaps too.

In general, the overall results exhibited a mixture of both positive and negative perceptions that have been reflected by both parties. Sher Ethiopia's community relations, community engagement, transparency, and openness with the local community and its impact on the surrounding community of Batu Town are widely seen in the discussions. Even though partially positive findings were reflected in areas of some corporate social responsibility, the negative perceptions of the surrounding community of Batu Town take the lion share, and they have dominated the negative relationships. Especially because of the polluted discharges, which are mixed with high chemical levels and flow directly to Lake Zeway, the community predominantly reflected that they have a negative perception of the company, and they also frequently reflected their complaints and doubts.

The majority of study participants think that Sher Ethiopia PLC is a threat to the livelihood of the surrounding community. 71.2 out of the total respondents think that the company may affect the ecosystem of the area and cause health and economic crisis.

Overall Sher Ethiopia's community relations practice lacks transparency, implying that there are no changes in the approach to community relations over time in Sher Ethiopia's PLC. Thus there is lots of work to be done by the company to narrow these gaps and the lack of trust in the community.

5.3. Recommendations

Depending on the findings of this study, the researcher has the following suggestions for both the organizations and the stakeholders and even other researchers in the future to bring harmony and success in these fields with the hope of contributing to the healthy relationship between the two mutually interrelated stakeholders.

- In order to strengthen community ties and promote mutual progress, gaps need to be closed and the PR practitioners must be bridges between the two parties.
- Sher Ethiopia PLC needs to make the community relation, practices, engagements, and services more professional and transparent. Their communication strategy needs to embrace the key players, and the stakeholders should have a clear vision and mission that is disclosed to the public in a responsible manner.
- SherEthiopia PLC should implement community relations activities and practices by hiring qualified and professional PR practitioners. They should also create new PR structures to address the shortage of skilled labor and support practitioners. Highlighting the professionalism of practitioners can be considered a good way to increase practitioner efficiency.
- Sher Ethiopia should gather the community's feedback to fill gaps in a professional and scientific manner to foster and maintain good neighborhood and that this company really increase its advocacy and make sher Ethiopia brand company that its practice speaks for them.

Building relationships with community groups is an important issue in corporate and communications strategy. CSR is how organizations plan and manage their relationships with key stakeholders. CSR is, therefore, an organization's defined responsibility to its society (ies) and stakeholders. Based on Relationship Management Theory (Tench&Yeomans, 2014, p.49),

managing the trust and satisfaction relationship is the key to fostering positive and maintain relationships of the Sher Ethiopia PLC.

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Appendix I

Addis Ababa University

School of Journalism & Communication

Survey Questionnaire

Research Questionnaire for the surrounding communities of Batu Town

Dear Respondents,

I am surveying a study entitled “An Assessment of the Practices and Challenges of Community Relations: The Case of Sher Ethiopia P.L.C” which is done in fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts Degree in Public Relations and Strategic Communication. This questionnaire aims to obtain information needed for the study. You are selected to fill out this questionnaire to assist the study. Your correct response is significant for the success of the study. Thus, you are kindly requested to provide your honest and genuine responses. I promise that your responses are always kept confidential and that the data obtained will not be used for any other purposes. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Instruction I: Fill in the following basic information to be used for demographic purposes.

- i. Job Title _____
- ii. Gender: Male Female
- iii. Age:
 - i. 20-25
 - b, 26-35
 - c. 36-45
 - More than 45

These survey questions can provide valuable insights into Sher Ethiopia PLC's community relations practices, strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement, helping to inform the assessment of their community relations efforts.

Instruction II: This basic information is to be used for the assessment purposes

1. Is there any mutually beneficial relationship between the surrounding community and Sher-Ethiopia?

- a. Yes, there is.
- b. No, there is not

2If there is a practiced relationship between the surrounding community and the Sher-Ethiopia, is it a friendly one?

- a. Yes, there is.
- b. No, there is not

3Did Sher-Ethiopia PLC bring to the community of Batu Town any outstanding opportunities?

- a. Yes, it did.
- b. No, it did not bring any opportunity at all.

4Have you ever participated in or benefited from any of Sher Ethiopia PLC's community programs or initiatives if there are?

- Yes, I have
- b. No, I have not.

5How satisfied are you with the level of communication between Sher Ethiopia PLC and the local community regarding their activities and initiatives?

- a. Satisfied much b. Satisfied very much. c. Not satisfied at all

6As a surrounding community member, how much are you satisfied with Sher-Ethiopia PLC Company?

- a. Satisfied much b. Satisfied very much c. Not satisfied at all

7If you are not satisfied what are your reasons

8Do you observe challenges caused by the company in the surrounding community of Batu Town?

- a. Yes, I do. b. No, I don't.

9Do you think that Sher-Ethiopia PLC is a threat to the surrounding community?

- a. Yes, I do. b. No, I don't.

10How would you rate Sher Ethiopia's transparency in its community relations practices?

- a. Very Transparent b. Somewhat Transparent c. Not Transparent

11Have you noticed any changes in Sher Ethiopia's community relations approach over time?

- a. Yes, I have b. No, I have not.

12How would you rate Sher Ethiopia PLC's overall community relations efforts?

- a. Excellent! b. Good! c. Poor!

Thank you for your cooperation!

Appendix II

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

School of Journalism & Communications

Interview Guide developed for PR Practitioners/ communicators/

These interview guides can provide valuable insights into Ethiopia PLC's community relations practices, strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement, helping to inform the assessment of their community relations efforts.

Instruction I: This basic information is to be used for demographic purposes

- ii. Job Title _____
- iii. Gender: Male Female
- iv. Age:
 - a. 20-25
 - c. 26-35

d. 36-45

More than 45

v. Years of experience as a PR Practitioner:

d. 1-5years

e. 6-10years

f. morethan10years

vi. Field of study: tick on one of the given choices

a. Journalism&Communication

b. Publicrelations

c. Othersocialsciences

d. Naturalsciences&technology

Instruction II: Questions prepared for face-to-face personal interviews

1. What specific initiatives or programs does Sher Ethiopia PLC undertake to foster community relations?
2. Can you mention some of the contributions made to the community by this company?
3. What new opportunities did the Sher-Ethiopia PLC bring to the community of Batu Town?
4. What major challenges does the PR Practitioner of this company face in its community relations?
5. What challenges does Sher Ethiopia PLC face in its efforts to build and maintain positive community relations to execute its social responsibility?
6. In your opinion, what are the key opportunities and areas for improvement for Afrilfora Sher's Ethiopia PLC in enhancing its community relations practices?
7. How does Afrilfora Sher's Ethiopia PLC handle conflicts or disagreements with the surrounding community?
8. How do you think Sher Ethiopia PLC intends to improve its engagement with the surrounding community of Batu Town and address any challenges it faces in its community relations initiatives?

9. What types of company-community relations are practiced in the Sher-Ethiopia PLC?
10. What type of community engagement strategies do you believe Sher Ethiopia utilizes?
11. How effective do you think Sher Ethiopia's community engagement efforts are?
12. Which of the following community relations activities Sher Ethiopia PLC is engaged in?
(Select all that apply).

Thank you for your cooperation!