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COMMUNICATION**

**An assessment of Public Relations Practices and challenges: the
Case of GIZ Ethiopia**

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**An assessment of Public Relations Practices and challenges:
the Case of GIZ Ethiopia**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess the practices of PR in GIZ Ethiopia with specific objectives to explore the strategies used within the internal stakeholders and to examine the challenges faced in implementing the practice. It has also the objective of investigating the gap between the general understanding of professional PR from practitioners' view and how they use it. A qualitative research method was employed, and data was thematically analyzed. The researcher collected data using one to one in-depth interviews (preparing semi-structured interview questions) with fifteen respondents and conducted participant observation. The findings of the study showed that the strategies used by the internal stakeholders of GIZ Ethiopia were targeted at building relationships within internal stakeholders although interactive relations within the stakeholders is found difficult to achieve as employees are not much responsive. Another finding is that the barriers of the PR practices in the organization were professional overlap which further impacts their dedication to the profession and their relationship within the stakeholders. This shows lack of understanding of the profession and its professional standard. Furthermore, the internal PR practitioners implement PR principles by using communication tools available in the organization while the communication flow and interaction focuses solely on sending and transmitting messages mostly not interactive/mutual. The internal PR practitioners view PR as professional. The activities of PR have standards and guidelines to keep uniformity and in turn to bring professionalism into the field. Nevertheless, there are misperceptions about public relations work and role. Because of its placement especially in project areas, it is disregarded for its role in promoting mutual relationships between organizations and stakeholders and its contribution to organizational goals. Proactive and interactive participation of the PR professionals is suggested to build mutual relationships and a common understanding on issues of the major activities. A two-way communication approach within the stakeholders is recommended.

Key words: PR practices, building relationships, professional, stakeholders, strategies

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and all the source materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged. I have carried out the study independently with the guidance and suggestions of the research advisor.

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Date of submission: September 2022

Place of submission: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Relatively as a young science and discipline, the profession and practices of Public Relations (PR) is evolving over time with its own standards along with the roles of PR and advances in technology. PR has grown to build the relationships between an organization and its stakeholders through communication. Thus, communication strategies have been developed to address and engage the stakeholders of different organizations.

The practices of PR help to build relationships between an organization and its key publics through communication. As stated by Smith (2009), PR is the strategic communication that different types of organizations use for establishing and maintaining symbiotic relationships with relevant publics, many of whom are increasingly becoming culturally diverse. GIZ being a culturally diverse international organization acknowledges that cooperation between individuals with different talents, skills and personal experience generates more new ideas than bringing together those with similar backgrounds. International cooperation relies on heterogeneous teams and multicultural settings, as they foster more creativity, greater innovation, and a better working atmosphere.

GIZ functions as a federal enterprise on behalf of the German government, as well as other public and private clients, to facilitate sustainable development results together with its partners around the world. As a service provider in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development and international education work, GIZ is dedicated to shaping a future worth living

around the world. It supports the German Government in achieving its objectives in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development.

GIZ operates in developing countries, emerging economies, and industrialized states on behalf of the German Government (especially by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)). It works on 1,600 projects in 120 countries around the world. It has been present in Ethiopia since 1964 G.C currently implementing 69 projects in the country. Commissioned by the German Government, GIZ supports the Ethiopian Government in the achievement of the development objectives.

According to Tench and Yeomans (2006), organizations are much more accountable to external publics who want to know what they stand for, how they conduct themselves and the impact they have on society and the environment. PR practitioners are more focused on the activities of their project work not in the overall organization, GIZ Ethiopia, which have some implications in the interaction between the public and the organization. Projects' management consider external communication very important, but it is not necessarily embedded in their work and planning. Communication activities and instruments used in a proactive way would help in building bridges as PR is about building bridges, connecting viewpoints, and constructing meanings that can create understanding and mutually beneficial relationships.

Theaker (2004) highlighted that PR practices is the discipline concerned with the reputation of organizations (or products, services, or individuals) with the aim of earning understanding and support. On the other hand, Fawkes (2004) argues that understanding the practice is helped by analyzing how people engage in different activities. The researcher of this study supports this notion as the practices of PR is an area of practice which still seeks to reach professional status

even in international development cooperation. Despite this, PR practitioners have continued to struggle to define the role and place of PR in organizations and its contribution to organizational performance (Grunig, 2001). The practices and position of the field in organizations can improve the overall effectiveness of an organization. PR has become an important aspect of development initiatives in every sector for an organization. The PR and Communications unit having Communication experts is located at the country office and each project at the organization has a communication focal person responsible for the internal and external communication activities of the project.

Doing a thorough search of the relevant literature yielded no research conducted on GIZ Ethiopia which triggered the researcher to conduct the present study. It analyzes the practices of PR in GIZ Ethiopia.

1.2 Problem Statement

According to Theaker (2004), PR practitioners need to be acutely aware of political, social, economic, and technological developments within their organization, area of operations, and local, national, and increasingly global communities. From the information gathered by the researcher, some experts who are Monitoring and Evaluation experts are not working in their area of profession because they work as a PR and Communications expert partly. The functions of PR overlap with and are interrelated with that of other disciplines. The research, thus, will be significant in providing awareness about the importance of understanding PR practices and implementing it to improve organizational performance.

Furthermore, each project has its own PR practitioner working not as one component as GIZ which makes it difficult to communicate and interact among projects. Project staff would not

necessarily be able to discuss the work of GIZ as a whole and provide general information about other areas of activities different than theirs.

According to Van Ruler (2018), we should no longer focus on strategic communication as a one-way process from the organization to audiences that presents, promotes, and realizes organizational goals and strategy. She suggested focusing on the amalgam of ongoing communication processes in the context of strategy building, presenting, realizing, negotiating, and rebuilding. Strategic communication is still focused on how organizations use communication purposefully to fulfill their mission, but no longer as a one-way process to present, promote, and realize their strategy, nor as a conversational process through which it is built. Instead, it focuses on the agile management of the amalgam of communication processes in the context of strategy making, presentation, realization, and remaking (ibid.).

In this study, the researcher tried to integrate the practices of PR in building bridges with the communication outlook. The communication perspective of PR is the basic ingredient to make a good decision that can contribute to the goals of an organization, (Haliti, 2019).

In my observation, even though GIZ Ethiopia is well organized and structured in the delivery of communication tools, it has some limitations in building bridges with internal stakeholders, in the practice of PR in building professional practitioners; and in promoting the company in general. Besides, PR practitioners face lack of public, internal and external, understanding of the profession.

The researcher reviewed some previous studies conducted on the practices of PR and selected two recent works. They took government organizations as a case study as reflected in the next

paragraphs. There is none that is conducted on a development organization. There is also no previous study assessing the practices of PR in the GIZ Ethiopia.

The research conducted by Seyoum (2019) with the title *'The Strategic Role of Public Relations in Corporate Reputation Building: The Case of Tourism Ethiopia'* was undertaken in the form of a case study combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods and collected data through questionnaire, in-depth-interview, and document analysis. The study which was carried out on 195 participants indicated poor strategic implementation of the principles of PR in Tourism Ethiopia. The organization did not identify and select stakeholders; it uses one way communication style, and it did not stipulate stakeholders' roles for common good and organizational achievement. The study implied ineffective or poor strategic communication leading to autocratic or one-way communication in the organization.

Another work is by Shimelis (2017) on practices of government Public Relations in the Ethiopian Government Communication Affairs Office. The study bases the two-way symmetric PR model and uses qualitative research methods. He examined whether the PR and communication practices of the organization were responsive to the diverse information needs of the public. The study identified lack of transparency, poor understanding of the role of PR, and non-recognition of PR as a management function as challenges to the practices of PR. Besides, political, economic, and cultural conditions, and poor information and communication infrastructures coupled with legal structures were reported as factors hampering the progress of government PR practices.

After reviewing those research works, the researcher noticed that most of the challenges identified by the studies are also shared by the GIZ Ethiopia. However, the studies did not pay

attention to the role of PR in relationship building within an organization. Since public relations' role is to help the organization develop and maintain good relationships, it must provide data or information about how the organization can achieve this. The communication function looks at all the stakeholders in the organization and uses a variety of tools and tactics to enhance relationships with these stakeholders, Schmitz (2012).

We can use systems theory not only to examine relationships with our external stakeholders but also to look at the internal functions and stakeholders of our organizations (Tench & Yeomans, 2006). Interactions with the internal and external stakeholders of an organization play a critical part in any organization as systems theory and two-way symmetric model of PR generally engage themselves in balance of the interests of organizations and stakeholders. The study used qualitative approach and applied systems theory and two-way symmetric model of PR.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study is to assess Public Relations practices and challenges in GIZ Ethiopia.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

More specifically, this study aims:

- to explore the strategies used within the stakeholders of GIZ Ethiopia
- to find out barriers in implementing PR practices
- to investigate how PR is implemented by the PR practitioners
- to examine the view of the PR practitioners on PR practices

1.4 Research Questions

This work attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What are the strategies used within the stakeholders of GIZ Ethiopia?
2. What are the barriers of the PR practices in GIZ Ethiopia?
3. How do the PR practitioners implement PR principles?
4. How do the PR practitioners view PR practices?

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study is limited to the practices of PR in GIZ Ethiopia found in Addis Ababa because it is important to see the practice in the area of development cooperation. To the researcher's knowledge, there is no research conducted on the practices of PR in GIZ Ethiopia. Besides, the researcher has a prior insight on the issue under study that could help her to have a more comprehensive understanding.

The study mainly focused on the Public Relations and Communication Unit of the organization to assess the practices of PR at the GIZ Ethiopia in Addis Ababa because it is where the unit resides in the country. Subsequently, the study is limited to its scope to the organization found in Addis Ababa.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The research is expected to indicate problems in the practices of PR and the communication gaps among the different projects within the GIZ Ethiopia giving an emphasis on the internal

stakeholder PR and communication. The research would also be significant to indicate the gaps between what has been done so far and what is left undone.

It can also lay a foundation for further academic research and insight for the PR profession. In addition to this, PR professionals can use the findings of this study useful in understanding the field. Moreover, it would hopefully help the organization under study to inform its PR practices and better achieve its organizational goal.

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into five main chapters. Chapter one includes the general introduction to the study by discussing the background, problem statement, objectives, research questions, scope, significance, and Theoretical Framework of the Study. Chapter two reviews literature relevant to this research under study. Chapter three describes the research methodology employed to conduct this study, followed by Chapter four which includes the data presentation, analysis, and discussion of findings. The final chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusion, and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to gain an understanding of the existing state of knowledge on PR towards answering the research questions and designing relevant tools of data collection. This chapter reviews some literatures on the roles of Public Relations (PR) giving special prominence on the essence of PR, building bridges with stakeholders. Definitions, roles, and concepts of Public Relations have been elaborated by referring different literatures. Location of PR within organizations has also been explained in the review besides defining and explaining the concept of Strategic Communication using recent literatures. In addition, the concept of the newly emerging and quite significant practice of PR, Building Bridges is dealt within this chapter.

2.2 Public Relations Practices

2.2.1 Definition and Concept: Public Relations

The definitions of PR are numerous, and they have different emphasis which results in lack of an agreed definition. However, they generally deal with communication and relationship management between an organization and different internal and external stakeholders. Most definitions given by scholars highlight that PR is a management function, developing and executing strategic issues involving two-way relationships and communication between an organization and its client (Theaker, 2012).

According to the Chambered Institute for Public Relations CIPR (2010), Public Relations is about reputation – the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you. It is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behavior. Some practitioners disagree with this definition because it leads with the concept of reputation, and they do not believe this is the primary focus for PR programmes. However, modern ideas about PR are moving away from reputation as the key concept, to relationship building, so the CIPR definition may be revised or fade from use (Tench & Yeomans, 2006).

The Institute of Public Relations, IPR (2004) defined PR as a planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics. This definition emphasizes that the relationships between an organization and its publics are established and maintained with the aim of goodwill and understanding. Dunn (1999) further stresses that organized two-way communications between an organization and its stakeholders is critical to an organizations' success the aim being to create understanding and support for its objectives, policies and actions.

Banik (2006), PR is an effort to inter policies and programs of an organization with the objective to establish a bridge of understanding and good will between an institution and its publics. Many think that PR is about promoting an organization focusing on building the image of that organization and ignoring its role to build bridges between its stakeholders. In agreement with this idea, L'Etang (1996) points out that the PR practitioner is often seen as a bridge builder, the voice of different internal and external publics within the organization, and the voice of the organization to those different publics.

Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, (2002) stated that a common practice of PR is engaging with stakeholders, both internal and external, maintaining mutual relationships between the organization and its stakeholders. Internal stakeholders' communication is one of the most important specialties of PR. Without internal communication, organizations would not develop structures and cultures. Internal communication, therefore, is the force that produces the context in which a PR department must function.

IPR further defined PR as a discipline concerned with the reputation of organizations (or product, services or individuals) with the aim of creating understanding and support. PR practitioners serve as an intermediary between the organization and all the publics that exist in the organization. PR helps to define and explain relations of mutual benefit between an organization and its key stakeholders both internally and externally (amongst employees and clients). These relations must be managed rather than allowed to develop on their own. Based on this, PR is a management discipline that must exist within an organization in order to communicate effectively with the aim of developing understanding and support.

On the other hand, Ihlen and Ruler (2009) defines PR as a strategic communication which emphasis on the relationship with publics; Strategic communication in this definition is the techniques of both internal and external communication practiced by PR practitioners to build or maintain the relationship of the public with its organizations. PR is the strategic communication that different types of organizations use for establishing and maintaining symbiotic relationships with relevant publics many of whom are increasingly becoming culturally diverse (Smith 2009).

2.2.2 Roles of Public Relations in organizations

Roles are what we have performed daily. A Public Relations' role can then be defined as the behavior of practitioners or organizations in practicing PR Putra (2015). The role of PR is recognized as the gist of an organization, agency or company. It can save the company from failing, enhance company's reputation as well as build internal and external relationships which are significant to the agency's goals Asunta (2016). Smith (2017) further pointed out that PR isn't simply a feel-good endeavor. Rather, it is a strategic process relying on research, rooted in goals, implemented through a variety of tactics, and evaluated on its outcomes.

The role of public relations in any organization is to identify the key publics, both internal and external, with whom the organization must operate effectively, and alongside this, to strategically develop and maintain a relationship with these publics for the benefit of both the organization and the identified publics.

As to Henslowe (1999) the term PR is often either misunderstood or deliberately misinterpreted, so that it is used in a pejorative way, associating it with propaganda, economy of the truth or evasion. Different people, therefore, have different perceptions of PR. Those who work in the industry are often viewed with suspicion by those who work in the media, who misunderstand its roles. There are some individuals, often highly placed in industry, who expect PR to be used as a tool for whitewashing reputations, or for covering up acts of ineptitude or dishonesty (ibid.).

Smith (2017) noted that PR is changing. No longer is it enough merely to know how to do things. Now the effective communicator needs to know what to do, why to do it, and how to evaluate the effectiveness of the chosen approach. He stressed the need for a call for strategic communicators.

He has identified two categories of PR practitioners: technicians and managers.

2.2.2.1 PR Practitioners as Communication Technicians

PR professionals used to be called upon mainly for such tasks, always important, as writing news releases, drafting speeches, producing videos, editing newsletters, organizing displays, and so on. These are roles of a communication technician, who is a specialist in PR and marketing communication and typically performs these tasks at the direction of others. Often these tasks are associated with entry-level jobs (Smith, 2017).

2.2.2.2 PR Practitioners as Communication Manager

Beyond the work of a communication technician, the profession increasingly demands competency in directing research, making decisions, planning projects and campaigns, and solving problems (ibid.). This is the work of a communication manager. Two types of communication managers have complementary roles within organizations. He considers the work of both of these types of communication managers, tactical and strategic.

A tactical manager makes day-to-day decisions on many practical and specific issues.

Should they post a news release or hold a news conference? Are they better off with a brochure or a web page? Should they develop a mall exhibit, or would it be more effective to create a computer presentation? Do they need another advocacy ad, and if so, for which publication or station, and with what message using which strategy?

A strategic manager, on the other hand, is concerned with management, trends, issues, policies, and corporate structure. What problems are likely to face the organization over the next several years and how might they be addressed? What is the crisis readiness of the organization? Should

senior personnel be offered an advanced level of media training? What should the policies be for tweeting by employees?

Smith (2017) concludes that in the workplace PR practitioners often find themselves functioning in both the technician and the managerial roles, but the balance is shifting. He calls for greater skill on the management side of communication.

Tench and Yeomans (2006) consider the research undertaken by US researchers Broom and Smith (1979) and Dozier and Broom (1995) which identifies two dominant PR roles:

- The communication manager, who plans and manages public relations programmes, advises management, makes communication policy decisions and oversees their implementation.
- The communication technician, who is not involved in organizational decision making, but who implements PR programmes such as writing press releases, organizing events, producing web content. Technicians usually do not get too involved in research or evaluation: they are the ‘doers’.

The communication manager role itself divides into three identifiable types:

- The expert prescriber, who researches and defines PR problems, develops programmes to tackle these problems and then implements them, sometimes with the assistance of others.
- The communication facilitator, who acts as communication broker, maintaining two-way communication between an organization and its publics, liaising, interpreting and mediating.

- The problem-solving process facilitator, who helps others solve their communication problems, acts as a counsellor/adviser on the planning and implementation of programmes. This role can be fulfilled by specialist consultancies as well as the in-house person.

Two other roles, sitting between the manager and technician are also noted:

- Media relations role, a highly skilled job requiring profound knowledge and understanding of the media. This is not just about the dissemination of messages, but a crucial function where the needs of the media are met in a sophisticated way.
- Communication and liaison role, meaning the individual who represents the organization at events and meetings and creates opportunities for management to communicate with internal and external publics.

The classification into manager and technician roles does not mean that lines are fixed. Most PR professionals perform a mix of manager and technician work (Tench & Yeomans, 2006).

However, Holtzhausen (2002) criticizes the managerial-technician dichotomy for overemphasizing the managerial role and underrating the technician role. He noted that managers and technicians are mutually influenced by and influencing internal and external role players and publics, thus all shaping an organization's public relations agenda on a continuous basis.

2.2.3 Locating Public Relations within Organizations

PR practices varies from organization to organization and so does its position. There is no single blueprint for either the location, structure or the range of activities that should be undertaken, and priorities will differ in every organization. There are a number of influences that will establish

priorities for PR in an organization and determine the way it is practiced and whether or not it fulfils a management role, (Theaker, 2012).

Asunta (2016) positioning PR in relation to other functions within an organization inevitably brings up the question of PR's role within organizational hierarchy. The approaches and outcomes of different practitioner role investigations are, however, more multifaceted than that. According to Ralph & Yeomans (2006) the location of PR within an organization depends on a variety of other factors: the position of the most senior practitioner; the tasks allocated to the function; and how it is situated in relation to other functions.

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) has long used an official statement positioning PR as a process within organizations that encompasses activities such as opinion tracking and analysis, relationship building, research, planning, objective setting and evaluation Smith (2017). On the other hand, Holtzhausen (2002) argues that PR is used to legitimate the management's domination by utilizing internal and external communication functions to promote the management's view as the objective truth.

Seitel (2004) points out that in many corporate organizations, PR has suffered the impact of downsizing and decentralization. This has led to the shrinkage of once-large operations to the formation of smaller departments which further, led to the question of what the best way is to organize for PR in an organization. But there is no one answer. However, it can be argued that the strongest PR department is one led by a communications executive who reports directly to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

Skinner, Mersham, & Benecke (2004) reinforce that PR is regarded as, and should of necessity be, a management function where PR can take up a more strategic role within an organization and be involved in strategic decision making. This obviously refers to PR practiced at an

advanced level by experienced practitioners. Seitel (2004) states that as a management function, PR is in a position to evaluate internal and external opinions, attitudes and needs on an ongoing basis; advise management regarding their possible effect and to act as an instrument in bringing about policy changes and in directing new courses of action.

2.2.4 Public Relations: Building Bridges

PR can bridge internal and external perspectives; it can provide a bridge between shareholders and managers; managers and employees; it can bridge local with national and international perspectives. PR is a vital part of strategic management. Its role is to use communication to build relations with the strategic publics that shape and constrain the mission of the organization (Grunig, 1992).

Kim and Ni (2010) noted that PR bridges gaps of interests and stances on problems between an organization and its environment by communicating interactively and proactively, and with balancing efforts for distinct interests. Kim and Ni suggest that this effort to build quality relationships is not an easy or quickly attainable goal, and they conclude that it is necessary to be proactive as an organization in this effort.

PR strives to influence how public interpret concerning the organization by creating an impression in the minds of the public by shaping negative attitude developed about the organization from the internal and external environment (Tench & Yeomans, 2006). In addition, creating two-way communications between an organization and the public can be a good fertile ground to the mutually beneficial relationship. PR professionals should invest their time, money and another potential to connect their company with the external world (ibid.).

Asunta (2016) the bridge builder sees the purpose of PR in engagement as constructing identity, building cohesion, motivating, encouraging participation, establishing and maintaining relationships, discussing about corporate social responsibility, creating understanding and trust, and so forth. The general orientation that guides this PR professional is connecting the organization with the surrounding community where organization is seen as one member amongst others, and they are all affected by one another, and they share common responsibility of how the community functions.

According to Asunta, the fundamental approach in bridge building includes supporting organization's strategy and vision, constructing identity, and creating commitment and engagement.

2.3 Definition and Concept: Strategic Communication

Strategic communication is defined as purposeful communication of an organization to advance its mission (Hallahan et al. 2007). It examines organizational communication from an integrated, multidisciplinary perspective by extending ideas and issues grounded in various traditional communications disciplines. Grunig (2006) describes strategic communication as a "bridging activity" between organizations that should be institutionalized.

Hallahan argued that the essence of strategic communication is being purposeful, in order to advance an organization's mission through communication (Hallahan et al. 2007). When communication helps to move the organization's mission forward in a purposeful way, we may speak of strategic communication. Therefore, only communication that has the intention to advance an organization's mission can be defined as "strategic". For these scholars, it is not the

quality that makes communication strategic, but its purpose of enhancing the organization's mission (Van Ruler, 2018).

Hallahan, Holtzhausen, Van Ruler, Vercic, & Sriramesh, (2007) mentioned that the purposeful nature of strategic communication is critical focusing on how the organization presents and promotes itself through the intentional activities of its leaders, employees, and communication practitioners. Nevertheless, this does not exclude their use of relationship building or networks in the strategic process. It is said to examine how organizations use communication purposefully to fulfill their mission. Because communication is an integral part of the field and the purpose of communication is essential to the concept of strategic communication, we should consider communication as the pillar on which the field rests.

Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2015) state that the strategic communication process typically is a communication process that follows from an organization's strategic plan and focuses on the role of communication in enabling the organization's strategic goals and objectives. On the other hand, Van Ruler emphasized that strategic communication should be conceptualized as an agile management process in which the focus is on feeding the arenas in which meanings are presented, negotiated, constructed, or reconstructed for strategy building and strategy implementation, and on testing strategic decisions by presenting and negotiating these in a continuous loop Van Ruler (2018).

Van Ruler concludes that strategic communication is seen as strategic when it integrates all those communications that are associated with organizational goals and strategies. For some, strategic communication is focused on presenting and promoting goals and strategies; for others, it is also focused on driving its development.

2.4 PR Processes

Public Relations process as to (Cutlip, et al 1994) presents a four-step model of the PR process named RACE. The steps are essential to effective PR.

- **Research** - finds out about the situations facing your organization, how they came about, who is involved in them, how they relate to your organization's goals, and how you - as a public relations practitioner - can maximize the benefit and/or minimize the harm they might do.
- **Action** - uses your research findings to determine the best course of action, plan your response, and then implement these plans. Some RACE proponents call this step "Assessment" instead of action, but they invariably include the same activities.
- **Communication** - takes advantage of all available media to deliver carefully focused messages through the most appropriate channels so they can have positive effects on each of your organization's publics.
- **Evaluation** - analyzes what's been done during the first three steps to see how it affected your publics and their perception of your organization. Once this step is completed, you return to the research step and begin the process again (Cutlip, et al 1994).

2.5 PR Tools

In order to build a two-way communication and mutual understanding in an organization, proper planning of PR incorporating ways of communications and appropriate PR tools to be used are essential. Thus, suitable use of PR tools for an organization is very important to deliver the

information to the public to create awareness, capacity building, and promoting social issues, to create trustworthiness, build the image and status of the organization (Cutlip et al, 1994).

According to Banik (2006), Public Relation tools used by the PR department to communicate with the public and target groups depending up on the nature of activity and different target groups, different tools can be used.

- **Publications:** may include interim report, annual report, and reports of firms meeting for the purpose of influencing the general background information to the reader about the overall condition of the organization. The written and printed communication produces higher level of comprehension to readers. It in corporate objective idea and goal by way of production of booklets, brochures, pamphlets.
- **Information center:** the information center are multi-purpose in nature and provide in several services to the organization as well as employees and also the members of the public outside, among different purpose of the information center. The following three are the most important.
- **Sponsorship:** sponsorship as a means of giving something to the community in which they operate and consider them as PR activities, like sponsorship to school and college in the project area, hospitals, and big events like national seminars or Exhibitions on telecommunication or various institutional of telecommunications.
- **Bulletins:** It is an official publication of an organization, highlighting its policies, programs and achievements; it serves as a vehicle of communication among the various members of the company. The bulletins is published at regular intervals, they includes weeklies, fortnightlies, monthlies, bimonthlies and quarterlies.

- **Company website:** Company website can be a good public relation vehicle. Consumers and member of other publics can visit the site for information and entertainment. Such site can be extremely population.
- **Advertising:** It is the dissemination of information concerning an idea, service or product for the action accomplishment of a definite purpose with the ultimate objective to create a favorable image of an organization. Uses of advertisement are to achieve wide coverage and to build the image of the company among its target group. Their objectives are varied from just an announcement, to imparting specific information to communicating the organization stand on an issue. The objective also includes launching a new service or project or plant installation confidence and building image of among its target groups.
- **Relation with press:** Despite the emergence of electronic media like radio and television, a relation with the print media is the oscillatory in PR. the press provides information and creates the climate and thereby influences attitudes. Normally there are four methods to conduct press relation which include press releases, press conferences, 15 facility visits and letters to the editors. Issuing new and initiating articles features and reports.

2.6 Theoretical Framework of the Study

This research is to be informed by systems theory of PR and Grunig and Hunt's four models of PR namely Press Agency (Publicity), Public Information, Two-way Asymmetric, and Two-way symmetric towards answering the research questions.

1.6.1 Systems Theory

One of the predominant theoretical lines of thinking underpinning much of PR practice is systems theory, (Gregory, 2000). The theory was first proposed by Ludwing Von Bertalanffy, and later it was further developed by psychologist Ross Ashby in the 1950's.

Systems theory focuses on how the organization interacts with its internal and external environments (Heath, Toth, & Waymer, 2009). It sets the platform to understand and improve the flow of information and make relationships more balanced as the rationale for PR. It looks at organizations as made up of interrelated parts, adapting and adjusting to changes in the political, economic, and social environments in which they operate.

According to systems theory, organizations are most effective when they acknowledge that they interact with, affect, and are affected by their environment. They need to bring in resources that enhance their success and deflect threats that can compromise their survival. Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier (1995) state that the systems perspective emphasizes the interdependence of organizations with their environments, both internal and external to the organization.

As to Gregory (2000), systems theory essentially works from the premise that publics, like customers, employees and neighbors, all form a kind of social environment for the organization. Like the physical environment, the social environment is always changing. Organizations that adjust to the changes survive and prosper, and organizations that do not adjust do not survive. Some scholars agree that the reason systems theory is of concern to PR is that adjustment requiring feedback. If a system receives no feedback from its public, then it cannot make wise adjustments. The theory describes organizations as a set of subsystems that affect each other and jointly interact with the external environment (Tench & Yeomans, 2006). Theoretically and

methodologically it's evident that organizations analyze the different environments only to adjust and adapt their policies.

Therefore, it is incumbent on PR departments to not just send messages to publics, but to create processes and perform research to ensure that messages from publics are coming into the organization, and that organizational leadership is considering the feedback when steering the company into the future.

Through systems theory, we think of PR people as boundary spanners, straddling the edge of an organization- looking inside and outside of an organization. PR practitioners are the go-betweens, explaining the organization to its stakeholders and interpreting the environment to the organization (Tench & Yeomans, 2006). PR people advise the dominant coalition, the primary decision makers of the organization, about problems and opportunities in the environment and help these decision makers respond to these changes. We can use systems theory not only to examine relationships with our external stakeholders but also to look at the internal functions and stakeholders of our organizations (ibid.).

This theory is thought to be applicable in this study because interactions with the internal and external stakeholders of an organization play a critical part in any organization and managing it properly is a key function of the PR practitioners. The PR practitioner is expected to develop and maintain good relationships with the whole system by crafting messages that are targeted to achieving the goals of the organization and will in return receive feedback that are pertinent to the GIZ Ethiopia for any kind of change or sustainability. Besides, the PR practitioners represent themselves on behalf of their organization to achieve the organization's objectives with a focus to build good relationships with the stakeholders through PR which is the core element of the systems theory.

Applicable academic models need to be incorporated by GIZ Ethiopia because they can help the organization to align their work with its mission; manage change and act as an intermediary (balancing diverse interests). By implementing systems theory and the two-way symmetric model into such situations, the decision made would be beneficial to the organization and its stakeholders because the decision would be more acceptable, and it would help in maintaining relationships.

Systems theory can be applied to many aspects of PR to regulate the core activities of organizations. Thus, the theory is utilized in this study to analyze the activities and the problems that need to be diagnosed within the GIZ Ethiopia. In this regard, the theoretical framework in this research will be linked to the research questions and the data analysis.

Hence, data will be collected and analyzed through observation and in-depth interview offering as both tools would give a comprehensive picture of what is going on and why. Details on the tools shall be entertained under Chapter Three of the thesis.

1.6.2 The Four Models of PR: Two-way Symmetric

In this study, the two-way symmetric model of PR will be used which basically emphasizes mutual understanding and relationships with its stakeholders in order to meet its objectives.

Two-way Symmetric

In two-way symmetric communication the aim is to generate mutual understanding – the two-way communications process should lead to changes in both the public's and the organization's position on an issue (Tench & Yeomans, 2006).

Two-way symmetrical communication is based on a dialogue, the give-and-take between two parties. Thus, a relationship is built on interactive communication between the organization and the stakeholders. Both parties are involved in sharing ideas and shaping the nature of the relationship (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992). The end result is often viewed as a compromise, a solution that would benefit both the organization and its stakeholders.

Zerfass, Van Ruler, & Sriramesh (2008) are concluding two-way symmetrical is based on research and uses communication to enhance public participation and to manage conflict with strategic publics. As a result, two-way symmetrical communication produces better long-term relationships with the public. This is one of the reasons the researcher of this study found the model most appropriate. As the GIZ Ethiopia's vision is to work to shape a future worth living around the world, long-term relationship building with its stakeholders is significant and goes hand in hand with all its activities.

Furthermore, symmetric programs are generally conducted more ethically than other models which result in balancing the interests of organizations and the stakeholders.

A symmetrical system of internal communication is based on the principles of employee engagement and participation in decision making. Managers and other employees engage in dialogue and listen to each other. Internal publications disclose relevant information needed by employees to understand their role in the organization and to provide employees a voice in management. Symmetrical communication fosters a participative culture as well as improved relationships with employees (Grunig, 2001).

In the two-way symmetrical model, communication is balanced in that it adjusts the relationship between the organization and its publics through negotiation and compromise. The practitioner

of this model uses planned communication to manage conflict and to improve understanding with the public. It uses research to facilitate understanding and communication rather than to identify messages most likely to motivate or persuade the public (ibid.).

This theory is implemented in the study as the major function of this model deals with transfer of information that needs to be shared with the stakeholders for common interest and understanding. The message conveyed by the organization, GIZ Ethiopia, will be utilized to make further amendments to incorporate the feedback of its stakeholders.

This model held mutual interest at its heart. As GIZ Ethiopia sends out messages within an open system it needs to listen to what its stakeholders, both internal and external, are saying. By doing so, the organization can adapt and change its own messages accordingly and both would mutually benefit from the communication. The PR practitioners should strive to use research and interactive communication to bring about symbiotic relationship.

Interaction between the stakeholders, engagement, participation, and the emphasis on the requirement of feedback informs the tool design of the present study i.e., in-depth interview and participant observation.

In conclusion, systems theory and two-way symmetric model of PR shall be utilized to analyze data gathered through the tools. The theories depict that relationships between organizations and stakeholders could lead to success of an organization if there is an interactive communication. This was examined for further understanding of the practice with the direct involvement of the researcher using in-depth interview and participant observation as both tools help in answering and exploring the objectives of the research.

In summary, the reviews done indicate how PR is conceptualized and should be practiced by organizations. PR is regarded as image builder and its role as bridge builder is overshadowed. This literature review has pointed out the lack of research specifically on development organizations with a focus on the role of PR practices in relationship building. The research seeks to understand how PR is practiced and the barriers that influence such practices. From the review, the researcher found out that there is misunderstanding in the term and role of PR practices which support the researcher to familiarize with the current state of knowledge on this area of study and assist in the development of the theoretical framework and method of the research.

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology used to carry out the study. It further describes and discusses how data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted towards answering the research questions. It reviews relevant literature on design and method, techniques of sampling, and reliability and validity concerns.

3.2 Research Design and Method

Research design refers to the overall strategy that we choose to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way, (Kothari, 2004). In the same way, Pandey and Pandey (2015) explained research design as a map that is usually developed to guide the research. Creswell (2014) further described that research designs are types of inquiry within qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches that provide specific direction for procedures in a research design. Research design stands for advance planning of the methods to be adopted for collecting the relevant data and the techniques to be used in their analysis, keeping in view the objective of the research and the availability of staff, time, and money.

To answer the research questions and attain the objectives of this research a qualitative research method was employed. As described by Yin (2011), qualitative method allows for more flexibility in identifying factors and practical strategies than the formal, structured quantitative approach and it allows for theory development.

The interpretivism paradigm of qualitative research was utilized in this study as the aim of the paradigm is to understand how people in everyday natural settings create meaning and interpret

the events of their world, Wimmer & Dominick (2013). Another reason for the choice of interpretivism is that face-to-face communication will help the researcher to derive meaning from participants' experiences. Wimmer & Dominick see the interpretive researcher as an integral part of the data, without the active participation of the researcher no data exist. The interpretive researcher conducts studies in the field, in natural surroundings, trying to capture the normal flow of events (ibid.).

In interpretivist paradigm it is important that researchers should spend time with their participants to build mutual trust so that participants would likely provide complete and honest data for the purposes of research (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). Moreover, researchers can probe an interviewee's thoughts, values, prejudices, perceptions, perspectives, emotions, and perspectives by utilizing the key approach of interactive interview, which allows researchers to analyze and set off matters that we cannot observe (ibid.). Hence, the research data will be gathered by in-depth interview and participant observation tools of data collection to meet the research objective. As a participant observer the data collected will enable the researcher to highly involve in the actual setting and the interviews will help to further investigate the study.

3.3 Sampling Technique

3.3.1 Sample Population and Size

According to Pandey and Pandey (2015), sampling means selecting a given number of subjects from a defined population as representative of that population. Population or universe means the entire mass of observations which is the parent group from which a sample is to be formed. The first step in sampling is to define the target population. The target population for this study includes GIZ Ethiopia PR professionals practicing public relations that are representative of the

population. 15 of this target population except one who was not volunteer to participate were included in this specific study.

It is unlikely that researchers will be able to collect data from everyone who is connected to the topic of research. Daymon and Holloway (2002) describe that the appropriate number of participants chosen for research will depend on the type of research question, the type of qualitative approach used in the study, material, and time resources as well as the number of researchers involved in the study. Although there are no rigid rules or guidelines for sample size, generally qualitative sampling consists of small sampling units studied, 15 people for this specific research.

The communication specialist of GIZ Ethiopia at the head office and PR and communications officers at the head office and project offices who are working on PR and Communication, a total of 15 participants, were selected for in-depth interviews. Those participants were selected with the assumption that they can provide insightful information on the area, which can help to answer the research questions of this study.

3.3.2 Sampling Design

As stated by Daymon and Holloway (2002) the underlying principle of gaining rich, in-depth information guides the sampling strategies of qualitative researchers. Identification of a sample provides inclusion or exclusion criteria for the study, that is, boundaries between those who are included in the study and those who are outside of it. The members of the sample generally share certain characteristics and experiences which are important for the development of the study.

For this study the researcher used purposive sampling to gather information from the interviewees. The goal or purpose for selecting such sampling techniques is to have informants

that will yield the most relevant and adequate data for the study. Purposive sampling enables researchers to squeeze a lot of information out of the data that they have collected. This allows researchers to describe the major impact their findings have on the population (ibid).

When developing a purposive sample, researchers use their special knowledge or expertise about some group to select subjects who represent this population (Bruce L. & Berg, 2001). The selection of the target population is purposive because all the participants are PR and Communications professionals at GIZ Ethiopia practicing public relations and they are believed to provide insightful information during data collection.

3.4 Data Type and Source

While deciding about the method of data collection to be used for the study, the researcher considered two types of data, primary and secondary. The primary data are those which are collected afresh and for the first time, and thus happen to be original in character. The secondary data, on the other hand, are those which have already been collected by someone else and which have already been passed through the statistical process.

Both primary and secondary types of data was used in this thesis. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews with the selected respondents and through participant observation. The secondary data relevant to this study was collected from books, other research works, articles, reports, publications, and internet-based open sources. This approach to find information from these sources shall deliberately employ to further assess the trend of public relations practices and make analysis triangulating with the information obtained from primary data sources.

Basing the study on systems theory and two-way symmetric model of PR which focus on relationships between organizations and stakeholders that could lead to success of an organization, the researcher was directly involved in an in-depth interview and observation as both tools help in answering and examining the objectives of the research.

3.5 Data Collection Tools

3.5.1 Participant Observation

Michaelson and Stacks (2014) defined participant observation as a tool of qualitative method where the researcher takes an active role in the life of an organization or community, observes and records interactions, and then analyzes those interactions. The researcher shall commit to understand how individuals and groups function in their natural settings through observation. But alongside the observation held at GIZ, the researcher will assess the outlets employed to disseminate information to the target audience identified.

Daymon and Holloway (2002) elaborate the idea that observation provides a technique for distinguishing between what people say they do and what they actually do and investigating any contradictions between the two. A strength of observation is that it can be less disruptive and more unobtrusive than other methods. Therefore, the researcher is less likely to influence the data to be collected. The researchers seek to be an insider taking part and immersing themselves in the world of participants. Wimmer & Dominick (2013) further discussed that the most noteworthy advantage of field observation is that the study takes place in the natural setting of the activity being observed and thus can provide data rich in detail and subtlety.

As in any other research tools, participant observation has its own limitations. Undertaking research by observational methods is time consuming. It takes time to negotiate access and time to spend in the field, familiarizing with all the goings-on and making meticulous records at the same time. However, in some cases, the duration of observation may be shortened if the researcher is already acquainted with a setting (ibid.).

Another limitation of the tool is when participants are aware of being observed, there is the possibility that they may react to the researcher's presence and behave atypically or out of character. This is called 'the observer effect' and tends to disappear the longer the researcher spends in the research setting.

The researcher of this study conducted an overt participant observation to minimize the limitation of the tool. Thus, the researcher made informal interviews while actively looking and taking part in routine activities of the people under study.

Hence, participant observation was used as observations may help the researcher to have a better understanding of the context and phenomenon under study. The observations are based on the research purpose and questions, Creswell and Poth (2013). It was conducted developing a checklist to properly address the research purpose accordingly.

The checklist is designed by the researcher based on the literature review and the research questions. It has three main sections with closed-ended questions. Section I is on gathering and receiving information which was extracted from the two-way symmetric model as the model deals with transfer of information that needs to be shared with the stakeholders. Section II derived from systems theory is about workplace correspondence. The last section, section III, is on communication in a workplace initially extracted from the systems theory and the two-way

symmetrical communication that focuses on the flow of information and dialogue. *See the Appendix for details*

3.5.2 In-depth Interview

The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with selected targets to collect deep information about the practices of public relations in the organization under this research. The questions are formulated based on the literature review, theoretical framework, and the research questions of this research work which would help to answer the research objectives.

As Holloway and Daymon (2002) suggest, interviews are a useful form of data collection tools especially in PR qualitative research because they allow the researcher to explore the perspectives and perceptions of various stakeholders and publics in depth. It is also believed that the technique would make things easier to ask follow-up questions, when the researcher is seeking elaboration, further meaning or reasons. In-depth interviews have limitations that include - interviewee could be presenting inaccurate information, a large amount of time and effort required to set up interviews, potentially expensive and transcribing is costly and time-consuming, Morris (2015). To minimize those limitations the researcher has also used participant observation as a research instrument. Taking all those perspectives into consideration, an in-depth interview of semi-structured type was used in this research to assess the PR practices in GIZ Ethiopia.

Components of the interview questions are designed from the theoretical framework and based on the research questions of this study. The questions are on:

- background of the participants,

- PR practitioners' way of implementing PR principles,
- strategies used,
- views on PR, and
- barriers against PR practices (See details in Appendix).

Contents of the interview questions are drawn from systems theory and the two-way symmetric model under which the researcher grouped them into five main open-ended questions. Accordingly, the first interview question is a general question which was addressed by the interviewee about his/her education and work experience. The second question derived from systems theory comprises of how the internal PR practitioners implement PR principles. Thirdly, from the two-way symmetric model the researcher developed the research question on the strategies used within the internal stakeholders. The fourth question How the internal PR practitioners view PR? and the last question What are the barriers in implementing PR practices? are formulated from systems theory. *See the Appendix for details*

Follow-up questions were produced as needed which enabled the researcher to interact with the interviewees and utilize interactive interview to answer the research questions numbers two, three, four, and five.

3.6 Procedures of data collection and Method of Data Analysis

In this work, the researcher employed a qualitative research data analysis. The qualitative data was collected by the researcher using in-depth interview and participant observation along with sources from secondary data. It is an appropriate technique as this research examines opinions and ideas in depth using the language of a small sample of individuals to explain their

representative thoughts, ideas, and reactions to concepts. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Then, the data generated was used to complement, validate, and triangulate the data for analysis besides supporting the findings.

3.7.1 Procedures of Data Collection

Data was gathered carefully and orderly to gain a response out of the stated research questions and to evaluate the outcomes. At first, the researcher gathered information by using participant observation as a data collection tool followed by an in-depth interview.

Collecting data as a participant observer helped to address the questions which were further tested by the interview questions. Data collected during participant observation was questioned and validated during interview which is believed to strengthen the trustworthiness of the study conducted. To establish credibility triangulation of data sources and methods was conducted.

On the other hand, observation research tool further supported to answer the research questions numbers two, three, and five because observation supports to understand how people respond to natural settings. Hence, in-depth interview and participant observation tools of data collection were used in this study. As a participant observer the data collected enabled the researcher to highly involve in the actual setting and the interviews helped to further investigate the study.

To operationalize terms such as credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as “the naturalist’s equivalents” for internal validation, external validation, reliability, and objectivity, Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose techniques such as prolonged engagement in the field and the triangulation of data sources, methods, and investigators to establish credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2013). The researcher collected data that represented

information drawn from the participants. To make sure that the findings are transferable between the researcher and those being studied, thick description is necessary (Allen, 2017). The researcher of this study had paid close attention to contextual detail while observing and interpreting to maintain the credibility of the research.

3.7.2 Method of Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

Stirling (2001) stated that thematic analysis aids the organization of an analysis and its presentation, and allows a sensitive, insightful, and rich exploration of a text's overt structures and underlying patterns. Researchers conducting thematic analysis look for recognizable reoccurring topics, ideas, or patterns (themes) occurring within the data that provide insight into communication (Allen). On the same note, Braun and Clarke (2006) described thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. They stated that thematic analysis minimally organizes and describes data set in (rich) detail. It involves searching across a data set – be that a number of interviews or focus groups, or a range of texts – to find repeated patterns of meaning (ibid.).

The in-depth interviews conducted with 14 respondents for this study were recorded and transcribed. The individual interview responses that were transcribed were then, categorized into themes and subsequently interpreted to draw conclusions. Before stating the coding and identifying themes, the researcher has tried to familiarize herself with the data and shared the transcription with the respondents of the interview.

Transcripts of an interview were put in texts and labelled with codes to extract major thematic areas. The researcher of this study has recorded and transcribed the interviews. According to Stirling (2001), codification can be done based on the theoretical interests guiding the research

questions and on the basis of salient issues that arise in the text itself, or on the basis of both. Coding of data is further elaborated by (Allen, 2017) as a process of transforming collected information or observations to a set of meaningful, cohesive categories. It is a process of summarizing and re-presenting data in order to provide a systematic account of the recorded or observed phenomenon.

As to Braun and Clarke (2006) a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. They stated that thematic analysis involves a constant moving back and forward between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data that you are analyzing, and the analysis of the data that you are producing. They suggested researchers to work systematically through the entire data set, giving full and equal attention to each data item, and identify interesting aspects in the data items that may form the basis of repeated patterns (themes) across the data set.

The researcher determines the prevalence, relevance, and importance of ideas, concepts, or communication aspects present in the data to decide whether the idea, concept, or communication contributes to a theme, Allen (2017). To locate themes within the data, the researcher read the data to identify repetitive ideas and opinions occurring within the data set. Thus, the researcher identified major thematic areas emerging from the collected data which will be further discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter dealt with the data presentation and analysis of the results. As expressed in the previous chapters, the objective of this study is to assess the PR practices in GIZ Ethiopia. The study further tries to relate the study with the theoretical framework discussed in this research work. Keeping these objectives in mind, the researcher of this study has collected data through participant observation and in-depth interview data collection tools. The interviews were conducted with fourteen respondents who are PR practitioners in the GIZ Ethiopia and then, the data were thematically analyzed.

4.2 Description of Respondents

The respondents of the in-depth interviews, purposively selected, are chosen for their insight in the study. All the respondents work in GIZ Ethiopia country office and project offices based in Addis Ababa with a service time ranging from a year to six years in the organization.

For the purpose of confidentiality, anonymity and identification of thematic areas, the interviewees are individually named as Respondent 1, Respondent 2, Respondent 3, Respondent 4 and Respondent 5, Respondent 6, Respondent 7, Respondent 8, Respondent 9, Respondent 10, Respondent 11, Respondent 12, Respondent 13, and Respondent 14. The researcher has used semi-structured in-depth interview questions to collect data. The interview conducted with the respondents took an average of 30 (thirty) minutes of audio recorded data and is transcribed into text data.

4.3 Data Presentation and Analysis

The research was conducted to assess the PR practices in GIZ Ethiopia. As discussed in the methodology of the study, the research is qualitative that employed an in-depth interview and participant observation to gather data. Fourteen respondents who are close to the study working in PR and communications in the organization were interviewed. Respondents were selected purposively based on their closeness to the field of PR practices.

The responses collected from the in-depth interview were transcribed into text, and key words and related concepts that appeared repetitively from each interview were selected. Then, the data was coded and used to formulate the themes by grouping similar responses as one and analyzed for the study to find results as the data emerge. The major thematic areas were further categorized under sub-themes for analysis.

Thus, thematic analysis was used as a method of analysis for the study by identifying four main themes and sub-themes from the data collected. As stated by Wimmer and Dominick (2013), data are collected relevant to some topic and are grouped into appropriate and meaningful categories; explanations emerge from the data themselves.

Theme One: Role of PR - refers to the emphasis the organization and PR practitioners put on the role of PR practice i.e., the part played by the profession.

Sub-themes include PR location and PR awareness.

Theme Two: Challenges - describing the challenges the organization under study faces when implementing PR activities.

Sub-themes: Capacity, Implementation, and Resources.

Theme Three: Professional - denotes the practice of the professional activity.

Sub-themes: Content, Perceptions towards the Profession, and Participation

Theme Four: Strategies - explains to the specific strategies and tactics that respondents mentioned have contributed to their success.

Sub-themes: Tools for communication, and Outsourcing some Activities

4.3.1 Theme One: Role of PR

This theme represents the value that respondents place on the role of PR in the organization. Indicators of this theme are identified when respondents stated PR role explaining their activities and when they express the extent to which they practice PR.

Most of the respondents expressed the role of PR as publicity i.e., maintaining and promoting the reputation of an organization and that it assists in disseminating information.

'The role of PR is promoting the activities of GIZ within the public. So, to create awareness about the project that we are working on we are engaged in different PR activities. The role is, thus, mainly to create awareness within the public about every project that we are currently involved in. That is our main objective as a PR practitioner. In addition to that, it's also to promote the development work of the organization in Ethiopia.'

Respondent 3 stated:

Disseminating and sharing information to stakeholders is the major role of PR, which allows for two-way communication and to succeed in achieving the goals of PR.

This view is also mentioned by respondent 6:

The role of PR is to fulfill PR duties that will assist us in participating in the activities and that will help us reach out to the organization's internal and external audiences to disseminate and share information so that we can deliver messages to them.

As being observed by the researcher, most PR practitioners use communication tools, Outlook and MS Teams, to communicate their ideas and to gather information. Nevertheless, most of the professionals focus on what they are requested for in responding to the emails.

4.3.1.1 Sub-theme: PR location in the organization

This sub-theme represents how PR is considered in the organization and by its practitioners.

According to some of the respondents, the attention given to the PR activities in the organization is expressed as reflected in the following statements:

Respondent 2 'Each project has a PR and Communications officer responsible for PR activities. Whenever there is a PR activity request coming from every project that needs attention, the PR at the country level will be communicated and usually they reach out to each project requests as soon as possible.'

On a similar note, Respondent 4 mentioned *'There are misperceptions about public relations work and role. Because of its placement especially in project areas, those who work in project level should be concerned of the misunderstanding and should make an effort to create awareness on the issue. Through internal stakeholders' interaction and way of working, PR officers should help in representing a cohesive professionalism in projects and help to clarify its role.'*

As internal stakeholders in any organization are one of the most important audiences a clear understanding of the role of PR is mandatory. The respondents further provided information and the remark from Respondent 7 summarizes their comments. The respondent said:

'Yes, it is considered as professional. Although this depends on the understanding of the staff including the management at the project level. A few consider the profession as a career that others who are not a PR professional can do. Hence, in some projects we see experts working as a PR officer and a monitoring and evaluation expert. There should be one professional dedicated to do the PR activities. But the engagement and interaction should be improved.'

According to the data collected from the observation, there is a monthly meeting targeted at addressing PR and Communication activities, but some Communication officers join the meeting. There should also be other meetings and discussions which will help to build the team relationship. As it is also described by respondent 6:

'Because there is this regular communication experts meeting once a month. Other than that, I don't think there is any other way PR and communication

people get together. I think we should work on that like to have it online. There should be a way that we get engaged physically every now and then not only on MS Teams. If they could get together regularly and physically and then also encourage or maybe force other PR experts to really participate in this meeting because I only see familiar faces on the MS Teams monthly meeting, and yet there are so many experts that are not even around. And there should be like a way to engage them either voluntarily or by other means. Organizing regular events not only meetings on MS Teams but also like physically, every project organizing events on rotation every month, they could switch and then having the physical interaction matters.'

The respondents have emphasized the need to pay attention in identifying and taking responsibilities to address its role in a professional way. However, the PR and Communications unit at the country office is organized with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Some of the roles of PR explained by the respondents are maintaining and building good relationships and finding funds. From the observation conducted, the researcher has observed that even though communication tools were used to communicate appropriate ideas and information to the audience seeking input from external sources to develop and refine new ideas or approaches and to gather information is a gap. The communication relies mostly on one-way.

Usually disseminating and sharing information to stakeholders is regarded as the major role of PR. Its role serving as a bridge between the organization and its stakeholders making it a two-way communication needs to be considered.

4.3.1.2 Sub-theme: PR awareness

This sub-theme denotes how the profession is understood by the practitioners within the organization.

Most of the respondents have stated that PR and communications works are done at the country office and in the project offices.

Respondent 2 has noted:

I believe that the PR and Communication office at the country office is taking it in a professional way while I have some doubts in at project offices. Some might be aware of the profession but that does not seem clear because there is a mix of the responsibilities assigned to the experts. Hence, the organization needs to organize awareness appraisal programmes for the projects.'

Most of the respondents believe that the monthly regular PR and Communicators online meeting is of help to raise awareness of the role of PR. The meeting would help to engage the professionals and to review any updates done by the projects including the country office. Unfortunately, a few are actively participating. There is also an intranet that is aimed to maintain and build relationship within the stakeholder.

The respondents believe that PR experts whether working solely as a professional or those working in partial are already aware of its role especially its role in the International Development Cooperation sector. They said that when it comes to any kind of communication with the stakeholders the primary role of PR is to inform and educate the stakeholders. In an international cooperation context, practitioners are also required to show the impact the project

brought to the beneficiaries using different means of communications tools to collect funds to the organization.

4.3.2 Theme Two: Challenges

This theme describes the challenges identified during implementation of PR.

4.3.2.1 Sub-theme: Capacity

This sub-theme indicates the capacity of professionals assigned to the PR position. Assigning those who are not a PR professional is a challenge observed from the data collected.

The statement from Respondent 6 summarizes the response from most of the respondents as mentioned:

‘There are PR focal persons assigned in each project that signifies the degree of emphasis given to the profession. Besides, it is an element which underlines the emphasis in theory. When it comes to practice, there is not always a professional assuming that kind of position. Those assigned for other profession also work as a PR expert. This is a challenge that shows the organization should invest in skills development which in turn will be for the good of the communicators who are trying to perform well.’

A few of the respondents stressed the need for a short-term PR and Communication skill trainings. Implementing measures to address communication skill gaps do not necessarily require formal training programs. Such measures can take the form of short-term training sessions and personalized project activities when required. The PR and Communications unit should work in

close coordination with project managers and management of GIZ to identify and implement skill development measures. This would help to fill the gap temporarily.

Respondent 11

‘if an organization invests in skills development, there will be also for the good of the communicators who are trying to perform. So, I think there are certain gaps, little gaps, which can be closed easily. But it has to come from the organization.’

From the interview conducted with the respondents and from observation data collected, it is observed that some projects assign some responsibilities of a PR officer for an employee who is also working in another position at the time which will be an additional task for the PR practitioners. One example is that usually Monitoring and Evaluation officers also work the duties of the PR position assuming two responsibilities.

4.3.2.2 Sub-theme: Implementation

This sub-theme indicates the challenges encountered during implementation of the practice.

From the data gathered during the interview and observation, there is a strategy in place targeted to facilitate the implementation of the practices of PR and build relationship with the stakeholders.

As to Respondent 3 mentioned it the Key practices in PR would be communication management that comes from the strategical part of communication where you basically set and implement activities deriving from a communications strategy of the organization. Online communication and websites or social media targeting both internal and external audiences is a major focus area in the implementation of PR practice.

This notion is further strengthened by Respondent 4:

'...from what I have noticed throughout the years, we have worked our ways to really develop a good strategy and a good implementing method. We have developed ways to work our assignments; we identified the big gaps on communication activities. It's a fact that we are dedicating as an expert where the project is maybe from a financial point of view might be too overwhelming. But from a practical point of view, I think it's a good system. That means that shows that we are giving more attention to the PR activities.'

The Communication unit has developed a communication strategy to help with on how to target internal and external audiences. And with the strategy they have also identified and defined certain channels Outlook, MS Teams, and LinkedIn to communicate with the internal audiences. There are different online based applications which they use to communicate with the internal audiences. However, employees are much more responsive to what they believe are important to the specific task they are required to do. They don't focus on the general goal of the organization which makes the communication one-way, not as such interactive.

Respondent 8 stressed that by saying

'We provide information on specific projects which are then to be consumed by the internal target audiences. We also use a simple email communication. And with this email communication, we are targeting a broader internal audience. Because with our online communication i.e., our website where we provide

product news, we are not reaching everyone. But with an email, you can be sure that everyone who should receive this information receives it in the end.'

However, the respondents explained that physical events to inform and communicate with the internal audiences is becoming less. Basically, focusing on online events.

Respondent 8 mentioned:

'Whenever we have an internal event on a specific topic, we will have an online event conducted on MS Teams. There are different formats available to attend the online event, which they made use of to communicate with internal target audiences, not only in Ethiopia, but also with other countries.'

Respondent 10 stated:

'To improve the practice, the organization should focus on hiring PR professionals who can work full time on PR and communications. Besides, there should be some kind of training or awareness raising events on the practices of PR to improve the skills and expertise of the PR professionals and to improve the PR practice in the organization in general.'

4.3.2.3 Sub-theme: Resources

This sub-theme shows the time and budget constraints that face the PR practice implementation.

From the data collected, there is scarcity of resources in terms of time and finance in some areas of the projects. Respondent 4 has tried to elaborate the challenges with regards to resources as:

'I would back the PR professionals with resources if available because PR experts cannot make decisions about budget. On the one hand, there are human resources

that need to have core team of professional communicators to get things running. Money to buy special services like video production services or translation is necessary. So, how can I initiate great things? I cannot. I can just do it when I do have the backup from the organization. I have been working in communication, for example, but it's not my field of study. I would say it depends on not on the academic perspective but on the skill we have. So, I think it really depends on the skill of the employee and how many resources are allocated to PR and communication works.'

On the other hand, there is also a need to further engage in communication activities as there is a need for professionals who are responsible for doing the necessary tasks. From the data collected it shows that if somebody is not really hired as a full-time expert, the amount of effort he would put in is limited to a certain amount of time and money. Thus, it's quite different when it's full timer.

This is also reflected in the data collected where some of the respondents replied that being a full-time worker for a specific profession is important for the successful accomplishment of communication tasks and they also indicated that this might result from considering the financial aspect.

There is a need to focus more on the professionals' expertise and to back up them with trainings.

Respondent 9 stressed:

'The organization should take its time to really review the expert knowledge and years of experience. And they really focus on quality... However, the type of person they need is quite on another level. Although, they sometimes tend to focus

on salary. So, that means some of the experts that they could have gotten or kept, or is gone as a result of salary, and then they really stick with the upcoming professionals or young energetic ones instead of the job that really requires a professional with many years of experience that can produce quality products. There is a need for a professional visionary who is identifying gaps and trying to come up with innovative solutions. I think that will be a way forward for an organization through just ranking the people who are able to get the car running.'

4.4 Theme Three: Professionalism

This theme denotes the practice of the professional activity.

4.4.1 Sub-theme: Content

Contents produced from the projects for any publication and/or for any social media usage and the activities done by the PR and Communications personnel at the projects are required to get a go ahead in consultation with the PR and Communications unit at the country office for quality check. This has enabled to get a close working relationship and to know what each project communication is engaged into. This is further expressed with some of the respondents.

Respondent 1 has given his opinion as:

'Projects consult the unit to assess whether a story is newsworthy or other project news are lined up for publishing. 'We try to be agile, innovative in terms of contents produced by the professionals. We monitor and evaluate contents we are publishing. Then, we take a decision whether the content can stay like this in the future or if we have to change certain things. So, we are constantly trying to

adapt in a way that the content we are providing is basically meeting the interest of our internal target audiences.'

To maintain quality PR works in the organization transparent editorial planning during the monthly communicators meeting is planned. The PR and Communications unit will share topics of interest with the communicators which is believed to strengthen their relationships and in turn it can further help to obtain quality communication materials. Content is to be cleared and shared by the PR and Communications unit in the GIZ country office. This procedure ensures that the overview is been kept. Further, cross-promoting on other channels, and monitoring, and evaluation will become more efficient.

'There are different PR practices in our organization. One of the main or key practices in PR, in my current position would be communication management. Communication management comes from the strategical part of communication, where you basically set activities and implement the activities deriving from a communications strategy. Part of the communication management would be not only to plan and implement certain activities, but also to coordinate some activities where we are all responsible in carrying out those activities. Besides that, strategical part, my major practice in PR in my current position is online communication, which is again divided in targeting internal and external audiences. So, we have a definite focus on online communication and websites or social media.' Respondent 6.

From the data collected the capacities of projects' communication staff must be strengthened through the provision of technical support.

4.4.2 Sub-theme: Views towards the Profession

This sub-theme represents how PR is placed within the organization and how it is perceived or understood by its professionals.

According to some of the respondents, on the country office level the communication and PR department is quite professional. It is well structured communication unit. The profession has its own standards, and they work accordingly. But when it comes to project level, anybody can assume working even if they don't have a communication background. Besides, with certain people it's still a working field where people don't see the necessity to hire professionals.

For example, Respondent 3 explained it as follows:

'Very often a person with an administrative background... a person with a law background ... with procurement background... you name it has a role as a communicator. It's a mix. But there's the necessity to be more professional. How are our activities actually performing? Do we reach the right target audiences? Or do we not reach that? I think this can only be tackled, the more we have professional people on the field of communication, that does not mean that we do have to be a journalist to be a professional communicator. I think it's a lot about skills development. If an organization is willing to invest in to develop the skills of their staff, even if they don't have a professional background, they can make that professional. And this is important. This is a result of how the profession is perceived by some.'

Systems theory focuses on how the organization interacts with its internal and external environments (Heath, Toth, & Waymer, 2009) which sets the platform to understand and improve the flow of information and make relationships more balanced. This is backed up by some of the respondents even though it doesn't mean that you don't understand the profession, or that you are neglecting the profession when working in other job positions at the same time, it is how it is perceived as a profession like it does not consume much time and do not see the necessity of hiring a professional.

As to respondent 6 explained

With certain people, it's still a taboo working field where people don't see the necessity to hire professionals. So, we see very often a person with an administrative background, with a law background, with procurement background, you name it, and this person will have the role as a communicator. I would say there are also certain organizations which have a mix, if you know what I mean. But there's, definitely, the necessity to be more professional not only in planning activities but also to be agile in the implementation and trying to monitor and evaluate how, and that's what I also have been saying before, how are our activities actually performing? Do we reach the right target audience, or do we not reach that? I think this can only be tackled if there are more professional people in the field of communication. That does not mean that we do have to be a journalist to be a professional communicator. I think it's a lot about skills development. So, if an organization is willing to invest into developing the skills of their staff, even if they don't have a professional background, they can make them professional. And this is important.

4.4.3 Sub-theme: Participation

This sub-theme describes the level of participation by the professionals.

Participation is expected from the communicators since they are presenting the organization in settings as an internal stakeholder working towards similar objectives. Public Relations is a bridge between the organization and its publics to create mutual understanding. Most of the PR professionals have ongoing communication activities addressed for their targeted publics, including newsletters, events and an intranet for employees, and promotions for the general public of the organization.

However, the relationship between internal stakeholders depends on the activity of the professionals. Respondent 2 similarly agreed with the above claim and added that

'Interaction is quite low. Whenever you send communication via internal channels, or you target internal audiences, the willingness to actively discuss a topic on internal platforms is quite low. I don't think it's that interactive. But there is a good interaction between the project communication experts and the country office.'

There is a monthly regular meeting with the PR and Communications experts to discuss on matters of the profession and to give and receive any updates in the organization. It is the PR and Communications unit that takes proactive approach to contact projects to contribute. Importance of participation in the monthly meeting is reiterated to project communicators. The meeting is organized by the PR and Communications unit. Every month, the Communications Unit assigns two project communicators to participate and give a review of the topics covered to the wider group.

Communication must be a two-way process; otherwise, it is not communication. Feedback is vitally important to check how well messages are accepted by the audiences to be influenced. By crafting messages that are focused on achieving the organization's goals, the PR practitioner is expected to establish and maintain good relationships with the entire system. In exchange, the PR practitioner will receive feedback relevant to the sustainability of the organization which is the core idea of the systems theory. Respondent 3 stressed this advantage of the two-way communication as:

'Exchange of information and synergies among projects is currently near non-existent; leaving project staff with a narrow view of the broader framework GIZ works in. Lacking access to such information has had a direct impact on GIZ's external image where a collective cohesive approach is needed.'

On the other hand, Respondent 7 elaborated the idea further

'The communication between the PR and communication unit at the country level and the project level is interactive. At the country office they are trying their best to really interact with the project offices. I think it is quite interactive because they're there, they are responsive. Whenever there is a request that needs the attention of the PR at the country level, they support the projects. Well, actually, we do have to, at times, be very overwhelming, with all requests coming from every project. But as far as I have noticed, the country office is doing their best to really reach out to each project requests.'

It is indicated in the data collected that the major practices of PR are related to communication. Mostly different publications, both online and print, are produced by the experts. The online are usually concerned with the different project activities but they're mainly produced for use on the internet. They also produce different types of newsletters both internal and external, mainly internal which are circulated within the GIZ company and the staff. The quarterly newsletters are targeted to create awareness about the GIZ projects.

The researcher of this study found out from the observation that exchange of information and synergies amongst projects is currently near non-existent; leaving project staff with a narrow view of the broader framework GIZ works in. Lacking access to such information has had a direct impact on GIZ's external image where a collective cohesive approach is needed. However, the communication type between the country office and the project level is relatively better than amongst the projects' communication. The country office usually requests for information from the project focal persons and the responsible person will respond which gives no room for other projects to get involved.

It is also found that internal stakeholders believed PR has a key role in the overall activities of the organization. From the observation the researcher conducted, the PR and communication unit tried to create a two-way internal communication environment using different digital tools for communication in the organization.

The work needs adjustment to changing environments within the sector to survive and trying new methods and strategies. As to systems theory, organizations should incorporate the two-way symmetrical model of communication.

A two-way symmetrical approach is rarely practiced when mandatory usually when projects have an event to organize. Otherwise, both two-way and one-way communication types are practiced in the organization.

All respondents reflected their idea on the importance of mutual interaction between the organization and stakeholders.

While most of the current challenges originate in the lack of a unified strategic approach; others lay in the lack of understanding of the context and proper tools that staff use to communicate about it.

4.5 Theme Four: Strategies

This theme denotes the strategies used to build relationships within internal stakeholders.

4.5.1 Sub-themes: Tools and strategies for communication

This sub-theme represents the tools and strategies the organization uses to build relationships within internal stakeholders.

Online platforms are accessible to employees to share content and interact with the stakeholders. Tools that can help the exchange of information within the GIZ country context and that aid in increasing visibility of GIZ are used.

According to respondent 1

'The challenge I've noticed while working is that different projects in countries require different strategies. We are currently developing different types of

strategies for Ethiopia and other countries. Trying to adjust the strategy based on the country's need, culture, and norms, which is essential and hard to come with.

The communication unit has developed a communications strategy that targets the internal audiences. The strategy also identified and defined certain channels where they try to communicate with the internal audiences. Using email communication that targets a broader audience to provide project news, they share information. However due to certain circumstances in person gatherings/events are less likely mainly because of the COVID pandemic. Some respondents emphasized on the need to adjust strategies based on the country's professionalism, norm, and culture specially during implementation a room for improvement and adjustments based on the country's cultural norm, language, proficient professionalism is a necessity.

The response from Respondent 7 quite explains this as

'I can tell that the PR strategy used by the company is improving. When there is work to be done, communication experts from the projects and the country office are attempting to assist one another and collaborate whenever there is work to be done. However, project managers should take every effort to make the initiative. Most of the time, responding to requests from the country office is not very efficient. I think the organization's PR strategy will be effective if project officers actively engage with the office and try to contact them proactively.'

As a participant observer the researcher has found out that Outlook and MS Teams are the leading communication channels used in the organization to build stakeholders relationship internally.

As expressed by Respondent 2:

'Communication tools play an important role in our PR activities. Communication materials help to inform potential stakeholders or partners about what we are doing.'

There is access to a range of internal communication channels and tools, however the lack of use of these instruments is having a negative impact on internal visibility. Such tools are also not used to support information exchange and synergies across the organization. The communication unit will support internal communication efforts that are directly or indirectly linked to the corporate image and better understanding of GIZ's work.

There are strategies that the organization considered useful. Communications strategy is one that can provide stakeholders with adequate information and help to maintain consistency in the workplace.

As respondents pointed out, it requires them to be strategic in their communication with stakeholders.

'I think two levels of communication exist. First there's the group communication. The meeting that we have on a monthly basis where we update each other about the activities of our work. Second there's also interpersonal communication. Whenever my project requires support from the country office, and I reach them directly.' Said Respondent 5.

At the country office level PR is much more professional, much more dynamic and strategy driven. The activities of PR have standards and guidelines to keep uniformity and in turn to bring professionalism into the field. They focus on producing different articles that will be sent via

email and which can be found on the website for the staff which is the main channel of communication. With the request from the country office projects produce different articles that focus their project activity.

4.5.2 Sub-theme: Outsourcing some Activities

This sub-theme represents the use of outside sources to carry out activities in photography, graphic designing, and others.

All the respondents have the same voice in the usage of outside sources to some PR activities. They said that it helps to facilitate the workflow besides filling the gap of professionals in the area.

Respondent 9 noted that:

‘There is a lack of special quality services to come up with communication products. Graphic design, photography and video production services are available in Ethiopia; however, the service or orientation of those service providers and the quality is very often not matching with the international standards. This is something which definitely will cause delays. It will cause more money; it will cost the organization a lot of resources to get the final product.’

In conclusion, the researcher tried to assess the practices of PR in GIZ Ethiopia. Four major themes: Role of PR, Challenges, Professional, and Strategies each with sub-themes were used to analyze the data. The following chapter will give a summary of the findings with a conclusion and recommendation.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The purpose of this study was to assess the practices of PR in GIZ Ethiopia with specific objectives to explore the strategies used within the internal stakeholders and to examine the challenges faced in implementing the practice. It has also the objective of investigating the gap between the general understanding of professional PR from practitioners' view and how they use it. A qualitative research method was employed, and data was thematically analyzed. The researcher collected data using in-depth interviews (preparing semi-structured interview questions) with fifteen respondents and conducted participant observation.

The major findings were:

- The strategies used by the internal stakeholders of GIZ Ethiopia were activities and tools and channels of communication that are targeted at building relationships within internal stakeholders. Even though the communications strategy targets at the internal audiences and tools that can help the exchange of information within the GIZ country context and that aid in increasing visibility of GIZ are used, unfortunately, interactive relations within the stakeholders is found difficult to achieve as employees are not much responsive.
- The barriers of the PR practices in GIZ Ethiopia were professional overlap which further impacts their dedication to the profession and their relationship within the

stakeholders. This shows lack of understanding of the profession and its professional standard.

- The internal PR partitioners implement PR principles by using communication tools available in the organization although the communication flow and interaction focuses solely on sending and transmitting messages mostly not interactive/mutual.
- The internal PR practitioners view PR as professional. The activities of PR have standards and guidelines to keep uniformity and in turn to bring professionalism into the field. Nevertheless, there are misperceptions about public relations work and role. Because of its placement especially in project areas, it is disregarded for its role in promoting mutual relationships between organizations and stakeholders and its contribution to organizational goals.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the results, the researcher concluded the following points:

- PR practitioners implement PR by using communication tools available that are recognized as a PR tool in the organization although the communication flow is not that interactive. It is also indicated that there is a need to build strong relationship within the employees as it is one way for effectiveness.
- From the results, it can be concluded that there is a professional overlap where one expert works as a PR officer and as a Monitoring and Evaluation officer which further affects their dedication to the profession.

- It can be concluded from the results that the organization under study be able to reach its publics and get feedback from them to build and maintain symbiotic relationship. In general, it is important for the PR and Communications unit to work harder on its implementation.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusion drawn: -

- Proactive and interactive participation of the PR professionals is suggested to build mutual relationships and a common understanding on issues of the major activities. A two-way communication approach within the stakeholders is recommended. It is important to consider establishing strategies pertinent to build and strengthen relationships between the stakeholders. Moreover, PR officers need to involve in the practice full-time. This would help to effectively work on the profession.
- It is suggested to recruit PR practitioners based on their skills and experiences on PR profession as it is essential to the organization. The organization should try to avoid overlapping of positions and assign professional PR personnel responsible solely for the PR activity. The profession demands expertise PR to practice and work interactively with the stakeholders.
- Implement PR activities that create awareness on PR profession. Professionals should try to properly identify, understand, and practice PR and act accordingly. Clear communication is the only way to interact and then resolve any problems. Subsequently, creating awareness helps to improve the practice. PR practitioners need to be aware of the importance of understanding the roles of PR to bring interactive communication that

would result in mutual relationship between the organization and the stakeholders. Workshops that aim to create awareness for employees about the general practices of PR needs to be organized. This would help to improve employees' perception towards the practice which in turn will help for mutual relationship.

- Communicators will have to set up a systematic way to exchange information of projects/areas of work using tools as a two-way communication. It is recommended that a similar process is also followed to collect the best communication practices.

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Appendix 1

In-depth interview questions

The in-depth interview questions are developed from the research questions under study:

1. General

1.1 Level of education

1.2 How long have you served in your current position?

2. How do the internal PR practitioners implement PR principles?

2.1 What is the goal of the PR practices of the GIZ Ethiopia?

2.2 What are the major practices of PR in your organization?

2.3 What is the type of communication between the PR & Communications unit and the communication experts at the project level? (One way, interpersonal, group communication) What is the reason behind such communication type?

3. What are the strategies used within the internal stakeholders of GIZ Ethiopia?

3.1 What strategy (approach) do you use to communicate with the internal stakeholders?

3.2 What should be done to improve PR practices in your organization?

3.3 What do you suggest?

4. How do the internal PR practitioners view PR?

4.1 Do you think PR activity is considered as professional in the organization?

4.2 How much weight do you place on public relations practices of the organization?

Please mention examples or state some indicators.

4.3 What is your opinion on the PR practices of GIZ Ethiopia?

5. What are the barriers in implementing PR practices in GIZ Ethiopia?

5.1 What are the challenges in implementing PR practices in the organization?

5.2 How do you address the communication gaps/problems within internal stakeholders?

Further information that you may want to share would be highly appreciated.

Appendix 2

Observation Checklist at Workplace

Communicate in the workplace	Observed		Remark
	Yes	No	
The Public Relations team has well organized office management system			
1. Gather and receive information and ideas			
1.1 Collect information to achieve work responsibilities from appropriate sources			
1.2 Use communication tools to communicate appropriate ideas and information to the audience			
1.3 Seek input from internal sources to develop and refine new ideas and approaches			
1.4 Seek input from external sources to develop and refine new ideas and approaches			
2. Complete workplace correspondence			
2.1 Draft correspondence within designated timelines			
2.2 Present correspondence within designated timelines			
2.3 Ensure presentation of written information meets organizational standards of style (the organization has templates)			
3. Communicate in a way that responds positively to audiences' differences			
3.1 Colleagues address communication gaps negatively			
3.2 Colleagues address communication gaps positively			
3.3 Take into consideration cultural differences in verbal communication			
3.4 Take into consideration cultural differences in non-verbal communication			
3.5 Use communication to develop positive relationships			