



Addis Ababa University

College of Humanities and Journalism

Graduate School of Journalism and Communications

**The Degree of Masters of Arts in Public Relations and Strategic
Communications**

**Assessing the Practice of Public Relations on Organizational Reputation: The
Case of Addis Ababa University Public Relations Office**

By

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June, 2020

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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**This Thesis is Submitted to School of Journalism and Communications (in the
Specialization of Public Relations and Strategic Communications) for Addis Ababa
University: In Partial Fulfillment of the Prerequisite for the Degree of Master of Arts in
Public Relations and Strategic Communications**

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Declaration

I, Shambel Binalfew Alem, hereby declare that this research thesis entitled **Assessing the Practice of Public Relations on Organizational Reputation: The Case of Addis Ababa University Public Relations Office** is my own original work and that all sources have been accurately acknowledged, and that this document has not been previously, in its entirety or in part, submitted to the Addis Ababa University or any other university in order to obtain academic qualifications.

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This is to ratify that this thesis studied by Shambel Binalfew Alem, entitled: **Assessing the Practice of Public Relations on Organizational Reputation: The Case of Addis Ababa University Public Relations Office**, submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master's Degree in Public Relations and Strategic Communication complies with the regulations of the university and meets the accepted standard with respect to originality and quality.

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to assess the practice of Addis Ababa University's public relations office in maintaining a good organizational reputation. The study predominantly focuses on answering how public relations practitioners do practice public relations to build an organizational reputation, what the communications tools the public relations practitioners used to build a reputation, what the challenges that public relations practitioners have faced to build a sustainable organizational reputation. To get the answer to these questions, the study employed a qualitative method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and also document review tools. An in-depth interview was employed to collect information from the practitioners of the AAU public relations office. Document review was also used to get insight into how the PR materials were designed to send a positive message to build the organization's reputation. The overall finding of the research revealed that the practice of public relations is not based on professional standards of public relations and effective communication strategies. The public relations practitioners are somewhat used to the poor communications tools that may able to lead to various undesirable effects, such as information gap, public displeasure, and inefficient use of valuable resources. This is because the public relations practitioners have been using poor communications tools and using ineffective communications strategies, then after, the organizational reputation of AAU may an able to convert from favorable to unfavorable. The study also found that most of the PR practitioners practiced with lack of well-trained professionals, have negligence attitude towards the profession, absence of adequate capacity building pieces of training, restricted bureaucratic system that prohibits the flexibility of public relations practitioners, shortage of budget, which have a directly undesirable effect on their jobs to build the reputation of Addis Ababa University.

Keywords: Public Relations, Addis Ababa University, Internal Publics, External Publics, organizational reputation, Strategic communications and professional standards.

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Acronyms

CIPRA	Charter of institute Public Relation Association
SCF	Strategic Communication Frame
IPRA	International Public Relation Association
PR	Public Relations
PRSC	Public Relations and Strategic Communication
SCF	Strategic Communication Frame
AAU	Addis Ababa University
WAPRA	World Assembly of Public Relation Association

Chapter One

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the study

Currently, organizations progressively realize that they need to communicate with their general public to develop and maintain their organizational reputation. The issue of public relations and organizational reputation is a multi-dimensional idea. Organizational reputation is inbuilt and simple in its common usage. Nevertheless, it is amazingly complex when employed and assessed in research, as evidenced by the multiple definitions, conceptualizations, and operationalization that have emerged across studies. Likewise, The Chartered Institute of Public Relations Association (CIPRA, 2015) definition of public relations states public relations is about reputation – the outcome of what you do? What you say and what others say about you? And it is the strategic and continual effort to establish and maintain goodwill and to create communal understanding between the organization and its public.

[According to] Newsom (2004) the practice of public relations concentrated on the reputation and image of an organization to earn understanding and sustenance, and persuading public opinion and behavior. An organizational image is a direct mirror image of its performance. That is why Public relations people have almost to win public acceptance. It is the responsibility of Public relations to make sure that the organization understood and accepted as well as loved by its publics. Most importantly, Van Riel (1997, p 46) “an organization’s reputation, and changes in its organizational reputation, influence the organization’s relationship with its stakeholders. Organizational reputation forms networks of cognitive associations the mosaic of associations come together to create an overall impression’ A positive reputation workings like a lodestone”. It reinforces the attractiveness of an organization, simplifying the realization of a broad range of activities. Positive reputation provides a good sign for an organization like Addis Ababa University with increased its profits and reduced its risk.

As well, Addis Ababa University is one of the biggest educational organizations in Ethiopia. It was established in 1950. It has made a major contribution to the country. The service it has concentrated on the training of high-level skilled manpower and experts in various key areas of improvement is instance within the educational environment (AAU handbook, 2013 p: 6).

Currently, Addis Ababa University aspires to be among the top ten pre-eminent African graduates and research Universities in 2023. Thus, AAU's vision is composed of four areas of excellence, namely; Excellence in teaching-learning, Excellence in research and technology transfer: Excellence in Community Service, engagement and strategic partnership, Excellence in Good Governance, and diversity management (AAU handbook, 2013 p: 6). Therefore, public relations and communications experts must work with internal publics concerning the vision, mission, and core values of AAU to building the organizational reputation of AAU. Because, most of the time the problem of public relations practitioners is to persuade the best people to work for the organization and then to stay and do their best (Newsom, 2004:16).

Thus, according to World Assembly of Public Relation Association (1978), Public relations play a vital role in analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling, organizational leaders, and implementing planned programs of action which will serve both the organization and the public interest and build a strong organizational reputation. It is the starring role of public relations to make sure that the organization is getting credit for the good it does. Great organizational reputation is built on doing this consistently over some time in which a track record of delivering on promises and engendering trust is evident to everyone. All members of an organization have a contribution to make to building and sustaining reputation P.J Kitchen and T. Watson 2008).

What is more, a sustainable organizational reputation earned based on the organization's ethical character and consistently trustworthy behavior can then be regarded as a strategic asset, as its reputation capital (Rangan, 2011:4). It gives the organization credibility and signals to its stakeholders that it can be trusted; That it is worthy of trust, which in turn will lead to trusting, mutually beneficial relationships (Swift, 2001:22-23) and, as is argued in this study, to supportive stakeholder behavior, which will impact positively on the organization's long-term economic sustainability. The difference between having a good reputation and being trusted is a subtle but important one, in that a for-profit organization with a good reputation can be relied upon to behave in a manner that is consistent with its reputation, but might not be trusted to behave ethically under uncertain circumstances (Blois, 1999:208; Swift, 2001:23).

On the other hand, when the researcher assesses the realities of public relations practices in Addis Ababa University public relations office in related with its vision, and the above scholar's definitions of public relations practice, the public relations practitioners of the university seems not capable to understand the professional standards of new public relations to maintains the respectable organizational reputation of the university and to create a sense of ownership among its internal publics. For the reason that these ideas are supported through the following arguments:

On May 5, 2006, the federal ethics and anti-corruption commission reported to the house of people's representative that corruption in higher education institutions is very severe and it states Addis Ababa universities as an example (Addis Guday magazine, No:216,2006, p:5). And also On October 23, 2006, Addis Guday magazine wrote an article entitled "the university which didn't grow as its age". And it is about the internal publics complaining about the lack of good governance and inefficient services provided by Addis Ababa University (Addis Guday Magazine, No: 188, 2006, p: 11).

For that reason, the researcher apprehended that an organization that genuinely adopts and lives an ethical value-based identity would not just able to build a strong organizational reputation, but able to earn the trust of its internal general public, which results in their continued support and assurance to build an organizational reputation. This thesis assesses the practice of public relations on organizational reputation. And also asks how public relations practitioners apply public relations in AAU public relations office to 'maintain worthy organizational reputation, and how to integrate the professional standards with values like transparency, integrity, co-creational and accountability to build an organizational reputation in AAU?

1.2. Statement of the problem

Since the early 1990s and right up until the early 2000s, the organizations became predominantly concerned with ideas such as ‘organization identity’, ‘organizational reputation’, and ‘branding’ organization which emphasizes the importance of this positioning. A favorable reputational position in the minds of stakeholders drives, whether stakeholders want to transact with an organization, and effectively choose the organization over other rival firms (Cornelissen, 2014).

Samson Mekonen (2018) explores that, the practice of public relations management in maintaining relations with the public who interact with the organization and the role of public relations is maintaining a trustworthy organizational reputation. Of course, if an organization does not earn a respectable reputation which is a strong organizational reputation, public relations must do somewhat about organizational communication (Jefkins, 2004). This implies that public relations are essential to cultivate a sustainable organizational reputation. Thus, public relations must be vigilant to change undesirable states to positive ones, which lead to goodwill and reputation. Deficiencies of building a strong reputation may make vulnerable a well-deserved and long refined favorable image and identity (Stacks 2016). For public relations practitioners, this trend raises serious encounters to their assumed role as the function, which is in control of the organizational reputation (Davis, 2004).

What’s more, the letdown to emphasize the organizational reputation of an organization could lead to the destruction of organizational image or reputation, which could in turn convert public opinion from positive to negative (Botan and Hazleton 2010). These could pose a challenge to the organization from achieving its objective and success. Black (2003), states that the use of public relations is to persuade internal publics that the organization is ‘right’ for them and make people feel good about working in, or with or for an organization and persuade them to do their best. An organization provides a better workplace for its employees, always earns a good reputation (Cravens & Oliver, 2006). It includes safety measures, job security, employee growth, and treating employees as a valuable asset.

Thus, AAU’s vision is composed of four areas of excellence, namely; Excellence in teaching-learning, Excellence in research and technology transfer: Excellence in Community Service, engagement and strategic partnership, Excellence in Good Governance, and diversity

management (AAU handbook, 2013 p: 6). Then after achieving its organizational goal and building its organizational image in near future.

On the other hand, when the researcher assesses the realities in Addis Ababa University with its vision and the above scholar's definitions of public relations, the public relations practitioners of the university seems unable to understand the professional standards effectively to build the organizational reputation of the university and to create a sense of ownership among its internal publics. Most importantly, these ideas were expressed by the following critics: According to Addis Guday Magazine wrote an article entitled "the university which didn't grow as its age". And it is about the internal publics complaining about the lack of good governance and inefficient services provided by Addis Ababa University (Addis guide magazine, On October 23, 2006, p: 11).

Particularly, in Addis Ababa University public relations office the practice of public relations on organizational reputation is not practiced effectively by public relations practitioners taught in related with the public relations profession mainly to create strong relationships between the university and its general public. Because, most of the time the problem of public relations practitioners is to persuade the best people to work for the organization and then to stay and do their best (Newsom, 2004:16). This view is supported by Grunig (cited in B. Steyn 2010) in affirming that —the paramount challenges for public relations professionals at this moment is to learn how to institutionalize strategic public relations as a continuing accepted practice in most organizations to maintaining respectable organizational reputation.

As far as the knowledge of the researcher is concerned, there is not enough empirical research done in Addis Ababa University public relations office in related to the practice of public relations on organizational reputation. Henceforth, studying the concern of AAU public relations practice on organizational reputation is worthy to identify the gap and offered the remedy. Therefore, this study is initiated to fill the gap and makes a fruitful effort to assess the practice of public relations professionals 'activities from the perspective of organizational reputation by taking public relations practitioner as a case study particularly focus within the internal public.

1.3. The objective of the research

The general objective of this study is to assess the practice of public relations on organizational reputation in Addis Ababa university public relations office.

1.3.1. Specific Objectives

- ✓ To identify the practices of public relations practitioners to build the organizational reputation of the Addis Ababa university
- ✓ To identify the appropriateness of communications tools that the public relations professionals used to build an organizational reputation of the Addis Ababa university
- ✓ To assess the challenges that hinder public relations practitioners face to build the sustainable organizational reputation of Addis Ababa University

1.3.2. Research questions

- ✓ How do public relations practitioners practice public relations to build the organizational reputation of Addis Ababa University?
- ✓ What are the communications tools that the public relations practitioners used to build an organizational reputation on Addis Ababa University?
- ✓ What are the challenges that public relations practitioners face building a sustainable organizational reputation of Addis Ababa University?

1.4. Significance of the research

Public relations practice has a great role to inform the internal publics. It provides basic information to understand the importance of public relations for maintaining mutual relationships among the general public to build well on organizational reputation. It enables the AAU public relations office to see its weakness and adjust itself to build sustainable reputations. What's more, it can be used as an input for further researchers who are interested in the subject matter. The researcher contemplates that public relations professionals can use the findings of this study useful in understanding strategic public relations and organizational reputation in detail.

1.5. Scope of the study

The scope of this study limited to Addis Ababa University public relations /communications office and only one academic year 2012 or 2020.

Thematically, this study focused to assess the practice of public relations on organizational reputation in Addis Ababa university public relations office

1.6. Limitations of the study

Some of the limitations of this study are the absence of local literature conducted in the case of Addis Ababa University in related to public relations practice on organizational reputation. Also, the state of emergency due to the corona virus (COVID-19) did not allow me to move freely to collect quantitative data and I focused on the qualitative data collection and analysis. The qualitative data were collected before the quantitative interests in the study.

1.7. Organization of the paper

This paper has five chapters. The first chapter presents the introduction, background of the study area, the statement of the problem, research objectives, and research questions, the scope of the study, the significance of the study and limitations of the study. The second chapter is all about the review of related literature and theoretical framework. The third chapter presents the research methodology and background of the organization. Data presentation and analysis are included in chapter four. Chapter five includes the finding, conclusion, and recommendation of the study.

Chapter Two

2. Review Literature

It is clearly explained in the above chapter that the objective of this study tries to assess the practice of public relations on organizational reputation: the case of Addis Ababa University's public relations office. To this end, this chapter emphasis on reviewing few topics that would help lay a foundation for the basic understanding the issues of public relations practice on organizational reputation. It's well thought-out, the definitions and the nature of public relations practice and organizational reputation, the best practice and assessment of public relations on organizational reputation, theoretical framework of the study. Generally, it also discusses the public relations practices on organizational reputation in related with Addis Ababa University public relations office.

2.1. What is a Public relations?

In this context the researcher takes part the definitions of public relations practice by many PR scholars with the practice of Addis Ababa university public relations office to build organizational reputation. According to the chartered institute of public relations (CIPR, 2010), suggested that, public relations practice is the discipline which looks after reputation and image with the aim of earning understanding and support, and influencing public opinion and behavior. An organizational reputation is a direct reflection of its performance. That is why Public relations practitioners have their almost to win public acceptance. It is the responsibility of Public relations to make sure that the organization really understood and accepted as well as loved by its publics (Newsom, 2004:15). And also Public relations are the management role that assesses public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or organization with the public interest, and executes a program of actions to earn public understanding and acceptance (Miller and Dinan 2007; Siriramesh and Verses 2003; Gruing 1992). This indicates public relations being a part of management function dealing with organizational communication activities by measuring public attitude, analyzing policies, performing program of action, where upon keeping public interest to win public attention and acceptance.

Similarly, Seitel (2017) placed organizational reputation at the center of public relations tasks. A public relations function is the discipline which appearances at organizational reputation with the

objective of earning support and influencing public opinion (Seitel 2017; Guth and Marsh 2016; Botan and Hazleton 2010). It is the people who form an opinion over a period of time (about a firm) that gives the organization its reputation. So, maintaining good relations with all the concerned publics enable to build strong organizational reputation.

2.2. What organizational reputation is?

Initially organizational reputation was described as a synonym to corporate image (Gotsi& Wilson, 2001). Organizational reputation is emerging and multidimensional concept over the past two decades. This period is regarded as determinative phase of reputation research (Mahon, 2002; Lange et al., 2011). There is no consensus of single definition and measurement technique (Jensen et al., 2012) because of the complex characteristics of reputation and difficulty in measuring reputation in monetary or quantification term. The dictionary meaning of reputation is ‘the beliefs or opinions that are generally held about someone or something’. Organizational reputation was initially defined as a =a perceptual representation of an organization’s past actions and future prospects that describe the firm’s overall appeal to all its constituents when compared to other leading rivals’ (Fombrun, 1996).

2.3. Theoretical Role of Public Relations Practitioners

In this study, the researcher need to see the practice of public relations on organizational reputation in Addis Ababa university public relations office in related with different theoretical models and concepts exist regarding the roles and function of public relations. In order to describe the numerous roles and functions of the public relations practices, it is significant to look at the various world views of public relations models and theoretical roles public relations on organizational reputation of Addis Ababa University. Gruning cited in the Kitchen (2003) intellectualized that there are four roles of public relations practitioners: the four theoretical roles of public relations as Gruning has it, (in Heerden, 2005) are:

2.3.1. The communication technician

The communication technician role of public relations is mostly conceptualized as the beginning of professionalism (Gruning, 2002). The practitioners are often responsible for the communication tactics of news releases, organizing press conferences, employee newsletters, position papers, designs brochures and media placements (Castelli, 2007). According to Gruning (2002) further maintained that the practitioners, in performing this role, are usually not involved

in defining problems and developing solutions, but base their tactics on the technical skill of writing. Theaker (2004) further stated that the communication technician's role of public relations may not require them to undertake research or be involved in organizational decision making; except to decide which communication mechanism suits their prescribed purpose.

2.3.2. The communication facilitator

The communication facilitator of public relations is a boundary spanner who listens to and brokers information between the organization and its key publics (Theaker, 2004). According to (Cutlip et al., 2000), the goal of this role is "to provide both management and publics the information they need for making decisions of mutual interest." Practitioners serving as the public relations manager within an organization are expected to be knowledgeable about innovations in public relations and are expected to demonstrate leadership in new approaches to old problems (Dozier 1984, cited in Castelli, 2007).

2.3.3. The expert prescriber and

The expert prescriber's theoretical role of the public relations is associated with the responsibility to handle consultation function or participation by other senior management. It is the role where the practitioner is responsible for describing and solving public relations problems independently. The expert prescriber acts as the authority on both public relations problems and their solutions (Castelli, 2007).

2.3.4. Problem solving facilitator

The problem-solving facilitator's roles of public relations, according to (Dozier cited in Castelli, 2007), is the role where the practitioners are assumed as problem solver, decision-maker and planner. They are expected to be knowledgeable about innovations in public relations and expected to demonstrate leadership approach to solve problems. Ströh (2007, p. 1) Explaining the importance of public relations stated that it must be the parasol function that manages the communication between an organization and its publics to build and enhance healthy relationships to the benefit of all parties involved. As Rosenberg (2013) puts it, "the most valuable type of public relations activities involves anticipating problems, planning to prevent problems or at least trying to solve them while they are still small" (p. 13). The issue of the roles of public relations was also dealt with Cutlip et al., (at Theaker, 2004, p. 57). They identified two dominant roles of public relations: the communication manager role and the communication

technician role. The communication manager plans and manages public relations programs, advises management, makes communication policy decisions and oversees their implementation. On the other hand, the communication technician is the one who is not involved in organizational decision making, but implements public relations programs.

Concerning the roles of public relations practitioners, Pearson (2008) stated that public relations practitioners today varies from the purely technical to the respected counselor within organizations of every kind, from huge profit-making conglomerates to small grassroots not-for-profit and everything in between. On the other hand, Mehta and Xavier (ND), point out that the roles and responsibilities of public relations practitioners are influenced by two forces: the professionalization of public relations and the nature of the organizational environment. In fact, the multiple roles of public relations may be because of its multiple functions through its association with communications, management, marketing and others.

Lubbe and Puth (2002) showed how public relations practitioners are involved in a variety of work assignments or functions which may include research, strategic planning, counseling, communication, evaluation, media relations and placement, organizing, writing, editing, media production, speaking, training, management. However, the most common prevailing perspectives that influence the function of public relations in broad concept, as Venter (2004) put it, are communication, management and marketing.

2.4. The Communication Perspective on Public Relations

In this study, the researcher wants to integrate the practice of public relations on organizational reputation with the communication perspective. Of the important factors, for the success of high level officers, communication perspective of public relations is the basic ingredient to make a good decision that can contribute to the goals of an organization. Public relations practitioners help to provide managers good information which may be vital for managers in order to impart the right decisions. The communication perspectives of a public relation are, therefore, used to provide genuine data or information about their organizations. The communication role of public relations Saylor looks at all the stakeholders in the organization and uses a variety of tools and tactics to enhance relationships with these publics. At its best, the communication function uses research and monitoring methods to keep a finger on the pulse of internal and external perceptions of the organization. It uses a variety of communication channels to enhance the

organization's reputation. And most importantly, it provides strategic counsel to the organization's leaders to help the team make better decisions (<http://www.saylor.org/book>). To sum up, the communication perspective of public relations is also emphasized by Rosenberg (2013). He stressed that public relations have to be interpreters and functions as communication links between an institution and all of its publics.

2.4. 1. Role of public relations on organizational reputation

In the corporate world, organizational reputation is seen as a major element of an organization's like Addis Ababa University, provenance alongside and included in organizational performance and innovation. The academic-practitioner team of Paul Argenti and Bob Druckenmiller (2004, p. 369), Suggest that, organizational reputation is a 'collective representation of multiple constituencies' images of a company built up over time. It is also linked to the organization's reputation, identity, performance and the way others respond to its behavior. The elements to note are that the organizational reputation is a 'collective representation' of images and perceptions, not a self-promoted message'. It involves relationships with all stakeholders ('constituencies') and it is gained, maintained and enhanced or detracted from over time. Murray and White's research amongst UK CEOs has found similar characteristics:

'It's the role of public relations to make sure that the organization is getting credit for the good it does. Great reputations are built on doing this consistently over a period of time in which a track record of delivering on promises and engendering trust is evident to everyone. All members of an organization have a contribution to make to building and sustaining reputation (Murray and White, 2004, p. 10).

The elements of promoting yet sustainable image and performance are again identified, but a holistic factor – 'all members of an organization' – is added. Later in this chapter, the role of CEOs in defining and driving reputation is discussed. However, it is broadly accepted that a good reputation is unsustainable without internal organizational support. Neglect of reputation by means of apathy, indifference or ineffective communication is leaving a key communication to the vagaries of other market forces. Murray and White also point to relationship management as being 'at the heart of creating, enhancing and retaining a good reputation' (2004, p. 10). They see strong communication performance of organizational leaders and effective feedback mechanisms

from stakeholders as essential for articulating relevant messages and making better informed decisions that retain the support of stakeholders.

2.4. 2. Public Relations and organizational Reputation

Various studies have demonstrated that organizational reputation is positively or negatively affected by public relations activities; therefore, managing organizational reputation is an important part of public relations practice and strategies. Grunge (1993) suggested that organizational reputation was one of the dependent variables of public relations effectiveness along with relationship with stockholders and employee satisfaction. Plowman et al. (2001) argued that maintaining the reputation of an organization was the most important function of public relations. More practically, Kim (2001) argued that _as the unit of public relations expense increases, a positive effect on the company’s reputation is expected.

Organizational reputation is formed on perceptions, that are an aggregate perception of all stakeholders, and that it combines the firm's past actions, current state and future prospects (Walker 2010, Dowling & Moran 2012). Chou and Kim (2010) also maintained that there was a positive correlation between a corporation’s public relations activity and corporate reputation. In this regard, it is not unreasonable to assume that larger corporations have larger public relations departments than smaller corporations and have correspondingly larger public relations budgets. Furthermore, it is likely that the more strategically and actively public relations activities are conducted, the higher and more positive reputation the corporation will have.

Dowling (2006) argues that positive reputations yield positive organizational benefits. According to Walker (2010), these benefits include the ability to lower firm costs, charge premium prices, increase profitability, attract applicants, investors, and customers, and create competitive barriers. In addition, corporate reputation can increase expected quality, decrease information cost or buying risks, and enhance trust (Jeng, 2011, cited in Wiedmann et al., 2013). Therefore, a good reputation brings about a number of beneficial outcomes.

2.5. Organizational Brand, identity, image or reputation

In this study, the researcher incorporates the practice of PR in Addis Ababa University public relations office with the concept of organizational identity, image and reputation. So, these three terms are sometimes used interchangeably – identity, image and reputation. Van Riel and Berens

say, ‘corporate identity can be defined as a company’s *self-presentation*, that is, the managed cues or signals that an organization offers about itself to stakeholders’ (2001, p. 45). Van Riel and Berens, also point to the corporate symbolism as part of the identity, which includes logos, house style, staff uniforms, etc. (2001, p. 45). The transmitted corporate identity is received by stakeholders as image, ‘a reflection of the organization’s identity and its corporate brand’. This image or set of images, thus contributes to the reputation of the organization. The corporate brand is also an expression of the organization’s presentation to others. Argentine and Druckenmiller define it as: ‘a brand that spans an entire company (which can have disparate underlying product brands); and. . . Conveys expectations of what the company will deliver in terms of products, services, and customer experience’ (2004, p. 369).

2.5.1. Concept of organizational identity

Organizational identity is the articulation of what a company is and how it works. Tied to the way the company carries out its business activities and to the strategies it adopts and implements, corporate identity is also a means of differentiating the company from others (Marwick and Fill, 1997, Balmer and Gray, 2003; Chun 2005). It reflects the unique characteristics or corporate personality deeply embedded in the behavior of the organization’s members which helps employees fully identify with the organization (Balmer and Gray 2000).

According to Barnett, Jermier and Lafferty (2006), corporate identity is thought of as a collection of symbols derived from internal values and beliefs. This then leads to the formation of corporate images which is created through corporate communication, corporate branding, and corporate visuals. The reputation component of market reputation capital is a concept closely related to —goodwill, ¶ and it is worth many billions of dollars in many large corporations. It has a value in not-for profits, government, and universities as well. For instance, a good reputation helps a university attract students and donors. Likewise, a good reputation also helps to attract a number of tourists which in turn develop the tourism sector in the country.

On the other hand, Cornelissen (2004) states that the purpose of organizational identity is to project a consistent and distinctive image of the organization, which, hopefully, leads to favorable images and reputations with stakeholders, suggesting also that organizations with stronger identities have more positive reputations. Basically, a powerful identity is easily recognizable by stakeholders outside the organization, where reputation is formed on the basis of

subjective impressions, acting as a different signal. An organization should understand the motivations and interests of its stakeholders, together with the importance they place on any kind of issue. At the same time, it has to develop relationships with them, finding out their current perceptions, expectations, and requirements in regard to the organization. These actions should be done, especially when things are going well and no crisis may threaten its activity (Thomson and John, 2007).

2.5.2 Organizational image

According to Wilkins and Huisman (2014), organizational image is an individual's immediate impression of an organization, whereas corporate reputation results from stakeholders' holding consistent corporate images over time. This is conventional wisdom which views corporate reputation from the aspect of time, since reputation is built on the basis of prior experience, while image is subject to change as a result of communications and other efforts. On the other hand, corporate image and corporate reputation are generally considered as two distinct constructs which may be strongly related. This relationship is intuitively appealing given the idea that image and reputation are two socially constructed entities and derived from the shareholder's perception.

2.5.3. Organizational branding

The organization's brand encompasses a wide range of corporate entities – companies, corporations, subsidiaries, business groups, and brand associations (Balmer& Gray, 2003). According to Cornelissen (2004), many communication practitioners indeed draw heavily on the idea of uniqueness or distinctiveness in corporate identity because it encapsulates the idea that the organization needs to express its uniqueness in the market and with other stakeholders. The principle behind this idea is that it enables an organization to differentiate itself from its competitors and to attain a preferred position 'in the minds of consumers and other stakeholders.

Whereas, Van Riel and Fombrun (2007) have argued that emphasizing branding in isolation from other communication concerns is also potentially dangerous. They proposed that branding is actually the middle stage in a complex corporate communication process that begins with identity development and ends with reputation management. They theorized that organization without a strong sense of identity struggle to develop a coherent brand and find it impossible to

establish and defend a robust reputation over the long term. They concluded that marketing must be balanced with equally strong efforts in management and internal communication that strengthen organizations from within and public relations activities that grow organizations' reputations among corporate, community, and governmental stakeholders.

2.6. How to build organizational Reputation?

For organizations like, Addis Ababa University public relations office, practitioners that want to maintain their own organizational reputation, there are also some steps and literature resources on how to go about doing this to maintain its own reputation. Organizational reputation is influenced by both operational and communication activities, but more by operating activities. But it is the lot of good communication programs to beam awareness of the operational events or efforts of the company as well as enhance the organization's relationship with its stakeholders. So, both are very important. Below are the six steps discussed by Harrison, K. (2009) that can be used to strengthen corporate reputation through stakeholder relations?

1. The first thing is to research into your stakeholders for the purpose of knowing them better. This research will more appropriately reveal who they are, what their preferences are, what they value most in a company, how they like to be related with by the company, etc. This effort removes all guess work on the nature and makeup of the stakeholders.
2. The research should be able to reveal the stakeholders' strengths and weaknesses. So, assess the strengths and weaknesses and then focus on the gap between internal realities of the company and stakeholder perceptions of the company. The aim is to minimize or eliminate this gap as much as possible towards reducing the forces that work against the company while increasing the forces that work or should work in its favor.
3. Having been armed with a sound knowledge of your stakeholders, you have to do other research. This time it has to do with clearly identifying the main factors that comprise or underscore your organization's reputation. You will then align these factors with your company's mission, policies, strategies, programs and systems across all functional lines or operations of the company. This will no doubt produce a powerful reorientation of corporate priorities and behaviors.

4. Having taken care of your stakeholders 'expectations as revealed in the above research, you can then develop and implement plans and strategies that will help you focus on exceeding all stakeholders 'expectations.
5. The CEO must be directly involved in all aspects of the programs as the champion of the entire process.
6. You must remember to measure regularly against targets while also working very hard to improve the results already obtained.

2.7. Developing good organizational Reputation

UK public relations industry leader Adrian Wheeler, taking cognizance of market research, that found 28 percent of people do trust business leaders to tell the truth (meaning 72 per cent do not), has proposed six components of good organization reputation. He also comments that 'corporate reputation is a slow-build proposition' (Wheeler, 2001, p. 8). His six reputation components are: Be obsessed with your product or service: Nothing comes close to superior product quality in influencing the way people feel about your organization. Deserve confidence: Lead from the front and engender trust from employees and customers. Be available: Don't hide behind a wall of middle managers and advisers. Build relationships with customers, employees and suppliers. Admit mistakes: If mistakes are made, admit them and respond rapidly. Engage people's interest: For CEOs and companies, taking up a public cause separates you or your company from the rest. Get all staff involved. Have something to say: Most people think business is boring, so make it interesting and human. CEOs can use their own and the business's personality to communicate with impact and colour. (Wheeler, 2001, pp. 910)

2.7.1. Challenges of public relations practice to build organizational reputation

In the practice of any kind of profession in any organization's challenges are inevitable. In this study the researcher wants to assess some of the challenges that face in practicing of public relations profession to build organizational reputation of the Addis Ababa University in related with the finding other researchers. Thus, according to Tesfaye Bezabih (2018, p, 37,) stated that, the practice and challenges of public Relations practices in government universities in Ethiopia. The finding of the inquiry revealed that the public relations experts, internal publics in the colleges and the external publics trusted that the public relations office has a key role in the

overall activities of the universities .Whereas the internal publics limited the role to publicity which is one part of the public relations function. Similarly, most of the public relations practitioners have not understand the professional standards of Public Relations i.e. the PR office has not involved in creating mutual understanding with the external publics regarding the mission of the universities towards the external communities. For the most part, Bruning, D. &Lambe, E. (2008) indicated the educational public relations is to create favorable attitudes in the minds of the people to implement government policies and strategies and addressing societal need of the public and also to build organizational reputation. However, the main roles of the universities public relations offices are not well understood by the university internal public. Meanwhile, the PR offices were not structured and organized professionally which emanates from belittling its role especially from the top leaders. Yet, the public relation practitioners are trying their best to solve the problems which face both from the internal and external publics by themselves to build sustainable organizational reputation their organizations.

Equivalently, Tesfaye Bezabih (2018) supplement that, the main challenges stated by the public relations practitioners are: Lack of skilled human, power (professionals);passive attitude towards the office (belittling) especially from the top leaders; absence of adequate capacity building trainings; structure of the office (personnel);lack of logistics(electronic) and financial constraint; absence of professional leadership; infrastructure (to reach village publics) reluctance of sector offices; and inadequate assistance from the president and dean or Head of the departments in the universities. Therefore, at this point it is possible to conclude that this huge of challenges are threats to the practice of professional public relations and public dissatisfaction on the daily activities which may lead to lack of good governance. Agee (1985) says “public relation practice-at its best affords genuine opportunities for meaningful service to the society.

2.8. Alignment in the domain of strategic communication

The analysis of contemporary literature in the strategic communication domain revealed that the term —alignment is often used, but seldom defined. Only two monographs have elaborated explicitly upon the alignment concept: *The Alignment Factor: Leveraging the Power of Total Stakeholder Support* by Riel (2012) and *Taking Brand Initiative: How Companies Can Align Strategy, Culture, and Identity through Corporate Branding* by Hatch and Schultz (2008). Both works stem from the field of corporate and brand communication; they are based on case study

research. Scholars have referred to alignment in different contexts: for instance, as a —mutually rewarding relationship between a company and its external and internal stakeholders Riel (2012). In fact, three major notions of alignment can be distinguished from the literature review: (1) organization–stakeholder alignment; (2) communication strategy alignment; and, (3) communication strategy and activities alignment.

2.8.1. Organization–stakeholder alignment

One strand of literature investigates alignment between an organization and its internal and external stakeholders (Invernizzi & Romenti, 2015; Riel, 2012). Alignment with internal stakeholders refers to aligning all employees to the organization and towards a common goal, identity, or behavior. Alignment with external stakeholders means aligning the organization to the multifaceted and changing expectations, beliefs, and demands articulated by different stakeholder groups. In this context, strategic communication is understood as a tool to create and maintain organization– stakeholder alignment and/or to detect misalignment. The ultimate goal of organization–stakeholder alignment is to create a favorable impression and to gain stakeholder support and an unrestricted license to operate (Riel, 2012).

According to Riel (2012), communication plays a critical role in gaining internal stakeholder alignment, as it helps executives to jointly align employees to corporate strategy through different techniques of consultation, mirroring, consensus, or power play (Riel, 2012,).He further highlights the need to fully integrate communications with counterparts from marketing, accounting, information technology, and human resources to foster internal alignment. Once that alignment is achieved, the company has to align itself to the expectations of external stakeholders to secure an unrestricted license to operate. The author suggests establishing external fit at three levels—with issue, public opinion, and reputation—through gathering intelligence based on analyses of competitors, consumer behavior, media, and scanning techniques.

Invernizzi and Romenti (2015) have briefly elaborated the organization’s alignment with the external environment in their recent analysis of entrepreneurial organization theory. They identified four contributions of strategic communication in their Entrepreneurial Communication Model: the aligning role, the energizing role, the visioning role, and the constituting role of Strategic communication. Communication in this context is hence ascribed a —aligning role in

supporting the organization to achieve alignment with external expectations through four different activities: boundary spanning; environmental scanning; activity of bridging; and engaging stakeholders. Regarding the first two activities boundary spanning and environmental scanning—communication supports monitoring and interpreting the context in which the organization operates and provides critical input for aligning strategies with ongoing external dynamics and expectations in order to guarantee long-term survival and legitimacy. Regarding the latter two activities—bridging and engaging stakeholders—communication helps building partnerships between the organization and its most important stakeholders, incorporating their points of view in managerial decision making and thus activating co-decisional processes, and thereby stimulating supporting behavior from stakeholders.

2.8.2. Communication–strategy alignment

The purpose of communication strategy alignment is to enhance the company's strategic positioning and contribute to increased performance (Argenti, 2016). Many seminal definitions of strategic communication have stressed its notion as being purposeful (Hallahan et al., 2007.), intentional or —objectives-driven (Kiousis & Strömbäck, 2015.), with the purpose of fostering the achievement of overall goals and fulfilling the organization's mission. Even though, the notion strategic is inherent in the term strategic communication only a few scholars have explicitly defined the term as communication aligned with the company's overall strategy (Argenti et al., 2005.). Alignment in this context emphasizes the need to formulate communication strategies that are linked to corporate strategy and mission in order to contribute to corporate success (Falkheimer et al., 2017; Zerfass, 2008).

Communication and marketing scholars have adapted strategy and planning concepts from management research to address these challenges and proposed frameworks for deriving communication goals and setting up communication plans (Bruhn, Esch, & Langner, 2016) and for connecting communication strategy to corporate strategy through Communication Scorecards (Zerfass, 2008). Although there is clarity on the necessity for well-aligned, harmonized communicative strategies, goals and plans, it is notable that the linkage and process of aligning communication and organizational strategy has received scant empirical attention in the strategic communication domain, just as has a deeper analysis of the strategy concept.

2.9. The Hunt- Grunig Models of Public Relations

In this study attempting to study the practice public relations without models is like building a house without a plan. Models form the basis for a good understanding of the practice of public relations. They also preempt the problems inherent in some public relations programmed by providing basis for resolving them. Again, models are predictive signposts that could tell the consequences and implications of certain public relations decisions. These [four models are] developed by professors, Hunt and James Grunig. The models include:

2.9.1. The Press Agency / Publicity Model

In this model, the focus of public relations effort is on getting favorable coverage or publicity from the media. It is a one-way communication with propaganda (one-sided argument) as its purpose. The model projects an approach that thrives on falsehood, thus accuracy, ethics and truth are not seen as essential. According to Guth and Marsh (2000), a study in 1989 had revealed that this was the most practiced model of public relations with P.T. Barnum as one of the prominent figures in the practice of the model. The model can be depicted as shown below:

2.9.2. The Public Information Model

This model equally adopts a one-way approach of dissemination of information. However, unlike the press agency/publicity model, it disseminates truthful and accurate information. It is a model in which the public relations professional acts much like a typical journalist or news reporter 'in residence' in the organization and the information he or she disseminates is relatively objective. Indeed, the purpose of public information here is the dissemination of truthful information. The model was developed by Ivy Lee, an early expert in public relations. It is depicted below: Guth and Marsh report that the 1989 study showed that this model was the second most practiced, but it ranked last in order of preference among practitioners.

2.9.3. The Two-Way Asymmetrical Model

The trust of this model is scientific persuasion. It uses research as a way of influencing vital publics towards the organization point of view. The model also attempts to create mutual understanding between the organization and its publics. Here, the public relations communicator gets feedbacks from the government and then employs appropriate communication theories to persuade the public to accept the organization's point of view. The essence of research here is to reveal how best to persuade the audience or public. According to Guth and Marsh, the 1989

study showed that it was the least practiced of the four models but it ranked first in order of preference among practitioners. It can be shown thus:

2.9.4. The Two–Way Symmetrical Model

In this model, public relations communicators make every attempt for each side to understand the other's point of view. The goal here is to achieve mutual understanding albeit in a deeper and more profound way that puts the two parties in a win-win situation. It is a useful model for conflict resolution within an organization and especially between an organization and its publics. The public relations communicator here is a middleman between the organization and its publics striving always at achieving mutual understanding rather than an adversarial relationship. The model is the most preferred by Hunt and Grunig who did the 1989 study. They reported that it was the most practiced model of public relations but ranked second in order of preference among practitioners. Edward Bernays and most communication educators are major supporters of this model. The model is depicted below:

Now in this study the researcher assess the practice of Addis Ababa university public relations office practitioners, which of these public relations models would they adopt for their practice as a public relations practitioner. Well it depends on a number of factors such as the size of your organization, the distinctive personality of the organization, its corporate goals and objectives as well as its history and what it has learnt from it. For instance a university of Kansas study showed that the more experience an organization has in dealing with crisis, the greater the likelihood that the public relations' role is closely tied to the organization's management.

2.10. The Theoretical framework of the study

For this study the researcher attempt to integrate the theoretical framework of the study with Addis Ababa university public relations office and social theory in public relation especially excellence theory in order to assess the practice public relation on organizational reputation. What is more, according to Van Riel and J. Balmer (1997) stated that, the theoretical frame work of organizational reputation as originally articulated by Birkigt and Stadler. The aim of to establish a favorable image, or reputation, with the organization's internal publics which it is hoped will be translated by such stakeholders into a propensity to buy that organization's products and services, to work for that organizational, or to invest in it (organizational reputation). In other words, a good organizational reputation has a strategic value for the

organization that possesses it. It ensures acceptance and legitimacy from stakeholder groups, generates returns, and may offer a competitive advantage as it forms an asset that is difficult to imitate. An organizational reputation, or rather the corporate identity upon which it is based, is an intangible asset of the organization because of its potential for value creation, but also because its intangible character makes replication by competing firms more difficult. The organizational reputation mix (symbolism, public relation or strategic communication and behavior of members of the organization) as based on the organization's core values in its history and culture and which inform every part of its strategy.

2.10.1. Social theory in public relations perspectives

Public relations theories related to organizational reputation is discussed by different theories on the basis various academicians and researchers (Walker, 2010; Bergh *et al.*, 2010). For this study the researcher tries to integrate the theoretical scope of public relations practice in Addis Ababa University's public relations office with the work of a group of prominent social theorists and from the public relations scholar's perspectives. In other words, social theory can help us to make sense of public relations at the societal, organizational, and individual levels to create strong relationships and to maintain good organizational reputation. According to Ihlen, O., & van Ruler, B. (2007), supposed that, social theory in public relations are often studied from a managerial perspective. Nevertheless, to understand its role in building trust or creating mistrust and in developing—or destroying—an organization's license (organizational reputation), the practice of public relations also need to be studied as a social phenomenon. Van Ruler and Verčič (2005) proposed viewing a sociologically oriented approach to public relations not so much as an alternative but as a macro view, one that is additional to the meso (management-oriented) and micro(people-oriented) views. Public relations as an academic discipline needs an understanding of how the public relations functions works and how it is influenced by and influences social structures. Such research endeavors have an obvious and legitimate role in themselves.

At present, everyday life is influenced by increased complexity, fast change, and the deconstruction of social structures. As a result, organizations today have a greater need to build

relationships with their stakeholders and to communicate with them about their aims and behavior in order to maintain a good organizational reputation.

Predominantly, in this interaction, this not only gives public relations new frames of reference, but also gives it a much more prominent position in the management of organizations. Organizations increasingly tend to see public relations as a senior management function, and a wider range of organizations has started to utilize public relations. The public relations consulting industry is indeed thriving. With this boost in the prominence of public relations, its practical needs to be understood in relationship to society (macro), organizational level (meso), and individual (micro) properties. Emerging from this, we also argue that there is a need to integrate social theory as dimensions of public relations research. We intend to apply social theory, which can be understood as the “effective effort by communities of scholars to make sense of their social world” (Baran& Davis, 2000, p. 4).

What is more, as an area of systematic scholarly inquiry, public relations are a relative newcomer. When Grunig and Hickson (1976) took stock of the academic research on public relations, they concluded that there was little theory to be found. A similar conclusion was reached by Mary Ann Ferguson in 1984 (as cited in Sallot et al., 2003). Shallot et al. (2003) duplicated her research and found that public relations have become a much richer field theoretically than it was in its early days. Botany and Taylor (2004) came to the same conclusion:

Over the last 20 years public relations has evolved into a major area of applied communication based on research of significant quantity and quality. Public relations have become much more than just organizational communication practice. Rather, it is a theoretically grounded and research based area that has the potential to unify a variety of applied communication areas. (p. 659).

2.10.2. Excellence theory in public relations

For this study, the researcher needs to assimilate the practice of public relations in Addis Ababa University’s public relations office with different public relations theories especially excellence theory. According to Botan and Hazleton (2006) state in their book Public Relations Theory II

that “a leading body of work has developed around Symmetry/Excellence Theory, which has probably done more to develop public relations theory and scholarship than any other single school of thought” (p. 6). Earlier, Botan and Taylor (2004) argued that the most prominent trend in public relations has been the movement from a functionalist to a co-creational perspective, focusing on publics as co-creators of meaning and emphasizing the building of relationships with all publics to maintain a sustainable organizational reputation.

For the most part, by the year 1984 James E. A grange, a public relations theorist, led an international research team consisting of six public relations academics and as a result that team proposes the Excellence Theory, which provides insight as to “how public relations excellence is achieved in an organization,” (Waddington, 2012, 2). This theory deals with internal structures and external variables as performance determiners for a given public relations section. Properties addressing excellence theory provides a model for the maturation of public relations theory in international contexts. As originally conceived, and based on an examination of public relations practice only in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, there were fourteen fundamental principles in three general areas: (1) empowerment of the public relations function; (2) communicator roles; and (3) organization of the communication function and its relationship to other management functions, (Freitag, & Stokes, 2009, 35). Thus, the practitioners of Addis Ababa University’s public relations must be inculcated in mind and integrated this theory with their day to day activities to maintain good well organizational reputation.

2.10. 3. Empirical Evidences 1st

This part presents empirical literature related to the practice of public relations on building organizational reputation especially with Addis Ababa University’s public relations office. Kim and Ewha (2008) attempted to identify the causal relationships among variables such as organization size and complexity, public relations department size and formality, and corporate reputation, and how these variables affected economic ROI (return of investment). The top 300 South Korean corporations were surveyed and their responses were analyzed using structural equation modeling. Sizes of public relations departments and organizations were the most important variables affecting ROI. Both public relations and corporate reputation positively affected ROI. There was a positive correlation between the complexity of an organization, and the size and formality of a public relations department.

Furthermore, Samson Mekonen (2018) shows that, the practice of public relations management in maintaining relations with the public who interact with organizational reputation. To investigate the practice of public relations in maintaining good organizational reputation, a mixed method approach was employed taking Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate as a case study. Data were collected from different instruments such as questionnaire, document review and in-depth interview. The questionnaire was administered to 50 participants, while in-depth interview was done with the public relations department officers of EBC. The findings of this study indicated that the public relation campaign of EBC is not research oriented and the outcome of the campaign is not measured. In addition, survey of the audience's perception indicated that audiences have negative perceptions towards the organization. It is possible to extrapolate that the efforts made by the public relations department of EBC to manage organizational reputation is not successful. This could possibly be due to lack of research-oriented public relations campaign and lack of research on return on investment. The basic point to address here is that corporate reputation these days should not be neglected or underestimated rather it should be given high priority in company's overall strategy and in all operations, inside and outside the company.

In additions, Romenti (2008) argued that corporate communication reaches its full potential in building organizational reputation, when it moves beyond the influencing of public opinion's perceptions, towards the shaping of organizational reality by engaging stakeholders as the main reputation drivers. This paper describes the case study of a leading dairy company in Italy, Granarolo, where stakeholder engagement activities have been put at the center of the corporate reputation development. The finding of this study suggested that it is argued that corporate reputation of Granarolo has been built on a network of stakeholder partnerships through which the company continuously improves organizational learning and develops new business solutions. In particular, the activation of co-decisional processes involving stakeholders, the building of partnerships, and the stimulation of supporting behaviors, enabled the company to recover from a severe loss of confidence by investors in the second half of the 1990s

2.10.4. Empirical Evidence 2nd

Fombrun cited in Chan T. J. (1996), organizational reputation is a perceptual representation of a company's past actions and future prospects that describe the firm's overall appeal to all of its

key constituents when compared with other leading competitors. Later, Fombrun (2012) further highlighted the new definitions of corporate reputation which focused on the different stakeholder group, whereby corporate reputation is defined as a collective evaluation of a corporation's attractiveness to a specific group of stakeholders relative to a reference group of corporations with which a corporation competes for the resources. Moreover, Reputation scholars Fombrun and Van Riel carried out comparative analyses of the corporate reputations of the most visible and reputable organizations across the world. Based upon stakeholder evaluations of companies within different countries, they found that organizations with the strongest reputations are on average characterized by high levels of *visibility* (the degree to which corporate themes are visible in all internal and external communication), *distinctiveness* (the degree to which the corporate identity or positioning of the organization is distinctive), *authenticity* (the degree to which an organization communicates values that are embedded in its culture), *transparency* (the degree to which an organization is open and transparent about its behaviour), and *consistency* (the degree to which organizations communicate consistent messages through all internal and external communication channels) in corporate communication.

In other words, a key driver for the strength of an organization's reputation is the degree to which the values that it communicates are not only authentic but also distinctive. Many communication practitioners indeed draw heavily on the idea of uniqueness or distinctiveness in corporate identity because it encapsulates the idea that the organization needs to express its uniqueness in the market and with other stakeholders. The principle behind this idea is that it enables an organization to differentiate itself from its competitors and to attain a preferred 'position' in the minds of consumers and other stakeholders. Recently, the term 'corporate branding' has become fashionable alongside corporate identity to highlight the importance of distinctiveness. The idea of an organization as a brand is a logical extension of the product branding approach, with its original focus on products and brand benefits and on individual consumers. The notion of a 'corporate brand' was also inspired by Wally Olins' framework on monolithic corporate, endorsed and branded identities.

2.10. 5. Strategic communication farm

Predominantly, in this study to improve the visibility, credibility of the practice of public relations in Addis Ababa University’s public relation office practitioners, it is time to basically rethink how strategic communication is advanced and the practitioners using modern agile strategic communications frame to build sustainable organizational reputation.

The strategic communication farm is based on the organizational behaviors, effective organizational communications, public relations and reflective relationships (Doorley & Garcia, 2008).It also constructed on the clear, fundamental and rational argument, based on the values, vision and mission of the organization. Besides it shows for what an organization, including its PR, would be accountable, and it gives a clear framework for strategies and actions in the field of public relations and communications (Ton Veen, 2018)



Picture 1, Sources the Strategic Communication Frame, Van Ruler, (2016)

Mihiret Massresha (2018,p, 24-25) suggested that ,fixing a realistic, consistent and time bound ambition, establishing a vision for the communication section, analyzing internal & external situations, assessing and classifying stakeholders, securing the necessary resource, assuming accountability guidelines will be essential ingredients of a strategic communication framework.

Thus, Ruler, & Körver, (2016, p, 1), suggested that, three years ago we developed the Strategic Communication Frame to do this effectively. After many trials, it has proven to be a practical, valuable and highly appreciated tool,

‘Particularly, The Strategic Communication Frame (SCF) is developed by Betteke & van Ruler, prominent public relations academicians in the Netherlands argued that, public relations practice is based on [SCF] in which we find some important keywords, showing sustainable state-of-the-art approaches in public relations: ambition, accountability, stakeholders’ perspective, legitimacy. It’s an ‘agile’, flexible method developed for strengthening the communication/PR function with an organization, creating clear choices in changing communications environments’.

In addition, according to Van Ruler, (2016), this model consists of eight interdependent building blocks those demonstrate how to develop a strategy. The ambition block is a strong desire to do or achieve something. The vision block is about strategic planning is worthless, unless there is first a strategic vision. Ambition is influenced by a person’s own perception of his/her profession and its added value. The Internal situation building block is concerned with what is happening inside the organization. The External situation building block is concerned with what is going on in the outside world and of public opinions, although we prefer to talk about social moods these days.

The accountability building block is concerned with making clear what of your exact responsibilities are regarding your ambitions and how you measure progress. The stakeholders’ building block is defining stakeholders slightly different by: those groups or persons who have a stake in our ambition. The resources building block a very important part of the strategy concerns resources. Resources are about being equipped to do the job. It is about budget, budget allocation and about competences. Furthermore, SCF model is offering a concept for agile PR strategy development’, within the context of changing society/organizations and legitimacy. It helps to increase impact, because it will relate content and process. It also helps public relations practitioners to make clear, fundamental and argument choices, based on the vision and ambitions of the organization. Besides it will show for what an organization, including its PR will be accountable, and it gives a clear framework for strategies and actions in the field of Communication/PR. (Ton Veen, 2018).

For the most part, to improve the reflectiveness and trustworthiness of public relation practice in Addis Ababa University, it is time the public relations practitioners to profoundly change their mind to adopt modern agile strategic communications frame to build sustainable organizational reputation. The practitioners must realized that, how strategic communication tools is technologically advanced.

Chapter Three

3. Research Methodologies

This chapter presents the methodology used to carry out the study. First, it pronounces the research approach; next, it describes the research design and justifies its use. The next section is about the target population and the sampling of respondents. Then, the describes the data collection instruments and followed by data, analyzing with different techniques to assess the practice of public relations on organizational reputation in Addis Ababa university's the public relations office.

3.1. Qualitative research approach

For this study, the researcher used a qualitative research approach to gather vital information to assess the practice of public relations in the Addis Ababa university public relations office. Kothari, (2004, 5), stated that the qualitative research method is concerned with a personal assessment of attitudes, opinions, and behavior of the respondents. And also research in such a circumstance is a job of researcher's insights and impressions. Such an approach to research generates results either in non-quantitative form or in the form which are not subjected to rigorous quantitative analysis.

What's more, in discussing the qualitative research approach, Crotty (1998) identified several assumptions; meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting. Qualitative researchers tend to use open-ended questions so that participants can express their views. Humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspective-we are all born into a world of meaning bestowed upon us by our culture. Thus, qualitative researchers seek to understand the context or setting of the participants by visiting this context and gathering information personally. They also interpret what they find, an interpretation shaped by the researchers' own experiences and backgrounds. The rudimentary generation of meaning has been always social, arising in and out of interaction with a human community. The process of qualitative research was largely inductive, with the inquiring meaning from the data collected in the study. Generally, in the qualitative research approach, individuals are cross-examined at some length to decide how they have personally experienced oppression (Creswell, 2014).

3.3. Research Design

In this study, the researcher used a case study research design due to the nature of the study problem which targets to assess the practice of public relations on organizational reputation in the case of Addis Ababa public relations office. Case studies in which the researcher explores in depth a program, and the event, and activity, a process, or one or more individuals, the case is presently bounded by time and activity, and researcher collects comprehensive information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period (Stake, 1995). This study used this design because it is most appropriate and able to collect data, analysis, description, and interpretation of the circumstances at the time of the study. For more detailed definitions of a case study, Sagadin (1991) states that a case study is used when we assess and define, for example, each person individually, institutions, or a problem (or several problems), process, event in a particular institution in detail. For that reason, the researcher assesses the practice of public relations on the organizational reputation in the case of Addis Ababa University.

3.4. The population of the Study

The public relations practitioners in Addis Ababa University are totally twelve in number. This study takes all of the employees as the population of the study. Utilizing maximum purposive sampling, the researcher interviewed 10 public relation employees of the University whose job are directly tied to the profession excluding two technical workers. Furthermore, public relation materials produced and disseminated online by the University public relations/ communication department were taken as a main data of the study.

3.4.1. Sampling Techniques

For this thesis, the researcher used the maximum purposive sampling technique to select ten (10) interviewees for an in-depth interview to gather sufficient data and to increase the quality and the credibility of this research. Most importantly, Zhi (2014, p, 105-11), suggested that the idea behind MPST is to look at a subject from all available angles, thereby achieving a greater understanding. It involves selecting respondents across a wide-ranging relating to the topic of study. This type of sampling is useful when a random sample is not taken and it's employed where the number of targeted populations assessing the case study was relatively too small.

Generally, using a purposive sampling technique allows the researcher to use certain criteria for judgment to choose the appropriate sample of the total population. The main informant was the

director of public relations office, the managing editor of the public relations office, the two team leaders of a public relations unit, and also six communications practitioners. They were selected based on the positional responsibility, based on their educational background and experience level to assess the practice of public relations on organizational reputation. But the remaining two individuals were not included in the sample, because the researcher believes that they did not have a direct contribution to answer the research questions.

3.5. Source of Data

3.5.1. Primary Sources of Data

For this study, the primary sources of data are gathered from Addis Ababa University public relations office experts through in-depth interviews and document reviews (news articles, photos and press conferences that produced and disseminated by the public relations /communication department was taken as a primary source of data.

3.5.2. Secondary Sources of Data

Secondary sources of data would be obtained relevant and related data from published and unpublished documents, articles, journals, books, reports, and magazines, etc.

3.6. Data Gathering Tools

The researcher used in-depth interviews and document reviews as major tools to gather data. Since the researcher collects information within the in-depth interview: Face to face interview and telephone interview techniques were employed by the public relations experts those who're working in AAU public relations office, the interviewees were selected based on their educational background and current positions or organizational responsibility they have in the workplace. And also Semi-structured interview type used superbly suited for several valuable tasks, particularly when more than a few of the open-ended questions require follow-up queries. In addition to an in-depth interview, document reviews with a cross-sectional studies time zone (only one the academic year 2012 or 2020) were employed to gather the information from the materials such as: (news articles, videos and press conference that posted on the website and social media pages of AAU public relation office).

3.6.1. In-depth Interview

In qualitative research, one interview people to understand their perspectives on a scene, to retrieve experiences from the past, to gain professionals information, to obtain descriptions of events or scenes that was normally unavailable for observation, to foster trust, to understand an intimate relationship to analyze certain kinds of discourse (Lindlof, 1995). The reason for choosing to use an in-depth interview is to make sure that the researcher reveals perceptions at an individual level on a particular issue.

What is more, according to Newcomb (1991), the main strength of interviewing as a method is its capacity to range over multiple viewpoints on a given topic. He/she supplementary give details that conducting many interviews helps to increase the information and broaden a point of view. Moreover, in-depth interviews are an excellent way of obtaining in-depth knowledge on sensitive matters and complexities related to individuals 'beliefs, perceptions, and practices that can be explored Duplooy (1995). The interview provided face to face interaction with the top manager and senior employees. It was semi-structured questions. The interview guide for in-depth interviews consisted of open-ended questions and provides clarification on the practice of public relations on organizational reputation AAU.

3.6.2. Document review

In this study, the researcher used document review as a tool to gather the data from the document that is from AAU Public relations office. Document reviews is very essential to achieve research objective concerning assessing the practice of public relations and communication tools as well as strategies of AAU public relations office. The researcher reviews a wide range of written materials, videos; audios and news article that was produced and posted on the website and the community radio FM 99.4 in this academic year cross-sectional. These can be particularly useful in trying to understand the philosophy of an organization. They can include policy documents, mission statements, annual reports, and minutes of meetings, codes of conduct, websites, and other promotion materials, etc. (Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge, 2009). Therefore, the documents were assessed from AAU public relations offices such as news articles, photographers, videos and press confers. In sum, to cultivate the data in this research document review is significant to achieve the research objective and was employed in this study.

3.7. Data Collection Procedure

As mentioned earlier, the study used in-depth interviews and document analysis method to collect data. When, I received a consent letter from the school of journalism and communications department to collect data for this research the data collection has been done. In processing this data collection, I applied various approaches, For instance, for the in-depth interviews; I first transcribed the audio-recorded. After data transcription, the researcher started to highlight influential quotes that are relevant to the research questions and research objectives which led to themes formulation that are related to the research questions. Interviewees who are participating in the interview were given codes based on the number of participants, for example (AA, BB, CC, DD, EE, and QQ). For document reviews, I review with a cross-sectional studies time zone (only one the academic year 2012 or 2020) was employed to gather the information from the materials such as: (news articles and press conference that posted on the website and social media pages of AAU public relations office). Document reviews particularly useful in trying to understand the philosophy of an organization. They can include policy documents, mission statements, annual reports, and minutes of meetings, codes of conduct, websites, and other promotion materials, etc. (Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge, 2009).

3.8. Data analysis procedure

In this study, the data were presented and analyzed based on themes in a way that the themes are reflections on the research questions. Qualitative data from the open-ended interview part was analyzed using thematic analysis methods. Analyzing qualitative data typically involves immersing oneself in the data to become familiar with it, then looking for patterns and themes, searching for various relationships between data that help the researcher to understand what they have, then visually displaying the information and writing it up, (Kawulich, 2015, 96).

Most importantly, according to Boyatzis (1998), suggested that the thematic analysis, which is based on the frequent theme of data can be used to make sense of qualitative data. It is used to analyze qualitative information and to systematically gain knowledge about a person, an interaction, a group, a situation, an organization, or a culture. This study also administered qualitative data in terms of content and where applicable and a quotation form analyze the director or senior communications expert in-depth interview to assess the practice of public relations on organizational reputation the case of aids Ababa universities.

What's more, the researcher has analyzed the documentary materials such as: (news articles and press conference and photos that posted on the website of AAU public relations office) employing by qualitative contextual content analyses. Because, it's more reflective to developing contextual meaning, rather than mere frequencies positions and counting numbers. As a practical example, Gamson and Modigliani (1989) maintained that to understand which frameworks are being used, the researcher conducts a qualitative content analysis of news articles, photos, and press conferences, by looking for specific elements of a package contextually. This shows the more qualitative element of this content analysis, by going beyond merely counting and reading the pages, but also contextual content analysis required to interpret inductively. What is more, for this study to support the design of the requirement document review, SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis was used to categories known information into a sound order. According to Siyoum Tito (2018) suggested that SWOT analysis is a standard strategic planning instrument. Employing the framework of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, it provided a simple way to assess how the practice of public relations can best be applied by the PR practitioners to build the organizational reputation of AAU.

3.9. Credibility / Trustworthiness of the research

In this research, the credibility and trustworthiness of the research were no less important in qualitative research. They have different connotations for qualitative data. Qualitative researchers must pay attention to several different concerns that may call the credibility of their research into question. There is a matter of completeness of the data. According to (Creswell (1998) maintained that in qualitative research four factors help to construct the rationality and credibility /trustworthiness of the study: Such as, multiple methods of data collection, audit trial, member checks, research team, and debriefing, therefore the researcher used this parameter to assure the appropriateness of the validity and reliability claim. Therefore the researcher was applied such vital factors to get the credibility and trustworthiness of this study, for instance, the researcher sends the research to four members to check the credibility of the study, this research was used audit trial proses by the researcher himself and debriefing by two close friends and academicians to approved the credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

3.10. An ethical issue of this research

The entire participant of this study would be adequately informed about the objective of the study and the anticipated benefits and risk of the study by their data collector. The respondents had the right to respond or refuse the interview. Even they had the right to withdraw the interview at any time or skip any question that they do not want to respond to. Oral informed consent will be obtained from study participants. All the information given by the interviewees were used for research purposes only and confidentiality and privacy will be maintained by omitting the name of the respondents during data collection procedure and after data collection information from the study put without participants' name and principal investigator put questionnaires locked with be.

Chapter Four

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter deals with the presentation and analysis of the collected data, and discusses the results. As indicated earlier, the main purpose of this study was to assess the practice of public relations on organizational reputation: the case of AAU public relations office. To gather the required data for the study, in-depth interviews and document reviews were employed as major tools. The general responses gained from data collection tools are analyzed as follows

4.1. The Practices of public relations on the organizational reputation on AAU

The primary aims of educational public relations should be building an organizational image or reputation. And also advance, create and disseminate knowledge through research and provide, as part of its service to the community, promoting and developing scientific and technological research as well as research in the social sciences, the humanities, and the creative arts. Public relations practitioners involve a diversity of tasks. The people who do the work of public relations, that is PR practitioners, practice different kinds of work, and they are a multitude indeed. The creating of mutual understanding between organizations and its publics should be to promote the image and to build the organizational reputation of their organization.

Likewise, 'BB' supposed that in the contemporary world the practice of public relations has focused on the strategic communications and skills of the manger .The public relations professional has had to become educated in how organizations are managed can be an organize and integrate communication activities, or they can be communication technicians who primarily write and construct messages to address the general public especially the internal public.

'Particularly, I am practicing public relations to promote the image of AAU to the internal and external public. Yes of course; communication skills is the power to bring attitudinal change and practicing educational public relations becomes something more than an infrastructural component of the organization. Indeed, we did not participate in the decisional process with top management level to practice public relations as a problem solver, to persuading it through reflective activities of analysis and interpretation of the internal and external context to build the reputation and image of an

organization to earn understanding with the general publics' (Interview on 23, April 2020).

Newsom, (2004:15) stated that an organizational image is a direct reflection of its performance. That is why Public relations people have almost to win public acceptance. It is the responsibility of Public relations to make sure that the organization understood and accepted as well as loved by its publics. As many researchers supposed that, in the current world the practice of public relations focused on the reputation and image of organizations to earn mutual acceptance and support, and influence public opinion and behavior. As 'EE' adds more, we are practicing public relations in our office to build the reputation and also to promote the image of Addis Ababa University to the internal and external public.

In my point of view, it is very important to apply communication skills for our organization to achieve its goal and to build its reputation, Because, the purpose of practicing public relations within strategic communication skills is vital to achieving the vision and missions of our university. From this perspective, strategic communication skill is vibrant to be integrated into organizational strategy and itself to build organizational reputations'.

'AA' thought that we are practicing public relations to build a smooth relationship between the organization and its publics. We are focusing on promoting the image of the Addis Ababa University.

'Especially, I practice public relations as a communications professional. And also, we disseminate different information by using some medium of the organization's (social media, website, and community radio) to our general public. Furthermore, we have a responsibility to announce the vision and mission of the organization for the internal and external public for its achievement (Excerpt an interview on 30, April 2020).

Most importantly, Andriof, Waddock, (2002) stated that applying public relations or strategic communication skills is very significant to the exchange of information, ideas, and views within and outside an organization via multiple channels. The importance of the activity of dialogue between the organization and its publics within the constitutive role of strategic communication

is fundamental as it permits maintaining harmonious relationships among the respective values and helps legitimate the organization in the environment in which it operates.

It's the role of public relations to make sure that the organization is getting credit for the good it does. Great reputations are built on doing this consistently over some time in which a track record of delivering on promises and engendering trust is evident to everyone. All members of an organization have a contribution to make to building and sustaining a reputation (Murray and White, 2004, p. 10).

On the other hand, according to the managing editor of the public relations office (Excerpt an interview on, April 29, 2020), Public relations is a bridge between the organization and its publics to create mutual understanding. And also most of the public relations experts have ongoing communication programs for these targeted publics, including newsletters, corporate events and an intranet for employees, and promotions for the general public of the organizations to build its reputation.

'Nevertheless, in our case, I am practicing public relations as a role of communications technicians and my daily activities focused on the writing of news and editing the news and also I prepared content for our website and manage it. Then again, as I recognized, from my experience in the past, I hope, we do not practice it more just by involving all the knowledge competence, kills competence, value, manners of public relation .And also my experience gave me open ways to disseminate factual information to the internal publics as much as possible, so, now we are not practicing our profession effectively that can build organizational reputations. We are not involved in defining problems and developing solutions in our public relations department, but base their tactics on the technician skill of writing'.

Most importantly, the communication technician role of public relations is mostly conceptualized as the beginning of professionalism (Gruning, 2002). The practitioners are often responsible for the communication tactics of news releases, organizing press conferences, employee newsletters, position papers, design brochures, and media placements (Castelli, 2007). According to Gruning (2002) further maintained that the practitioners, in performing this role, are usually not involved

in defining problems and developing solutions, but base their tactics on the technical skill of writing.

Likewise, the problem of public relations practitioners is to persuade the best people to work for the organization and then to stay and do their best (Newsom, 2004:16). These could pose a challenge to the organization from achieving its objective and success. Black (2003), states that the use of public relations is to persuade internal publics that the organization is 'right' for them and make people feel good about working in, or with or for an organization and persuade them to do their best.

Furthermore 'BB' indicated that, public relations involve a commitment to some key areas of organization work which includes ensuring that the organization acts in the interest of its publics. So that it's our mission to protect and enhances the organization's reputation, maintains openness and integrity.

'Predominantly, I thought that, we are not practicing public relations based on its knowledge, skills, and abilities to create mutual understanding between the organization and its public, to build the reputation of Addis Ababa University. What is more, we are practicing in a conventional way to keep the interest of the organization, but not in a way that public relations perspective to keep Addis Ababa university from reputation destruction (interview on 30, April 2020).

According to (CIPR, 2015) supposed that public relations are all about organizational reputation – the result of what you do? What you say and what others say about you? And it is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between the organization and its public's .What is more, as the researcher analysis the public relations office documents (news, information posted on the Facebook page of AAU) the public relations practitioners practicing PR as a communications technician only, but not as a problem solvers role .The practitioner's day to day activities is writing news articles, disseminating news information. And also they are passive participant in decision-making activities, to influence the top manager and to pursue the general public about the organization and to create mutual acceptance between the organization and its public, as a result, to build an organizational reputation.

This study sees the analysis part in related with The Two-Way Symmetrical Model, this model is the most preferred by Hunt and Grunig who did the (1989) in this model, public relations communicators make every attempt for each side to understand the other's point of view. The goal here is to achieve mutual understanding, albeit more deeply and profoundly that puts the two parties in a win-win situation. The public relations communicator here is a middleman between the organization and its publics striving always at achieving mutual understanding rather than an adversarial relationship. However, according to Broom and Dozier (1986), pp. 37–56), researches indicate that practitioners in a predominantly communication technician role spend the majority of their time writing, producing, and placing communication messages. Typically, those in this role are creative and talented with language and images. Their capacity to create and produce messages with powerful imagery and evocative language is very important to the execution of public relations tactics. On the other side, communication technicians rarely have a seat at the management table and do not have a voice in the strategy of the organization. Once the strategy is decided, the technician is brought in to execute the deliverables (or tactics) in the strategy.

As the researcher inquires information from the PR document (such as news articles, photos, and press conferences that posted on the website of AAU) the public relations practitioners did not help the top managers to work from side to side as a problem solver from a public relations perspective; And public relations professional did not combine their role as, an expert prescriber, a communication facilitator, and a problem-solving facilitator. And also applying effective communication strategies and effective communication tools can create mutual understanding and build a sustainable organizational reputation.

By the same token, public relations professionals have to collaborate with top managers to define and solve problems. Research shows that the communication technician role was distinct from the other three roles and that the latter three roles (as, an expert prescriber, a communication facilitator, and a problem-solving facilitator) were highly correlated. Dozier and Broom (1995, pp. 3–26). In other words, an expert prescriber was also likely to fulfill the role of communication facilitator and problem-solving facilitator to resolve the lack of mutual inclusiveness were combined into one role as communication manager. The dichotomy between

the communication technician and the communication manager more accurately explained the responsibilities of public relations practitioners within organizations.

Eventually, in this context the researcher need to analyze the first question that, the Practices of public relations on the organizational reputation on AAU based on the interviewees' ideas. So, the interviewees, like 'AA' & 'EE' a maintained that, a lot of public relations practice and activities have been done to promote the image and to build the reputation of Addis Ababa University for its general public. In this way, the practice of public relations may be able to affect the organizational reputation of AAU positively. Grunge (1993) suggested that organizational reputation was one of the dependent variables of public relations effectiveness along with the relationship with internal and external public satisfaction. Plowman et al. (2001) argued that maintaining the reputation of an organization was the most important function of public relations. More practically, Kim (2001) argued that as the unit of public relations expense increases, a positive effect on the company's reputation is expected. In additions, Romenti (2008) maintained that organizational communication reaches its full potential in building an organizational reputation, when it moves beyond the influencing of public opinion's perceptions, towards the shaping of organizational reality by engaging stakeholders as the main reputation drivers.

On the other hand, the managing editor, PR, office and interviewees, like (DD, BB.QQ, and CC, etc.) argued that, the practices of public relations it is fragile and not properly done. The case of AAU PR office social media [for example] Facebook is not managed by the public relations practitioners but it's managed by the president's office. The practice of public relations conveyed via two different public relations, communications tools, mainly website and community radio to address new information to the general public is weak. As a result, in this case, the internal public did not well informed or effectively persuaded in a way that to build organizational reputation Addis Ababa university.

[The] researcher analysis the contents qualitatively the information gained from the PR office document such as news articles, photos and press conference that posted on the website and social media of AAU during this academic year. The public relations practitioners did not help the top managers as a problem solver from a public relations perspective; and public relations professional did not combine their role is that of as, an expert prescriber, a communication

facilitator, and a problem-solving facilitator. PR practitioners' did not apply effective communication strategies and effective communication tools.

Similarly, to affirm the above ideas the managing editor of public relations office supposed that, for the most part, in our case, we are practicing public relations as the role of communications technicians and my daily activities focused on the writing of news and editing the news.

I hope, we did not practice it more just by involving all the knowledge, competence, skills, competence, value, behavior, and the professional standards of public relations to build the reputation of Addis Ababa University. And also my experience gave me open ways to disseminate fact information to the internal publics as much as possible, what's more, now we are not practicing our profession effectively to maintain the good organizational reputation and we are not involved in defining problems and developing solutions in our public relation department (Excerpt an interview on 30, April 2020).

To sum up, the first question the practice of public relations on organizational reputation in Addis Ababa university public relations office is not based on the professional standards of public relations and effective communication strategies and the PR practitioners did not practice it more just by involving all the knowledge competence, skills competence, value and the good manners of public relation to disseminate fact information to the internal public as much as possible. This means the practitioners are not practicing the PR profession effectively that can build good organizational reputations. Furthermore, they are not involved in the decision-making process with top management, defining problems, and developing solutions in their public relations department. In this context, the practice of PR can affect the organizational reputation of Addis Ababa University negatively. For public relations practitioners, this trend raises serious challenges to their assumed role as the function, which is in control of the organizational reputation (Davis, 2004). Moreover, (Botan and Hazleton (2010,) suggested that the failure to emphasize public relations practice on organizational reputation an organization could lead to the destruction of the organizational image or its reputation, which could in turn convert public opinion from positive to negative. Of course, if an organization does not deserve a good reputation which is a strong organizational reputation, public relations must do something about organizational communication (Jefkins, 2004). This implies that public relations are crucial to develop a sustainable organizational reputation. Thus, public relations must be vigilant to change

negative states to positive ones, which lead to goodwill and reputation. Deficiencies of building a strong reputation may make vulnerable a well-deserved and long cultivated favorable image and identity (Stacks 2016).

4.2. The communications tools used by PR practitioners to build an organizational reputation

At this time, as many public relations scholars recognize that, communication is the essence of any relationship in any organization: personal, professional, or a temporary transaction among individuals. People communicate every second deliberately or subconsciously. The public relations practitioner used a wide variety of communications tools to convey basic information to their general public, to build strong relationships, and to create mutual understanding between the organizations and its public. These communications tools include social media like Facebook, website, smartphones, computers, video and web conferencing tools, social networking, as well as online collaboration and productivity platform news release broadcast media, etc.

Nevertheless, concerning Addis Ababa university public relations office the communications tools that the public relations practitioners were used almost two (website and community radio), according to ‘QQ’ supported that, in the competitive world, to make once organization more reputed among the social and professionals circles communications tools play a vital role.

‘Specifically, as I knew that, the main communication tools that we used in Addis Ababa university public relations office include website & community radio FM 99.4. So, as the public relations practitioner’s we need to have effective communications tools to address the information to our general public in actual time. To be sure, the communications tools that we have used are not much enough to disseminate the information and to persuade our general public as result to build the reputation of Addis Ababa University (Excerpt an interview on May 3, 2020).

Likewise, Schwalbe, (2010) suggested that to communicate effectively the organization’s general public, the public relations practitioners include: Such as, the director public relations office and the team leader, the managing editor and the communication practitioners should set appropriate communication tools and techniques that are relevant to convey a piece of the right information

to the right public. The selection of which, communications tools and techniques to use is a non-trivial task that is affected by many variables. Some of these variables include cost, tool availability, skill set, and type of communications (Mnkandla, 2008). Thus, communication tool management becomes an essential and necessary skill-set for effective coordination of any tools and all involved publics. Ineffective communication tool management may doom a project into failure (Schwalbe, 2010; Mephyans-Robinson, 2010).

Furthermore ‘BB’ indicated that, predominantly, we are using the only website and community radio to practice public relations particularly the website.

I hope as a communications expert this channel of communications is good, but it is not enough to address our relevant information to our target publics to create mutual understanding and to maintain a good organizational reputation of Addis Ababa University. Indeed, as public relations or communications practitioners, there are a lot of communications tools that we are not used .Such as news releases, Brushers, and blogs because of lack of budget (Excerpt an interview on 30, April 2020).

Besides, Romenti (2008) argued that organizational communication reaches its full potential in building an organizational reputation, when it moves beyond the influencing of public opinion’s perceptions, towards the shaping of organizational reality by engaging stakeholders as the main reputation drivers. ‘AA’ supposed that, most of the time our information became much delayed,

Particularly, we did not use different communications tools to convey information effectively. And also the social media like Facebook are functioned by the president's office but not by the public relations office. So if the Facebook page of AAU will run by the PR office, the information that, we are release is becoming very fastest to pursue the general public, especially the internal public and to build the reputation of our organizations (Excerpt an interview on 30, April 2020).

The prominence of social media emanates from its networking and communication skills that allow users to generate content in different arrangements, which sorts it an efficient instrument for public relations practitioners. Social media like Facebook is the most widely used social networking sites of at the current moment; it has a high level of self-presentation and an average level of media richness and social presence. And also, Social media allows organizations to have

communication with their internal public and external public at low cost and high efficiency. As a result, social media like Facebook has come to be an important part of millions of people all over the world and have changed the way they establish relations, transfer information, interact with their organization (Kaplan A.M. & Haenlein M. (2010). So applying social media in public relations practice, it can play a dynamic role to create mutual understanding among the mind of its public and to build a reputation Addis Ababa University.

Furthermore, ‘BB’ supposed that, it’s very serious, some of public relations employees in Addis Ababa university public relations office did not understand what communications strategy really means and their role in performing it.

‘Especially, I am sure that, we did not have effective communications tools and even a concert communications plan to apply the science of public relations in our PR office effectively. Hence, unless we can use effective communications tools and effective communications strategies, we cannot promote the reputation of Addis Ababa University. Therefore, we should have to have a communication strategy. And also for many organizations failures are ultimately attributable to the confusion caused by using poor communication tools and using ineffective communications strategies (Excerpt an interview on 29, April 2020)’.

Public relations practitioners need to have put on an effective communications strategy and effective communications tools to build sustainable organizational reputation of Addis Ababa University. According to, Strategic Communication Frame model was offered a concept for agile PR strategy development, within the context of changing organizations and legitimacy it supports to increase the effect because it will relate content and process. It also helps to create clear, essential, and argument choices, based on the vision and ambitions of the organization. As well it will show for what an organization, including its PR, will be accountable, and it gives a clear framework for strategies and actions in the field of Communication/PR. (Ton V., 2018 P.) In this context, strategic communication is understood as a tool to create and maintain organization– stakeholder alignment and/or to detect misalignment. The ultimate goal of an organization–stakeholder alliance is to create a positive reputation and to gain stakeholder support and an unrestricted license to operate (Riel, 2012).

Consequently, to analysis the 2nd question that, the communications tools used by AAU public relations practitioners to build an organizational reputation based on the ideas of the interviewees even though the public relations practitioners have used almost two types of communications tools like website, community radio and sometimes press conference. Nevertheless, public relations practitioners have not used communications tools like, (news release, event organization, brochure, and billboard especially Social media like Facebook.

And also, as the researcher analyzes the document posted online on the AAU public relations office website page during this academic year. The practitioners used the website page to convey news information only. But they didn't use the website as an effective communications tool to pursue to build a bridge between Addis Ababa University and its general public especially the internal public to maintain a good organizational reputation. Moreover, based on the document analysis the contextually the public relations practitioners in a public relations office, they didn't have a concert communications strategy to practice the profession of public relations, to integrate with effective communication tools to persuade the public and to build the reputation of Addis Ababa University. Thus, practitioners have the limitation or weakness to practice public relations as a profession effectively. According to James E. Grunge (2001) suggested that most public relations practitioners have limitations to masters of several techniques like media coverage, prepare press releases, write speeches, write and design brochures, produce video news releases, lobby representatives in Congress, stage a special event, or prepare an annual report. On the other hand, Mahoney, (2013) suggested that senior practitioners should be responsible for planning the details of what, how, and why their organizations communicate with strategic publics'.

Generally, in practicing public relations applying poor communications tools can lead to several undesirable consequences: Information gap, public dissatisfaction, and wasteful use of valuable resources and also for organization failures are ultimately attributable to the confusion caused by using poor communication tools and using poor communication strategies. As a result, unless the Addis Ababa university public relations practitioners used effective communications tools and effective communications strategies the organizational reputation converted from favorable to unfavorable one.

4.3. The challenges that PR practitioners face to build a sustainable organizational reputation

Currently, the issue of public relations practices in many countries, including Ethiopia has been debated within the field of public relations. The possible reason for this could be accredited to the lack of understanding the role of public relations and its professional standard. At the same time, some people did not know what public relation encompasses, what it aims to achieve, and how it works. And also, some others see the practice of public relations as propaganda (Piperopoulos, 2013).

Concerning the practice of public relations in Addis Ababa university public relations office, there are a lot of challenges that can be an obstacle to practice the profession of public relations. According to ‘CC’ supposed that, we are still applied public relations in our organizations in a conventional way to protecting the interests of the top management and to promote the image’ of Addis Ababa University.

‘For the most part, one of the challenges that I observed was that the matter of ‘professionalism’ is in ‘question’. As a public relations practitioner, we didn’t understand the professional standards of public relations as a profession very well .Especially to promote and to building an organizational reputation. And also we have a lot of professional gaps that, how to integrate with values such as transparency, integrity, and accountability to create mutual understanding between the organizations and its public and also to build a sustainable organizational reputation’ (Excerpt an interview on 30, April 2020).

To support the ideas that the above mentioned, according to Tesfaye Bezabih (2018, p, 37), stated that, most of the public relations practitioners in government universities have limited role to publicity which is one part of the Public relations function”.

In the same way, most of the public relations practitioners in Addis Ababa university public relations office have not understood the professional standards of Public Relations, i.e. the PR office has not involved in maintaining mutual understanding with the general public concerning the organizational reputation of the universities. ‘DD’ advance that, Staffing is one challenge in

our office. Because there is a big problem when personal power recruiting or ‘appointing the right man in the right place or it is known as staffing.

‘Specifically, one of the challenges that can face the public relations practitioners is that, ‘a matter of ‘human resource or personal power’. I think almost all the public relations practitioners in our PR office, they aren’t from PR or communication filed of the profession. Therefor to practice public relations effectively and to build the organizational reputation of Addis Ababa University, public relations experts should be assigned from PR or communication, educational background (Excerpt an interview on 30, April 2020)’.

The public relations profession is often either misunderstood or deliberately misinterpreted so that it is used in a pejorative way, associating it with propaganda or evasion. Most organizations disregard public relations as an integral part of the organization (Henslowe, 1999). According to ‘DD’ (Excerpt an interview on 30, April 2020): supposed that “As I recognized, in our public relations office there is a profession overlap with other professions. And also there is not a clear mandate and there is not a clear professional border. Because of this, we may have made a mistake in practicing public relations”. As, Rothstein (1986) has said about professional overlap: ‘We, as a profession, maybe doing more things, but in no way have we developed a true sense of whom and what we are’. Henslowe (1999) stated that, in most instances, organizations only acknowledge the importance of public relations practitioners, when things go wrong and in times of crisis. Hence, public relations practitioners release the situation by apologizing to the organizations’ public. They take the responsibility to assure that all will be managed and the crisis is under control. The functions of public relations overlap with and are interrelated with that of other disciplines.

Furthermore, public relations professionals have a weakness to find themselves in the position to influence management [; and] to describe the importance of research as a crucial part of a departmental or research budget. Because conducting research is an essential part of practicing public relations effectively. And also, the public relations practitioners are not the members of a top manager, practitioners are neglected to participate in the problem-solver role, to provide a verdict on the basic decision process the concerned issues of the Addis Ababa University and to create strong relationships in a reflective manner. For that reason, the researcher did not get any

kind of research material that is prepared by the PR practitioners in a team or individual level to relate to the practice of educational public relations concerning building the organizational reputation.

On the other hand, the researches on the best practices of public relations should support by the International Association of Business Communicators suggests that excellent public relations occur when the senior communications officer is part of the dominant coalition and has a presence in the C-suite. With the above ideas Bowen et al. (2006) stated that, when the public relations function is downgraded to a communication technician role, it is not achieving its unique management role. As mentioned previously, this status must be received. Public relations professionals gain access by providing essential data and counsel essential for making significant decisions. When these communication experts have the advanced knowledge of strategic public relations, including research and evaluation, and reveal business wisdom, they should be a part of that of the executive team.

Eventually, to analysis the 3rd question, the challenges that public relations practitioners face building a sustainable organizational reputation based on the interviewees' ideas that above mentioned:

- ✓ To be sure, there are a lot of challenges that impede the practice of public relations practitioners in AAU public relations office such as: lack of professionalism (practitioners unable to practice PR as a communications facilitator and problem solver). Nieman-Struweg and Meintjies (2008) suggested that accentuated on ethics as the main component for public relations expertise is very important. This means that the profession needs in the first place professionals, associations, and societies to set up the professional, ethical guidelines to practice the profession and work towards the public interest.
- ✓ A shortage of budget was another challenge in practicing public relations in AAU public relations office: Budgeting is essentially financial planning or planning for financial performance, its involve planning for diverse revenue, producing and cost generating activities of an organization for PR office and 'Failing to plan is like planning to fail'. Moreover, according to West and Shi, 2006) suggested that the overall complexity of the

budgeting method was determined by allotting points according to the sort of the budgeting in the public relations office.

- ✓ The challenge is a restricted bureaucratic system that prohibits the flexibility of PR practitioners. Unlike, other professional public relations practices in Addis Ababa PR office did not get attention by the top management bodies. Concerning the above ideas Hornaman (2000), argued that even though educational public relations have a lot of contributions to the public relations status as a profession. But, public relations professionals in Ethiopia are intermittent. (Al Enad, 1990, 1992) suggested that, effective PR practice needs democracy and the respect of individual opinion. Public relations practitioners need political participation through a dynamic civil society and a high level of transparency and respect between the organization and its publics. Public relations are based on the role, status, and respect of public opinion in the general public to build a strong relationship and good organizational reputation.

The fourth challenges were that there is a profession overlap with other professions. Thus, concerning Addis Ababa University's public relations office, there is a challenge of a clear task division's or clear, professional mandatory and clear professional border to practice the profession of public relations effectively. As Rothstein (1986) has said about professional overlap, 'We, as a profession, maybe doing more things, but in no way have we developed a true sense of whom and what we are.

As a result, the human resource management did not take its responsibility to appoint professionals who are from PR or communication, educational background (assigned the right professionals on the right professions), and there is a profession overlap with other professions. And also there is not a clear mandate and there is not clear, professional boundaries in the PR office, PR, office support by top management bodies with in- adequate budget to practice the profession very well and to create mutual understanding between the organizations and its public to build a sustainable organizational reputation in near future.

Most importantly, according to Tesfaye Bezabih (2018) the main challenges stated by the public relations practitioners are: Lack of skilled human, power (professionals); passive attitude towards the office (belittling) especially from the top leaders; absence of adequate capacity building

pieces of training; the structure of the office (personnel); lack of logistics(electronic) and financial constraint; absence of professional leadership; infrastructure (to reach village publics) reluctance of sector offices; and inadequate assistance from the president and dean or Head of the departments in the universities. Therefore, at this point, it is possible to conclude that the challenges are threats to the practice of professional public relations and public dissatisfaction on the daily activities which may lead to a lack of good governance. Agee (1985) says “public relations practice-at its best affords genuine opportunities for meaningful service to the society.

Chapter Five

Findings, Conclusion, and Recommendation

5.1. Introduction: Brief Background of the Study Area

Now a day, organizations progressively realize that they need to communicate with their general public to advance and to maintain a positive organizational reputation. The practice of public relations focused on the reputation and image of an organization to earn understanding, support, influencing public opinion, and behavior. An organizational reputation is a direct reflection of its performance. That is why Public relations people have almost to win public acceptance. It is the responsibility of Public relations to make sure that the organization understood and accepted as well as loved by its publics (Newsom, 2004:15). According to Van Riel (1997) an organization's reputation, and changes in its organizational reputation, influence the organization's relationship with its general public. Organizational reputation forms networks of cognitive associations or the mosaic of associations that come from together to create an inclusive impression. A positive reputation works like a magnet. It strengthens the attractiveness of an organization; makes things easier the realization of a broad range of activities. A positive reputation provides a good signal for the future with increased profits and reduced risk, therefore, stakeholders are more likely to work hard in reputed organizations.

Predominantly, the objective of the research was to assess the practice of public relations in maintaining a good organizational reputation: The case of Addis Ababa university public relations office. The research questions were formulated like how do public relations practitioners practical public relations to build an organizational reputation? What are the communications tools that the public relations practitioners used to build an organizational reputation? What are the challenges that public relations practitioners face building a sustainable organizational reputation? The qualitative method approach was employed. Data were collected by two types of tools, document reviews (such as news articles, photos and press conference that posted on website and social media page of AAU) with the contextual content analysis technique. An in-depth interview (semi-structured interview) was conducted with ten public relations practitioners in the AAU public relations office.

5.3. The findings of this study

The finding of this research revealed that even though ‘PR practitioners’ practicing public relations to promote the image of AAU to the general public. Nevertheless, the practice of public relations is not based on professional standards of public relations and effective communication strategies. The PR practitioners were not practicing it more just by involving all the knowledge, competency, skills competency, value, the performance of public relations to disseminate factual information to the internal public as much as possible. This means, they did not practice the profession effectively to create mutual understanding between the organization and its public and to sustain organizational reputation of Addis Ababa University.

- In this context, the practice of PR can affect the organizational reputation of Addis Ababa University undesirably. (Botan and Hazleton 2010,) suggested that, the failure to emphasize public relations practice on organizational reputation an organization could lead to the destruction of organizational image or reputation, which could in turn convert public opinion from positive to negative.
- As the result of this study indicated that, currently the public relations practitioners are using poor communication tools like, (website and community radio only) that may able to lead to various undesirable results: information gap, public’s displeasure, and inefficient use of valuable resources. And also, public relations practitioners have not used communications tools like news releases, event organization, and brochures. Especially the practitioners did not use social media like Facebook because it's controlled by the president's office; this means unless the public relations practitioners used effective communications tools and effective communications strategies the organizational reputation converted from favorable to unfavorable once.

The finding revealed that there are a lot of challenges that impede the practice of public relations practitioners in AAU PR office such as:

- The first challenge is the lack of PR professionalism. The practitioners are appointed from non-communications or public relations educational background. Accordingly, Cameron and others (1996), Parsons (2004), Meintjies (2008) suggested that public

relations practitioners emphasize ethics as a core constituent for public relations professionals. This means that the profession needs in the first place professionals, associations, and societies to set up the professional, ethical guidelines to practice the profession and work towards the public interest.

- The second challenge is a shortage of budget. There is not an adequate budget and planning for financial performance to practice PR effectively. “Failing to plan adequate budget is like planning to fail”. According to (West and Shi, 2006) suggested that the overall complexity of the budgeting method was determined by allocating points according to the category of the budgeting in the public relations office.
- The third challenge is the restricted bureaucratic system that prohibits the flexibility of PR practitioners. Public relations practitioners are neglected to participate in the decision-making process. Unlike, other professional public relations practices in Addis Ababa PR office did not get attention from the top management.

Concerning the above ideas in the finding, Hornaman (2000), argued that even though educational public relations have a lot of contributions to the public relations status as a profession. But, public relations professionals in Ethiopia are intermittent. What is more, (Al Enad, 1992) suggested that the effective public relations practice needs democracy, and the respect of individual views? Public relations experts need political participation through a dynamic civil society and a high level of transparency and respect in the middle of the organization and its public. Public relations are based on the role, status, and respect of public opinion in the general public to build a strong relationship and good organizational reputation.

Most importantly, according to Tesfaye Bezabih (2018), proposed that the main challenges stated by the practitioners are: Lack of skilled human, power (professionals); passive attitude towards the office especially from the top managers; absence of adequate capacity building pieces of training; the structure of the staff (personnel); lack of logistics(electronic) and financial constraint; absence of professional leadership; infrastructure (to reach village publics) reluctance of sector offices; and inadequate assistance from the president and dean or Head of the

departments in the universities. Therefore, at this point, it is possible to conclude that this huge of challenges are threats to the practice of professional public relations and public dissatisfaction on the daily activities which may lead to a lack of good governance. Agee (1985) says “public relations practice-at its best affords genuine opportunities for meaningful service to the society.

5.4. Conclusion

This study aimed to assess the practice of public relations on organizational organization: The case of Addis Ababa university public relations office. This study makes an effort to assess the practices of public relations practitioners to build the organizational reputation, to identify the communications tools that the public relations professionals used to build the organizational reputation, most importantly, and also to recognize the challenges public relations practitioners face to build the sustainable organizational reputation of Addis Ababa University.

Concerning, the AAU public relations office, even though ‘PR practitioners’, practicing public relations to promote the image of AAU to the internal and external public. Nevertheless, the practice of public relations is not based on professional standards of public relations and effective communication strategies and they do not practice it more just by involving all the knowledge competence, skill competence, value, behavior of public relation to disseminate fact information to persuade the internal public as much as possible to build the reputation of Addis Ababa University. Furthermore, the practitioners are not using the effective Communications tools and communications strategies to disseminate factual information to the internal public as much as possible to build the reputations of Addis Ababa University .Thus, unless the public relations practitioners used effective communications tools and effective communications strategies the organizational reputation converted from favorable to unfavorable once. What is more, some of the challenges that niggling the practice of PR was that, lack of PR professionalism (the practitioners are not appointed from communications or PR educational background), shortage of budget (there is not adequate budget and planning for financial performance to practice PR effectively), the bureaucratic systems that prohibition the flexibility of PR practitioners. Public relations practitioners are neglected to participate in decision-making proses. Unlike, other professional public relations practices in Addis Ababa PR office did not get attention for the top management bodies.

Generally, the human resource management did not take its particular responsibility to assign the right professionals on the right profession and the public relations office did not support by top management bodies with an adequate budget to practice the profession very well, what's more, Because of the restricted behavior of top management the public relations practitioners didn't have the autonomy to reflect their profession effectively to create a mutual understanding in the middle of the organizations and its public, As a result, to build the sustainable organizational reputation of Addis Ababa University in near future.

5.5. Recommendations

The following recommendations are given based on the findings of this study for practical application by AAU public relation Practitioners.

- To build well organized favorable, more interactive communication office between the organization and its public, Addis Ababa university public relations office must be restructured. Public relations experts need to practice public relations effectively by incorporating its image and reputation, aimed at its public especially the practitioners. As Harold Burson (2008) that renowned, workforces are the main sources of an organizational reputation for most people outside the company. Public relations institute, in particular, should bring into being to integrate its organizational change activities with the building organizational reputation activities.
- If public relations practitioners will use effective communications tools like, (news release, event organization, brochure, Social media like Facebook, billboard,) and actual communications strategies. Then, the PR office strategic communication plan must be reviewed based on the principles and practice of Van Ruler's strategic communication frame because it has a clear insight on how to improve a clear communication/ PR strategy in the future.
- The human resource management bodies should have to take its actual responsibility to appoint the right professionals on the right profession especially from PR /communication educational background, then the public relations practitioners enable to practice their profession effectively to create mutual understanding flanked by the

organization and its public, as a result, to build the sustainable organizational reputation of Addis Ababa University in near future.

Finally, the researcher recommended to other researchers to conduct their study on the public perceptions on the organizational reputation of Addis Ababa University and to make it's well-reputed soon

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Appendices
Interview Questions I
Addis Ababa University
School of Journalism and Communications
Masters of Arts in Public relations and strategic communications
Postgraduate Program

Dear interviewees,

I am conducting an academic research on the topic of scrutinize the practice of public relations on organizational reputation: the case of securitize Addis Ababa University. The research requires collection of valuable inputs regarding from people who have worked or have experience of the issue. This interview questions is an attempt to plead with your opinions regarding the practice of public relations on organizational reputation. For its only when you provide your genuine answers to all the questions that the research outcome could be genuine and trustworthy. I assure you that all the information you give in these interviews will only be used for the purpose of the research and will be kept anonymous.

Thank you for your help!

1. What does mean the profession of public relations for you?
2. How public relation practitioners are practicing public relations to build organizational reputation?
3. What are some of the professional standards that you apply in your PR office?
4. What are the communications tools that the public relation practitioners used to build organizational reputation?
5. How do you understand the organizational image or reputation?
6. What are the challenges that public relation practitioners faces to build sustainable organizational reputation?
7. How did you participating in the process of decision making with the top management?