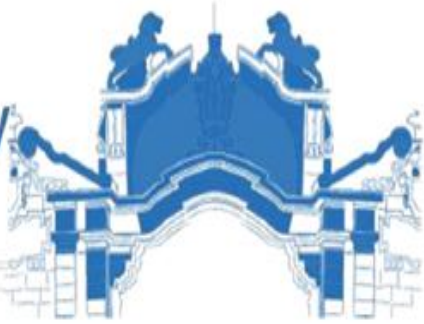




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**Graduate School of Journalism and  
Communication**

**Analyzing Ethical Practices of Public Relations Practitioners in FDRE  
Ministerial Offices**

**By: Melkamu Amare**

**Aug, 2020**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**Addis Ababa University**

**Graduate School of Journalism and Communication**

**Analyzing Ethical Practices of Public Relations Practitioners in FDRE Ministerial  
Offices**

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Communication**

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**Examiner** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

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# Analyzing Ethical Practices of Public Relations Practitioners in FDRE Offices

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## DECLARATION

I, Melkamu Amare declare that this thesis entitled “analyzing ethical practices of PRs practitioners in FDRE ministries.” This thesis is merely my own work that has been done after approval of title for this study and not been presented for MA and/or for other purpose in any university or college.

MelkamuAmareDemissie

Signature\_\_\_\_\_Date\_\_\_\_\_

# Analyzing Ethical Practices of Public Relations Practitioners in FDRE Offices

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## *Abstract*

*Ethics in public relations plays a great role in human communication. It brings the credibility to the given organization. It helps to establish faithful relationships between organization and its publics. So as to achieve goals and/or interests of the organization and publics, the PRs practitioners should ensure the reliable services by fulfilling ethical standards and code of ethics. The study intends to analyze ethical practices of public relations practitioners at FDRE government ministries through such measurements of PR professionalism including professional ethics, availability of standards and code of ethics, autonomy, serving the public interest and so on. The study assessed three FDRE ministries PR directorates and PR practitioners by using a cross sectional survey and involved the existing 20 ministries in the country. It used a descriptive design based on purposive sampling technique to select source of data. The study used mixed approach and both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools such as questionnaire, FGD and interview were used. Employees, PR practitioners and PR directors were subjects of the study. The findings of the study shows that PR profession receives less attention in the organizations; there is a political influence which makes the PR office the government mouthpiece; the PR staff didn't get professional training and participation in PR association. Moreover, there were lack of center of excellence to PR growth, lack of practitioners' skill and unavailability of common standards and code of ethics. As a result, it needs availing of favorable conditions from the government, PR practitioners and other concerned bodies. The researcher recommends that all the PRs practitioners should acknowledge that there is an obligation to protect and enhance the profession; keep informed and educated about practices in the profession that ensures ethical conduct and counsel its members in proper decision making by observing the ethical recommendations.*

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAU	Addis Ababa University
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BSC	Bachelor of Science
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
KPIS	key performance Indicators
MA	Masters of Arts
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOCT	Ministry of culture and Tourism
MOF	Ministry finance
MSC	Masters of Science
NGO/s	Non-governmental organizations
PhD	Doctor of philosophy
PR	Public Relations
PRO/s	Public relations office/s
PRSA	public relations society of America
PRSC	public relations and strategic communication
SJC	school of Journalism and communication

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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. Introduction

This chapter of the study deals on the background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, limitation of the study, and structure of the study.

### 1.1. Background of the Study

#### 1.1.1. PR and Ethics

Ethics is a value system that tells ‘what is right or wrong, fair or unfair, just or unjust. (Parson, 2004) It is the process of making correct decisions on the basis of valid reasons.(Tuffley, 2004)As Haque and Ahmad, 2016, ethics determines the behavior of the people having different roles such as personal ethics which determines personal behavior and professional ethics again determines the behavior of the practitioners in various professions. Ethics is a basic part of public relations. It includes honesty, openness, loyalty, fair mindedness, respect, integrity and forthright communication. Serving the public without ethics is nothing in the community. According to Gruing, (1992) the ethical public relations ensures the welfare of all stakeholders. Modern public relations contain both self-interested perspective tactics and sincere caring initiatives. According to Seib and Fitzpatrick, (2006), public relations practitioners up hold shared understanding and peaceful co-existence among individuals and organizations. Public relations practitioners must cautiously follow ethical codes to develop public trust of an organization.

On the other hand, public relations helps our complex, pluralistic society to reach decisions and functions more effectively by contributing to mutual understanding among groups and institutions. It serves to bring private and public policies in to harmony. So as to cope up with credible information to the public, every profession has its own principles and professional ethics to implement effectively and

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efficiently manner. Gilaninia, et al., (2013) said any organizations and public relations practitioners must follow the principles of public relations field like reliable information, accurate and timely considered based on the purpose and structure of the organization.

Gruing and Hunt (1984) claim PR was formed as an ethical, socially responsible and scientifically grounded profession in 1922 when Bernays describes the new profession of the PR counsel. This distinguished is from the journalistically – oriented occupation of press publicity (P.3). On the other hand, Kruckberg (1998) on his part said, PR as a profession or occupation set of professional values, curricular needs, beliefs and theories of both human kind and society. He underscores professional values aimed to encourage discipline, excellence and serves ethics in the new profession.

Ethical practices in any profession are guided by timeless philosophical perspectives, ongoing developments in technology, especially in the field of public relations practitioners act ethically.(Pearson, 1994). He also added that “rotted in reality and pointing to professionalism, ethics in public relations reminds us of our societal responsibility.

Palea (2012) on his part argues that PR professional associations around the world seek to enhance the professionalism of the field to support the development of the profession and the practitioners. PR professional associations are aiming to promote professional standards and ethical principles to provide a frame work for discussing and finding a universally accepted definition and to increase the credibility of the profession (P. 17)

Ethics in public relations has received different degrees of attention from scholars since the period of Lee and Bernays (Edgett, 2007). The agreement has been established in public relations research for many years that ethics must be central to professional practices (Walle, 2003). When ethics and responsibility are guaranteed in public relations, it offers a significant communication role for organizations, nations and even the world. (Gruing, 1993). Ethics in public relations is a value system that tells” what is right or wrong, fair or unfair, just or un-just (parson, 2004). It is the process of making correct decisions on the basis of valid reasons (Tuffley, 2004).

According to the government communication affairs office (GCAO) web page, PRs was not supported by formal education in higher intuitions until recent times compared to other scientific field of studies,

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although PR as a profession is not a new invention in Ethiopia. The 1<sup>st</sup> PR related entity the press and information desk was established during the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie I under the then ministry of writing in 1941/2. Then in 1972 the military government (Dergue) established ministry of information by which in 1983 it renamed to ministry of information and National Advisory. The new ministry was given a responsibility to supervise such government offices. Ethiopian news agency (ENA), Revolutionary Ethiopian voice, press office, PR office, Newspapers and Magazines Distribution Agency and censorship service. After 1991 the then ministry of information survived as a government publicity organ till 2008/9 and then replaced by GCAO.(Nov. 2017)

As a result, in all FDRE ministries and their affiliate institutions, the directors, or vice directors of the PR desk were political appointees by GCAO. In addition to this, all governmental organizations hire and fire PR Practitioners by GCAO approval or recognition. Nevertheless, October 2018 GCAO became one of the defunct offices by proclamation No. 1097/2018 and a new press secretariat organ established under the prime ministries office.

According to the proclamation no, 1097/2018, there are 20 ministerial offices. Among these 15% of them are incorporated in this study so as to maximize the probability of getting dependable data that represent the government PR Practitioners. The ministerial offices that are incorporated in this study are selected non-randomly through purposive sampling technique. Moreover, their willingness to give information and make their doors open to data access will be assessed by the researcher during an observation and consultation time with communication directors. The ministerial offices included in this study are: Ministry of Finance /MOF/, ministry of education /MOE/, and ministry of tourism and culture /MOTC/.

## **HistoryOf FDRE Ministries Understudy**

### **Brief history of Ministry of Finance /MOF/**

Ministry of finance was among the first ministries established in 1907 by emperor Menelik II in the history of Ethiopia. When it was established, its name was ministry of finance and treasury and later on it changed its name with merger and separation of other organizations in different times.(finance and development bulletin, 2008, PP. 7-15).

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Likewise, in October 2018 it returned again by proclamation No. 1097/2018 it renamed again by proclamation No. 1097/2018 that determines the power and the responsibilities of executive organs. As a result, its name changed from ministry of finance and economic corporation (MOFEC) to ministry of finance (MOF). The ministry has its own PR and information directorate having totally 9 staff led by a director. In this staff the directorate has organized under two desks: The PR desk with six practitioners and protocol desk. Both desks have mutual support staff including two audiovisual professionals, one secretary and a messenger.

## **Brief History of Ministry of Education (MOE)**

Education in Ethiopia is not a recent phenomenon because churches and mosques stayed in the country to educate people for thousands of years. But Ethiopian government made modern and secular education forms in 1908 by emperor Menelik II under the supervision of Ethiopian Tewahedo church (EOTC) in Addis Ababa. (Yodit Zenebe, 2009 and Birehanu Demeke, 1995).

But, there was a strong resistance from the ruling cliques till 1925. Later on, with the dedication and commitment of Haile Selassie (HSI) to modernize Ethiopia, the expansion of western type education becoming inevitable although the real growth of modern education in the country began in 1941 after the end of the brief Italian occupation. In 1974, HSI government removed from power and the ministry of education became under the full control of the government until this data (PP 22-24) the existing ministry of education has responsibilities to moderate education after more than 100 years existence, it is divided in to two ministries by proclamation No. 1097/2018: Ministry of education (General aspect) and ministry of science and Higher education. During the first visit of the researcher in January 2020, the ministry PR and information directorate totally (9) staff members. These are a director, six PR professionals, one cameraman, one secretary and a messenger staff (Interview with the MOE PR and communication director W/ro Haregua Mamo on April 08, 2020).

## **Brief History of Ministry of Culture & Tourism (MOCT)**

Ethiopia is one of the few less developed countries endowed with various manmade and natural heritages (sefrin, 2012). Tourism in Ethiopia was established by Habteselassie Tafese in 1954. He introduced the intangible and tangible heritages temporarily at Bole airport. After that it restructured

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again named as Ethiopian Tourist organization in September 11, 1957 by proclamation No. 36157. Tourism in Ethiopia had different structural changes through time until October 7, 2003 by the proclamation No. 691/2003 and its recent name is ministry of culture and tourism with huge responsibilities. For the first visit of the researcher January 10, 2020, it has ministry of PR and information desk-totally nine (9) staff members. These are PR director, a messenger, a secretary and six PR professionals working in PR department.

## 1.2. Statement of the Problem

Ethics in public relations is a big concern and important discourse in all sections of the society. (Seib and Fitz Patrick, 2006). Ethics is an ambiguous area, because it involves making complex decisions about what is “right”, and necessitates “identifying and prioritizing your responsibilities to yourself as a person, your profession and the wider community and this requires a good understanding of stakeholder interests” (Breit 2007, p.308). It is common knowledge that a profession can only succeed if it is backed by a code of ethics because as a general rule, any self-regulating profession that serves the public has a duty to adhere to a certain type of ethics.

In October 2018, the FDRE government publicized a new proclamation No. 1097/2018 to redefine the government executive organ duties and responsibilities and established 20 new ministries. These new ministries and their satellite institutions under their specific activities; a PRs activity is either at a corporate, or directorate level. Having a PRs activity in each government at office is unquestionably helpful to communicate with stake holders in particular and the public at large. Nevertheless, the public relations activities in government offices have not been merit based rather lead by political appointees. Besides, it is practiced by unrelated field of study graduates after receiving a one-month political ideology dominated training that was given by GCAO. This has an impact on the communication activities effectiveness since the job lacks real professionalism, professional standards and code of ethics.

Thus, this study tries to analyze the ethical practices of PRs practitioners in the selected three FDRE ministries through descriptive approach regarding this issue. There is a study in Kenya related to this topic but the researcher tried to analyze unethical, perceived dishonesty and lack of genuineness of the PR professionals. It stated that they are having the certification by this job because the PRs practitioners acted by their own ideology; they have been viewed with so much skepticism in public relations and the

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adoption of the international code of ethics. There is also another study about professional ethics by Dr. Syed Ibrahim (2013) studied in Shaqra University. He tried to analyze what PR profession seems in terms of code of ethics and its standards but it is based on their culture not in Ethiopian context.

### **1.3. Objective of the Study**

#### **1.3.1. General objective of the Study**

This study intends to analyze the ethical practices of PR practitioners in the selected government organizations.

#### **1.3.2. Specific Objectives of the Study**

The specific objectives are aimed to;

- Identify the PR practitioners' ethical practices in relation to PRs ethics.
- To relate PRs activities in line with ethical standards of PRs science.
- Find out the ethical challenges and problems of PR practices in the selected government organization.

### **1.4. Research Questions**

1. What are the PR practitioners' ethical practices in their respected PRs offices?
2. How PRs activities are related with PRs professional ethical standards?
3. What are the ethical challenges and problems of public relations practices?

### **1.5. Scope (Delimitation) of the Study**

The student researcher focused on only the PRs practitioners working in FDRE government ministerial offices with particular focus to the three selected government organizations. These are Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Finance (MOF), and Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MOCT). Of course, public relations has many functions; as management function which supports as a bridge for successful communication of organizations with internal and external publics. Public relations also manages problems or issues and responsive for public opinion; consultate the management body of the organizations to serve the public interest and effectively utilize the changes or trends and it also conducts research (Harlow, 1976) .But, due to the researcher's time and financial

resources, the present study is conducted on ethical practices of PRs practitioners in only ethical issues in the selected FDRE ministerial offices.

### **1.6. Significance of the Study**

The final research report may have different significances. The study may be important for academicians and researchers as a source of information and also it may help for policy makers to decide what kind of strategic communication and ethical standards should be applied in the government and private organizations. Besides to this, the public relations associations may use this research as a base to check the profession in line with professionalism.

Generally, the final finding of this study is hoped to be useful for PRs professionals working in FDRE government organizations to investigate critical challenges regarding to ethical practices of PRs practitioners in the selected organizations.

### **1.7. Limitation of the Study**

Limitations may be expected in any type of research and research may have its respective restraint. With this inception, limitation of this study includes inadequacy of physical access to information from the selected ministerial offices because of the current pandemic virus. The researcher used alternative data collection system that is through e-mail and telegram in coordination with the PR section.

There was absence of pilot testing on questionnaire before actual data collection from MOE, MOF and MOCT because of Covid-19.

### **1.8. Structure of the study**

This study is expected to have five chapters. Chapter one covered background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study and structure of the study. Chapter two designed review of literature, chapter three focused on research methodology, research design, sampling techniques and data collection instruments and also chapter four assigned data analysis and presentation. Finally, chapter five destined to the conclusion and recommendation section.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. Review of Literature

#### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to the literature review part where the theoretical works of scholars are reviewed. The review focuses on theoretical and conceptual frame work of PR ethics. Thus, the chapter contains ethical theories of PR, professional ethics, models of ethics, brief history of PR, key performance indicators of PR, roles of PR practitioners, nature of government public relations, challenges of PRs practices and finally theoretical framework of PRs ethics.

#### 2.2. Ethical Theories of Public Relations

Without ethical behaviors there is no credibility and without credibility there is no business. Ethics is considered to be an important factor for the success of any public relations work. Public relations practitioners must be ethical and they have to be honest, credible and trust worthy. Nicolaides (2017) states “ethics is a branch of philosophy whose focal point is on normative value in human behavior. It seeks to provide a justifiable, rational way to consider what is either good or bad in terms of human action (P.7). The major ethical theories the student researcher used and also found in many professions including PRs are; virtue ethics, cognitivism and non cognitivism, consequentialist, or teleological approach and non-consequentialist or deontological approach.

##### 2. 2.1. Virtue Ethics

###### 2.2.1.1. The Ethical Theory of Virtues

The founding father of virtue ethics is Aristotle. His approach focuses on the good person, with virtues understood as characteristics of the good person. Although it is a personal ethics, virtue ethics is not individualist, because it regards people as social beings who can

function only in relation to others. Hence, virtue ethics is expressed in relationships; morality is concerned with concrete social life instead of abstract moral rules. Virtue is acquired in daily interactions with others, in communities and through a process of trial and error (MacIntyre, 1987). Whereas, this is a widely known failure of deontological ethics: it is one thing to know what is best to do but quite another to act accordingly. Of course, an authority may enforce a moral rule, but without a majority vote in favor of the rule, the rule will not be followed. The frustration of many well-wishing individuals about the lack of a political will to enforce moral duties was eloquently voiced by U-2 singer Bono: 'We have the cash, we have the drugs, we have the science, but do we have the will to make poverty history?' There are several influential ethical theories that are related to virtue ethics, in particular. Deontology is a universal ethic, concerned with universal rules. Virtue ethics is contextual and concerned with responsibility in specific instances. It is not grounded in reason or in desire, but seeks to find a balance between reason and emotion (called intuition) that transcends the dichotomy of head and heart. In her book on morality and emotions, the Aristotelian-inspired ethicist Martha Nussbaum (2001) has demonstrated how emotions are part of ethical reasoning as they involve judgments that acknowledge our vulnerability. By recognizing human neediness and the incompleteness of human strivings, emotions are evaluative in themselves, and not just a by-product of ethical reasoning, let alone something that inhibits moral deliberation as Kant held (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 19). Virtue ethics focuses on the good or self-sufficient virtues. Humans seek to follow the good for itself, committed to certain ends and not seeking them instrumentally for some other goal (Aristotle, 1980, pp. 1–2). This good includes the use of good means and a good process. This makes virtue ethics an intermediate position –somewhere between the exclusive focus on ends in utilitarianism and other consequentialist ethics, and the exclusive concern with imperatives of deontological and other principled ethics. Hence, the good in virtue ethics involves having both good motivations and good reasons. Together they produce moral goods, like justice, generosity, liberality, or kindness, which derive meaning from their application in particular contexts. The combination of motivation and reason in specific contexts distinguishes virtue ethics from utilitarianism and deontology (Braithwaite, 1971; Stocker, 1997).

This nuanced ethical position transcends the dichotomy between self-interest and altruism, as motivation derives from shared and contested values in a particular community, shaped by institutions that will partially enable good behavior and partially constrain bad behavior. Acknowledging fundamental uncertainty, vulnerability, human fallibility, and human interdependence, self-interest simply does not provide the best guide for behavior. Altruism, the other extreme, requires the moral strength of Gods, not the weak will of humans. So, like self-interest is not a feasible strategy. Therefore, both self-interest and altruism are two extremes or ideal-types of motivation that are weakened by the contingent contextual factors on which virtue ethics is founded. Virtue ethics acknowledges that the good has no universal standard, and that moral behavior is imperfect and continuously adapting to changing social circumstances. It is guided by the values that are shared and contested in communities, supporting these values through a trial-and-error process, but recognizing that values are fallible and that we can never reach perfect virtue. This continuous trial-and-error process is all the more complex because the good is plural, consisting of a variety of values. So, not only is every single virtue a means between two extremes (e.g. courage is a means between cowardice and rashness), every virtue is a balance between excess and deficiency, and all the virtues together form a balance because they are interdependent. Virtue ethics recognizes that people often fail to find a balance between excess and deficiency of values due to 'weakness of the Beyond Utilitarianism and Deontology (Stocker, 1997, p. 66). But, virtue ethics has its own shortcomings. Its concern with the good person makes it difficult to evaluate situations, structures, and institutions. The theory was developed for individuals, not for organizations or society. The theory might be adapted to address moral questions beyond persons, but this is a complex endeavor.

### **2.2.2. Cognitivism and non Cognitivism (The Expressivists)**

Cognitivism is an inference to our conviction level about the world. Smith (cited in Harold, 2012) says that cognitivism is the view that when we make a moral judgment we thereby express our beliefs about the way these moral facts are informing moral opinions we acquire beliefs representation of the way the world is morally. Harold, (2012) relates this

definition with supporters of the idea. Cognitivists are said to hold that moral claims are both meaningful and truthful. They believe that moral judgments are beliefs. They distinguish themselves from non-cognitivists in their insistence that moral judgments are indeed a species of beliefs and are not themselves co-native states. (p.167)

For cognitivism, moral is the principle issue in relation to their view about life. On the other hand, a non-cognitivist theory of ethics suggests that ethical sentences are true or false, since they are devoid of any truth values. Normative sentences however, play a great role even though they are deficient in truth values and this is a fact which is concealed by the indistinct use of such sentences in language. Ethical non-cognitivism maintains that the perceptions have a more singular nature than descriptive sentences, as they possess no truth values. (Nicolaidis, 2017, p.8)

### **2.2.3. Consequentialist or Teleological Approach**

Bowen (2012) writes consequentialism approach as a normative paradigm of ethical decision making tool explains the decision maker to look to potential consequences for a decision in order to determine what is ethical. Most of the useful consequentialist paradigms fall in to utilitarian school of thought, based on the utility of a decision as predicted by its consequences (p.165).

This means decision potential consequences should be assessed before implementation. On the other hand, Benlahcene, Zainuddin and Ismail, (2018, p.33) states teleological ethics also known as consequentialist ethics in the theory of morality that draws moral obligations or duties from what is desirable or good as an end to be attained (Wolf, 1982). Went back to its roots and states the word teleological is derived from two Greek terms: telos, which means “end”; and logos, which refers to “science”!! The teleological perspective holds that an act is morally right if it produces a greater level of good over evil than any alternative act, and it is morally wrong if it does the opposite. The teleological theories accept utility as the basis for morality. Nicolaidis (2017) states, “utilitarianism” narrates morally depends on the consequences of human actions and not on the actions that

people take. Here, an action is considered to be right or wrong depending only on its ultimate consequences and whether the consequences are good or bad. Thus, consequentialism teaches that we should do whatever produces the greatest amount of good consequences in all actions which support the actions that turn out the greatest amount of contentment (P .8). So, RP practitioners in Ethiopia having a country with diverse society in many aspects should perform their activities responsible for good results and professionally predict the consequences of their communication actions. What expected from them is to focus on socially binding issues for peaceful co-existence of the people.

#### **2.2.4. Non-Consequentialist or Deontological Approach**

According to Bowen (2012) non-consequentialist reasoning or deontology is based on a duty to up hold moral principle. Thus, discovering the underlying moral principle behind a decision and supporting it by its ultimate goal of deontology is crucial (171).

About the deontological theories, the following post descriptions are stated:

Deontological theories can be depicted as duty based ethical theories. The word “Deon” originates from the Greek word “duty”. They focus on the nature of the action itself and also on its motive in order to figure out if it is right or wrong. In contrast to the situation with utilitarianism consequences do not matter in deciding which act is morally right; it is the rules that determines what motive to act from and what actions you should make, i.e., what your ethical duty is (Benlahcene, Zainuddin, and Ismail. 2018,p.35).

To sum up, the relation to the theoretical aspects of ethics focusing on teleology and deontology; the first one concerned with outcomes or consequences of decision or action while the later emphasizes on the decision on action issues. Thus, It raises the question that what really PRs concerns as a profession in a lens of these ethical approaches and indicates that it needs a rigorous response in that decisions need for address well before a diverse effect to happen and loosing many things.

### 2.3. Professional Ethics in public relations

Universities seeking industry accreditation must address the ethical statements offered by the professional association in their curriculum. For instance, the PRIA accreditation guidelines state universities must develop in students an awareness of the ethical implications of public relations practices and familiarizes students. With the Code of Ethics for individual practitioners (PRIA 2009). However, the dominant paradigm for public relations tends to present ethics uncritically as a function which contributes to both organizational effectiveness and organizational reputation, resulting in “a not entirely comfortable marriage between the priorities of organizational effectiveness and idealistic ethical communication practice.” (L’Etang. 2009, p. 14).

Ethics by its nature demands personal engagement. It aims at achieving best principles and an understanding of the rational decisions to be made and a good grasp and understanding of consequences. Ethics can’t be legislated; it comes from within us and nurtured by life training and the standards and codes of conduct. Ethics in PRs deals basically with the principle of ethical thinking which include roots of professionalism: truth telling, responsibilities, right and loyalties. Debating the issues of PRs ethics is exposing the dilemmas inherent in media relations, confronting ethical problems in organizational communication, employee and peer communication, corporate social responsibility, lobbying and community relations. Evetts (2003)

*The emergence of PRs as a profession is essentially a 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon although its roots can be traced to ancient civilizations. Since its early stage, the practice of PRs has posed many concerns and problems related to ethics. In the field of public relations, unethical practices have been regarded as a serious problem with numerous deleterious effects. Regarding to this issue, professional public relations associations including the public relations society of America (PRSA) and the International public association (IPRA) have launched and mandated the use of ethics codes in the field (Wilcox and Cameron, 2006).*

Bowen (2007) argued that the current state of PRs ethics depends heavily on code of ethics developed by major professional associations. PRs codes of ethics generally encompass

cross cultural and universal moral principles such as the concepts of honesty, fairness, integrity, credibility and not harming others. Ofcourse, there is dilemma regarding with codes of ethics; some scholars stated that ethical PRs decision do not need codes of ethics. Others said that if a PRs practitioner has a good intention, he/she needs no codes of ethics.

This leads us to the rationales of Plato's "Good people do not need laws to tell them to act responsibly Where as bad people will find a way around the laws." Bowen (2007) suggested six practical recommendations and guidelines for the practitioners to make rational ethical decisions in PRs:

1. The first thing to be concluded from studying ethical cases is that communication professionals must pay attention to ethics before the desperately need it. Once a crisis of conflicting ethics or high media interest fall, the organization is too late to begin searching for ethical guidance.
2. Know your own values. Taking a thorough and systematic look at the values you hold and espouse as a person and a PRs practitioner will help you when you are ' under the gun' being pressured by a supervisor, client or someone else;
3. Spot and discuss ethical issues. Issues management (Heat.1997) as the primary function that seeks out and resolves problems before they become crises. Is an area with a natural propensity to identify perplexing ethical situations
4. Time and time again research finds that organizational culture has a significant impact on ethical analyses and decision making.
5. Educating decision makers in the organizations specially the dominant coalitions of the abilities if the PRs function engages in ethical advertisement by using issues management, research and the conflict resolution should be one of the primary responsibilities of communication executives.
6. Engage in systematic and analytical of contemplating ethical dilemmas. The use of moral philosophy lends rigorous and consistent methods of ethical analyses and decisions in PRs. The theory of justice demands that decision makers be guided by fairness and equality as well as impartiality. All persons whether in business, government, education, institution or any other professionals are concerned with

ethics. Encyclopedia of social science defines ethics the organization or criticism of conduct in-terms of notion like good, right, or welfare..... Ethics is the secular or critical manner of taking account of the rationalizing process in human conduct. Its temper is non-mystical and its orientation is social rather than theological.

According to Sohan (2013) moral values are generally associated with personal view of values which reflects beliefs relating to sex, drinking, gambling etc. They can reflect the influence of religion, culture, family and friends. Ethics is concerned with how a moral person should behave. Ethical values are beliefs concerning what is morally right and proper as opposed to what is simply correct or effective. i.e., an individual may personally believe that drinking is immoral. However, drinking is not in and of self- unethical. Further, it is unethical to impose your personal moral values on others. The Josephson Institute of Ethics recommends six core ethical values to abide by: Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship. Whether the circumstance is business or life, ethical values should be ground rule for behavior. According to World Health Organization (1946) definition, a code is a statement of policies, principles or rules that guide behavior. Certainly, Codes of ethics do not apply not only to business enterprise but also for the behavior of persons in all organizations and in every life and it is called professional ethics. On the other hand, the public society of America (PRSA) also sketches out the following five professional ethics that are expected from PRs professionals. These are advocacy, honesty, expertise, independence, loyalty and fairness. (PRSA, March, 2019)

To sum up, this topic concludes with some ancient sayings which reflect the previous discussion of professional ethics and morality in the present time. ‘When one sees all beings in his own self and his own self in all beings, one loses all fear.’ ‘When one sees this great unity and the self have become all beings, no sorrow can afflict him.’

## **2.4. Models of Professional Ethics**

Evetts (2010) notifies the following in relation to models of professional ethics: Professional values emphasize a shared identity based on competencies. (Produced by education, training and apprenticeship) and sometimes guaranteed by licensing. The analysis of professionalism as an occupation value has involved different interpretations: sometimes positive sometimes negative. The feature of occupational professionalism which made it distinctive and different to organizational means of controlling work and workers were somewhat idealistic and based on a model and image of historical relations (p.5-8).

While various industry codes of ethics exist, there is no theoretical framework for explaining ethics strictly from a public relations perspective. Several attempts have been made however to outline ethical expectations and related decision-making processes for the industry: three types of theoretical bases and models founded in ethical principles which might be used to address professional ethics in the FDRE ministerial offices.

### **2.4.1. Models of Discourse**

This model type stresses public relations' role in encouraging discourse within this type lays a popular theoretical base for public relations. According to Barney and Black (1994), public relations practitioners perform a persuasive function similar to an attorney representing a client. The attorney adversary model operates under an assumption that if competing messages and viewpoints are adequately represented, the truth will inevitably emerge. Similarly, in the court of public opinion serviced by public relations practitioners, there is an expectation that the public will absorb all of the contrasting messages and viewpoints being disseminated. After considering all of this information, the public is expected to form an advised, intelligent opinion. Along with this expectation, the public relations practitioner provide strategic, limited disclosure of information to best serve and/or protect his/her client's interests. Similar to the counterargument in legal settings, this practice is deemed acceptable behavior since alternative views are expected to arise

naturally as a counterbalance to a particular perspective. If an opposing viewpoint doesn't emerge on its own, the burden falls upon the journalist or consumer advocate to provide for the public a counterargument that assures this balance. According to Gruing (1992), The two-way symmetrical model structure is used for public relations as a forum for discussion in which a variety of individuals' opinions and values come together. Generally, arriving at different conclusions, this model is derived from the teaching of classical Greek philosopher Isocrates, who viewed unification and consensus as essential components of rhetorical dialogue (Marsh, 2001). One cannot be certain that the best course of action was selected said Isocrates unless the interests and arguments of others were first weighed.

#### **2.4.2. Models of Social Obligation**

The social responsibility model, originally formulated by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) as a normative pattern of press operations, serves as a basis for concepts of civic journalism. This model instructs public relations practitioners to enact their campaigns while serving a broader public interest and communal good and closely related to the communitarianism model which extends the social responsibility model to include additional duties of strengthening community and promoting communal values of fairness, democracy, and truth. Sullivan's (1965) partisan versus mutual values model defines public relations as the intersection between these two values. While a public relations representative owes allegiance to his/her client, employer or organization must acknowledge all--even conflicting--viewpoints. A proper balance between obligation to employer and a principle of mutuality to contrasting opinions ensures a responsible strategic communication process. (Pearson, 1972)

### **2.4.3. Models of the Professional**

Professional responsibility model extends the other theoretical models by freeing public relations representatives from assuming social and communitarian responsibilities in their activities. Fitzpatrick and Gauthier (2000) characterized these as unrealistic and unattainable expectations. They classified public relations practitioners not under the umbrella of communicators, but rather as serving in a professional role, with appropriate responsibilities derived from this alternate form of classification. The four criteria of this classification are: a) membership in a professional organization, b) specialized expertise, c) an orientation toward service, and d) autonomy in operation. According to Fitzpatrick and Gauthier, professional classification does not necessarily imply complete autonomy from performing responsible advocacy. They outlined three foundations of advocacy-related requirements for the public relations practitioner as a professional: a) persuasive communication should completely avoid or best minimize harm, b) display respect for people and treat them with appropriate dignity, and c) communicate the benefits and burdens of an action or policy in as fair a manner as possible. It is to mean allowing a practitioner to sacrifice the well-being of one member of the community in servicing the needs of another. A professional relationship maintains ethics through self-regulation, unbridled loyalty to a single client and/or viewpoint effectively removes other members of the professional community as potential clients. The only model that truly describes public relations is one containing an underlying purpose of relationship management towards a client. This model, according to Hutton, is the only one capable of both defining the discipline while serving as a basis for its operation. Overall, the use of ethical self-standards as an operational framework for public relations is an approach gaining more widespread acceptance. Baker and Martinson (2001) advanced the use of these theoretical models by placing them in an ethical framework specific to public relations. Their TARES test outlined ethical expectations for the public relations practitioner to consider when enacting a persuasive communication campaign.

#### **2.4.4. The TARES Test**

The TARES test is composed of five interconnected factors of ethical consideration: Truthfulness of the message, Authenticity of the persuader, Respect for the persuadees, Equity of the appeal, and Social Responsibility for the common good. (Baker & Martinson, 2001). Truthfulness states that public relations communication must result in an audience with enough information to make an informed choice on the issue being presented. Authenticity questions are the motive of the communication message, requiring public relations practitioners to ask themselves if this message will benefit someone other than their clients. Respect demands that communicators perceive their target audience as human beings, and that messages are shaped and transmitted with appropriate respect. Equity calls for a responsibility by public relations practitioners to avoid communication that intentionally takes advantage of the vulnerabilities of a specific audience. Social responsibility discussed above as a theoretical model and often cited within sister disciplines, is an expectation of service by mass media practitioners toward the public at large. Lieber (2003) created a quantitative version of the TARES Test by wording its ethical considerations. In a test of U.S. based practitioners, Lieber uncovered that the TARES Test was better suited for a three-factor configuration derived from Days (2003) definition of moral knowledge:” the first Civility,” represented an attitude of self-sacrifice by the communicator in favor of overall respect for others. The definition of this factor mirrors that of pro social behavior, specifically behavior powered by intrinsic, pro social motives for action. This form of pro social behavior produces a response or action guided by a primary focus on the needs of others and for collective society (Ryan & Connell, 1989).

The second factor, “Integrity,” signified a communicator’s willingness to take responsibility for the consequences of his/her actions and to live with the results of this behavior. A communicator who values matters of Integrity practices what he/she preaches trying to make a difference in society through their actions (Day, 2003, p. 11). “Credibility,” Day’s third factor, detailed a communicator’s ability to be believable and

worthy of trust. It is a communicator's transition from simply dealing with others to his/her membership in the moral community at large. Even the TARES test, however suffers from a glaring weakness of the public relations industry, it is a vocation guided by amorphous ethical standards. Perhaps the solution to these standards and public relations' non-enforceable industry codes are in traditional models, ones that can help to provide a much-needed ethical foundation for issue advocates expected to equally serve both public and private interest.

## **2.5. Brief History of Public Relations as a Profession**

PRs as a profession has no central, identifying founder, national origin or founding date because it focuses on efforts to influence not only opinions but behavior.(Newson and et al.. 2004,p.20) but PRs as a self-determining subject has a centenary history in USA. Ruler (2003) on her side PRs is a flourishing industry in all over Europe; in some countries the concept is fairly new, but in other countries as a specialism practiced for more than a century.

Alternatively,EnoAkpabio(2009) writes about PR practices history in Africa as follows:

The practice of PRs in Africa predates the independence moment and the achievement of nationhood like other areas of human endeavor. But PR scholarship and practice in Africa is not very visible to the rest of the world. This means that its contribution is relatively unacknowledged and invisible. Thus, it makes the practitioners and academics in the continent appear unaware of current theory, research and practice in the field. It also means that academics from other fields rush to fill the void by providing an outsider's look at the practice. The disadvantage of the lack of local knowledge about PR in Africa still becomes apparent. There are also efforts, some quite recent from the continent that exaggerate the achievements of theory and research in Africa.(pp.351-352)

The statement given by Akpabio clearly shows that due to lack of PR professionalism in Africa, the knowledge and skill gap is filled by outsiders. This gap should awaken the field

scholars of the continent to work aggressively to bring change and strive to make PR profession in Africa an exemplary to the rest of the world based on scientific research.

Fawke (2015) puts the general trend like this, PR is seen as an emerging profession, lacking some features of law and medicine but similar to journalism or marketing. It has a body of knowledge to pass on and professional associations to maintain standards but only for their members. Anyone can practice but the hallmark of a professional in the commitment to social value and high ethical standards (p.74).

When we see Ethiopia's PR history, there is no national data about its beginning. However, the defunct Government Communication Affairs Office website states the country's first PR related entity the Press and Information Desk was established during the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie I the then ministry of writing in 1941/42. After 30 years, in 1972 the new military government (Dergue) established Ministry of Information by which in 1983 it renamed to Ministry of Information and National Advisory. The new ministry was given a responsibility to supervise such government office; Ethiopian News Agency (ENA), Revolutionary Ethiopian Voice, Press Office, PR Office, Newspapers and Magazines Distribution Agency and Censorship Service. (GCAO, November 2017)

After 1991, the ministry of information survived as a government publicity organ till 2008/9 and then replaced by GCAO that contributed its own share for the PR growth in Ethiopia. But it was able to survive for nearly a decade and become defunct in October 2018 and replaced by a new established Press Secretariat Office. Though the PR structure is visible for more than 60 years, the PR professionalism status in the country is at infant stage.

## **2.6. Key Performance Indicators of PRs Profession**

There are many different roles, functions, activities, works, results, feedbacks, practitioners' performance, competencies, level of ethics and other related issues that can measure the PRs profession. But each of these issues has their own distinct metrics. According to Cyber(2015), measuring different goals require different metrics because the

goal determines the metrics like volume goals for visibility require volume metric; quality goals require qualitative metrics and reputation as well as influence goals require perception or believe metrics. Metrics for PRs measurement sometimes called key performance indicators.(KPIS, P.10)

The focus of this study is to analyze the ethical practices of PRs professionals in FDRE ministries. To do so, PRs as a profession is evaluated from different perspectives. Such as among others practitioners' competency and autonomy, availability of work standards, level of ethics, the practitioners' willingness to serve the public, existence of PRs association are included in the study. Most of the metrics incorporated are inclined to a qualitative type. The student researcher also adds some factors in relation to the profession itself, the professional ethics of the practitioners and PRs professionalization process in the country through a lens of government PRs in ministerial offices.

### **2.6.1. PRs Competency**

PR as a profession has many competencies. Andersen and Pedersen (2012) believe many providers of public services are professionals. They belong to occupations with high levels of specialized , theoretical knowledge and strong intra-occupational norms .This means that their motivation and behavior potentially differ from other public employees.(p 46) Or it is to mean public service professionals are expected to have high competency in their occupation .On the other hand, Grift,Guit, and Sijde(2010) state: a competency is a combination of knowledge, skills, attitude and behavior needed for proper functioning in a given professional situation . To develop competencies, it is a must to constantly reflect on what we know ,what we can do ,what we want and what we are doing.(p. 14) Respect to clients by practitioners also raised in relation to competency .Pearson(2008) states, requiring clients , communities and ourselves require us to exhibit competence in our professional activities since we provide a service to society . In doing so, the society expect a certain level of competence in our ability .In a professional sense, there are two main objectives to achieving competence in any field. In PRs primary one is to protect the

public and the second one is to secure the future of PRs image as an ethical pursuit. (P.55-58)

### **2.6.2 Standards of PRs Practitioners**

Standards are referenced points to measure activities credibly with distinctive character. Tench and Laville (2006) listed the Global Alliance of PRs associations guiding principles of professionalism characteristics. They are mastery of a particular intellectual skill through education and training acceptance of duties to a broader society than merely one's clients /employers and objectivity and high standards of conduct and performance.(p.107). Thus, without mastery of a certain skill based on education and training for the benefit of the public, one couldn't be considered as a professional. In relation to standards researchers like Waddington (2015) argued that there are very few standards in PRs and it is surprising for a business that is tasked with the critical role of managing the reputation of an organization. He said, time served is as the typical measure of competence but not all experience is equal and when media and technology are evolving so quickly it is a lousy metric. Without a competence framework, it is difficult to benchmark one practitioner against another or apply a strategic approach in building educational, training, or continuous professional development programs. (p.36)

But beyond time and other old measurements of the PRs activity, the modern times of PRs profession considers competencies through standards of the professional ethics.

### **2.7. Roles of PRs Practitioners**

Practitioners' roles have been a major focus for theory development within the systemic perspective. Broom and Smith (1979) proposed five practitioners role models: problem-solving process facilitators; expert prescribers; communication process facilitators; technical services providers and acceptant legitimizes. These were later simplified by Broom and Dozier (1986), who defined two basic roles for the PR practitioner:

- the communication technicians, who focuses on tactical matters such as writing, event management and media management
- the communication *managers*, who has a more strategic communication perspective and will normally create overall strategy, take and analyze client briefings and deal with issues and crises. These roles have been confirmed in subsequent research. For example, Terry (2001) analyzed lobbyists' stories of their jobs and found a clear separation between those who enacted the technician role and those who enacted the manager role. She also found evidence of all five of Broom and Smith's (1979) typologies in the lobbyists' narrations. Kelleher (2001) also found that managers spent significantly more time communicating orally than technicians, and that with the exception of email, technicians spent significantly more time using traditional written communication.

Dozier and Broom (1995) updated their initial study and showed that gender indirectly affected the role of practitioners. Thus, men are more likely to have been longer with the organization (tenure) and have more professional experience. The longer the tenure: the greater the professional experience; the longer the professional experience, the more likely it is that a practitioner has a managerial rather than a technician role; and the higher the salary. The excellence study conducted by Grunig and his colleagues argued strongly for PR practitioners to aspire a managerial role rather than a technician role, since they are able to exert more power and influence among senior management and be more effective for the organization if they operate from this more senior position. As a result, a hierarchy has emerged between the two types of roles, with managerial roles generally enjoying greater perceived value and status.

According to Lauzen and Dozier (1994) and Moss et al. (2000) also found that organizational factors affected the likelihood of a managerial role, including whether the organization had a strong orientation to its stakeholders and whether PR could demonstrate financial and operational value to the organization. For example, if you work for a chemicals company like Monsanto, whose work can be controversial and is a regular target of sometimes violent protests, then your role is highly complex. You need to focus on

building long-term reputation among customers and governments, persuading more general audiences that what you are doing will benefit communities around the world, and engage with activists to tackle and survive difficult situations in the short term.

If, contrariwise, you work as a communications manager for a regional theatre, your job is likely to focus mainly on short-term promotion of upcoming productions. This is obviously much simpler and more tactical than working for Monsanto! However, if your role involved bidding for Arts Council or local authority grants, working with local communities or fighting closure threats, you would certainly be involved with strategic PR. Moss et al. (2000), in a study of 10 leading UK companies, found that practitioners were only involved in strategic decision making beyond the communications area if they had a real understanding of communications and had good relationships with senior management.

## **2.8. Nature of Government Public Relations**

Government RPs is a critical link between the government bodies and the citizens. Cutlip, Center, and Broom (2006) expound the diversity of technical skill, organization goals and specialized public activities of the function of the government public affairs is far greater than that of traditional PRs practices. And the paramount difference is the public advocacy role played by government communicators to government decision makers. (p.240) The avowal shows that these days of government communicators should aware as a professional they should play higher roles beyond daily routine activities.

On the other hand, Bowen (2012) states government PRs is the type of communication function deals with the interaction of the citizenry with the government, government regulators, and the legislatives and regulatory arms. It helps to facilitate communication with constituencies and governmental publics both government PRs and corporate public affairs have to deal with strategic issues on matters of public policy; meaning how their organization interact with government and constituents. (P.159-160] thus, government

PRs practitioners have to have a competency of managing so as to create better communication between the organization they represent and the public.

### **2.8.1. Responsibility of Government PRs (Communicators)**

There are different responsibilities for government communicators based on their job levels however, Martinelli (2012) indicates government communicators at all levels should incorporate all three major government PRs purpose:

The mandatory (media relation, public reporting, and written responsiveness), The pragmatic (customer and client responsiveness and outreach activities) and the political (including public support) in to one master document. Such planning helps government employees identify and specify their priorities to support the vision, mission and goals of the larger agency or department. (2012, p.144) The idea raised above point supports to an organization is the major purpose of government PRs. So, communicators should be aware about this responsibility.

Bowen(2012, p.172), on his part, advises “government PRs practitioners should seek to avoid creating or working in the type of environment in which any group member is afraid to question assumptions, voice objections, or raise a point for ethical analysis whenever they feel it is warranted ,no matter what level in the organization the person occupies”. Therefore, they are expected to stand on the side of the truth and to the voiceless.

### **2.8.2. Government PRs Practices in Ethiopia**

Different studies are found in relation to the PRs practices in Ethiopia. Among these BiniyamWubeshet (2006) said the treatment of PRs information in Ethiopia News Agency (ENA) and the study result found out that the institution journalists do not consult other sources to cross check the information they received from government PRs professionals. So that, there are so many flaws in relation to News sent from government PRs /communication practitioners” (p.59).

ShimelisMulatu (2017) examined, “the PRs communication practice of the defunct GCAO in line with its responsiveness to the diverse information needs of the public. From this

study, the researcher concludes though GCAO assumes special responsibility for coordinating government PRs/communication activities, its decision making power was weak” (p.71).

Nevertheless, the student researcher couldn't find any study done to fill the ethical practices of PRs practitioners' except about professionalism. So, this study aimed at analyzing the ethical practices of PRs practitioners in FDRE government ministries through dimensions of responsibility of standards and codes of ethics, autonomy, willingness of practitioners to serve the public interest, professional, educational and existence of PRs association in the country. Thus, the student researcher believed to fill the knowledge gaps in the study topic given an insight about the issue under study and initiate further studies on the ethical practices of public relations practitioners in other perspectives.

## **2.9. Role of PR in Promoting Ethics**

Similarly, PR has undoubtedly played its roles in promoting ethics so as to build an ethical society that cannot agree to accept the unethical practice. It's of course, a public relations profession that carefully handles the issues of ethics. These ideas indicated that PR activities have administered with all-embracing virtues of ethics. These help the PR section of the anticorruption organization first to create a sufficient ethical environment in their organization, second to promote ethics education, which is one strategy of the anti-corruption organization, for the public at large to build ethical society. (Lattimore, 2012)

Public relations of an anti-corruption organization can have also a good opportunity to promote the issues of ethics among society, as it has core values support the profession. Some of these values as the Public Relations Society of America specified includes: -

**Advocacy** – PR serves the organization and public interest without revealing corrupt behaviors.

**Honesty** - PR activities should be planned and executed based on prone and cones. They tell the truth for the people, don't lie.

**Loyalty** - PR professional should understand that his or her loyalties must remain constant.

**Fairness** – one of the PR practitioners' responsibilities is to be fair and fairly handle others.

These terms are embedded in the PR profession. Thus, PR of the anti-corruption organizations has the chance to confidently teach the public about ethical issues as per the organization and societal needs. Page & Parnell (2019) added also that PR practitioners have “power in both management and communication decisions to shape society by providing information, forming attitudes, and encouraging behaviors”. According to Page & Parnell (2019), PR practitioners have a responsibility to function morally and serve as ethics counsel to their organization. Moreover, the issue of ethics has also fixed in PR excellence theory that shows practitioners can still play roles in expanding ethics education among society.

It is, therefore, common that PR practitioners communicate organizational objectives with the public. In an organization like anti-corruption, objectives may include promoting ethics and anticorruption education. In such a case, it is a PR section of the organization that takes lion share in promoting ethics and anti-corruption messages using different media outlets.

## **2.10. Challenges of Public Relations Practices in Ethiopia**

Scholars have continually added to the empirical evidence supporting the efficacy of ethics codes in discouraging unethical practices. Bennett(1988) Moreover, scholars have claimed several direct and indirect benefits of ethics codes for companies, such as: (1) improvement of the company's bottom line (2) protection during litigation or regulatory actions. (3) Promotion of corporate social responsibility, positive employee behavior, management, and corporate culture and (4) creation of a positive impression of a firm among its stakeholders. Since the mere existence of ethics codes in firms may correspond with only a limited impact on ethical practices, scholars conducting ethics studies have made an attempt to pinpoint the determinants of the codes' efficacy.

In a meta-analytic review of key efficacy factors of ethics codes in ethics literature, Ford and Richardson (1994) broadly divided the determinants into two groups individual factors and situational factors (e.g., peer group influence, top management influence, organization size, and industry type). Individual factors include variables that are a result of birth (e.g., age, sex, nationality, etc.) and those that are outcomes of the human development and socialization process (e.g., personality, attitudes, values, education, religion, employment, etc.). These variables embody the sum of one's life experiences and circumstances of birth that an individual brings to the ethical decision-making process (Ford and Richardson 1994). As these individual factors are predetermined and cannot be controlled by public relations firms, this study focuses primarily on situational factors. In particular, this study assesses three organizational ethics factors, ethical climate, top management support for ethical behavior, and the association between career success in the organization and ethical practices in addition to the existence of an ethics code.

### **2.11. Organizational Ethics Factors**

In ethics studies, organizational culture has gained attention as a primary influential factor of ethical behavior. To emphasize the importance of organizational culture, Cassel et al. (1997) claimed, "Design and implementation of a code of ethics does not take place in a social vacuum. Therefore it is important to realize that certain contextual phenomena will have a bearing upon how people respond to any code of ethics"(p. 1,080). Organizational culture is the common set of assumptions, beliefs, and values that develops within an organization to cope with the external and internal environment and that is passed on to new members to guide their actions with respect to these environments (Schein 1984).

The presence of ethics codes in public relations firms represents one way of communicating ethical standards to public relations professionals in those firms. As such, favorable organizational factors, such as top management support for ethical behavior, a favorable ethical climate, and a strong association between ethical practice and career success in the public relations firms can boost the impact of ethics codes on public

relations professionals' behavior. For ease of reference, these factors are termed as organizational ethics variables.

Here, organization refers to public relations firms. As this study focuses on public relations firms' ethics, in-house public relations departments were excluded from the study. Factors affecting ethical practices are ethical climate. Since Victor and Cullen (1987, 1988) introduced the concept of ethical climate to predict ethical conduct in organizations, and it has served as a key conceptual foundation in ethics studies. Ethical climate is defined as the shared perception of how ethical issues should be addressed and what ethically correct behavior is. Adopting the aforementioned definition, this study conceptualizes ethical climate as the shared perceptions among public relations practitioners in a firm of the nature of ethically correct practice and how ethical issues should be handled within the firm.

An organization's ethical climate can result in four main outcomes for the employees: organizational commitment, job satisfaction, psychological well-being, and preventing unethical behavior. For example, several studies have confirmed that a favorable ethical climate positively influences employees' job satisfaction, potential promotion, and supervisions. More importantly, findings from multiple studies emphasized the importance of a firm's ethical climate as a leading factor in influencing ethical behavior and preventing dysfunctional behaviors among employees within the firm (Barnett and Vaicys2000).

It has been suggested that there are multiple dimensions of ethical climate, and these different dimensions tend to convey varied indications to employees regarding what is acceptable behavior. While there is some variation among the underlying dimensions of ethical climate, the three dimensions: egoism, principle and benevolence as framed by Victor and Cullen (1987). Egoism is the application of behavior for maximizing self-interest. Principle is the same concept of deontology, which is the application of universal standards, rules, codes, and procedures to behavior. Benevolence is similar to the concept of utilitarianism in classical ethical theories. This construct entails behavior that maximizes the well-being of as many people as possible.

The measure of three typologies of ethical climate has been applied to various disciplines, including education (e.g., Rosenblatt and Peled 2002) and management. Studies assessing how ethical climate affects ethical decision making in firms have proliferated in business and organizational literature. However, to the researchers' knowledge, none of the studies in the public relations field have specifically examined whether the ethical climate within public relations firms affects public relations professionals' ethical decision making in their practices. Since the ethical climate in a firm tends to shape the firm's collective norms for ethical behavior (Trevino 1986).

In accordance with organizational ethics studies that ethical climate may also play an important role in influencing ethical behavior of practitioners in public relations firms. Top management support for ethical practice has been found to be another key ingredient in encouraging employees' ethical behavior. Originally developed a measure of “top management support for ethical practices” and summarized the following actions that top management can take to ameliorate employees' ethical dilemmas: (1) serve as role models by performing their own practices faultlessly, (2) promote ethical practices by promptly reprimanding unethical conduct, and (3) develop and promote ethics codes of both their company and the industry determined that top management action is the single best predictor of ethical problems of marketing researchers. Trevino et al. (1999) noted that although a firm's ethics code rarely influenced practitioners' ethical behavior, a value-based cultural approach leaders' commitment to ethical behavior, rewards for ethical practice, and congruency between policies and actions—positively influenced ethical behavior among employees. Consequently, a firm's ethics code can be more effective when firm management and the board of directors supports (Raiborn and Payne 1990).

Moreover, top management has been found to positively influence other important outcomes within organizations, such as organizational performance, productivity, success, and job satisfaction. In general, top management support is influential for the overall effectiveness of an organization. In public relations, top management support has been discussed as a key factor in influencing public relations practices. Top managers represent an essential link between ethics codes and practitioners' ethical practices. If managers fail

to discuss the importance of ethical practices with their employees, these practitioners will likely believe that ethical behavior is not significant or necessary. Thus far, none of the studies in this area have empirically tested the effect of top management support on ethical practices in public relations firms. This study considers top management support in the following way: top management in public relations firms understands the importance of ethical practice among employee practitioners and is dedicated to developing more ethically oriented work settings. The association between ethical behavior and career success demonstrated that a person's behavior tends to be encouraged by three types of reinforcers: feedback, money, and social recognition. Several empirical studies tested this variable in terms of job satisfaction and confirmed that employees demonstrate higher levels of satisfaction when they can perceive a clear relationship between ethical behavior and career success (Lthaun, 1999) Compared to the other two variables, the association between ethical behavior and career success has rarely been tested in terms of ethical decision making with the exception of one study.

Boo and Koh (2001) investigated if employees' perceptions of the positive association between ethical behavior and career success encourage more ethical practices, they added empirical evidence confirming that employees tended to behave more ethically when they perceived a positive relationship between ethical behavior and career success. Based on the empirical evidence, it is assumed that in a public relations firm where ethical practice is closely tied with career success; ethical practice of public relations practitioners would be reinforced.

On the other hand, when public relations professionals believe unethical practices are necessary for success in their careers, such perceptions would motivate unethical practice. This study aims to evaluate the following four variables that could contribute to more ethical public relations practices: whether public relations firms explicitly develop a code of ethics for guiding public relations professionals, whether public relations Factors affecting ethical practices are professionals' perceive, a favorable ethical climate within their firms, whether strong top management support for ethical practices exists

within firms, and whether there is a clear association between ethical practices and career success in public relations firms.

## **2.10. Theoretical Framework of Public Relations Ethics**

Mouza (2018) states, “theory is defined as a statement or group of statement that clarifies the mechanics of the world around us and frequently explains relations among phenomena. It constitutes the core body for analysis, assists in a resourceful development of the field, and it is a necessity in applying real world problems (p.1)

Based on this definition the student researcher tried to relate a theory that fits to this study on PR ethics in Ethiopia. So, the theory begins with working on what is actually ethics mean.

Since the mid 20th century, the public relations (PR) industry, its practice and function has been under persistent ethical debate and security. Thus, ethical codes of conduct and industry, standards are continuously evolving. Tench and Yeomens (2014, p.4) “assert that public relation is the product of social, cultural, economic and political circulation of its time and evolves according to the need of these environment.”

Meyer and Leonard (2014) assert professions are set apart from other career paths by their status and public respect which allow them a proportionate degree of autonomy in decision making .In order for public relations practitioners enjoy similar autonomy and recognition, professional status is essential.(p.2)

Freidson (2001) states professions are privileged, autonomous occupational groups that they have gained control of specific, socially relevant sections of work. A profession can define professional education and controls the entry to a market. Today, the focus is less on professions than on professionalism as a specific mode of work.(ibid, p.37) Therefore, having this concept, the student researcher has used ethical theories such as cognitivism and non-cognitivism, consequentialist (teleological approach), non-consequentialist (deontological approach) and virtue ethics are included.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. Research Method

#### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter attempts to address research methodology that includes research method, research design, method of data collection (primary and secondary data collection methods) sampling method and sampling technique (non- probability sampling technique) and data analysis method.

#### 3.2. Research Design

In this study, descriptive research design is employed. Adopting a certain research design depends on a range of factors and some of them are the nature of the problem under the study, the situation in which the research is conducted, availability of sources, and the background of the inclination of the researcher. In this regard, the relationship between methodology and research objectives is the fundamental factors to determine the quality of the data. (Denzin, et al., 1994)

Durrheim (2004) states research design is a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between questions and the execution or implementation of the research strategy. And also the research design has used the descriptive type of research design. According to Kothari(2004), descriptive type of research is a study which is concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular or a group. Most of the social research comes under this category. This research design requires identifying what the researcher wants to measure and the finding of the study needs adequate methods. The aim of descriptive research design is to obtain complete and accurate information in the said studies and the procedure to be used must be carefully planned to save the study from bias.

Besides, descriptive research design is simply concerned with explaining the nature, the situation and the degree of intensity of factors under investigations. Deribsa expresses that descriptive research design is used to identify the problem and to distinguish the objective of the analysis; comprehending the variables or factors to be measured. This method is also used to explain the process of compiled facts and documents in a way that the perceptions derived from relevant sources and can lead to valid generalizations Deribsa (2008).

Therefore, based on the above notes, the student researcher selected this type of research design. The study focuses on analyzing the ethical practices of public relations practitioners by evaluating the practitioners' of ethical standard services in line with the professionalism; the roles of public relations in the organization; and then investigating or suggesting solutions for the major challenges in the way to meet the organization's goals and objectives.

In this study, mixed research approach is used both to quantify the data and to express the data in to words, concepts and other way of expressions. Dornyei, (2007) noted that mixed research method helps to reduce the inherent weakness of individual method either qualitative or quantitative but by compensating them with the strengths of the other. The qualitative approach is used to interpret themes, words and expressions of the interviewees by in-depth interview questions; whereas, quantitative approach is used to quantify the data that are collected from respondents by using questionnaires.

### **3.3 Sampling Techniques**

The study applied a purposive sampling technique which is a part of a non-random sampling technique so as to pick out which FDRE ministries had to be included in this study.

Macnamara(2005, p.46) states purposive sampling technique is used when there is a defined purpose and it may be used to select from large number of customers. Based on this technique, the researcher asked different ministries PRs and communication directorate offices with formal letter from AA, SJC, in December 2019 to get permission for data

accessibility. So that, it has got willingness from three ministries Ministry of Education(MOE), Ministry of Finance(MOF) and Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MOCT).Because of insufficient number of PRs practitioners existed in each ministry to take samples census is applied for the actual data collection technique. Whereas, questionnaire is used as a tool for quantification but it has also a short coming to give detail information about the actual study targets. So, to avoid this weakness, the student researcher prepared close ended questionnaires.

### **3.4. Data Sources and Data Collection Instruments**

The student researcher collected all the available sources of information from the informants (primary data) and documents(secondary data).Primary data were collected from the three ministries through structured in-depth interview, FGDs and entirely close ended questionnaires. Whereas, secondary data sources comprise pre-established data used for other purposes. Such data contains collective information than specific issues to the topic under study. Most of the time such data are termed as published materials.

#### **3.4.1. Interview**

Interviews are a valuable method of research for both planning and evaluating and also used with a wide range of stakeholder groups. The main limitation of interview is the demand on time for both the interviewer and the interviewee. A single interview may take from 15 minutes to one hour. Thus, interviews are mostly used for qualitative research with small sample sizes. Interviews are particularly relevant to high level stakeholders. (Macnamara, 2005, p.47).

Kothari (2014) also claims the method of collecting information through personal interview is usually carried out in a structured way. Structured interviews involve the use of set of predetermined questions and highly standardized techniques of recording. It follows a rigid procedure laid down; asking questions in a form and order prescribed.Based on this, a maximum of one hour in depth interview having six main and other ten follow up questions were prepared for two PR practitioners in each ministry and a director in each ministry included in this study. The researcher succeeded three interviews withsix PR

practitioners and three directors. The data collected from the PR directors through structured interviews in Amharic language in some terms and transcribed and/or translated into English language, coded, and analyzed qualitatively.

### **3.4.2. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**

FGDs are conducted with a small group of respondents and they provide qualitative information. This decision is usually based on segmentation, i.e. ensuring that groups from different segments of the target population are researched. A benefit of conducting research with small groups is that the method often prompts discussion between participants, rather than relying on only the interviewer's questions. A Comment by one participant may prompt others to recall something or provide their point of view either agreeing or disagreeing. This discussion component is useful to test the validity of views. (Macnamara, 2005, p.48) and the discussion wrapped up when the discussants reached at saturation level; raise their concerns and issues to tell.

FGDs was conducted having six (6) questions with four (4) sub questions prepared and discussed with five PR practitioners in each ministry or the total number of fifteen (15) discussants of MOE, MOF, and MOCT based on a one and half an hour time budget by handling them to discuss together. But, because of the institutions were found in different places and because of the corona virus (covid-19), the researcher didn't merge them together so, it was discussed in each ministry having five discussants of a group. Therefore, the researcher had three FGDs tables with facilitator himself and note taker and during the discussion there were personal cell phone and lap tops to record the discussions and discussants had the right to give an idea whenever they disagree and left the discussion if they believe it is an ethical.

At MOE, There are nine PR practitioners including the director and among them five of them attended the discussion for one hour and forty minutes on July 2, 2020; at MOF, there are also ten participants and again five of them attended in the discussion and in MOCT there are twelve practitioners and the discussion were there. Generally, the

researcher could able to manage three FGDs with fifteen (15) PR practitioners out of the total number of thirty one (31) PR practitioners with 100 percent success rate of attendants.

### **3.4.3. Questionnaires**

According to Walliman (2011), questionnaires are a suitable tool for gaining quantitative data and can be used for qualitative data. This method of data collection is usually called a survey. Using a questionnaire enables the researcher to organize the questions and receive replies without actually having a talk to every respondent. There is no also personal influence of the researcher, and embarrassing questions can be asked with a fair chance of getting a true reply.

In order to triangulate the research result, the student researcher prepared a fifteen (15) questions package mostly close ended questionnaires having an additional five (5) follow up questions. The researcher tested the reliability of these questions by a pilot study in each ministry's employees. The questionnaires were administered to all existing PR customers or employees working in the three ministries or only employees that have close work relations with the PR departments were asked to fill the questionnaires. So, totally 120 questionnaires were disseminated in April, 2020.

### **3.5. Data Analysis, Ethical Issues and Coding**

The data was analyzed at its initial stage separately using different data analysis techniques. The questionnaires administered were more inclined to qualitative type since most of the questions are close ended. But, the researcher maneuvers the data mathematically by using SPSS software. All in all, interviews and FGD are qualitative data and analyzed thematically based on the qualitative analysis procedures; to fulfill the research, the researcher secured the informants anonymity and also their real identities were replaced by their job levels and other reasonable codes during analysis and presentation time. Finally, the result revealed based on the given codes consequently.

### 3.6. Ethical Consideration

Ethics is one of the pivotal issues getting consideration in every aspect, particularly in academic research. In academic research, the issues of ethics can be considered in every stage and process of research. Ethics can be happened in writing a research proposal, in literature review and methodology like data collection and analyzing techniques.

In this study, the researcher attempted to respect the various ethical issues from the beginning to the report writing of the research. Some of these ethical issues which are discussed by Creswell & Creswell (2018) and Kumar (2011) and considered in this study include:

- **At the beginning of research-** disclosing objective of the study, respecting norm and culture and disclosing research beneficiaries;
- **In the middle of research-** In the process of data collection, respecting respondents' privacy, avoiding imposition on the respondent and restricting from collecting unethical or harmful information are taken into consideration;
- **At the end of research** - In the case of data analysis, data has analyzed without taking side and any finding has disclosed based on research results. In addition, the researcher tried to consider issues of ethics in research reporting, storing and sharing.

The researcher has, therefore, exerted possible effort to avoid bias and unethical issues at the beginning of the research, in the courses of data collection and analysis, and during report writing.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. Data Presentation and Analysis

This is the fourth chapter of the research entitled: EthicalPRs practices in FDRE ministries; a study on three ministerial offices. This chapter deals with data presentation and analysis. The data were collected through questionnaires, FGDs and in depth interview.

#### 4.1. Quantitative Data Presentation

Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires distributed to a sample of 120 respondents. These questionnaires were distributed for the employees of three ministerial workers who were always working with PR practitioners cooperatively. From distributed questionnaires 90, about 75% of the total questionnaires were collected. The rest questionnaires were not returned from the respondents which may be attributed to Covid-19 emergency.

In order to continue on data analysis, the researcher has tried to look at the appropriateness of the response rate. In relations to this, Funcham indicated that at an average above 60% of response rate could be estimated for most researcher and more than 80% for pharmaceutical studies (2008). It is also specified in more recent research article that comprehensive response rates for research ranges from 66-83% (Brtnikora.et.at. 2018). The response rate for this study is, therefore, acceptable to proceed on presentation and analysis of data collected from respondents through questionnaires.

#### Data from Questionnaires

In this research, structured and semi-structured questions were designed to collect data from respondents through questionnaires. The researcher has tried to categorize these inquires according to their relevance to research questions or thematic areas of the study. Comments or opinions of respondents have also used as required according to their significances. Consequently, all these questions can fall into activities of public relations, ethical practices, and challenges facing public relations activities in FDRE ministries.

#### 4.2. Analysis of the Questionnaires Data Collected From Ministry of Education, Finance and Culture and Tourism Employees

There are totally 90 respondents for the distributed questionnaires given for employees working in FDRE ministries. Therefore, the whole data analyzed based on SPSS software and the result presented as follows.

**Table 1: Gender distribution of employees in FDRE ministries**

Valid	Frequency	Percent
Male	52	57.77%
Female	38	42.22%
Total	90	99.99%

Among them seventeen of the males are working at MOCT, the other sixteen found at MOF and the rest nineteen working at MOE on the other hand, among them twelve of the female employees are working at MOE, thirteen of them are working at MOF and thirteen of the female workers are at MOCT. As shown in the above, among the total 90 respondents, 57.77% of them are males and only 42.22% are females. Therefore, the actual employee number is dominated by males but the reason behind it needs further research

**Table 2: Education level of Employees in FDRE ministries**

Valid	Frequency	Percent
BA/BSC	69	76.66%
Diploma	8	8.88%
MA/MSc	13	14.44%

Among them 69 (76.66%) are BA/BSC, 13 (14.44%) are MA/MSc holders and the rest 8 (8.88%) of them are diploma holders. Therefore, their educational level matters for evaluating the PR practitioners how they are serving the public and they are qualified to comment on PR practices.

**Table 3: Employees experience in FDRE ministries.**

Experience	Frequency	Percent (%)
Five years and lower	23	25.55%
6-10 years	50	55.55%
More than 10 years	17	18.88%

Among the total 90 respondents, 50 (55.55%) have shown as they were more experienced—serving 6-10 years whereas 23 (25.55%) of them had experience of five years and lesser. The rest 17 (18.88%) of them were those with the highest level of experience. As a result, its implication shows that the more they are experienced and working with the PR practitioners, the more they understand how the PR practitioners are serving the

public. This indicates that majority of them did work for sufficient time with the PR department to respond to inquiries of this study.

**Table 4:** Whether PR profession is an influential in the organization for making decisions or not.

Valid	Frequency	Percent
No	66	73.33%
Yes	24	26.66%
Total	90	99.99%

Table 4 above shows respondents' reaction on whether PR in the organization is influencing decision. Among the total 90 respondents, 66 (73.33%) of them said PR is not influential profession that able to contribute for any decisions, the rest 24 (26.66%) of the respondents said PR can participate and influence on different decisions as others departments equally. This shows that as understood in the above, the PR department is not a very good influencer in any decisions because knowingly or unknowingly the government as well as the political appointees doesn't give emphasis for this department that is why this department seems not influential.

**Table5:** View on PR profession vs. occupation

Valid	Frequency	Percent
Occupation	24	26.66%
profession	60	66.66%
Profession and occupation	8	6.66%
Total	90	99.99%

Table 5 above shows the respondents' view to whether PR is profession or occupation. Among the total 90 respondents 24 (26.66%) argue that the PR is an occupation because everybody can do it by practicing it and it is already taken from human's nature at the same time most of the politicians can do it. Again 60(66.66%) of the respondents argue that PR is really a profession because it needs knowledge, skill, techniques, experience, scientific applications and it is mandatory to have responsible practitioners. The rest 6(6.66%) of the respondents said that it is both profession and an occupation without telling the reason for their saying.

Gruning and Hunt (1922) state "PR is a scientific any grounded profession" and Freidson (2011) added "it needs special knowledge and skills to practice in a scientific way". The result shows, majority of the employees marked PR as it is a profession.

**Table 6:** Dominant perspective of PR in FDRE ministries

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Political	43	47.77%
Economics	13	14.44%
Social	11	12.22%
All	23	25.55%
Total	90	99.99%

As the respondents showed in figure, among the total number of 90 respondents, 43(47.77%) of the them said PR is functioned in ministerial level as political because mostly, there is no PR professional who are certified by PR so, PR department is covered by other employees like political appointees. 13 (14.44%) of the respondents assumed as PR is only used for economical purpose because it is used for promotional advertisement or marketing target. Again, 11(12.22%) of them responded that PR is used only for social

interaction. The rest 23(25.55%) argued that PR profession is used for political, social, and economical purpose. According to Rosebeng (2013), PR has the over sight of organizational international communication policies of internal and external communication. According to Seitel (2011) pointed out that the management function of public relations is in a position.

1. Evaluate internal and external opinions, attitudes, and needs ongoing basis.
2. To advise management regarding their possible effects and act as an instrument in bringing policy changes and in directing new courses of action.

On the other hand, According to kitchen, 2004, the marketing perspective of public relations is being incorporate in to the marketing communication mix. It is concluded that PR practice is used to all political, economic and social aspects.

**Table 7:** Ethical standards used by practitioners

Valid	Frequency	Percent
Unknown	50	55.55%
Have standard	15	16.66%
No standard	25	27.77%
Total	90	99.99%

As shown in the above table indication, among the total number of 90 respondents 50 (55.55%) of them didn't know what standard means or not answered clearly and they told as there are standards or guidelines posted in the office; gain 15(16.66) of the employees, knew standards that they gave example that the standards are given by GCAO and Federal Civil Service. The rest 25 (27.77%) of the employees said there is no standard that the PR practitioners were led to do their day to day activities. Thus, PR didn't have ethical standards used for the day to day activities or it is unknown by most employees who always work with them cooperatively.

Waddington (2015) argued” there are a few standards in PR and it is surprising for a business that is tasked with the critical role of managing the reputation of an organization. As a result of nonexistence standards in the FDRE ministries, the PR directors and the PR practitioners may not be suppressing, but it is clear evidence that for the PR practices and it leads to low level of professionalism in FDRE ministries.

On the other hand, there are ethical codes applied in each ministry under the supervision of the federal civil service commission. Some employees specially the directors could mention some ethical codes including honesty, impartiality/fairness, integrity, transparency, accountability, confidentially, efficient, effective, independence, hard work, serving the public developing one self, communicative, advocacy, and credibility/sincerity. This is one of the positive aspects not only in the PR profession but also in other parallel profession, too.

As they stated, the criteria to hire PR practitioner in FDRE ministries supervised by the federal civil service commission and its pre-conditions are BA or BSC holder in any social subjects, experience, GCAO certificate and computer literate, the respondents said the PR work depends on the management, highly politicized and government biased practices, misunderstood of PR by the public, lacks attention from the leadership, even focused works, unprofessional and unscientific Practices.

Regarding to this, Pearson (2008) states” the primary PR professionalism competence is to protect the public and the second one is to secure the future of the PR’s image as an ethical sense.

**Table 8:** Likert scale questionnaires on ethics of PR practitioners

No	Questions on PRs ethical	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.1.	PR practitioners provide accurate and timely information to the public	10	11.11 %	15	16.66 %	11	12.22 %	44	48.88 %	15	16.66%
1.2.	PR practitioners adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth based evidence in advancing the interest of the public.	2	2.22%	16	17.77 %	12	13.33 %	49	54.44 %	11	12.22%
1.3.	The professionals actively promote and advance the profession through continued professional development, research and educational training	2	2.22%	15	16.66 %	14	15.55 %	50	55.55 %	10	11.11%
1.4	PRs practitioners provide behavioral guide lines to its members.	3	3.33%	16	17.77 %	15	16.66 %	45	50% %	11	12.22%
1.5	PR practitioners are professionals who are obligated to act as ethical counselor than political appointees	20	22.22 %	52	57.77 %	8	8.88%	8	8.88%	2	2.22%
1.6.	PRs practitioners cross check the reliability of	5	5.55%	10	11.11 %	15	16.66 %	48	53.33 %	12	13.33%

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	the information before to be informed				%		%		%		
1.7.	PRs practitioners develop the profession in relation to the PR association and trainings.	3	3.33%	19	21.11 %	10	11.11 %	45	50%	13	14.44%

Item 1.1 in table 8 shows response on whether PR practitioners provide accurate and timely information to the public. As can be seen from the table, majority of the respondents 48.88 percent stated that they disagree with the statement while another 16.66 percent strongly disagreed. Only a total of 27.77 percent (agree and strongly agree) showed their agreement with the statement. This indicates that respondents believe PR practitioners do not provide accurate and timely information to the public.

Item1.2 in the table 8 shows response onwhether PR practitioners adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth based evidence in advancing the interest of the public. As shown in the above, from the total number of the respondents 54.44 percent stated that they disagree with the statement while another12.22 percent strongly disagreed. Only a total of 21.11 percent (agree and strongly agree) responded their agreement with the statement. This implies that majority of the respondents believe that PR practitioners do not adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth based information in advancing the interest of the public.

Item 1.3 in table 8 indicates response on whether the professionals actively promote and advance the profession through continued professional development, research and educational training. As can be shown in the table, majority of the respondents 55.55 percent responded that they disagree with the given statement to the other side 11.11 percent strongly disagreed. Only a total of 20 percent (agree and strongly agree) agreed with this statement. This indicates that majority of the respondents assure that the

practitioners were not given training, continued professional development and professional activities to develop the profession.

Item 1.4 in table 8 shows response on whether PRs practitioners provide behavioral guidelines to its members. As shown in the table, the total number of 50 percent didn't agree with the statement given while another 12.22 percent strongly disagreed. On the other side, the total of 21.11 percent (agree and strongly agree) agreed with this statement. This concluded that majority of the respondents believe that the practitioners didn't have behavioral guidelines and at the same time they didn't give ethical training to the public.

Item 1.5 in table 8 indicates response on whether PR practitioners are professionals who are obligated to act as ethical counselor than political appointees. As indicated in the table above, majority of the respondents (80%) agreed with the statement given. While another 11.11 percent (disagree and strongly disagree) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. It is concluded that much number of the respondents agreed with the statement asked.

Item 1.6 in table 8 shows response on whether PRs practitioners crosschecks the reliability of the information before to be informed. The total of 73.33 percent (disagree and strongly disagree) disagreed with the statement. While another 16.66 percent agreed with the given idea. It indicates that the practitioners didn't cross check the reliability of information before to be informed.

Item 1.7 in table 8 shows response on whether PRs practitioners develop the profession in relation to the PR association and trainings. A total of 64.44 percent (disagree and strongly disagree) disagreed with the statement on the on the hand a total of 24.44 percent agreed with the given statement. It indicates that majority of the respondents that the practitioners didn't cross check the message before addressed to the public.

**Table 9:** Challenges facing PR activities in FDRE

No	Questions on challenges on the PRs activities	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
2.1	PRs has proper structure to carry out its activities in FDRE	2	2.22%	10	11.11%	5	5.55%	60	66.66%	13	14.44%
2.2	PRs has sufficient resources in FDRE	4	4.44%	33	36.66%	15	16.66%	34	37.77%	4	4.44%
2.3	PRs has faced imposition from top management	15	16.66%	39	43.33%	8	8.88%	18	20%	10	11.11%
2.4	There is no clear demarcation between PR its science and the current activities	2	2.22%	38	42.22%	10	11.11%	24	26.66%	16	17.77%
2.5	PR section is not free from political influences.	9	9.99%	49	54.44%	8	8.88%	12	13.33%	12	13.33%
2.6	Absence of PR association and non-PR professionals in FDRE affect the profession	10	11.11%	48	53.33%	10	11.11%	15	16.66%	7	7.77%

Item 2.1 in table 9 indicates the response on whether PRs has proper structure to carry out its activities in FDRE. As indicated in the table above, 83.33 percent (disagree and strongly disagree) of the respondents didn't agree with the given statement. While another 13.33

percent (agree and disagree) of the respondents agreed with the statement. It indicates that the PR department didn't have proper structure to carry out its activities.

Item 2.2 in table 9 shows response on whether PRs has sufficient resources in FDRE. As shown in the above, 42.22 percent (disagree and strongly agree) disagreed that PR department didn't have sufficient resource to run efficient and effective activities. On the other hand 41.11 percent (strongly agree and agree) agreed with this statement. It shows that with a little difference PR had resources but it was not sufficient.

Item 2.3 in table 9 shows response on whether PRs has faced imposition from top management. As shown in the above, a total of 60 percent (strongly agree and agree) agreed with the statement given. The other 31.11 percent (disagree and strongly disagree) disagreed with this idea. It implies that PR practitioners are loaded by doing unrelated activities with their profession.

Item 2.4 table 9 shows response on whether there is no clear demarcation between PRs profession's science and the current activities. As can be seen 44.44 percent (strongly agree and agree) agreed that the practitioners did either this way or that way the activities are nearly the same but they are not given for PR recognition. While another 44.44 percent (disagree and strongly disagree) disagreed that the activities are done for the sake of facilitating politics and/or the organization's target. Its indication is that the activities are being done with no PR science but for in a way of occupational doing.

Item 2.5 table 9 shows the response on whether PR section is not free from political influences. As indicated a total of 64.44 percent (agree and strongly agree) agreed with the statement given. On the other hand, 26.66 percent (disagree and strongly disagree) disagreed with stated in the above. It concludes that majority of the respondents that the PR profession is always under the influence of political appointees that is why PR is not independently working.

Item 2.6 table 9 indicates the response on whether absence of PR association and non-PR professionals in FDRE affect the profession. As shown in the above, majority number of

the respondents (64.44) agreed that the reason why PR is still in infant stage is because of absence of PR association and lack of professionalism. While another 24.44 percent (disagree and strongly disagree) responded that PR is not under this influences. It indicates that really large number of the respondents responded that PR is under this influence.

#### **4.3. Analysis of the FGDs data collected from Ministries of Education, Finance and culture and Tourism PR practitioners**

In this section the researcher presents pike FGD conducted in three ministries based on structured FGDs guide. Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic virus, each ministry of PR practitioners required to make separate discussions. From the total 31 PR practitioners working in the three ministries, there were 15 participants. Including five discussants in MOE, MOF and MOCT in each in the Separate discussions held in each ministerial office in different times.

##### **4.3.1. Practitioners' PR definition and interest towards the profession**

The PGD participant practitioners relate PR mainly with its bringing, liaisons, promotion, publications to the media, the public, the management and employees and external stake holders by using different tools, but there are other practitioners who give technical definitions. Among them Senior PR practitioners 12 of them at MOE defined as a two way communication that links the government and the public if there is a feedback to the government from the public, PR is functional and at work.

Junior PR practitioners at MOE perceive PR is an activity that strives to achieve an organizations plan, goal, and mission by working with its stake holders. The profession has great value because without two way communication nothing can be achieved so this profession helps the public as well as the organization.

Three senior PR practitioners at MOCT believe that PR relates an organization with its publics because it is a continual process of informing to create better communication and understanding.

Senior PR practitioners mostly in three ministerial offices concluded that PR has many roles and characters. It has an advisor, a researcher role, facilitator, bridge etc. by doing this and others activities, it provides the organizations work, Besides, A communication specialists define PR is a technique to give and take information. It builds an organization by feeding the necessary information to the society. But if the public misunderstood the information negatively it will disseminate misinformed information.

Generally, the study confirmed that only five percent of PR practitioners who participated in the PGDs are PR practitioners with language and literature back ground. The rest come from journalism and communication, IT and other back ground because some of them join PR industry with their own interest.

A senior PR practitioners at MOE, MOF and MOCT testified' PR is an interesting profession to call our life; we like this occupation if we act perfectly because credible information now the public so to give and take timely, it needs good actor to the public

On the other hand, many of the PR practitioners took the training given by the defunct GCAO for two up to four weeks long after joining their respective FDRE ministries. But, there are also practitioners who said, " I come to this profession with the opportunity given but I didn't have a plant to be PR practitioner then I am paid better income and the other two PR practitioners at MOE who joined this profession came for survival even they didn't know about PR profession before joining in this industry but through reading and training they had got clues about it. Now they have more than ten years' experience.

#### **4.3.2. Existence of Favorable Working Condition to the PR Professional**

In relation to the existence of favorable working environment for the PR practitioners as a means of realizing this profession, a senior PR officer (three out of five) at MOE highlights there is skill gap. He says

*Even we all PR practitioners have little expertise. In addition to this the PR practice has got little attention from the top management. Beginning from the nearest director up to the minister offices the work environment is very difficult*

PR in Ethiopia is in infant because of presence of less attention for this profession in Ethiopia.

Senior PR practitioners at MOCT also describe that “in the last few years stay, this profession has got little attention by the top management.” Even the PR practitioners act as the mouthpiece for the leaders. Besides, in most ministerial offices, PR practitioners and PR directors haven’t got an opportunity to do ethically because of unavailability of practitioners’ capacity building opportunity and career structure to grow up. Thus, it holds them back to achieve the organization goals and have an influence and the directors’ knowledge gap affects the actual practices of the profession. A senior PR practitioner at MOCT pointed that:

*“PR is directly responsible to people at the vertical ladder. This structure acts as a difficulty to access information within an organization; on the other hand, there is a tendency from other directorates to see PR not as a profession so they even merged PR department with other divisions. But this trend must be changed.”*

Another PR practitioner at MOF stated that because of the dominance of politics, the ethics of PR practices are underground. To fill this kind of gap, the top management and the PR practitioners should focus on the PR profession so as to build organizations.

Although there are challenges in relation to management, but thanks to the PR practitioners who are the parts of management play an advisory role in each ministry that created awareness to the management staff and to the public.

#### **4.3.3. PR Professional Ethics Situation in Ethiopia**

Most of the PR practitioners participated in the FGDs discussed and even believed that PR is really a profession because it requires knowledge, (expertise), wisdom, skill, ethics and/or ethical standards to fulfill professionalism and it needs technique to achieve its goals. They said, “When there is no favorable working condition and if it is under the influence of the politicians, the profession becomes an occupation. So, we should struggle

this kind of attitude to succeed effective profession. In addition to this, there are other challenges in their respect ministries:

- There is no independent PR work
- The political perspective makes it only for political ideology
- The PR practices has been done with no skill based and standards
- There is no credible information delivery

Here, the media workers are hired for only governments' ideology rather than scientific ethics.

- Even the PR practitioners themselves are working for the target of the organization rather than the public
- Educational back ground of the PR practitioners affect the profession; because most of the workers, educational back ground is not PR profession
- Most of the PR heads didn't have a good communication skill to shape either the internal or external stakeholders. Besides, the top management influences the leaders to let them to political ideology.

A senior PR practitioner at MOCT states the following:

*Ethiopian PR practitioners focus on writing and other technical works than PR strategic works like advertising, promoting, delivering, supporting etc. In addition to this, the trend of PR work is being serviced with no transparency and no independence as others professions that means it is still with journalism and communication department*

Again at MOE, some practitioners stated that PR profession needs know how, skills and wisdom. But in our country the PR directorates are assigned in each governmental officewith know how about PR. They added,

*In every organizations whether service giver or producer, we profit or loses are measured by the PR activity success. As a result, people who came from PR*

*industry can give tangible information. They know to whom, how, in what way the information should be disseminated to the public.*

But, as most PR practitioners discussed in the FGDs, the perspective of PR profession has got less attention than being weapon of the political liaison. Still there is a practice of hiding the truth, so, this trend should be corrected and restricted in our country, besides, and the government should try to focus on the PR professionalism to be independent practice and filter unfitted educational back grounds of PR practitioners because PR profession is now specialized having its own concerned work.

#### **4.3.4. Professional Tasks of PR Practitioners Working in FDRE Ministries**

The PR practitioners in each ministry list different professional and unprofessional tasks done in their day to day PR practices. Among the professionals tasks they listed are: articles writing, media monitoring, news tip, information delivery to the media or, researchetc., event organizing, press release, public opinion print works (including, brochures and bulletins), audio-visual works, leading forms, social media works, preparing documentaries, press conference, giving media training ,etc.

PR practitioners at MOE stated that there are additional tasks like empowering the PR practitioners through training, given support to the other employees and higher institution public radio service.

APR head at MOF had details about some lacks to access information from other directorates these directorates didn't have know how about the PR profession. But now it is changed to disseminating information that is through face book, you Tube, Twitter and linked in to be more accessible to the public.

#### **4.3.5. Standards and Ethical Codes Applied in Ministerial PR Offices**

Relating to this, most of the ministries of PR practitioners stated that they didn't have standards to work their tasks effectively rather doing them as daily activities with no criteria. It shows that the directorates and the PR practitioners didn't apply the PR science. Because their back ground is not PR profession and they don't serve the public

ethically. In the ministry of MOCT three PR practitioners told me as they prepared work plan by agreement and sharing their experiences. For ethical codes, we have citizen charter and we measure our achievements in every six months. The frame work is available the problem is practicing and following the procedures.

On the other hand, most of the practitioners said we follow the federal civil service cost coded ethical guidelines that comprise 12 elements including honesty, responsibility, integrity, punctuality, independence, teamwork, etc.

One PR practitioner at MOE said PR work and ethics are related issues. Any work couldn't be achieved without ethics. A PR practitioner should be objective, stable listener, confident, honest and representative or stand on the side of others.

A good personality is important for communication work. The professional is recommended also to have moral and description

Bown (2012) confirms the above nation ethics and government PR interests at a function called issues management. The public policy issues faced but governments, legislators, regulatory agencies and their counter parts at various levels of government across any national setting must be monitored and managed with vigilance.

#### **4.3.6. Ways to Rate the PR Profession in the Respective Ministries and In Ethiopia**

Pawkes (2015) states:

PR is seen as an emerging profession, lacking some of the features of law and medicine but similar to journalism or marketing.

The discussants in their discussion stated, PR profession is in the infant stage which lacks independency however it is not a new invention in Ethiopia; still it is merged with journalism and communication. Of course now a day MA graduated are going to develop this profession because they specialize PR profession. As the discussants at MOE, MOCT and MOF stated that the following are some solutions.

- The government and the PR practitioners should establish the PR association in Ethiopia as well as nation wide
- PR practitioners ourselves should be interested to practice the profession
- The government should expand PR initiations like universities and colleges in which the PR course is given independently
- After graduation, the graduates should have concept of PR profession with in standards and ethical codes of the course

#### **4.4. Analysis of in-depth interview conducted with ministry of Education, finance and cultural and Tourism PR directors and some of the PR practitioners**

The student research succeeded structured guide interview with the total number of three PR directors and three PR practitioners by taking at least 50 minutes for each in different times.

When we see the educational background and work experience, MOE and MOF directors studied language and literature but MOCT's director studied journalism and communication. They all have been attaining their MA program and they have worked in different organizations having more than ten years' experience in journalism, teaching, leading office, PR practitioner and director and at the moment they are PR head in the existing ministry.

On the other hand, the interviewees that the researcher interviewed have more than seven years working experience including the experiences in the existing ministry. They studied language and literature at BA level and for the time being they are attaining MA program in public relations and strategic communication that hopefully will develop and shape the profession.

#### 4.4.1. In Depth interview with directors

### **1. PR Professional Expertise in FDRE Ministries and Knowhow of PR Practitioners**

The MOE and MOCT PR directors justify PR is a profession. It is a science which needs a special knowledge and skill to communicate with the public so, in order to achieve the goal of the organizations and to understand the interest of the public, expertise is a vital requirement MOF director added if a practitioner doesn't engage the profession it because an occupation. But as in our organization, the PR works are not integrated with the PR science because most of the PR workers are not PR education back grounded and most of PR directors are from political appointees, and /or not PR educational. Besides, these political appointees are responsible to the minister for the sake of MOCT stated, all most some of the PR practitioners' level of education is fine because in our ministry program public relations and strategic communication except the influence of the strategy of the government.

Finally, those PR directors concluded the last few years the government had atrend to hire political appointees to be PR head but next, we should push the government to hire PR practitioners and even the directors mainly language and literature, journalism and communication and public relation and strategic communication holders to be effective professionals.

### **2. PR practitioners level of ethics in FDRE ministries**

Ethics is one of the core concerns of public relations as public relation attempts to work for both organizations and the public. Latter more, etal (2012) On their part describe as ethical issues of public relations practitioners should be concerned at least for the following reasons.

- Public relations is often the source of ethical statement from an organization and the repository of ethical and social policies for that organization
- Practitioners have struggled to create suitable code of ethics for themselves.

The MOE director 'A' stated we don't have special ethical codes at organizational level. But as a directorate, we have our ethical principles to serve-ethically like being model to others, punctuality, stand for others' interest, being responsible to defend the wrong sides and the corruptors as possible.

MOCT's PR director 'C' believed most of the staff members in our ministry are cooperative workers regarding to team working, image building, and persuading people however there are some PR practitioners who can't show the ethical value for others.

MOF PR director 'B' testified our PR practitioners are good in ethics because they came from who are respected and integrated in societal activities as well as they are from communication department however there are no enough professional standards and code of ethics in our organization.

### **3. PR Perspectives in FDRE Ministries**

Historically public relations have been perceived as a business function, designed to serve organizational interests through the management of communication between an organization and its publics. (Grunig and Hunt, 1984, p, 6)

MOE PR director 'A' believed the important of emerging perspective in the systematic family approaches puts the actual relationship of an organization with public at the center of PR activity. Maintaining and improving that relationship is the objective of PR. So, in our ministry we tried to maintain a great relationship between the organization and its public. We know most of relationships symmetrically are applied by this profession however there are some challenges like the practitioners' perspective and the top management short in sighted perception and other limitations.

MOF PR director 'B' added, we know PR is very important profession specially to facilitate relationships used as a bridge of an organization with the public. But, as said in the above, there are influences hot to promote this profession like politicians, marketing leaders, managers have used this profession but they don't think as it is PR.

Besides, some PR practitioners are not PR professionals in order to serve the public professionally, serving them without professional qualities leads to wrong perspectives.

MOCT PR director 'C' verified we know PR is a very strategic field which helps people to formulate relationships. The more you are professionals, the more you will be effective in terms of relationships, persuasion and strategic communication.

Generally three of PR directors (A, B, and C) concluded although PR is under influences, it is very important profession used as a bridge between an organization and the public.

#### **4. Solution should be done to improve the overall wrong activities of PR in FDRE**

MOCT PR director (C) asserts since PR profession needs wisdom, knowledge, skill, ethics and techniques to achieve its goal, it needs to be reformed in the respective ministries; it must be detached from old and existing system and must be given a practitioners' knowledge and professional skill based activities because any part of information is central to the PR section.

MOE PR director (A) said, PR activity should be done based on ethical standards and or professional values. The PR profession needs a great attention from top managements. In addition to this, practitioners become competent enough to be professional and even perform their activities based on innovative manner so as to attract public attention towards organizational objectives.

MOE PR (A) again added in the current sceneries, some messages or attitudes are not indicative of the ways in which PR profession is independent profession that solves the problem but we know the public are complaining because of credible information, valid and timely addressed messages.

## **5. Challenges that has been facing in PR activities FDRE ministries**

Succession is relatively happening situation and it is difficult to be sure these critical challenges will not face in organizations through time. Challenges facing diverts the PR professions to act against the mutual benefit of the organization and the public. (Question berry, 2009)

MOE PR director (A) verified challenges and success are the two sides of a cent. Any ways, to success the PR activities, there are many challenges. Some of them are: social media; we all are writing and talking through social media but we can't identify credible information unless this information is filtered by the concerned bodies. The other problem is lack of professionalism, if the media are not led by professionals and if the responsible persons are not professionals, we face challenges between the organization and the society.

MOF PR director (B) said, really we have been facing different kinds of challenges but we try to defend them. Some of the challenges are:

The attitude of the top management; mostly PR profession is used for political ideology, and even it doesn't have equal participation or contribution with parallel departments. The reason is PR in Ethiopia is the emerging stage. The other one is still how, most practitioners are not qualified and come from different back ground like agriculture, business administration, health infact no PR back grounded.

MOCT PR director (C) added we have faced many challenges in our ministry. Some of them are:

There is no PR association to develop the profession; we know PR can create democratic society. So it should be developed by flourishing members, new

trainings and other experience sharing. Most of our PR practitioners are not certified by PR background that is why PR is in the emerging stage.

Generally, most of the PR directors (A, B and C) agreed that the solutions are expected from different concerned bodies. Like the government, the PR practitioners, the PR directors and other media counselors.

#### **4.4.2. Interview with PR Practitioners**

##### **1. Definition of PR as a Profession**

Regarding this issue, the PR practitioners come from MOE defined public relations helps our complex, pluralistic society to reach decisions and functions more effectively by contributing to mutual understanding among groups and institutional. It serves to bridge the public with the organization so as a profession, it needs knowledge, wisdom, skill and ethics to serve the public perfectly.

MOCT PR practitioner (T) said to serve the public in our organization we need to understand the interest of the public and the goal of the organization. It needs strategic communication between the public and the organization. Public relation is a management function which encompasses anticipating, analyzing, interpreting public opinion, communication, counseling, researching, conducting and evaluating to achieve the informed public understanding and it is necessary to the success of organizations' aims.

MOF PR practitioner (N) defined PR in a tool that links the public with the organizations. The activities of public relations are not peculiar to the specific nation. There has been communication in every nation as per their respective culture and tradition. Therefore, skill and techniques are very important to achieve the interest of the public and organization. Generally, all most all PR practitioners understand the definition of PR as it is a two way communication that links the government and the public.

Public relations serves a wide variety of institutions in society such as, businesses, trade unions, government agencies, voluntary associations, foundations, hospitals, schools, colleges and religious institution, to achieve their goals, these institutions must develop

effective relationships with many publics; it is symmetrically linked together and gives feedback. So, PR is observed in this situation.

## **2. Current activities of PR practitioners in FDRE and major tasks of the PR Science**

As two MOE PR practitioners stated in their ministry, they don't have their own common standards to be evaluated but we are still led by the standard frame works of federal civil service commission to all government organizations. This includes Business process Re-engineering (BPR), Balance score card (BSC), citizens charter and as PR department GCAO controls the profession. These standard frame works have different types of specific task measurements and used accordingly. So based on GCAO's standard frame works, we derived standards and we use different communication tools and we are measured by these tools in time, quality and quantity. Some of our activities are: preparing brochures, news release, articles, bulletin etc.

As two of PR practitioner at MOF (N) stated they have different tools to communicate about their tasks. One of the measurements is being university of graduates in any field of study as well as measured in with their performance based on time, quality and quantity. But, PR department is not lonely working rather depending with others.

MOCT PR practitioner (T) added, we don't have our own standard frame woks except the federal civil service standard. Of course, we have measurements like biannual and annual plans for our job.

- the PR practitioners in all three ministerial organizations agreed that they don't have their own standard frame works but they used the federal civil service and the Government communication Affairs office standard frame works and they derived their own standard frame works accordingly but, they really criticized the PR science is not being applied in each ministry.

According to Broom and Smith (1979) proposed five PR practitioners role models.

- ✓ Problem solving process facilitators
- ✓ Expert prescribers
- ✓ Communication technicians
- ✓ Communication managers

Any ways more or less the tasks are being given in terms of PR science and or based on the contact of the respective organization.

### **3. Status and Perception of PR Ethics in FDRE ministries and in Ethiopia.**

MOE PR practitioners believed ethics is as personal, social, and professional or as a dynamic interaction between the personal and the social, or it is a profession context as respecting the code of conduct the industry following it is to be doing the right thing or making moral judgments.

MOF PR practitioners added, “Ethics evolves choosing between acceptable or unacceptable behavior or it is their idea of what is wrong or right in society so it is perceived as a dynamic process which varies according to the social values in a particular context. Regarding to this context, the responsibilities of the public relations are to act transparently and ethically in all dealings and strive to the best result for the client.”

Mostly, the logic of as PR practitioners, the primary perception of the PR practitioners is to the public rather than the client or the employer but as our respective ministries, most of the practitioners are not working about the interest of public.

MOCT PR practitioners believed ethics is the fundamental to public relations and journalism majors. Besides, however we have different cultures or attitudes, it is perceived as important in developing and awareness of the potential impact of their communication practices on others.

Organizational theorists long have recognized that bureaucratic organizational structures allow people to avoid taking responsibility for unethical actions. (Conrad R Poole,

1998:413) public relations practitioners are often cost as the social conscience of the organization, playing a great role in the development of ethical standards within institutions.

#### **4. Factors contributing to the effectiveness of Public relations Practices**

Regarding to this factor PRs practitioners suggested their own contributions.

MOCT PR practitioners defined, effectiveness is to achieve a big success; an organization must emphasis effectiveness in its practices especially in significant areas such as public relations. To maintain the relationship between an organization and its publics, many factors must be recognized.

As my opinion the most influential factors are honesty, loyalty, attitude, trust and control mutuality are some of them. Therefore, if we keep and practice them in our organizations, the publics are satisfied. But currently in our ministerial offices most of ethical practices are take a side. Unless we apply these and other professional values, public relations practitioners are doing for the sake of occupational survival.

MOE PR practitioner (A, C and Z) explained to be effective to their PR practices,“they should apply ethical standards and code of ethics. The quality of ethics can be influenced by the roles of public relations professionals and besides the roles, lack of positive attitude in the public relations field also give a contribution to the ethical conduct that will lead to ineffective in the public relation so, the factors are commitment, trust, honesty and other factor can engage relations.” But as their organization, these and other influential factors are more or less are being applied but not enough. The reasons why we don’t apply these things are lack of skilled man power, less attention of the top management, lack of professionalism and so on.

MOE PR practitioners (A, C and Z) stated effectiveness is the final outcome of the great practicing of PRs practitioners so as to be effective in our practices; we need to practice ethical considerations. If we are PR professionals, we need to apply ethical standards which are expected from this profession but currently in our respective ministerial offices

PR is not functional because of less attention of the concerned bodies. But as PR practitioners, we should fight these challenges like by taking training, by establishing the PR associations, and others.

According to Zeithmaletal (1996), the public relations that have effective practices can gain customer loyalty that will lead to customer retention. Effectiveness is when the desired output has been achieved. Meanwhile, public relations are elucidated as management of communication between an organization and its publics (Grunig and Hunt, 1984).

The practitioners interviewed in the above agreed that to be effective in PR practice there should be fulfilled the influential factors like trust for other commitment, skillful, persuasive and others. But on behalf of their ministerial offices, there are some shortages that hinder the relationships betweenanorganization and its public. So, as PR practitioners, if there are not ethical standards and professional values, there will be ineffective in their day to day activities.

## **5. Unethical related activities faced in the FDRE ministries**

MOE PR practitioner (Z) stated public relation practitioners are often cost as the social conscience of the organization, playing a role in the development of ethical standards within institution are obligated to act as PR practitioner because it is the criterion of our science but the reality in the ground is its reverse. Even the critics argue that the practitioner is simply the robot agent of his/her master's voice.

So as our organization, we the PR practitioners are serving the public targeted to our organization. Some complaints raise about some misinformed information like credibility of information, timely disseminated messages, and others.

MOCT PR practitioner (E) raised-we know PR in our country has been emerging recently and it is not well developed but we try to practice to adapt this habit, for example, in our ministry office, somehow the practitioners have been serving the public depending on the actual situations. We make decisions on the building blocks of truth telling, promise-

keeping, loyalty and commitment. But it is not enough and even it sometimes seemed as if it is for political ideology.

MOF PR practitioners (N, K, and D) argued as real PR practitioners, we can't apply the appropriate ethical standards and code of ethics because of some influences. Because the reality is that if we are PR professionals, we should satisfy the public interest, the employer and the organization. So, it is concluded that we used the federal civil service and government communication Affairs office's standard frame works to measure our ethical standards in our office in terms of time, quality, and quantity. The remarks made by these PR professionals in each ministry clearly shows that a global code of ethics for the public relations practitioners around the world is a complex one fraught with paradox and contradiction yet nonetheless an important imperative.

Tone and Health, 1992 have cogently argued that critical approaches to public relations must constantly strive for higher ethical standards. But it will be achieved only through a constant standards of its role in the society, we would modify this to say that this project must be under taken in terms of its ethical role within the inter linked plurality of the global context. So, they pointed that there should be constant and common ethical standards and code of ethics established by the PR professionals in the world than taken into the countries accordingly.

## **6. Criteria to hire PR Practitioners in FDRE level**

MOE PR practitioners (E, Z and U) stated, we as PR practitioners have been hired as others departments but the criteria are still led by the old fashions. Because as in our ministerial office, the practitioners are hired if they are in social departments like history, civics and ethical education, Geography, Language and literature, journalism and communication etc. Of course, there is not PR specialized practitioners but the government should provide the opportunities to develop this profession.

MOCT PR practitioners (T, B and G) added, really including us we were hired in our ministry by being of language and literature graduates but it is not enough to act PR practitioners because it needs knowledge, skill and technique to serve the public.

MOF PR practitioners (N, K and D) informed the reason why the government didn't consider the criteria of being PR professional is still PR is merged with journalism and communication even though there is no university which provides PR courses and trainings except Addis Ababa and Mekelle Universities. So, the access affects for this profession.

All PR practitioners mentioned in the above agreed of course they are working as PR practitioners in the respective ministries, but they didn't fulfill the expected criteria to be PR professionals however it is not their problem. public relation practice more than ever depends on how well the profession adapts to current shifts and changes in economic, social and business paradigms and the way in which accommodates the inter play of cultural differences among different societies. (Sriramesh R white, 1992:597) practicing ethical public relations has become one of the greatest challenges facing practitioners in the 21<sup>st</sup> century because it impacts on the management of strategic relationships with in the complex dynamics and inter relationships of a global context.

According to the universal declarations on principles of ethics, a profession is distinguished by a certain characteristics or attributes including:

- ✓ Mastery of a particular intellectual skill through education and training
- ✓ Acceptance of duties to a broader society than merely one's clients/employers
- ✓ Objectivity
- ✓ High standards of conduct and performance some of the codes of professional standards are
  - **Advocacy**- serve clients and employer interest by acting responsible advocate and by providing a voice in the market place of ideas, facts and viewpoints to aid informed public debate

- **Honesty**-able to adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth in advancing the interest of clients and employers.
- **Integrity**:able to conduct different actions with integrity and observable principles and sprit of the code.
- **Expertise**: acquire and responsibly use specializing and client/employer credibility.
- **Loyalty**: faithful to those they represent while humoring their obligations to serve the interest of the society.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This final chapter provides a brief conclusion and recommendations of the study that shows the presentation and analysis of the study. Thus, the data collected from different source including the PR directors PR practitioners and employees, from the data presented and analyzed the researcher concludes in the following way.

#### 5.1. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to analyze the ethical practices of PRs practitioners in FDRE ministries. Regarding this finding, it is concluded that practitioners have been working different tasks though it is not satisfactory. It needs implementation; PR activities require close attention and commitment from the top management and the practitioners themselves by adjusting the structures and strategies having guidelines and common standards. According to the study above 75% of the respondents responded that there were many problems that hinder the development of the profession. Such as absence of professional ethics, lack of expertise and skills, unable to give attention for the profession, shortage of PR professionals, communication barriers and lack of common standards and pure strategies in the department. As a result of such problems, there have been inaccurate and incredible information disseminated to the public. Specially, most of the ministries in PR department are led by political appointees. That is why PR is still in emerging in Ethiopia. But, as the respondents stated PR has a great function in every aspects however the society couldn't understand it very well.

To sum up, the researcher concluded that there are many factors that why PR has not been grown yet and there are best solutions to grow up. Some of them are hiring PR professionals, constructing best strategies and common standards and code of ethics, giving them training, expanding media outlets, and conducting a research in general.

## 5.2. Recommendations

The study was explored and come up with findings related to the extent of ethical PR practices in FDRE ministerial offices, the role of practitioners and challenges facing in the respective ministries. Based on findings related to these three pillars of the study, the following points are forwarded as recommendations.

- ❖ PR section should be reformed. In this regard, PR structure should be reformed that makes common standards to act independently; the government should hire competent practitioners, facilitate training and establish PR associations to develop it.
- ❖ PR activities should be based on need assessment and message testing system to evaluate the message. PR professionals should give and take feedback from the public.
- ❖ The public relations practitioners or professionals can work cooperatively to bring a change on the practices of public relations; public relations profession should be an independent rather than a political tool for propaganda and being considered as mouthpiece to higher management.
- ❖ Public relations practitioners must be the interpreter of the organization's policies, philosophies and programs.
- ❖ Higher institutions teach and inspire PR professionals to expand this profession.
- ❖ The Ethiopian PR association should be established so as to cope up with the PR profession in the country through professional training.
- ❖ The PR directors and PR practitioners should be knowledgeable, skillful and effective technicians to serve the public ethically.
- ❖ The PR practice in FDRE ministries ought to have competent standards and scientific measurements as well as liberated from domination.
- ❖ The former federal civil service commission criteria must be void and replaced by standardized criteria which supports professionalism.
- ❖ To strengthen the relationship between an organization and its public, the practitioners should practice truthful information or credible messages as well.

- ❖ The concerned bodies should conduct research based findings to solve problems and use two way communication model to facilitate the relationship between an organization with its publics.

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## Appendix A

**Addis Ababa University School of Journalism and Communication (SJC)**

**Department of Public Relations and Strategic Communication (PRSC)**

A questionnaire to be filled by Employees working in the selected FDRE ministerial offices

I am Mr. X, PRSC MA student in SJC, at AAU. I am conducting a study entitled in *'Ethical practices of PRs practitioners in FDRE ministries; A study on three ministerial offices*. The main objective of this survey is to collect primary data to analyze the ethical practices of PRs practitioners in the three selected FDRE ministerial offices. Your genuine response would have greater effect on the effectiveness of the study. For this questionnaire, there is no need of writing your name; the information that you are giving is confidentially used only for the purpose this study. I thank all of you for your time and effort in advance.

**Section 1: General information** [please tick (  $\checkmark$  ) for your preference.

- ✓ Gender; a. Male \_\_\_\_\_ b. Female \_\_\_\_\_
- ✓ Level of Education
  - a. Diploma \_\_\_\_\_ b. BA \_\_\_\_\_ c. BSC \_\_\_\_\_ d. MA and above \_\_\_\_\_
- ✓ Experience in the Organization
  - 5 years and less \_\_\_\_\_ b. 6-10 years \_\_\_\_\_ c. More than 10 years

**Section 2: General Concepts on the profession**

1. Is PR an influential profession for making decisions?
  - a. Yes
  - b. no
  - C. I don't know
2. What do you think about PR condition in your organization?
  - 1.2.PR is an occupation
  - b. PR is a profession
3. What kind of PR perspective is dominant in your ministry?
  - ✓ politically functioning one
  - ✓ An economically functioning one
  - ✓ A socially oriented one
  - ✓ all
4. Do the PR practitioners recognize ethical issues to do the right thing and do not tolerate unethical behavior?
  - a. Yes
  - b. no I don't know
  - C. I don't know
5. Are there any ethical guidelines for PR practitioners posted or written in the office?
  - a. Yes
  - b. no
  - C. I don't know
6. Do you think PR professionals in your ministry follow existing ethical guidelines?
  - a. Yes
  - b. no
  - C. I don't know
7. Do you think that PR practitioners can be managers?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. I don't know
8. Do you think that PR directors hire the practitioners considering the professional ethics?
  - a. Yes
  - b. no I don't know
9. Can any political appointees act as PR practitioners?
  - a. Yes
  - b. no I don't know
10. Is PR profession really functional in your ministry as other departments?
  - a. Yes
  - b. no I don't know

### Ethical Related Questions

No	Questions on challenges on the PRs activities	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		disagree		Strongly disagree	
		R	%	R	%	R	%	R	%	R	%
2.1	PRs has proper structure to carry out its activities in FDRE	2	2.22%	10	11.11%	5	5.55%	60	66.66%	15	16.66%
2.2	PRs has sufficient resources in FDRE	4	4.44%	33	36.66%	15	16.66%	34	37.77%	4	4.44%
2.3	PRs has faced imposition from top management	15	16.66%	39	43.33%	8	8.88%	18	20	10	11.11%
2.4	There is no clear demarcation between PR its science and the current activities	2	2.22%	38	42.22%	10	11.11%	24	26.66%	16	17.77%
2.5	PR section is not free from political influences.	9	9.99%	49	54.44%	8	8.88%	12	13.33%	12	13.33%
2.6	Absence of PR	10	11.11%	48	53.33%	7	7.77%	15	16.66%	5	5.55%

association and non-PR professionals in FDRE affect the profession											
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## Appendix B

### Interview Question

#### Please Provide Brief Explanation for Following Questions

#### Interview with PR Directors

1. What do you think for PR profession expertise and how is practitioners' level of knowledge?
2. Do your practitioners apply enough level of ethics while serving the public?
3. What do you think about the perspective of PR in your ministry?
4. What are the solutions to improve the overall misleading activities in your ministry?
5. What are the challenges facing in your PR activities?

## Appendix C

#### Interview with PR practitioners

1. What is PR as a profession?
2. What are the current activities that you are doing? So, do those activities related with the PR science?
3. What do you think for the perception of the PR ethical standards in your ministry and in Ethiopia in general?
4. What are the factors contributing to the effectiveness of PR activities?

5. What are the major unethical activities usually faced while you are serving the public?
6. What are the criteria to be hired in the PR position?

## **Appendix D**

Discussion with PR practitioners

Discussion plan

- A. Would you please introduce yourself including your educational back ground and work experience?
- B. What do you say about the study and the session?

Section 1: General concepts about the profession

1. What is PRs as a profession?
2. What kind of standards and ethical guide lines do you use to measure PRs profession?
3. Is PRs a profession or an occupation? Why?

Section 2: PRs professional ethics related questions

1. Is the working condition in your ministry favorable to the Pas professionals?(reasons)
2. What kind of tasks do you perform as a PRs professional in your work place?
  - 2.1.Are these tasks related to the PRs science?
3. What kind of educational background is needed as a PRs profession?
4. What are the main challenges while you are serving the public?

5. How do you handle those challenges?
6. What are the work ethics being applied in your work place?
7. How do you rate PRs profession in your ministry and in Ethiopia in general?