

COLLEGE OF HUMANITES, LANGUAGE STUDIES, JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATIONS

SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION

EXAMINING THE PRACTICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS OF THE MEDIA: THE CASE OF ETHIOPIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION FROM 2020- 2024

By:

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A thesis submitted to department of Public Relations in partial fulfillment of the requirement of masters of Arts degree in Public Relations and Strategic Communication at Addis Ababa University.

DECLARATION: I the undersigned Nebiyou Solomon Herein declare that this thesis is the product of my own research based on reliable data obtained from primary and secondary sources that are totally acknowledged and cited

Signature

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Abstract

This research examines the practice of the Public Relations (PR) department at the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) from 2020 to 2024. It explores the critical role of PR in media organizations and assesses the visibility and success of PR department at EBC in relation to organization's reputation, stakeholder engagement, and internal communication. The study Employ a qualitative case study methodology. Data were gathered from key informant interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis with purposive sampling technique. Observation also used as data collection means to support validity and reliability of interviews and questionnaires. These data are analyzed through thematic analysis. Applying excellence and systems theories in addition to Grunig and Hunt`s the four models of PR, this study finds out that effective public relations department is needed for media organizations. The findings also demonstrated that the absence of a well-empowered PR department has contributed to reputational challenges, low public trust, and a misalignment between EBC's activities and its strategic goals. Based on the findings, reestablishing and strengthening of a fully empowered public relations department that staffed by qualified professional and building structured stake holder engagement are recommended to address existing gaps.

Key Words: EBC, Public Relations, Excellence Theory, Stakeholder Engagement

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In the contemporary era, every organization needs effective public relations (PR), as it is critical to bridge the organization with its stakeholders including the public, government, media, and internal employees. The primary aim of public relations department is interacting in strategic management and communication to keep the reputation of organization, promote credibility, and uphold the trusteeship with its audiences (Cutlip, Center, and Broom, 2006). According to Grunig (1997) a well-structured PR department is important to form and reshape the organization's image, managing its reputation, and ensuring effective communication with its audiences. Within media organizations, PR's role is especially critical, as these organizations grasp in shaping public opinion and disseminating information to the mass. Public relations are vital within modern media organizations, providing a strategic interface between the organization and its diverse stakeholders, including the public, the government, and other media organizations (Yankova, 2018). It is evident from their organizational structure in that many global media institutions have recognized the value of PR and have established dedicated departments to manage this crucial aspect of their operations.

In the very dynamic media landscape of Ethiopia; due to technological improvements, competitive media, and a more informed, interactive and demanding public, public relations is essential for media organizations such as EBC than ever. The Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) is one of the leading and most influential media organizations in Ethiopia, establishing in 1964. EBC has played a significant role in informing, educating, and entertaining Ethiopian people for over 60 years through disseminating urgent and new information, shaping public opinion, and covering the country's diverse cultural values (EBC, 2023).

According to Ayele (2021), EBC has been broadly perceived by the people as a propaganda machine of the government. Conversely, government officials frequently criticize it for weakness to adequately report efforts of the government to serve the people. These antagonistic views have significantly challenged EBC and its employees (Ayele, 2021). During the beginning of Ethiopian Television (ETV), the now Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), Emperor Haile Selassie I provided a public speech outlining the visualized role of the EBC. He underscored that Ethiopian people deserves access to electronic media to get fresh news, stay informed, and acquire from

modern civilization. Nevertheless, after the downfall of Emperor Haile Selassie, ETV/EBC had criticized for its limited reporting of public issues, concentrating on praising the nobility rather than covering wider societal affairs (Leykun, 2001). Tesfaye (2018) indicates that a precursor to modern public relations emerged in Ethiopia in 1960s. This development followed the 1940s establishment of the Ministry of Pen, tasked with overseeing state-owned media outlets like the radio, Television and news agency. Initially, the media as well as the public relations efforts primarily served the interests of the ruling elite. Likewise, during the regime of the communist Derg (1974-1991), EBC had criticized due to its content and coverage by both the people and government officials. Government officials criticized it for failing to effectively report the value and norms of communism and the endeavor of the Derg, which were perceived as working for the welfare and interest of the Ethiopian people. Eventually, ETV/EBC journalists and staff were often accused and jailed. Meantime, Ethiopian people had criticized ETV/EBC on its content focusing on government propaganda, commonly discharged as fraudulent and untrustworthy information (Ayele, 2021).

When the Derg overthrown in 1991, the Ethiopian people's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) came to power, it promised that the media would work for the interest of the people and encourage democracy and freedom of expression. EPRDF has tried to reduce the media's direct vulnerability from government and make the accountability of the Ethiopian television (ETV) / Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) to the House of Representatives. Related to this, ETV established an editorial policy aimed to indicate its autonomy (Leykun, 2001). In 2015, Proclamation No. 858/2014 enacted, which clearly outlined ETV/EBC as a public media organization. In spite of the proclamation the government maintained strong control over it like appointing senior management and assigning its budget. Eventually, EBC keep up operating as a government media (State media monitor, 2024). The EPRDF frequently argued that "since we are elected body, media deserved to give broad media coverage to us, as we are working for the interest of the people" This perspective posits that extensively reporting government activities was equivalent to serving the people's interest. Yet, various groups such as journalists have criticized this perspective, as it questions the logic of journalism (Chalkley, 2024). Though the then government repetitively expressed its dissatisfaction with EBC`s content and framing, most of the people were criticizing EBC and perceived it as a propaganda machine of the government. For instance Samson (2016) conducted a survey on audience perceptions of EBC and found that the overall sentiment toward the organization was predominantly negative. According to Samson, the efforts of EBC's public relations

department to manage the organization's reputation have been largely unsuccessful. The department has been unable to transform the public's negative attitudes into favorable or positive ones. Additionally, it fails to anticipate future public opinion trends and seek proactive solutions. The PR activities, particularly those concerning public opinion, are not research-based but rely on assumptions unsupported by reason or facts. Furthermore, the department does not evaluate the outcomes or effectiveness of its practice. Overall, Samson's study concludes that the PR activities at EBC are confined to a technical role, lacking the managerial function essential for strategic communication.

Three years after Samson's study, Tsigereda (2019) conducted research on the PR practices at EBC and reached similar conclusions. Tsigereda noted that the role of public relations within the organization has been given minimal significance. She further highlighted issues such as ineffective and non-credible communication with key audiences, as well as a failure to emphasize the power and value of the organization's brand to all stakeholders. Additionally, she pointed out a lack of utilizing feedback to foster mutual understanding between the organization and its stakeholders. Following Tsigereda, two years later, Dawit (2021) evaluated the practice of public relations at EBC and reached a similar conclusion. He observed that, although the management and staff of the organization hold a positive perception of the importance of public relations, their actions do not align with this view. Dawit noted that PR practitioners at EBC lack direct access to top management. Additionally, EBC's PR practice is hindered by an insufficient number of personnel and a lack of professional training. From the studies of Samson (2016), Tsigereda (2019), and Dawit (2021) one can draw a conclusion that dissatisfaction regarding the work of EBC from both the government and public side continue after the Ethiopian people's Revolutionary Democratic Front`s (EPRDF`s). As prosperity party (PP) come to power, some media reforms has been carried out, but still both the public and the government expressed their dissatisfaction on EBC`s work. Though EBC has evolved for over half a century, it couldn't effectively address these dissatisfaction and criticisms. If ETV/EBC has consistently faced similar criticism from its key stakeholders (the public and the government) since its establishment, this indicates a need to critically examine its public relations practices and communication system. It necessitates a review of how the organization exercises to maintain positive image, handling of crises, relations with other media, communication with the public and overall stakeholder relations. It is logical to argue that EBC shall improve its service and product quality to build a positive image rather than examining its PR practice. However, if an organization continuously criticized for years

from its establishment, the real gap is possibly between the products and the perception of stakeholders towards these products. This is the responsibility of PR, bridging EBC and its stakeholders in any issues related to the organization. Public relations is not needed to struggle with selling a poor-quality products, but, to facilitate the production of a quality product by researching perceptions of diverse stakeholders, builds trust and credibility with stakeholders by addressing their concerns and ensures the organization's sustainability (Grunig and Hunt,1984).

Several researchers have examined the professional standards of public relations (PR) in Ethiopia and concluded that the field is still in its early or underdeveloped stage. Hawa (2017) and Geremew (2017) indicated that, Public relations in Ethiopia remains primarily focused on propaganda, publicity, and manipulation. According to them practitioners are mainly confined to communication technician role of PR; tasks such as writing press releases, organizing events, preparing annual plans, and taking minutes during organizational meetings. Most practitioners are excluded from communication manager roles, such as participating in the development of strategic plans and policies with top-level management and decision making which are key components of the practice of public relations.

Mulualem, (2017) points out those public relations as a professional practice is a relatively new phenomenon in Ethiopia. He observed that the government is the dominant actor in the field, primarily using PR to publicize its policies, highlight developmental achievements to the public, and enhance the country's image abroad for international diplomacy and cooperation. Despite the growing recognition of public relations and its structural inclusion in government organizations, it remains undervalued by top-level management in many organizations. There is also a widespread confusion regarding the role of public relations, often conflating it with related disciplines such as marketing, journalism, and advertising. Geremew (2017) further noted that very few people in Ethiopia truly understand what public relations entails, its objectives, and how it functions. This lack of understanding by managers, the public and even by the practitioners themselves significantly limits the effectiveness of PR within the country. In most of the cases the practitioners exercise the profession without qualification. Tesfaye (2018) reinforces Geremew's conclusion, highlighting that PR practitioners in Ethiopia have not fully understood the concept of public relations, particularly its management function in fostering mutual understanding with internal and external publics. Key challenges to practice the PR professionally include lack of professionally skilled personnel, insufficient empowerment of PR offices, inadequate capacity-building training, poor infrastructure,

and limited support from relevant leadership.

This study examines the practice of PR in EBC from 2020 to 2024, filling the research gap that has existed since 2019. It explore the effectiveness of PR department on the organization`s reputation at EBC. By analyzing the results this research targeted to understand the critical role that PR in promoting the corporation's positive image, credibility, and relationship with its stakeholders, particularly to media organizations.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

As one of the senior and most powerful media organizations in Ethiopia, EBC has played a fundamental role in shaping public opinion, diffusing information, and reflecting national culture (EBC, 2023). Nevertheless, its organizational structures disclose that, despite its outstanding status, EBC has functioned for years without well-structured and effective public relations (PR) officers as well as department. Over the past two decades, EBC has frequently revised its organizational structure, updating its organogram on average at least once every four years (EBC, 2021). Yet, in each restructuring, the role and practice of PR within the corporation have remained either negligible or entirely absent. Five years ago, Tsigereda (2019) examined the public relations (PR) activities at the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) and concluded that PR roles were given minimal significance. During Tsigereda` conduct her study, EBC's PR was a team of only three personnel under the name of "brand management" within the Marketing division. Likewise, Dawit (2021) examined the internal PR practices at EBC and found out that EBC's failed to build good relationships with employees, which limited the staff's understanding of the organization and led to the spread of rumors and gossip. These two studies supposed that EBC has struggled to build mutual understanding with its internal and external stakeholders due to lack of effective PR personnel in number and qualification as well as line of reporting structural problem. As Grunig and Hunt (1984) assert, promoting an organization's true identity, aligned with its mission and vision, is essential for maintaining its reputation. This clearly indicates that an organization needs a PR to prevent misunderstandings and unrealistic expectations. The role of public relations goes beyond establishing and communicating with internal and external stakeholders. It also involves advising senior managements on achieving organization's strategic plan and evaluating activities through the lens of strategic communication (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). However, this cannot be effectively executed without capable and properly positioned PR officers. Tsigereda (2019) and

Dawit (2021) shows how EBC is suffering from managing both external and internal PR works of this big nationwide media organization with three personnel who assigned at insignificant position to influence the management, the employees and external stakeholders. However, there is a time gap in existing research on the topics. There is no research that assesses the practice and presence of public relations at Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) post 2019, particularly after EBC restructured in 2021. This research aimed filling this gap by examining the practice of PR at EBC and its impact on its reputation and stakeholder relationships since.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1. General Objective

The general objective of this study is to assess the current operational effectiveness of the EBC`s PR activities, in order to identify key challenges and propose strategic recommendations for enhancement.

1.3.2 Specific Objective

- To assess the necessity of public relations for media.
- To evaluate the perception of credibility and trustworthiness of EBC between 2020-2024.
- To assess the influence of EBC`s PR practice on its corporate reputation from 2020 to 2024.
- To investigate the organizational structure, staffing level, and resources allocations of the PR at EBC and to analyze these internal factors affect its operational effectiveness.

1.4 Research Questions of the Study

This research tried to answer the following basic research questions.

1. Why do media need public relations?
2. What is the current perception of the public regarding the credibility, objectivity and over all reputation of EBC?
3. How is the current PR unit at EBC organized, staffed and resourced; compared to pre 2021?
4. What is the rationale of EBC for organizational changes that affecting PR activities since 2021?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study seated on its comprehensive analysis of the impact of having or lacking a PR department on media reputation and public perception. The findings will not only benefit EBC by enhancing its communication practices but also contribute to the broader field of media management by demonstrating the importance of effective PR departments in Ethiopian media.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study focused on examining the practices of the PR at EBC since 2020. It evaluates the perception of credibility and trustworthiness of EBC between 2020-2024. The research investigates the organizational structure, staffing level, and resources allocations of the PR to analyze factors affect its operational effectiveness and it doesn't delve into the broader side of media management. The time-frame for the study has encompassed PR activities from 2020 to 2024 and any historical trends relevant to the current state of PR at EBC.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The research is confined to the period between 2020 and 2024, and as such, it does not address public relations practices before this time-frame. Additionally, the focus on the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) may limit the generalizability of the findings to other media organizations.

1.8. Organization of the Study

This study is organized in five chapters. The First Chapter encompassed background of the study, problem statement, research objectives, questions, significance, scope, limitations and organization of the study. The Second Chapter explores review of related literature, conceptual, and theoretical frameworks. The Third Chapter deals with research methodology, design, sample size, sampling techniques, data gathering instruments, methods of data analysis and ethical considerations. The Fourth Chapter included data presentation, analysis, and discussion. Finally, The Fifth Chapter is all about summary of key findings, conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter overviews the nature, importance, and historical evolution of public relations (PR). It also explores related theoretical frame works of PR practices in Ethiopia, focusing on the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC). It highlights previous research, and gaps that this study aims to address.

2.1. What Is Public Relations

Attempts to define public relations as a professional field and academic discipline are many and varied. The very nature of the profession and its constant adaptation to the needs of society make it at best a moving target for definition (Lattimore *et al,* 2012). Over time, the definition of public relations has evolved alongside changes in the profession, as practitioners transitioned from primarily technical roles to managerial ones (Dozier & Broom, 1995). Similarly, Grunig and Hunt (1984) expanded its function from a focus on generating publicity to fostering mutual understanding. For over a century, the word "public relations" and its associated functions have often been viewed negatively by the people, perceived as a means of manipulating public opinion by some professionals. To prompt this perception and emphasize its importance, several professionals have sought to substitute the term "public relations" with other terms such as reputation management, corporate communication, corporate affairs, and corporate relations (Hutton *et al.,* 2001). Several public relations professionals and intellectuals have suggested numerous definitions and metaphors to describe the field, such as lawyer in the court of public opinion, engineer of public consent, developer of goodwill, builder of public opinion, motivator, persuader, catalyst, interpreter, educator, news engineer, perception manager, relationship manager, and reputation manager. Despite ongoing debates, the term *"public relations"* continues to be widely used and supported by most scholars and PR practitioners (Hutton et al., 2001).

Edward Bernays, often referred as the father of public relations, has played the lion share for the coining of the term public relations. Bernays has played the crucial role in popularizing and formalizing PR as a profession in the early 20th century. However, the phrase itself predates Bernays. Some sources trace its earliest use to Thomas Jefferson's 1807 address to Congress, where he employed *"public relations"* to justify government actions. Some scholars demonstrated the 1897 *Yearbook of Railway Literature* as the first known occurrence of the term "public relations" being

used in a professional context, referring to railroad companies' efforts to shape public perception (Lattimore et al., 2012). An American communication expert and among the pioneer of public relations, Rex F. Harlow, compounded elements from multiple perspectives and disciplines to craft a comprehensive definition of public relations. He described PR as:

"A distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance, and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools" (Harlow, 1976).

Harlow arrived at his definition after analyzing over 472 definitions provided by academicians and practitioners worldwide over time. Harlow's work underscored the strategic management function of PR that serves as bridging organizations and their public. Today, his definition remains one of the most widely recognized in the field. According to Grunig & Hunt (1984) Harlow`s definition of public relations can be reduced in to *"the management of communication between the organization and its public's"* Unlike Harlow's lengthy paragraph definition, Wolter and Miles (1983), writing in the Public Relations Journal, introduced a concise three-word definition: *"management of interdependence."* This definition of public relations emphasizes the growing recognition that not only individuals or organizations but even large nations are not entirely independent and need of management, skill and practice of public relations (Haberman & Dolphin, 1988). Similarly, different professional associations such as the international public Relations association (IPRA), the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), and various European organizations, including the UK's Institute of Public Relations (IPR) have made repeated efforts to define and redefine public relations. For example the international public Relations Association (IPRA) defined PR as *"the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organization leaders and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the organization's and the public interest", in its 1978 meeting at Mexico(Theaker, 2002).*

Likewise, according to Theaker (2002), the UK Institute of Public Relations (IPR) in 1987 also defined public Relations as *"the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain good will and*

understanding between an organization and its public". Based on these instances, it is possible to conclude that all these definitions of public relations largely build upon Harlow's foundational work. To meet the demands of the 21st century, the process of defining and redefining public relations has continued. Recent definitions highlight the distinctive challenges and opportunities brought about by the digital age, such as the rise of new communication channels, the diversity of stakeholders, and shifting public expectations (Cernicova, 2016). For the purposes of this paper, the term, concept, and function of public relations are grounded largely in Harlow's definition.

2.2. Confusion with related disciplines

The term "public relations" is a broad and often generalized concept, and because the profession is inherently interdisciplinary, it is frequently confused with related fields such as marketing, journalism, and advertising. To address this confusion, some scholars like James E. Grung and Todd Hunt, in their definition of PR include the term "what PR is not" in addition to "what PR is" (Grunig, & Hunt, 1984). Although PR has a distinctive nature that stems from its role, it collaborates and sometimes overlaps with related disciplines in practice including advertisement. However the two terms are distinctive and different. Advertising is the practice of purchasing space and time in the media to directly demand customers, while public relations focuses on securing media coverage without direct payment, such as stories that appear in news columns or broadcasts. Marketing, on the other hand, is centered on sales and distribution, targeting specific audiences like customers, retailers, and distributors. In contrast, public relations engage with a wide range of publics. These publics include the media, employees, community leaders, government regulators, investment analysts, activist groups, and more (Lattimore et al., 2012). Similarly, the key point that differ Journalism from public relations is that Journalists report news about organizations without representing them, whereas public relations practitioners advocate for the organizations they represent. This fundamental difference can influence objectivity, framing, and the presentation of ideas and facts in public relations (Lattimore et al., 2012).

As the field of public relations evolves, the practices shifting more, from unethical to ethical and the theories also bases themselves more from propaganda to persuasion. Bobbitt and Sullivan (2014) indicated a distinction between propaganda and persuasion as follows;

"Persuasion is 'an effort to gain public support for an opinion or course of action.' the effort is based on truthful and ethical methods. Propaganda, on the other hand, is 'the attempt to have a

viewpoint accepted on the basis of appeals other than the merits of the case.' It often uses methods that could be labeled as unethical or manipulative. So persuasion is based on truth, whereas propaganda is based on fiction or exaggeration" (Bobbitt and Sullivan, 2014).

2.3. Why public Relations

Public relations are needed to harmonize the public. It helps the complex, pluralistic society to reach decisions and function more effectively by contributing to mutual understanding among groups and organizations. "Public" in public relations are groups that are almost always important to the organization. Public defined in terms of the relationships to the given organization, including the media, employees, governmental officials, community leaders, and so on (Lattimore *et al.*, 2012).

2.4. The Practice of Public Relations

Public relations work is typically carried out through either departments within organizations or external agencies. The majority of public relations professionals are employed by businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government entities, while others work in agencies or as independent consultants. In Western countries, the primary employers are business organizations, while in developing nations, government institutions tend to be the major employers. The size of public relations departments varies significantly from country to country in general and from organization to organization in a given country. According to Lattimore *et al.* (2012), in the United States, the number of personnel in an organization ranging from over 400 members in large corporations to just one or two individuals in smaller organizations. In large corporations, public relations departments are often overseen by a vice president of the organization who serves as part of top management and contributes to the development of overall policy. This is for instances common in Ethiopian higher education institutions that are owned by the government (Tesfaye, 2018)**.** These organizations also tend to have multiple public relations managers at both corporate and divisional levels, supported by specialists such as writers, researchers, and media representatives. Conversely, in smaller organizations, a single individual may be responsible for handling all public relations activities (Lattimore *et al.*, 2012).

Public relations practitioners engage in a wide range of responsibilities, reflecting the diverse nature of the field. The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) highlights this diversity in a booklet that outlines various career paths within public relations. These include, programming/planning

(analyzing problems and opportunities), relationships (building and maintaining connections through effective information gathering), writing and editing (creating reports, news releases, booklets, speeches, film scripts, and trade magazine articles…), speaking (engaging in face-to-face communication, delivering speeches and preparing speeches for others), information (managing media relations), production (developing publications, special reports, films, and multimedia programs), event organizations (organizing news conferences, exhibitions, special showings, new facility openings, anniversary celebrations, contests, award programs, tours...), research and evaluation (conducting research on issues, organizations, publics, competition, opportunities, and threats) (Lattimore *et al.,* 20 12).

2.5. Historical developments of public Relations

According to Haberman & Dolphin (1988), the practice of public relations is as old as human civilization. History shows that various successful leaders and groups have achieved their goals by gaining strategic support from key individuals, particularly in persuading and communication. Though they didn't use the term "public relations", ancient people were engaging in fundamental principles of PR. Lattimore et al. (2012) noted that the practice of PR is ancient rooted, despite the term being coined in 19th century. They highlight the historical foundations of the field, stating:

"The forerunner to modern-day public relations practice can be found in the work of rhetoricians, press agents, and other promoters. Since early times, speechmakers, called rhetoricians, provided such communication services as speech-writing, speaking on clients' behalf, training for difficult questions, and persuasion skills. For example, by Plato's day, ca. 427 to 347 BC, rhetoric as a distinct discipline was well established in Greece" (Lattimore et al., 2012: p. 24).

According to Theaker (2001), early forms of corporate identity can be traced back to ancient cave paintings, flags, and Roman coins. Additionally, artifacts resembling public relations materials have been discovered in ancient civilizations such as India, Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome (Lattimore *et al.,* 2012). Lattimore et al. (2012) highlighted that during the early modern period in Europe; the establishment of the "Congregation for Propagating the Faith" by the Roman Catholic Church in the 17th century is often regarded as a pivotal moment in the evolution of public relations. Similarly, Theaker (2001) points to the distribution of leaflets in late 18th and early 19th century America, such as Thomas Paine's Rights of Man, as a significant example of early public relations efforts. Theaker

(2001) also underscored the role of rising literacy rates and advancements in printing technology during the 19th century in facilitating various reform campaigns across Europe and America. He notes that campaigns addressing issues such as health and education were often promoted through pamphlets and newspaper articles, which can be considered early forms of public relations advocacy. On the other hand, Lattimore et al. (2012) identify figures such as Samuel Adams, active during the era of George Washington and the American Civil War, and Amos Kendall, who served as an advisor during Andrew Jackson's presidency, as among the earliest public relations practitioners in American politics.

In the business spheres, at the beginning public relations were pure promotion, often exaggerated, and sometimes misleading. This might suggest that public relations grow out of advertising and promotion (Haberman & Dolphin 1988). In early stages, public Relations not only confused with promotion but also with propaganda (Jowett and O'Donnell, 1992). Industrialization altered the structure of society and gave rise to conditions requiring public relations expertise. With the flourishing of industrialization, businesses were collecting enormous profits but were losing public support in the process. Workers began to organize themselves into unions, and they perceived their interests in many cases as directly opposed to those of business owners. Corporations gradually began to realize the importance of combating hostility and to court public favor. By the early 1900s public relations became a specialized function broadly accepted in major corporations in order to counter hostility by courting public support (Lattimore et al, 2012).

However, public relations as a discipline are still young, beginning in the early 20th century. It has emerged with a management-oriented, relationship-building focus among its stakeholders with less emphasis on media tools and more on behavioral change. The process of public relations continues to be grounded in the research, planning, action, and evaluation. The practice extends its scope from publicity to communication consultancy, social movements and government public relations. It has evolved into a profession and academic discipline, incorporating multiple theories from various fields of study and transitioning towards socially ethical practices. Today new social, interactive media tools are developing, to supplement the traditional media relations efforts (Lattimore et al, 2012; Cernicova, 2016).

2.6. Related theories and models of public relations

Models and theories in public relations are structured frameworks and explanations that help to understand how communication processes facilitate relationship-building between organizations and their stakeholders. These tools form the foundation for designing, analyzing, and evaluating public relations strategies practices (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2006).

Based on the concept of public relations, the term "theory" refers to a framework that predicts or explains how events, actions, and interactions are interconnected (Grunig, 1984). Theories are not laws or inflexible rules; they are merely guides (Bobbitt & Sullivan, 2014). Public relations are not a pure science but rather an applied science and its theories are drawn from various social sciences, particularly communication theories, and, to some extent, organizational and management theories. Furthermore, there are theories uniquely developed by public relations scholars. Although public relations, communication, management, and organizational theories often overlap, they are differentiated by their focus, scope, and application (Grunig, 1984; Bobbitt & Sullivan, 2014).

Models are simplified representations of communication processes and strategies. According to Grunig & Hunt (1984), public relations evolve from one-way communication to more balanced, two-way interactions, and public relations theories provide systematic explanations for how communication influences relationships between organizations and stakeholders. Public relations professionals can create effective communication strategies by integrating theoretical insights and practical models. Here we discuss theories and models that used to discuss the study.

2.6.1. Grunig and Hunt`s Models of public Relations

Grunig and Hunt (1984) identified four models of public relations that progresses from an elementary method of public relations to a more sophisticated practices. These are press agentry/publicity, public information, two-way asymmetrical communication, and two-way symmetrical communication. The models help to understand different stages in the history of public relations. Each model has different objectives, nature of communication, and area of practice. The analysis of the history of these four models helps to understand the diversity of public relations practiced today.

2.6.1.1. Press agentry/publicity model

The purpose of this model is propaganda function. The practitioners most concern is drawing attention. They spread the faith of the organization involved often through incomplete, distorted, or half true information. The communication is one way, directing from the organization to the public. Practitioners of this model view communication generally as telling, not listening. The model comes

first in the period from 1850 to 1900. Organizations that equate public relations with publicity or promotions today generally practice the model with paying more attentions to the truth than did press agents/ publicist of the 1850s. The best example today includes sports, promotions, theatre or movie (Grunig, 1992).

2.6.1.2. Public information model

This model posits that the purpose of PR is information dissemination, not necessarily with persuasive intent. The practitioner functions essentially as a journalist in residence whose job is report objectively information. In this model the nature of communication is one way. The public information model came next to press agentry/ publicity, beginning about 1900 and continued as major model until the 1920s. It is still frequently practiced model today, mostly in government agencies, associations, nonprofit agencies, and educational organizations. It is also quite popular in many business firms. Organizations that exercise the model; offer news to the media, produce many informational pamphlets, magazines, films, consumer guidebooks, fact sheets… about the organizations (Grunig and Hunt, 1984).

2.6.1.3. Two-way asymmetrical communication

The practitioners carefully plan what they communicate to the publics to achieve maximum change in attitude and behavior. Functions are more like that of the press agentry or publicity but the purpose can best be described as scientific persuasion. They use social science theory and research about attitudes and behavior to persuade. The press agent/ Publicist`s attempts persuasion in more intuitive way than scientific. In this model, the nature of communication is two way but imbalance in favor of the organization i.e. communication from public that comes as feedback used to control the receiver.

The two-way asymmetric model developed in 1920s. It finds most of its adherents in business firms, especially those that face considerable competition. Companies in the food industry, for example, may use research which is often conducted by their marketing department- to determine what product feature consumers' like- convenience or natural quality. The companies then stress presence of these qualities and emphasize the feature that the public likes (Grunig, 1992).

2.6.1.4. Two-way symmetrical communication.

Here the purpose is mutual understanding. The practitioners serve as mediators between organization and their publics. There may be use of social science theory and methods but usually use of theories of communication rather than theories of persuasion. The two way symmetric models consist of more dialogue than monologue. The organization and the public communicate well enough to understand

the position of one another. The two-symmetric model comes in the 1960s and 1970s. Organization that replace press release with invitation to reporters to come in and develop their own story about the organization, are practicing this model. Other invites reporters to dialogue sessions with organizational official (Grunig and Hunt, 1984).

2.6.2. Systems theory

Systems theory views an organization as an interconnected set of parts working together within a larger environment. It emphasizes interdependence, feedback, and adaptation, i.e. changes in one part of the system affect the whole, and how organizations must interact with their environment to maintain stability and achieve goals. In public relations, systems theory helps organizations understand their role as part of a larger environment made up of stakeholders, communities, and other entities. According to the theory the role of public relations is bridging internal systems (employees, leadership) and external systems (media, public, and regulators), ensuring alignment and coherence across these groups. The theory asserts that public relations rely on feedback from stakeholders to gauge perceptions, refine messaging, and adjust strategies for system stability and growth. The theory also indicates that systems must adapt to changes in their environment to survive and PR helps organizations respond to evolving public opinions, crises, and market dynamics to maintain relevance and positive relationships (Grunig, 1997). The theory asserts that if an organization interacts accordingly with its surrounding it is in "open system" and fails to interact regarded as an organization with "closed system".

2.6.2. Excellence theory

The excellence theory of public Relations is developed as a result of study to answer the question *"what is best practice in Public relations?''* in 1985 by James E. Grunig and his colleagues. It is one of the most influential frameworks in public relations research. Rooted in years of empirical research, the theory integrates several dimensions of PR performance; such as communication effectiveness, ethical responsibility, and organizational integration into a single standard of best practice.

The excellence theory first explained the value of public relations to organizations and society based on the social responsibility of managerial decisions and the quality of relationships with stakeholder publics. For an organization to be effective, according to the theory, it must behave in ways that solve the problems and satisfy the goals of stakeholders as well as of management. One of the central

arguments of Excellence Theory is that public relations should not be relegated to a support function but rather be practiced as a strategic management role, contributing to key organizational decisions. (Grunig, 1992)

2.7. Public relations departments in Media organizations

The necessity of public relations (PR) for media organizations is still debatable; with arguments often stand on the issues of journalism ethics versus resource constraints. Several scholars argued that the primary focus of media organizations should be on fair reporting. Proponents of this idea feared that integrating a PR department in the media organizations could fuzz the difference between journalism and corporate promotion, leading to conflicts of interest, where editorial independence and objectivity are compromised in favor of enhancing organizational image. They also argued that PR department is unnecessary, as newsrooms and editorial teams are fully capable of managing reputation and practicing communication, within stakeholders (Macnamara, 2014). In addition, proponents of this idea argued that establishing and maintaining a PR department requires significant resources, including staffing and budgets. They questioned the vitality of PR in investment in situations where resources are limited. They contend that these resources might be better allocated to improving content quality or enhancing core journalistic activities, rather than establishing and maintaining PR department (Cardwell et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, several scholars argued that a significant portion of these questions and arguments streamed from misconceptions about the role of public relations. According to Shin and Burk (2024), those people misconceived the practice of PR, indicating that its role extends far beyond mere publicity or damage control or propagating. Shin and Burk emphasized the strategic importance of PR in reputation management, stakeholder engagement, and orienting organizational practices with public expectations. They argued that strategic functions of PR are often overlooked, leading to an underrating of PR in media organizations. In the contemporary world, it is difficult to an organization to be successful without securing the consent and support of its stakeholders and the public. This consent is largely achieved through effective public relations efforts (Shin and Burk, 2024). So, organizations need to implement public relations practices either through a well-structured in-house department or by hiring external agencies. Likewise, media organizations also need tailored public relations strategies, as internationally well-known media organizations like BBC (British

Broadcasting Corporation), CNN (Cable News Network), and Al Jazeera media network, have incorporated public relations department into their organizational structures.

As the website of BBC shows, the organizational communication of BBC is carried out by corporate affairs, part of the executive committee. This indicates how PR gets a significant position within the organization's leadership structure of BBC (BBC, n.d.-a). The main responsibilities of the Corporate Affairs department include managing local and international stakeholder relations, maintaining and enhancing the reputation of BBC and ensuring effective communication with vital partners and interested parties (BBC, n.d.-b). Similarly, the public relations of CNN is managed by the "Communications department", which runs at a senior executive level within the organization (CNN Press Room, n.d.). Its duties include managing CNN's public image, media relations, and drafting external and internal communications strategies (Entertainment Careers, n.d.). Like BBC and CNN, Al Jazeera Media Network's, public relations are managed by the "Global Brand & Communications" department operating at the executive level. Its duties include overseeing the network's public image, managing media relations, and ensuring consistent internal and external communications (Al Jazeera Media Network, n.d.).

Like other organizations do, several media organizations are also integrating PR departments in their organizational structures, shifting the debate from questioning the need for PR in media organizations to evaluating its effectiveness. Today various studies have been conducted to assess the effective practice of PR within media organizations. For instance, Wambua (2014) conducted a study on corporate image strategies applied by prominent media organizations in Kenya. Her research indicated that four prominent media organizations benefited by implementing specific corporate image strategies. To eventually achieve their goals, these organizations largely focused on managing their corporate image, reputation, and publicity to grab the attention of different stakeholders and audiences. She underscored that employing corporate image strategies is the most effective and efficient approach to gaining a competitive advantage over other actors in Kenya's media industry (Wambua, 2014). However, according to Owuor (2016), these organizations could benefit more is they aligned strategic marketing with image building and promotional practices.

Though the complicated nature of marketing and PR can lead to confusion, they are different and each have distinct roles. In minor organizations, one person may perform both roles, or small group of people may operate under the same department. However, in huge organizations, these departments often structured separately, though they may work collaboratively. For instance

corporate affairs and marketing are different departments with different roles and responsibilities in the BBC's organizational structure. Corporate affairs focus on managing the BBC's reputation, handling media relations, engaging with stakeholders, and overseeing internal communications. On the other hand, marketing department concentrates on enhancing the BBC's content and services, conducting audience research, and tailoring strategies to enhance audience engagement. While corporate affairs and marketing operate separately, they collaborate to ensure that the BBC's messaging is consistent and aligns with its public service mission. This collaboration ensures that both external communications and promotional activities reflect the organization's values and objective (BBC, n.d.).

2.8. Relevance of literature review to the study

The literature reviewed in this chapter is essential to establishing the conceptual and analytical foundation for examining the practice of public relations at the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) from 2020 to 2024. The study seeks not only to understand how PR has been practiced but also to assess its strategic role, effectiveness, and institutional positioning within a national media organization. It offers both theoretical frameworks and empirical insights that help explain the strategic role of PR in media organizations, and it supports the interpretation of findings related to structure, performance, and public perception.

The Four Models of Public Relations by Grunig and Hunt serve as an important foundation for categorizing EBC’s communication approach. These models provide a lens through which to assess whether EBC’s PR practice fosters mutual understanding (two-way symmetrical) or remains one-directional and limited to publicity or information-sharing. This directly supports the exploration of why media need PR and how the public currently perceives EBC’s credibility and reputation.

Systems Theory further deepens this analysis by positioning PR as a boundary-spanning function that links the organization to its external environment. This theory is especially relevant to address how the current PR unit is structured and resourced and how organizational structural changes have affected PR activity. A System Theory helps to explain how the organization interacts with its Stakeholders defines its effectiveness and farther existence.

The inclusion of the Excellence Theory adds a crucial strategic dimension to the literature review. It

defines what “excellent” public relations looks like and provides specific criteria for evaluating whether EBC’s PR unit is functioning as a management-level advisor or merely a support office. By emphasizing the need for well-staffed, empowered PR departments engaged in two-way symmetrical communication, the theory strengthens the argument that EBC’s credibility, internal coordination, and stakeholder engagement depend on the strategic integration of PR. It also offers a valuable lens for understanding the rationale and consequences of structural changes made by EBC’s leadership since 2021.

In summary, these theories together offer a comprehensive framework for addressing all four research questions. They guide the formulation of research instruments, provide a basis for analysis, and validate the study’s recommendations.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter consists of employed research approach, research design, sources of data, population and sample selection, data collection instruments, and methods of data analysis. It also addresses the ethical considerations observed throughout the research process. The chosen methodology aims to explore the perspectives and experiences of individuals within and outside EBC and to assess the communication strategies and organizational alignment of its PR practices.

3.2. Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative research approach. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018), qualitative research particularly suited to exploring people's opinions about specific subjects or organization. Unlike quantitative research, which emphasizes numerical measurement and statistical analysis, qualitative inquiry relies on subjective assessments and in-depth exploration of lived experiences. This study adopts a qualitative research approach because it demands personal insights and interpretive understanding. The research focused on examining the experiences and perceptions of individuals regarding the practice of Public Relations (PR) department at the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC). The chosen approach aligns with the study's aim to explore how employees and stakeholders perceive the organization's public relations practices and by that the reputation and communication strategies of EBC.

3.3. Research Design

This study employed a case study design, which enables an in-depth examination of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) as a single unit of analysis. The case study design is particularly suited to understanding complex issues within a specific organizational context and, particularly for media studies (Brennen, 2013). For this research it provides a rich, detailed account of the PR challenges and their impact on the organization's reputation.

3.4 Sources of Data, target population, and sampling techniques

This study gathered data from primary sources. To ensure a comprehensive examination of the topic, the study draws upon four primary sources of data, that are in-depth interviews with individuals knowledgeable about EBC's PR practices, documents relevant to the activities and structure of the PR department and responses from questionnaires distributed to selected employees and stakeholders. Personal observation of the researcher also included supplementing and strengthening of the data collected through in-depth interview, document analysis and questionnaires. These multiple sources enhanced the reliability and depth of the findings.

The target population for this research includes individuals with direct or indirect involvement in or knowledge about the PR operations at EBC. This comprises:

- Current and former PR officers;
- Senior management members involved in strategic decision-making;
- Management members participating in organizational restructuring of EBC
- Journalists and editors, familiar with EBC`s communication processes;
- Marketing and branding professionals of EBC;
- External stakeholders/ audiences and partners.

The study sample is drawn from the aforementioned groups, with participants selected based on their relevance to the research objectives. The final number of participants is guided by data saturation, when new data no longer provide additional insights. Totally 65 respondents participated in this study. Participants were selected in purposive sampling technique. According to Reinard (1998) purposive sampling method selects units from groups that are known to poses particular characteristics under investigation. It is useful particularly for researches where the criterion for admission clearly exists. It involves selection of particular units of the universe for constituting a sample which represents the universe. The researcher used for selecting items which he considers as representative of the population. Here EBC`s management body, employee and stake holders employ the purpose, because these participants possess rich and relevant knowledge of the PR functions at EBC. While a fixed sample size is not predetermined, the study aimed to include a diverse range of participants until data saturation is achieved. For instance, the study involves PR officers, senior executives, media professionals, and external stakeholders. A total of 65 participants, contributed their unique perspectives to the research questions. Among them seven key informants are

participated in semi structured in-depth interviews while, 28 of EBC employees and 30 external stake holders participated in questionnaires responses. The size of the data was determined by the principle of saturation, meaning that data collection ceased when no new information emerged and responses began to repeat. According to Panneerselvam (2006), this is a common practice in qualitative research employing purposive sampling techniques.

3.5 Data Gathering Tools

The study utilizes four main data collection tools to gain a well-rounded understanding of PR practices at EBC. Data collection for the study involves four methods: semi-structured in-depth interviews, questionnaires, document review, and observation.

3.5.1 Questionnaires

To explore the perceptions of employees and stakeholders regarding the public relations practices of EBC, the study uses questionnaires that included both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Closed-ended items offered structured responses that helped identify common patterns or recurring sentiments. They were interpreted qualitatively, focusing on the underlying meanings and trends expressed by the participants. On the other hand, Open-ended questions allow respondents to elaborate on their thoughts freely, providing richer detail and context. As Creswell (2013) notes, qualitative questionnaires that include open-ended items can serve as a valuable tool for capturing in-depth views. These combinations help to ensure that the data reflects consistency of responses. Lindlof and Taylor (2011) explain that in communication research, questionnaires can be useful for obtaining insights from individuals who may be unable to participate in interviews. In this study both open-ended and close ended questionnaires focused on identifying themes, shared concerns, and subjective meanings. By using both types of questionnaires the study understands in more clear and detailed manner how participants explain the PR practices of EBC in their lived experiences, thereby enhancing the richness, credibility, and relevance of the data collected.

Two types of questionnaires were prepared to collect data: one for EBC employees and another for external stakeholders. The external stakeholders, including the viewers, Media owners, media experts, and managers familiar with EBC`s operations, were primarily expected to provide insights into the current public perceptions of the organization. On the other hand, the questionnaires for EBC employees focused on gathering information about the organization`s PR activities, the level of visibility and the placement of PR within the organizational structure. A total of 60 questionnaires

were distributed for the purpose of this study, 30 to public stakeholders and 30 to employees of EBC. Out of these, 28 questionnaires were properly filled and returned by stakeholders, and all 30 of the questionnaires were returned by employees.

3.5.2 In-depth Interviews

According to Lindlof and Taylor (2011, pp. 173–174) the advantages of in-depth interviews include their ability to yield rich, detailed data, flexibility in questioning, and the opportunity to understand the participant's perspective in context. These typical characteristics are important to this research for several reasons. First the ability to explore issues in detailed data aligns with the qualitative nature of this study, which seeks to assess the practice of the public relations department at the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) between 2020 and 2024. In addition, the flexibility nature of the interview method allows adapting questions according to the flow of conversation; enabling the capture of more contextually rich and meaning full insights. The method also facilitates the collection of personal and organizational perceptions that may not have been accessible through other data collection techniques. There for the interviews were essential instruments in addressing the research questions and capturing the complex realities surrounding EBC`s public relations practices. On the other hand, there are disadvantages associated with the interview method. These include the *time*-consuming nature of interviews, potential interviewer bias, and costly (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, pp. 175–176). However this limitation does not apply to the present study, as the research is confined to upper- level management within the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), all of whom are located within a single organizational setting. Another potential drawback identified is the risk of bias from the interviewer and the respondents. In this study, however, this aspect poses less of concern as the use of non- probability sampling technique is intentional and aligns with the exploratory nature of qualitative research, where the focus is on depth rather than generalizability.

Given this consideration, the interview method is well suited to the aims and context of the study. It enabled in-depth exploration, accommodates purposive sampling, and ensures the participation of key informants, thereby supporting the validity and relevance of the findings. Here the key informants are PR officers, senior management members, and participants in organizational restructuring of EBC. These interviews explore perceptions, lived experiences, and professional judgments about the PR function at EBC which targeted to answer all research questions. Seven respondents are participated in in-depth interview; former and current PR head, marketing division head, member of

EBC organizational restructuring committee, chief of staff to the CEO, former PR team leader, and former event organizers team leader.

3.5.3 Document Analysis

In addition to questionnaires and interview, this study has also employed document analysis instrument to collect data. Document analysis serves as a complementary method to provide additional insights into the organization (Brennen, 2013). This includes documents such as organizational structures, annual reports, PR materials, job specifications and descriptions related to the PR function at EBC.

3.5.4 Observations

Deacon et al. (1999) argue that Observation is used when the researcher seeks to understand practices and interactions in their natural context**,** rather than relying solely on what people say about their experiences. Observation allows a research to witness practices as they occur, and to attend to non-verbal and contextual features that are often overlooked in interviews and surveys. In this study enhance the credibility and depth of the research, personal observation was used as a tool for data collection alongside interviews, questionnaires, and document reviews. As an employee of EBC with nearly 20 years of experience, I was able to observe the organization's internal communication practices, PR visibility, and staff dynamics over time. This participant-observer role allowed me to validate and enrich data gathered from other sources by comparing reported experiences with real-life practices. Ethical standards, including confidentiality and objectivity, were strictly maintained.

3.6 Data Analysis Method

To analyze the collected data through in-depth key informant interviews, open-ended questionnaires, and close-ended questionnaires, this study employed thematic analysis method of data analysis. According to Naeem *et al. (*2023), thematic analysis is essential to analyze qualitative data. Thematic analysis provides a flexible and systematized approach to rendering qualitative data such as interview responses, documents, or social media content (Naeem *et al.,* 2023). Standing from the framework of Naeem *et al.* (2023), the thematic analysis of this study passes through a systematic series of steps listed below.

1. Transcription, Familiarization with the Data, and Selection of Quotations
2. Selection of Keywords
3. Coding
4. Development of Themes
5. Conceptualization through Interpretation of Keywords, Codes, and Themes
6. Development of a Conceptual Model

First the researcher familiarized the data including transcribing the interviews, organizing the content of analyzed documents, and reappraising the responses from the open-ended and close ended questionnaire items. Then researcher identified and coded significant ideas and key concepts from the collected data including labeling relevant contents to capture the essence of the participants' perspectives. Then these codes grouped into wider and logical themes that aligned with the research questions and objectives of the study. Next, the grouped themes were reviewed and sifted to assure their accuracy of representing the collected data and lined up with the research questions of the study (see appendix seven). Finally, this shifted group of themes were discussed by using theoretical foundations and interpreted in relation to the study's objectives, drawing conclusions, and presenting the findings in a way that highlights their implications for understanding the effectiveness of EBC's PR department.

3.7. Reliability and validity

Ensuring credibility and validity is essential in qualitative research to establish trust in the findings and interpretations. Since this study examines the practice of public relations (PR) at the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), I employed various techniques that support the trustworthiness of the data and its interpretation. Credibility in qualitative research refers to the accuracy and believability of the findings from the perspective of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To enhance credibility in this study, I used methodological triangulation, combining in-depth interviews, open- and close-ended questionnaires, document reviews and my own personal observation. This approach enabled me to gather diverse perspectives on how PR is practiced within EBC and cross-check the consistency of the information obtained from different sources (Patton, 2015). Additionally, member checking was applied to ensure the authenticity of participants' views. After conducting interviews, I shared summaries of the responses with selected participants to confirm that

my interpretations correctly represented their perspectives. This step reduced misrepresentation and enhanced the credibility of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Validity, more accurately referred to as trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry, was further ensured through reflexive practice and prolonged engagement. Throughout the research process, I critically examine my own biases, assumptions, and influence on the study. This reflexivity helped maintain transparency and grounded the analysis in participants' actual narratives (Berger, 2015). I also spent sufficient time reviewing institutional documents and conducting follow-up communications with participants, which deepened my understanding of the organizational context in which PR is practiced at EBC. By incorporating these strategies, I ensured that the study presents a credible and valid account of the public relations practices at EBC, grounded in participants' lived experiences and supported by multiple data sources.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

According to Brennen (2013), research should be done ethically to ensure the integrity of the research and protect the participants. So, the researcher adheres to specific ethical standards in this research. All participants of this research engaged by informed consent of the study and participated voluntary. The confidentiality and anonymity of participants are strictly maintained. All collected data collected both from interview transcripts and questionnaire responses, are stored securely and accessible only to the researcher.

As an employee of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) with nearly 20 years of experience, I had insider access to the organization, which allowed for valuable observations and a deeper understanding of internal practices. While this enhanced the richness of the data, I remained fully aware of the potential for bias. To address this, I maintained a neutral stance during data collection and analysis, and I carefully separated personal opinion from objective interpretation. My dual role was handled with caution to ensure that all ethical standards—particularly confidentiality, impartiality, and the responsible use of insider knowledge—were strictly upheld.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the data collected to assess the practice of Public Relations (PR) department at the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) between 2020 and 2024. In this chapter collected data through seven in-depth key informant interviews, 28 questioners to employees of EBC and 30 questioners for stakeholders, regarding the importance or need of PR in media organizations, the structure level and effectiveness of PR at EBC, justifications of EBC to the position of PR in organizational structure, and reflections on its performance are explored thematically.

4.2 Background Information of Participants

The participants in this study included internal employees and external stakeholders of EBC. Seven key informants participated in in-depth interviews, comprising former and current PR department heads, PR and branding team leader, EBC event organizing team leader, marketing development division managing director, EBC organizational restructuring committee member, and Chief of Staff to the CEO. These individuals were selected due to their direct experience and involvement with PR-related activities at EBC. Additionally, 28 employees completed the questionnaire, providing insights into the internal perceptions of PR functions. These perceptions include what they have perceived about PR practice, role and effectiveness at EBC. The respondents included staff from various departments, such as editorial, production, Human resources, marketing, and other working units. 30 stake holders also gave responses to the questionnaires intentionally prepared to them. Public stakeholders of EBC in this case are audiences from all walk of life and individuals or company owners who engaged with EBC as a partner. Their feedback offered an external perspective on the institution's reputation and communication effectiveness.

4.3 Thematic Analysis of Interview Data

The qualitative data collected from in-depth interviews in Amharic language transcribed into texts, translated into English, coded and analyzed to identify recurring themes relevant to the research questions. For this study, four major themes emerged. These are needs of PR for media organizations, the effect of the absence of well-structured PR department at EBC, reflections on the effectiveness of

the previous PR structure under the earlier organizational structure and justifications for the current PR organizational structure at EBC.

4.3.1 Need of Public Relations in Media Organizations

Participants consistently emphasized the necessity of a robust PR function in media institutions. They highlighted that PR is essential for strategic communication, reputation management, and stakeholder engagement for media. Most of them noted that the works of PR cannot be substituted by journalism and is necessary for building institutional image. They stress that media institutions cannot function without strategic communication. Also they underscored the importance of integrating event organizing, branding works and other internal and external communications with PR functions. For instance KI1[1] (2025), noted that though there is a debate on the role of public relations (PR) departments in media organizations, PR is essential for media. He described what PR did at EBC like this:

"I had served head of PR department for two years. This period highlights the importance of having a PR department in a media organization. The celebration of EBC's 50th anniversary emphasized the importance of a well-structured PR department. A capable PR team plays a crucial role in managing both internal and external relations efficiently, with minimal bureaucratic delays. For the 50th anniversary, the PR department at EBC was instrumental in preparing various documents and publishing.. These are tasks that no other department in the organization took on. In this way, PR serves as a vital bridge between the organization and its internal and external stakeholders, showcasing its essential role" (KI1, 2025).

Key informants of this study also believed that PR serves as the eyes and ears of media organizations. According to KI1 (2025), one of PR's key functions is to strengthen external relations. It's natural that mistakes can happen while working and problems may arise from unexpected news coverage that could damage the organization's reputation. When such issues occur, it's the PR department that stands on the front line, working to protect and preserve the organization's reputation. PR acts as the guardian, the bridge, and the corrective force. He also noted that without a PR department, addressing these issues can become a significant challenge, as the responsibility often falls to other departments,

[1] KI1 is the former EBC PR department head and a key informant interview in this study.

like the newsroom, which aren't directly equipped to handle such situations. In KI1's view, this responsibility should lie with PR. He believed that PR's role is not only to connect the organization with external stakeholders, but also to manage internal communication effectively. Ki1 noted that during organizational crises, the PR team is responsible to react swiftly and professionally, to help the organization navigates the crisis effectively. PR is truly the pillar that supports both internal and external relations (KI1, 2025).

Regarding this debate, KI2[2] (2025) also believed that PR is essential to media and asked *"how can an institution function without proper communication? Who responds to the miscommunications and misunderstandings that constantly arise?"* demonstrating how EBC paid a heavy price due to absence of proper communication. KI3[3] (2025) also noted the vitality of PR for media. He elaborated that when the media seeks information, whether for news or for a program, they (PR) can connect at that point and work together; the spokesperson is from public relations. The media's mission, on the other hand, is basically to provide information, educate, and entertain. Therefore, the work of the two is different. The media has its own stakeholders, its own audience/clients. Public relations also have its own stakeholders, its own clients/audience (KI3, 2025). Likewise, KI4[4] (2025), explained that there are two arguments regarding the vitality of PR for media. Some argued that since the media itself is a communicator and inherently speaks for itself, it doesn't require an additional public relations function. On the other hand some scholars argued that while the media's core content creation work is paramount, there is still a need for a dedicated, independent corporate communication function. This function would handle the media outlet's corporate branding, personal branding (of key figures), and overall corporate communications strategy (KI4, 2025). He further elaborated that the rationale for the second argument is the media should establish dedicated platform to communicate about itself; its work, its strategic goals, engaging directly with its audience, and promoting itself to clients. KI4 asserted that based on this thought, EBC, even dating back to its previous structure, established Branding and Communication as a distinct department, and it continues to operate today (KI4, 2025).

KI5[5] (2025) also reflected similar perspective. He explained that the idea of seeing PR as unnecessary

[2] KI2 is an event organizer at EBC and a key informant in this study.
[3] KI3 is a Public Relations team leader at EBC and a key informant in this study.
[4] KI4 is the head of CEO office at EBC and a key informant in this study.
[5] KI5 is head of EBC`s branding and corporate communication department and key informant in this study.

for media stems from the idea that since media is one of the tools for carrying out strategic communication tasks, having a communication function within the media would be redundant – like creating media within media. So, the argument comes from the assumption that the media can inherently speak for itself. However, KI5 believed that this perspective is incorrect. He noted that;

> *"….our institution, in particular, communicates globally. We have partners. We have international media institutions as partners. A communications department is necessary for managing our relationships with them. For instance we currently have corporate agreements with Al Jazeera, CGTN (China Global Television Network), TRT (Turkish Radio and Television), and among African nations, SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation). These partnership agreements are achieved through robust strategic communication efforts. This means the institution needs a dedicated department to establish these agreements with partner organizations* (KI5, 2025).

This all showed that PR is essential for media to communicate with its audience, advertisers, and local and international partners.

4.3.2 Effects of absence of a well empowered PR Department in EBC

Many participants of this study agreed that EBC has suffered reputational damage due to its weak PR functions. Misperceptions, unresolved public criticisms, and widespread misinformation have gone unaddressed. According to them lack of proactive communication has led to defamation and trust issues with clients. The respondents illustrated how PR tasks were either neglected or usurped by other departments, which diluted the institution's capacity to respond to crises. KI1 (2025), observed that a PR department within media organizations is quite rare in Ethiopia. He doubted if any large media organizations, aside from EBC, have a PR department as part of their organizational structure. He described that, even the PR department at EBC has not been particularly active. Typically, EBC's PR department has taken on tasks that should be handled by other departments, such as ethics, which should fall under the ethics team, or employee discipline, which is more aligned with HR responsibilities. During the time, KI1 led the PR department; the focus shifted more toward the department's core responsibilities. He explained that this was largely due to the efforts of EBC's CEO, Ato Berhanie Gebremariam, who took the initiative to strengthen the PR department. According to KI1 (2025), however, this period of focus on PR lasted only two years, while Berhanie

was in office. Once he left EBC, the PR department returned to its usual inactive state. KI1 concluded that PR departments in Ethiopian media organizations are either non-existent or remain dormant, with few exceptions (KI1, 2025).

Similarly, KI2 (2025), explained how the absence of well-structured PR created ambiguities in the activities of EBC. He described:

"There are many instances of defamation that we encounter. For example, the perception that the amount EBC charges for advertising are expensive has taken hold like a belief among many of our clients. However, this perception is incorrect. It's information spread by our competitors – a typical defamation. But when it comes to the reality, in many advertising deals [or sales], our price isn't expensive; comparatively, it's similar to competitors. Sometimes, our price is even better. We need an entity that can systematically explain this mistaken perception to stakeholders. This means that, in our part, we haven't communicated properly, we haven't worked to correct the misinformation" (KI2, 2025).

KI6[6], (2025), also reflected that EBC has suffered much due to the lack of properly structured PR. She explained that sometimes discontinuation of programs have created a compliant. She described; *"for example, programs we initiated after discussions with major institutions get cancelled abruptly; when they are cancelled, there isn't even an entity to properly explain the reason why. Things are not communicated properly, and similarly, when new initiatives emerge, they aren't communicated well either. We fail to adequately address both stakeholders and the community*". She believed that due to lack of appropriate communication procedures, EBC lose audiences and stakeholders, created a major gap. She further elaborated that;

"For example, the claim that 'EBC is a liar' needs a response. EBC carries out its work based on evidence. Perhaps there are things it doesn't cover, but when it does work, it doesn't fabricate anything. Since there are segments of society who believe EBC is a liar, it struggles even to respond by saying this is inappropriate. There's a tendency not to focus on these matters, but over time, this harms EBC. In this era where a lot of distorted information is spread, an era abundant with misinformation and disinformation, it might be necessary to diligently track and refute it. If that

[6] KI6 is a member of EBC organizational structural reform and a key informant in this study.

doesn't happen, the institution could run into trouble. Sometimes, because there's no one monitoring, it might not even realize it's in trouble" (KI6, 2025).

She also added that due to the absence of PR, there are many times when things are said about EBC, and the issue passes without a proper response being given, leads to an erosion of trust within society. Because silence regarding claims rose, whether true or false, is often considered tantamount to acceptance, and because there is no entity recognized by the public that verifies information about EBC, there's a tendency among the public to accept these claims as truth (KI6, 2025). She also raised the recent case of '*Fikr Eske Mekabir*' drama as an example. She noted that regarding the recent *'Fikir Eske Mekabir'* issue with those claiming rights against EBC, if there were a PR department, it would have accurately informed the public about the actual situation. Instead, the public hear about it from other media outlets. Even broadcasting news claiming victory without acknowledging the lawsuit was inappropriate in itself (KI6, 2025).

According to KI5 (2025), the absence of PR at EBC has prevented the institution from forming strong alliances and partnership. He elaborated that though EBC has a 90-year legacy in radio, it hasn't built strong alliances or close partnerships with international partners due to lack of a robust global communication, prevented the creation of extensive relationships.

Generally, the data gathered from key informant interview indicated that lack of a well-structured PR has negatively impacted EBC, particularly in audience engagement, defamation against it, ambiguity among workers, and its relationship with advertisers as well as international partners.

4.3.3 Reflections on the Effectiveness of the Previous PR Structure Under the earlier organizational structure

Key informants of this study reflected diverse responses regarding the effectiveness PR during the former structures. According to KI1 (2025), the then PR department has arranged different agreements with various organizations to benefit EBC and its employees'. He elaborated that, *"in that time, we established good relationship with Mesfin Industrial to benefit our workers with long term credit of automobile cars, the industry in return to get news coverage with consistent manner. We also designed a project with Addis Abeba city administration that shall benefits our workers with*

ownership of house. Our Employee with the position of Director and above got a car with the agreement of long term credit with our organization" (KI1, 2025). He added that all of these are done by the active involvements of PR department.

However, as KI5's (2025) personal assessment, the employees who were assigned to work in the former PR department did not properly understand the profession. He argued that if the assigned employees had performed effectively, they would have been able to demonstrate the department's importance. KI5 don't think the assigned employees had the appropriate education or training for the profession. They should have had strategic communication training, but they lacked it. They were people who came into this profession from other fields. Therefore, they associate communication solely with tasks like preparing banners, handling publications, and similar activities. This lack of understanding of the profession prevented the department from being effective (KI5, 2025).

Since 2023, a few measures have been taken to reactivate the PR function at EBC from its dormant state. One significant change has been an improvement in the reporting line: the PR unit now reports directly to the Office of the Chief Executive Officer, bringing it closer to executive management. Previously, it was positioned under the Creative Division. Another improvement is the elevation of the PR unit from a team to a departmental level. However, the department still suffers from insufficient staffing. Although clear job descriptions for PR roles have been developed, they have not been adequately filled or empowered. Currently, the department's activities are limited, mainly focusing on establishing external relations, primarily with a few embassies. Even these external relations are largely restricted to exploring opportunities for media cooperation and training with other countries. Nonetheless, it can be said that some improvements in structure and operational activities have been made compared to the previous period.

4.3.4 Justifications for the Current PR Organizational Structure at EBC

Interviewees consistently reported that no formal justification has been provided for the restructuring of the PR unit at EBC, whether regarding its upgrading or downgrading. Participants noted that while the Public Relations (PR) department at ETV/EBC operated at the departmental level for nearly two decades, senior management often demonstrated either a lack of awareness of the importance of PR or little interest in maintaining a well-empowered and effective PR department. Although the

department was not officially removed from the organizational structure, likely to avoid contradicting recommendations from restructuring bodies, interviewees indicated that it consistently lacked the necessary support and attention for its proper functioning.

KI1 (2025), questioned that since the restructuring in 2021 what way can it be said that things have been strengthened? He said, there isn't even a designated department to handle this work, after all! Although Public Relations (PR) work involves many things, key aspects include protecting and upholding the institution's reputation, and ensuring its relationship with the public remains peaceful... performing these tasks is the work of public relations. In the absence of the department one cannot assume that these aspects have been maintained. Because, without PR in place to promptly resolve problems as they arise, I find it very difficult to say that it has been strengthened (KI1, 2025).

According to KI2 (2025), there is no an effective PR at EBC due to illusions that PR is not needed. As a result, the current PR not equipped well. It has never even encountered a competent communicator. There is also a struggle over mandate – for example, there are times when the CEO's office performs communication tasks. Sometimes, the entity managing content also undertakes communication work using the resources at its disposal. He further elaborated that in many occasions communication, branding, and marketing exist and work together in an integrated manner. But the question is who should lead it overall. There is internal competition. Here at EBC, these are viewed as equivalent. But if they push against each other lead to clashes, it won't be effective (KI2, 2025).

According to KI3 (2025), likewise, the PR department did not provide the needed service to EBC. He explained that though the structure existed, it hasn’t sufficient understanding of its functions, as there are people who assume the media itself can function as public relations. Therefore, they don't give it attention. He further illustrated that;

“For example, if there is a statement to be given by the CEO, it should pass through the EBC Public Relations department, just like the PR of any other institution. It's not something you just give by calling over a journalist who happens to be nearby; the primary consideration should be 'How should I connect with the public? How do I build my institution's image?’ Because the thinking when the CEO gives a statement is, ‘I have journalists readily available, I don't need PR,’ the Public Relations department was rendered powerless/ineffective. Therefore, it's difficult to say it has

effectively functioned. Perhaps during the celebration of EBC's 50th anniversary, one could say it functioned then." (KI3, 2025).

Similarly, several participants highlighted that the PR department at EBC has long been perceived as an "*unwanted unit."* Senior management reportedly used the PR unit as a place to reassign employees who were no longer wanted in operational roles elsewhere. For years, it served as a way to sideline unwanted staff. In some cases, employees who management wished to dismiss, but could not due to legal constraints, were instead transferred to the PR department.

Those assigned to PR positions often lacked the necessary skills and knowledge to perform PR functions effectively. Moreover, the team remained extremely small—typically comprising only two or three members—whereas most departments at ETV/EBC maintained staffing levels of ten or more. Participants highlighted that the PR department's activities received little to no oversight, with an absence of regular monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up. In addition to these challenges, PR personnel were sometimes tasked with responsibilities outside their core mandate, such as handling employee ethics and disciplinary issues, which more appropriately belonged to the Ethics or Human Resources departments (KI5, 2025).

According to KI1 (2025), after the PR department was removed, the responsibilities were transferred to two bodies the Event Organizers teams and branding teams each reporting to different departments. He has observed that these teams now handle many of the PR activities. For example, when guests visit EBC, event organizers or branding personnel greeted them and given a tour. Embassies also visit for various purposes, and either of the teams is responsible for welcoming them and accommodating them based on the purpose of their visit. Additionally, the event organizers manage events such as Radio Day, FM anniversaries, and other similar activities. EBC hosts various events, and I've witnessed the Event Organizing team taking on many of the PR-related tasks (KI1, 2025). Some interviewees such as KI7[7] (2025), recalled that the PR department received greater attention from senior management during the leadership of Berhane Kidane Mariam at ETV/EBC (2014–2016). During this period, the department became more actively involved in PR-related activities, including organizing major events such as the 50th anniversary celebration of ETV/EBC. It also contributed to several publications. (In fact most of which were internal operational manuals)

[7] KI7 is managing director of EBC`s marketing development division at EBC and a key informant interview in this study.

and established external relations with other organizations. Notably, participants mentioned that the department played a significant role in initiating a cooperation agreement between EBC and Mesfin Industrial Engineering (KI7, 2025).

However, following Berhane's departure and another round of organizational restructuring, the PR department was downgraded to a team-level and put under the newly formed Marketing Department, renamed as "Branding and PR team". Participants described how another team called "Event Organizing" was also established within the same department, leading to overlapping roles and confusion regarding the PR team's mandate. During this time, the PR unit's role was largely limited to supporting marketing staff in income-generating efforts, without engaging in any visible or strategic PR activities.

During the 2021 reform and organizational restructuring of EBC, PR department removed. After two years PR at the level of team reestablished under creative division and renamed the "communication and branding team". It staff is only one individual. Later in the same year (2023), the team grew to a departmental level and began reporting directly to the chief of the CEO's staff. While this upgrade and reporting-line change might appear to signal improvement, participants stressed that the department still operates with only a single staff member, severely limiting its capacity to function effectively.

Overall, the findings indicate that the PR function at EBC lacks both senior management attention and operational autonomy. Participants repeatedly pointed out a fundamental lack of institutional understanding and prioritization of PR within EBC, which negatively affects resource allocation, strategic planning, and overall effectiveness. The current marginalization of the PR unit appears to be a direct consequence of its historical ineffectiveness, itself rooted in insufficient focus, investment, and support from senior leadership. These findings relate directly to the research question concerning how EBC justifies the absence of a capable and well-empowered PR department within its organizational structure. Responses of key informants showed that EBC hadn't a proper justification for restructuring the PR department, leading to internal competition, gaps in task divisions and weak public relations work. Key informants also believed that current workers of the newly structured department are not equipped with proper staff number, and tools.

Table 1: Summary of thematic analysis of in depth interview

Major theme	subthemes	Summary of responses
Need for PR at media organization	Strategic Role of PR	Participants emphasized that PR is crucial for managing reputation, building public trust, and aligning communication with organizational goals
	Internal and External Communication	PR was described as necessary to maintain consistent communication internally with staff and externally with audiences and stakeholders
Effects of absence of a well empowered PR	Damage to Public Image	Participants noted EBC's low level of public reputation, citing lack of coordinated messaging and missed opportunities for engagement
	Loss of Stakeholder Trust	The absence of a strong PR function led to weak relationships with key stakeholders, including government bodies, the public, and partners
Justification for the current PR structural position	Managerial Perceptions	Management reportedly justified the weak PR structure by considering PR non-essential compared to content production roles
	Organizational Challenges	Some participants mentioned internal resource limitations and a general misunderstanding of PR's strategic importance as reasons for the current setup
Effectiveness of the Previous PR Structure	Limited Strategic Impact	Under the previous structure, PR strategic activities were not visible, limiting their effectiveness
	Staffing and Professionalism Issues	Participants criticized the practice of assigning unmotivated or unsuitable staff to PR, which undermined the department's ability to function professionally

4.4. Analysis of Questionnaire Data

Open and close-ended questionnaire responses from 28 employees and 30 stakeholders, which are

intended to answer RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4, revealed significant findings regarding the operational and reputational implications of EBC's current PR structure.

4.4.1. Employees` close ended questionnaire response data analysis

The analysis of employees' close-ended questionnaire responses, which relate directly to RQ3 and RQ4, provided insights into the current state and perceived effectiveness of the Public Relations function within EBC. Purposely selected EBC employees' were asked if they have any information on the presence of public relations within EBC. The data confirmed that only few employees are aware of the existence of a Public Relations body within the organization. Additionally when asked about the actual practices of PR personnel, most respondents indicated that PR activities are generally perceived as limited and lacking visibility. Most employees rated the effectiveness of PR practices as low, pointing to insufficient involvement in core organizational functions and weak strategic communication support. Moreover, the responses of participants showed a strong consensus on the need for a dedicated and capable PR department at EBC, with many stressed that PR cannot be easily replaced by related departments such as marketing and branding. While they believed in the functions of marketing and branding, employees underscored that strategic PR is critical and irreplaceable in managing the organization's reputation and stakeholder relationships. Regarding EBC's focus on public relations, the data revealed that the 2021 organizational restructuring, attention to PR activities has brought no change. Employees widely reported that the effectiveness of PR work has further declined under the new structure, with reduced institutional support and unclear positioning of the PR function within the overall organizational framework. Overall, the responses illustrate a clear need to reposition and empower the PR department to better serve EBC's strategic goals.

Table 2: Summary of Employees' Close-Ended Questionnaire Responses

Focus Area	Summary of Findings
Existence of PR Department	Only few Employees acknowledged the existence of a PR body within EBC
Practices of PR Personnel	generally lacks visibility and perceived as limited and without strategic depth
Effectiveness of PR Practices	Most employees rated PR effectiveness as low or negligible

Need for PR at EBC	Strong agreement
Role of PR vs. Other Functions	Employees emphasized that PR has a unique role distinct from marketing or branding efforts.
EBC's Focus on PR after 2021	No change from previous
Effectiveness of PR Post-2021	Most agree no change

4.4.2. Employees` open ended employee response data analysis

The analysis of employee open-ended responses revealed a consistent and critical view regarding the state of Public Relations (PR) practice at EBC. While responding questions about the effectiveness of EBC's PR department, the majority of employees stated that there was no evident or influential PR work during the assessment period. Many of them described that PR practices were either missing or carried out in a disconnected and reactive manner, lacking strategic planning and execution. Regarding its achievements, most employees participated in this study demonstrated that they could not name any major accomplishments by the PR department, proposing that its contributions to enhancing EBC's public image were minimum or zero. Finally, when they asked for recommendations, the frequent suggestion was the need to restructure the PR department, underscoring the vitality of clearly defining roles and responsibilities, appointing qualified professionals, and ensuring that PR is positioned as a strategic function within the organization.

Table 3: Summary of employees` open ended questionnaire responses

Focus Area	**Main Response Summary**
Effectiveness of PR	Largely ineffective; lacked strategic planning and impact
Major achievements	No major achievements identified by employees
Recommendations for improvement	Restructure the department, appoint qualified staff, and align PR with strategic goals

4.4.3. Stake holders` close ended questionnaire data analysis

The close-ended questionnaire responses from stakeholders provided critical insight into the current public perception of EBC, directly addressing Research Question 2. In terms of overall impression, the majority of stakeholders reported a negative or unfavorable view of EBC. Regarding their media consumption habits, most stakeholders indicated that they rarely or occasionally watched or listened EBC programs. On transparency and responsiveness of EBC, the majority of participants disagreed with the idea that EBC reacts to public questions timely and transparently. Likewise, majority of participants disagreed that EBC effectively communicates its mission and values to the public. These results reflect a clear gap between EBC's intended public image and the actual perception held by stakeholders. The absence of an empowered and proactive PR function appears to have contributed significantly to the deterioration of public trust and audience loyalty.

Table 4: Summary of Stakeholders' Close-Ended Questionnaire Responses

Assessment Area	Summary of Stakeholder Responses
Overall impression of EBC	Majority reported a negative or unfavorable view
Frequency of watching/listening to EBC	Most stakeholders rarely or occasionally engage with EBC programming
Transparency and responsiveness to public	Majority disagreed that EBC is transparent or responds on time to public concerns
Communication of mission and values	Most respondents felt that EBC does not effectively communicate its mission and values

4.4.4. Stake holders` open ended questionnaire data analysis

The open-ended responses from public stakeholders provided current public perception of EBC. They were also asked about their first thought or feeling toward EBC. Participants shared diverse reactions, ranging from specific opinions about the type of programming to broader views about the station's overall content quality. While some respondents noticed improvements in entertainment and cultural programs, the majority of them expressed dissatisfaction with the credibility, timeliness, and balance of EBC's news contents. Many perceived the organization as lacking independence, with some criticizing it for favoring governmental narratives over neutral reporting. These findings directly

address Research Question 2 by revealing that the current public image of EBC is mixed but leans toward negative perceptions, particularly in areas that a capable PR department could have influenced positively. The absence of strong PR engagement appears to have contributed to a gap between EBC's intended image and public expectations, allowing criticisms to dominate public sentiment.

Table 5: Summary of Stakeholders' Open-Ended questionnaire Responses

Focus Area	Summary of Stakeholder Responses
Type of Programs	Some positive comments about entertainment and cultural content.
News Content	Criticized for lack of credibility, balance, and timeliness
Overall Public Image	Seen as government-aligned; perceived lack of independence
General Public Sentiment	Mixed, but more negative perceptions dominate

4.4.5. Employees' and Stakeholders' data analysis

The analysis of both employee and stakeholder questionnaire responses revealed consistent and reinforcing perceptions about the status of public relations at EBC. Both groups agreed that the practices of PR personnel at EBC lack strategic depth and visibility. Employees rated the effectiveness of PR work as low or negligible, and stakeholders similarly characterized EBC's public communication as inconsistent and reactive. There was strong consensus from both employees and stakeholders on the necessity of having a capable, empowered PR department, distinct from marketing or branding efforts. Furthermore, both groups indicated that no significant improvement was observed in either the focus on PR activities or the effectiveness of public relations work following the organizational restructuring in 2021. These findings highlight a shared understanding among internal and external audiences about the critical gaps in EBC's current PR practices and the need for structural and strategic reforms.

4.5. Document Review Analysis

The document review provided valuable insights into the structural and functional status of the Public

Relations (PR) department within the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC). A careful examination of materials produced by the PR department, job specifications and descriptions, annual reports, various versions of organizational structures (organograms) revealed several key patterns. First, the materials produced by the PR department reflected a limited scope of activity, often lacks strategic communication. PR outputs were primarily focused on routine activities, rather than proactive reputation management, strategic stakeholder engagement, or advisory functions to senior leadership. This indicated a lack of clear role definition and insufficient strategic integration of PR into EBC's broader organizational goals.

The job specifications and descriptions for PR roles further highlighted this issue. The roles were often vaguely defined, emphasizing basic communication tasks without outlining strategic responsibilities such as crisis communication, brand management, or stakeholder analysis. This lack of clarity likely contributed to the marginalization of the PR function within the corporation.

The review of multiple organizational structures (organograms) implemented over time showed that the PR department was frequently changed its position (upgraded and downgraded, or establishing under this or that unit) and consistently placed in a peripheral position, often under departments with limited strategic influence. Unlike international benchmarks — such as the BBC, Al Jazeera, and SABC — where PR is positioned directly under executive leadership or as an independent unit with clear strategic mandates, EBC's PR function was subordinated and lacked direct access to decision-making processes. This structural marginalization reflects the minimal priority given to PR by EBC's senior management. At BBC, Al Jazeera, and SABC, PR and communication functions are treated as critical to organizational strategy, equipped with autonomy, well-defined mandates, and strong support from top management. These organizations recognize PR as essential not only for external communication but also for internal cohesion and crisis management.

According to KI6[8] (2025), international media organizations like CNN and BBC have established well-structured PR departments that promote their brand, explain things to stakeholders and the audience when the media faces problems, and issue clear reports. CNN and BBC have these because of professional encounters. They operate with significant organizational structure and major responsibilities. She also noted that the South African SABC handles external and internal

[8] KI6 is a Key informant in this study and member of EBC organizational structural reform.

communications. They undertake work related to diversity. For example, recognizing that there are segments of society harmed during the Apartheid era that are now said to deserve reparations, various activities are undertaken related to raising awareness among journalists about these groups and ensuring the media provides equitable coverage. They design strategies for this, promote them to the public, and inform the community, partly to encourage government support (KI6, 2025).

Ki6 (2025) also illustrated that the role of PR is not just taking information and publishing it; it also involves gathering information through discussions with leadership. Because the PR function understands the institution's relationship with the public, it serves as a bridge for the leadership. Its role includes informing leadership about what is gathered from the public, and informing the public about what comes from leadership, in a manner that protects the institution's interests. It performs work that is distinct from content creation, with clear demarcation. Because leaders change frequently, different leaders promote different stances when they come into office. Consequently, when leaders who believe EBC needs its own PR department arrive, they establish one. When those who think it's unnecessary arrive, they abolish it. When leaders who believe the work of EBC already serve as its own PR, the dedicated department remains absent. Still others seem to maintain something nominally, perhaps just to avoid eliminating it completely, without definitively stating whether it truly exists as a functional department or not (KI6, 2025).

In summary, the document review revealed that the PR department at EBC has historically been undervalued, structurally sidelined, and functionally limited. The findings align with interview and questionnaire results that suggested PR at EBC has been treated as an *"unwanted unit,"* used to sideline employees rather than drive strategic communication. This structural and functional neglect has significantly undermined the department's effectiveness and its potential contribution to the corporation’s reputation, stakeholder trust, and organizational success.

Table 6: Summary of document review analysis

Reviewed Document	**Findings and Interpretations**
PR Materials, Reports	Focused mainly on routine, lack strategic communication
Job Specifications and Descriptions	Lack role clarity, focusing on basic communication tasks; absence of strategic functions like crisis

	communication or brand management, contributed to marginalization
Organizational Structures (Organograms)	Frequent repositioning, subordinated to less influential departments, reflecting low prioritization by senior management.
Comparative Review of International Media (BBC, Al Jazeera, SABC)	PR units are directly linked to top management; roles clearly defined and strategically empowered, clear model for improvement.

4.6 Analysis of Observation Data

In addition to in-depth interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis, I also relied on long-term participant observation informed by my professional experience of nearly two decades within the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC). This extended engagement allowed me to observe patterns in how communication and public relations functions have been handled over time, particularly before and after the organizational restructuring that took place in 2021.Throughout this period, I observed that the visibility of PR activities at EBC have remained largely unchanged despite formal structural adjustments. There was a consistent absence of strategic communication planning, limited engagement with stakeholders, and little evidence of a system in place to monitor and manage the institution's reputation. These long-term observations reinforce what many respondents also confirmed, that the structural changes did not meaningfully enhance the practice or visibility of PR within the organization. These points to a deeper issue: the mere existence of a PR department (or its nominal restructuring) does not guarantee its visibility or success unless it is institutionally empowered, adequately staffed, and recognized as a strategic function within the media organization. After 2023 the aim of PR activity getting some attention of higher management. In 2023, the unit was elevated to the Communication and Branding Department. As part of this strategic change, its reporting line shifted to the CEO's Chief of Staff. These improvements have resulted in a significant increase in the department's activity and visibility.

4.7. Discussion

This study employed four primary data sources; in-depth interviews with key informants and questionnaires distributed to employees and stakeholders, observation and document review. An integrated analysis of these sources provided a comprehensive understanding of the role, practice, and challenges of the PR department within the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) from 2020 to 2024. The findings are presented according to the four major research themes.

4.7.1 Why Media Institutions Need PR: Theoretical and Practical Perspectives

Participants consistently highlighted the necessity of a well-empowered PR department for managing reputation, strategic communication, and stakeholder engagement—including crisis communication, international partnerships, and clarifying ambiguities or addressing defamation. Data from key informants, document analysis, and observations of international media organizations (e.g., BBC, Al Jazeera) indicated that a structurally positioned PR department at the heart of strategic operations is fundamental to media success.

Applying Grunig and Hunt's (1984) four models of public relations, respondents agreed that PR is vital for media organizations. Their emphasis on engagement, responsiveness, and dialogue supports a shift away from one-way communication models (press agentry, public information) toward more interactive approaches. In particular, the two-way symmetrical model, which prioritizes mutual understanding and shared benefit between media and their audiences, is especially relevant.

This perspective aligns with the Excellence Theory, which posits that ethical, strategic, and interactive PR is essential for organizational success, particularly in trust-driven environments. Moreover, participants emphasizing that PR is not just about disseminating messages but about sustaining meaningful relationships with key stakeholders. In media contexts, this means PR is central to content management, audience trust, and institutional credibility.

4.7.2 The Implications of Lacking a Well-Empowered PR Structure Since 2021

Key informants indicated that EBC has significantly suffered from the absence of a well-structured and empowered PR department. Their responses revealed a lack of clear frameworks, insufficient staffing, absence of professional training, and blurred roles between PR, event organization, branding, and marketing. The organizational restructuring in 2021 does not brought any important change to visibility of PR at EBC.

For example, programs were sometimes canceled without communicating clear information to the public or internal teams. Cases like the “Fikr Eske Mekabir” drama episode created confusion among audiences who received more information from other media than from EBC itself. These issues reflect a failure in crisis communication planning and execution.

In light of the Excellence and systems Theories, effective PR requires a dedicated, knowledgeable team that integrated with top-level decision-making and interacts with stakeholders. However, participants described EBC’s PR as marginalized, under qualified, and lack visibility. The integration of PR functions with unrelated departments diminished its role and impact. Consequently, EBC’s public image suffered, and its ability to manage crises, build trust, and maintain transparency declined.

According to stakeholders and employees, the PR department is so invisible that many were unaware of its existence. This marginal positioning negatively impacted internal coherence, public perception, and external relationships. Data also show that senior management often viewed PR as non-essential, which contributed to poor performance and low visibility. The stakeholder responses further confirmed public dissatisfaction, reporting minimal engagement with EBC programming and limited transparency in addressing public concerns.

Overall, the findings clearly suggest that the absence of a well-empowered PR department before the 2021 restructuring and no change after the restructuring has had a direct and negative impact on EBC’s credibility, responsiveness, and public trust.

4.7.3 Justification and Organizational Logic behind the PR Gap

Document analysis and interview responses indicated that the current structure of EBC emerged from managerial misunderstanding or undervaluation of PR's strategic importance. Rather than viewing PR as a leadership function central to reputation and audience management, it was treated as a secondary support role. This misperception led to the removal of the PR unit during the 2021 restructuring, reinforcing its marginality within the organization, even though reinstated in2023.

Employee responses confirmed that this change was not based on performance evaluations or strategic review but rather administrative convenience or a top-down directive that did not consider the actual needs of the institution. The PR function was either absorbed into unrelated departments or left without a clear mandate, leading to further disempowerment and inefficiency.

This organizational logic contradicts the principles of Excellence Theory, which advocates for PR as a strategic management function requiring independence and direct access to decision-making bodies. Without such positioning, PR cannot facilitate two-way symmetrical communication or contribute meaningfully to organizational planning and crisis management.

4.7.4 Visibility of PR before the 2021 Restructuring

Participants also reflected that even before the 2021 restructuring, EBC's PR function was not strategic or impactful. Employee questionnaires revealed that the earlier PR unit lacked clear objectives, professional staffing, and strategic communication capacity. PR activities were poorly defined and often reactive rather than proactive.

Historical documents and limited PR outputs supported the view that the department was weak even before the recent structural changes. Staffing was inconsistent, and PR lacked a clearly defined role or voice in major organizational decisions. These insights underscore that EBC's PR challenges are not only structural but also cultural and professional. The long-standing marginalization of PR, both before and after 2021, has weakened its institutional role. As per **Grunig and Hunt's (1984)** theoretical framework, the absence of strategic, transparent, and two-way communication has negatively affected EBC's credibility and reputation.

Participants concluded that there has been no improvement in PR visibility or function since the restructuring, though some improvements after 2023.The organization's failure to institutionalize

ethical, transparent, and stakeholder-centered communication practices—hallmarks of excellence in PR, has led to a deepening crisis of public trust, reputational damage, and diminished internal and external engagement.

4.7.5. Integrated Discussion: Comparing Employee, Stakeholder, and Interview Data

Across all data sources, three recurring themes emerged:

1. Lack of Strategic Communication Integration: PR is not part of strategic planning at EBC.
2. Disempowerment of Communication Officers: Those assigned PR roles are neither well-trained nor involved in decision-making.
3. Stakeholder Disconnection: Public stakeholders felt disengaged and unaware of EBC's vision, policies, and editorial rationales.

This triangulation of data strengthens the study's conclusion that the PR function at EBC is not positioned as a strategic necessity. The consequences are reputational decline, weakened stakeholder trust, and missed opportunities to guide the organization through public perception challenges.

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Summary

This study, titled "The Practice of Public Relations at the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) from 2020–2024"**,** investigated how Public Relations (PR) is understood, structured, and practiced within EBC. It aimed to assess the visibility, strategic relevance, and institutional positioning of PR in one of Ethiopia's leading public media institutions. The research focused particularly on the period before and after the 2021 organizational restructuring, exploring how the absence of a well-empowered PR department has affected EBC's ability to manage its public image, respond to crises, engage stakeholders, and communicate its mission effectively. The study also sought to evaluate whether existing PR activities align with recognized theoretical models such as the Excellence Theory, systems theory and Grunig and hunt`s four model of public Relations.

To achieve these objectives, a qualitative research methodology employed, that allowed for an in-depth and contextual exploration of PR practices at EBC. Data were collected using a variety of tools, including in-depth interviews with key informants**,** semi-structured questionnaires distributed to EBC employees and public stakeholders, as well as long-term participant observation and document analysis**.** These tools were chosen to provide a triangulated and comprehensive perspective on how PR is, or is not, functioning as a strategic communication instrument within the organization. This study finds out the following key findings:

- **Strategic Relevance of PR:** Participants of this study reported that PR is vital for media organizations. They underscored PR's role in strategic communication, stakeholder engagement, and reputation management. This supports the theoretical foundations regarding the need for PR to function as a strategic management tool, particularly theory of excellence.
- **Visibility of PR in the Previous organizational Structure:** The earlier PR structure lacked visibility and linkage to senior management; it has also suffered from inadequate resources, authority, and follow-up mechanisms. Some occasional visibility such as the 50th anniversary campaign, were not sustained due to lack of systemic support. From 2020 to 2024 the working unit re-positioned twice but still no basic improvement in its working activities due to the same problems; inadequate resources and authority.
- **Current Organizational Structure:** The PR function at EBC is marginalized within the marketing and branding division. This structural arrangement limits its autonomy and weakens its strategic potential. As highlighted in the literature, lack of clearly defined role with related

departments often results in diminished effectiveness and mandate confusion.

- **Impact of an low visibility PR Department:** EBC's under-performance in PR has contributed to defamation, reduced stakeholder trust, and public misinformation. The absence of a well-empowered PR team has made it difficult for the organization to address crises, clarify controversies, or project a consistent image.
- **Internal and External Perceptions:** Employees and stakeholders alike expressed dissatisfaction with PR performance at EBC. Questionnaire data revealed that most of employees viewed the PR department as critical but poorly utilized. Stakeholders highlighted gaps in responsiveness, transparency, and engagement.

5.2. Conclusions

Applying qualitative research approach and gathering data through in-depth key informant interview, questioner and document analysis, the study concludes that PR department is vital for media organization for stakeholder engagement, reputation management and crisis communication. Additionally, this study concluded that EBC's PR department is structurally and functionally underdeveloped. While its theoretical importance is acknowledged, practical implementation is weak due to inadequate positioning, resource limitations, and lack of strategic oversight. As supported by excellence theory and the two-way symmetrical model, effective PR should facilitate mutual understanding, respond to stakeholder feedback, and be integrated into the organization's strategic decision-making processes. EBC's current structure fails to meet these standards. This research also confirmed that public relations practices in Ethiopia remain technical and reactive, rather than strategic and managerial, lining up with previous studies. This is particularly evident at EBC, where PR practitioners are not empowered to act as communication advisors or engage in reputation management.

5.3. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, this study recommended EBC to restructure its PR department to function independently, directly interacting to executive management like the case of BBC and CNN. In addition to this, recruiting and developing skilled PR professionals with a strong background in strategic communication is vital for EBC, with adequately staffed and resourced. Likewise, establishing a clear and comprehensive responsibility for PR personnel to avoid duplication and

dilution of roles with other departments and ensure accountability is vital. To appropriate address current gaps, EBC also needed involving PR department in strategic discussions and planning processes to ensure alignment with institutional goals and public expectations. Moreover, building a structured feedback mechanism to gather, analyze, and respond to stakeholders will enhance two-way communication and foster public trust. Finally adopting communication policies that emphasize transparency, accountability, and ethical engagement, consistent with modern PR theories and practices will empower EBC's PR practice.

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APPENDIXES

Addis Ababa University

Graduate School of Journalism and Communication

Department of Public Relations and Strategic Communication

In-depth Interview Questions, to Interior key informants (former and current management members)

The Need for PR in Media

1. From your perspective, why do media organizations, particularly state-owned broadcasters, need Public Relations?
2. How does PR contribute to audience trust, stakeholder engagement, and crisis management in media?
3. Can you provide examples of media organizations (local or international) that have successfully leveraged PR for credibility and reputation management?

Effects of PR Absence on EBC's Reputation

4. How has the absence of a strong PR department affected EBC's ability to manage its reputation?
5. Have you observed any public perception changes regarding EBC since the PR department was removed?
6. In your view, how has the lack of PR impacted EBC's ability to handle public criticism, misinformation, or crisis situations?
7. Do you think journalists and editors at EBC recognize the importance of PR in their work? Why or why not?

Justification for PR Absence at EBC

8. What were the organizational reasons behind the decision to remove the PR department in 2021?
9. Since then, how has EBC attempted to handle PR-related functions?
10. In your opinion, has EBC's reputation management been stronger or weaker without an official PR department?

Effectiveness of PR Personnel Before 2021

11. How would you assess the PR personnel's effectiveness before the department was removed?
12. Were there any major PR achievements or challenges that stood out during that time?
13. What internal or external factors influenced the performance of the PR team?
14. How were PR officers positioned within EBC's organizational structure? Were they empowered to make strategic communication decisions?

Recommendations for Strengthening PR at EBC

15. Do you believe EBC should reinstate a PR department? Why or why not?
16. If EBC were to bring back PR functions, what structural or operational changes would you suggest?
17. How can PR officers be positioned within EBC to maximize their impact on reputation management and strategic communication?
18. What lessons can EBC learn from other successful media organizations with strong PR strategies?

Appendix Two

አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ

የጋዜጠኝነትና ኮሙኒኬሽንትምህርት ቤት

የህዝብ ግንኙነትና ስትራቴጂክ ኮሙኒኬሽን ዲፓርትመንት

ዝርዝር ቃለመጠይቅ ለዋነኛ መረጃ ሰጪዎች(ከኢቢሲ የአሁንና የቀድሞ አመራሮች መካከል)

በሚዲያ ተቋማት ውስጥ የሕዝብ ግንኙነት ዲፓርትመንት አስፈላጊነት

1. በሚዲያ ተቋማት በተለይም ባለቤትነታቸዉ የሕዝብ በሆኑት ውስጥ የሕዝብ ግንኙነት የሥራ ክፍል ለምን የሚያስፈልገዉ ይመስሎታል?
2. የሕዝብ ግንኙነት ሥራ በሚዲያ ተቋማት ውስጥ፤ የአድማጭ ተመልካችን እምነት ለማግኘት፣ የባለድርሻ አካላትን ተሳትፎ ለማሳደግና ችግር ሲከሰት በመከላከል ረገድ ምን ሚና ይጫወታል?
3. ከሀገር ውስጥም ሆነ ከዓለም አቀፍ የሚዲያ ተቋማት መካከል በሕዝብ ግንኙነት ሥራቸዉ አማካኝነት ተአማኒነትና መልካም ስም መገንባት የቻሉ የሚዲያ ተቋማትን መጥቀስ ይችላሉ?

የሕዝብ ግንኙነት አለመኖር በኢቢሲ መልካም ስም ላይ ያሳረፈዉ ተጽእኖ

4. ጠንካራ የሕዝብ ግንኙነት ዲፓርትመንት አለመኖር በኢቢሲ መልካም ስም አጠባበቅ ላይ ያለዉ ተጽእኖ ምን ይመስላል?
5. የህዝብ ግንኙነት ዲፓርትመንት ከታጠፈ ወዲህ ሕዝቡ በተቋሙ ላይ ያለዉን ስሜት እንዴት ያዩታል?
6. አቢሲ የሚሰነዘሩበትን ትችቶች ለመመዘን፣ የተዛቡ መረጃዎችን ለመከላከል ወይም አስቸጋሪ ሁኔታዎች ሲከሰቱ ለመቋቋም ባለዉ ብቃት ላይ የሕዝብ ግንኙነት አለመኖር ያሳረፈዉን ተጽእኖ እንዴት ይመለከቱታል?

7. ጋዜጠኞችም ሆኑ አርታኢዎች በሥራ እንቅስቃሴያቸዉ ውስጥ ለሕዝብ ግንኙነቱ ሥራ ዋጋ የሚሰጡ ይመስሎታል? እንዴት የሚለዉን ያብራሩታል?\

የሕዝብ ግንኙነት አያስፈልግም የሚለዉ መከራከሪያ

8. በመዋቅር ማሻሻያዉ ላይ የሕዝብ ግንኙነት ዲፓርትመንት የታጠፈበት ምክንያት ምንድነዉ?
9. .ዲፓርትመንቱ ከታጠፈ ወዲህ ከሕዝብ ግንኙነቱ ጋር የተያያዙ ሥራዎችን ኢቢሲ እንዴት እያከናወናቸው ይገኛል?
10. የሕዝብ ግንኙነት ዲፓርትመንት ከታጠፈ ወዲህ የተቋሙ የመልካም ስም አጠባበቅና አያያዝ እየተጠናከረ ወይስ እተዳከመ የመጣ ይመስሎታል?

ከመዋቅር ማሻሻያዉ በፊት የነበረዉ የኢቢሲ ሕዝብ ግንኙነት ውጤታማነት

11. ዲፓርትመንቱ ከመታጠፉ በፊት የነበረዉን የኢቢሲን የሕዝብ ግንኙነት ውጤታማነት እንዴት ይገመግሙታል?
12. ዲፓርትመንቱ በነበረ ጊዜ፤ያስመዘገበዉ ተጠቃሽ የሥራ ውጤት ወይም በድል የተወጣዉ ይህ ነው የሚባል ተግባር አለው?
13. በሕዝብ ግንኙነቱ ቡድን የሥራ እንቀስቃሴ ላይ ተጽእኖ ያሳረፉ ዉስጣዊና ዉጫዊ ምክንያቶች ምንድናቸዉ?
14. በኢቢሲ መዋቅራዊ አደረጃጀት ውስጥ የሕዝብ ግንኙነት መኮንኖች ያላቸዉ ደረጃ ምን ነበር? በእስትራቴጂክ ኮሙኒኬሽን ጉዳዮች ላይ ውሳኔ የመስጠት ሥልጣን ነበራቸዉ?

የኢቢሲን የሕዝብ ግንኙነት ለማጠናከር ምክረ ሐሳቦች

15. ኢቢሲ እንደቀድሞዉ የሕዝብ ግንኙነት ዲፓርትመንት ሊኖረዉ ይገባል ? ለምን?
16. ዲፓርትመንቱ ቢመለስ መዋቅራዊ አደረጃጀቱና ተግባሩ ላይ ምን ምን ለዉጦች ሊኖሩ ይገባል ይላሉ?
17. የኢቢሲ የሕዝብ ግንኙነት መኮንኖች በተቋሙ መልካም ስም አጠባበቅና ስትራቴጂያዊ ኮሙኒኬሽን ላይ ያላቸውን ሚና ለማጎልበት ደረጃቸው ምን መሆን ይገባዋል?
18. ስኬታማ የሕዝብ ግንኙነት ስትራቴጂ ካላቸው የሚዲያ ተቋማት ኢቢሲ ምን ትምህርት ይወስዳል?

Appendix Three

Addis Ababa University

Graduate School of Journalism and Communication

Department of Public Relations and Strategic Communication

Questionnaire to EBC public/stakeholder: Dear Respondent;

The main purpose of this questionnaire is to collect data for a research work. Your feedback is a great contribution to this study. I would like to assure you that your response to the questionnaire would be kept confidential and it has no intention except for academic purpose. I also humbly ask you to provide appropriate answers to the questions listed below. Thank you so much for your time and attention. If you would like to be clarified or have additional comments, you can contact me at Email:*nebsol2017@gmail.com* or at cell phone: +251- 911385981

Please circle your responses for the following personal information

1. **Gender:** A. Male B. Female
2. **Age:** A. 18-25 B.26-35 C.36-45 D. 46-50 E. 51 and above
3. **Educational level:** A. Diploma B. 1st degree C. 2nd degree D. PhD E. other
4. **Livelihood:** a. Government employee b. Private organization employee c. Self-employed d. Unemployed e. Other

5. How often do you watch/listen to EBC programs?

- Never
- Rarely (Less than once a month)
- Occasionally (A few times a month)
- Frequently (A few times a week)
- Daily

6. What is your overall impression of EBC?

- Very Negative
- Negative
- Neutral
- Positive
- Very Positive

7. Do you feel EBC is transparent and on time to respond to the public?

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

8. Do you think EBC effectively communicates its mission and values to the public?

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

9. What are the first thought or feeling that come to mind when you think of EBC? (In a few words) _____

_____

_____

Appendix Four

አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ

የጋዜጠኝነትና ኮሙኒኬሽን ትምህርት ቤት

የህዝብ ግንኙነትና ስትራቴጂክ ኮሙኒኬሽን ዲፓርትመንት

ለኢቢሲ ባለድርሻ አካላት/ አድማጭ ተመልካች የቀረበ ጥያቄ፡-

የዚህ መጠይቅ ዋና አላማ ለሁለተኛ ድግሪ ማሟያ የምርምር ሥራ መረጃ መሰብሰብ ነው። የእርስዎ አስተያየት ለዚህ ጥናት ትልቅ አስተዋፅዖ አለው። ለመጠይቁ የሚሰጡት ምላሽ ለአካዳሚክ ዓላማ ብቻ የሚውል ሲሆን፤ሚስጥራዊነቱም የተጠበቀ መሆኑን ላረጋግጥ እወዳለሁ። ከዚህ በታች ለተዘረዘሩት ጥያቄዎች ተገቢውን መልስ እንዲሰጡኝ በትህትና እጠይቃለሁ። ጊዜዎን ሰጥተዉ ይህን ጉዳይ በትኩረት በማየትዎ ከፍ

ያለ ምስጋና አቀርባለሁ። ማብራሪያ ለመሥጠት ወይም ተጨማሪ አስተያየት ካለዎ፤ በኢሜልnebsol2017@gmail.com ወይም በሞባይል ስልክ፡ +251- 911385981 ሊያገኙኝ ይችላሉ።

እባክዎ ለጥያቄዎቹ ከአማራጮቹ መካከል ምላሽዎን ያክብቡ

1. ጾታ፡- ሀ. ወንድ ለ. ሴት

2. ዕድሜ፡- ሀ.18-25 ለ.26-35 ሐ.36-45 መ. 46-50 ሠ. 51 እና ከዚያ በላይ

3. የትምህርት ደረጃ፡- ሀ. ዲፕሎማ ለ . የመጀመሪያ ድግሪ ሐ . ሁለተኛ ድግሪ መ . ዶክትሬት ድግሪ ሠ. ሌላ

4. መተዳደሪያ፡- ሀ. የመንግሥት ሠራተኛ ለ. የግል ድርጅት ሠራተኛ ሐ. በግል ሥራ የተሰማራ መ. ሥራ አጥ ሠ. ሌላ

5. የኢቢሲ ዝግጅቶችን ምን ያህል አዘዉትረዉ ይመለከታሉ/ ያዳምጣሉ?

- አላይም
- በጣም በጥቂቱ (በወር አንዴ ወይም ከዚያ በታች)
- አልፎ አልፎ አያለሁ (በወር ዉስጥ ጥቂት ቀናት)
- በተደጋጋሚ (በሳምንት የተወሰኑ ቀናት)
- በየቀኑ

6. ለኢቢሲ ያለዎት አጠቃላይ ስሜት እንዴት ይገለጻል?

- በጣም መጥፎ ስሜት
- መጥፎ ስሜት
- ጥሩም ሆነ መጥፎ ስሜት የለኝም
- ጥሩ ስሜት አለኝ
- በጣም ጥሩ ስሜት አለኝ

7. ኢቢሲ ከሕዝብ ለሚነሱ ጥያቄዎች ግልጽና ወቅቱን የጠበቀ ምላሽ ይሰጣል በሚለዉ ሐሳብ ይስማማሉ?

- በፍጹም አልስማማም
- አልስማማም
- አስተያየት የለኝም
- እስማማለሁ
- በጣም እስማማለሁ

8. ኢቢሲ ተልእኮና እሴቶቹን ለሕዝብ በሚገባ አስተዋዉቋል በሚለዉ ሐሳብ ይስማማሉ?

- በፍጹም አልስማማም
- አልስማማም
- አስተያየት የለኝም
- እስማማለሁ
- በጣም እስማማለሁ

9. ስለ ኢቢሲ ሲያስቡ ቀድሞ ወደ አዕምሮዎ የሚመጣዉ ሐሳብ ወይም ትዉስታ ምንድነዉ? (በጥቂት ቃላት ይግለጹ) _____

_____

_____

Appendix Five

Addis Ababa University

Graduate School of Journalism and Communication

Department of Public Relations and Strategic Communication

Questionnaire to EBC employee: Dear respondent;

The main purpose of this questionnaire is to collect data for a research work entitled *"*Examining the Practice of Public Relations Departments of the Media: The Case Of Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation From 2020- 2024"

Your feedback is a great contribution to this study. I would like to assure you that your response to the questionnaire would be kept confidential and it has no intention except for academic purpose. I also humbly ask you to provide appropriate answers to the questions listed below. Thank you so much for your time and attention. If you would like to be clarified or have additional comments, you can contact me at Email:*nebsol2017@gmail.com* or at cell phone: +251- 911385981

Please circle your responses for the following questions

5. Gender: A. Male B. Female
6. Age: A. 18-25 B.26-35 C.36-45 D. 46-50 E. 51 and above
7. Educational level: A. Diploma B. 1st degree C. 2nd degree D. PhD E. other
8. Work experience in year: A. 1-5 B. 6- 10 C. 11- 15 D. 16 -20 E. 21 and above
9. Current Work Position: A. Reporter/ Expert/ Technician B. Team leader C. Middle management D. Higher management

6. Did you have any Information that there are public relations within EBC?

- No Information
- Few information
- Not Sure
- Enough information
- Detailed Information

7. Do you know the practices of PRs in EBC?

- No Information
- Few information

- Not Sure
- Enough information
- Detailed Information

❖ **Do you mention activities that you know and performed by PR of EBC?**

_____

_____

8. Do you think the practice of PR in EBC is effective?

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

❖ **Do you mention major achievements of PR of EBC?**

_____

_____

9. Do you agree that EBC needs public relations?

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

10. Do you agree that the role of PR in EBC can be easily substituted by others like marketing, Branding or others?

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

11. How do you see EBC's focus on public relations?

- Very Low
- Low

- Neutral
- High
- Very High

12. What type change do you observe on the effectiveness of PR work after organizational structure of 2021?

- Significant Decrease
- Slight Decrease
- No Change
- Slight Improvement
- Significant Improvement

❖ **If the PR department were to be reinstated, what improvements or changes would you suggest?----------**

Appendix Six

አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ

የጋዜጠኝነትና ኮሙኒኬሽንትምህርት ቤት

የህዝብ ግንኙነትና ስትራቴጂክ ኮሙኒኬሽን ዲፓርትመንት

ለኢቢሲ ሠራተኞች የቀረበ ጥያቄ፡-

የዚህ መጠይቅ ዋና አላማ ለሁለተኛ ድግሪ ትምህርት ማሟያ ጥናት መረጃ መሰብሰብ ነው። የእርስዎ አስተያየት ለዚህ ጥናት ትልቅ አስተዋፅዖ አለው። ለመጠይቁ የሚሰጡት ምላሽ ለአካዳሚክ ዓላማ ብቻ የሚዉል ሲሆን፤ሚስጥራዊነቱም የተጠበቀ መሆኑን ላረጋግጥ እወዳለሁ።

ከዚህ በታች ለተዘረዘሩት ጥያቄዎች ተገቢውን መልስ እንዲሰጡኝ በትህትና እጠይቃለሁ። ጊዜዎን ሰጥተው በትኩረት በመመልከትዎ ከፍ ያለ ምስጋና አቀርባለሁ። ማብራሪያ ለመሥጠት ወይም ተጨማሪ አስተያየት ካለዎ፤ በኢሜይል nebsol2017@gmail.com ወይም በሞባይል ስልክ፡ +251- 911385981 ሊያገኙኝ ይችላሉ።

እባክዎ ለጥያቄዎቹ ከአማራጮቹ መካከል ምላሽዎን ያክብቡ

1. ጾታ፡- ሀ. ወንድ ለ. ሴት

2. ዕድሜ፡- ሀ.18-25 ለ.26-35 ሐ.36-45 መ. 46-50 ሠ. 51 እና ከዚያ በላይ

3. የትምህርት ደረጃ፡- ሀ. ዲፕሎማ ለ . የመጀመሪያ ድግሪ ሐ . ኹለተኛ ድግሪ መ . ዶክትሬት ድግሪ ሠ. ሌላ

4. የሥራ ልምድ በዓመት ፡- ሀ. 1-5 ለ. 6- 10 ሐ.11-15 መ. 16-20 ሠ. 21 እና ከዚያ በላይ

5. አሁን የያዙት የሥራ ወይም የኀላፊነት ደረጃ ፡- ሀ. ሪፖርተር/ኤክስፐርት/ቴክኒሻን ለ. መካከለኛ አመራር መ. ከፍተኛ አመራር

6. ኢቢሲ የሕዝብ ግንኙነት የሥራ ክፍል እንዳለዉ መረጃ አለዎት?

- ምንም መረጃ የለኝም
- ጥቂት መረጃ አለኝ
- እርግጠኛ አይደለሁም
- በቂ መረጃ አለኝ

- ዝርዝር መረጃ አለኝ

7. የኢቢሲ የሕዝብ ግንኙነት የሥራ ክፍል ስለአከናወናቸዉ ተግባራት መረጃ አለዎት?

- ምንም መረጃ የለኝም
- ጥቂት መረጃ አለኝ
- እርግጠኛ አይደለሁም
- በቂ መረጃ አለኝ
- ዝርዝር መረጃ አለኝ

❖ **የኢቢሲ የሕዝብ ግንኙነት ክፍል ስለአከናወናቸዉ ተግባራት የሚያዉቁት ካለ ይግለጹ**

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8. የኢቢሲ የሕዝብ ግንኙነት ክፍል ዉጤታማ ተግባራት አከናዉኗል ቢባል ይስማማሉ?

- በፍጹም አልስማማም
- አልስማማም
- አስተያየት የለኝም
- እስማማለሁ
- በጣም እስማማለሁ

❖ **የኢቢሲ የሕዝብ ግንኙነት ክፍል ካከናወናቸዉ ተግባራት መካከል ዉጤታማ የሚሉትን ይግለጹ?**

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9. ኢቢሲ የሕዝብ ግንኙነት የሥራ ክፍል ያስፈልገዋል በሚለዉ ሐሳብ ይስማማሉ ?

- በፍጹም አልስማማም
- አልስማማም
- አስተያየት የለኝም
- እስማማለሁ
- በጣም እስማማለሁ

10. የኢቢሲ የሕዝብ ግንኙነት ሥራ ገበያ ልማትና ብራንዲንግ በመሳሰሉ ሌሎች የሥራ ክፍሎች

በቀላሉ ሊሸፈን ይችላል በሚለዉ ሐሳብ ይስማማሉ?

- በፍጹም አልስማማም
- አልስማማም
- አስተያየት የለኝም
- እስማማለሁ
- በጣም እስማማለሁ

11. ኢቢሲ ለሕዝብ ግንኙነት የሰጠዉን የትኩረት ደረጃ እንዴት ያዩታል ?

- በጣም ዝቅተኛ
- ዝቅተኛ
- አስተያየት የለኝም
- ከፍተኛ
- በጣም ከፍተኛ

12. በ2014 ዓም የተሠራዉ ተቋማዊ የመዋቅር ማሻሻያ በሕዝብ ግንኙነት ክፍል የሥራ እንቅስቃሴ ላይ ያመጣዉን ለዉጥ እንዴት ይመለከቱታል?

- በከፍተኛ ደረጃ እንዲቀንስ አድርጎታል
- በመጠኑ እንዲቀንስ አድርጎታል
- ለዉጥ የለም
- በመጠኑ እንዲሻሻል አድርጎታል
- በከፍተኛ ደረጃ አሻሽሎታል

በሕዝብ ግንኙነት ክፍሉ ላይ ማሻሻያ ይደረግ ቢባል ምን ዓይነት ማሻሻያ እንዲደረግ ይመክራሉ?----------
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Appendix Seven

Thematic Analysis of All Data Sources

To understand the practice of public relations (PR) within the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), this section presents thematic analysis based on data collected from three primary sources: employee questionnaires (N=30), public stakeholder questionnaires (N=28), and seven in-depth interviews with internal key informants. The analysis followed the six-phase thematic analysis approach outlined by Naeem et al. (2023) to each data collected through questionnaires and in depth interview and here is the integration of analysis of these all data. By triangulating these sources, the study ensures a more complete and validated account of the strengths and limitations of PR practices within EBC.

Step 1: Familiarization with the Data

The first step involved repeatedly reviewing open-ended responses and interview transcripts while also interpreting patterns in the close-ended response results. Participants across all groups consistently highlighted poor visibility of PR, lack of public engagement, minimal involvement in organizational decisions, and widespread misunderstanding of the PR role within EBC.

Step 2: Generating Initial Codes

Codes were created from key ideas repeated across data sets. These were drawn from employee and stakeholder response narratives, supported by close-ended data patterns, and enriched with deeper insights from interviews.

Code	Sample Expression	Source(s)
PR lacks authority	"PR had no say in planning or decisions."	Employee open-ended, Interview
Frequent change of level and line of report	"It was a unit with no real interest of management"	Interview, Employee survey
Public not engaged	"There's no open communication with the audience."	Stakeholder open-ended, Close-ended
Role confusion	"PR is confused with, marketing, branding, protocol and event handling."	All three sources
PR not seen in media	"We never see EBC communicating through PR on any platform."	Stakeholder open-ended, Employee data
No response during crises	"PR is silent when there's public criticism."	Stakeholder and Interview
No collaboration of operations	"PR works alone, not with other units."	Employee and Interview

Step 3: Searching for Themes

These codes were grouped into five overarching themes that emerged consistently across employees, stakeholders, and interviewees:

Emerging Theme	Related Codes
1. Lack of proper PR Structure	No staffed department, no qualified leadership, unclear mandate
2. Exclusion from Strategic Roles	No seat at planning, no role in decision-making, no advisory role
3. Misunderstanding of PR Function	Seen as, marketing, branding, protocol, not strategic

Emerging Theme	Related Codes
4. Disconnection from the Public	Lack of engagement, absence during crises, no feedback
5. Weak Internal Collaboration	Lack of collaboration in operations, no cross-department communication

Step 4: Reviewing Themes

Themes were reviewed to ensure they represented distinct yet interrelated issues. All five themes were retained because they consistently appeared in all three data sources. These themes represent both internal and external dimensions of PR challenges at EBC.

Step 5: Defining and Naming Themes

Final Theme	Definition
1. Lack of proper Structure	PR at EBC lacked proper line of Reporting, clear roles, and functional autonomy.
2. Exclusion from Strategic Roles	PR was not included in executive or strategic planning processes.
3. Misunderstanding of PR Function	The role of PR was widely misunderstood as event organizing, marketing, branding or protocol management rather than a communication strategy unit.
4. Disconnection from the Public	The PR function failed to maintain audience engagement, manage feedback, or respond to crises.
5. Weak Internal Collaboration	The PR unit operated in isolation from other departments, limiting effectiveness and coordination.

Step 6: Writing the Integrated Report

The integrated analysis confirms that the PR function at the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation was severely limited in its capacity and role and no change post 2021organizationa restructuring. The absence of proper organizational structure in relation to its mandat meant that PR had no defined

authority, leadership, or clear reporting line. Interviews and employee responses described PR as a subordinate desk rather than a full-fledged department.

The theme of exclusion from strategic roles was particularly concerning. PR personnel were not invited to participate in content planning, executive decisions, or strategic discussions—practices that are essential for aligning public communication with institutional priorities. This was affirmed by employee surveys and multiple interviewees.

A consistent theme across stakeholders, employees, and interview participants was the misunderstanding of the PR function. Many individuals equated PR with hospitality, protocol, marketing, or branding tasks. This perception prevented PR officers from being recognized as professional communicators or strategic advisors.

Externally, the theme of disconnection from the public highlighted EBC's failure to maintain audience dialogue. Stakeholders reported minimal engagement, lack of responses during public controversies, and an absence of communication platforms for feedback or inquiry. These perceptions suggest that the PR unit played almost no role in building or managing the organization's public image.

Finally, weak internal collaboration was a barrier to effectiveness. The PR function operated independently, with minimal coordination with programming, editorial, or technical departments. Employees and interviewees stressed the need for cross-unit collaboration to ensure consistent messaging and institutional alignment.

Together, these themes show that the PR function at EBC—under its previous organizational setup—was lacks visibility, under-resourced, and misunderstood. The findings strongly support the need for a well-empowered, strategically positioned PR department that contributes to both internal communication and external engagement.

Integrated Summary of Themes across All Respondents

Theme	Description	Voices Reflected	Sample Quote
Lack of proper Organizational Structure	PR lacked qualified staff, autonomy, or leadership	Employees, Interviews	" frequent change of line of reporting and level"
Exclusion from Strategic Roles	PR not included in planning, editorial, or decision-making	Employees, Interviews	"We were never in strategic meetings."
Misunderstanding of PR Function	PR viewed as event or protocol unit rather than strategic partner	All three sources	"They think we sale product and not strategy."
Disconnection from the Public	No public engagement, reactive communication, no feedback systems	Stakeholders, Interviews	"There is no way to communicate with EBC PR."
Weak Internal Collaboration	PR worked in silos without input from or coordination with others	Employees, Interviews	"No one knew what PR was doing, and vice versa."