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Addis Ababa University

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**ASSESSING THE PRACTICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS ON
INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION: THE CASE
OF ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**

By

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**A Thesis Submitted to the School of Journalism and Communication Presented in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts In public
Relations and Strategic Communication.**

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November, 2023**

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Asebe Endeshaw entitled “**Assessing the Practice of Public Relations on Internal Organizational Communication: The Case of Addis Ababa University**” and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Public Relations and Strategic Communication complies with the regulations of the University and notes the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the internal organizational communication practice. In this study, the practice of public relations was assessed in the context of internal organizational communication at AAU. In this study, important informants were selected through purposive sampling methods. The data from in-depth interviews and FGD were collected and analyzed using a qualitative research method. The relevant information from the FGD and interview was analyzed using a qualitative theme approach. This study found that AU uses formal and informal communication techniques including grapevine and other types of downward, upward, lateral, and diagonal communication. Even though the AAU created integrated communication channels including social media, print publications, websites, and electronic media. However, the university's PR professionals mostly disseminate their message through websites and yearly publication.

This research concluded that AAU PR practitioners play insignificant role in establishing efficient internal organization communication within the university internal publics.

Key terms: Internal Organizational communication, Public Relations, Internal Publics

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to give special thanks to God the Almighty for giving me strength, health and other resources to complete this thesis.

I would like to acknowledge the academic support and invaluable guidance that I received from my advisor, Dr. Samson Mekonnen throughout this thesis preparation stages. I would also like to express my gratitude to my wife Meseret Zewedu for her advice and encouragement. I am very grateful to my friends' who supported me during the research.

Table of Contents

Contents	Page
ABSTRACT.....	i
Acknowledgments.....	ii
List of Table	vi
Acronyms	vii
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
1.1 Background of the Study.....	1
1.2 Statement of the problem	2
1.3 Objective of the Research.....	4
1.3.1 General objective	4
1.3.2 Specific objectives Specific Objectives	4
1.4 Research Questions/Hypothesis	5
1.5 Significance of Study	5
1.6 Scope of Study.....	5
1.7 Limitation of the study	6
CHAPTER TWO	7
2.0. Literature Review	7
2.1. Internal Communication.....	7
2.1.1. Internal publics are Not Homogenous	7
2.1.2. Skill Sets for Internal Communication	8
2.1.3. Internal Communication Impacts External Communication	9
2.1.4. Internal Communication as an Element of Public Relations	9
2.1.5. Internal Communication: Dimensions and Value.....	11
2.1.5.1. Roles and Objectives of Internal Communication	12
2.1.5.2. Internal Communication Resources	14
2.1.5.3. Relationship of Internal Communication and Employee Performance.....	17

2.1.5.4. Relationship of Internal Communication and Organizational Identification	21
2.1.5.5. Relationship of Organizational Identification and Employee Performance.....	24
2.1.5.6. Relationship of Internal Communication, Organizational Identification and Employee Performance	26
2.1.5.7. Public Relations in Higher Education	27
2.2. Theoretical Framework	28
2.2.1. The Excellence Theory	29
2.2.2. Information Theory.....	30
2.2.3. Media Richness Theory	33
2.3. Empirical Reviews	35
CHAPTER THREE	39
Research Methodology	39
3.0 Introduction	39
3.1. Research Approach and Research Design.....	39
3.2. Tools of Data Collection	41
3.2.1 In-Depth Interview.....	41
3.2.2 Focus Group Discussion	41
3.3. Sampling Technique and participants of the study	42
3.4 Procedures of Data collection and method of Analysis	43
3.4.1 Procedures of Data Collection	43
3.4.2 Method of Analysis.....	43
3.5. Validity of the Study	44
CHAPTER FOUR.....	45
Presentation and Analysis of Data	45
4.1 Introduction	45
4.2 Data from Focus group discussions.....	45
4.3 Data from an In-depth –Interview	48

4.4 Discussions	51
4.4.1 Internal Public s of AAU	51
4.4.2 Hierarchy of AAU Communications	53
4.4.3 Internal Communication channel of AAU	55
4.4.4 Elements that affect Internal Communication of AAU	62
4.5 Major Findings of the Study.....	65
CHAPTER FIVE.....	67
Discussion, Summary Conclusion Recommendation.....	67
5.0 Introduction.....	67
5.1 Summary	67
5.2 Conclusion.....	69
5.3 Recommendations	70
Reference	72
Appendices.....	76
APPENDIX II.....	77

List of Table

	Page
Table 1: data gathered from in-depth interviews with AAU internal publics.....	51

Acronyms

AAU- Addis Ababa University

PR- Public Relations

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Background of the Study

Addis Ababa University was established as university College of Addis Ababa in 1950, stands as the most ancient and extensive center for higher education and research in Ethiopia, recognized as Addis Ababa University. Since its founding, the university has been a national and international hub for research, teaching, and community service. In 1950, AAU had a maximum enrolment of 33 students. Today, it has more than 50,000 undergraduate, graduate, and PhD students, as well as nearly 9000 academic and support staff members. The University offers numerous Health Sciences specializations across its 14 campuses, including 293 graduate programs (72 PhD and 221 Masters) and 70 undergraduate programs. Since the institution's founding, almost 250,000 students have graduated from AAU (AAU strategic communication plan, 2023).

The University is under the leadership of a President who receives support from four Vice Presidents and one Executive Director, as indicated in the AAU Strategic Communication Plan (2023). These Vice Presidents consist of the Academic Vice President, Vice President for Research and Technology Transfer, Vice President for Administration and Student Services, Vice President for Institutional Development, and the Executive Director of the College of Health Sciences (who holds the rank of Vice President). The University has implemented several reform initiatives in recent years in order to keep pace with and adapt to the swiftly changing national and international dynamics of higher education. At present, the University encompasses 10 colleges, 4 teaching and research institutes, and 6 research institutes primarily dedicated to research endeavors. These academic institutions house 55 departments, 12 centers, 12 schools, and 2 teaching hospitals. (AAU strategic communication plan, 2023). Higher education has been using the public relations function since the 19th century. The University of Michigan established the first publicity office for higher education in 1897. At Harvard, Yale, and

Columbia, others soon followed (Cutlip et al., 1985). Currently, almost all colleges and universities in the United States have some form of administrative public relations or public affairs department.

The Office of Communication and the Office of External Relations and Partnerships were merged in 2012 following AAU's restructure. The office's primarily mandated to communicate the objectives and overall performance the university through different media outlets. This will ultimately help to build and harmonize the university-wide relationships and collaborations with national and worldwide Universities. The office has two team leaders: the team leader for external relations and partnerships, which has three practitioners, and the team leader for communications, which has two senior public relations officers and two assistant public relations experts. There are also camera operators, secretaries, messengers, and drivers (OERP, 2017).

As far as the knowledge of the researcher is concerned, there are no researches conducted in relation to Addis in Addis Ababa University public relations practice on internal organizational communication. Therefore, this study is mainly focused with assessment of the internal organizational communication practice of AAU to achieve its institutional goals.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The field of organizational message investigation was developed through to the point somewhere academics are now engrossed to tackling statement issues for arise from workplace interactions. Due to this, nowadays it is necessary to assess the communication that occurs within an organization's internal environs, also known as internal communication, which is an integrated process (Rajhans 2012).

Researchers divide organizational communication into two categories: organizational communication as well as communication within organizations. The first strategy, which entails the exchange of information between a sender and a receiver, is communication within the organizations. There is a need to alteration of a perspective that takes into account organizational

challenges and complexities, generational issues, cultural differences, and technological advancements that leads to effectiveness (Miller 2006; Cheney, Christensen, Zorn & Ganesh 2011; Wagner 2013; Steele & Plenty 2014; Men 2014; Ruck 2015; Zwijze-Koning & De Jong 2015; Mao & Hale 2015; Wilkinso). This approach is criticized for failing to accommodate for emerging multifaceted situations in organizations.

The second approach to communication, known as organizations as communication, was chosen as a remedy for the emergence of complicated circumstances in organizations as it fills up the gaps left by the first approach, i.e., communication within organizations.

Organizational communication approaches emphasize two perspectives on communication. These are constitutive and constructive views. The constitutive view uses communication as a platform to question and investigate essential organizational realities and complexities by exploring and examining communication processes in search of a more favorable organizational outcome for employees. In contrast, the constructive view accommodates the fundamental and complex processes, such as negotiation and interpretation of meanings that shapes social reality (Koschmann 2012).

In order to determine whether the desired goal within the organization is being served, Downs (2012) contends that organizations should evaluate their internal communication. To understand the status of internal organizational communication within the institutions is also improved by undertaking an assessment (Buhmann, Likely, & Gededs, 2018). In this regard, a technique called communication audit. It is employed with the aim to rate internal corporate communications.

This study also considers a constitutive perspective of organization communication approach. It was done due to the privilege it offers a framework for investigating and evaluating the university's internal communication practice in order to foster effective communication and realize the institution's goals and vision .

Previously, numerous studies related to organizational communication have been conducted in our Country. For instance, as presented on Tirusew's report "Internal Organizational Communication Audit of Hibret Bank Head Office" 2022. He recommended that the practice of internal communication at the bank must be revised. Moreover, he also suggested the customization for channels of communication is needed so as to fulfill the intended function and for staff members to actively participate in the internal communication process.

In addition to this study done by Zemedkun (2019) titled "A Comparative Study on the Organizational Communication and Public Relations Practices of Two Ethiopian Public Universities: Addis Ababa and Jijiga Universities" revealed that Jijiga University's Corporate Communication Directorate and Addis Ababa University's External Relations, Partnerships, and Communications Directorate were both successful in communicating with their external stakeholders, but with mixed results.

As a result, Zemedkun's study (2019) compared the two organizational communication programs at two universities by combining system theory and corporate communication theory.

However, this study assessed the internal communication of AAU by merging the excellence, information, and media richness theories to achieve measurable results and conduct a thorough analysis of the impact of public relations on internal communication at the University,

1.3 Objective of the Research

1.3.1 General objective

The general objective of the study was to assess Addis Ababa University's internal organizational communication practices.

1.3.2 Specific objectives Specific Objectives

The research specifically addresses the under listed aims:

- To find out AAU's internal audiences
- Identify the hierarchy's internal transmission of AAU communication.

- To determine the effective ways that AAU uses to communicate with its internal publics.
- To examine the elements that affects the information flow in AAU's internal communications.

1.4 Research Questions/Hypothesis

Under stated study's inquiries are derived out of the research objectives, and t answers are found through data analysis.

Study's enquiries were presented as:

- Who are AAU internal publics and how public relations professionals recognize the institution's internal public?
- What is hierarchy of the AAU affect the delivery of internal communication looks like?
- Which criteria does AAU consider while choosing the communication channel to deliver its messages for its internal audiences?
- What are the elements affect the information flow within AAU's internal communications?

1.5 Significance of Study

This study has significant for academics and researchers as a source of knowledge and as a basis or inspiration for choosing a study field, reference material, or body of literature. Moreover, it will help the AAU PR department identify its areas of weakness and make necessary adjustments to better engage and effectively communicate its internal publics.

1.6 Scope of Study

The scope of this study was restricted to Addis Ababa University's internal publics due to financial, time, and other constraints. It won't look at the universities overall communication strategy or external communication tactics.

1.7 Limitation of the study

Since the study selected security guards, messengers and cleaners when asked during focus group discussion to reflect their views regarding the internal public relation practice of the university, few of them were afraid of to join the focus discussion group. Besides, during the data collection period the due the purposive sampling was used for this study limited numbers of students were included and that are the major limitations.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0. Literature Review

This chapter covers the general literatures in internal organizational communication practice that best illustrates the area under study. Furthermore, other studies which are conducted in area of this research were reviewed.

Theoretical frameworks that link with internal organizational communication, empirical studies in similar topics and conceptual framework and findings of the studies area reviewed.

2.1. Internal Communication

Organizations must engage and inform internal stakeholders while still maintaining an external focus. According to Whitworth (2006), "Internal communication is "the flow of information among individuals within the confines of an organization," according to Mazzei (2010). According to Welsh and Jackson (2007), internal communication is a purposeful management of interactions and relationships between stakeholders at all levels of the business, which supports a stakeholder approach. By stating that internal stakeholders can assist external stakeholders, Freeman (1984) develops on this notion. The conduit via which managers communicate with other external stakeholders must be understood to be internal stakeholders. Internal communication has been expressly mentioned as a relationship management and commitment-building method by public relations researchers (Cutlip et al., 2006; Grunig, 1996; Jo & Shim, 2005; Ledingham & Brunig, 2000). However, not every audience is the same.

2.1.1. Internal publics are Not Homogenous

Public relations professionals must remember that although internal stakeholders may be connected to one another, they may not all have the same interests (Jones, 1995; L'Etang, 2005; Welsh & Jackson, 2007). There are different types of internal audiences. These might be categorized based on demographic characteristics or profession. For instance, internal stakeholder groups in higher education can include those who are hourly or salaried, academic

support, administrative, academic, or research-based. According to Cheney and Christensen (2001), internal stakeholders can also be categorized using structural levels. They proposed the subcategories of daily management, team and project management, and strategic management. are some of the suggested classifications put forth by Welsh and Jackson (2007). There are specific skill sets that, like with any trade, enable practitioners to achieve their communication goals regardless of audience.

2.1.2. Skill Sets for Internal Communication

Internal communication is complicated (Smith, 2005), so communicators who want to interact with internal stakeholders need to possess a certain set of soft skills in addition to technical expertise. Adroitness like sensitivity and knowledge of how different individuals in companies will react or behave in various cultural contexts are examples of personnel skills (Chalmers, 2008). According to Conrad and Poole (2005), "rational" decision-making theory may not be sophisticated enough to guide a communicator through the complicated web of interpersonal, political, and ethical dilemmas that might arise in complex organizations. To get employees to support ideas and objectives, communicators need to be skilled at influencing and coaching employee attitudes, beliefs, and actions (Strauss & Hoffman, 2000). In addition to studying situational or environmental aspects of an organization, practitioners must also be able to assess its political, cultural, and relationship aspects. They must prepare for interactions with various groups (Welsh & Jackson, 2007) and frequently speak with employees to stay up to date on their needs (Farrant, 2003). To have direct knowledge of the organization's strategy and commercial plans, they must also be a part of the strategic coalition (Welsh & Jackson, 2007).

“It appears to be necessary for practitioners to acquire knowledge regarding the functioning of organizational processes, the ability to conduct comprehensive analysis of organizational environment and culture, and the skill to facilitate effective two-way communication within organizations (Chalmers, 2008). Technical abilities include the ability to create and write messages, carry out simple informative research, make wise decisions, manage media and

change, and have a working grasp of technology (Smith, 2005; Chalmers, 2008). Utilizing technology involves choosing a communication channel and determining when a company is prepared to adopt new technologies. Effective communicators understand how to strike a balance between humanity and technology (Keenan & Hazelton, 2006).

2.1.3. Internal Communication Impacts External Communication

The effectiveness of internal communications may affect employee-public relations, according to Rhee (2004). Relationship management focuses on internal publics since their actions can have a direct impact on how the outside world perceives a business (Gruing, 1992b). According to public relations theory, employees frequently represent a company's brand and image to external audiences. Therefore, employees have an impact on the brand or reputation of their company (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003; Grunig, 1992).

Organizations are interested in this because if they consider how employees communicate inside, then those same employees will have access to information and communication resources when they are interacting with members of the public outside the organization. They are then able to discuss the organization with facts and perspectives that are well-informed. Such encounters with external publics could have a negative impact on the business if they are ill-informed. Some businesses invest millions on philanthropic causes in an effort to gain a positive reputation in their local communities, but they fail to realize that every time an employee speaks negatively about the company, their reputation is put at risk (Crescendo, 2005). Public relations professionals are concerned about this possibility of external reputation damage. However, it can be lessened with a well-thought-out internal communication program.

2.1.4. Internal Communication as an Element of Public Relations

Internal communication is positioned in the public relations function, according to Van Reil (1995). This is a good fit since public relations professionals may utilize many of the same managerial, people, and technical abilities with internal audiences that they would use with external stakeholders. Using two-way communication is part of this. Based on research,

communication, and managing conflict with strategic publics, the two-way model of symmetrical communication identified in the Excellence Study seeks to balance the interests of the organization and its audiences. The study also stated that although even mediated communication can be symmetrical, the communication's substance must satisfy "employees need to know, rather than management's need to tell."

Public relations can use managed media to strategically communicate important internal messages to employee stakeholders. The frequency, substance, and placement of messages on controlled media are completely under the sender's control. There is direct communication between sender and recipient, and there are no gatekeepers who could alter or skew the message. staff-accessible intranet websites, company-issued emails sent directly to employees, social media accounts managed by the company, and even staff newsletters are all examples of controlled media. A regulated medium is also face-to-face communication. Public relations professionals who choose the content, format, and mode of distribution are engaging in managed communication in controlled media (Welch & Jackson, 2007). The dissemination of information through news media by public relations professional is an example of an uncontrolled media with a gatekeeper. The news media staffs, who are not employees of the entity that supplied the information, alter it after that. They manage the message's tone, amount of substance, and other aspects that are made available to the audience.

In accordance with Grunig (1992), the optimal framework for public relations is symmetrical two-way communication. This mode of communication is characterized by a balanced exchange between the sender and the recipient, as it facilitates a reciprocal flow of messaging. Consequently, the public relations messaging can be adjusted based on the ongoing conversation and the feedback received from the stakeholders to whom the messages are directed. As part of this continuous two-way communication, the public relations function should routinely conduct surveys to gauge employee preferences. These surveys serve the purpose of identifying the topics of information that employees find most engaging, as well as determining the optimal quantity of

information to avoid overwhelming the employees. The public relations department would then analyze this data when preparing for internal communication.

According to Jackson and Walsh's (2007) theory, internal communication has four key objectives. The first benefit is that it will strengthen internal ties and foster employee dedication. Second, employee belonging is encouraged via internal communication. Thirdly, it increases staff members' sensitivity to change. Employees can better grasp the necessity for the organization to change as a result of its environment with the use of internal communication. Internal communication can support the idea of employee commitment, which is crucial to firms. The risk of intrusion, however, poses a potential risk to the effective performance of the public relations role.

2.1.5. Internal Communication: Dimensions and Value

Based on the usage of communication technology, internal communication can be divided into two main categories: management communication and corporate information and communication systems (CICS). Management communication refers to the exchange of information between managers and staff, typically regarding certain duties that have an impact on morale and a sense of community. The majority of the communication is interpersonal. While human interactions are a focus of communication in management, information sharing generally is. For communication both above and downstream, they collaborate together. Employees are encouraged to voice their issues through upward communication, and the CICS provides forums to broaden the audience and strengthen connections to top leadership. (2011) Cornelissen.

Effective communication is a trait of high-performing businesses, which also succeed in eight areas including teaching staff about the organization's culture and values, connects employees with the business, synchronizes employee behavior with customer needs, provides objectives and financial details, explains and advertises new initiatives, integrates new hires into the company, shares information regarding the worth of the complete rewards program before displaying leadership during change (Yates, 2006).

Staff members are believed to be more motivated when information is communicated (Argenti, 1998), and engaging with employees even when it has nothing to do with their performance on the job is encouraged (White, Vanc, and Stafford, 2010). It helps to be well-informed as a person moves from being self-centered and job-focused to being more conscious of those around them in a company (Argenti, 1998). Dolphin (2005) contends that building relationships is more important than merely cascade communication and that trust and accurate information are essential. The impact of connections and trust between leaders and employees, as well as the connection between the significance of assisting employees in understanding their function within the firm, appeared to have an impact on employee communication satisfaction levels. By concentrating on the brand promise, internal communication can assist employees in relating to identity, commitment, and loyalty (Sharma and Kamalanabhan, 2012).

De Bussy and colleagues (2003) conducted a study to investigate the attributes of internal marketing communication, such as the ethical work climate, mutual trust, attitude towards innovation, and goal alignment. This study aimed to examine the influence of new media and communication on employees.

Information, direction, channel, and culture were all mentioned by White et al. (2010) as factors that could enhance relationships and trust within an organization as they researched internal communication in connection to interpersonal impact. Adequate information can help employees comprehend organizational messaging; the effectiveness of downward communication affects management and employee relationships; the culture has an impact on communication; and message efficacy optimizes employees' perceptions of communication channels.

2.1.5.1. Roles and Objectives of Internal Communication

Internal communication is widely acknowledged as playing a significant and diverse role in the achievement of business success. An important intangible factor that is believed to contribute to the performance of organizations is internal communication. The effectiveness of internal communication is viewed as a competitive advantage and a distinguishing factor for high-

performing firms in comparison to their competitors. It is also recognized to have a greater market value, enhance shareholder value, reduce employee turnover, and foster employee engagement. Public and private sector firms that perform at a higher level are more inclined to employ specific strategies for both group and individual internal communication. It is imperative for senior executives to actively participate in this process. In the absence of sufficient upward communication, managers may lack a comprehensive understanding of their challenges, thereby limiting their ability to devise effective solutions.

Although internal communication is on the rise, practitioners disagree on how it operates and how it fits into a multidisciplinary framework. Since it encompasses a variety of knowledge and skill sets, it is recognized as being interdisciplinary and as belonging to a distinct domain. There is disagreement about whether it should be administered by a separate department or be located under HR or corporate communication (Veri, Veri, Sriramesh, 2012). According to The Work Foundation (2007), internal communication was often handled by one or two dedicated employees.

The position is viewed as being technical in nature and involves disseminating information, managing the production of internal media content, and coordinating employee objectives with those of the employer. The internal communicator's roles include "information manager," "coach," and "mediator," and their goals include inspiring and bringing people together to establish culture and add value (Veri, Veri, Sriramesh, 2012). Although considering internal communication as a strategic strategy improves outcomes, internal communication is still difficult and complex (Chalmers, 2008).

Internal communication ROI takes both monetary and non-monetary measures into account. Businesses that monitor how effectively they use their resources have a competitive advantage. There isn't a measurement that works for everyone. To make sure that all communication efforts are connected together and accurately measured, a thorough internal setup is required. Timing is important for determining ROI, so ROI must be monitored at different stages of the

communication process and journey. When direct metrics are difficult to determine, use other measures to address ROI (Meng and Berger, 2012).

Since it is recognized as being more sophisticated, employee communication is viewed on par with external communication. The newsletter is viewed as a chance to establish the firm's brand, one that is connected to the communication plan and consistent with both internal and external communications. Respect and active listening are two crucial components. Let staff members be the first to know. Managers are the primary decision-makers in internal communications, and their input is crucial (Argenti, 1998).

The majority of businesses incorporate internal communication within their communication department (Dolphin, 2005). According to a study conducted in the United Kingdom, approximately 50% of organizations have centralized internal communication departments, while the remaining 50% have decentralized teams dispersed across various departments. However, in large organizations with over 5000 employees, internal communication is typically housed within the corporate communications department (The Work Foundation, 2007)

2.1.5.2. Internal Communication Resources

The majority of internal communication is controlled by the budgets at hand rather than by the goals specified. Budgets have grown, demonstrating the function's relevance (Work Foundation, 2007). The value of internal communication for strategy was recognized by communication leaders in the UK. The communicator's job is to increase the opportunity for workers to participate, listen, speak up, and be engaged. In comparison to external communication, management must place equal emphasis on internal communication. Clear and consistent internal communication is essential for the success of change management programs.

Internal communication is like a "corporate lifeboat." Instead of the people team, the communications department is where most businesses invest in internal communication. The likelihood of the organization speaking with one voice increases with the degree of alignment between internal and external communications. At the board level, internal communication was

not well represented. The methods used for internal communication were determined by the resources available and the size of the company. A result of efficient internal communication is a strong network of connections, increased trust, and valuable information. The 'today's strategic information manager' can be the communication leaders. In the UK, corporate communication is in good shape and is expanding consistently (Dolphin, 2005).

A. Internal Branding

Internal communication can increase employees' affinity to support the brand because they are thought of as "ambassadors of commitment" (Argenti, 1998). The necessity of creating communication policies and practices inside an organization. Employees' connections to the brand were aided through visual representations of it as well as logos and other symbols. Internal corporate communications should put more of an emphasis on offering strategic guidance and effectively positioning brand messages. Face-to-face interactions that allowed for direct interaction and opinion expression were successful.

It appears that feedback and subsequent actions are overlooked and undervalued. Brand training should be done on a regular basis because it can affect how people identify with the brand's values. The impact of connections and trust between leaders and employees, as well as the significance of assisting employees in understanding their roles within the firm, both appeared to have an impact on employee communication satisfaction levels. By concentrating on the brand promise, internal communication can assist employees in relating to identification, commitment, and loyalty. More effort was required from senior management participation in brand building. The integration of HR and ICC is advised for maximum effectiveness (Sharma and Kamalanabhan, 2012).

B. Organizational Culture

There is a need for additional discussion on this topic because evidence from a Delphi survey carried out in Europe shows that internal communication is cross-national and cross-cultural. (2012) (Veri, Veri, Sriramesh).

Due to its occurrence within a communication environment influenced by corporate culture, internal communication is commonly perceived as addressing a singular audience (Welch and Jackson, 2007). In the event that employees do not receive information in formats that are both beneficial and acceptable to them, the effectiveness of internal communication may be compromised, consequently impacting the organizational effectiveness and internal relationships negatively (Welch, 2012). The implementation of internal communication presents a challenge due to the potential for creating fissures, ruptures, and intricacies within the organizational culture, particularly in bureaucratic establishments, despite the known positive effects of corporate culture and the nature of internal communication on enhancing corporate efficiency.

Yates (2006) found that teaching employees about the business culture and values has a beneficial influence on their commitment in her study on communication effectiveness and internal communication. Even in organizations with excellent communication efficacy, however, there remain gaps. Less than one-third of highly effective companies give employees the chance to comment on choices, and only 25% ask for opinions on how the company should be run. Organizations need to establish two-way channels of communication, better equip managers with tools and training, use technology, add formal measurement metrics, and form global advisory groups to identify specific focus areas, customize, and gain buy-in to establish an environment that encourages trust and feedback in order to improve communication effectiveness.

C. Practitioners' Competencies and Internal Communication

Research that examines the effects of culture and organizational boundaries in connection to internal communication is being emphasized, according to some (Veri, Veri, Sriramesh, 2012). Internal communication is a diversified, complex job that requires a professional to exhibit a wide range of skills. Internal communication is recognized to have contributed to the success of the organizations in terms of tactics and strategies, according to a study by Chalmers (2008) that examined employment adverts for the position. Self-motivation and inventiveness were the two personal qualities that were mentioned the most. Additionally, the capacity for engaging with

senior leadership, managing complexity and uncertainty, juggling several projects, cooperating effectively, and keeping an eye on business outcomes.

With the introduction of new technologies, communications with employees don't necessarily stay within the company. Employees are frequently able to communicate electronically with external stakeholders about a company without much oversight or expectation from the employer (Cornelissen, 2011). Because there is a correlation between corporate reputation and internal communication, top-performing firms must adopt a more sophisticated internal communication strategy, which has an impact on their reputation. Companies with better reputations place greater emphasis on internal communication, have more comprehensive plans for it, are measurement-driven, have an influence on corporate objectives, invest in internal communication teams, and employ powerful platforms for sharing goals. Consensus on achieving both financial and non-financial outcomes/results was vital, as were annual meetings and the sharing of information about the business plan, strategy, and future (Dortok, 2006).

2.1.5.3. Relationship of Internal Communication and Employee Performance

It has been widely recognized that internal communication, also referred to as employee communication or internal public relations (Kennan and Hazleton, 2006; Kreps, 1989), plays a pivotal role in contemporary organizations and contributes to the development of positive relationships with the general public (Cutlip et al., 2005). This form of communication is characterized as a dialogue between the organization's top executives and one of its most significant audiences, namely the workforce (Dolphin, 2005). Additionally, it entails social interaction through various communication channels (Kalla, 2005) and showcases management's ability to establish connections among internal stakeholders across all levels of the organization.(Welch and Jackson, 2007).

The formal and informal methods of internal communication have progressively transformed to become strategically aligned with the objectives, visions, and values of the company, in response to the evolving business and marketing landscape. Welch and Jackson (2007) discovered that

internal corporate communication lacks theoretical clarity, particularly when viewed from a strategic management perspective, despite the extensive research that demonstrates a correlation between internal communication and organizational effectiveness, encompassing job satisfaction, productivity, and leadership. They presented a framework of internal corporate communication, derived from the work of Van Riel (1995), which situates internal communication within the domain of strategic public relations. Deliberately, they define internal corporate communication through these two initiatives as a process involving the organization's strategic managers and internal stakeholders, with the aim of fostering commitment to the organization, a sense of belonging, awareness of the changing environment, and understanding of the evolving goals (Welch and Jackson, 2007).

A more purposeful internal communication on employee engagement was recently discovered by Kang and Sung (2017). They empirically found, adopting Grunig's hypothesis (1992), that Symmetric internal correspondence is correlated with the engagement of workers, thereby enhancing behaviors of supportive employee communication and mitigating the inclination to resign. To elucidate, the enterprise must incorporate a bidirectional and employee-oriented symmetrical communication framework into its daily management of communication, thus bolstering the involvement of employees and fostering constructive exchanges pertaining to the organization.

According to studies, one of the main ways that employee engagement contributes to explaining it is by improving employee performance (Macey and Schneider, 2008; Rich et al., 2010). In a large number of employee engagement studies, employee performance has been mentioned as a benefit of employee engagement. This is because motivated workers engage in a variety of fruitful behaviors that support collaborative team efforts to achieve organizational objectives (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008; Bakker et al., 2006), which improves worker performances (Bakker and Schaufeli, 2008).

One of the first researchers to examine engagement, Kahn (1990), described personal engagement as the tying of an organization member's self to their professional duties. People who are engaged use their bodies, minds, and emotions to express themselves as they do their roles. According to Schaufeli et al. (2002), engagement is a positive, fulfilling state of mind related to work that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Those who are engaged in their work activities feel energised and connected to their tasks and are confident that they can complete them. However, Shuck and Wollard (2010) agreed with Kahn and outlined engagement as the mental, emotional, and behavioral state of a specific person that is focused on achieving desired organizational results. Kahn's (1990) concept was used by Truss et al. (2006), who empirically defined three degrees of engagement: emotional (involvement in work-related tasks at a high level), cognitive (intense concentration on work-related tasks), and physical (willingness to exert additional effort). In other words, according to Truss et al. (2006), people actively use and express their bodies, minds, and emotions when acting out a role. However, before that, they may require internal communication as a means of achieving the three main drivers of employee engagement they proposed, namely: chances for employees to share their opinions and ideas with higher-ups, employees feeling informed about what is happening within their organization, and employees sensing their manager is dedicated to the organization.

According to Kang and Sung (2017), who referenced Kress (2005) and Lockwood (2007), the idea that internal communication serves as a tool for improving connections with employees and promoting employee engagement is consistent with this concept. The relationship in question has been described in previous studies using Grunig's symmetrical communication theory (2001) posits the notion of organizational receptiveness towards acknowledging and resolving the apprehensions and inclinations of its primary stakeholders. Grunig (2001) emphasizes that for this type of relationship, organizations must adopt a comparable perspective towards their employee relations as they do towards their interactions with other essential stakeholders. Additionally, Dozier et al. (1995) suggested that the symmetrical system of internal

communication was the most moral model, while Kang and Sung (2017), Men (2014), and Jo and Shim (2005) both conducted empirical studies linking it to employee engagement.

Additionally, the symmetrical communication theory, as highlighted by Dozier et al. (1995), places significant emphasis on the importance of engaging in negotiations and actively listening, while also being prepared to make internal adjustments. This theory elucidates how symmetrical communication cultivates an environment that encourages open communication between the organization and its workforce, with the aim of fostering mutual understanding, respect, and robust relationships. Moreover, the theory provides an explanation for the correlation between internal communication and employee engagement. It seeks to strike a balance between the company's interests and the personnel are of utmost importance. The effectiveness of management as a whole is impacted by this strategic relationship management with internal publics. It is assumed that when employees are happy and engaged at work, according to Mishra et al. (2014), individuals who exhibit engagement are more likely to establish strong relationships with stakeholders both within and outside of the organization. Consequently, effective employee communications may lead to positive relationships with employees, and when employees establish connections with external stakeholders, they may serve as ambassadors or champions for the company (Chong, 2007; Grondstedt, 2000).

A literature review reveals that internal symmetrical communication possesses several key qualities as identified by Grunig (1989) and cited by Kim and Rhee (2011). These qualities include trust, credibility, openness, reciprocity, network symmetry, horizontal communication, feedback, and negotiation. Transparency is also an important factor, as Men (2014) highlights that transparent communication practices within the organization are associated with high-quality employee-organization relationships. Additionally, consistency in internal communication, as emphasized by Lockwood (2007), plays a crucial role in driving employee engagement.

The characteristics of employee engagement, which have an impact on their performance, are based on the work of Kahn (1990) and Truss et al. (2006). These characteristics encompass

emotional involvement in work-related tasks, cognitive focus on work-related tasks, and the willingness to exert extra effort physically.

2.1.5.4. Relationship of Internal Communication and Organizational Identification

Internal communication helps organizations and people communicate, fostering the development of meaningful and valuable social ties (Smidts et al., 2001). As a result, it is thought that employees will be better able to grasp the organization's goals and identify with its values (Welch, 2011). Employee who feel connected to and a part of something bigger than themselves when they are identified with their organizations (Ashforth et al., 2008). It is a crucial component of a person's self-concept and can help people feel less uncertain since it gives them a feeling of order (Hogg, 2000; Ashforth, 2001; Deaux et al., 1999; Hogg, 2000). Because organizational identification can boost performance overall, increase loyalty, reduce turnover intentions, prevent alienation, and prevent alienation, organizational identification among employees is crucial for businesses (Ashforth et al., 2008; Haslam, 2001).

Organizational identification, according to a well-known definition by Mael and Ashforth (1992), is the perception of unity with or belongingness to an organization, where the individual defines himself or herself in terms of the organization (or organizations) in which he or she is a member. According to Dutton et al. (1994), organizational identification is the extent to which a member defines himself or herself in terms of the same characteristics that, in their opinion, characterize the organization. To put it another way, when an employee feels emotionally connected to the organization, he or she develops organizational citizenship behavior (Dukerich et al., 2002; van Dick et al., 2008; Restubog et al., 2008), creative behavior (Carmeli et al., 2007), job satisfaction, and job involvement (van Knippenberg and van Schie, 2000).

Additionally, according to Riketta (2005), organizational identity combines both cognitive and emotive elements. According to Riketta (2005), organizational identification is the desire to maintain an emotionally fulfilling self-defining relationship with the identification object while for cognitive connection, as sharing attributes between a person's self-concept and the perceived

organizational identity (Dutton et al., 1994). This definition is based on O'Reilly and Chatman's (1986) approach of affective components of organizational identification.

According to a study conducted by Bartels et al. in 2007, it has been established that there is a positive correlation between organizational communication and organizational identification. Previous research has only suggested that providing information related to the organizational identity can enhance organizational identification by allowing individuals to perceive themselves as being an integral part of the organization they are affiliated with (Postmes et al., 2001). On the other hand, other studies have highlighted the significance of fostering a positive and open communication climate, where individuals feel valued and appreciated, in promoting organizational identification (Smidts et al., 2001). However, there is limited knowledge regarding the specific aspects of corporate communication that facilitate the development of organizational identity.

In their study, Bartels et al. (2010) delve further into the intricate aspects of vertical and horizontal communication features. They argue that these two components of internal communication have diverse impacts on the establishment of organizational identity. According to Bartels et al. (2010), the dimensions of horizontal communication play a significant role in determining professional identification, while the dimensions of vertical communication serve as significant indicators of organizational identification.

Within the hierarchy of the organization, vertical communication pertains to work-related matters and flows both from top to bottom and from bottom to top (Downs and Adrian, 2004; Goldhaber, 1993). Bottom-up communication refers to information conveyed from the lower levels of the organization to the management level, which includes opportunities for employees to participate in decision-making. On the other hand, top-down communication predominantly consists of information concerning the organization's strategy (Bartels et al., 2010).

Given the favorable correlation between the communication climate and organizational identity, this study expands upon and further analyzes the topic of vertical communication through the

adoption of Bartel's methodology (Smidts et al., 2001). Furthermore, Postmes et al. (2001) propose that commitment can be more effectively explained through vertical rather than horizontal communication.

Because it can assist employees understand and define the organization's viewpoint and minimize confusion about it (Postmes et al., 2001), vertical communication has been found to be a greater predictor of commitment than horizontal communication (Bartels et al., 2010). Employees will be aware of the organization's distinctive qualities since they will be well-informed about its mission, goals, and accomplishments (Dutton et al., 1994). Vertical communication enables the company to communicate to its staff how it sets itself apart from rival companies (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Cheney, 1983; Postmes, 2003). Vertical communication is therefore required to convey the distinctive qualities of an organization (Smidts et al., 2001), which may then help employees develop a sense of organizational identity (Bartels et al., 2010).

The social exchange hypothesis offers a more comprehensive explanation of how vertical communication affects organizational identification. It provides a lens to examine social exchange connections within the business environment (Gersick et al., 2000) and is a well-known theoretical paradigm for understanding workplace relationships (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005) and employee attitudes (DeConinck 2010). A series of contacts between two parties that result in personal obligations, appreciation, and trust are referred to as social exchanges (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1976). The most important social exchange characteristic is reciprocity, which describes how good and equitable interactions between two parties (individuals or groups) lead to beneficial behaviors and attitudes (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005).

Employees utilize their cognitive filters to translate resources, specifically information, into favorable or unfavorable actions. The concept of information as a resource of exchange in vertical communication aligns with social exchange theory. In order to reduce uncertainties,

employees actively participate in collective sense-making. This process allows them to establish consensus and norms within the group. The purpose of this collective sense-making is to gain insight into others' perspectives and acquire information that facilitates task performance. This suggests that organizations with more symmetrical communication with their employees are more likely to foster reciprocal relationships, leading to stronger connections and improved workflow.

According to existing literature, vertical communication and symmetrical communication possess distinct characteristics when excluding the aspect of horizontal communication. Trust, credibility, openness, reciprocity, network symmetry, feedback, and negotiation are among the key elements highlighted by Grunig. Men's research indicates that internal organizational practices such as symmetrical and transparent communication with employees contribute to high-quality employee-organization relationships. Lockwood emphasizes the significance of transparent and consistent internal communication from management. an important factor in the success of the EOR."

According to the findings put forth by Smidts et al. (2001), Tajfel and Turner (1985), as well as Edwards (2005), organizational identification is distinguished by the ensuing aspects: The cognitive facet centers on an individual's self-definition in relation to their affiliation with the organization, while the affective facet pertains to one's emotional bonds with the group and the sentiments connected to membership, such as pride, appreciation, and a sense of inclusion.

2.1.5.5. Relationship of Organizational Identification and Employee Performance

Welch (2011) used internal corporate communication as a model for organizational practices that encourage employee comprehension of the organization's aims and help them connect with its values. Since they promote absorption of organizational values and involvement with organizational goals, these practices are acknowledged as essential factors for employee performance (Bindl and Parker, 2010), leading to more engaged employees (Welch, 2011). Welch (2011) suggested that additional research may look at how employee engagement is

related to other significant characteristics like organizational culture or organizational identity in addition to internal corporate communication.

According to Albert et al. (2000), identity and identification are fundamental concepts in organizational phenomena and have frequently been a subtext of organizational behavior. The direct connection between work engagement and organizational identity has received relatively little published study (Karanika-Murray et al., 2015). However, research on organizational behavior suggests a potential connection between the two. Employees with high group identification are more likely to be motivated to collaborate with their group, both directly and through the indirect effects of identity on attitudes and values, according to Tyler and Blader (2001). Additionally, Reade (2001) demonstrated that organizational identification can accurately forecast enhanced motivation and performance beyond and beyond a person's core responsibilities. In other words, people who strongly identify with their company are more likely to actively participate in its objectives and activities, which in turn will inspire them to put up greater effort to meet these objectives (Dutton et al., 1994).

Organizational identification can be understood as the sense of self that employees have in relation to their company. According to Ashforth and Mael (1989), identification is the term used to describe an employee's sense of unity and group membership and has the power to affect social exchange relationships. Employees identify themselves in terms of their social and group membership when they feel as though they are a part of an organization, which is known as organizational identification (Tajfel, 1978). Employees who identify with the organization also see the organization's success or failure as their own (Ashforth and Mael 1989).

As much of the research on organizational identification has been influenced by both social identity theory and the literature on group identification processes (Smidts et al., 2001; Fuller et al., 2006a), of the impact of organizational identification on employee engagement and performance can be elucidated by the application of social identity theory. As per social identity theory, an employee's inclination to exert considerable effort on behalf of their colleagues and

the organization is reinforced when they possess a robust connection to it (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994). This is due to the fact that organizational identification influences an employee's sense of pride and affiliation with the company at both a cognitive and emotional level (Smidts et al. 2001; Tajfel and Turner 1985). The cognitive aspect, which pertains to how an individual defines their own identity in relation to their organizational membership, and the affective aspect, which pertains to the emotional attachment and sentiments associated with this membership, such as pride, recognition, and a sense of belonging, play a pivotal role in most conceptualizations (Edwards, 2005). According to Tajfel and Turner (1985), the emotive component of organizational identification contributes more significantly to the cultivation of a strong sense of social identity than the other two. Stronger psychological ties to the organization might hence strengthen motivation to work harder and be more engaged (Karanika-Murray, 2015).

2.1.5.6. Relationship of Internal Communication, Organizational Identification and Employee Performance

This paper proposes that social factor (i.e. identification) and communication serve essential functions ranging from the maintenance of interpersonal relations among coworkers to the dissemination of strategic organizational objectives, as suggested by Dasgupta et al. (2012), interpersonal relationships, including social relations with one another, are an essential part of organizational life and sustainable success, and supported by Postmes (2014). This research explicitly contends that internal symmetrical communication characterized by trust, transparency, and consistency features influences employees' emotional, cognitive, and physical engagement. This argument is based on the three primary assumptions and social exchange theory. In addition, internal symmetrical communication influences the cognitive and affective aspects of organizational identification. Employees with strong organizational identification typically engage in more emotional, cognitive, and physical activity and perform better in their primary responsibilities.

2.1.5.7. Public Relations in Higher Education

Higher education has been using the public relations function since the 19th century. The University of Michigan established the first publicity office for higher education in 1897. At Harvard, Yale, and Columbia, others soon followed (Cutlip et al., 1985). Nearly all colleges and universities in the United States now have some type of administrative public relations or public affairs department.

According to Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer (2001), the main objective of public relations in higher education is to promote public understanding of the college or university and its goals among the different dynamic publics that make up its stakeholders. Governmental relations, internal audience support, recruiting and development help, and government relations are additional general purposes of public relations in the context of higher education.

The most the existing body of literature pertaining to public relations in higher education, as articulated by Cutlip et al. (1985), Smith (2002), and Wilcox & Cameron (2007), defines it as a strategic mechanism through which an organization engages in two-way communication with its publics, with an emphasis on fostering mutually beneficial relationships between the organization and its diverse publics. Initial studies have indicated that the strategic role of public relations in higher education has not always been fully realized (Higgins, 1983). According to Sands, senior public relations administrators are predominantly perceived as technical experts rather than prominent members of the senior management team within the university.

Hale (2001) and Sands (2003) contend that professionals in higher education public relations ought to have a greater level of involvement in institutional decision-making and policy formulation. Sands' research aligns with the findings of the Excellence Study, revealing that the organizational role of the public relations practitioner is of utmost importance productive when it reports directly to top management. The public relations team should be present at all high-level meetings that involve the president and other officials, according to Wilcox and Cameron (2012). This is advised so that the public relations department may become aware of the facts and

circumstances behind decisions and offer advice. Using primary data from the preeminent collation, public relations professionals may then design action programs and satisfactorily address inquiries from diverse stakeholders. This enables them to effectively serve as the administration's voice.

Institutions of higher education should adopt a strategic and proactive approach to the promotion, advocacy, and protection of their organization and staff through public relations. This is necessary for various situations such as addressing the dismissal of a trustee in the public eye, mitigating the impact of a president's poorly phrased public statement, managing student protests or employee strikes, handling appearances by controversial or unpopular speakers, as well as spotlighting the numerous accomplishments of their employees, students, and alumni. Though not all relationship-building and public relations campaigning is done on the outside. To carry out its duties and accomplish its goals, public relations also use internal communication.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

Theories are collections of linked ideas arranged into claims or hypotheses that offer an explanation for a phenomenon. They come in the form of a justification for a phenomenon, a figure, an argument, a discussion, or a conceptual framework. The study question is investigated using theories (Ary et al. 2018:2; Creswell & Creswell 2018:52). They serve as a foundation for developing new hypotheses as well as testing previously held beliefs. The premise of Grunig's excellence theory is that theories are arbitrary because they are built around data and intended to explain reality (Ruane 2005; Grunig 2013).

As far as they guide the research questions and the method of data collecting, theories serve as the framework for a complete study (Creswell & Creswell 2018). Notions are significant in this study because they guide how to approach research questions and serve as the foundation for testing preexisting notions that guide communication audits. The excellence theory, the information theory, and the media richness theory are the three theories that inform the proposed theoretical model used in this work.

2.2.1. The Excellence Theory

Since it incorporates the majority of the other theories, the excellence theory was employed for this study as a meta-theory, and the internal communication theories served as the foundation for the integrated internal communication method (Grunig 2008).

A. Theoretical Development of the Excellence Theory

According to the theory put forth by Communication System (2015), an organization's internal communication system consists of a variety of formal and informal communication processes that enable the transmission of information within the organization using a variety of channels, including electronic, verbal, and nonverbal. As the former focuses on an organization's communication behavior and the latter on individuals' communication behavior within an organization, it can be argued that both the organizational communication theory and the situational theory contribute to the internal communication system of an organization (Grunig 2013).

The elements that affect internal communication are recognized as separate entities by the organizational communication theory, a subset of the excellence theory (Grunig 2013). The following elements have been identified: the organizational structure, which facilitates information flow within the organizational.

The discovered criteria in this study are acknowledged as the cornerstones that offer direction in the creation of a measurement tool for integrated internal communication for the Addis Ababa University. This study will benefit from the ideas described by the theory by having advice on the elements that affect the constructs that guide the measuring instrument. For instance, it is important for employees to communicate internally with one another in order to share knowledge inside the organizational structure. This theory also offers recommendations for the best communication practices that have to be used between employees as well as between employees and the company.

B. Relevance of the Excellence Theory to Integrated Internal Communication

The excellence theory is particularly applicable to integrated internal communication because it is based on the concept that organizations should address problems and meet the goals of internal stakeholders (employees) and management. In doing so, organizations should engage in symmetrical communication to cultivate long-term relationships and ensure employee satisfaction with their jobs and the organization. According to Grunig (2013), two-way symmetrical communication involves individuals adapting their beliefs and actions to align with others during the communication process.

Integrated internal communication (IIC) is recognized as a significant factor in organizational performance as it helps organizations achieve their objectives. This emphasis on IIC is supported by the excellence theory, as highlighted by Grunig and Grunig (2011). Wagner (2013) and Fill (2013) also support this theory, asserting that feedback is crucial in fostering two-way symmetrical communication and building long-term relationships among internal stakeholders.

The components of effective communication include the communicator or information source, the message, the medium or channels, the recipient of information, and the feedback. Hasel (2011) and Cheney et al. (2011) outline these components. The excellence theory is considered the driving force behind effective communication, as it promotes open, two-way, and responsive communication systems that invite feedback, address employee opinions and concerns, encourage collaboration, and foster employee satisfaction.

The excellence theory, along with the information theory and the media richness theory, is treated as a Meta theory in this study, stemming from the aforementioned debate.

2.2.2. Information Theory

A 1948 study by the mathematical theory of communication, as presented by Shannon and Weaver, laid the foundation for the field of information theory. This scientific discipline, centered on the study of information, was subsequently published in book form in 1949. By examining the question of whether the intended information from the source will successfully

reach the recipient, this theory seeks to address a deficiency in Shannon's communication model. (Woodward 2014; Yeung 2012; Pierce 2012).

A common measurement of the amount of information transferred or transmitted through communication lines from one place to another, frequently amid noise and interference, is provided by the branch of research known as information theory. The transmissions of messages by written, verbal, electrical, and mechanical means as well as human behavior are all subject to measurement (Pierce, 2012).

According to the theory, knowledge is a relative quantity that is independent, dimensionally limited, and distinct from information. Without considering the value of such information, information has been seen in terms of "scarcity" in transmission. According to the statistical perspective, information is "the result of choice" (Brillouin 2013:9). The information theory is concerned with the sources of information, the routes through which information is transmitted in a communication system, and assessing the quantity of information required in an organization's communication system in order to address communication issues. The significance of information is overlooked from a human perspective, which emphasizes quantity (Grunig & White 1992; Gray 2011; Woodward 2014).

In light of the fact that it makes it easier to communicate information regarding daily operational operations, decisions, policies, and any other significant information, it is believed that the information theory plays a crucial role in internal communication inside a company. By disseminating knowledge through communication channels including staff meetings, noticeboards, emails, and newsletters, this idea also fosters trust connections between management and employees. According to Veri, Veri, and Sriramesh (2012), Engin & Akgz (2013), Njomo (2013), and Horn (2014), the information theory also advocates an increase in the flow of information that fosters a sense of belonging, which is demonstrated by employee dedication to organizational activities.

An internal communication system facilitates the transmission of information such as policies, reports, procedures, manuals, strategic goals and objectives, and any other information by regulating and enforcing the flow of formal communication according to a set chain of command. Communication takes place over channels that are also used to convey data or store it in a memory device. Formal communication channels are open and promote employee motivation, but they impede the free flow of private or unofficial information, which typically takes the form of the grapevine, which accounts for 75% of information flow and is regarded as equally trustworthy by most employees as formal communication. When they convey spontaneous or unplanned communication inside an organization, organizational structures may replace communication channels (Ivancevich, Konopaske & Matteson 2011, Brillouin 2013, Horn 2014, Robbins, Judge, Odendaal & Roodt 2009).

The information theory has an impact on how information moves in an organization in both upward and downward directions. Information is frequently communicated downward to employees by management or people at the top levels of the hierarchy. According to studies (Lunenburg 2010a; Hargie & Tourish 2009; Hasel 2011; Cheney et al 2011), downward communication is the type that occurs most frequently in organizations. It takes the form of job instructions and directives on how to carry out specific tasks, job descriptions, performance feedback, departmental progress reports, information, messages, and socialization.

According to Hargie and Tourish (2009) and Fill (2013), information on the business vision, rewards, strategies, and values is communicated to employees through managers. The flow of communication on organizational roles, such as planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, managing, and persuading personnel to achieve organizational goals, is also a part of the interaction between managers and employees. Since employee engagement, participation, and proactive communication are crucial to managers' performance, they should encourage these behaviors. Additionally, information moves up from inferiors to superiors. The level of understanding of information communicated downhill by subordinates is determined by this information. Staff retention is frequently a result of upward communication since it fosters

honest relationships between employees and management. According to Canary (2011), Hasel (2011), and Stredwick (2014), upward communication might take the form of proposals for improvement, performance reports, financial data, grievances, conflicts, and complaints.

The rate of communication between numerous information senders and numerous information receivers in the presence of noise and interference is the main focus of developments in the field of information theory. One of the developments in information theory that can be used for interaction between employees in an organization is social media, which consists of internet-based tools and platforms that enable people to create content and facilitate conversation and networking (Pierce 2012; Wilkinson & Weitkamp 2016:131). These platforms, which enable the transmission of information between many individuals, include email, Twitter, and LinkedIn, as examples.

2.2.3. Media Richness Theory

The task-media fit is a special focus of the media richness theory in order to ensure Hasel (2011) contends that there is no worst or best method of communication, but Miller (2006) contends that the choice should be determined by the nature of the task at hand. Hargie and Tourish (2009) also believe that task media fit is crucial for ensuring that the chosen communication channel is appropriate for the task at hand. A rich channel, like face-to-face communication, is needed for jobs with high levels of uncertainty, while a comparatively lean channel, like written communication, is needed for tasks with low levels of uncertainty (Miller 2006). Additionally, Cheney et al. (2011) contend that people like channels with a variety of media. The measurement device should be used to determine whether the selected communication channels truly transfer the desired amount of information. According to Hargie and Tourish (2009), effective communication channels should be able to handle emergencies, communicate day-to-day information, and offer a genuine picture of the organizational environment.

According to the media richness theory, the hierarchy of communication channels is determined by their level of richness, ranging from highly rich (or lean) media, which disseminate

standardized information to a wide audience, to low-rich (or lean) media, which allow for message customization based on real-time feedback. The media richness theory posits that face-to-face interaction is the most superior communication medium in this hierarchy, followed by voice, text, and video. Face-to-face communication possesses the ability to process ambiguous messages, replicate transmitted information, and facilitate symmetrical communication and immediate feedback within an organization. These attributes have been recognized by researchers (Downs-Hazen 1977; Woldearegay 2013; Nikolic, Vukonjanski, Nedeljkovic, Hadzic & Terek 2013; Tsai, Chuang & Hsieh 2009) as important elements for conducting an internal communication audit (Hasel 2011). Woldearegay (2013) contends that media richness increases with the naturalness of the medium, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of communication.

Internal communication is predominantly dominated by face-to-face interaction, which is acknowledged as the most efficient medium for resolving intricate problems and conveying multiple cues, such as body language and facial expressions. It is versatile and can be utilized in various social and professional contexts, as well as both formal and informal settings. Face-to-face contact is considered superior to other communication modes because it has a greater variety of media (Ishii 2005; Miller 2006; Hasel 2011; Men 2014; Chang, Liang, Chou & Lin 2017).

Email and other written communication are unavoidable because they foster trusting relationships between subordinates and superiors and provide access to information long after it has been received, despite their perceived lack of richness and lack of a personal touch. Senior managers should avoid using email because of their executive-level decision-making and strategic leadership duties, which call for direct engagement. Email offers instant messaging, but despite being convenient for communicating task-related tasks, it is not advised for usage by senior managers. Senior managers are less likely to use email than junior managers, and younger employees use it more frequently. The communication environment of a company is viewed

favorably by seasoned email users (Ishii 2005; Byrne & LeMay 2006; Hasel 2011; Steele & Plenty 2014; Men 2014).

In order to ensure effective internal communication, organizations should include online social media networks like Facebook, MySpace, WAZZUB, discussion forums, and blogs in their communication channel strategy, according to advancements in the field of organizational communication (Barker 2013; Meredith 2012). According to Cowan (2017), social media are effective and open channels for exchanging both formal and informal communication. They also alter the dynamics of interaction and connections within organizations, transforming them from a place of employment into a workplace community.

In order to determine the best and most efficient routes that provide media richness in the communication system, the Addis Abeba University's communication channels were examined. The media richness theory aids this study by providing direction in doing so. The communication channels will be used in this study to quantify the volume of information sent in the Library as independent constructs.

2.3. Empirical Reviews

Numerous studies undertaken on organizational communication, specifically internal organizational communication, are carried out globally. Starting with the benefits of internal communication within the company, Rhee (2004) asserts that employee-public relations may be impacted by the effectiveness of internal communications. Relationship management focuses on the internal publics since their actions can have a direct impact on how the outside world perceives an organization (Gruing, 1992). According to public relations theory, employees frequently represent a company's brand and image to external audiences. Therefore, employees have an impact on the brand or reputation of their company (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003; Grunig, 1992).

Abundant western researchers concur that efficient internal communication is essential to achieving some organizations' goals. Karanges et al.'s (2014) study titled "Enhancing Employee

Engagement through Internal Communication: An Examination from the Lens of Social Exchange" revealed that companies and managers should allocate their internal communication resources towards cultivating heightened feelings of assistance and intensified affiliation among employees as a means to cultivate the most favorable levels of engagement. On the other hand, internal communication is seen as crucial to organizational performance according to Verghese's 2017 article, which was done under the title "Internal Communication: Practices and Implications," despite the fact that there are existing obstacles preventing the function from developing.

A second study by Reineth (2019) the University of South Africa library conducted a case study on a measuring tool for integrated internal communication. This tool was specifically developed for the library's use. "reveals that the Library's internal communication system recognized exceptional work by staff members and regularly updated staff on the Library's accomplishments and goals. While all of the study involved individuals who held primary reporting duties to the president of their respective universities and all exhibited engagement in a strategic role within their work a supportive workplace culture, Campbell (2019)'s dissertation for a portion of a Doctor of Philosophy degree on "Looking Inward: Higher Education Public Relation and Internal Communication" found that none had documented communication processes with regard to internal audiences and very few had official procedures in place to assess the effectiveness of their initiatives. Furthermore, none had established well-thought-out and strategic processes for the use of symmetrical communication for building connections while upholding a feedback loop to modify public relations tactics in response to audiences and environments.

Many organizational communication studies were also undertaken in our country. The comprehensive examination of the internal organizational communication strategy at Hibret Bank Head Office necessitates review, as evidenced in Tirusew's 2022 report entitled "on Internal Organizational Communication Audit of Hibret Bank Head Office." Moreover, the avenues of communication must be tailored to effectively fulfill their designated purpose and encourage active engagement from staff members within the internal communication process.

Furthermore, Zemedkun's (2019) investigation titled "A Comparative Study on the Organizational Communication and Public Relations Practices of Two Ethiopian Public Universities: Addis Ababa and Jijiga Universities" brings to light the Corporate Communication Directorate at Jijiga University and the External Relations, Partnerships, and Communications Directorate at Addis Ababa University were both successful in communicating with their external stakeholders, but with mixed results.

As a result, Zemedkun's study (2019) compared the two organizational communication programs at two universities by combining system theory and corporate communication theory. To achieve measurable results and conduct a thorough analysis of the impact of public relations on internal communication at the University, this study primarily assesses the internal communication of AAU by combining the theories of excellence, information, and media richness.

Due to its recognition of organizational structure, culture, gender, and the internal communication system, facilitation of benefits of the excellence theory. He contends that research in pertinent fields that deal with culture and gender issues can be used to include non-Western voices and experiences in the ideas that are being advanced. In order to construct a measurement instrument, new emergent concepts will be taken into consideration as we examine the internal communication of the Addis Abeba University.

In this study, the media richness theory offers guidance regarding the consideration of communication channels that provide extensive information and the necessity of considering task-media compatibility are crucial factors in the selection of channels for the transmission of specific messages, such as emergencies, daily messages, or the organizational vision. This concept argues that a medium with high richness possesses the capacity to effectively handle communication that is open to interpretation, replicate the information conveyed through it, and potentially even facilitate prompt response. The issue with the media richness concept is that it exaggerates the diversity of media without taking into account the possibility of overwhelming information or message overload (Chang et al., 2017).

Based on the literature review that it is inferred that the excellence theory recognizes the significance of real-time feedback in facilitating two-way symmetrical communication. Contrariwise, the media richness theory perceives the communication channel as being abundant in terms of the transmission of high-quality information. It is subsequently contended that the three theories concur that the abundance and suitability of the media are pivotal for the internal information circulation of an organization. Moreover, it is asserted that two-way symmetrical communication fosters relationships among internal stakeholders. This is achieved by identifying the channels that can be employed to facilitate the flow of information through two-way symmetrical communication in order to promote interactions within the internal environment of the organization, the three theories in this study offer assistance in the construction of the measurement tool.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the method used to carry out this investigation was presented. It discourses the research approach and explains why it should be used in the study design after first articulating the research paradigm. The population of the data is then analyzed using various techniques in the following section to evaluate the use of public relations practices to communicate with the internal audiences of Addis Ababa University's public relations.

3.1. Research Approach and Research Design

According to Campbel et al. (1982), research design refers to the process of narrowing or focusing one's perspective in order to conduct a specific study. Creswell (2009) defines research design as a collection of rules and guidelines that govern the study of a particular issue, encompassing everything from generalizations to specific data collection and analysis techniques. It serves as a framework that allows researchers to logically integrate various research components to effectively address the research challenge at hand. Furthermore, it provides guidance on how to carry out research using a specific approach, ultimately leading to the selection of an appropriate study design, which is a critical decision.

The primary objective of the research was to assess the internal organizational communication practice of internal organizational communication at AAU. To achieve this, the questions posed to the participants will be comprehensive and broad, enabling them to develop a deeper understanding of the situation. These questions aim to capture the essence of debates and interactions, where meaning is often constructed. The researcher's attentiveness to people's words and actions in their everyday environments is directly influenced by the quality of the questions asked. It is important to note that these definitions of situations are frequently subject to historical and social contestation.

Due to the fact that it involves a subjective evaluation of the respondents' attitudes, opinions, and conduct, the researcher assessed the practice of internal public relations at Addis Ababa University through an interview and a focus group discussion. In this situation, research produces findings that can be interpreted either subjectively or in a non-quantitative manner.

A case study is a common form of qualitative research design that calls for thorough and meticulous observation of a social unit in order to examine a small number of occurrences or circumstances and their relationships. Singh (2006) asserts that the primary goal of a case study is the formation of a case based on a diagnosis, which is carried out using the case's post-case records. It identifies the relationship's causes and effects.

This study's methodology was chosen because it best captures the conditions during the time of the study in terms of data collection, analysis, description, and interpretation. A case study is utilized when we assess and characterize, for instance, each person individually, institutions, or an issue (or numerous problems), process, or event in a specific institution in detail, according to Sagadin (1991). Due to this, the researcher assessed the use of public relations techniques in relation to internal audiences.

Moreover, for this study, the researcher used a qualitative research approach to obtain crucial data in order to assess the public relations strategy used by Addis Abeba University to communicate with its internal publics. According to Kothari (2004, 5) personal evaluation of the respondents' attitudes, opinions, and behavior was a key component of the qualitative research approach. Additionally, research in this situation depends on the researcher's perceptions and insights. Such a research methodology yields outcomes that are either non-quantitative or do not require arduous quantitative processing.

Furthermore, Crotty (1998) listed a number of assumptions when considering the qualitative research approach, including the notion that humans generate meaning as they interact with the environment they are understandings. The use of interpretation in qualitative research is encouraged since it like all other types of qualitative inquiry, interpretative analysis focuses on

figuring out the intents, meanings, and uses that individuals have for their own behavior and relationships with others.

3.2. Tools of Data Collection

During under taking this research and in depth-interview and focus group discussion were used to gather information from selected participants of the study .

3.2.1 In-Depth Interview

To examine particular issues in the field of crisis communication from the perspective of the practitioners, in-depth interviews were used. The benefit of this approach is that it enables to grasp the participants' subjective information and provide details about their emotions, values, attitudes, and beliefs (Stewart, 2002). To gather detailed information regarding the university's overall internal communication, the researcher conducted nine in-depth interviews with members of several departments' internal publics, including academic staff, administrative staff, students, and communication practitioners.

3.2.2 Focus Group Discussion

Focus groups are distinguished by the utilization of group interaction to produce qualitative data, regardless of when and where they are employed. The 'sharing and comparing' (Morgan, 2010, 2012) that takes place in group conversations is a crucial component of this connection. Sharing involves talks of the ways that participants feel similar to one another on the one hand, while comparing focuses on participant differences. These continual discussions about similarities and contrasts give the researcher insights into the participants' thoughts as well as the reasons behind those thoughts. The researcher performed two focus group discussions (FGD) with the university's security guard, messenger, and cleaners in addition to collecting interview data for this study. The interviewer is largely free to restate the questions, amend them, and add some new questions to the list even if the researcher employs a set of questions and guidelines to lead responders.

3.3. Sampling Technique and participants of the study

To obtain ample data for this thesis and to improve the caliber and credibility of this research, the researcher utilized the maximum purposive sampling technique to select) participants from various departments for an in-depth interview. Most crucially, (Zhi, 2014) employing a purposive sampling strategy typically enables the researcher to utilize certain judgmental criteria to select the suitable sample of the entire population. The university's public relations staff members, academic staff, and administrative staff served as the primary informants. They will be chosen based on their level of expertise, educational background, and positional duty to evaluate the practice of public relations on practice of public elation on the university's internal publics. On the other hand, FGD was used to engage the university's security guards, messengers, and cleaners in order to gather detailed information regarding its internal organizational communication.

Participants in the FGD and interviews with AAU PR professionals included academic personnel, administrative staff, students, security guards, messengers, and cleaners of the university. In addition to this, their viewpoint was more relevant to the study's subject. As a result, they were able to address the problem with internal organizational communication when it was at its worst. The subjects of the interview and FGD were disclosed to the participants, but the pre-determined interview questions were not. The interview subjects were encouraged to elaborate on the themes of the interview and, at the conclusion, to add anything further they believed was pertinent to the issue but wasn't addressed by the pre-planned questions. On the other hand, the FGD was also facilitated by a mediator to foster favorable conditions, and the floor was left open for all participants to openly share their sentiments, information, and understanding on the internal organizational communication.

Due to the nature of the study problem, which aims to assess the internal organizational communication practice of Addis Abeba public relations, the researcher chose a case study research design in this investigation. Case studies are in-depth examinations by the researcher of

a program, event, activity, process, and more people. The case is currently constrained by time and activity, and the researcher gathered thorough data using a variety of data collection techniques (Stake, 1995).

3.4 Procedures of Data collection and method of Analysis

A data collection tool employed to get data were an in-depth interview (open-ended questions) and data from the FDG. The researcher conducted two FGDs with the university's secretary, messengers, and security guards. Information for the target publics must be produced and distributed by the public relations and communication department. Most frequently, in-depth interviews and FDG were used in this study. According to the researcher, the combination of these techniques would reduce bias and strengthen the study's conclusions.

3.4.1 Procedures of Data Collection

The sequential research procedure type was used for this study. First, information was acquired from the university's PR experts, academic personnel, management staff, and students through interviews and two focus groups with data from security guards, messengers, and cleaners. Then, a small group of internal audiences were invited to attend, including academic staff, administrative personnel, students, security guards, messengers, and cleaners, to learn about the university's overall PR strategy for internal communications.

3.4.2 Method of Analysis

In this study, the themes that were used to organize and analyze the data were reflections of the research questions. Thematic analysis techniques were used to examine the qualitative data obtained from both the FGD and the interview. The preferred word today for expressing a general induction process where the researcher reviews and codes the data to comprehend what the participants have to say about the research issue is "thematic analysis." Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012) created the thematic analysis method that has received the most citations. They suggested a six-step procedure: (1) thorough coding of the data; (2) repeated reading of the transcripts; (3) the formation of preliminary themes; and (4) the revision of those themes; (5)

Choosing a final set of ideas, step five; structuring the written work, step six, around those themes. Additionally, this method can be used in both a more deductive manner, where codes are based on previously established theory, and a more inductive one, where codes are derived directly from the interviews. The data collected through interviews and FGD from AAU regarding internal organizational communication are analyzed with this method because thematic analysis is a versatile strategy that it may be used in conjunction with nearly any way to data gathering.

3.5. Validity of the Study

The respondents who were chosen for this study were asked to provide data. The respondents were chosen on purpose. Purposive sampling is used by the researcher because it makes it possible to identify the precise individual in charge of Addis Ababa University's internal public relations practice. As a result, the researcher has shown the interview questions, FGD, and document analysis, and were improved based on their feedback to increase the instrument's validity. The research leader was shown the interview questions, and the validity of the thesis can be supported by any document linked to internal public relations activity. Aside from the many tools employed (FDG, interviews, and documents), the results from various people interviewed were kept to improve the dependability of the study. Additionally, the interviewees were chosen based on their expertise and experience in the field.

CHAPTER FOUR

Presentation and Analysis of Data

4.1 Introduction

Based on the information acquired and the theoretical notions offered in chapter two, this chapter aims to present the key findings based on the analyzed data. The research shown below displays the necessary data obtained from AAU in regards to the internal organizational communication before attempting to analyze the data collected.

The information that was acquired in accordance with the study's objectives is examined and presented in this chapter. To gather the qualitative data, key informants were subjected to protracted, in-depth interviews and FGDs. Similar to how the analysis would be built on the results of the literature review and the methodology described in chapter two. Additionally, a qualitative theme analysis method was used to examine the data collected from the participants of the study AAU.

4.2 Data from Focus group discussions

The researcher also conducted two focus groups discussions with six security guards (four boys and two girls) and six secretaries, messengers, and cleaners (two girls from the cleaners, two messengers, and two secretaries) because those members of the public are primarily involved in the institution's internal organizational communication.

The internal public of the institution, according to participant FGD 1, "comes from variety of culture both locally and internationally." We could unintentionally occupy their culture when we communicate with them. Especially when we utilize sign language to communicate with them because we don't comprehend their language. According to Aman et al. (2014), the differences across countries and cultures lead to various working styles in businesses. It is important to ascertain the values that each employee holds dear. Employees' cultural beliefs will have an

impact on how they operate through their body language, communication style, problem-solving abilities, and time management. This is a highly important issue for management to solve since cultural differences in work value may have an impact on an employee's performance, which in turn affects job satisfaction at work.

One FGD participant affirmed, "The University mostly uses technology advancement to communicate its message for its publics. However, since most of us didn't use such technology and because the website's message is presented in English, it was difficult for us to understand what was being said. Additionally, we use clique communication to comprehend university policies and up-to-date information. Participant FGD two also acknowledges, "As you know, we lack the educational background and social media proficiency of our coordinator, who frequently uses face-to-face communication and billboards in some situations. When we speak to one another verbally, we frequently get into arguments that we later forget. The majority of the time when we messengers are documenting files, our ability to understand the letter we are addressing and the connected activities is put at risk. As a result, we attempt to go beyond these challenges by speaking with our friends and secretary.

According to participant in FGD 2, "AAU predominantly addresses its message through its social media pages and emails. Even if we strive to use social media platforms by improving our skills, the language itself makes it difficult for us to comprehend the most recent information. The institution should take into account our needs by speaking the local language to its intended audience. In addition, a participant in the FGD affirms that "we communicate with many publics who express their inquiries in different languages. Examples of students from different regions of our nation include those from Gambia, Oromiya, Tigray, Amhara, Afar, and Somalia, among others. Additionally, our university hosts international students who attend classes there. Even if they make an effort to communicate with us in English, we are unable to do so successfully.

One FGD participant said, "The University usually informs us through face-to-face communication. They occasionally try to use billboards. The institution mostly uses social media

to disseminate information, yet the majority of us are unable to evaluate those platforms. As a result, we are powerless to fully respond to questions from our external audience when we communicate with them. A second participant in FGD 2 further verifies that "face-to-face contact and billboards were employed for lower class staff like security guards, messengers, cleaners, and secretaries. We interact with a range of publics, but occasionally when we have face-to-face conversations, we can lose sight of the main message. Face-to-face contact is good for clarifying questions and understanding information, but people can forget due to a heavy workload.

Another FGD participant said, "As humans, we are fascinated about those who are a part of the university's internal public. Not only do we speak with our workers to get to know them, but sometimes our tasks also call for it. In order to get to know him well, we are also curious to discuss our cliques in general. To protect the university's stability and harmony, we must work together more. But given that humans are diverse by nature, there may also be those people who are keen to learn more about others. A second participant in the FGD agrees that these people might spread false information about someone in order to maintain their interest.

"We security guard communicate with all internal publics of the University without hierarchies, from students to instructors, from department heads to college deans, from vice presidents to presidents, from cleaners to messengers, etc.," said Participant FGD One. As you are aware, all of those visitors enter the university through its main gate. We are primarily charged for maintaining the university's safety and tranquility. The members of FGD two also agree with the prior notion that we should communicate with those publics as often as possible. The cleaners, messengers, and secretaries of the university interact with a range of internal publics on a daily basis.

The fourth respondent said, "AAU is the first university in Ethiopian history, thus the university anticipated dealing with a number of socio-economic and political issues of the nation and also practicing to progress the university to fulfill its established vision and goals as much as feasible.

Here, we can see that the university does not simply communicate formally according to its established organizational framework. In order to properly carry out its objective, it may interact with its audiences informally. Diagonal communication is used to coordinate efforts for the fulfillment of organizational goals and to speed up information flow and understanding, according to Shibeshi (2014). A lot of communication occurs along the line of command rather than the organizational structure.

4.3 Data from an In-depth –Interview

In the in-depth interview was conducted with nine respondents selected based on the purposive sampling methods used for this study. The researcher has also taken notes during the interview

According to respondent number seven, "as public relations professionals, we primarily work with aim to improve the university's reputation within the university before engaging with our external audience." We are aware that our internal audience includes employees in management, education, and other fields. Additionally, respondent nine on confirms that "the communication staff clearly identifies its publics as the strategic communication plan reveals and we engage in accordance with the plan's guidelines, but we have certain limitations in outlining and addressing our internal publics target fully as our publics have a variety of demography background." Respondent number eight adds, "We are aware that the university has a range of internal publics. I can give you a good definition of their heterogeneity if you ask me, but we weren't able to handle all of them for a variety of reasons. As a department, we primarily focus on resolving the educational activities and related issues of our organization. We are aware of our limited workforce and human resources, as well as other financial limitations.

The most of the times, students don't have the opportunity to engage in upward dialogue, according to respondents 1 and 2. The most frequent time that students are given the chance to engage in upward communication is during teacher evaluation. Students and professors generally interact when they are in college. A large percentage of teachers never hear back from their pupils. The university management is also reticent to hear what students have to say. The

majority of the cases, the student then follow the instructions provided by the relevant body. The academic community, on the other hand, "expects to create an effective communication with our management staff, students, and other communities of the university," according to respondent 5. Although it is important for an institution to communicate, there isn't any room for upward communication to express our opinions to top management. Respondent 4 disagreed, saying that "we are aware that communication from lower level employees is essential for achieving the university's objectives. Then, as an institution, we offer multiple platforms to collect feedback in various organizational levels, from the president's office to departmental levels. Although there may occasionally be a gap between the effective practice of those activities and the variety of our personnel, we should not draw the conclusion that the university places focus on this kind of communication.

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Respondents 1 and 2 said, "We students occasionally find it difficult to comprehend our peers, even when we speak the same language. I have a friend from Borena who speaks oromiffa, for instance. I am from Wollo and am of the Oromo family, but I frequently find it difficult to grasp the messages sent to me by my freeing. Additionally, our teacher's foreign-accent pronunciation makes it tough to grasp them easily. Because various people have different communication styles, misinterpretation can occur even when two people are speaking the same language, according to Agarwal (2012). Even if two people speak the same language, their accents and dialects (the way they use words) may differ (Agarwal, 2012). Despite the fact that speakers of different dialects and accents speak languages that are technically similar, varied word meanings and interpretations can result in a variety of disputes.

The fourth respondent said, "AAU is the first university in Ethiopian history, thus the university anticipated dealing with a number of socio-economic and political issues of the nation and also practicing to progress the university to fulfill its established vision and goals as much as feasible. Here, we can see that the university does not simply communicate formally according to its established organizational framework. In order to properly carry out its objective, it may interact with its audiences informally. Diagonal communication is used to coordinate efforts for the fulfillment of organizational goals and to speed up information flow and understanding, according to Shibeshi (2014). A lot of communication occurs along the line of command rather than the organizational structure

According to respondent number seven, "as public relations professionals, we primarily aim to improve the university's reputation before engaging with our external audience." We are aware that our internal audience includes employees in management, education, and other fields. Additionally, respondent nine on the opposing side states that "the communication staff clearly identifies its publics as the strategic communication plan reveals and we engage in accordance with the plan's guidelines, but we have certain limitations in outlining and addressing our internal publics target fully as our public has a variety of demography." Respondent number eight adds, "We are aware that the university has a range of internal publics. I can give you a good definition

of their heterogeneity if you ask me, but we weren't able to handle all of them for a variety of reasons. As a department, we primarily focus on resolving the educational activities and related issues of our organization. We are aware of our limited workforce and human resources, as well as our financial limitation.

According to the third respondent said, "In AAU, we obtain the bare minimum of knowledge from our pals. The university has restrictions when it comes to providing its pupils with basic information. Even the university's campus lacks any kind of direction indicator to help us actively carry out our obligations. Through communication with our peers and senior students, we bridge the gap.

Interviewees	Work Place/Position/Department	Date of Interview	Duration of Interview
Respondent One	Graduate Student	July 03	17 Minutes
Respondent Two	Undergraduate Student	July 03	21 Minutes
Respondent Three	Academic Staff	July 07	20 Minutes
Respondent Four	Academic Staff	July 07	25 Minutes
Respondent Five	Administration Staff	July 11	31 Minutes
Respondent Six	Administration Staff	July 12	27 Minutes
Respondent Seven	PR Practitioner	July 15	34 Minutes
Respondent Eight	PR Practitioner	July 16	33 Minutes
Respondent Nine	PR Coordinator	July 22	39 Minutes

Table 1: data gathered from in-depth interviews with AAU internal publics

4.4 Discussions

4.4.1 Internal Publics of AAU

As the excellence theory acknowledges the organizational structure, culture, gender, and system of internal communication, it also facilitates two-way symmetrical communication, promotes long-term relationships that provide a feedback loop through the sharing of messages between internal stakeholders in the organization. Here, the researcher believes that in order for public relations professionals to construct an effective integrated internal organizational communication, they should first identify their internal publics. Although internal stakeholders

may be connected to one another, they may not all have the same interests (Jones, 1995; L'Etang, 2005; Welsh & Jackson, 2007). Public relations professionals need to keep this in mind. Groups and subgroups of internal audiences are possible. These can be categorized using demographic information or job description. For instance, internal stakeholder groups in higher education may be hourly or paid employees, academic support staff, administrative, academic, or research-based. According to Cheney and Christensen (2001), internal stakeholders can also be categorized using structural levels.

AAU identified its general publics as its primary and secondary/internal and external audiences in order to effectively address their message as they designed the strategic communication policy with the goal of "brand attributes in the minds and hearts of key audiences". The researcher observed how the plan identified the internal publics of the institution because the focus of this study is the internal organizational communication of the university. Parents of present and prospective students, faculty, staff, alumni, the college advisory council, and donors were among the internal publics who were asked to comment on the plan. Even though the plan mentions the internal publics, they are more vague and don't fully specify the precise state of the publics.

According to respondent number seven, "as public relations professionals, we primarily work with aim to improve the university's reputation within the university before engaging with our external audience." We are aware that our internal audience includes employees in management, education, and other fields. Additionally, respondent nine confirms that "the communication staff clearly identifies its publics as the strategic communication plan reveals and we engage in accordance with the plan's guidelines, but we have certain limitations in outlining and addressing our internal publics target fully as our publics have a variety of demography background." Respondent number eight adds, "We are aware that the university has a range of internal publics. I can give you a good definition of their heterogeneity if you ask me, but we weren't able to handle all of them for a variety of reasons. As a department, we primarily focus on resolving the educational activities and related issues of our organization. We are aware of our limited workforce and human resources, as well as other financial limitations.

Based on the respondents' replies, the researcher concluded that PR practitioners had successfully identified their internal publics, demonstrating that they have a full awareness of the publics they are seeking as required by their profession. Knowledge should be shared inside the organizational structure, according to Excellency theory, and this necessitates the flow of internal communication between various employees. This theory also offers recommendations for great communication practices between the company and its employees as well as amongst those employees.

4.4.2 Hierarchy of AAU Communications

Internal communication channels can be divided into official and informal channels in their broadest sense. According to Stuart & Sarow (2007), internal communication is a network that higher management and workers have joined. Meetings, conferences, occurrences, and gatherings are commonplace in employees' weekly schedules, and staff members are the most important corporate communication channel for face-to-face interactions. While informal communication networks encompass anything from workplace banter to inside jokes and rumors spread in the break room. Due to the content's dependability and the message's speedy delivery compared to formal memos and staff meetings, informal communication is sometimes more crucial than formal communication. In recent years, organizations have increased their efforts in informal communication due to the rise in productivity it has brought about. 2009 (Argenti)

The interaction between employees or staff in the organization takes place through computer-mediated communication tools like instant messaging, e-mails, chat rooms, or internal communication network, as today's businesses have their own internal social networking site where the interaction between the employees can be carried out in a secure and safe manner. This method of communication includes social media as well (Stuart & Sarow 2007). On its strategy plan, the AAU cites "Social, print, web, and electronic Media" as the channels intended to address its audience. It shares university news and information with target groups via social media in a quicker, more pertinent way. The University currently makes use of Facebook,

Twitter, Telegram, and Instagram. The university uses brochures, newsletters, emails, and conversations as additional channels for reaching its target population, in addition to traditional electronic media platforms like TV and radio. Even though the university created integrated channels of communication to properly serve the needs of both its internal and external publics, it actually struggles to put such channels into practice.

One FGD participant said, "The University usually informs us through face-to-face communication. They occasionally try to use billboards. The institution mostly uses social media to disseminate information, yet the majority of us are unable to evaluate those platforms. As a result, we are powerless to fully respond to questions from our external audience when we communicate with them. A second participant in FGD 2 further verifies that "face-to-face contact and billboards were employed for lower class staff like security guards, messengers, cleaners, and secretaries. We interact with a range of publics, but occasionally when we have face-to-face conversations, we can lose sight of the main message. Face-to-face contact is good for clarifying questions and understanding information, but people can forget due to a heavy workload.

AAU uses traditional media, billboards, and face-to-face contact in addition to social media channels including Facebook, Twitter, and the website, according to respondents one and two. While we receive information from these platforms, the practitioner does not provide timely and updated reports. Respondents 9 through 8 and 7 further affirm that "mostly the communication staff spends time engaging by writing news for website page." Before three years ago, we tried to create a variety of print products, such as brochure flair and other PR tools, to reach out to our audiences. However, the university later decided to cancel those productions due to the budget issues and funding concerns. We only produce one annual publication that details the university's routines in operations all year long.

The university does not consult the communication department while using an integrated channel to engage the public, according to respondent nine. Without consulting the communication

department, the university's upper administration occasionally engages with different local media. This is demonstrated by the fact that the university president special advisor manages the university's Facebook page. This suggests that the university's communication department is dysfunctional.

To sum up, the researcher considered that Addis Ababa University should place more attention on choosing media and engaging in communication work while also consulting the department to improve the practice professionally as the same time.

4.4.3 Internal Communication channel of AAU

According to Shibeshi (2014), most communication flows in one of four different directions: downhill, upward, horizontally, or diagonally. The grapevine is another significant channel of communication. The internal communication patterns of an organization are influenced by its organizational structure. An organization's structure ought to allow for communication in three different directions: horizontally, vertically, and downward (Lunenburg, 2010). The framework for organizational communication is established by these three directions. Scott claims that official communication occurs downward, upward, and diagonally, whereas informal communication occurs over the grapevine. (Lunenburg, 2010). AAU uses both official and informal communication channels for internal organizational communication. Let's examine each one in turn;

A. Downward Communication

The term "top down approach" also refers to downward communication. The highest level management employs this strategy to interact with the lower levels. Its primary objective is to use information to gain influence. This is used to put policies, rules, plans, goals, etc. into action. Actual information is distorted in this kind of organizational communication. Feedbacks could help make this effective (Lunenburg, 2010). Additionally, Scott (2014) claimed that downward

communication occurs from the CEO down or from top to bottom. From the head of the division to the head of the unit, it passes through top executives before reaching junior staff members.

The President of AAU works with four Vice Presidents and one Executive Director to implement the university's policies, guidelines, strategies, and other goals. The Academic Vice President, the Vice President for Research and Technology Transfer, the Vice President for Administration and Student Services, the Vice President for Institutional Development, and the Executive Director of the College of Health Sciences (with the rank of Vice President) all communicate with lower-level employees.

In accordance with response of interviewees' numbers three and four, "AAU top management forwards several modified policies, guidelines, strategies, and objectives to be implemented by lower employees." Additionally, respondent nine states, "In our institution, interactions between our department and the top management of the university are downward communications. Any information or policy is easily forwarded to us by the university's senior administration. They didn't even consult us as the communication staff when making decisions or planning university events that directly affects us. Even if respondents five and six reject the idea because "we are in the information age," respondent nine blames the university's top management for their reluctance to invite the communication practitioner in the relevant area. The department of communication is highlighted. When we conduct any ceremony or make decisions regarding any university activity, we enlist their assistance in playing the role of a link between our publics and the institution.

According to information obtained from the relevant stakeholder's which are the internal public of the university and observations made by the researcher, communication between top management and staff is often downward. Rarely did top management staff, primarily the university president and vice presidents, have two-way channels of communication.

B. Upward Communication

AAU has a number of hierarchical levels of authority and communication, including department level, college, faculty, and school level, as well as president and vice president level. In addition to those levels of hierarchy, the institution also has levels for students, security guards, messengers, and secretaries. As previously said, the university communicates its policies, rules, plans, and goals to the concerned staff members. Lower-level employee ideas, performance reviews, and feedback on the institution are communicated through upward communication. Upward communication refers to any communication that occurs between employees and managers, managers and executives, and so on. Examples of upward communication in an organization include employee recommendations, performance reviews, criticism about the company, and requests for facilities or instructions (Scott, 2014).

Shibeshi (2014) further demonstrates that managers should support upper communication since it gives insight into how effectively workers comprehend downward communication. It might inspire staff members to offer useful suggestions. In participative and democratic organizational environments, upward communication is primarily nondirective. In addition to the chain of command, common methods of upward communication include suggestion systems, reports, appeal and grievance procedures, counseling sessions, cooperative goal-setting, grapevine group meetings, the application of an open door policy, morals questionnaires, etc.

The most of the times, students don't have the opportunity to engage in upward dialogue, according to respondents 1 and 2. The most frequent time that students are given the chance to engage in upward communication is during teacher evaluation. Students and professors generally interact when they are in college. A large percentage of teachers never hear back from their pupils. The university management is also reticent to hear what students have to say. The majority of the cases, the student then follow the instructions provided by the relevant body. The academic community, on the other hand, "expects to create an effective communication with our management staff, students, and other communities of the university," according to respondent 5.

Although it is important for an institution to communicate, there isn't any room for upward communication to express our opinions to top management. Respondent 4 disagreed, saying that "we are aware that communication from lower level employees is essential for achieving the university's objectives. Then, as an institution, we offer multiple platforms to collect feedback in various organizational levels, from the president's office to departmental levels. Although there may occasionally be a gap between the effective practice of those activities and the variety of our personnel, we should not draw the conclusion that the university places focus on this kind of communication.

Therefore, the institution has less capacity for upward communication based on the observation made by the researcher and the data acquired. Though the university rarely got in touch with the department of communication. Most decisions are made by top management alone, without input from the communication department, and are subsequently communicated to the public by the special adviser to the university's president without the assistance of PR professionals. Respondent nine affirms, "We communication staff also acquire that information as one public of the university when big decision reached and addressed for publics of the institution or in most circumstances through mainstream media. Such incidents deter us from carrying out our tasks in an effective and efficient manner.

C. Lateral Communication

In an organization, lateral and horizontal communication happens between employees who are normally on equal basis. Under this communication, information is shared amongst individuals in the organization who are of equal position. In an organization's managerial structure, lateral or horizontal communication is described as communication between departments or individuals at the same level (Rasel, 2013). In an organization, lateral communication frequently occurs and is neither upward nor downward. In essence, lateral communication is practiced by AAU. The third respondent said, "In AAU, we obtain the bare minimum of knowledge from our pals. The university has restrictions when it comes to providing its pupils with basic information. Even the

university's campus lacks any kind of direction indicator to help us actively carry out our obligations. Through communication with our peers and senior students, we bridge the gap.

According to Scott (2014), it happens among peers and in a horizontal fashion among equals. Another term for it is peer level communication. Any verbal or written communication that occurs between the heads of different divisions or groups can be categorized as lateral communication. The fact that there is little distinction in the hierarchical levels or positions of the senders and the receivers in any such lateral communication is crucial. The most efficient method of communication is not blocked here by the boss or the subordinates. In AAU, lower-level employees like security guards, messengers, cleaners, and secretaries particularly practice lateral communication. As was previously indicated, such internal publics primarily interact with their university communities face to face. However, in addition to face-to-face interactions, the university's top management also uses billboards to reach out to those internal audiences.

One FGD participant affirmed, "The University mostly uses social media platforms or modern technology to communicate messages for its publics. However, since most of us didn't use such technology and because the website's message is presented in English, it was difficult for us to understand what was being said. Additionally, we use clique communication to grasp the university's policies and up-to-date information. The Other Participant in the FGD two also acknowledges, "As you know, we lack the educational background and social media skill of our coordinator, who frequently uses face-to-face communication and billboards in some situations. When we speak to one another verbally, we frequently get into arguments that we later forget. The majority of the time when we messengers are documenting files, our ability to understand the letter we are addressing and the connected activities is put at risk. As a result, we attempt to go beyond these challenges by speaking with our friends and secretary.

In general, the researcher noticed that AAU internal publics primarily share information amongst their friends, such as students with students, teachers with teachers, administration staff with their clique, particularly the college deans. However, lateral communication is crucially held on

between security guards, messengers, and cleaners of the university as the university communication tools and strategy didn't consider them.

D. Diagonal Communication

It is the information exchange between various hierarchical levels of an organization. Diagonal communication, for instance, may entail upper level management by informing lower level management about a change in organizational objectives and fostering discussion about the best way to accomplish the new objectives (Scott, 2014). AAU engages in diagonal communication most often when the institution attempts to adopt new legislation, when there are national concerns, and when top management positions are being filled. The fourth respondent said, "AAU is the first university in Ethiopian history, thus the university anticipated dealing with a number of socio-economic and political issues of the nation and also practicing to progress the university to fulfill its established vision and goals as much as feasible. Here, we can see that the university does not simply communicate formally according to its established organizational framework. In order to properly carry out its objective, it may interact with its audiences informally. Diagonal communication is used to coordinate efforts for the fulfillment of organizational goals and to speed up information flow and understanding, according to Shibeshi (2014). A lot of communication occurs along the line of command rather than the organizational structure.

"We security guard communicate with all internal publics of the University without hierarchies, from students to instructors, from department heads to college deans, from vice presidents to presidents, from cleaners to messengers, etc.," said Participant FGD One. As you are aware, all of those visitors enter the university through its main gate. We are primarily charged for maintaining the university's safety and tranquility. The members of FGD two also agree with the prior notion that we should communicate with those publics as often as possible. The cleaners, messengers, and secretaries of the university interact with a range of internal publics on a daily basis.

In general, the AAU values diagonal communication greatly among its lower-level staff members and practices it in some capacity at the top management level as well. In this case, it is important to note that the institution needs to place more attention on all facets of communication transmission.

E. Grapevine

Grapevine is a haphazard, unofficial method of communication that is common in businesses. Because communication is a human tendency, grapevines thrive. Within the company, familiar individuals socialize and have informal conversations. They converse about events at the company they both work for because it is one thing they have in common. Such communication may not have a clear source, and it might spread throughout a company through individual interpretation as rumors, gossip, and single-strand communications. Compared to formal communication/messages, grapevine communication is frequently quicker and more direct (Scott, 2014). It can occasionally become more effective and respectful than formal communication. It is necessary to acknowledge and accept the prevalence of this style of communication within a company. It can be advantageous to a skillful communicator, and grapevine control may always be available. The AAU also engages in this kind of communication at all levels of the university.

Work-related and interpersonal information are both spread through grapevines. Employees are interested in knowing what is happening within the company. They turn to the grapevine for information when formal avenues are not used to keep them informed. According to responder number three, "mostly we try to get in-depth information about our university from other staff members; it may be our senior/in a position to get the information." When we speak with our friends who work at our university, the majority of administrative and interest-related difficulties are brought up. In most cases, they provide information based on proof, but it needs occasionally be double examined. Our university is unique in that the majority of decisions were made by the administrator with the help of his group and other governmental entities. As personnel, we are

invested in our university and need to be aware of developments pertaining to academic policy. As a result, we make an effort to inform our workers informally.

They are also interested in the people they work with. Personal information that is typically not shared through official means travels through grapevines. Some workers rely heavily on word-of-mouth for information. They receive information quickly, and more information is provided than is often done face-to-face or with persons they are familiar with. One FGD participant said, "As humans, we are fascinated about those who are a part of the university's internal public. Not only do we speak with our workers to get to know them, but sometimes our tasks also call for it. In order to get to know him well, we are also curious to discuss our cliques in general. To protect the university's stability and harmony, we must work together more. But given that humans are diverse by nature, there may also be those people who are keen to learn more about others. A second participant in the FGD agrees that these people might spread false information about someone in order to maintain their interest.

Shibeshi (2014) asserts that informal downward communications, which are frequently written and may come from someone they do not directly know, often have a stronger impact on the people who engage in them. In order to reduce the drawbacks of grapevine communication, AAU should give its internal publics with effective information.

4.4.4 Elements that affect Internal Communication of AAU

Effective communication has a lot of obstacles. These difficulties are referred to as communication barriers or environmental factors. According to Patako and Yazdanifard (2014), communication between managers and employees is frequently a very difficult process. However, hurdles to clear, open, and effective communication in the workplace can arise from both managers and employees, which might obstruct or diverge from a message's true meaning. Unwanted interference with the transmission of a message is typically related with noise, one of the environmental elements that affect successful communication inside companies.

Many pieces of organizational psychological literature (Agarwal & Gary, 2012; Conrad, 2014; Rani, 2016) include message overload, a lack of feedback, physical impediments, and other factors as barriers to effective communication. When someone receives too much information at once, message overload may occur. Effective communication within businesses can be hampered by a variety of physical obstacles, including the environment's nature, which can result in noise-related environmental elements over which the organizations have no influence, the absence of feedback, or who to report to in particular circumstances. For example, the organization is severely impacted by noise and a lack of input. A communication barrier is a situation that prevents a message from being successfully received or understood by a recipient that an employer or employee uses to convey information, ideas, or a message (Rani, 2016).

The researcher attempted to look at the background of language and culture in order to provide an overview of the AAU internal organizational communication hurdles. These three ideas are stressed by academics such as Arifin, Abuisaac (2017), Ivancevich et al. (2011), Adu-Oppong & Agyin-Birikorang (2014), (Daud et al., 2017), and Agarwal (2012) in internal organizational communication. Misunderstandings about language and culture pose problems for information flows, especially when communicators interact with heterogeneous audiences. The researcher then goes on to discuss each of the two notions below using information gathered from AAU internal publics.

A. Language

Language serves as a medium for communication and enables us to create shared understandings of the world (Arifin and Abuisaac, 2017). Since language is the primary means by which communication is enabled, language is essential to efficient communication (Ondondo, 2015). However, when people can't grasp one other's languages, communication might be difficult. The inability to communicate through language is referred to as a language barrier. The most frequent obstacle to efficient communication, causing misconceptions and misinterpretations, is language (Agarwal, 2012). According to participant in FGD 2, "AAU predominantly addresses its message

through its social media pages and emails. Even if we strive to use social media platforms by improving our skills, the language itself makes it difficult for us to comprehend the most recent information. The institution should take into account our needs by speaking the local language to its intended audience. In addition, a participant in the FGD affirms that "we communicate with many publics who express their inquires in different languages. Examples of students from different regions of our nation include those from Gambia, Oromiya, Tigray, Amhara, Afar, and Somalia, among others. Additionally, our university hosts international students who attend classes there. Even if they make an effort to communicate with us in English, we are unable to do so successfully.

Respondents 1 and 2 said, "We students occasionally find it difficult to comprehend our peers, even when we speak the same language. I have a friend from Borena who speaks oromiffa, for instance. I am from Wollo and am of the Oromo family, but I frequently find it difficult to grasp the messages sent to me by my freeing. Additionally, our teacher's foreign-accent pronunciation makes it tough to grasp them easily. Because various people have different communication styles, misinterpretation can occur even when two people are speaking the same language, according to Agarwal (2012). Even if two people speak the same language, their accents and dialects (the way they use words) may differ (Agarwal, 2012). Despite the fact that speakers of different dialects and accents speak languages that are technically similar, varied word meanings and interpretations can result in a variety of disputes.

B. Culture

One of the elements affecting employees' working performance in an organization is culture, which is defined as a system of shared values, beliefs, and attitudes that affects individual perceptions, preferences, and behaviors (Ramlan et al., 2018). A larger cultural gap inside an organization will require tighter management oversight. Organizational anarchy may result if managers are just partially unable to comprehend how important culture is. Failure to recognize cultural differences in businesses can lead to embarrassment, relationship breakdown, and other

effects on corporate performance (Ghemawat & Reiche, 2011). Each manager has a unique perspective on particular organizational operations. According to response number 9, "the recent AAU top management are they act personally make decisions with consultation of specific government body and also they doesn't care about the formality of the university guidelines." If we look at the institution's privatization, the university's internal public was not invited to address it. The top management merely talks with the representative of the government before forwarding the choice to us. Here, it is important to note that universities' main goal is to advance educational practice through research and training, not for financial gain.

The internal public of the institution, according to participant FGD 1, "comes from variety of culture both locally and internationally." We could unintentionally occupy their culture when we communicate with them. Especially when we utilize sign language to communicate with them because we don't comprehend their language. According to Aman et al. (2014), the differences across countries and cultures lead to various working styles in businesses. It is important to ascertain the values that each employee holds dear. Employees' cultural beliefs will have an impact on how they operate through their body language, communication style, problem-solving abilities, and time management. This is a highly important issue for management to solve since cultural differences in work value may have an impact on an employee's performance, which in turn affects job satisfaction at work.

The researcher comes to the conclusion that culture is a program of the mind that someone guides and also used for organization how it hold on its activity. Culture is not only the common values, beliefs, and attitudes that impact individual perceptions, preferences, and behaviors.

4.5 Major Findings of the Study

Following a thorough analysis of the AAU PR's contribution to the development of efficient organizational communication using the aforementioned study approaches, To effectively communicate with its audiences and use the plan as guidelines or policy, AAU created a strategic communication plan.

- AAU's strategic communication plan is largely intended to reach out to its external audience and includes the following four goals: enhance community-engaged learning, advance inclusive excellence, and promote resources.
- In spite of the fact that AAU lists its internal publics as Current Students, Staff, Prospective Students, Faculty, Parents of Current and Prospective Students, Alumni, College Advisory Council, and Donors, it is more thorough and overlooks demographic information on its publics.
- AAU uses formal and informal communication techniques including grapevine and other types of downward, upward, lateral, and diagonal communication. Lower-level employees and students primarily use lateral communication when upper management uses downward communication.
- Even though the AAU created integrated communication channels (including social media, print publications, websites, and electronic media), PR professionals mostly communicate their message through their websites and yearly publications.
- PR professionals at AAU mostly work to promote universities to the general public.
- Language, cultural, and financial barriers prevent AAU from conducting efficient internal organizational communication. Additionally, the communication department lacked the resources to connect the university with its audience, particularly the internal one.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion, Summary Conclusion Recommendation

5.0 Introduction

This study was conducted on the Internal Organizational Communication Practice at Addis Ababa University. This chapter discusses the research findings of the study, the conclusion and the summary based on the findings and conclusion.

5.1 Summary

The main purpose of this study was to assess the internal organizational communication practice. In this study, the practice of public relations was assessed in the context of internal organizational communication at AAU. In this study, important informants were selected through purposive sampling methods. The data from in-depth interviews and FGD were collected and analyzed using a qualitative research method. The relevant information from the FGD and interview was analyzed using a qualitative theme approach. This study found that AU uses formal and informal communication techniques including grapevine and other types of downward, upward, lateral, and diagonal communication. Even though the AAU created integrated communication channels including social media, print publications, websites, and electronic media. However, the university's PR professionals mostly disseminate their message through websites and yearly publication.

The researcher employed a qualitative research methodology and the case study method to investigate those particular objectives. In-depth interviews with key informants and focus groups with security guards, messengers, cleaners, and secretaries were conducted as part of the primary data collection process. Thematic analysis was used to examine the information acquired from university internal publics through interviews and focus group discussions. Applying the aforementioned research methodology, the researcher critically examined how the AAU PR

contributed to the development of effective internal organizational communication and came up with the seven key results that were detailed in the preceding chapter.

The researcher comes to the conclusion that though the AAU PR practitioners are guided by a strategic communication plan, the plan itself should be approved because it places a strong emphasis on internal organizational communication. These important findings are given forth in chapter four. The success of the institution may be impacted because, according to public relations theory, employees are frequently ambassadors to external audiences of an organization and its image. AAU PR practitioners primarily target the external public to boost global learning, realize inclusive excellence, improve community-engaged learning, and promote resources while neglecting the internal one. Employees consequently have an impact on the brand or reputation of their company (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003; Grunig, 1992).

AAU uses both formal and informal communication channels, but when internal audiences engage in gossip and diagonal communication when information is lacking, the reputation of the institution is put in jeopardy. The study came to the conclusion that AAU PR practitioners play no part in establishing efficient intra-organizational communication, unless they create an annual book that covers all of the institutions' activities and write news articles for websites. In order to communicate with internal audiences, PR professionals solely use websites, which may accidentally disregard lower-level employees like security guards, messengers, and cleaners.

On the other hand, the university's senior administration has created space for a communication wing to supervise media-related operations and all aspects of communication. Here, as the researcher noted in the discussion section, AAU top management doesn't consult when they deal with the media to collaborate, provide multiple ceremonies, prepare speeches, and allot necessary budget for the communication department to practice their duties by using a variety of PR tools to effectively address their internal public. Therefore, the AAU PR division and the top management of universities should place a strong emphasis on their internal publics to safeguard the institutions' reputations.

As Crescendo (2005) indicates, some businesses invest millions in philanthropic causes in an effort to cultivate a positive reputation in their local communities, not realizing that certain employees can damage that reputation every time they speak negatively about the company. Public relations professionals are concerned about this possibility of external reputation damage. However, it can be lessened with a well-thought-out internal communication program.

5.2 Conclusion

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deal with the media to collaborate, provide multiple ceremonies, prepare speeches, and did not allot necessary budget for the communication department to practice their duties by using a variety of PR tools to effectively address their internal public. Therefore, the AAU PR department and the top management of universities should place a strong emphasis on their internal publics to safeguard the institutions' reputations.

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5.3 Recommendations

Based on the result, findings and conclusion, the researchers provided the following recommendation:

- First and foremost, AAU needs to have a draft of comprehensive and well-organized strategic communication plan that directs all of its communication-related actions. The use of communication tools and elements has been prepared in advance so that their combined efforts can support the intended outcome. The communication needs to be carefully controlled and should put its internal audiences first.
- In addition to providing short- and long-term training for the PR practitioner in collaboration with academic expertise and media professionals, AAU should hire well-experienced PR practitioners to facilitate the overall communication activities as required by professional ethics and principles.
- Thirdly, AAU should to involve PR professionals in media-related activities, such as giving ceremonies, signing with media, and advising the university's senior management to identify problems, describe them, and design answers to them.

- Finally, AAU top management should support for the improvement of the department of communication by establishing an effective budget, offering training to update employees' abilities, and bridging the skills gap in the workforce.

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Appendices

APPENDIX I

In depth Interview Questions

Addis Ababa University

School of Journalism and Communication MA in PR and Strategic Communication

General Information

This Interview questions are prepared to assess the AAU PR department experts, academic personnel, management staff, and students view regarding the internal communication practice of the university.

Your response is valuable to meet the objective of this research.

- With what criteria do you categorize and communicate the internal publics of the University?
- Does your plan consider the internal publics?
- Were the messages disseminated met the intended objectives? How?
- Which communication types were used to address the internal publics?
- What it looks like communication department engagement in meeting which management members involved in?
- In what ways do you play a role for the internal communication related issues of the university?
- How do you consider the appropriateness of channels which communication to internal audiences?
- Which of these channels were effective? Why?
- What challenges have you faced on the internal communication practice of the University?
- What are weakness and strength you have observed regarding the university's internal organizational communication?

APPENDIX II

General information

These questions are prepared to guide the Focus group discussions that are aimed to assess the view of security guards, messengers, students and cleaners regarding the internal communication practice of the university. Your response is valuable to meet the objective of this research.

- Are you aware of the university's current activities and future plans?
- Was internal organizational communication activities were appropriate and effective? Why?
- What were mechanisms are to collect feedback or Comment on the internal communication practice of the university to the internal employees?
- How do you classify the internal communication approach of the University?
- How consistent and accurate information from the PR department regarding the university's current activities and future plans of the university?
- What are weakness and strength you have observed regarding the university's internal organizational communication?