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ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE STUDIES

SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATIONS

**AN ASSESSMENT IN TO THE EMPLOYEE PERCEPTION ABOUT PR
PROFESSION AND ITS PRACTICE: THE CASE OF BATU TOWN
MUNICIPALITY OFFICES**

BY

MOHAMMED KASSO

SEPTEMBER, 2021

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND
COMMUNICATION IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS AND
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS**

SEPTEMBER, 2021

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

Addis Ababa University

School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Mohammed Kasso, entitled Perception of Public Relations Practice in the Governmental Organizations: The Case of Oromia Regional State of Batu town municipality offices submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Public Relations and Strategic Communications (PRSC) complies with the regulations of the University and notes the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality; Signed by the Examining Committee:

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to assess employees' perception of public relations profession and its practice in Oromia regional state of Batu Town municipality offices. It has utilized a case study design and a mixed research approach. In order to be able to answer the research question, the instruments used to gather the required information for the study were questionnaire, key informant interview and focus group discussion (FGD). The total number of respondents who took in questionnaire and key informant interview 70 and 10 respectively; two focus group discussions (FGD) comprising eight and six participants were also conducted. The obtained data through questionnaire were analyzed through simple statistics while those obtained through key informant interview and focus group discussion were interpreted qualitatively. The major findings of the study include: The Public Relations profession is in infant stage in general in Ethiopia particularly in Oromia Regional State of Batu Town municipality offices. The respondents said that, PR profession is not well known and structurally designed in the lower level of the Governmental offices like zonal and town administration with its designed and clear job description and this resulted in poor perception of the PR profession among employee of the Batu municipality offices. The paper revealed that the practice of public relation in town is very deprived and highly challenging for effective performance and implementation of public relations activities. The reason behind is the major perspective of public relations roles and functions are not clearly identified.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I praise Allah Almighty for giving me the tenacity, strength and patience to complete this study. Secondly, I would like to express my deep gratitude and appreciation to my advisor, Mekuria Mekasha (Assi. Prof)for his consistent advices, valuable suggestions, and unreserved encouragement. I am also grateful to Batu Town Administration Managers, Employees and stakeholders, for their support by giving every valuable information and documents that are needed for this research. Last but not the least on the list of people I am indebted to my wife Beysa Bete and my friends. I really appreciate the support they provided me in every step I went through.

Table of Content

	Page
Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Table of Content	iii
List of Acronyms	vi
CHAPTER ONE	1
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1. History of Public Relations in Ethiopia.....	3
1.2. Statement of the Problem	5
1.3 Objective of the Study.....	6
1.3.1 General Objective	6
1.3.2. Specific Objectives	6
1.4 Research Questions	6
1.5 Significance of the Study	6
1.6 Scope of the Study.....	7
1.7 Limitation of the Study	7
1.8 Organization of the study	8
CHAPTER TWO	9
LITERATURE REVIEW	9
2.1. Introduction	9
2.2 Historical Development of Public Relations	11
2.3 Public Relations in Government Organizations	12
2.4 Public Relations Roles and Functions.....	13
2.5 Public Relations Practice in General.....	14
2.6 Government public Relations.....	15
2.7 Public Relations in Ethiopia.....	15
2.8 Theories and Models	17
2.8.1. Models	17
2.8.1.1 Press Agency (Publicity) model.....	17

2.8.1.2 Public Information Model.....	17
2.8.1.3. Two- Way Asymmetry model.....	18
2.8.1.4. Two -Way Symmetry model.....	18
2.8.2 Theoretical Frameworks.....	19
2.8.2.1 Systems Theory.....	19
2.8.2.2 Open and Closed Systems	19
2.8.2.3 Systems and Sub-Systems	21
2.8.2.4 The Value of System's Thinking to PR.....	21
2.8.2.5. The Relevance of Systems	22
CHAPTER THREE	23
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	23
3.1 Introduction	23
3.2 The Research Design.....	23
3.3 Overview of Organizational Background	23
3.4 Study Area Description	24
3.5 Sampling Technique and Sample Size	24
3.5.1 Data Source and Collection Instrument	25
3.5.2 In-depth Interviews.....	26
3.5.3 Focused Group Discussions (FGD).....	28
3.5.4 Questionnaires	29
3.6 Data Collection procedures	29
3.7 Method of Data Analysis	29
3.8 Ethical Considerations.....	30
CHAPTER FOUR.....	32
DATA PRESENTATIONS AND ANALYSIS	32
4.1 Discussion	34
4.1.1 Data Analysis.....	35
4.1.2 Summary of the Questioners	35
4.1.2.1 Perception of PR profession among the employees of Batu town municipality offices.	35

4.1.2.2 How employees of Batu town municipality offices practice the PR profession.	35
4.1.2.3 Structurally establishment of the PR profession in the town municipality offices.	35
4.1.2.4 Ways of improvements of PR profession among the employee of batu town municipality offices.....	35
4.1.2.5 The growing trend of the Public Relations Profession from the top/federal to the lower level administrations.	35
4.1.2.1 Perception of PR profession among the employees of Batu town municipality offices.....	39
4.1.2.2 How employees of Batu town municipality offices practice the PR profession.	41
4.1.2.3 Structurally establishment of the PR profession in the town municipality offices.....	42
4.1.2.4 Ways of improvements of PR profession among the employee of Batu town municipality offices.....	43
4.1.2.5 The growing trend of the Public Relations Profession from the top/federal to the lower level administrations.....	43
CHAPTER FIVE	45
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	45
5.1 Conclusions	45
5.2 Recommendation.....	47
Reference	48
Appendices.....	51

List of Acronyms

FGD = Floccus Group Discussions

GCAO = Government Communications Affairs Office

IPR = Institute of Public Relations

PRO = Public Relations Officer

PRP = Public Relations practitioners.

PR = Public Relations

MoI = Ministry of Information

NGO = Non-Governmental Organizations

UK = United Kingdom

CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

Public Relations (PR) refers to the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its public. It entails building sustainable relationships between an organization and all its public in order to create a positive image. Bernays(1945) defines PR as "a management function which tabulates public attitudes, defines policies, procedures and interests of an organization followed by executing a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance. The other writer also defined PR by saying Organizations usually has several management functions to help them operate at their maximum capacity: research and development, finance, legal human resources, marketing and operations. Theaker (2004) According to him each of these functions is focused on its own contribution to the success of the organization. In its meeting in Mexico in 1978, the World Assembly of Public Relations Associations agreed that: "Public relations is the art and science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling improvisation leaders and implementing planned program of action which will serve both the organizations and the public interest" (Harrison, 2000:6) .On the African continent, the application of PR techniques date back to the beginning of the African civilization.(Nart, 2002). According to Narty (quoted in Rensburg, 2002:5), the concept of PR was practiced in Africa before the era of colonialism. Public relations have become an important tool for governments following the push for good governance and fledgling democracy. Governments have also used public relations to assist the news media in coverage of their activities.

The general functions of PROs in government ministries include propagation of policy, projection and improvement /shaping/ of government image, changing public perception/worldwide view of government and performing the service of the respective ministries. The role of PROs is to channel out important information from the government organizations to the public through the press and other forums, make the organizations more accessible to the public and the press, handle press queries and churn out publications giving positive image for governmental organizations. Ombara (2001:6),

He suggested that, the main function of PROs in government institutions is to help articulate the government policy and to publicize the ministries' activities. Essentially, a PRO should

try to make his or her ministry more accountable to the public. She says other functions of a PRO include assisting in the preparation of ministerial speeches by polishing them ready for functions, issuing press releases, providing adequate press coverage for the ministry in a positive and meaningful way, highlighting ministry activities, advising senior management on relevant publicity program and creating rapport between senior management and junior staff.

As (Mersham et al.(2009) educates perceptions of public relations vary among practitioners and academics people. Perceptions are important to the practice of public relations, especially the perceptions of those who are attached with it on a day-to-day basis and whose decisions directly affect its practice. As this study deals to a high degree with perceptions of public relations practice, it is important to define what perception is.

Perception can be defined as a “complex process by which people select, organize, and interpret sensory stimulation into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world” (Berelson & Steiner, 1964, p.88).

Lubbe and Puth (2002) showed how public relations practitioners are involved in a variety of work assignments or functions which may include research, strategic planning, counseling, communication, evaluation, media relations and placement, organizing, writing, editing, media production, speaking, turning and management. However, the most common prevailing perspectives that influence the function of public relations in broad concept, as Venter (2004) put it, are communication, management and marketing. The roles of public relations practitioners within the organizations can be seen as a communicator, a mediator, an interpreter or communication link between the organization and all its stakeholders

Although the name public relations is expanding and growing in many organizations in Ethiopia, the profession is still endanger from many problems emanating from misunderstanding of the clear roles and functions of the public relations , as marketing expert and as a communication process in an organization.

In Ethiopia, where the public relations practice is at its preliminary stage, the struggle to achieve the right track for the development of this outlook is not yet very clear. As PR profession is at infant stage in Ethiopia, the same is true for Oromia Regional State and Batu town municipality offices. As a result, the aim of this study is to explore perception of public relations practice in the governmental organizations in Ethiopia, Oromia regional state of Batu town municipality offices. Different studies carried out in Ethiopia related to Public Relations perception and practice shows that it is highly challenging for the practitioners in governmental organizations. There still exists in Batu town municipality offices wide gaps in understanding the perception of public relations practice in the governmental offices.

1.1. History of Public Relations in Ethiopia

The emergence of the practice of modern public relations in Ethiopia came as a result of the establishment of the Ministry of Press in 1940's (Solomon (2000)). Then the media organizations such as Radio, News Agency and Television services were organized and administered under the ministry of Press. After serving for some time, the ministry was replaced by the then Ministry of Information and tourism in 1950's with similar task of administering the media organizations in addition to carrying out the responsibility of culture and tourism related issues. Later in 1960 is when the Ministry of Information replaced it, the responsibility of leading the media organizations was also transferred to the new ministry. The head of government public relations, around the final years of Emperor Haile Selassie, explained the practice at that time as routine occupied by activities, for example, gathering, and convention and, to some degree, caring for publications.

The practice of public relations that started to take shape during the 1960's continued for years without any change in form and content. The major purpose of the public relations then was merely serving the interest of the ruling class. As the public relations at those times were so unprofessional, it was unable to respond to the situations arising in those times.

Prior to 1960s the beginning of newspapers since 1900's that provided advertisement space for business organizations together with the introduction of printing press, telecommunication and the railway by Emperor Minilik II (MoI, 2003). As cited in **Journal of Advertising and Public Relations V1 • I2 • 2018** , Now days, public relation activities are mainly considered as hub of developmental activities; thus, in each government offices, there is public relation office. Among these offices of the government organizations in the country have opened offices for public relations practices which aimed to promote and report the day-today activities to the internal and external publics. The issue of public relations practices in different countries including Ethiopia has been controversial within in the field of communication. The possible reason for this could be attributed to the lack of understanding of the role and practice of public relations. At the same time, very few people know what public relation encompasses, what it aims to achieve and how it works.

Public` relations in Ethiopia are less significant in the eyes of top level managements in an organization due to misunderstanding of the role and functions of the profession in the success of an organization. As a result, the consistency of the public relations practices may not be on the right way. In spite of significant changes in the focus and practice of public relations during the last decade in Ethiopia, the term is still misused and misunderstood in many organizations. As Oromia, is part of Ethiopia, the historical development of public relations has no difference.

The perception of public relations in Batu town municipality offices, government employee is in infant stage and the Public relations practice in the governmental offices of the town is very less due to public relations profession is not well known and lack information about the profession. However Batu Town Government Communications Affairs Office is tried to work as a PR in the town administration, people do not trust this office and they consider it as a government propaganda agency. Therefore, there is luck of trust and interest of the government employee from the GCAO of Batu town administration. Thus, there is poor understanding about public relations in Oromia regional state of Batu Town administration among the employee in governmental offices.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Public relations practitioners have different responsibilities. For example, the practitioner acts as a counselor to management and as a mediator, helping to translate private aims into reasonable, publicly acceptable policy and action. Therefore, if public relation is well perceived and implemented in an institution, that institution will achieve its goals and objectives successfully. Government touches every aspect of society and virtually every facet of government are closely tied to and reliant upon Public Relations (Cutlip et al, 1994:462). This therefore reveals that Public Relations practice in governmental organizations to be given serious consideration in terms of budgetary allocations, staffing, positioning, and recognition. However, according to Ombara (2001:4), Public Relations units in many ministries are not well established. The units exist as small offices, with inadequate facilities and often rely on other offices for equipment. Further, some Information Officers who are seconded to various ministries as PROs/public relations officers/ lack adequate training and are usually not prepared to undertake their duties as Government Public Relations Officers (Ombara, 2001:4). She further says that Public Relations officers are often ignored as they do not qualify as managers. Often, they cannot articulate government policy.

In Ethiopia, the government is focusing on the significance of public relations department to all the governmental organization throughout the country. However there is little understanding of the profession among the employees. As few studies carried out in Ethiopia regarding to Public relations Practice showed that, government employee have poor perception about the profession due to clear designed and job description of the profession. In Oromia Regional State, the Batu Town municipality offices, government employee has misunderstood of public relations perception and its practice due to the problem mentioned above. Based on the problem stated, the purpose of this study is to asses to what extent employees perception of public relations profession in the Batu town municipality offices, to ensure employees practice towards public relations and to recommend ways of improving their perception of public relations practice in the municipality offices. Therefore; this study is intended to investigate employees perception of public relations and its practice in Batu town municipality offices.

1.3 Objective of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study is to assess employees' perception of public relations profession and its practice in the governmental organizations of Oromia regional state in general and Batu town municipality offices in particular.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

- To assess employees' perception of public relations profession in the Batu town municipality offices.
- To explore to what extent the perception of PR between the employee, managers and customers in the governmental offices of Batu town municipality
- To recommend ways of improving employees' perception of Public Relations profession and its practice.

1.4 Research Questions

In order to achieve the above mentioned research objectives and seek answers for the stated objectives, the study is guided by the following research questions;

- 1) To what extent is the perception of Public Relations profession among the employees of Batu town municipality offices?
- 2) What factors affect employee's perception of PR profession and its practice in Governmental offices of the town municipality?
- 3) What needs to be done to strengthen employee's perception of PR profession in Batu town municipality offices?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study tried to explore employees' perceptions of public relations profession and its practice in the governmental organizations in Oromia regional state, Batu town municipality offices.

It attempted to investigate factors that affect employees perceptions of PR profession and its practice in the government offices among staff members, employees and managements.

Therefore, the study is useful for governmental organizations of Ethiopia and other organizations like NGO/ Non-Governmental Organizations/ to know the importance of perception of public relations practice in the government sectors activity and success. Furthermore, as a result of its practical application, it also allowed Governmental offices to assess problems and weaknesses that related to employees perception of public relations profession and its practice. In addition, the study has a significant advantage for every employee to assess their perception of public relations profession and its practice in their daily activity. It also attempted to come up with findings and future recommendations that will possibly be replicate to other government offices in the region as well as in the country. Finally, the paper will also help to initiate other studies in the area and can be used as an input for further research.

1.6 Scope of the Study

Oromia Regional State of Batu Town municipality offices is central or the site chosen to the conducting research. Therefore, the research included employee/workers of the government offices, managements and heads of the offices. Because of unconnected location of different towns and zones in the regional state, logistic facility constraint not incorporated any governmental organizations in Oromia.

The research conducted by taking the time frame from January, 2021 to June, 2021 (six months period after re-structuring). The above mentioned time frame selected for exploring perception of public relations practice in the Batu town municipality offices.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

As many researchers believe any research work was not free from certain constraints. So is this research paper. The following are some of the restrictions that the researcher was faced while conducting the course of the study or the constraints which reduce the quality of the research:-Lack of adequate relevant data on time because of the reluctance of the concerned informants and absence of documented data that the researcher wants to analyze; luck of up-

to-date research outputs on public relations. Since the major source of the information for this study is the opinion of the employees and managers, these opinions would not provide all rounded necessary information for the study due to the fact that some employees misunderstand the questions, give less attentions and respond irrelevant answer as well as over jump some questions that may influence the precision of the study.

The other restriction is that due to the spread of (COVID 19)many challenges were faced and it was difficult to conduct the research. Many workers and respondents were staying at home and they are unwilling to give the information because of anxiety of it. Even though there were a lot of limitations, the researcher was tried to overcome such problems by convincing the respondents the objective of the study and by taking precaution of Covid.

1.8 Organization of the study

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter one is establishes Introduction, statement of the problem, and presents objectives of the study. It also deals with significance, scope and limitation of the study. Chapter two reviews a related literature on employee's perception of public relations profession in the governmental organizations.

Chapter three dwells on the research methodology. It has discussed the research method, data collection techniques to conduct the research. Chapter four discusses data presentation, interpretation and data analysis. This chapter analyzes perception of public relations profession and its practice and it also analysis factors that affect their perception towards the public relations practice among the government employee of Batu Town municipality offices Chapter five and the last chapter provide conclusion and recommendation.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide literature review that may function as a relevant framework for the current research. The thesis is expected to study perception of public relations practice in the governmental organizations in Oromia regional state of Batu town municipality offices. Therefore, the chapter is designed to review related literature in order to develop experiences and restrict the study.

Public Relations practice has become an essential part of modern life, and has settled down to making an important contribution to governments, industry, the community and many other fields (Black, 1976:15-16). According to him, Public Relations in central and local governments should be non-political. It is to promote democracy through full information and not to advance the policy of any political party. He says Public Relations are an essential part of management both in central government and industry. Black (1976:3) explains further that the purpose of Public Relations practice is to establish a two-way communication mechanism to resolve conflicts of interests by seeking common ground or areas of mutual interest, and to establish understanding based on truth, knowledge and full information. The scale of activity to promote good Public Relations may vary considerably according to the size and nature of the interested parties, but the philosophy, the strategy and the methods will be very similar whether the Public Relations program influences international understanding or to improve relations between a company and its customers, agents and employees.

The most basic function of government Public Relations is to contribute to the definition and achievement of government program goals, enhance government responsiveness and service, and to provide the public with sufficient information to permit self-government (Aronoff & Baskin, 1983: 306). Government is intended to provide services that would otherwise be impractical for individuals to provide, such as law enforcement and fair protection, wildlife preservation, national defense, public transportation systems, justice systems, social programs, and national museums. The problems and pressures of society increasingly strain the machinery of government (Cutlip et al, 1994:463).

Harrison (2000:8) says that because Public Relations are sometimes seen as an instrument of persuasion, it is useful to distinguish it from propaganda. Public Relations, on the other hand, recognizes a long-term responsibility and seeks to persuade and to achieve mutual understanding by securing the willing acceptance of attitudes and ideas. It can succeed only when the basic policy is ethical and the means used are truthful. In Public Relations, the end can never justify the use of false, harmful or questionable means (Black: 1976:5).

Decker (1974:2) says that the purpose of a Public Relations effort, therefore, is to gain and hold a favorable opinion of publics of an organization. He suggests that developing a Public Relations effort involves five steps: determining content of the message, identifying publics, choice of communication methods, assignment of personnel responsibilities and evaluation. According to Black (1976), practical applications of Public Relations practice should entail positive steps to achieve goodwill. These, he says, involve initiating and maintaining goodwill and public interest in the activities of an organization in order to facilitate the successful operation and expansion of those activities. Practical applications of Public Relations practice should aim at action to safeguard reputation. Heerden (2004) describes the function of and/or role of PR practice by using the following ten principles: PR deals with reality, not false fronts. Conscientiously planned program that put the public interest in the forefront are the basis of sound PR policy; PR is a service oriented profession in which public interest, not personal reward, should be the primary consideration; PR practitioners must go to the public to seek support for program and policies; public interest is the central criterion by which program and policies should be selected.

PR practitioners reach many publics through the mass media, which are the public channels of communication; the integrity of these channels must be preserved; PR practitioners act as intermediaries between organizations and their publics and they must be effective communicators - conveying information back and forth until understanding is reached. PR practitioners are also obligated to explain issues to the public before these problems become crises; and PR practitioners should be measured by only one standard: ethical performance. Cutlipetal (1994:462) suggests that the role of Public Relations in government varies widely. The diversity of goals and activities in government is greater than any other area of Public Relations practice. Perhaps this can be attributed to the fact that governments touch every

aspect of society, and virtually every facet of government is closely tied to and reliant up on Public Relations.

In a very real sense, the purpose of government itself closely matches the purpose of Public Relations. Successful governments maintain responsive, mutual understanding based on two way communication with citizens. Government Public Relations activities, many embraced by terms such as public affairs and public information, have developed as a political and administrative response to various organizational goals. They are a key component of the administrative system, specifically designed to bridge the gap between popular and bureaucratic government (Cutlip et al, 1994:465). Theaker (2004, p. 50), suggested that, the management perspective of public relations is twofold: first helping to collect and interpret information from the social environment so that strategic decision can be made and second, the communication of the strategic vision. The notion of public relations as a managerial function is emphasized in many definitions put forward to explain the nature of the discipline Seitel (2011) pointed out that the management function of public relations is in a position to: (1) evaluate internal and external opinions, attitudes and needs on an ongoing basis; (2) to advise management regarding their possible effect and to act as an instrument in bringing about policy changes and in directing new courses of action. Hence, the high-level of organizations and the practitioners of public relations should know very well their publics to achieve organizational missions. These organizational missions can be determined by the external and internal stakeholders. The public relations practitioner acts as a counselor to management and as a mediator, helping to interpret private aims into reasonable, publicly acceptable policy and action. This view clearly indicates that relationships are at the center of public relations, and is seen as an important ingredient for the effective functioning of an organization.

2.2 Historical Development of Public Relations

According to J. Grunig and Hunt (1984), the 18th century American Revolution in the United States was “one of the most important products of public relations-like activities in history. (p.17). Cutlip et al. (2000) also confirms that the temporary patterns of public relations practices were shaped by innovations in mobilizing public opinion” (p. 103) that formed part of Revolutionary War propaganda campaigns.

(Seitel, 2011: 54; Baines et al, 2004: 2-3). Later the 1920s saw the books “Crystallizing Public Opinion” and “Propaganda” that Edward Bernays, the father of public relations, wrote in order to mold public opinion and influence the public in line with specific views. Edward L. Bernays, sought to achieve public relations goals through the spread of cultural ideas about art, science, and social programs that would appeal to the mutual interests of organizations and their publics (Brummett, 2000) USIA interprets public opinion overseas and provides analysis and feedback to the federal government. USIA, an independent agency within the executive branch, reports directly to the president. It is perhaps best known for its radio broadcast network, Voice of America, which began during World War II and was responsible for providing information to American troops and citizens in war areas. In addition, USIA operates World net, a satellite television service, and various other programs and services Overseas, USIA is known as the United States Information Service, or USIS. In America embassies, the chief USIS officials are the public affairs officers. They advise ambassadors and other diplomats on relevant Public Relations issues affecting U.S. interests and policy and on embassy operations and relationships within host countries. A vital responsibility of USIA is to correct information or to counter adverse propaganda that might have a detrimental effect on the United States (Cutlip et al, 1994:468)

2.3 Public Relations in Government Organizations

Public relations service interventions are the desired course of actions planned the organization to achieve public relations goals. According to Banik (2002:35) the need for public relations service interventions in government is required to achieve the organizational goals. He summarizes into the following: to support the structure and strategic mission, vision and goals of the organization, to prepare to respond to the increasing problem faced by the organization both internally and externally and to help build a desirable image of the organization by suitable PR strategies and actions.

As Banik explained in his book of effective public relations in public and private sector (Banik, 2002:40-46), the public relations management has to enlist the perception and support of its workers to realize its objectives winning confidences and trusts of its shareholders, clients and suppliers and the public at large thereby full filing its internal and external obligations. The Department of Information in the ministry responsible for

communication is the recognized channel for all government information to the local and the international mass media (DPM, 2006). Ministries and departments are, therefore, expected to maintain regular liaison through Public Relations Officers seconded to them to ensure the fullest possible publicity for any information they wish to communicate to the public through the media.

2.4 Public Relations Roles and Functions

Public Relations are essentially nonpolitical and have two main tasks: to give regular information on policy, plans and achievements of the department; and to inform and educate the public on legislation, regulation and matters that affect the daily life of citizens. It must also advise ministers and senior officials of reaction and potential reaction to actual or proposed policies (Black: 1976:6). Public relations practitioners must be sensitive to the public or organization's needs when they are given a role to play within the organization they represent. Such sensitivity, which involves role taking, is especially important when a practitioner acts as a communication manager assessing, reacting to, and devising ways of relating to public and clients in a dynamic, ongoing way (Broom & Dozier, 1986, 12th ed., pp. 37-56).

The problem-solving facilitator's roles of public relations, according to (Dozier cited in Castelli, 2007), is the role where the practitioners are assumed as problem solver, decision-maker and planner. They are expected to be knowledgeable about innovations in public relations and expected to demonstrate leadership approach to solve problems. The positions of Public Relations Officers were created in Kenya in 1983 by the then Ministry of Information and Broadcasting which decided to send its Information Officers to various Ministries to act as the link between the Ministry and the public (Ombara, 2001:6). The main function of PROs in government institutions is to help articulate the government policy and to publicize the ministries' activities. Essentially, a PRO should try to make his or her ministry more accountable to the public. The role of a PRO is to channel out important information from the ministries to the public through the press and other forums, make the ministries more accessible to the public and the press, handle press queries and churn out publications giving a positive image of ministries. Other functions of a PRO include assisting in the preparation of ministerial speeches by polishing them, issuing press releases, providing

adequate press coverage for the ministry in a positive and meaningful way, highlighting ministry activities, advising senior management on relevant publicity programs and creating rapport between senior management and junior staff (Ombara, 2001:6). The role of a PRO is to channel out important information from the ministries to the public through the press and other forums, make the ministries more accessible to the public and the press, handle press queries and churn out publications giving a positive image Ombara (2001:6).

Now all government departments have their quota of press officers and public affairs specialists (Harrison: 2000:171). The core functions of the Office of Government Spokesman/Public Communications Secretary include: carrying out research on communication aspects of Government and providing appropriate strategies for effective communication; propagating Government policies and programs and disseminating accurate information. Other functions are advising the Government on best practices in dealing with the media; anticipating public concerns and responding to them appropriately; liaising with the media on matters touching on Government; ensuring good working relations between the Government, media and the general public's; liaising with ministers departments on matters relating to dissemination of relevant information pertaining to their operations; editing and producing journals and other publications aimed at improving Government image; and using communication to encourage nationalism and patriotism . Government ministries and bodies are expected to furnish the Office of Public Communications with Press Statements and Press Releases and provide updated information for communication to the public. The Government Spokesman holds weekly press briefings.

2.5 Public Relations Practice in General

The British government first employed Public Relations in 1912 when Lloyd George, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, organized a team of lecturers to explain the first old age pension scheme in 1912 (Jefkins, 1992:4). Kitchen (2004) argues that many people know only the small parts of public relations. They claim the negative attitude towards the profession emanates from this half or part of knowledge.

Onabajo(2006)JournalofSocialSciences,12(2),119-124(2006).Http://www.krepublishers.com. Retrieved on April 5,2006. Argues in his article 'Proactive corporate management and the dynamics of public relations' that: the term public relations are widely misunderstood, and

misused. Part of the confusion is due to the fact that public relations cover a very broad area. Depending on the context and one's point of view, it can be a concept, a profession, a management function, or a practice". These arguments have considerable connection in the context of Ethiopian public relations. The first thing that comes with the word 'public relations' to an employee of government and private sector is the activity of publicity .

2.6 Government public Relations

Government relations and public affairs are the types of public relations that deal with how an organization interacts with the government, with governmental regulators, and the legislative and regulatory arms of government. The government relations and public affairs are discussed together in this section; the two functions are often referred to as synonyms, but there are very minor differences. Government relations are the branch of public relations that helps an organization communicates with governmental publics. Public affairs are the type of public relations that helps an organization interact with the government, legislators, interest groups, and the media. These two functions often overlap, but government relations is often a more organization-to-government type of communication in which regulatory issues are discussed, communication directed to governmental representatives takes place, lobbying efforts directed at educating legislators are initiated, and so on. A strategic issue is any type of issue that has the potential to impact the organization, how it does business, and how it interacts with and is regulated by the government. Heath contends that "public policy issues⁶ are those with the potential of maturing into governmental legislation or regulation (international, federal, state, or local)." Heath (1997), p. 45

2.7 Public Relations in Ethiopia

Practicing public relation activities in Ethiopia is a recent phenomenon. During the last regimes, public relation is one of the professions which had got special attention currently in private and governmental organizations. PR has recognized as an important profession to achieve their objectives. The Role of public relation has two basic missions in Ethiopia that is to create national consensus through the nation and to introduce Ethiopia throughout the world or to show Ethiopia's good image and to attract investment, and create good opportunity for the citizen and country.(Ethiopia Federal Government Offices Public Relation Instruction and Structural Manual 2006, p8-13)

The main objective of public relation practice is to teach the importance of tolerance, unity based on diversity and create good image of Ethiopia externally together to struggle poverty and strengthen the democratic principles which are the pillars of the nation to survive and continue politically stable. (Cited in Haimanot Gebayo 2018).

The Federal Government Communication Affairs of Ethiopia reorganized public relation in federal institute since 2001 E.C. Government communication Affairs Office Establishment Council of Ministers Regulation 158/2008 This was a government regulation issued by the Council of Ministers in 2008 in order to GCAO as a legal government institution to play a leading role in the government information and communication system in the country. As the document puts under its objectives (Article 4), the Office was established with a grand objective to ‘ensuring smooth flow of information between the Government and the public and facilitate the process of building a society enriched with information and actively participate in the country’s affairs and, in particular, facilitate the creation of equal opportunities for peoples and sectors of the society that need special support in accessing government information. Public relation should be the member of top management and also decides the public relation structure of minimum staff number. Therefore Directorate director, assistance director, senior, middle and junior, experts is minimum staff. But according to the burden of the work and institutions can have more staff. The public relation Director and assistant head of public relation is assigned by the federal government communication affairs. (Cited in Shimelis Mulatu, 2017).

Federal Negarit Gazette, 25th NO.8 29th November 2018, according to Proclamation NO.1097/2018 to provide for the definition of the powers and duties of the federal democratic republic of Ethiopia, there is only 19 ministries and there is the liquidation of Government Communication Affairs Office. According to the Reporter, December 10, 2018, over one hundred employees of the recently defunct Government Communication Affairs Office (GCAO) have been transferred to three state media Organizations. It is to be recalled that, GCAO was legally dissolved in the recent restructuring of the government after its mandate was transferred to the new office called the Press Secretariat established under the office of the Prime Minister. According to its sources, all employees of the former

communication office were transferred to the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) the Ethiopian News Agency (ENA) and the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA).

2.8 Theories and Models

Almost all public relations text book writers have borrowed theories from the adjacent disciplines of communication, such as psychology, sociology and organizational studies; including Grunig's model itself (Mackey, 2003). As to Mackey (2003), at the end of the twentieth century, J. Grunig's four model concept of public relations was the contemporary modern theoretical methodology that could be said to have commenced from within public relations scholarship. These models are:

2.8.1. Models

2.8.1.1 Press Agency (Publicity) model

The focus of this model of communication is on sending message from the source to the receiver. Relatively it is an old form of communication model where one- way traffic is assumed to be productive. As Seitel (2011) put it, "This model is basically one way communication where messages will be sent from a source to a beneficiary with the express aim of winning great media consideration."

2.8.1.2 Public Information Model

The early 1900's, was a time when huge business organizations were under serious attack from the media on issues of corruption and other forms of injustice. This situation has forced private organizations to establish public relations offices and hire practitioners. This period was marked with a communication model known as public information (Grunig, 1992). This is another early type of one way communication planned not really to influence yet rather to inform. Both this and the press a gentry's model have been connected to the common notion of public relations as publicity (Seitel, 2011).

Indeed, this stage was identified as public relations practice having a significant influence on public opinion that may have its own contribution to prevent policy changes of social significance. During this time the principle of Lee which promotes telling the truth is the best

way to effective public relations was a widely accepted way of doing public relations business.

2.8.1.3. Two- Way Asymmetry model

This model seems to be a bit complicated compared to the two models discussed previously. The idea of two ways communication was introduced as a result of looking for a feedback for information disseminated that began to be considered as part of the communication process. However, the purpose of seeking feedback wasn't to change position that has been seized by an organization, instead the feedback was to be used to introduce another form of persuasion so that the audience would accept the interest of the organization (Seitel, 2011). This third model of public relation is known as the period of propaganda and persuasion. It is also a period when some social science research such as opinion polling, random sampling and organized feedbacks and the likes were introduced to the public relations practice.

2.8.1.4. Two -Way Symmetry model

These model advocates present it as the preferable model of public relations. As indicated by Seitel (2011) the symmetric model promotes for free and equal information transfer between an organization and its publics based on common understanding. This model of public relations will provide practitioners a balanced relationship with the public whom they serve as a mediator to their organization. The major advocate and founder of this model James E. Grunig mentioned that it would be difficult to exactly identify when this model came into being. Nonetheless, he underscored that those men who are considered to be the founders of modern public relations Lee and Bernarys used to counsel their clients in a way both the organization and the public mutually benefit from each other's interaction (Grunig, 1992). Following the Second World War professionalism in public relations has begun to take shape of as public relations offices flourished almost everywhere.

As J. Grunig and Hunt's four models of public relations and specifically their advocacy for the symmetric model over the others was a very recent phenomenon, obviously there will continue a lot of arguments and counter arguments on the symmetric model. In due process public relations might have chances of getting other new theories.

This research is conducted based on the two ways symmetric public relations model, where Public relations departments give equal emphasis to the interest of the public as that of the institutions. Especially in a country where the government is claiming to be not only developmental but also democratic, the best model for such a system is the two way symmetric. The two - way symmetry which best serves the interest of the institution employing persuasion and propaganda as the main strategy of public relations. Moreover, the two ways symmetry model of public relations is the most progressive and ideally the one that might serve the interest of an institution as well as a country.

2.8.2 Theoretical Frameworks

Tan (1985:14) defines a theory as a set of interrelated laws or general principles (hypotheses that have been repeatedly verified) about some aspect of reality. The function of theory is to explain, predict, and discover systematic relationships between facts. Public Relations practice is anchored on a number of theories. Some of these include the excellence theory, the systems theory and the social systems theory. For this study, the systems theory will be used.

2.8.2.1 Systems Theory

A system is a set of interacting units that endures through time within an established boundary by responding and adjusting to change pressures from the environment to achieve and maintain goal states. Influential on organizational communication, systems theory explains how and why people form groups, each of which is a system as well as part of a larger system. The systems perspective applies for Public Relations because mutually independent relationships are established and maintained between organizations and their publics. Mersham et al. (1995:47) say that the system's primary function is to maintain itself, therefore the interactions of the system (mechanical, organic and social) and the environment, ultimately define the system.

2.8.2.2 Open and Closed Systems

There are two types of systems, that is, open and closed systems. Open systems exchange energy, material and information with systems in their environment. Closed systems seal their boundaries and do not exchange energy with their environment (Spicer, 1997; Gregory,

1999:267). Open systems thus adjust and adapt to environmental demands (inputs from the environment) in order to survive since the ultimate goal of the system is survival. Closed systems on the other hand do not adapt to environmental changes with the end result being a stagnation of the system.

Application of Systems Theory to Public Relations Pressures can come from many sources in the environment (anything that generates change pressures on a system and includes information, energy and matter inputs) and PR must anticipate these pressures and deal with them. As counselors to top executives and line management, the Public Relations staff is charged with keeping the organization sensitive to environmental changes, anticipating as well as reacting to changes.

2.8.2.3 Systems and Sub-Systems

The organization is a system. It is made up of several departments that are sub-units or subsystems. The departments (sub units) are interdependent and help in fulfilling the goals and objectives of organization. Organizations are adaptive systems. They make adjustments based on the response from the environment. They also spend time, resources and effort in monitoring the environment.

Open System Model in Public Relations. An organization can be viewed from a systems perspective. An organization as a whole is composed of interrelated subparts and therefore any single change in a subsystem will affect the entire system. Organizations exist in dynamic environments where it needs to modify its internal processes and restructure itself in response to changing environment. Open systems adapt to accommodate environmental changes and therefore usually affect other units of the organization as well as the whole system, which is responsive to changes in the environment (Heerden, 2004:38).

2.8.2.4 The Value of System's Thinking to PR

Grunig and Hunt (1984) are of the opinion that the press a gentry or publicity PR models operate as if they were in a closed system. Cutlip el al (2000:238) contends that closed systems react to outside events and therefore refer to reactive PR programs. Buckley in Gregory (1999:268) is of the opinion that closed systems force a PR practitioner towards a technical role, implementing the decisions made by the dominant coalition.

The two-way symmetrical model focuses on shared meaning, which will have behavioral and organizational consequences.

In order for PR practitioners to apply the open systems approach, environmental scanning is essential so as to anticipate changes in the environment. These changes will influence the organizations and the relationships with the stakeholder groups.

Buckley in Gregory (1999:273) embraced the adaptive model where organizations are invited to engage with stakeholders, to create a process of shared meaning, which will change the organization's current form. The organization is part of a whole system which is interdependent and where the relationships between the organization and its environment are subject to change.

2.8.2.5. The Relevance of Systems

Thinking From an organizational perspective, the function of PR and the level at which it is performing will influence the bigger system. The level at which PR practitioners perform their activities will influence the success of the PR department. It is clear that the interdependency of the different levels at which PR operates influences the bigger system.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Under this section, the methodology that was employed in the study is briefly discussed. The chapter includes research design, sampling and sampling techniques, data collection tools, data collection procedures and method of data analysis.

3.2 The Research Design

This research is exploratory. The selected methodology for this study is qualitative and quantitative or mixed approach methods. The research methodology chosen for this study was suggested by the objective of the research, statement of the problem and the nature of data intended to be analyzed. The study focuses on exploring perception of Public Relations practice of the employee in Batu town municipality offices. The most common qualitative method of collecting data is in-depth interview. The method is particularly suited for obtaining a specific type of data (Creswell2009). Thus, the research method used for collecting data to study the employees perception of Public Relations profession and its practice in Batu town municipality offices was In-depth interviews, questioners and Focus group discussions. Through all this data gathering tools the researcher categorized the data obtained from samples and analyzed them carefully

3.3 Overview of Organizational Background

The Oromia regional state in its proclamation declaration number 65/1995 clearly stated the admission for restructuring their own city administration which lead to Batu's in 1997 E.C new structural reforming declaring its growth and development to be based on industrial advancement and their by solve its socio-economic problems. At present Batu's socio-economic progress is channeled through two administrative sectors which are Batu Town council and five Kebeles. Its past population census size as central statistical Authority (CSA) data of 1997 indicates; then population of Batu town was estimated to be 47,204. Out of which 24,960 are male and 22,244 are female. The recent study showed the size to a range of 38,321 males 34,992 female; total 73,313. According to socio-economic profile documents economic (Source in year 2009 E.C), the total area of the town is 5,306.73

hectars. Meteorological data shows that Batu town belongs to hot climatic zone a fresh air with mean annual temperature range between 210c- 270c (Batu socio economic profile).

In this section, the qualitative and quantitative data collected through various data gathering tools are presented. It is classified into two parts. The first part describes the characteristics and background of the participants; and the second part presents the analysis and interpretation of the data on perception of public relations practice in the governmental organizations in Batu town municipality offices.

3.4 Study Area Description

The study is conducted in Batu Town municipality offices of Oromia Regional State. The name 'Batu' derived from ancient Oromo hunters and warriors who come from the surrounding areas " Midhagduu" which means beautiful with their tired and hungry horses in search of grass land from the great Lake Zeway/Haro Dambel to their great astonishment and delight, they found swampy fresh pasture where they feed their horses and named the place 'Batu' the complete meaning of the word is well known as the creator /God gave us the land that we really wanted; After maintaining its historical name Batu for very long time, it's marvelous site ambitious lead the then feudal administrators turning it to the seat of the former 'Hikoch and Butajira Awraja' in the year 1956 E.C changing, the name which remained the reminder of their selfish and unfair naming. Batu shares boundary largely with Adami Tullu Jido Kombolcha District in the North, south and west and Lake Zeway/Haro Dambel in the east. Batu its name to Ziway received its municipal service as of 1956 E.C (Batu town Administration Official Document 2017)

3.5 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Samples are very important in research. Because it is not feasible for the researcher to study the whole population. In other words, samples are preferable because they are cheap and quicker. Cognizant of the aforementioned fact, the researcher applied both purposive and random sampling technique to select the sample units from the population. The researcher used multi-stratifying sampling technique to select informants from eleven administrative offices and 5 Kebeles. Questions initially prepared in English and later translate to Afan

Oromo language to avoid language barrier and to obtain required information from the respondents. Since this study is on Batu town municipality offices, the target population of this study is all employees of the Batu town municipality offices.

The selection is based on a multi stage purposive sampling technique in which two or more stage sampling is used for determining sectors and numbers employees participated in interviews and FGD to seek knowledgeable experts and sectors. Random sampling technique is also used for Questionnaire to avoid biasness. For example, 73 respondents used for questionnaire, Out of which 18 are females and 55 are males that are used for questionnaire. This sample size was taken using (Yemane1967) formula as follows: $n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$, where n = sample size; N = total population e = error terms assumption; so $n = \frac{269}{1 + 269(0.1)^2} = \frac{269}{1 + 2.69} = \frac{269}{3.69} = 72.89 \approx 73$. However, 70 responded questionnaires and the three won't return it, in which participants are about 26% of the population. Moreover, the participants for questionnaire are determined by systematic random sampling technique in which n th sequence chosen from the list of population. According to this technique n th = N/n in which N = Total population; n = the sample size. The n th value is 4. Hence, respondents nominated every fourth interval from payroll of each office.

3.5.1 Data Source and Collection Instrument

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, both primary and secondary data sources were applied. For seeking primary data sources, the researcher used key interviews; FGD/Focus Group Discussion and questionnaires. Different existing secondary sources including public relations documents, proclamations, articles, journals, books and etc were used during conducting this study.

Key Informant Interview

This method is quite important whereby the well informed members of the community being studied that provide the researcher with rich and detailed information on the subject of inquiry. Key informants are persons who have knowledge about the issue under study, and have access to other information of interest to the researcher (Kaufman 2005). The study also include key informant interview to dig out the employees perception in public relations practice at local level.

3.5.2 In-depth Interviews

According to Daymon and Holly (2002) in-depth interviews are useful form in communication studies, because they allow exploring the perspectives and perceptions of stakeholders and publics. In the best way, interviews should be conducted in a collaborative fashion that interviewees become able to express their opinion on topics that are of interest to them. The key feature of the interviews is that they allow the researcher to understand the point of view of the interviewees. From researcher's perspective, if something interesting and novel appears, the researcher has a freedom to prompt for more information; not sticking to the research instruments prepared prior conducting the interview. From the perspective of the interviewee, it gives more control over the interview and allows them to accent/pronounce things what they prefer most. So, the responses of interviewees can be slow and thought through or spontaneous and honest. Here the task of the interviewer is not to proceed too fast with all the questions, but also follow up and clarify the meaning of the words or phrases, which are not understood for interviewee.

Daymon and Holloway (2002) indicate that another benefit of interviews is that the responses are the subjective views and the researcher's understanding is fully based on evidence from participant's views and his/her own interpretations which might also be informed by personal experiences. Interviews can be formal and pre-planned or informal. The aim of all kinds of interviews is to elicit or draw out information by searching in the past and present experiences of the participants in order to discover their feelings, perceptions and thoughts. Usually in the interview process the responses to initial questions determine how the interview will further develop. Then the interviewer continues with the same questions along the same lines.

Daymon and Holloway (2002) also disclose that interviews can be structured or unstructured or, semi-structured. Qualitative research is usually engaging in unstructured and semi-structured interviews, as they are more flexible compared to structured ones.

It was necessary to ask the questions to get answers to different questions on perception of Public Relations Practice in the Governmental offices which were done by interviewing a total of ten interviewees which are four managers of the office and six experts in the governmental offices 7 of them are male and the rest 3 are female .In-depth interview gives opportunity to relevant members in the organization to offer detailed information and express themselves.

I interviewed a number of key officials from Batu town municipality offices: two experts and head of the office from Batu town Government communication Affairs office, one Expert from Environmental Climatic Change Authority, head of Investment office, two experts from Batu town Municipality office, a head of water supply enterprise, a head of the office from culture and tourism office and a key informant from kebeles .

As a qualitative approach to data gathering, the researcher employs personal (face-to-face) interviews with managers and employees of the Batu town municipality offices.

Interviewee12 explained the following by supporting responses from questionnaire stated that, there is less awareness regarding the Public Relations profession and there is poor practice in the developing of PR due to deprived perception among the employees. In general, according to the respondents, employees are practicing and participating in different activities for the issues of their life, but there is poor perception of PR among employees that resulted in poor practice in the developing of the profession.

According to the interviewee13 stated that, the Government should structurally establish strong PR professionals in the Government offices in order to control false and fake news and distribute different written materials such as brochures that can give the employees well perception.

The participants of the interview said that, to improve the PR profession, municipality offices should be structurally established in all governmental offices with its clear and specific designed job descriptions so that every employee could read and understand about the profession and its role.

On the other hand, An interviewee¹¹ explained the following by supporting responses from questionnaire that; reflect their opinion on the perception of the of the PR profession, they are agreed on that they have a perception to some extent about the PR from the media and some of them said that they take a short training on the profession especially from Government communication affairs and they have some information from the nearby NGO/ non-Governmental organizations. To sum up the interviewees ideas, even if the PR profession is not established in the government offices, the respondents have some information about the PR profession and in general, there is poor perception of the PR Profession. Most of the interviewees have similar idea on different questions that rose for them and that is why the researcher took their most important ideas on perception of the public relations profession and its practice.

3.5.3 Focused Group Discussions (FGD)

Focus Group Discussions is conducted with knowledgeable sectoral experts, selected people from the stakeholders and some selected managers and employees to generate qualitative data to supplement data obtained through interviews. A double or two groups of focus group discussions (FGD) held with an expert of Mayor Office, two experts from Government communication Affairs office, an expert from municipality, an expert of investment office and three stake holders from different kebele in the town and totally which has eight members and five of the participants are male and three of them are females.

The second group of FGD participants two experts from GCAO/Governmental Communication Affairs Office/ two experts from town administration council and two experts from educational office and civil service office respectively and has member of six members which have four males and two females. Furthermore, it is used to generate additional data concerning the existing traits of factors added to the perception of public relations practice.

3.5.4 Questionnaires

This method is a widely used technique in order to gain quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaires are dispatched to selected people of the study area, according to explained in the table 1.2 of institutional affiliations and respondents of the questioners. Self-administrated questionnaires which comprise close ended and open-ended questions were prepared and dispatched to 52 males and 18 females which are totally 70.

3.6 Data Collection procedures

Based on the research objectives; the interview questions were primarily prepared. Then, the interviews were conducted and the responses were properly taken and organized later. During all the interviews, the researcher relied on taking note. On the average, the interviews took 30 -45 minutes per interviewee. Finally, the interviews were interpreted and analyzed.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

After conducting the interviews, questioners and FGD, the researcher analyzed the notes and prepared the full report. The Gathered data were analyzed using themes that emerged from the interviewees, questioners and focus group discussions. The key statements, ideas, and attitudes were expressed under various topics. Thematic analysis refers to category segment/strata of qualitative data into meaningful (significant) themes. It aims to understand and know the data. When data is analyzed by theme or strata, it is called thematic analysis (Braun, V. and Clarke, V., 2006). This type of analysis is highly inductive, that is the themes emerge from the data and are not imposed upon it by the researcher (Braun, V. and Clarke, V., 2006). Thematic analysis is one of the most common forms of analysis in qualitative research. It helps in identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in detail. Finally, the written data was translated from Afan Oromo to English and then, analyzed by grouping similar responses together. The data has presented in a narrative form.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Research ethics primarily deals with the interaction between the researcher and the research population being studied.

Mack et. Al. (2005) has identified basic categories of principles to be considered in research ethics such as relationships with participants, intellectual property, fabrication of data, and plagiarism among others. So, the following points were taken into critical consideration while conducting this study:

Participants were selected voluntarily and guaranteed the right to withdraw from the participation at any time.

- ❖ I disclosed who I am and why I was there.
- ❖ I briefly explained what participating in this particular research means to the participants. So, they had an appropriate consent about why they were participating
- ❖ Informants were confirmed of the confidentiality of their response.

Reliability

Reliability is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated results. Reliability in research is influenced by random error. As random error increases, reliability decreases. Random error is the deviation from a true measurement due to factors that have not effectively been addressed by the researcher. Errors may arise from inaccurate coding, ambiguous instructions to the subjects, interviewer's fatigue, interviewee's fatigue, interviewer bias, etc (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003:95-96).

In this research therefore, random error was minimized through giving clear instructions to the respondents, having fewer questions to avoid interviewers and interviewee's fatigue and pursuing objectivity.

Validity

Validity is the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences, which are based on the research results. In other words, validity is the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of data actually represent the phenomenon under study. Validity, therefore, has to do with how accurately the data obtained in the study represents the variables of the study (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003:99). To ensure the validity of the research process, utmost care was taken in collecting accurate and analyzing data to ensure their credibility

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATIONS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the data, which was collected as per the objectives of the study are analyzed and presented. The data were gathered through in - depth interviews, questioners and focus group discussions reports.

Characteristics and Background of the Research Participants

Semi-structured interviews are held with 10 individuals from Batu town municipality offices: two experts and head of the office from Batu Town Government communication Affairs office, one Expert from Environmental Climatic Change Authority, a head of office from Investment office, two experts from Batu Town Municipality office, a head office manager from water supply enterprise, a head of the office from culture and tourism office an expert from Batu Town council and a key informant from the community. Focus group discussion is also held with a combination of these experts. Questionnaires were filled out by the above mentioned offices and others. A total number of 70 respondents filled out questioners, besides, the background of the respondents such as sex, age, work experience and educational status were the concern of the study and are expressed as follows.

Table 1.1: Characteristics of Participants by Sex, Age, Work Experience and Educational Status

Items	Category	Frequency	Percent
male	52	52	74.3
Female	18	18	25.7
Total	70	100	100
Age in year			
male			
18-25	2	2	2.8
26-35	37	37	52.8
> 35	13	13	18.6
Female			
18-25	2	2	2.8
26-35	10	10	14.3
> 35	6	6	8.6
Total	70	100.0	
Work experience			
male			

< 5	7	7	10
>6-15 years	21	21	30
> 15 years	24	24	34.3
Female			
<5 years	6	6	8.6
6-15 years	14	14	20
> 15	10	10	14.3
Educational level			
Male			
Diploma	2	2	2.9
BA/BSC	40	40	57.1
MA/MSC	10	10	14.3
Female			
Diploma	3	3	4.3
BA/BSC	13	13	18.6
MA/MSC	2	2	2.9
Total	70	70	100.

Source: Own survey result

This table has the intention that personal characteristics could have influence on responses of the questions. For instance, the way aged respondents react to questions of Public Relations issues from their experience they have passed through different and from the information they have and level of education also helped respondents to react to the questions accordingly. Even though, the sex category was presented, it was only to see representations in different work experience and educational background levels. As indicated by the table 4.1 of characteristics of respondents regarding the sex distribution, the majority of the respondents 52(74.3 %) were males while the remaining 18(25.7%) of the total respondents were females.

This shows us that females' participation in government bureaucracy and others is weak and still need support and affirmative action. The respondents of this study categorized into different age groups. Accordingly, the age dissemination of the respondents as revealed by survey result were 2(2.9%) within the age range of 18-25 years, 37 (52.9%) of them within the range of 26-35 years, 10(14.3%) within the age range of >35 years 13 (18.6%) and 6 (8.6%) of informants range above 35 years. From this fact, it could be easily understood that the majority of respondents were found in the productive age and hence can serve in public institutions of the town municipality offices for longer years.

Regarding work experience of respondents, 11(15.7%) of them served for less than 5 years, 35 (50%) of the respondents had work experience of 6-15 years, above 15years 34(48.6. %) of served above 16 years. Thus, this information enables the researcher to conclude that most of employees had appropriate work experience. All respondents of the study were government employees, so the information provided was very crucial for proper understanding Public Relations issues. Concerning the educational qualification, 5(7.1%) of them were diploma holder, 53(75.7%) of the respondents were degree holders, and 12(17.1%) of them were MA/MSC holders. This implied that most of respondents had qualified educational requisite that allow them to assess what is conducted and reason out critically.

4.1 Discussion

This part deals about analysis and interpretation of data obtained through questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions that associated to Public relations issue. To identify these Public relations perception, the responses summarized as follows. The total numbers of respondents are 52 males and 18 female, 10 key informants and two FGD (focus group discussions) which held eight participants five and three were male and female respectively and six participants that were four male and two female.

4.1.1 Data Analysis

Data analysis in the study followed thematic approach. The data generated from the in-depth interviews, key-informant, questionnaires and focus group discussions were analyzed through careful interpretation of meanings, contents; and through organizing, and summarizing in accordance with the issue under investigation. For the presentation of data, the researcher used tabulation of Liker with five ratings i.e., strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree.

The researcher used different mechanisms to analyze quantitative data that is gathered through close ended questionnaire. To this effect, the researcher made descriptive and exploratory presentation of data in a reflexive and narrated manner whilst keeping its original content. Nonetheless, the research is predominantly a qualitative analysis that examines the research problem from varieties of a social phenomenon at a single point in time the researcher analyzed quantitative data that is gathered through close ended questionnaire.

4.1.2 Summary of the Questioners

4.1.2.1 Perception of PR profession among the employees of Batu town municipality offices.

4.1.2.2 How employees of Batu town municipality offices practice the PR profession.

4.1.2.3 Structurally establishment of the PR profession in the town municipality offices.

4.1.2.4 Ways of improvements of PR profession among the employee of batu town municipality offices

4.1.2.5 The growing trend of the Public Relations Profession from the top/federal to the lower level administrations.

Close ended Questionnaires

Table 1.2 Local level evaluation of public relations awareness.

S /N	Items	Ratings														
		Strongly agree			Agree			Undecided			Disagree			Strongly disagree		
		M	F	%	M	F	%	M	F	%	M	F	%	M	F	%
1	Batu town municipality employees are well aware about public relations profession.	5	2	10	8	4	17.1	16	4	28.6	19	8	38.6	4	0	5.7
2	Batu town government workers have well awareness about public relations practice.	4	2	8.6	7	3	14.3	18	5	32.9	18	7	35.7	5	1	8.6
3	PR professional in your municipality offices have a positive impact on achieving organizational goals.	3	3	8.6	18	2	28.6	15	3	25.7	10	8	25.7	6	2	11.4
4	Do the top and line manager appreciate/recognize the activities of the PR practitioner in your office?	3	1	5.7	4	5	12.9	18	4	31.4	20	8	40	7	2	12.9
5	Public Relations Practitioners are established in all the government offices in the town administration.	2	1	4.3	3	0	4.3	20	7	38,6	25	8	47.1	2	0	2.9
6	Do stakeholders are actively participating in practicing public Relation Profession in Batu town administration	2	1	4.3	4	3	10	16	6	31.4	20	8	40	10	0	14.3

(Source: Own Survey Result, May 2021).

Question No.1 The above table reveals that from 70 employees of sector offices respondents, 7(10%) said „Strongly agree", 12(17.1%) Agree" 20(28.6%) undecided, 27(38.6%) disagree and 4(5.7%) said strongly disagree to the item which let them to reflect about their stance towards employees awareness of the Public Relations and their practice in the developing the PR profession. At this juncture, the conclusion could safely be reached that most of the employees recognized with a significant number in the range of Undecided and Disagree about the awareness of the PR profession and their practice in the developing of the PR profession. In addition, when they were questioned their reason for the above mentioned response, most of the respondents stated that there is less awareness regarding the Public Relations profession and there is less practice in developing PR due to poor perception among the employees. This clearly indicates that there is poor awareness of the respondents about the PR profession.

Question No.2 The above table shows that from respondents of the town administration 6 (8.6%) said that strongly agree, 10 (14.3%) said agree, 23(32.9%) said undecided, 25 (35.7%) disagree and 6(8.6%) said strongly disagree to the question which let the respondents to reflect their attitude on the awareness of the Batu Town Government workers toward the public relations practice. Most of the respondents said that undecided and disagree toward the well awareness of the government workers in town administration about the public relations practice. At this moment it could be concluded that, there is poor awareness of public relations practice among the government workers in the town municipality offices. This indicated that since the Public Relations profession is not fully established structurally in the lower levels of the government offices, there is no well exercise of the PR profession and that implies there is less awareness of the profession and there is less practice of public relations profession in the lower levels of administrations like district, zonal and town administrations.

Question No.3 states that from the 70 respondents 6 (8.6%) said strongly agree, 20(28.6%) agree, 18(25.7%) said undecided, 18(25.70) said disagree and 8(11.4) said strongly disagree to the question which let them to reflect their opinion about the PR profession in organization have a positive impact on achieving organizational goals. According to this question, the majority of the respondents said that they agree on that the PR profession in organization have a positive impact on achieving an organizational goals and the majority of the respondents agree on that the profession is very important for the success of an organizational goals if the profession or field is structurally established in every government organizations. On the other hand, this shows us even if the workers of the government in the town administration have poor perception about the public relations profession as mentioned in the above questions; the majority of the respondents believe that the PR profession is important for the success of the organizational goals.

QuestionNo.4 As can be seen from the table above, the participant of this study replied that, 4(5.7%) said strongly agree, 9 (12.9%) agree, 22 (31.4%) undecided, 28(40%) said agree and 9(12.9%) said that strongly disagree on the question that let them to reflect their opinion on top and line manager appreciate/recognize the activities of the PR practitioner in the governmental organizations. Based on the question, the majority of the respondents said that they disagree on the raised question. Because, according to the majority of the respondents, top and line managers do not appreciate or recognize the activities of the Public Relations practitioners in the Governmental offices especially in the lower level of administrations such as woreda and zonal due to top and line managers themselves have no well perception about the PR profession. This shows us that most of the top and line managers have poor perceptions toward the profession and it is difficult that to appreciate PR practitioners activities without the knowledge of the profession.

Question No.5 In the above table shows that from respondents of the town administration 3 (4.3%) said that strongly agree,3(4.3%) agree, 27(38.6%) said that undecided, 33(47.1%) said disagree and 2(2.9%) said strongly disagree on the question raised for the respondents to reflect their opinion on Public Relations Practitioners establishment structurally in all the government offices of the town administration.

As can be seen from the table, the majority of the respondents said that disagree to the question raised to them. This shows us public relations practitioners are not structurally established in the lower level of the administrations and there are no PR practitioners in all governmental offices in the town municipality offices.

Question No.6 In the above table shows that from respondents of the town administration 3(4.3%) said strongly agree, 7(10 %) said that agree, 22(31.4%) said undecided, 28(40%) said disagree and 10(14.3%) said strongly disagree on the question raised for the respondents on stakeholders participation in practicing public Relation Profession. As can be understood from the above table, the majority of the respondents said that “disagree” on the question left to them to reflect their opinion and their response reveals that stakeholders are not actively participating in practicing the PR profession there is poor perception of the PR profession among the stakeholders of the town administration

4.1.2.1 Perception of PR profession among the employees of Batu town municipality offices

Regarding to Perception of PR participants of focus group discussion said that when we hear about public relation, we perceive that PR means a spokesperson of the Government organizations or Nongovernmental organizations especially that gives attention for promotion and the quality of the product in industry. According to the participants of this group, they relate the PR with the MARCO or marketing communication and if the product quality faced the problem, the PR practitioner should make assessment to improve the quality of the product and who works on internal and external relations as well as media relations for the success of an organization. The issue is in order to compromise the governmental policy, governmental goal, that it might be confirm to the public at large collecting information, gathering information what is happening at the public level and what is going on. It is according to the policy of the government that is needed to be implemented or not, that should be detected, analyzed, organized and finally vocalized that is the issue of the PR that comes to the mind of the FGD group 2 participants. Here in this area, the government is alive when he practices the PR that means the PR should hear the public as well as the government.

Public Relations practice is the discipline which looks after reputation with the aim of earning understanding and support, and influencing opinion and behavior. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its public" (Harrison. 2000:2).

According to most respondents, the day to day activities of the PR in their office is especially the (Government Communication Affairs Office) servicing the customers, reporting what is raised by people in the town administration, gathering information and discussing different issues and need solutions from the concerned body. The participants of the FGD/Focus group discussion II said that, as a PR when we gather data on positive and negative opinion, people give their suggestion only on positive ideas and they are not volunteered to give suggestions on negative opinion due to political atmosphere. The communicators especially from the Government Communication Affairs of the town said that they are sometimes obliged to cut the conversation that is not suitable for the current political situation even if the idea is acceptable among the public.

Therefore, there is poor acceptability of the communicators among the public, equipment like camera and computer, less perception about the profession among employees and structurally un establishment of the field in the Governmental organizations especially in the lower level offices like town administrations and zones are the major challenges that face the PR in the field of their work. In addition of the above mentioned problems, PROs may face a lot of challenges during their work such as a matter of real information, lack of awareness about PR, public consider PR only as a Government agent and there is hesitation between them, fear of political situation among the public to tell the reality to the PR for the worker of the Government Communications Affairs Office those serve Public and the Government. Some of the group said that stability of the political atmosphere in the country and lack of budget is what may face the PROs/ public relations officers / in the field as a challenge. They also said that the PR or the profession is mostly seen as politics among the people rather than a science and all these are the challenges that can influence the public relations practice in most sectors.

Some respondents said that, since they have no structurally established PR in their office and have no perception of PR in general and they can't identify the daily activity of PR because of there is no guide line or job description like other professions in their office.

According to the respondents of the focus group discussion group one, Therefore, PR a bridge between the government and the community. If the bridge is filled or can be done accordingly to the expected goal of the government, there is public satisfaction of public at large. Regarding what is happening, what kinds of activities aspects, where is the problem, how it can be solved and to what extent the solved issue is satisfies the public is what is detected around the PR profession. As can be seen from the table, toward the perception of the PR profession, most respondents said that 23(32.9%) undecided and 25 (35.7%) disagree. This could be concluded that, there is poor awareness of public relations practice among the employees of the town municipality offices. This indicated that, since the Public Relations profession is not fully established structurally in the lower levels of the government offices, there is no well exercise of the PR profession and that implies there less practice of public relations profession.

4.1.2.2 How employees of Batu town municipality offices practice the PR profession.

Employees of the Batu town municipality are practicing in the communication but their practice is not because of PR perception. They participate in different issues of their life. Therefore, they practice in communication by commenting, criticizing and posting different ideas on social Medias but sometimes there is fear of political situation to express their feeling on social network sites. Directly or indirectly the employees are practicing in different activities. But they less perception of public relations. Therefore, there is poor perception among the employees of the town . Regarding to PR., Employees raise their questions, strength and weakness of different issues connected to their town municipality by giving suggestion in suggestion box and on social media or telephoning to the concerned body.

As we can see from the table, the most respondents said that with a significant number in the range of "Undecided" and "Disagree "about the employees perception of the PR profession and the respondents denied that or hesitate their practice in the developing the profession.

4.1.2.3 Structurally establishment of the PR profession in the town municipality offices

Two years ago vice managers of each office work as a PR officers for each governmental offices and they service as PR and give any information about their office. But since from 2011 there is no the structure of vice managers in the town administration and no any information about PR. According the respondents of this inquiry, the PR issue did not get attention from the government and the profession is suspended only in the higher governmental institutions and there is no the profession structure in the lower level offices.

The majority or it is possible to say all of the respondents from the questioners, participants of FGD and from the interviews, for this question, said that, PR is not fully established in most or all of the government offices in Batu town administration except for the Government Communication Affairs office. In addition of this, most respondents said that there is no perception about public relations and some said, we did not hear about PR (Public Relations) and the Government did not give attention to fully establish the PR in government offices those are at the lower level like town administration. As it can be understood from the questioners, 20(28.6%) of the respondents agree to the question which let them to reflect their opinion about the PR profession in organization have a positive impact on achieving organizational goals. According to this question, the majority of the respondents said that they agree on that the PR profession in organization have a positive impact on achieving organizational goals and that the profession is very significant for the success of organizational goals if the field is structurally established in every governmental organizations.

The rationale for expenditure such as this on central government Public Relations is three fold: a democracy should encourage the flow of ideas and information between itself and the country's citizens; the government should be accountable to the people it serves; and taxpayers have a right to get information about what the government is doing or is planning to do with their money (Baker, 1997:456).

In a very real sense, the purpose of government itself closely matches the purpose of public Relations. Successful governments maintain responsive, mutual understanding based on two way communication with citizens (Cutlip et al, 1994:462-463).

On the other hand, this shows us even if the workers of the government in the town administration have poor perception about the public relations profession as mentioned in the above questions; the majority of the respondents believe that the PR profession is vital for the success of the organizational goals. Therefore, from this analysis, we can conclude that most of the respondents believed that PR profession have had a high impact on their organizations.

4.1.2.4 Ways of improvements of PR profession among the employee of Batu town municipality offices

In addition to the above mentioned challenges, there is poor attention of the Government for the PR profession especially in the lower level like town administrations, lack of short term and long term training to aware employees about PR, shortage of budget and the like are what the majority of the respondents said earlier. Most respondents suggested that ways of improving PR in the municipality offices are as follows: According to the opinion of the respondents, the Government should improve the profession through structuring in all the Government sectors, training should be given to fill the skill gap, providing awareness to the public at large by professionals, putting the right man at the right position and long term and short term training should be given by the government.

4.1.2.5 The growing trend of the Public Relations Profession from the top/federal to the lower level administrations.

There should be improvement of the profession from the higher to the lower of the governmental institutions to solve the problem and to service as a bridge between the government and the public. There should be good connection and build up between the government and the public. To do that, PR trend should have tied up from the minister office to lower level to solve the grass rooted problems and to have two way communications.

Providing wide awareness for the stakeholders and budget should be allocated for the profession in every level of the government organizations. Providing Short term and long term training for stakeholders to develop the awareness about the professions, short and very clear written materials like brochures and short messages should disseminate to aware the public by using different channels like mini media, radio and FB channels. Through establishing underlining principles at all levels of administration or Government that is from the federal, state, zonal and district level, there should be established and underlined principles. It should be mainstreamed at all sectoral according to the nature and strategic team of the sector. According to the respondents of this inquiry, the growing trend of the PR field is from the top level to the lower level should be equally get attention from the government and the public should aware about the profession from different kinds of media. In the higher Governmental institutions, every activities of the sector is informed and reported to the public by their PR officers. But, in the town administrations, there is no such profession to communicate the public or to report the activities of the sector. This reveals that even if the PR is as a bridge between the Government and the public, it did not get equal attention from the government.

So there is a growing trend for the dynamic world. The world is very changed and the people become interacted very highly from time to time. Because of the technological improvement, there is a high dissemination of information. If this information is not well managed by PR profession, it will move to other directions and it will create destructions and it may cause public and governmental deteriorations. So that, in order to manage and solve this kind of problem, there should be high growing trend in the PR profession and updated in order to fill the gaps.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter deals with a brief summary of the study and recommendations. The researcher basically tried to summarize what the research has been all about; how it was undertaken and the major findings it came up with. Based on the findings, the researcher makes some suggestions that may help with the future improvement of measuring stakeholder's engagement and perception of public relations practice in governmental organizations of Batu town administrations.

5.1 Conclusions

Public Relations (PR) refers to the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its public. It entails building sustainable relationships between an organization and all its public in order to create a positive image. On the African continent, the application of PR techniques date back to the beginning of the African civilization. According to Narty(qtd in Rensburg, 2002:5), the concept of PR was practiced in Africa before the era of colonialism.

In Ethiopia, where the public relations practice is at its preliminary stage, the struggle to achieve the right track for the development of this outlook is not yet very clear. Despite the practice of public relations in every organization for its betterment, rare has been investigated about the status and practices of public relations in Ethiopia.

Based on the research findings the researcher has concluded the following conclusions.

- As the study shows that, toward the perception of the PR profession, most respondents said that (32.9%) said “undecided” and (35.7%) “Disagree”. This could be concluded that, there is poor awareness of public relations practice among the employees of Batu town municipality offices.
- This study depicted that Public Relations profession was not fully established structurally in the town administration of the government offices and there is no well exercise of the PR profession that leads in poor perception

- Most respondents said that with a significant number in the range of “Undecided” and “Disagree” about the perception of the PR profession and the respondents hesitate the PR practice in the municipality offices. This clearly indicates that there is poor engagement in developing the PR practice.
- The study shows that majority of the respondents from the questioners, participants of FGD and from the interviews, said that, PR is not fully established in all of the government offices in Batu town administration.
- The study also depict that, lack of skilled human power regarding to the PR profession and passive attitudes toward the offices like Government Communication offices and top leaders.
- The study shows us absence of adequate capacity building trainings, Structure of the office (personnel), Lack of logistics, inadequate assistance from the region’s communication bureau was the major challenges to practice Public Relations in the lower level administration.

5.2 Recommendation

On the basis of the conclusions drawn, the researcher concluded the following recommendations.

- ❖ Establishing the PR profession in all the government offices, including the lower level of the administration like Batu town municipality offices.
- ❖ The provisions of adequate office spaces and conducive work environment for public relations officers.
- ❖ Making Public Relations Officers spokesmen of their respective organizations (departments) would raise their profile, boost their morale and hence improve their performance.
- ❖ The growing trend of the PR field is from the top level (federal) to the lower level administration should get equal attention from the government.
- ❖ Batu town municipality and other concerned bodies like Oromia Government Communication Affairs office and academic institutions should work jointly to build the capacity of the PR practitioners to strengthen professional practice of public relations.
- ❖ Batu town municipality, especially, should strive to create conducive environment and build the capacity of the Public relations department by allocating adequate budget; by giving adequate training to the employees to provide awareness on the PR profession.
- ❖ Up to date PR tools should be used in kind and frequency

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Appendices

Appendix A

Addis Ababa University

School of Journalism and Communications

Master's program in PRSC (Public Relations and Strategic Communications)

Dear Respondents, My name is Mohammed Kasso. I am undertaking a research on the

An Assessment in to the Employees perception of public relation and its practice: The case of Oromia Regional State Batu Town municipality offices.

in partial fulfillment for the Master of Arts (MA) degree in Public Relations and Strategic Communication at the School of Journalism and Communication, Addis Ababa University.

Please spare a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Kindly tick (✓) or answer the questions correctly. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and there are no risks associated with it

Writing your name is not mandatory. Any information given will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Sex _____ Age _____ Address _____

Work experience _____ Occupation _____

Title (position) _____ Education level _____

Appendix B
Open ended Questioners

1. Is PR section in your department/office fully established?

2. Yes___ No _____

3. How Employees perceive and practice public relations profession?

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

4. List the day to day activities of the PR section in your department/offices

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

5. Outline the major challenges that you face in the course of performing your duties (forGCAO)

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

6. Give suggestions on how best PR services can be improved in government offices.

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

Thank you for participating in this study!

Appendix C
Questioners for Interview

Interview Guide for Key Informants

1. What is your perception about public relations?
2. How employees practice to develop public relations profession?
3. Do you think that Government employee in your town administration have well perception about PR?
4. Does your office have public relations practitioner? Do you have a strategic plan?
5. If yes, what are his/her daily activities?
6. According to your opinion, what factors affect employee's perception of public relations profession?
8. What needs to be done to strengthen employee's perception of PR profession?
9. In your opinion, what to be done to improve public relations perception among employees?
10. How can PR practice in government offices be improved?

Questioners for FGD (Focus Group Discussion)

1. What come to your mind with reference the job profile of PR professionals?
2. What challenges do the PROs/public relations officers/ face in the course of their work?
3. How can PR practice in government be improved?
4. What do you think are the growing trends in PR?
5. What are most the serious problems observed in the field?

Thank you for participating in this study!

I. Questionnaires a Close ended

Evaluating City /Local Level /public relations awareness.

S/N	Items	Ratings				
		Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Employees are well aware about public relations and practicing in developing the PR profession.					
2	Batu town municipality employees have well awareness about public relations practice.					
3	PR professional in your organization have a positive impact on achieving organizational goals					
4	Do the top and line manager appreciate/recognize the activities of the PR practitioner in your office?					
5	Public Relations Practitioners are established in all the government offices in the town administration.					
6	Do employees are actively participating in practicing public Relation Profession in Batu town municipality offices					

Thank you for participating in this study!

Appendixes

Afaan Oromoo

Appendix A

Addis Ababa University

School of Journalism and Communications

Master's program in PRSC (Public Relations and Strategic Communications)

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Writing your name is not mandatory. Any information given will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Sex _____ age _____ Address _____

Work experience _____ Occupation _____

Title (position) _____ Education level _____

Appendix A

1. Quunnamtiin uummataa waajjira keessanitti caaseffameeraa? Eeyyan ___Lakki___

2. Yoo hin jirre maaliif?

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

3. Hojjattoonni ogummaa PR haala kamiin hubatu?

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

4. Hojii quunnamtii uummataa w/ra keessanitti guyyaa guyyaan hojjatu tarreessi

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

5. Raawwii hojii quunnamtii uummataa keessatti hudhaaleen gurguddoon isin quunnaman maalfa'a?

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

6. Waajjiraalee mootummaa keessatti tajaajila quunnamtii uummataa hala fooyya'uun ibsaa

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

Questioners Close ended

Evaluating municipality employee/Local Level public relations awareness.

S/ N	Items	Ratings				
		Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Hojjattootni waa'ee quunnamtii uumataa irratti hubannoo gahaa qabu, ogummicha dagaagsuu keesattis ni hirmaatu					
2	Hojjattoonni Bulchiinsa magaalaa Baatuu waa'ee quunnamtii uummataa irratti hubannoo gaarii qabu.					
3	Ogeessi quunnamtii uummataa w/ra keessanii galma gahiinsa kaayyoo dhaabbatichaatif dhiibbaa sirrii qaba.					
4	Hooggantoonni hojiiwwan ogummaa quunnamtii uummataa (PRP) keessan jajjabeessuu?					
5	Waajjiraalee mootummaa Bulchiinsa magaalattii keessatti caasaan quunnamtii uummataa jira.					
6	Bulchiinsa magaalaa Baatuutti Hojjattooni motummaa ogummaa quunnamtii uummataa haala gaariin shaakalu					

Thank you for participating in this study!