



Addis Ababa University

School of Journalism and Communications

Assessment of Perceptions in PR-Journalist Relationships: The Case of Oromia Government Communication & Selected Afan Oromo Media

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**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Master
of Arts Degree in Public Relations and Strategic Communications**

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July 2020

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis entitled “Assessment of Perceptions in PR-Journalist Relationships: The Case of Oromia Government Communication & Selected Afan Oromo Media” and submitted to the School of Journalism and Communications in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Master of Arts Degree in Public Relations and Strategic Communications is my own original work. All sources referred, information derived and cited have been duly acknowledged and accurately reported. This document has not been previously, in its entirety or in part, submitted to Addis Ababa University or any other university in order to obtain academic qualifications.

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Acknowledgement

I dedicate this work to my mom who sent me to school in the middle of hardships and difficulties. She was a committed woman who brought up four of us as a single mother. Although she is uneducated, she was able to understand, by her instincts, the value of education four decades ago. Now in her seventies, she is satisfied with her decisions and has nothing to regret.

Equally important, my heartfelt respect and honor goes to my resourceful adviser Dr. Yohannes Shiferaw. Starting from day one, his guidance, commitment and support are just extraordinary. I especially thank him, for critically reviewing all the contents from cover page to back page, providing me valuable and timely feedback that shaped the study to its current form. He is not only an adviser, but also a brother, a man of goodwill and reliable.

I would also like to thank OGC practitioners, OBN and EBC journalists, especially the coordinators, for their cooperation in filling questionnaires and giving me interviews at this difficult time of Coronavirus pandemic.

Abstract

There is a widespread distrust and suspicion between public relations practitioners and journalists around the world. The two sides largely perceive each other negatively. Their relationship is paradoxical as it involves both cooperation and conflict. Especially in countries like Ethiopia, where government PR and state media dominate the fields, their relationship is expected to be bad. This study aims to assess the perceptions in PR-Journalist relations between OGC practitioners and Afan Oromo journalists working in OBN & EBC. The study used mixed method approach and data are collected from 90 respondents and informants working in the three institutions using questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The results have shown that lack of professionalism, misunderstanding of each other's roles, unethical practices and state ownership of the media are affecting their perceptions. Specifically, the study indicated that journalists are more suspicious of PR practitioners (57 percent of the respondents), both are dissatisfaction with each other's contributions (62 percent of journalists & 81 percent of PR practitioners), and government ownership of the media is negatively influencing their perceptions (responded by 50 percent from both sides). Based on the findings, the researcher recommends establishing regular tripartite review meeting forum, providing selected and practical training about roles of both sides and ensuring trust by meeting professional standards.

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List of Acronyms

| | |
|---------------|---|
| AAU- | Addis Ababa University |
| EBC- | Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation |
| EGC- | Ethiopian Government Communication |
| ENA- | Ethiopian News Agency |
| Fig. - | Figure |
| GCIS- | Government Communication & Information System |
| IMS- | International Media Support |
| IPRA- | International Public Relations Association |
| N.R. - | No Response |
| OBN- | Oromia Broadcasting Network |
| OGC- | Oromia Government Communication |
| PR- | Public Relation |
| PRs- | Public Relations |
| RMT- | Relationship Management Theory |

CHAPTER I

This chapter covers the overall information about the subject matter to be studied in detail by presenting the introduction, research problem and objectives of the study.

1. INTRODUCTION

Public relations and Journalism are complementary fields in a system of delivering information to readers, listeners and viewers (Whitaker, Ramsey & Smith, 2004, p. 322). They need each other to achieve their goals. According to Macnamara (2014, p.1), 40-75% of mass media news content is supplied by PR. The two sides interact through a special PR function called media relations. Thus, the relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners is the key component of media relations (Supa, 2014, p. 2). The mass media and the public relations industry have a close relationship, but it has never been easy (Sriramesh, 2003, p.3). That relationship is described as tense and complex since it involves both cooperation and conflict (Charron, 1994, p. 42). Due to their complicated relation, their relationships has is filled with stereotypes and prejudices.

Journalists view PR practitioners as unethical, manipulative, one-sided, deceptive, and fabricators (Macnamara, 2014, p. 2), while PR practitioners complain saying journalists know little about public relations. They also accuse journalists of quoting out of context; sensationalizing stories and considering themselves as if they are always right (DeLorme & Fedler, 2003, p. 99). However, the two sides co-existed with these difficult relationships. The sources of their complicated relationships are the perceptions they hold towards each other on different issues. The underlying factors behind this complication are lack of understanding about PR, dual personality of PR (Macnamara, 2015, p.10, 11), ethical issues (McCullough, 2015, p.1), struggle to control information flow (Sterne, 2008, p. 8) and conflicting roles of the two professions (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002, p. 11; Macnamara, 2015, p. 11; Langett, 2013, p. 8; Sterne, 2008, p. 24). Generally, such distrust and suspicion between the two negatively affect information supply to the public and the effectiveness of both fields (Coman, 2004, p. 155).

Coming to Ethiopia, due to the implementation of restrictive political system for a long period of time (Tesfaye, 2018, p. 29), the PR and media industry are not well developed in the country. PR is a young and growing profession in the country (Geremew, 2017, p. 152).

Currently, the field of PR is dominated by government PR in Ethiopia (Mulualem, 2017, p. 2). The media has also been largely kept under the control of the state until 2017 (Skjerdal, 2017, p.4). In such a case, PR-Journalist perceptions are likely to be influenced by government interests. The same trend can be observed in regional states media and government PR.

OGC is a regional state PR and information source for Oromyia regional administration. According to the regional state proclamation no. 199/2008 E.C, the bureau has the mandates and responsibilities of organizing communication activities of the regional state, preparing the regional government's statement on issues of focus to the government and serving as the spokesperson/PR of the regional government (as cited in OGC's Five Year Strategic Plan, 2015, p.5).

OGC bureau provides news information to media via press releases, press conferences, government statements and its Facebook page. The bureau uses its media relations desk to coordinate and conduct these activities. For instance, during the years from 2009 E.C. to 2011 E.C., it has disseminated 313 press releases, held 135 press conferences and released 58 government statements (compiled from annual reports). Although how these PR materials are treated by the media requires further investigation, and not the focus of this study for the time being, it is clear that OGC has been serving as source of information and interacting with media organizations.

Similarly, OBN is a broadcast media that belongs to the regional state of Oromia . It informs its audiences in Oromia and elsewhere through television, radio and online 24 hours, seven days a week. It broadcasts in Afan Oromo, Amharic, English and other languages. It has permanent crew in 20 zones and 18 city administrations who produce news and programs and send to the main station. In addition, its branch in Addis Ababa covers issues at federal and regional levels as well as Addis Ababa city and its environs. The studio in Addis is linked to the main station in Adama via satellite and they jointly transmit daily news and live events from Addis Ababa. On the other hand, EBC Afan Oromo service is a branch of the state owned national broadcaster EBC. It broadcasts news, educational and entertainment programs in Afan Oromo on both radio and TV. It has a two-hour Afan Oromo daily TV program transmitted on Languages channel. It also broadcasts a three-hour radio program daily on SW, AM & FM. The two media have longstanding relations with OGC.

However, the perceptions the two sides hold towards each other about their relationships are not clear because they are not studied. Thus, this study is intended to assess these gaps in order to contribute to the establishment of better understanding for more effective relationships.

According to Seitel (2017), the practice of public relations is broadly represented throughout government in all government agencies, on the state and local levels (p.279). Government PR practitioners are public servants who must provide information to citizens about the work of their respective state agencies (McCollough, 2015, p.1). Government entities employ public relations specialists to promote their services, spread news of their successes or crises, assist with smooth daily operations or crisis management and implement campaigns that address social issues (Wilcox et al., 2015, p. 519). In the government sector, it can help sell policies and ideas and change behaviors in various ways; for example, the various public relations campaigns around health issues or domestic violence (Bainbridge et al., 2015, p. xxvii).

However, government PRs are usually associated with politics. According to Tench & Yeomans (2009), the context of public sector communication is political (p.578). Moreover, public communication in national governments fits the asymmetric model of communication where a change in knowledge, attitudes or behavior is intended (p. 580). This is because a two-way asymmetric communications is rooted in persuasive communications (Tench & Yeomans, 2014, p.124). The objective of such communication is to bring the organization and its publics around the organization's way of thinking and generate agreement between them (p. 124). Consequently, some scholars have deemed persuasion unethical because it is asymmetrical (Pfau & Wan; Porter, as cited in Tench & Yeomans, 2014, p. 200).

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Oromia Government Communication Affairs Bureau (OGC) is the spokes office for the regional government of Oromia. It is responsible for PR activities of the regional government and is the official source of information for the regional state. The bureau has set a target of increasing public trust to the government from 71.6 percent in 2014/15 to 93 percent by the year 2020/21 using communication activities. It also targeted to raise public satisfaction with government services from 75 percent in 2014/15 percent to 92 percent at the end of 2020/2021(OGC's Five Year Strategic Plan, 2015, p.67).

One of the strategies followed by OGC to achieve these targets is utilizing the media widely. Especially, state media that work in Oromo language such as OBN and EBC Afan Oromo rely on OGC for news information in the regional state.

However, OGC as a government PR is more likely to implement a two-way asymmetric communication model. McCollough (2015) indicated that governmental agencies provide greater media access for emerging radio and television technologies, but they also control access to information (p.2). For this reason, it may be exposed to different perceptions that affect its relationships with the media. Grunig et al. (as cited in Tench & Yeomans, 2014), indicated that by using an asymmetrical model, it is difficult to practice public relations in a way that is ethical and socially responsible (p. 223). According to Relationship Management Theory, PR strategies and tactics should always be assessed in terms of their effect both to an organization and its publics (clients), rather than the benefits for the organization only (Tench & Yeomans, p. 2014, 126, 127).

State ownership of the media is another area that can affect perceptions between PR practitioners and journalists. As indicated by Mediating the Media Model, state-press ideology affects the relationship between organizations and the media, and influences the way news gets disseminated (Pang et al., p. 275). However, no direct assessment has been made so far in this regard. Research results that show how the two sides perceive each other are not available. Few existing studies lack focus, as they are conducted on the general practice of OGC practitioners. A study by Olbana (2018) indicates that OGC mobilizes media and ensures good working relations with them to build the image of the government. Nonetheless, the kinds of relationships that exist between the two sides are not indicated, the perceptions that exist between the two sides is not known as it has not been studied.

In a related study conducted on Ambo government communication office, one of the zonal branches of OGC, Muluaem (2017) stated that, the people and the media perceive the PR practitioners as politicians and their activity as biased and manipulative because they inform only positive sides of the government. As a result, there is suspicion between journalists and PR practitioners in the town (p. 3, 4, 5). But, the views and attitudes of the PR practitioners of Ambo town government communication office towards the media practitioners are missing from the study. Whether the same trends exist at regional level or not, needs further assessment.

Overall, the studies at regional and federal levels lacked focus and details on PR-Media practitioners' perceptions about one another in Ethiopia. At the same time, they dealt with few issues and treated only one side of the actors of the relationships. They provide only limited explanations that fail to describe the full context of the relationships. More important, there is no study conducted focusing on PR-Media practitioners perceptions and their challenges among OGC, OBN & EBC Afan Oromo. Therefore, this study makes detailed assessment of perceptions between the two sides and tries to give the full picture of the relationships by filling the gaps observed. Filling these gaps would mean "an important footstep towards eliminating negative perceptions" (Coman, 2004, p. 156). The findings are expected to contribute to the establishment of better relationships that ultimately lead to effective communication (Erzikova, Waters & Bocharsky, 2018, p.13).

1.2. Objectives of the Study

1.2.1. General Objective

The general objective of the study is to assess perceptions in PR-Journalist relationships that exist between OGC PR practitioners and Afan Oromo journalists working in OBN & EBC.

1.2.2. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- ⊕ analyze how OGC PR practitioners perceive OBN & EBC Afan Oromo journalists and their practices
- ⊕ examine how OBN & EBC Afan Oromo journalists perceive OGC PR practitioners and their practices
- ⊕ assess how the perceptions that exist between OGC PR practitioners and OBN/EBC Afan Oromo journalists are affecting their relationships
- ⊕ explore the challenges that the two sides are facing in their relationships as a result of existing perceptions

1.3. Research Questions

1. How do OGC PR practitioners perceive OBN & EBC Afan Oromo journalists and their practices?
2. How do OBN & EBC Afan Oromo journalists perceive OGC PR practitioners and their practices?
3. How do the perceptions that exist between OGC PR practitioners and OBN/EBC Afan Oromo journalists affect their relationships?
4. What are the challenges that the two sides are facing in their relations as a result of the perceptions that exist between them?

1.4. Significance of the Study

The main aim of this study is to assess how OGC PR practitioners and journalists working in OBN & EBC Afan Oromo perceive each other and their practices. The researcher hopes that OGC, OBN and EBC Afan Oromo may use the findings of the study to improve their relationships. The suggested recommendations are believed to help enhance their cooperation.

Researchers in the fields of journalism, PR and communication can also make use of the findings for further study. Moreover, other media organizations and government institutions can utilize it to improve their PR practices. It can also serve as a policy guide for concerned bodies.

1.5. Scope of the Study

Generally, this study deals with the relations between government PR and state media journalists. Specifically the study focuses on perceptions between PR practitioners in OGC and broadcast journalists working in OBN/EBC Afan Oromo media. As the name of the bureau implies, PR practitioners in OGC are collectively known as government communicators. Thus, it is limited to communicators in OGC and broadcast journalists from the two media only. The three institutions are selected for three reasons. The first one is that state broadcast media is still dominant in the country both in coverage and accessibility. Second, they share the same target audience i.e., residents of Oromyia regional state Afan Oromo speaking people. Thirdly, the three institutions belong to the state and are believed to have strong ties and long-standing relationships.

Geographically the study is limited to Addis Ababa as OGC and EBC Afan Oromo headquarters as well as OBN branch are located in Addis Ababa.

1.6. Limitations of the Study

The study included only OGC headquarter practitioners. Due to lack of time and resources, practitioners working in Oromia regional state bureaus and OGC branch offices are not included. Similarly, the study focused on state institutions only. For similar reasons, the study did not embrace journalists working in private media. Their incorporation would have contributed to better understanding of the problem.

Moreover, since the month of March, the whole process of the study was full of stress due to the obvious reason of Coronavirus pandemic. Movement was restricted for safety; meeting people and making discussions for data gathering was very difficult. The situation was psychologically disturbing and worrying. The researcher took risk and conducted the study in the middle of these challenges.

CHAPTER II

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter is allocated to the presentation of the works of other peoples, established facts, theories and models on PR-Journalist perceptions. Related studies conducted in Ethiopia will also be reviewed here.

2.1. The Scopes of PR & Journalism Disciplines

The two practices have wider scope and multiple purposes. The following sections present the overview of major concepts related to both disciplines.

2.1.1. Defining PR & Journalism

Public relations is a broad profession with multiple definitions. It is a multidisciplinary field (Bozkurt, Soylu & Aktaş, 2018, p.99), diverse and dynamic profession (Creative Commons, 2012, p.10; Simons, 2018, p.11); multifaceted profession with many roles (Wilcox et al., 2015, 29). Perhaps the recent definition of PR is the one provided by International Public Relations Association (IPRA) in October 2019. It says “public relations is a decision-making management practice tasked with building relationships and interests between organizations and their publics based on the delivery of information through trusted and ethical communication methods” (IPRA, 2019).

Practically it is the promotion of a product, idea, event or person with the intention of creating goodwill for it (Bainbridge et al., 2015, p. xxvii). A PR person might work for a charity or a non-government organization, working to create awareness of a particular social or environmental issue (p. xxvii). According to Kaur & Shaari (2006), the profession plays a vital and strategic role in building and enhancing on-going or long-term relationships with an organization’s key constituencies, including the media and the public (p. 14).

Journalism is a form of mass communication that involves the sifting and editing of information, comments and events into a form that is recognizably different from the pure form in which they first occurred. Journalism is about putting events, ideas, information and controversies into context (Ibbotson and Rudin, as cited in Birhanu, 2006, p. 27). It is the gathering and disseminating of new information about current events, trends, issues and people to a wide audience (Whitaker et al., 2004, p. 10).

The fundamental principles of journalism are respect for truth and the public's right to know while their loyalty is to the public (Bainbridge et al., 2015, p. xxii). Journalists are individuals who engage in a broad range of activities associated with newsmaking, including reporting, criticism, editorializing and the conferral of judgment on the shape of things (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009, p. 31). They are people who are involved in the selection, evaluation and presentation of news information or issues of general interest to the wider audience through print medium or broadcast media (Ibbotson and Rudin, as cited in Birhanu, 2006, p. 27).

2.1.2. The Roles, Goals and Responsibilities of the two Professions

Public relations have dual roles: half organization and half public. PR practitioners believe that their main role is cultivating and sustaining strategic relationships with diverse publics on behalf of organizations (Valentini, 2014, p. 123). Wilcox et al. (2015) stated that on the one hand, PRs interacts directly with external sources of information, including the public, media, and government, and relays these inputs to management. On the other hand, it becomes the vehicle through which management reaches the public to accomplish organizational goals (p.40, 41).

The goal of PR is maintaining and improving relationships between organizations and their audiences (Tench & Yeomans, 2014, p.127). This is useful to enhance the organization's reputation and establish trust in its policies, products, and services (Wilcox et al., 2015, p.46). In a general sense, the profession is interested in reducing conflict and improving cooperation. (Bainbridge et al., 2015, p. xxvii). Therefore, they are expected to serve multiple masters, i.e., to help organizations succeed while contributing to society in a positive way (Berger & Reber, 2008, p. 29). This half-organization, half-society nature of PR is described as a dual personality problem of PR (Macnamara, 2015, p. 11).

Moreover, PR practitioners serve as source of information (Coman, 2004, p.153) and their task is to manage information. Tynan (2015) argued mass media demands information in many forms, and relentless pressures have been exerted on governments, organizations and businesses to provide information (p. 165). According to Wilcox et al. (2015), that is why public relations personnel gather facts and information for the purpose of informing the public. But, the objective is not only to inform but also to change people's attitudes and behaviors in order to further an organization's goals and objectives (p.43).

However, the roles of PR is usually perceived by journalists in a different ways. According to McCollough (2015), one source of antagonism between the two is journalists' ignorance about the work of PR practitioners (p.3). Journalists feel that their work of informing the public is noble and pure, whereas PR practitioners are propagandists willing to work for anyone able to pay them (DeLorme & Fedler, 2003, p.107, 108)., 2008, p. 24).

Journalism's primary purpose according to Wilcox et al. (2015) is to gather and select information to provide the public with news and information. (p.43). Journalists claim that they want facts, information for news items while the organization (PR) wants to be viewed positively (Bland et al., 2005, p.79). They convey information, ideas and opinions, a privileged role for which they must act independently from those they report and operate under a code of ethics (Bainbridge et al., 2015, p. xxii). The purpose of the media is to inform and entertain. According to Whitaker et al. (2004), the primary responsibilities of the media are to help discover truth, be a watchdog for society and provide a check on government (p. 10). In other words, they play the role of mediating between those in power and citizens to enable citizens make informed choices (Tench & Yeomans, 2014, p. 239, 240) and keeping the all-powerful government in check (Sriramesh & Vercic, 2009, p.70). The media has additional responsibility of ensuring that all viewpoints are expressed (Whitaker et al., 2004, p. 11).

2.1.3. PR-Journalist Symbiotic Relationships

The symbiosis between the two is usually known as mutual dependence (Macnamara, 2015, p. 1; Sterne, 2008, p. 21). In this type of relationship, the journalist seeks information from the public relations practitioners (Charron, 1994, p. 52) because they cannot reach everywhere to gather all firsthand information. Similarly, PR officers seek publicity from the journalists and need editors to treat their news release.

According to Whitaker et al. (2004), symbiotic relationship is based on the mutual and professional need that each has for the other. They described this relationship as nature's version of you scratch my back and I will scratch yours (p. 371). Their relationship is based on negotiation and exchange of resources (publicity and information) (Charron, 1994, p.43). Relating this to marketing principles, Blumler & Gurevitch (as cited in Moloney, 2006) asserted that the cost of what they exchange is equal to the benefit they get from each other (p. 126).

PR can aid journalists by collecting and arranging news information and providing it to journalists for free (Tench & Yeomans, 2014, p. 37). This role is known as providing information subsidy, which enables them to save time and expense of investigative journalism (p. 244). And, the use of information subsidy by the media is referred to as subsidized content (Macnamara, 2015, p.4). Empirical evidences indicate that PR significantly influences the media content. Curtin (as cited in Sriramesh & Vercic, 2009, p. 68) noted that 25-80 percent of news content is influenced by the information subsidies given by public relations practitioners. For this reason, public relations people are sometimes considered as unpaid reporters to the media (Wilcox, 2015, p.391). This influence of public relations on journalism is growing (Macnamara, 2015, p.1). Cutbacks in staffs and budgets due to global financial crisis (Valentini, 2014, p.114, 115) have increased the dependence of journalists on PR (DeLorme & Fedler, 2003, p. 114).

In addition to economic pressures, changes in technology at the beginning of the 21st century have opened the door for more symbiotic relationships (McCollough, 2015, p. 3). Social and digital media are opening the door for attentive public relation officers to build a direct line to the public for agency messages and information that bypasses the media filter (p.17). Even further, more journalists are switching their career to PRs. According to Valentini (2014), these changes have boosted the phenomenon of journalists shifting their career to public relations in Italy (p. 113). This growing switching of professional role among journalists suggests possible changes in the way public relations practitioners and journalists perceive their and the other profession (p. 119).

2.1.4. Similarities and Differences between PR and Journalism

As can be seen from the table 1 below, the two sides have some similarity but many differences. Writing is a common activity of both public relations professionals and journalists. Both interview people, gather and synthesize information and in fact, many reporters eventually change careers and become public relations practitioners (Wilcox et al., 2015, p. 43). They also resemble each other in their role of informing the public, their goal of achieving informed public and dependency on each other. One of their major differences is their loyalty. According to Bivins (2004), PR is a client based occupation that serves clients rather than the general public. An advocate usually acts as an agent of the client (p.17).

Some of the similarities and differences between the two professions are summarized below.

Table 1: Similarities and Difference between PR and Journalism

| | PRs | Journalists |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Roles | Gather facts and information to inform the public, source of information to journalists & others (Wilcox et al., 2015, p.43; Coman, 2004, p.153; Tench & Yeomans, 2014, p. 37). | Gather and select information for news, inform the public and entertain, convey ideas and opinions (DeLorme & Fedler, 2003, p.107; Whitaker et al., 2004, p. 10; Bainbridge et al., 2015, p. xxii). |
| Goal | Building, enhancing, improving, cultivating and sustaining relationships between organizations and their publics (Wilcox et al., 2015, p.46; Kaur & Shaari, 2006, p. 14; Valentini, 2014, p. 123) | Enable citizens make informed choices (Tench & Yeomans, 2014, p. 240) |
| Objective | Creating goodwill for a product, idea or event; wants to be viewed positively (Bainbridge et al., 2015, p. xxvii; Bland et al., 2005, p.79) | Want facts for news items (Bland et al., 2005, p.79) |
| Responsibility | Balance the interests of both organization & the public; maintain relationships (Macnamara, 2015, p.11; Wilcox et al., 2015, p. 43) | Discover truth, be a watchdog for society, ensure all viewpoints are expressed, respect the public's right to know, maintain fairness and balance (Whitaker et al., 2004, p. 11; Bainbridge et al., 2015, p. xxii; Biniyam, 2006, p.8) |
| Loyalty | To both organization & the public (Macnamara, 2015, p.11; Wilcox et al., 2015, p. 43) | Their loyalty is to the public (Bainbridge et al., 2015, p. xxii) |
| They serve | Dual service: half-organization, half-society, serve the interests of both of organization and the public (Macnamara, 2015, p.11; Wilcox et al., 2015, p. 43) | Serving the interest of the general public (Curtin, as cited in Langett, 2013, p.8; Grunig et al., 2002, p. 11; Sterne, 2008, p. 24) |
| Information control | Control access to information (Kaur & Shaari, 2006, p. 10) | Control and determine message that reaches the public (Charron, 1994, p.50) |
| Dependency | Need the media to achieve publicity (Sterne, 2008, p.21; Gower, 2007, p.1) | Need PR practitioners for story material (Sterne, 2008, p.21; Gower, 2007, p.1) |
| Independence | Advocates for their clients (Gower, 2007, p. xvi) | Independent, neutral (Bainbridge et al., 2015, p. xxii) |

Source: compiled by the researcher

2.2.PR-Journalist Perceptions of Each Other

The Cambridge dictionary defines perception as “a belief (a thought) or opinion, often held by many people and based on appearances (how things seem) (Cambridge dictionaries online, 2020). In relation to the theme of this study, a more expanded definition is provided by Berelson & Steiner (as cited in Spurgeon & Bereket, 2018), which states perception is a “complex process by which people select, organize, and interpret sensory stimulation into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world” (p.437).

In the context of the relationships, perceptions as a process refer to attitudes or beliefs that are built over time about each other. PR-journalist relationships are influenced by perceptions of both sides. The above authors indicated that “perceptions affect the way public relations practitioners are treated, spoken about and portrayed” (p. 437). PR and journalists perceive each other in a different way as indicated below.

2.2.1. Journalists’ Perceptions about PR

According Buhagiar (2006), the field of public relations is always perceived more negatively than journalism (p.10). Journalists’ approach to PR experts is mainly skeptical and negative (Larsson, 2009, p. 137) and their relationship is surrounded by persistent negative attitude and contradictions (DeLorme & Fedler 2003, p. 102,103). Journalists view the relationship with public relations practitioners as antagonistic, based on misperceptions about the practice of public relations (Aronoff, as cited in McCollough, 2015, p.3). Mostly journalists view PR practitioners as spin, obstructionists, liars, fabricators and propagandist (Macnamara, 2014, p. 2), unethical, manipulative, one-sided and deceptive (DeLorme & Fedler, 2003, p. 99). Journalists also describe PR as the dark side (Tench & Yeomans , 2014, p. 237) because they believe public relations practitioners present only the bright side, like the shining moon, and leave the dark side hidden (Jensen, as cited in Moloney, 2006, p. 106).

However, journalists perceive themselves they are committed to serving the interest of the general public whereas public relations practitioners are expected to serve the interests of both of organization and of society (Curtin, as cited in Langett, 2013, p.8; Grunig et al., 2002, p. 11; Sterne. Especially journalists argue ‘PR exists for control purposes, to hinder, rather than to inform’ (Heather & Brooke, as cited in Theaker, 2012, p. 261).

At the same time, journalists and journalism scholars view PR as solely focused on influencing journalists and gaining media publicity (Macnamara, 2015, p.10). Journalists feel that public relations people dump unwanted press releases on editors' desks and then push self-serving stories that have little news value (Grunig & Hunt as cited in Abebe, 2019, p. 3). Journalists also think that PR people are to be kept at a distance because they are considered as opponents (Larsson, 2009, p.136). Even though many journalists go on to seek careers in public relations (Macnamara, 2009, p.6), they continue to hold negative attitudes towards PR. Journalists see PR people as a large and growing field of practice corrupting media and the public sphere (Macnamara, 2014, p.14).

2.2.2. PR Practitioners' Perceptions about Journalists

PR practitioners view journalists in a more positive way as compared to the attitudes of journalists towards PR practitioners. According to Cornelissen (2013), PR practitioners hold less negative perceptions towards journalists and are often eager to work with them (p. 210). However, some PR practitioners believe that “journalists have a narrow view of PR work and know little about public relations” (DeLorme & Fedler, 2003, p. 100).

Even farther, some (PR) executives consider journalists to be the enemy, dead set on revealing all the bad news about their organization (Seitel, 2017, p. 206). In Ethiopia too “the media in general and journalism in particular has been stereotyped as rumor disseminating machine, mouth pieces of the government or the opposition political parties” (Negeri, 2013, p. 133). According to Birhanu (2006), Ethiopian journalists themselves perceive their reputation as not good, and bad (p. 87). Critics of journalism claim that it is superficial, values appearance over substance, appeals to emotion and celebrity worship, has moved increasingly to being a forum for conflict rather than conciliation and hinders solutions to social problems. Lack of credibility was cited as the most important problem facing journalism today; loss of public trust is given as the reason for declining news audiences (Whitaker et al., 2004, p.17, 18).

2.3. PR-Journalist Perceptions of their Relationships

PR practitioners and journalists often interact in order to fulfill their mutual need. Though ideally that relationship should be symbiotic and productive, in practice it has its problems (Kaur & Shaari, 2006, p.6).

Tensions and misperceptions in PR-Journalist relationships have great implications for the dissemination of information to the public (Kopenhaver et al., as cited in Callard, 2011, p. 22).

According to various findings, the mistrust between the two has a serious consequence to not only both sides but also the public. A journalist who does not trust public relations person would miss interesting news while a PR practitioner who cannot rely on journalists' trust would be tempted to use unethical means in order to promote some messages. None of these situations works for either the press, the PR, or the entire society" (Coman, 2004, p. 155). Outright hostility hurts the public by interfering with information flow (Sterne, 2008, p.7). As a result, different types of relationships existed between PR-journalist. Understanding these relationships provides an understanding of the factors that shape media relationships over time (McCollough, 2015, p. 4). Sterne (2008) listed the types of relations in three categories: negative, positive and neutral (mixed) (p. 13). However, others treat the neutral and mixed relationships separately as different types. Thus, the researcher preferred to split it into two and present them independently in order to give it more focus and depth. This will raise the types of relationships to four as indicated below.

Positive Relationship

This indicates a smooth relationship based on cooperation. This is sometimes referred to as two sides of the same coin (Macnamara, 2015, p. 1; Sterne, 2008, p. 21) or "love-love" (Biniyam, 2006, p.35) relationship. It is situation where the two sides work in win-win partnerships (Sterne, 2008, p.14).

Negative Relationship

This kind of relationships is referred to as paradoxical/contradictory, antagonistic/adversarial or suspicious/skeptical where total denial or negative opinion prevails about one another (Kaur & Shaari, 2006, p.29; Sterne, 2008, p. 21; McCollough, 2015, p. 1; DeLorme & Fedler, 2003, p. 100). It represents negative perceptions and attitudes that PR and journalists hold towards each other. Such relationship is characterized by mutual distrust and conflicting agendas, a power struggle over dominance in the public domain and conflict of interests over disclosure of information (Sterne, 2008, p.21). According to Callard (2011, p.1), such attitudes are borne out of frustrations arising from some of the media relations tactics employed by PR practitioners.

Mixed Relationship

According to Grunig & Hunt (as cited in Abebe, 2019), “the field of media relations is a battleground” (p.3) as it involves both cooperation and conflict (DeLorme & Fedler, 2003, p. 101). Charron (1994) claimed that the incentives to cooperate emerge from the interdependence of the two groups, while the dimension of conflict arises from the struggle to control the distribution of information (p. 52). Such type of interaction is also known as love-hate, contradicting, and paradoxical relationship (Macnamara, 2014, p.3; Valentini, 2014, p. 116; Kaur & Shaari, 2006, p.29; Coman, 2004, p.153). Studies of the interaction between journalism and PR in the United States show a certain underlying tension and simultaneous mutual dependency between them (Simons, 2018, p.1).

Pincus et al. (as cited in Sterne, 2008) concluded that the traditional adversarial relationship between journalists and public relations professionals still existed but there was evidence of change in the relationship towards greater collaboration and understanding (p.8). That is to say, journalists recognize the role of PR practitioners as source of news information while on the other hand; they do not trust PR practitioners because they think of them as self-promoters (Coman, 2004, p.153).

Despite perceptions and stereotypes, journalists and public relations professionals actually have more in common than they perceive (Buhagiar, 2006, p.13). Thus, journalists and public relations practitioners tolerate their contentious relationships because of the benefits to both (Cameron et al., as cited in Sriramesh & Vercic, 2009, p. 68). For this purpose, they negotiate to exchange a news item and some type of publicity (Charron, 1994, p.44).

Neutral Relationship

This is a situation where PRs and journalists think both sides are simply playing their roles independently. It does not mean that there is no relationship, but to mean normal relationship that is neither positive nor negative. They act as if they are independent. A study in Sweden indicated that this kind of relation is a more distanced approach to the relationship, practitioners saying that “they do their work and we do ours”, or that the relation is completely neutral (Larsson, 2009, p.137). According to Valentini (2014), recent studies show a more neutral relationship and point to a more blurred division between journalism and public relations professions (p.116).

2.4. Factors Affecting PR-Journalist Perceptions

Media relations is “surrounded by a minefield of ethical issues” (Tench & Yeomans, 2009, p. 311), such as offering a gift, payment and lying. Sallot & Johnson (as cited in McCollough, 2015), stated that chief issues for the antagonism is the lack of transparency, withholding information, a lack of ethics, a lack of professionalism, lack of understanding of news values, and lack of objectivity in providing news content to journalists (p.3). How these and other factors affect PR-Journalist Relationships are presented in detail below.

2.4.1. Misunderstanding of the PR Profession

An underlying factor affecting the interrelationship between journalism and PR is considerable misunderstanding and even ignorance of PR among journalists and some journalism academics (Macnamara, 2015, p.10). According to Sterne (2008), one of the sources of conflict derives from the narrow definition of public relations as publicity (p.32). This view is not only held by journalists, but also shared by PR practitioners themselves. Many journalists have also a narrow view of PR, seeing it predominantly as news releases and phone calls and emails from PR practitioners other than their contacts/trusted sources (Macnamara, 2014, p. 13). This narrow definition is not an accurate reflection of what the profession is or does and ignores wider understandings of the profession, which place a greater emphasis on a wider view of relationship with publics (Sterne, 2008, p.32).

Definitions of public relations are debated, largely because of the diversity of things that practitioners do in their work (Simmons & Small, 2012, p.119). What the profession is and does is even less clear because it has come to mean many things and operate under numerous labels (Berger & Reber, 2008, p.22). Public relations was still seen as a profession of spin rather than strategic communications and reputation management (Theaker, 2012, p. 436).

According to Macnamara (2015), a number of former journalists who ‘crossed over’ to work in PR field acknowledged a lack of knowledge about PR and highly pejorative attitudes that they later found to be at least partly unfounded (p. 10). Focusing on the relationship-building context, the researcher identified the following two recent definitions of PR for this study, listed in chronological order.

“Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics.”
(Seitel, 2017, p.32)

“Public relations is a decision-making management practice tasked with building relationships and interests between organizations and their publics based on the delivery of information through trusted and ethical communication methods.”
(IPRA, 2019, September 2019)

From these definitions, it is clear that the concept of PR is about creating understanding, building and maintaining mutual relationships. Also from marketing point of view, PR messages are more credible than advertising because they are endorsed by third party (independent sources) such as the media (Trench & Yeoman's, 2014, p. 237; Yeshin, 1998, p. 231; DeLorme & Fedler, 2003, p.113).

Moreover, many still do not consider PR as profession but as an occupation. Difference between the two is that, profession is more related to academic based activities; whereas occupation is delimited to consumption of time to accomplish any task (Getasew, 2019, p.19). But Tench & Yeomans (2014) claimed that the existence of PR as a distinct profession separate from its cousins marketing and propaganda is confirmed in the 1950s (p. 14). Similarly, Sharpe & Pritchard (as cited in Gower, 2007) argued that PR emerged as a profession in response to the empowerment of public opinion as a result of democracy, social interdependence, and instantaneous communication abilities (p.6). Therefore, PRs is a profession that has its own set of professional values, curricular needs, beliefs, and theories of both humankind and society (Kruckeberg, as cited in Getasew, 2019, p.1).

2.4.2. Lack of PR/Journalism Professionalism

According to Seitel (2017), professionalism is the key to productive media relations (p.225). Public relations is a professional occupation which requires specialized professional education (Kruckeberg, as cited in Geremew, 2017, p.146). The criteria for evaluating the quality of PR are good writing skills and knowledge of the media. Thus, good relationships can be initiated through the appearance of a public relations practitioner's journalistic skill, the presentation of relevant story ideas rather than pre-packaged materials (Curtin, as cited in Langett, 2013, p. 8).

For getting effective media coverage, practitioners must not only know their own organization but also the practice of journalists such as knowing their deadlines and returning their calls (Seitel, 2017, p.225). Yoon (2005) also added that sources should have great knowledge of journalists' news values (p. 767). Practically though, there are still many in the industry who do not have a relevant qualification and it is still possible to enter the profession without a degree (Theaker, 2012, p.92). Similarly, a study in Australia revealed that only 39.4 per cent of practitioners had a high school certificate, implying that more than 60 per cent of PR practitioners do not have any tertiary training (Macnamara, p.112).

That is why journalists complain about PR practitioners' lack of news sense and values, accuracy, timeliness and style of presentation (Sallot & Johnston, as cited in Callard, 2011, p. 23). Lack of technical news writing skills by PR is also another problem. According to Bland et al., (2005), only one press release in ten is published by any newspaper for three reasons: failing to fulfill news value, they are badly written or are not targeted accurately (p.73,74). To overcome the problem of media releases discarded by journalists, Sallot and Johnson (as cited in Callard, 2011, p.25) concluded that public relations practitioners must be accurate with the information they communicate and make sure they provide a relevant local angle.

To succeed as a public relations writer, one has to focus on information of significance that is local, timely and consequential, and presented in a balanced manner (Whitaker et al., 2004, p. 350). Grabowski (as cited in Callard, 2011) also highlighted a number of wrongdoings committed by PR practitioners when it comes to media relations. These include the view held by journalists that PR practitioners often lack knowledge about their subject matter, are ignorant about journalism, rely too often on gimmicks and fail to plan appropriately (p. 23). However nowadays, the situation is improving. Buhagiar (2006) indicated that the two fields have advanced to a point where they can recognize that their counterparts are professionals with similar news values (p. 13).

Likewise, in Ethiopia the PR profession is still in its infancy (Muluaem, 2017, p.2) where individuals qualified in PR are rare (p.3). The researcher stated that the workers lack appropriate skills as most of them are appointed by the good will of managers or assigned based on their political achievement. Unlike other professions, public relations training in Ethiopia did not get attention for many years (Geremew, 2017, 145). As a result, the assigned practitioners are not well-trained and skillful professionals (Tesfaye, 2018, p. 34).

In Ethiopia, there is little understanding of the profession and its practice by the practitioners (Spurgeon & Bereket, 2018, p. 445, 438). Data from EGC affairs office show that most government PR practitioners are not qualified professionals. Rather, they came from different disciplines and entered into the job on the basis of short-term training (Dawit, 2019, p.1).

2.4.3. Perceived PR/Journalist Roles and Conflicting Goals

Roles are the key to understand the function of both PR & journalists. Roles are defined as repetitive actions that are performed to set forth a system of practice, or model (Holtzhausen, Petersen, & Tindall, as cited in Castelli, 2007, p.9). Roles are important because they are linked to professional behaviors and to perceptions of others about the practice (Mechanic as cited in Berger & Reber, 2008, p. 29). Nevertheless, the roles and goals of the two professions seem to be overlapping and conflicting. Both industries have traditionally opposing goals (Callard, 2011, p.10) and diverging interests (Cornelissen, p. 210). They maintain motivations that are “diametrically opposed (Curtin as cited in Langett, 2013, p.8).

Journalists tend to believe that they play a more valuable role in society than PR practitioners (Cho and Cameron as cited in Callard, 2011, p.30). Both sides bring conflict to the relationship through the nature of their roles and goals as well as the values, attitudes and views they hold of each other (Cameron, as cited in Callard, 2011, p. 19). Therefore, the more the journalist understands what the public relations practitioner does, the more likely the journalist will accept information supplied by the practitioner (Bollinger, as cited in Buhagiar, 2006, p. 8).

2.4.4. Control over Information Flow

This refers to the perception about who should control the flow of information and the power struggle over control of the message that reaches the public (McCollough, 2005, p.2). Public relations practitioners are perceived as controlling access to, and managing information (Kaur & Shaari, 2006, p. 10), while journalists are viewed as having veto power to determine the fate of the message (Charron, 1994, p.50). These divergent interests to control information causes distrust and opposition between them (p. 43). McCollough (2005) claimed that governmental agencies control access to information (p.2). Journalists argue that PR exists to hinder, rather than to inform (Heather & Brooke, as cited in Theaker, 2012, p. 261). According to White and Hobsbawm (as cited in Callard, 2011), journalists strongly dislike their access to sources and information being denied or restricted for any reason (p. 25).

The situation where the government hides information away from journalists is characterized as contest relationship (Blumler and Gurevitch, as cited in Moloney, 2006, p. 126). They claimed such relationship characterizes the two sides as opponents and implies winners and losers. For these reasons, both journalists and public relations practitioners are skeptical of each other's roles (Pincus et al., as cited in Kaur & Shaari, 2006, p.10).

2.4.5. Ethical Practices

The canons of journalism contain statements alluding to the acceptance of bribe of any form as a grave professional misconduct. Likewise, the International Code of Professional Conduct for Public Relations Practitioners expects members not to engage in any practice, which tends to corrupt the integrity of the profession (Kaur & Shaari, 2006, p.16). According to Seitel (2017), within an organization, public relations practitioners must be the standard-bearers of corporate ethical initiatives (p. 150). Kaur & Shaari (2006) indicated that giving gifts to journalists, whether they are referred to as tokens of appreciation or bribes may influence favorable coverage (p. 17). The secret efforts to control the information we receive, such as the practice of paying columnists to tout a particular stance on a policy issue or the government's distribution of video news releases (VNRs) as objective news stories are deceiving (Gower, 2007, p.1).

2.4.6. Sensational Reporting

Public relations professionals feel reporters and editors expose than explain, and know little about the complexities of public relations (Grunig & Hunt, as cited in Abebe, 2019, p. 3). They also accuse journalists of distorting the information to make it sensational news that they have on their mind (Coman, 2004, p.156). Moreover, they view journalists as "incompetent bunglers who quote out of context and sensationalize the negative (DeLorme & Fedler, 2003, p. 100).

However, in principle, journalists are neither for PR nor against PR, but neutral intermediaries standing between PR and the public (Tench & Yeomans, 2009, P. 302). Journalists see their role as defenders of the truth, purveyors of balanced reporting and significant contributors to the open dissemination of information (Sterne, p.25). The challenge for the journalists (media) is that they have a responsibility to include more than the public relations' side of the story in order to maintain fairness and balance (Biniyam, 2006, p.8).

2.4.7. Perception about Superiority in Status

Journalists consider themselves superior to PR practitioners in status, ethics, and skills (White & Shaw, as cited in Macnamara, 2015, p.10) and commonly rate public relations practitioners lower in status than themselves (Sterne, 2008, p.5). A study conducted by Sterne (2008) about media perceptions of public relations in New Zealand, also found that there is a widespread belief that journalists are ethically superior to public relations practitioners because they are not tainted by commercialism and are more committed to presenting balanced and objective information (p. 33).

Moreover, they have been found to have higher status perceptions of their role and believe PR practitioners act in a less ethical manner than journalists (Aronoff & Jeffers, as cited in Callard, 2011, p.40). For this reason, journalists consider “crossing over to public relations from journalism as a serious loss of credibility as a professional” (Sterne, 2008, p. 27).

On the other hand, public relations practitioners tend to rate themselves closer to equal with journalists (Sterne, 2008, p. 5).

2.5. PR-Journalist Perceptions and Media Relations

According to Supa (2014), PR-Journalist relationship is the key component of media relations (p. 2). In other words, the relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners lies at the heart of media relations (Tench & Yeomans, 2009, p. 313). PR-Journalist perceptions are affected by the types of relationships that exist between them.

According to Tench & Yeomans (2014), ideally, the job of the media relations department is to help reporters and editors do their jobs (p. 236, 237). This is important to earn media publicity. Publicity is gained by dealing directly with the media, either by initiating the communication or by reacting to inquiries from journalists (Seitel, 2017, p. 216). Attracting positive publicity requires establishing a good working relationship with the media, which is easier said than done (Seitel, 2017, p. 205). That means, “good media relations can contribute to longer term strategic objectives” (Theaker as cited in Abdu, 2018, p. 24).

Media relations has short-term and long-term objectives. The short-term (output) objective is making something known (publicity), whereas the long-term (impact) objective is developing long-term relationships (Supa, 2014, p. 9; Tench & Yeomans, 2014, p.238).

However, media relations is mistakenly considered as mere publicity (Tench & Yeomans, 2014, p. 237). The true purpose of media relations is to enhance the reputation of an organization and its products (Bland et al., 2005, p. 55). This objective is consistent with the broader goal of public relations (Holtz as cited in Tench & Yeomans, 2014, p. 237).

2.6. PR Practices in Government PR

The PR discipline has a number of functions that include media relations, government relations, employee communications, local community relations, internal communication, corporate PR, , public affairs, investor relations, strategic communication (Seitel, 2017, p.71; Theaker, 2012, p.10). In other words, public relations today include communication with shareholders, employees, communities, government and other stakeholders (Macnamara, 2009, p.8). Obviously, journalists are among the main stakeholders of PR, which is one focus area of this study.

Government PR is a type of PR that is exercised by governments and usually known as government communication. It deals with the cultivation of long-term mutual relationships between the public and the government. In liberal democracies, people have the right to be informed and governments are accountable to the people. Thus, public sectors are legally and morally obliged to inform the population about policy decisions and issues affecting everyone in society (Tench & Yeomans, 2009, p. 578).

Government PR falls under public sector communication because its services are not based on profit. According to Theaker (2012), public sector comprises of central government, local government and public corporations that are not primarily operated in a commercial manner (p.331). This public relations function in government sectors and nonprofits is usually termed as public affairs (Wilcox et al., 2015, 35; Waters, 2015, p. 168). Federal, state, and local governments rely on this function to communicate effectively with their constituents (Wilcox et al., 2015, p. 520).

This type of PR differs from others because it is associated with politics. GCIS (2014) indicated that the work of government communication is mostly related to politics as it communicates information that is associated with a ruling party (p. 17). In other words, government agencies often promote the policies of the current administration and seek support from citizens (Wilcox et al., 2015, p. 520).

Consequently, this practice is accused of manipulation and ‘spin’. Especially journalists, criticize government public information activities as simply producing reams of useless news releases promoting individual legislators or justifying questionable policies (Wilcox et al., 2015, p. 532). If communication moves beyond the boundaries of persuasion into what often is called propaganda, it becomes misleading or manipulative (Whitaker et al., 2004, p.322).

Besides, government PR employs persuasion to influence publics to behave in the way the client organization wishes (Grunig et al. (2002p. 317). That means their goal is to create mutual relationships between the government and the public it represents. This type of communication employs a two-way asymmetric communication. Dozier et al. (as cited in Theaker, 2012), argued that public communications campaigns conducted by government PRs can be considered as examples of two-way asymmetric communication, where the sender’s intention is to influence knowledge, opinions and actions of the target audiences (, p. 334). Therefore, there is the potential for misuse of government’s power to persuade (Morgan, as cited in Castelli 2007, p.40, 41).

Therefore, the use of this type of communication model could affect the perceptions of journalists that this study intends to look into. A study in South Africa identified an adversarial relationship of a ‘them’ and ‘us’ mentality between government PR practitioners and journalists in this regard (GICS, 2014, p. 21).

Government PRs, as any type of PRs, needs the media and journalists to communicate with the public it represents to achieve its goals. They perform this task through their media relations function. Thus, the relationship between PRs and the journalists depend largely on this function. And their relationships in turn affect the perceptions that they hold towards each other.

2.7. PR-Journalist Perceptions in Ethiopia

Studies made directly on the perceptions about PR-journalist relationships are rare in Ethiopia. However, few studies conducted on media relations and PR practices in general indicate only limited information on the relations between PR practitioners and journalists. They show the existence of mixed trends of positive and negative relationships. On the positive side, Biniyam (2006) found positive (love-love) relationship between ENA journalists and public relations officers working in federal public sectors.

But, he indicated that the relationship is established at the expense of the public's right to get balanced information (p. 41, 42). This trend is also common in other government institutions. Berhanu (2019), in a study conducted on some government institutions, found that media and PRs practitioners were "working together to protect the image of the government" (p.73). However, the majority of available literature indicates negative relationships between the two sides in Ethiopia. Shimellis (2017) indicated that, a forum established to get better coverage of the media at EGC affairs office looked like a stage where the government's position is revealed and direction is given (p. 45). One of the reasons for this could be, as indicated by Geremew (2017), is the misunderstanding of the PR discipline and its role. In a study conducted in Harar and Dire Dawa towns, he claimed that there is very little understanding of the major functions and roles of public relations by both journalists and practitioners (p. 152).

Another factor identified by Abebe (2019) is knowledge gap of the field and lack of experience of journalists or PR practitioners (p. I). Similarly, Tesfaye (2018) found that, even practitioners of two universities are not well trained and skillful about PR offices (p.34). Spurgeon & Bereket (2018) based on a study they conducted on municipality offices in 11 zones of Ethiopia stated that, the practice of PR is not successful in general (p. 444).

As indicated by Muluaem (2017, p. 4), most public relation officers at Ambo town are appointed by the goodwill of managers or on the basis of their political achievement from related discipline like management. Moreover, Tesfaye (2018) argued that the understanding of public relations discipline in the country tends to propaganda (p. 29). That is considered another reason behind bad relationship with journalists. Ethical problem is another factor that cause distrust between the two sides. Especially giving and taking bribes between journalists and sources is widespread in Ethiopia (Birhanu, 2010, p. 486).

Other studies found negative relationship between PR practitioners and journalists. This is due to misunderstanding of the PR discipline as well as lack of knowledge and skill of their professions by both sides (Geremew, 2017, p. 152; Abebe, 2019, p. I; Tesfaye, 2018, p.34; Spurgeon & Bereket, 2018, p. 444). Moreover, ethical problem is identified as other source of distrust between the two professions. Regarding this, Negeri (2013) stated that "although journalists are expected to combat corruption, they themselves have actively involved in corruption (p. 133). This view is supported by Birhanu (2010), who indicated that bribery is customary at all organizational levels in the Ethiopian state media (p. 486).

In general, studies conducted at federal level falls short of indicating the influence of such relationships on their activities and attitudes. Regarding PR-Journalist perceptions between OGC PR and the two media, there is a critical lack of study in the country in this regard. Few researchers thinly touched the subject indirectly. A study conducted on one of the branch offices of OGC, Ambo town communication office, showed that the people and the media perceive the practitioners as politicians and their activities as biased and manipulative (Mulualem, 2017, p. 4). He also found that, the office is facing lack of trust and cooperation from the media because there is suspicion between journalists and PRs practitioners (p. 4, 5). Regarding the news subsidy the office provides, the study concluded “content and quality of messages prepared by the workers of the office is not fit for media” (p. 5). Another study by Olbana (2018) stated OGC relies on media communication to meet its goals and indicated that its core functions included ensuring good working relations with the media (p.34, 35). However, he did not indicate what the good working relations are and what the existing perceptions are.

2.8. Effective PR-Journalist Relationships

An organization’s interests are best served by establishing strong, positive, professional relationships with the media (Tilley, 2005, p.757). According to Larsson (2009, p.137), it is decisive for PR practitioners to create a well-functioning and long-term relationship with journalists. PR practitioners who build good relationships with journalists are more likely to achieve better results for their clients or organization (Pincus et al., as cited in Callard, 2011, p. 23). Trust and good relationships are key factors in establishing favorable attitudes (Callard, 2011, p. 185). However, establishing a good working relationship with the media is easier said than done (Seitel, 2017, p. 205). Newsom, Turk, and Kruckeberg (as cited in Sriramesh & Vercic, 2009, p. 15, 68) advised public relations practitioners to establish and maintain a positive relationship with the media and good working relationships with journalists for smooth functioning.

Effective media relations is not just about making contacts, but it is about maintaining relationships that requires constant effort (Larsson, 2009, p. 138). To achieve this, a strategic approach to media relations that involves developing long-term relationships with reporters is important (Erzikova et al., 2018, p.13). Traditional approach that is based on securing a one-time placement usually results into ineffective use of time and resources (p. 13).

Moreover, PRs are advised not to view journalists as adversaries but as stakeholders who can help frame their organizations, clients, and issues in a beneficial manner (Zoch & Molleda, as cited in Erzikova et al., 2018, p. 3).

Effective media relations practitioners view journalists as a stakeholder group, to be treated with the same respect as any other stakeholder group (Supa, 2014, p.10). The key to foster a closer relationship between PR and the media is fairness, with each side accepting and respecting the other's role and responsibility (Seitel, 2017, p. 215). Both fields must understand the opposite field in order to reach the greatest amount of success in their career and for their organization (Buhagiar, 2006, p.4). Moving beyond myths and stereotypes requires open dialogue on accountability and ethical issues (Macnamara, 2009, p.3). Similarly, PR practitioners could create mutually beneficial relationships with journalists by getting to understand their style of writing. Those who frame their stories with benefits for the journalist's readers are more likely to succeed in achieving their goals (Sallot & Johnson, as cited in Callard, 2011, p. 23).

Sustaining the relationship requires continuous effort. Whitaker et al., (2004), forwarded not to threaten journalists if something isn't printed or if you are unhappy with the way something is reported (p.372). Seitel (2017), also advised to treat journalists professionally to earn reporters' trust, never try to threaten or coerce a journalist and "never lie to a reporter or that reporter will never trust you again (p. 215, 216). Tench & Yeomans (2009) on the other hand, offered a principle to answer questions, return calls before deadline and accept the independence of the media: do not offer payment; do not ask for copy approval (p. 302). Langett (2013) on his part recommended fundamental principles, which include openness and transparency; respect; access and navigation and timing (p.7).

2.9. Theoretical Framework

This study in focuses on three areas of PRs: the general PRs practice, government PR and media relations in particular. Thus, the study relies on the combination Relationship Management PR Theory, PR Communication Models and Media Relations Theory.

2.9.1. Relationship Management Theory

The very essence of PRs is building a mutually beneficial relationship between an organization and its publics. This study particularly focuses on perceptions between PRs and journalists, which is associated with their relationships. Thus, Relationship Management Theory (RMT) is highly relevant in this regard. In this case, the relationship between OGC and OBN/EBC is considered as the relationship between an organization and its stakeholders.

This theory is developed by the contribution of many prominent scholars such as Hon and Grunig (1999), Grunig and Huang (2000), Bruning and Ledingham (2000), Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (2000). This widely recognized theory argues that PR is about effectively managing organizational–public relationships around common interests and shared goals, over time, [which] results in mutual understanding and benefit for interacting organizations and publics. This approach means that PR strategies and tactics should always be assessed in terms of their effect on the relationship between an organization and its publics, rather than, for example, the benefits they provide for the organization. Factors that affect all relationships, such as their history, the background of the people or organizations involved and the social context of the relationship, need to be considered in any PR campaign.

In this way, the focus on relationships broadens the perspectives used to formulate and evaluate PR strategies and tactics, but also requires greater involvement from organizations. Involvement means genuine dialogue, which in itself can be challenging. Dialogue in practice frequently fails to meet the expectations of those taking part and dialogue itself requires disclosure of information that may make the owner of that information vulnerable. Practitioners pressing for greater interaction with publics must recognize, explain and manage these potential risks for organizations, as well as for the publics they interact with (Tench & Yeomans, p. 2014, 126, 127).

RMT identifies the elements that make up a positive relationship, such as control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment, exchange relationship and communal relationship. Unlike the organization centered perspective of systems theory approaches to public relations, it takes the standpoint of the publics, which may be due partially to cultural and technological shifts that have empowered publics and facilitated international dialogue and/or coalitions.

Audiences move to centre-stage in relationship theory, which conceptualizes public relations professionals as negotiating a complex set of relationships inside and outside client or employer organisations (Hon & Grunig; Leitch & Neilson Jahansoozi; Ledingham & Bruning, as cited in Tench & Yeomans, 2014, p. 224).

Relationship Management Theory scholars posit that practitioners must fill a mediator's role between an organization to effectively build and maintain mutually beneficial relationships over time. Thus, delivering on promises, being honest and forthcoming, and working with the needs of journalists in mind all help improve working relationships and can help to change the culture of antagonism once so prevalent in media relations (Ledingham & Bruning, as cited in McCollough, 2015, p.4, 5).

Organization-public relationships are successful to the degree that the organization and publics trust one another, agree on who has rightful power to influence, experience satisfaction with each other, and commit oneself to one another (Grunig and Huang; Broom et al. , as cited in Rhee, 2004, p. 42,43).

The types of relationships identified include exploitive relationships, contractual relationships, manipulative relationships, covenantal relationships, and symbiotic relationships. Exploitive relationship is one in which one side takes advantage of the other. In contractual relationships, interactions between parties are limited to agreed-upon terms of the relationship. A manipulative relationship arises "when an organization, with the knowledge of what publics want, applies asymmetrical or pseudo-symmetrical approaches to communicate with publics to serve its own interests". In a covenantal relationship, both sides commit to a common good, openly exchange opinions, and provide opportunities for input and criticism. A symbiotic relationship occurs when organizations realize "their interdependence in the environment [and] work together with certain publics with the common interest of surviving in the environment" (Hung, as cited in Rhee, 2004, p. 44).

2.9.2. PR Communication Models

Grunig and Hunt proposed four models that define public relations communications in 1984. These are press agency /publicity, public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical. Press gentry/publicity and public information are both one-way models.

Practitioners of press gentry seek attention for their organization in almost any way possible, whereas public information practitioners are journalists-in-residence who disseminate accurate, but usually only favorable, about organizations. With the two-way symmetrical model, practitioners use research and dialogue to bring about symbiotic changes in the ideas, attitudes, and behaviors of both the organization and its publics. This model produces better long-term relationships with publics than do the other models of public relations (Grunig et al., 2002, p. 15, 308). The remaining model is presented in detail below because it is directly related to the subject of this study.

Two-way Asymmetric Communication

With the two-way asymmetrical model, practitioners conduct scientific research to determine how to persuade publics to behave in the way the client organization wishes (Grunig et al., 2002, p. 308). This model introduces the idea of feedback or two-way communication.

However, it is asymmetric or imbalanced because the intended change is in the audience's attitudes or behavior rather than in the organization's practices. It is also described as persuasive communication that relies on an understanding of the attitudes and behaviour of the targeted publics (Theaker, 2012, p.35). Under this model, an organization wouldn't necessarily change decisions as a result of feedback but rather would alter its responses to more effectively persuade publics to accept its position (Seitel, 2017, p. 80).

Government agencies are more likely to have asymmetrical than symmetrical systems (Grunig et al., 2002, p. 87). It is difficult, if not impossible, to practice public relations in a way that is ethical and socially responsible using an asymmetrical model (Grunig et al., as cited in Tench & Yeomans, 2014, p. 223). For these and similar reasons, there is a universal mistrust of government agencies and officials that necessitates the importance of honest and open communication (Seitel, 2017, p. 277).

According to Grunig et al. (2002), in symmetrical model communicators keep their eye on a broader professional perspective of balancing private and public interests. Practitioners should use the two-way symmetrical model to bring about symbiotic changes in both the organization and its publics (Grunig et al., 2002, p. 308). Symmetry has the same meaning as mixed motives, collaborative advocacy, and cooperative antagonism (p. 317).

2.9.3. Media Relations Theory

According to Supa (2014), there has been difficulty to establish the parameters needed for a ‘unifying’ theory of media relations (p.2). Though several researchers have sought to establish theoretical constructs for the practice, specific theory developed to media relations has been lacking (Supa, 2014, p.8). This is because of the absence of consensus on the definition of relationships in media relation (Broom et al., as cited in Supa, 2014, p.7). The meaning of media relations may differ from people to people, because media relations relationship differs depending on the journalist, the practitioner, and the organization’s media relations goals.

According to Supa (2014), the first purely media relations theory was established by Zoch and Molleda in 2006. Then Pang (2010) extended it and developed Mediating the Media Model (p.7). Therefore, that is the recent media relations theory of media relations.

Mediating the Media Model

The model identified five sets of internal and external influences that practitioners must recognize and understand to engage in proactive media relations and cultivate good media relations (Pang et al., 2014, p. 273). The internal and external influences that are found to shape media relations are journalist mindsets, journalist routines, newsroom routines, extra-media forces and media ideology. Out of these, journalist mindsets, journalist routines and media ideology are selected for this study based on their relevance.

Journalist mindset: Journalists are guided by traditional news values like immediacy, excitement and novelty that determine their choice of stories and angling Media relations. Practitioners therefore need to understand what makes news and how journalists write as the knowledge can help practitioners get better media coverage. This includes providing easy accessibility, exclusive stories and useful, timely and well-written information.

Journalist routines: Journalists adhere to work routines including deadlines, publishing balanced stories and fair and neutral reporting. To do this effectively, journalists need fast and immediate information. Therefore, they appreciate qualities like timeliness, accessibility and transparency. Practitioners should familiarize themselves with each news organizations’ deadlines and production routines and plan media events that maximize chances of coverage.

Media ideology: Media ideology refers to media organizations' role in society and their reasons for existence. State-press ideology affects the relationship between organizations and the media and influences the way news gets disseminated. Practitioners thus need to understand the role each media plays in society. This will help them navigate the media landscape (p. 274, 275).

CHAPTER III

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

The study is based on descriptive research which according to Newman (2014) presents a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting, or relationship and focuses on “how” and “who” questions (p.38, 39). Descriptive research is a form of research that gathers information in such a way as to paint a picture of what people think or do (Michaelson & Stacks, 2014, p. 220).

On the other hand, mixed method research is used to undertake the study. Mixed method is an approach to inquiry involving collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data, and using distinct designs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 44). This “mixing” or integrating of data provides a stronger understanding of the problem or question than either by itself (p. 345). The advantage of this method is its strength of drawing on both qualitative and quantitative research and minimizing the limitations of both approaches (p.349). Moreover, mixed methods research offers a potentially valuable alternative for undertaking multi-dimensional investigation, which generates new ways of understanding the situated complexities of social experience (Daymon & Holloway p.350).

This method is preferred to achieve the goal of studying perceptions in a complicated PR-Journalist relationship by measuring some key factors and compare them between the two sides. As indicated by Leavy (2017), this approach is a problem-centered approach and appropriate when the purpose is to describe, explain, or evaluate, and are particularly useful for studying complex problems or issues (p. 164). In such case, Creswell & Creswell (2018) advised to use mixed methods because collecting diverse types of data best provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative data alone (p. 62).

Of the different types of mixed method models, this study used convergent parallel mixed method. In this form of design, quantitative and qualitative data are converged or merged in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem by integrating the information in the interpretation of the overall results (Creswell, 2014, p. 57).

The convergent mixed methods approach is probably the most familiar of the basic and advanced mixed methods strategies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.269). In this approach, the researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data, analyzes them separately, and then compares the results to see if the findings confirm or disconfirm each other.

Mixed method research has also some limitations. Its disadvantage is its complex and time-consuming nature (Daymon & Holloway, 351). It also requires great effort and expertise to adequately study a phenomenon with two separate methods (Creswell, 2009, p. 249). With this awareness, the researcher has made preparation in advance to minimize the difficulties.

3.2. Sources of Data

The study relies on both primary and secondary data sources. The primary sources are PR practitioners in OGC and journalists in OBN Addis Ababa branch and EBC Afan Oromo service. Secondary sources used include written materials both published and unpublished as well as online resources which include books, journals articles, thesis and other documents.

3.3. Sample and Sampling Techniques

The focus of the study is PR practitioners in OGC and journalists in state broadcast media. OGC PR practitioners are known by the name government communicators in their office. Thus, the sample frame refers to government communicators in OGC as well as journalists in OBN Addis Ababa branch and EBC Afaan Oromo. More specifically, only PR practitioners working in OGC and journalists in OBN and EBC Afaan Oromo are targeted.

Although the main station of OBN is located in Adama town, the Addis Ababa branch is responsible to cover stories from and around Addis Ababa. Especially news information provided by OGC is covered by OBN addis Ababa branch. The two stations are linked via satellite and the branch in Addis feeds the main station in Adama town with the transmission of news and live events. The transmissions of the two are synchronized together.

Thus, OBN Addis Ababa and OGC have close contacts and better understanding about their relations than those working in Adama. For this reason, they are more appropriate for the study.

The total size of journalist population in OBN Addis Ababa branch is 21 and that of EBC Afan Oromo is 55 while the total population of OGC PR practitioners is 33. Initially the researcher intended to use stratification sampling method for questionnaire respondents to ensure the representation of each job category such as reporters, editors and producers that reflects the true proportion of individuals in the population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 251). However, that was impossible due to the crisis caused by the outbreak and spread of the Coronavirus (Covid 19). Because of the pandemic, workers are not coming to office as usual. While most OGC practitioners are told to stay at home, the journalists are assigned to work in shifts. For this reason, the researcher used convenience sampling method, a technique where people are selected because they are readily available (Stockemer, 2019, p.62).

That way, questionnaires are handed to directors and coordinators of the three institutions to distribute it throughout the week to PR practitioners and journalists who come to office. This was done in two rounds to get maximum possible practitioners and journalists that come to office anytime. Accordingly, 40 questionnaires were distributed to EBC and 38 properly filled and returned. Similarly, out of 25 questionnaires distributed to OBN, 20 successfully returned. And 30 questionnaires distributed to OGC out of which 26 returned. The ratio of the number of journalist respondents to the total journalist population is 58 to 76 (76.3%) and that of OGC PR is 26 to 33 (79%). That means, wider representation of both populations is ensured. The job titles of the respondents include all categories such as team leaders, editors, publications experts, public opinion analysts, article producers, media relations experts and social media news reporters in OGC as well as reporters, editors, producers and editor-in-chiefs in OBN & EBC. This is indicated in table 2 in chapter 4. Fortunately, good representation of the population was obtained and diverse views are acquired.

For in-depth interviews, six participants with top positions and more experience are purposely chosen as key informants from the three institutions (two from each institution). They include deputy bureau head of OGC, Department director in OGC, director of OBN Addis Ababa branch, an editor-in-chief at OBN as well as TV & Radio coordinators in EBC Afan Oromo. Senior OGC officials are selected due to their direct involvement in the bureau's PR practices and their role in organizing the overall PR activities. The two officials are also qualified professionals who earned their M.A. from A.A.U., School Journalism & Communication. They are key persons to inform the study, as they possess good understanding of the subject. They plan, monitor and evaluate PR activities regularly.

Their duty is similar to that of editor-in-chiefs in media houses. Their role includes reviewing the contents of news information and media selection for information dispatch.

Similarly, journalists with senior positions are selected for two reasons. The first one is that professionals at senior levels usually pass through most of the lower hierarchy in their institutions and know the practice in better than junior workers. Secondly, they serve as gatekeepers a role that gives them the opportunity to directly interact with OGC practitioners. They also have an indirect access to the practices of PR practitioners since they edit what other reporters have produced. This approach of deliberately choosing people with senior positions is also supported by Callard (2011), who indicated that “interviews with elite subjects would allow the researcher to explore why journalists hold certain attitudes towards PR practitioners in more detail (p.50, 51).

3.4. Data Collection Instruments

Data used in the study are collected using questionnaires and in-depth interviews. All the interviews are made in Afan Oromo, so that they can easily explain their ideas and better inform the study.

3.4.1. Questionnaire

For questionnaire, statements that represent perception levels on selected issues are formulated. Six categories are identified by the researcher for analysis based on understanding from literature review to measure respondents' perceptions. Various studies suggested that these issues are the causes of distrust and conflict between the PRs and journalists. The issues are: understanding of the PR profession, level of professionalism of both fields, PR and journalist roles, relationships between the two, trust and ethical issues. Then, under each issue, detailed variables which are intended to address the research questions are formulated.

Twenty-five close-ended questions are used in the questionnaire. According to Leavy (2017), the questions designed around each concept are used to operationalize the variables. They are the indicators that a variable is or is not present (p.102). Respondents were requested to rate their attitudes towards the variables against three categories of questions: a dichotomous question, multiple choice and Likert scale questions.

According to Leavy (2017), the vast majority of surveys opt for multiple choice, dichotomous, checklists and scales (p. 104). The dichotomous question usually involves a “yes” or “no” alternative. But for in this study the researcher added a third neutral option “don’t know”. Including this neutral choice makes it easier for some people to choose/respond and excluding the neutral option forces individuals to take a position, even if they do not prefer to take a choice (p. 44). The “don’t know option is useful to observe their knowledge on the issues. The study specifically used this category to measure variables categorized under understanding about the field of PR, trust level and relationship factor.

Secondly, multiple-choice questions with three options are employed to rate perceptions on relationship matters. Finally, a five choice Likert scale is used to measure opinion-based questions and questions tapping into personal attributes (Stockemer, 2019, p.44). Likert scale is the most frequently used ordinal variable in questionnaires and are especially designed to measure attitudes or opinions (p. 44). Ninety-five copies of questionnaire were distributed to public relations practitioners and journalists, of which eighty four successfully returned. The advantage of questionnaire as compared to interviews is that they protect the privacy and identity of respondents that provided the responses is not exposed to the researcher.

3.4.2. In-depth Interviews

The study is complemented with in-depth interviews to obtain detailed explanations that help address the research questions of the study. These interviews involve largely open-ended and few close-ended questions that are intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.373). This is possible by exploring the what, how and why questions in more detail (Tashakkori & Creswell, as cited in Daymon & Holloway, p.352). The key benefit of the in-depth interview is the opportunity to probe, to encourage people to expand on their answers (Watson and Noble, 2007, p. 68).

To guide the interview, a checklist of eleven questions is prepared. According to Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2015, p.158), interview checklist is flexible to allow the interviewer to follow the flow of the conversation. Thus, few semi-structured questions and predominantly open-ended questions are used in order to combine techniques of structured and unstructured interviews. The intent of the questions was to discover the reasons behind the existing PR-Journalist perceptions and the challenges they are facing as a result of this.

All of the interviews are conducted via telephone due to the threat of Coronavirus pandemic and are recorded on tape. According to Michaelson & Stacks (2014), telephone interviews can be used for areas that might be dangerous for an interviewer to go and can be conducted fairly fast (p. 142). The questions are then forwarded to six participants selected from the three intuitions via telephone. The interviews are 15 to 50 minutes long each and all of them are recorded by audio tape for later analysis.

3.5. Methods of Analysis

The analysis is made separately for the two methods and finally triangulated from both methods. Data analysis in a convergent design consists of three phases. First, analyze the quantitative database in terms of simple statistical results. Second, analyze the qualitative database by coding the data and collapsing the codes into broad themes. Third the mixed methods data analysis comes. This is the analysis that consists of integrating the two databases. This integration consists of merging the results from both the qualitative and the quantitative findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 353,354).

3.5.1. Quantitative Method

The six issues identified to address the research questions, are divided among the first three research questions. The first four are designated to the first two research questions (R_1 & R_2) and the last two are allocated for the third research question (R_3).

1. To address R_1 & R_2 , perceptions associated with:
 - ☞ Understanding of PR profession
 - ☞ Professionalism
 - ☞ Role clarity and
 - ☞ Ethical practices are used.

2. To address R_3 , perceptions on:
 - ☞ Level of Trust
 - ☞ Type of Relationship

3. R_4 is addressed by combining results obtained from the first three results and information from interviews.

To analyze the collected data, quantitative data analyses were carried out using simple and relevant statistical methods such as average, percentage and frequency distributions.

Tables and graphs are also used to demonstrate results. Microsoft Excel is used to generate charts and graphs.

3.5.2. Qualitative Method

The information from interviews are transcribed into text data for each category separately. Each interview verbatim is transcribed to preserve a complete record of the interview (Leavy, 2017, 142). The transcriptions from each question are labeled and collected together under the six categories designed for analysis. Finally, analysis is made for each category by organizing the information using summaries and direct quotations.

3.5.3. Integration (Triangulation)

In convergent mixed methods design, a researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data, analyzes them separately, and then compares the results to see if the findings confirm or disconfirm each other (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.352). The researcher will first report the quantitative statistical results and then discuss the qualitative findings (e.g., themes) that either confirm or disconfirm the statistical results. This is called a side-by-side approach because the researcher makes the comparison within a discussion, presenting first one set of findings and then the other (p. 354). First perceptions of OBN/ EBC Afan Oromo journalists about OGC practitioners are presented. This is followed by presentation of results of OGC practitioners' perceptions about OBN/EBC Afan Oromo journalists. Then analysis is done by comparing and contrasting the results under each issue from two directions.

The result from in-depth interview is used to supplement data from questionnaires. Then the final analysis is done by converging the data from both questionnaires and interviews. Based on the analysis made using merging the results from the two sides, conclusions are drawn. Finally, the findings are discussed in relation to the existing theories and conclusions given.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

The researcher is an employee of OGC who was working on the production of promotional videos and public service announcement messages that are displayed at public gatherings on screen or to be posted on the bureau's social media sites.

Even though he is staff member of OGC, he has not at all involved in the activities of news releases, press conferences and media relations. Accordingly, he has conducted the study with full consent and support of the bureau because he has been granted the scholarship by the bureau. He carried out all research activities including sampling, formulation of questions, as well as data collection and analysis with full freedom and in accordance with scientific procedures only. He had no face-to-face contact with the respondents during distribution and collection of questionnaires. He packed the questionnaires with paper bag and handed it to team leaders for distribution. Furthermore, he has placed an empty bag in the practitioners' rooms to enable respondents drop the questionnaires after completion. This is to guarantee the privacy of the respondents.

3.7. Validity and Reliability

Especially to maximize validity and reliability, the contents of the questionnaire are extracted from various studies (such as Buhagiar, 2006; Callard, 2011; Kaur & Shaari, 2006; Sterne, 2008; Valentini, 2014; and Yoon, 2005). They are adapted in such a way that they serve the purpose of the study.

Additionally, the researcher has deliberately provided an open comment space at the end of the questionnaire to get feedback on the overall aspect of the study. This is useful to get comments on the experience of the respondents (Ruel et al., as cited in Leavy, 2017, p. 107). But only limited number of respondents gave comments and the majority left it blank. Accordingly, few respondents said that some questions are not exhaustive, while few suggested it would have been better if the study focused on either journalists or PR instead of mixing the two. These are of course methodological comments and not necessarily involve validity and reliability threats. They didn't raise any conceptual or clarity problem. Rather, some of them gave additional explanations on areas they are interested in. Thus, no major validity and reliability problem is detected. Moreover, the use of mixed method research by itself is another way of ensuring validity of a research. Triangulation of data in mixed method is used to ensure validity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 341). On the other hand, the population is widely represented by the sample used, which adds strength to validity.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Demographic Information

Under this section, data compiled from questionnaires and the findings of explorations from in-depth interviews are presented in line with the six categories selected for analysis. To proceed to data presentation and analysis, first the demographic information and profile of questionnaire respondents is provided below in Table 2.

Table 2: Demographic information & profiles of questionnaire respondents

| No. | Group | Category | Jour., n=58 | | PR , n=26 | |
|-----|----------------|---------------------------|-------------|-------|-----------|-------|
| | | | Freq. | % | Freq. | % |
| 1 | Age | 20-25 | 7 | 12.10 | 0 | 0 |
| | | 26-35 | 38 | 65.52 | 11 | 42.31 |
| | | 36-45 | 10 | 17.24 | 8 | 30.77 |
| | | > 45 | 2 | 3.45 | 7 | 26.92 |
| | | No Response | 1 | 1.72 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | Gender | Female | 10 | 17.24 | 7 | 26.92 |
| | | Male | 47 | 81.03 | 19 | 73.08 |
| | | No response | 1 | 1.72 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | Experience | 1-5 | 25 | 43.10 | 1 | 3.85 |
| | | 6-10 | 21 | 36.21 | 12 | 46.15 |
| | | > 10 | 10 | 17.24 | 13 | 50 |
| | | No response | 2 | 3.45 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | Field of Study | Jour. & Com. | 36 | 62.10 | 9 | 34.62 |
| | | PR | 0 | 0 | 3 | 11.54 |
| | | Other social sciences | 20 | 34.48 | 14 | 53.85 |
| | | Nat. Science & Technology | 1 | 2.17 | 0 | 0 |
| | | No response | 1 | 2.17 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | PR Training | Yes | 43 | 74.12 | 23 | 88.46 |
| | | No | 13 | 22.41 | 2 | 7.69 |
| | | No Response | 2 | 3.45 | 1 | 3.85 |

The ratio of PR-Journalist respondents is 26 to 58 or 31 percent to 69 percent respectively. Of the total respondents of OGC practitioners & OBN/EBC journalists, 58 percent are aged between 26 & 35, seventy-eight percent are male and nearly 40 percent have an experience of six to 10 years. 53 percent of them studied Journalism & Communication and 78 percent have got additional PR training. The job titles of the journalists include news editor-in-chief, news editors, senior editors, reporters, senior reporters as well as producers and senior producers. Similarly, the positions of OGC PR respondents comprises of team leaders, publications experts, public opinion analysts, article producers and social media news reporters.

4.2. Perceptual Conditions between OGC PR and the Journalists

Below is the data compiled from the questionnaires regarding the six categories formulated for analysis and presented separately for the journalists and OGC PR practitioners to make ready for comparisons between the two sides.

A. Perceptions about the Field of PR

The data on the first category is shown in table 3 and 4 as follows.

Table 3: Responses of OBN & EBC Journalists on understanding of the field of PR

| | Perceived levels on understanding of PR, n = 58 | Yes | | No | | Don't know | |
|---|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|------------|------|
| | | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % |
| 1 | Do you think the field of PR is a profession by itself? | 51 | 87.93 | 6 | 10.34 | 1 | 1.72 |
| 2 | Do you feel that the status of PR field is less than Journalism? | 25 | 43.10 | 31 | 53.45 | 2 | 3.45 |
| 3 | Do you think PR is an important field for society? | 52 | 89.65 | 6 | 10.34 | 0 | 0 |

Data from table 3 show that 88 percent of the journalists accept PR as an independent profession, but only 53% of them feel PR is the same as journalism in status. This implies that the rest 43% believe that journalism is superior to PR. Once again, 89 percent of OBN and EBC journalists believe that PR is an important profession for society. That means the significant majority perceive the profession positively. Therefore, the journalists have clear understanding about the field of PR in general.

Table 4: Responses of OGC Practitioners on understanding of the field of PR

| | Perceived levels on understanding of PR, n = 26 | Yes | | No | | Don't Know | |
|---|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|------------|---|
| | | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % |
| 1 | Do you think the field of PR is a profession by itself? | 26 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | Do you feel that the status of PR field is less than the status of Journalism? | 5 | 19.23 | 21 | 80.77 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | Do you think PR is an important field for society? | 23 | 88.46 | 3 | 11.54 | 0 | 0 |

Similarly, data from table 4 indicate that all of the OGC PR practitioners (100%) perceive that their field is an independent profession. This view of their profession is another indication of positive understanding about PR profession. On the other hand, significant majority of OGC respondents (81 percent) believe that PR is not less than journalism in status. This implies that they don't feel inferior to journalism. Likewise, 88 percent of them believe that PR is an important profession for society. That means, they perceive their profession positively.

Comparing the two results, as indicated in Fig. 1 below shows, journalists perceive the status of PR slightly negatively than PR practitioners do. Although more than half of the journalists believe that PR is a profession, still considerable proportions of journalists (43 percent) perceive the status of PR negatively. Regarding, the importance of PR field to society, a common positive belief is found between the two sides. In general, the majorities on both sides agree that PR is a profession on its own and hold moderately positive attitude towards the status of PR. The large majority from both sides also acknowledge the role PR plays for society. This reflects a positive perception and no major difference is observed between them.

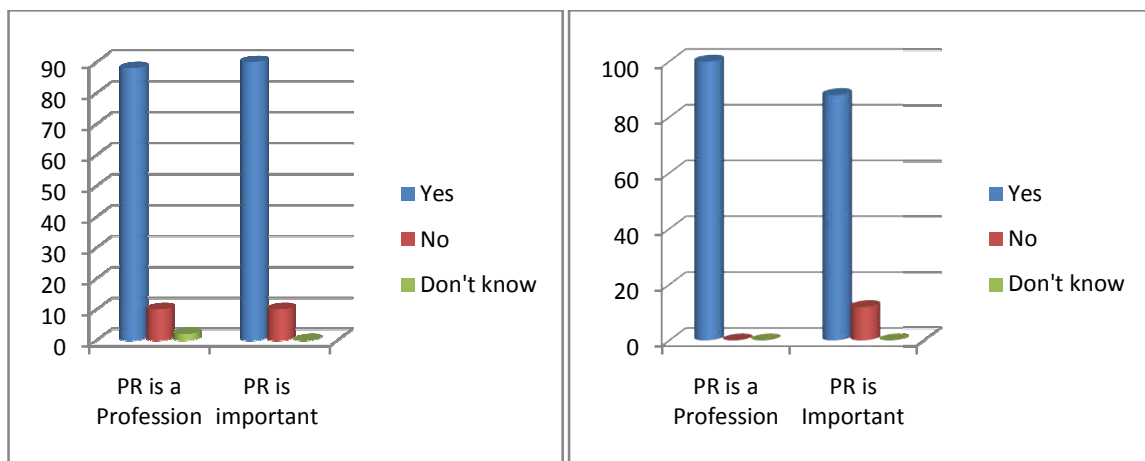


Fig. 1: Perceptions about understanding of PR by journalists (left) & OGC PR (right)

B. Perceptions about PR-Journalist Professionalism

Table 5 below indicates responses of journalists regarding their perceptions on the second category. For the sake of convenience, percentages are calculated by combining those in the same category together (Strongly agree + agree = agree, Neither agree nor disagree = Neutral, and Disagree + Strongly disagree = disagree). This method is also applied in all subsequent analysis under other categories. In case where significant results are observed in the “strongly agree” or “strongly disagree” category, they will be treated exceptionally.

Table 5: Responses of OBN/EBC Journalists on PR-Journalist Professionalism

| | Perceived levels on Professionalism, n=58 | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Neither/Nor | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | |
|---|--|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|-------|----------|-------|-------------------|-------|
| | | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % |
| 1 | OGC PR practitioners are qualified professionals in the field | 1 | 1.72 | 17 | 29.31 | 15 | 25.86 | 19 | 32.76 | 6 | 10.34 |
| 2 | OBN & EBC Afan Oromo journalists are qualified professionals in the field | 3 | 5.17 | 31 | 53.45 | 19 | 32.76 | 5 | 8.62 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | OGC PR practitioners lack journalistic skills about news value, news writing & understanding deadlines | 6 | 10.34 | 29 | 50 | 10 | 17.24 | 13 | 22.41 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | OBN & EBC Afan Oromo journalists lack understanding about the practices of PR | 0 | 0 | 15 | 25.86 | 13 | 22.41 | 28 | 48.27 | 2 | 3.45 |

Referring to the table above, the journalists provided inconclusive response regarding the qualification of OGC practitioners. But, the greater proportions (43 percent) think that they are not qualified professionals. Concerning the journalistic skills of OGC practitioners, 60 percent of the journalists agreed that the practitioners lack basic skills such as news value, news writing & understanding deadlines, which show negative perception.

Regarding the self-perceptions of the journalists, 58 percent of them perceive that OBN & EBC journalists are qualified professionals. This means that journalists view themselves more qualified than of OGC practitioners. Similarly, 53 percent of them think they do not lack understanding about PR practices, while 41 percent agreed they do lack the understanding.

The profiles of journalists also indicate that 65 percent of them got PR training, which supports their claim here.

Table 6: Responses of OGC Practitioners on PR-Journalist Professionalism

| | Perceived levels on Professionalism, n=26 | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Neither/Nor | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | |
|---|--|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|-------|----------|-------|-------------------|------|
| | | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % |
| 1 | OGC PR practitioners are qualified professionals in the field | 3 | 11.54 | 7 | 26.92 | 7 | 26.92 | 8 | 30.77 | 1 | 3.85 |
| 2 | OBN & EBC Afan Oromo journalists are qualified professionals in the field | 0 | 0 | 14 | 53.85 | 11 | 42.31 | 1 | 3.85 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | OGC PR practitioners lack journalistic skills about news value, news writing & understanding deadlines | 2 | 7.69 | 15 | 57.69 | 6 | 23.08 | 3 | 11.54 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | OBN & EBC Afan Oromo journalists lack understanding about the practices of PR | 2 | 7.69 | 10 | 38.46 | 9 | 34.62 | 5 | 19.23 | 0 | 0 |

Contrary to the views of the journalists, as can be seen from table 6, more than half of OGC PR practitioners (54 percent) agreed that OBN & EBC journalists are qualified professionals, indicating positive perception. But their view regarding basic understanding of PR practices by journalists is divided. Here 45 percent agreed that journalists lack basic PR skills, while 35 percent remained neutral. Though their views are inconclusive, still the greater proportion agrees that journalists lack understanding of PR practices.

On the other hand, OGC PR practitioners' self- perceptions on their professional qualification is not definitive, as they responded 39 percent agree, 35 percent disagree and 27 percent neutral. However, their profiles provided in table 2 tell a different story, as it reveals only 12 percent got qualification in PR profession. This shows that PRs are more positive about the qualifications of journalists as compared to their own qualification. Concerning the journalistic skills of OGC practitioners, 65 percent of OGC practitioners agreed that they indeed lack the skills, implying negative attitude. Comparatively, as can be seen from Fig. 2, OGC PR practitioners perceive the professional qualifications of OBN & EBC journalists more positively.

Comparing the two responses from both sides on professionalism level, journalists hold more pessimistic attitude towards the journalistic skills of OGC PR practitioners.

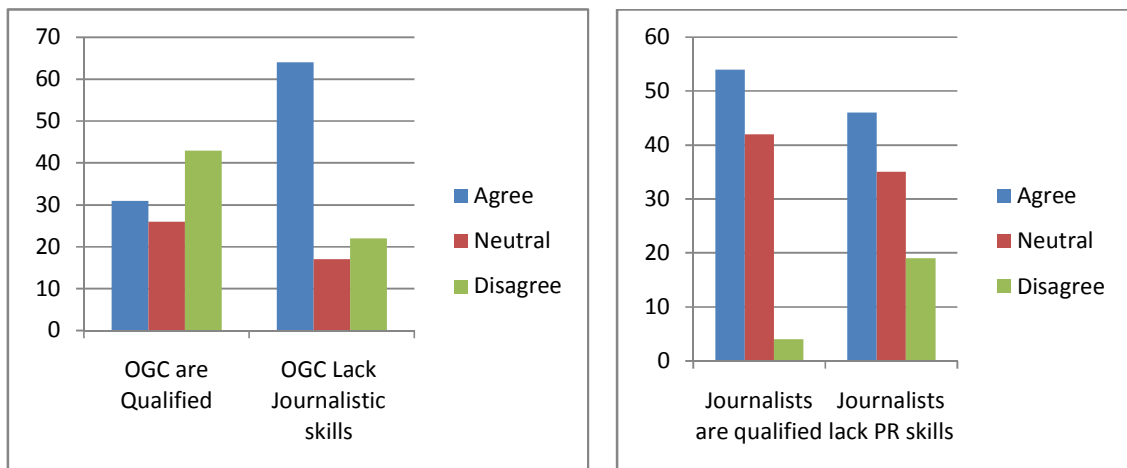


Fig 2: Perceptions about professionalism by journalists (left) and OGC PR (right)

C. Perceptions about PR-Journalist Roles

The third category of analysis refers to clarity about each other's roles by both sides. The data from the two sides is shown in the next table. Here also, percentages are calculated by adding those in the same category together for simplicity.

Referring to table 7A for perceptions on the roles of PRs, 55 percent of the journalists agreed that the role of PR is serving only their organization. Although the PRs are loyal to their organization, they have dual responsibility of serving both organization and the public. Similarly, the same proportion of journalists agreed that telling the positive side of their organization is the role of PR. Again, 65 percent of journalists agreed that controlling access to information is the duty of PR practitioners. 56 percent of the journalists also think that OGC PR practitioners are not available any time to respond to journalists' questions. So the journalists perceive that serving only the interest of their organization, telling the positive side and controlling information access is the role of OGC PR. Here the journalists are not referring to the general role of PR, but specifically to the role of OGC PR on the ground. This suggests that OGC PRs are not practicing their proper roles. Their proper role should have been serving both public and organization, telling both sides of the story as well as managing information instead of blocking it. This contradicts with their role of informing the public.

Table 7A: Responses of OBN/EBC Journalists on PR-Journalist Roles

| | Perceived levels on Roles, n=58 | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Neither/Nor | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | | N. R |
|---|--|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|-------|----------|-------|-------------------|-------|------|
| | | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | |
| 1 | PR practitioners serve one side only (their organization) | 10 | 17.24 | 22 | 37.93 | 10 | 17.24 | 14 | 24.14 | 1 | 1.72 | 1 |
| 2 | The role of journalists is to expose PR by revealing bad news | 3 | 5.17 | 12 | 20.69 | 9 | 15.52 | 24 | 41.38 | 9 | 15.52 | 1 |
| 3 | The role of PR practitioners is telling the positive side of their organization | 12 | 20.69 | 20 | 34.48 | 9 | 15.52 | 14 | 24.14 | 3 | 5.17 | |
| 4 | Journalists do not understand the relationship building role of PRs between organization and publics | 4 | 8.69 | 11 | 19.56 | 7 | 12.07 | 31 | 53.45 | 4 | 6.52 | 1 |
| 5 | PR practitioners control access to information to restrict journalists | 15 | 25.86 | 23 | 39.65 | 6 | 10.34 | 12 | 20.69 | 2 | 3.45 | |
| 6 | Journalists are superior in role and more important to society than PR practitioners | 13 | 22.41 | 20 | 34.78 | 8 | 13.79 | 12 | 20.69 | 5 | 10.87 | |
| 7 | OGC PR practitioners are available any time to respond journalists' questions | 3 | 5.17 | 12 | 20.69 | 9 | 15.52 | 24 | 41.38 | 9 | 15.52 | 1 |

Table 7B: Responses of OBN & EBC Journalists on the Nature of PR-Journalist Roles

| 8 | The roles of Journalists and PR practitioners are | Complementary | | Contradictory | | Do not know | | N. R. |
|---|---|---------------|-------|---------------|-------|-------------|-----|-------|
| | | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | |
| | | 38 | 65.52 | 15 | 25.86 | 3 | 5.1 | |

Coming to journalists’ self perceptions about their roles, 57 percent of them disagreed that exposing PR by revealing bad news is not their role. Similarly, 60 percent of them rejected the proposition that they lack understanding about the relationship-building role of PRs.

That means more than half of them properly perceive their roles and hold positive attitude. But, 57 percent believe that journalists are superior in role and more important to society than PR practitioners. This superiority attitude by OBN & EBC journalists represents negative perception towards OGC PR roles and one source of conflict between the two.

Table 8A: Responses of OGC Practitioners on PR-Journalist Roles

| | Perceived levels on Roles, n=26 | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Neither/Nor | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | |
|---|--|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|-------|----------|-------|-------------------|-------|
| | | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % |
| 1 | PR practitioners serve one side only (their organization) | 1 | 3.85 | 6 | 23.08 | 6 | 23.08 | 12 | 46.15 | 1 | 3.85 |
| 2 | The role of journalists is to expose PR practitioners by revealing bad news | 1 | 3.85 | 5 | 19.23 | 3 | 11.54 | 16 | 61.54 | 1 | 3.85 |
| 3 | The role of PR practitioners is telling the positive side of their organization | 8 | 30.77 | 12 | 46.15 | 2 | 7.69 | 3 | 11.54 | 1 | 3.85 |
| 4 | Journalists do not understand the relationship building role of PRs between organization and publics | 2 | 7.69 | 8 | 30.77 | 7 | 26.92 | 7 | 26.92 | 2 | 7.69 |
| 5 | PR practitioners control access to information to restrict journalists | 3 | 11.54 | 11 | 42.31 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 38.46 | 2 | 7.69 |
| 6 | Journalists are superior in role and more important to society than PR practitioners | 4 | 15.38 | 7 | 26.92 | 3 | 11.54 | 10 | 38.46 | 2 | 7.69 |
| 7 | OGC PR practitioners are available any time to respond journalists’ questions on any issue | 0 | 0 | 13 | 50 | 3 | 11.54 | 7 | 26.92 | 3 | 11.54 |

Table 8B: Responses of OGC PR on the Nature of PR-Journalist Roles

| 8 | The roles of Journalists and PRs practitioners are | Complementary | | Contradictory | | Do not know | | N. R. |
|---|--|---------------|-------|---------------|-------|-------------|------|-------|
| | | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | |
| | | 18 | 69.23 | 6 | 23.08 | 1 | 3.85 | |

Based on table 8A above, 65 percent of OGC practitioners agreed that the role of journalists is not exposing PR practitioners by revealing bad news. This shows their positive perception of the role of journalists. But their views on lack of understanding about relationship building role of PRs are divided and not definitive. 38 percent agreed, 34 percent disagreed and 27 percent remained neutral.

Considering OGC practitioners' self-perception of their roles, 50 percent disagreed that they stand only for their organization. That means, half of them have good understanding and right perception of this role. However, 78 percent of OGC practitioners agreed that telling the positive side of their organization is their role. Likewise, 55 percent of the practitioners agreed that PRs control access to information while 45 percent disagreed. Again, half of them have confessed that they are not accessible anytime for response. This shows basic misunderstanding and lack of clarity on their own roles. That means the practitioners perceive their role as telling the positive side of their organization, controlling access to information and delaying information. This is a wrong perception since it contradicts with their role of informing the public and other stakeholders. On the other hand, the majority from both sides (65 percent of journalists & 69 percent of OGC PR), as shown in table 7B & 8B, think that PR-Journalist roles are complementary, indicating positive attitude towards each others' roles.

Comparative analysis, as indicated in Fig. 3 below, shows OBN & EBC journalists perceive the roles of OGC practitioners more negatively, but PR practitioners are more positive about the roles of journalists. Moreover, OGC practitioners lack clarity on their own roles than journalists. However, the majority from both sides agreed that their roles are complementary to each other.

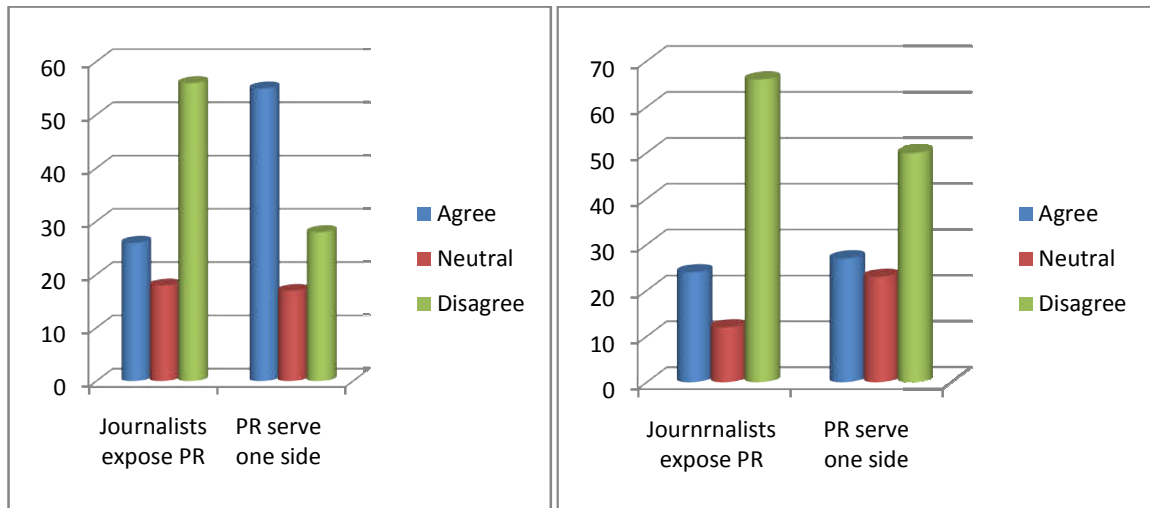


Fig. 3: Perceptions about roles by journalists (left) and OGC PR (right)

D. Perceptions about PR-Journalist Ethical Practices

The following table indicates the result of data collected for ethical practices of both sides. Again, percentages are calculated by adding those in the same category together.

Table 9: Responses of OBN & EBC Journalists on PR-Journalist Ethical Practices

| | Perceived Levels on Ethical Practices, n=58 | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Neither/Nor | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | |
|---|---|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|-------|----------|-------|-------------------|------|
| | | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % |
| 1 | OBN & EBC Afan Oromo journalists give good coverage if they get gifts/payment | 3 | 5.17 | 14 | 24.14 | 22 | 37.93 | 16 | 27.59 | 3 | 5.17 |
| 2 | OGC PR practitioners give gifts/payment to OBN & EBC Afan Oromo journalists to get good news coverage | 1 | 1.72 | 14 | 24.14 | 17 | 29.31 | 22 | 37.93 | 4 | 6.89 |
| 3 | OGC PR practitioners do not tell the truth in case of politically sensitive issues | 19 | 32.76 | 24 | 41.38 | 7 | 12.07 | 8 | 13.79 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | OBN & EBC Afan Oromo journalists sensationalize stories from PR to attract viewers | 2 | 3.45 | 20 | 34.48 | 16 | 27.59 | 18 | 31.03 | 2 | 3.45 |
| 5 | Journalists are ethically superior to PR practitioners | 7 | 12.07 | 19 | 32.76 | 11 | 18.97 | 18 | 31.03 | 3 | 5.17 |

Regarding the provision of truthful information, 74 percent of journalists (Table 9) believe that OGC PRs do not tell the truth on politically sensitive issues. This is negative view to ethical standards of OGC PR practitioners on this ethical conduct. But the view of journalists is divided on the offerings of gifts/money by PRs to journalists. 45 percent disagreed and 29 percent remained undecided. Although this result is inconclusive, still the greater proportion believes that PRs do not offer gifts to journalists. This doesn't seem a response provided to appreciate the PRs, but indirectly to defend themselves. Relating this to their self-perception regarding the taking of gifts, the greater proportion of journalists (38 percent) remained neutral. The remaining 29 percent and 33 percent agreed and opposed respectively. Once again, concerning the sensationalization of information, 37 percent agreed, 28 percent undecided and 35 percent disagreed. The fact that more than one-third of the respondents chose neutral option looks like a tactical move to escape taking side on this sensitive issue.

Once again, their thoughts concerning the issue of superiority on ethical practices are not conclusive. But still the greater proportions (46 percent) think they are ethically superior while 36 percent disagree. The overall picture here reveals that there is big division and difference among the journalists on their ethical practices.

Table 10: Responses of OGC Practitioners on PR-Journalist Ethical Practices

| | Perceived levels on Ethical Practices, n=26 | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Neither/Nor | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | | N.R |
|---|--|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|-------|----------|-------|-------------------|------|-----|
| | | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | |
| 1 | OBN & EBC Afan Oromo journalists give good coverage if they get gifts/payment | 3 | 11.54 | 11 | 42.31 | 8 | 30.77 | 4 | 15.38 | 0 | 0 | |
| 2 | OGC PR practitioners offer gifts/payment to OBN & EBC Afan Oromo journalists to get good news coverage | 2 | 7.69 | 7 | 26.92 | 12 | 46.15 | 5 | 19.23 | 0 | 0 | |
| 3 | OGC PR practitioners do not tell the truth in case of politically sensitive issues | 7 | 26.92 | 11 | 42.31 | 2 | 7.69 | 6 | 23.08 | 0 | 0 | |
| 4 | OBN & EBC Afan Oromo journalists sensationalize stories from PR to attract viewers | 2 | 7.69 | 14 | 53.85 | 6 | 23.08 | 3 | 11.54 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 5 | Journalists are superior in ethical practice than PR practitioners | 1 | 3.85 | 5 | 19.23 | 4 | 15.38 | 15 | 57.69 | 1 | 3.85 | |

Referring to table 10 above, 62 percent of OGC practitioners believe that journalists sensationalize PR information to attract audience. Again, 54 percent of OGC practitioners perceive that the journalists seek payment to give good coverage. Similarly, they believe that journalists are not ethically superior to OGC PR as 61 percent responded disagree to the given proposition. Thus, the majority of OGC practitioners perceive the ethical conducts of journalists negatively.

In a similar trend to that of the journalists, the response of OGC practitioners on their self-perceptions reveal mixed results, as indicated in table 10. In relation to offering money to journalists, 34 percent chose “agree”, 19 percent responded “disagree” and 46 percent chose “neutral”. Although this result is inconclusive, still the greater majority of the practitioners chose to stay undecided in a bid to avoid taking sides sharing the same attitude with journalists. However, 74 percent of OGC PR practitioners agreed they do not tell the truth in case of politically sensitive issues. This is a strong conviction about their own unethical deeds. This is one of the major unethical practices that is triggering negative perception between the two sides.

Comparatively, as indicated in Fig. 4 below, OGC practitioners are more negative about the ethical practices of OBN & EBC journalists. This can be considered one sources of suspicion between the two sides. But the greater proportions from both sides agree that journalists are not ethically superior to PR Practitioners.

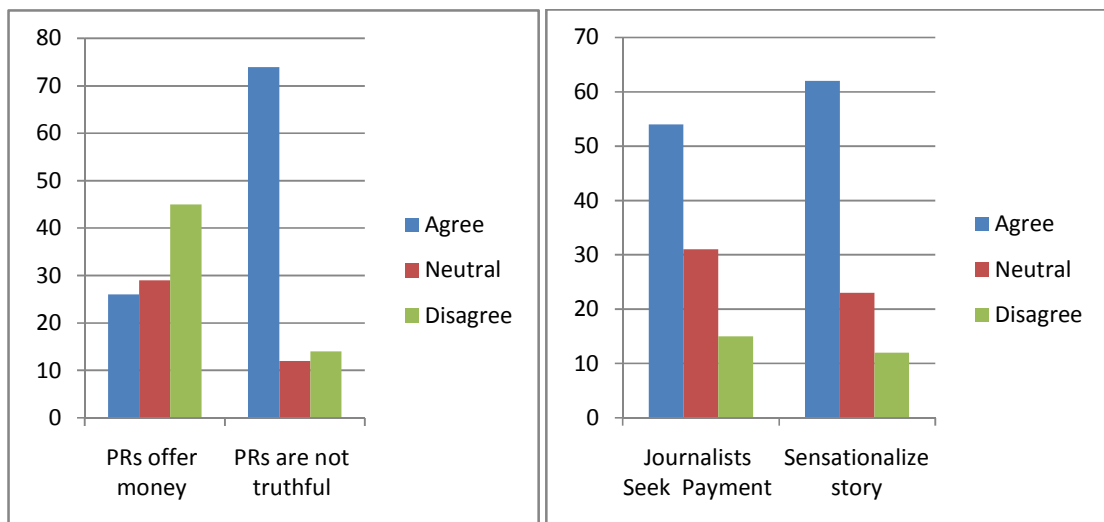


Fig. 4: Perceptions about Ethical Practices by journalists (left) and OGC PR (right)

E. Perceptions about Trust Level between the Two Sides

The following table depicts perceptions about the truthfulness and loyalty of OGC Practitioners and OBN & EBC Afan Oromo journalists by both sides.

Table 11: Responses of OBN & EBC Journalists on Trust Level between the Two Sides

| Perceived levels on Trust level, n = 58 | | Yes | | No | | Don't know | |
|---|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|------------|-------|
| | | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % |
| 1 | Are OGC PR practitioners trustworthy sources of information? | 19 | 32.76 | 27 | 46.55 | 12 | 20.69 |
| 2 | Do you trust OGC PR in your relationships? Are they honest partners? | 15 | 25.86 | 34 | 58.62 | 9 | 15.52 |

Looking in to table 11 above, 46 percent of the journalists think that OGC PR are not trustworthy sources of information. Only one-third believe that they are truthful. In the same manner, 59 percent of OBN & EBC journalists do not trust OGC practitioners as honest partners. The majority of the journalists do not trust OGC PR as honest partners. That is to say, they suspect OGC PR in their relationships.

Table 12: Responses of OGC Practitioners on Trust Level between the Two Sides

| Perceived levels on Trust level, n = 26 | | Yes | | No | | Don't know | |
|---|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|------------|-------|
| | | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % |
| 1 | Do you think OBN/EBC Afan Oromo journalists are credible sources of information? | 7 | 26.92 | 12 | 46.15 | 7 | 26.92 |
| 2 | Do you trust OBN/EBC journalists in your relationships? Are they honest partners? | 9 | 34.62 | 11 | 42.31 | 6 | 23.08 |

Referring to the table 12 above, the responses of OGC practitioners on trust level, show mixed results on both items. On the first item, 27 percent supported that journalists are credible sources of information, while 46 percent opposed and 27 percent neutral. Similarly, 35 percent responded they trust OBN & EBC journalists as honest partners, while 42 percent responded they do not. Although both results are inconclusive result on their own, still the greater proportion of OGC practitioners do not trust their relationships with journalists. Apart from that, nearly one-fourth of the practitioners (23 percent) chose the “don't know” option here. This suggests absence of interaction between the two sides. That means they may have been operating independently of each other, implying neutral relationship.

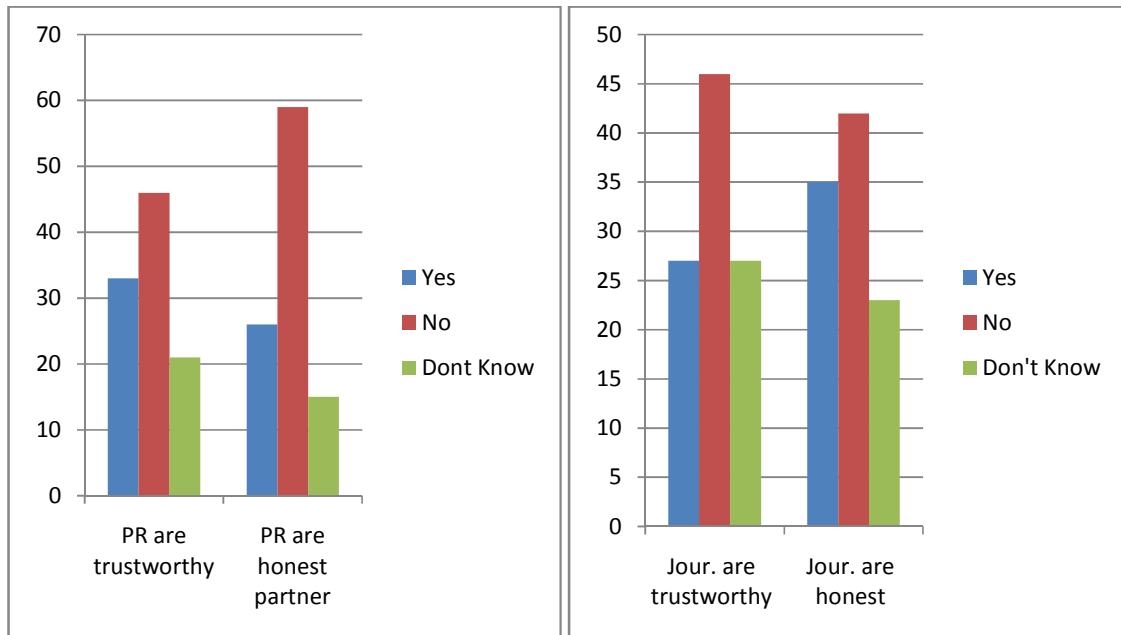


Fig. 5: Perceptions about Trust Level by journalists (left) and OGC PR (right)

Comparing the results from the two sides, indicate that the majority of the journalists and OGC practitioners negatively perceive each other. And OGC practitioners are slightly less suspicious of journalists.

F. Perceptions about the Relationship between the Two Sides

The final category refers to the perceptions that OGC Practitioners and OBN & EBC Afan Oromo journalists hold towards their relationships.

Table 13A: Responses of OBN & EBC Journalists on their Relationship Types

| | Perceived levels on type of relationship, n = 58 | Positive | | Negative | | Mixed | | N. R |
|---|---|----------|-------|----------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| | | Freq. | % | Freq. | Freq. | % | % | |
| 1 | How do you describe the relationship between OGC PR practitioners and OBN & EBC Afan Oromo journalists?? | 15 | 25.86 | 6 | 10.34 | 37 | 63.79 | |
| 2 | Does government ownership of OBN & EBC media affect the relationship between OGC PR practitioners and journalists of the two media? | 12 | 20.69 | 29 | 50 | 15 | 25.86 | 2 |

Table 13B: Responses of OBN & EBC Journalists on their Satisfaction Level

| 3 | Are you satisfied with the quality & quantity of the services you get from OGC Practitioners? | Yes | | No | | Don't Know | |
|---|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|------------|------|
| | | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % |
| | | 19 | 32.76 | 36 | 62.10 | 3 | 5.17 |

According to data from table 13A above, 64 percent of the journalists consider their relationships with OGC practitioners a mixture positive and negative relation. Looking in to response on government ownership of the two media, 50 percent of the journalists agreed that state control of the media is affecting their relationship negatively. Only 20 percent from journalists believe that it affects positively. On the other hand, 62 percent of the journalists (Table 13B) expressed dissatisfaction with OGC practitioners.

Table 14 A: Responses of OGC Practitioners on their Relationship Types

| | Perceived levels on relationship types, n = 26 | Positive | | Negative | | Mixed | |
|---|---|----------|-------|----------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | Freq. | % | Freq. | Freq. | % | % |
| 1 | How do you describe the relationship between OGC PR practitioners and OBN/ EBC Afan Oromo journalists? | 5 | 19.23 | 3 | 11.54 | 18 | 69.23 |
| 2 | Does government ownership of OBN & EBC media affect the relationship between OGC PR practitioners and journalists of the two media? | 9 | 34.62 | 13 | 50 | 4 | 15.38 |

Table 14B: Responses of OGC Practitioners on their Satisfaction Level

| 3 | Are you satisfied with the quality & quantity of the services you get from OBN & EBC Afan Oromo journalists? | Yes | | No | | Don't Know | |
|---|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|------------|------|
| | | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % |
| | | 3 | 11.54 | 21 | 80.77 | 2 | 7.69 |

Referring to data from table 14 above, sixty nine percent of OGC practitioners chose the “mixed” choice to rate the type of relationship they have with OBN & EBC journalists. However, 50 percent of the respondents agreed that state ownership of the media is negatively affecting their relationship, the same proportion with journalists. Only 34 percent from OGC believe that it affects positively. However, 81 percent of OGC respondents (Table 14B) are dissatisfied with the quality and quantity of services they get from the two media.

Comparatively, as indicated below in Fig. 6, the views of both sides about their relationship type converged, involving of both positive and negative interactions. In other words, it a mixture of both symbiotic and adversarial relationships. That is to say, their relationship is based on cooperation and conflict that cause a. In addition, the same proportions of respondents from both sides believe that state ownership of the two media affect their relationship negatively. But OGC practitioners are more dissatisfied with services of the journalists.

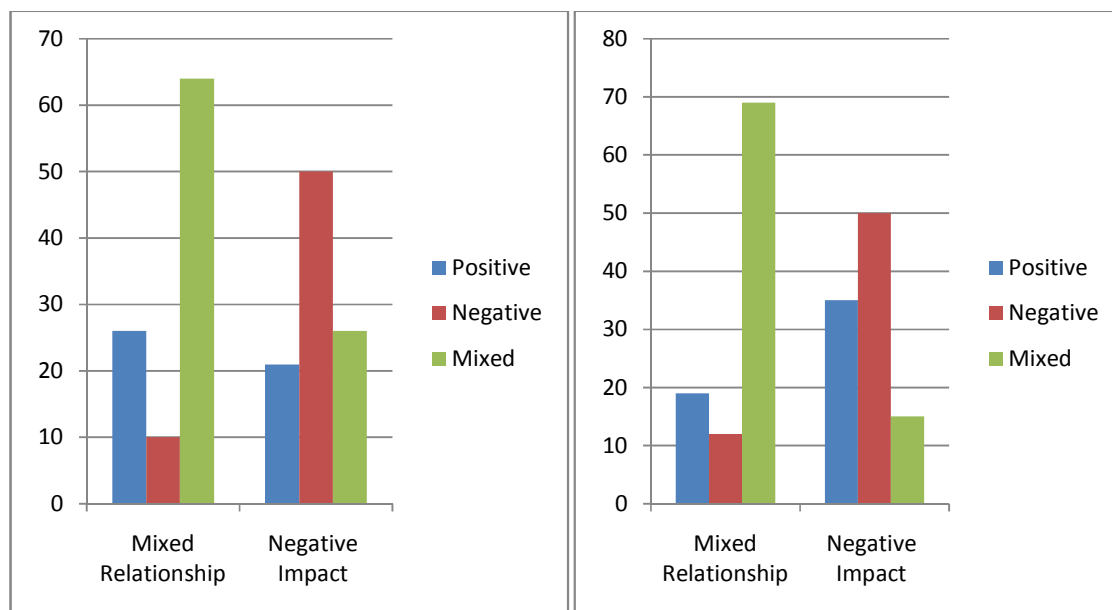


Fig. 6: Perceptions about their Relationship by journalists (left) and OGC PR (right)

4.3. Data Analysis from In-depth Interviews

Data provided by the key informants from OGC practitioners, OBN and EBC Afan Oromo journalists is presented below. The data is analyzed for each topic separately. The analysis is made by organizing and articulating the responses given on each topic. Summaries and direct quotations are used where they are appropriate.

A. Views on Understanding of the Field of PR

All the six informants agreed that PR is an independent profession. They believe so because it has its own roles, goals and ethics they explained. They also added that PR field is based on theory and concepts. According to an OGC official, PR is a discipline of strategic communication.

For me, PR is a strategic communication job of serving as bridge between the government and the public. It is a scientific profession by itself and managed by professionals. It requires special skills such as speaking, reading, and writing, planning and organizing.

(OGC Senior Official 2, personal communication, 20 May 2020)

Similarly, they unanimously agreed that PR is an important profession to society. According to them, PR is especially crucial for development, civilization, and consensus building. They also noted that PR is useful to create transparency on government policies and programs. Senior journalist at OBN acknowledged the role PR plays as a source.

PR is very important for society. PR persons at lower administrative levels know well what is worth for the media and can supply information to them. They serve as sources of information. PR also plays great role in creating transparency on government work.

(OBN Senior Journalist 2, personal communication, 13 May 2020)

But they noted that the profession has not been properly practiced and stressed the need for improvement of the practice.

B. Views about Professionalism

Explanations by the key-informants reveal that OGC PR practitioners are not qualified professionals. According to them, OGC practitioners are from any educational backgrounds, including mathematicians and biologists they added. Therefore, OGC PR don't even know the meaning of PR, its roles, what it should do and should not, because they didn't attend PR education. OBN Senior journalist explained why OGC practitioners are not professionals.

They are assigned to the position, just to fill vacant posts. Sometimes managers assign floating persons who are left idle. They give less value to the profession and underestimate it. They do not place competent and efficient persons to the office. Especially to OGC zonal branches, persons with poor performances are assigned to the position.

(OBN Senior Journalist 2, personal communication, 13 May 2020)

In addition, it is obvious that both sides are not working professionally said the key informants. All agreed that the practices of OGC practitioners and journalists are not based on profession. The informants indicated that OGC practitioners mostly perform the practice traditionally. OGC higher official acknowledged that the major weakness of PR in this regard is lack of technical aspect of the profession. At the same time, data from the informants showed that the practice of journalists is not fully professional. OGC practitioners complained about unprofessional practices by journalists. For instance, one OGC higher official accused some journalists of trying to build their own image.

These days the major problem of journalists in mainstream media including state media is populism. They are competing to get cheap popularity. They prioritize personal benefit instead of societal benefit. For this purpose, they pick only the bad things and leave aside the good sides of the same story. Moreover, they are driven by forces that have hidden agenda. They are funded and guided by forces that have their own interests. Journalists forget their audiences and mix other things. They mix the role of journalism with activism.

(OGC Senior Official 2, personal communication, 20 May 2020).

C. Views on Role Clarity

Discussions made with the key informants about telling only the positive side of a story revealed more negative perceptions towards OGC practitioners' roles. According to senior journalists, the practice of telling only the positive side of a story by OGC practitioners is one of the challenges they are facing in their relationships. This is the major cause of conflict between the two. They complained that PRs assume their duty as telling what the government or the office wants. Thus, they bring information to the media only if they think it benefits their office and are not willing to talk about their weaknesses. The informants specifically stated that government interference in to PR role is another challenge affecting their activities. One senior journalist gave the next explanation.

The government expects OGC to give information that favors its politics. They want a propaganda that is used for political benefit. PRs fear that if the media reveal information that hurts the benefit, they will be held responsible. It will be politicized and leads to blaming.

(OBN Senior Journalist 1, personal communication, 13 May 2020).

Concerning the practice of controlling access to information, the senior journalists explained they are unable to get timely information due to restrictions. Journalists complained that they are expected to make repeated attempts and may get it after two or three weeks. Even an OGC higher official admitted the problem openly, but blamed the past administration for centralizing information.

There is weakness in providing information quickly. During the previous administration, the service was highly centralized. Information was not readily available. It involved looking for information from other sources and involved further investigation. Previously, there was a tendency of hiding everything that is believed to have damaged the image of the regional government. Since the recent reform, things are improving. Now, we follow a new direction where we tell the truth based on facts without any fear. This includes defending the truth by countering lies and defamations. But still there are some limitations in fulfilling the professional standards.

(OGC Senior Official 2, personal communication, 20 May 2020).

Informants of the study totally agreed about the complementarity of the two fields. According to them, the two professions have a common goal of serving the public, adding that one cannot exist without the other. But they acknowledged that there are some conflicting interests between them. And they insist such differences can be compromised. One senior journalist said the cause of the problem is poor implementation, not contradicting roles.

PR and journalism fields have nothing to contradict. They support each other. The problem is the way we implement them. The two should establish good relation between them. They don't break each other; rather the two enhance each other.

(EBC Afan Oromo Senior Journalist 2, personal communication, 13 May 2020).

D. Views on PR-Journalist Ethical Practices

Information from informants confirmed that OGC PRs usually do not tell the truth to journalists in a bid to cover up problems. According to the majority of them, the PRs use all possible means including lying to build the image of their organization. But, some have argued that the problem existed in the past and currently it is improving.

In relation to offering money and seeking payment, data from the informants reveal the existence of widespread practice. PRs people offer money for different purposes according to the key informants. One is to hide problems in government offices facing crisis. They pay journalists assuming that “one who licks, shall not leak”. The other reason is to encourage reporters to come again next time.

They also said the journalists are interested in covering stories of sources that are accompanied by payment. Such journalists focus on success stories and promote the source. According to the informants, even editors are aware of such news stories by looking at how the reporter frames an attractive lead. For instance, institutions that appear repeatedly on media have relationship based on benefit they added. The informants acknowledged that these practices are affecting the quality of information. And they are worried that such information can deceive and mislead the public as well as damage journalists' credibility.

E. Views on Trust Level between the Two Sides

Five out of the six key-informants (83 percent) confirmed that the relationship between the two sides is based on suspicion. According to the informants, journalists suspect the PRs due to the practice of filtering and informing only the harmless information by leaving behind what they assume is harmful for their interest. The PRs on their part fear that the journalist may twist the information and expose them.

F. Views on PR-Journalist Relationship Types

The key-informants of the study acknowledged that their relationship is based on cooperation and conflict. In other words, it is the mixture of both positive and negative relationships. However, they insisted that the relationship is improving as a result of recent political reforms in the country.

Similarly, the two sides confirmed that they are not satisfied with each other's' contributions. This is largely due to the inadequacy of the quality and quantity of services they obtain from each other. One senior journalist explained reason for their his dissatisfaction.

Currently we are not getting any service at all. We are not satisfied. They are not providing us information tips. The bureau is weakening in its services. There is no organized and coordinated activity. We are not relying on OGC for news subsidy. They are not setting agenda for us. Overall, the quality and quantity of their information is poor.

(OBN Senior Journalist 2, personal communication, 13 May 2020)

OGC officials also complain that journalists fail to substantiate verbal descriptions provided by PR practitioners with what is actually on the ground. They also lack follow-ups. Regarding the content and quality most of the time there are complaints. According to these officials, they are dissatisfied because journalists mostly show weaknesses in balancing information provided by PR and produce complete story.

On the other hand, the interviewees differed on the issue of state ownership of the two media. According to senior journalists, this condition is a threat to the relationship, while higher OGC officials consider it as an opportunity. Regarding this, a journalist said:

State ownership of the media obliges us to treat whatever the government says. We cannot discard what is not newsworthy because the media is intended to serve the government. At the same time, the head of OGC bureau is the chairperson of OBN board.

(OBN Senior Journalist 1, personal communication, 20 May 2020)

On the contrary, OGC higher officials argued that media, which are partially funded by the government, has the responsibility of serving the interest of the government. And they consider this as a big opportunity for them.

G. Additional Factors found from In-depth Interviews

In addition to the factors addressed by the questionnaire and interview, additional challenges are discovered through exploration. The informants raised some challenges that the two sides are currently facing in their relationships. These are:

i. PRs do not Want to Release the Details

The PRs don't tell the details about the problems in their organization that journalists want for an in-depth report. In such situations, the audience cannot get complete information.

ii. PRs try to Instruct how to Treat the Information

According to the informants, PRs sometimes try to force or dictate journalists to produce the story in the way they like it to be. They give order to journalists from which angle they should cover. They complain that we don't treat the way we like.

iii. Government Officials Intimidate Journalists

Both journalists and OGC officials confirmed that sometimes journalists are intimidated and threatened by government officials including PRs officers. Especially, when journalists seek information on their own initiative, the PRs call and intimidate them to stop searching information or not to air what they have found. Journalists complained that they are not allowed to report news that is against government interest. PRs also threaten journalists who challenge them. They narrow the scope of the issue on which they provide information and warn journalists not to ask questions out of that angle. But, an OGC higher official, who recognizes the problem, pointed the blame to past officials.

In the past managers interfere in journalists' affairs. They try to threaten journalists. Because of that journalists work with suspicion and fear. By default that is an indirect censorship.

(OGC higher Official 2, personal communication, 20 May 2020).

These are serious practical challenges that are complicating the relationships between OGC practitioners and OBN & EBC journalists. Such practices are considered additional factors causing negative perceptions between the two sides.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Findings and Conclusions

The results from the analysis have shown that both OGC PR and the journalists have better understanding about the PR field as a profession. There is consensus among the majority that PR is an independent profession like that of journalism. Especially, PR practitioners were found to be not feeling inferior to journalists in status. But, journalists are only slightly positive towards the status of PR. Similarly, the large majority of both journalists and PR practitioners endorsed the importance of PR to society, although a lot remains to be done to ensure professional practice. Again, this a positive view by OBN & EBC Afan Oromo journalists towards PR profession. Thus, the overall attitude in this respect is optimistic. This view is in part attributed to their professional orientation and on-job trainings offered to both PR practitioners and journalists. In relation to this, data from table 2 strengthens this claim because it shows the majority of journalists and PRs practitioners have exposure to PR training.

This is a positive finding because in other parts of the world, lack of understanding is a serious problem. Even, journalists consider themselves superior to PR practitioners in status, ethics, and skills (White & Shaw, as cited in Macnamara, 2015, p.10) and commonly rate public relations practitioners lower in status than themselves (Sterne, 2008, p.5). However, the finding of this study indicates that the problem of misunderstanding of PR profession is minimal between the two sides. It can be said that, the professional understanding between OGC and the state broadcasting media is improving and entering positive relationship. This finding matches with that of Sallot et al. (as cited in Buhagiar, 2006) who indicated that the two fields actually have more in common than they perceive and advanced to a point where they can recognize their counterparts as professionals (p. 13).

On the other hand, both sides were found perceiving each other's competence and qualifications negatively. OBN & EBC journalists are more pessimistic about the qualifications and professionalism of PR practitioners, while OGC practitioners feel relatively positive about journalists. This is because; OGC PR practitioners are working traditionally than professionally.

Data from the profiles of OGC respondents reveal that only 12 percent are qualified professionals while 54 percent of them joined the practice from other social sciences. Persons from any background are operating as PR in OGC. According to Theaker (2012), similar problem exists even in Europe. She stated “there are still many in the industry who do not have a relevant qualification and it is still possible to enter the profession without a degree” (p.92).

Moreover, regional government officials are found to believe that the job of PRs does not require special skill and can be performed by anyone with any educational background. Not only this, the regional government is assigning particularly inefficient persons to the position. This has further complicated the problem of unprofessionalism in OGC PR. These are sources of negative perception between the two sides. Grabowski (as cited in Callard, 2011) identified lack of knowledge about subject matter, relying too often on gimmicks (publicity) and failing to plan appropriately as the wrongdoings of PR practitioners (p. 23). Therefore, skilled public relations professionals are required to ensure that information is disseminated clearly, efficiently, and widely. That means, practitioners need to understand what makes news and how journalists write to get better media coverage (Pang et al. 2014, p. 273). At the same time, the journalists are found not fully working professionally. OGC practitioners complained that journalists are influenced by external forces and their individual aspirations for popularity.

Both OGC PR as well as OBN & EBC journalists are found lacking clarity about each others’ roles. The journalists are generally negative about PR roles while PR practitioners are more positive about the role of journalists. This is possibly because of two reasons. The first one is wrong practices of PR practitioners such as telling the positive side only. According to Jensen (as cited in Moloney, 2006), journalists view public relations practitioners as the dark side because they present only the bright side, like the shining moon, and leave the dark side hidden (p.106).

The second reason is misunderstanding and lack of clarity about the proper roles of PR by both sides. Journalists view the relationship with public relations practitioners as antagonistic, based on misperceptions about the practice (role) of public relations (Aronoff, as cited in McCollough, 2015, p.3). Therefore, the key to foster a closer relationship between PR and the media is fairness, with each side accepting and respecting the other’s role and responsibility (Seitel, 2017, p. 215).

Both sides are found to believe that the role of PR is serving only their organization and telling the positive side of their organization. Restricting access to information is another mal-practice found to be committed by OGC practitioners. Specifically, OGC practitioners perceive that their role is telling the positive side of their organization and controlling access to information. They lack clarity about their own roles.

Once again, most of the practitioners admitted that they are not accessible to journalists all the time. According to White and Hobsbawm (as cited in Callard, 2011), both journalists and public relations practitioners are skeptical of each other's roles because journalists strongly dislike their access to information denied or restricted for any reason (p. 25). The presence of such wrong practices contradicts with their role of informing the public. According to R.M.T., this type of practice is known as manipulative relationship. Such approach arises "when an organization, with the knowledge of what publics want, applies asymmetrical or pseudo-symmetrical approaches to communicate with publics to serve its own interests" (Hung, as cited in Rhee, 2004, p. 44). This is a manifestation of the application of a two-way asymmetric communication by OGC practitioners. Therefore, the use of asymmetric communication is additional source of conflict and negative perception between OGC PR and OBN & EBC journalists.

According to PR Communication Models, practitioners have to use the two-way symmetrical model to bring about symbiotic changes in the ideas, attitudes, and behaviors of both the organization and its publics (Grunig et al., 2002, p. 308). Specifically, mediating the media model recommends practitioners to familiarize themselves with qualities like timeliness, accessibility and transparency that maximize chances of coverage Pang et al. (2014, p. 273). That means, PR practitioners are required to "answer questions, return calls before deadline, and provide information and context for effective media relations" (Tench & Yeomans, 2009, p.302).

Furthermore, journalists found feeling their role is superior and more important to society than PR. This attitude by OBN & EBC journalists represents another challenge to their relationships. However, the two sides overwhelmingly agreed that their roles are complementary than contradictory. The majority of OGC practitioners and OBN & EBC journalists shared a common view in this regard that can contribute to positive relationships. Accepting and respecting the role and responsibility of each side is the key to foster a closer relationship between the two sides (Seitel, 2017, p. 215).

Ethical practices are the main sources of negative perceptions between the two sides. OGC PRs are found to provide untruthful information to journalists and to some extent offer money to get news coverage. Again, this is due to implementation of a two-way asymmetrical communication by OGC practitioners. They tell lies to cover up problems; pay journalists to motivate them come again. Grunig et al. (as cited in Tench & Yeomans, 2014), indicated that using an asymmetrical model, it is difficult to practice public relations in a way that is ethical and socially responsible (p. 223). Even the quality of news depends on the amount of payment made and the influence of payment is visible in news contents. Seitel (2017) emphasized that “proper public relations, that builds credibility, must begin and end with one important commodity: truth” (P. 71). On the other side, the majority of OGC PRs agreed journalists sensationalize story to attract audience. But professionally, the journalists (media) have the responsibility to include more than the public relations’ side of the story to maintain fairness and balance (Biniyam, 2006, p.8).

However, the two sides comparatively differ in their perception about the practice of offering money and seeking payment. In this case, OGC PR practitioners perceive that OBN & EBC journalists seek payment to give good coverage to news information. And they feel more negative about the ethical standards of the journalists. On the contrary, the journalists are found feeling ethically superior to OGC PR, a claim that is not supported by OGC practitioners. Evidence from a study by Birhanu (2010, p.480) revealed that journalists in Ethiopia only work on those stories where a source is willing to pay and their willingness to report depends on the size of the reward. According to ethical theories, the receipt of bribe of any form by journalists is considered as a grave professional misconduct, while the International Public Relations Code of Conduct expects members not to engage in any practice, which tends to corrupt the integrity of the profession (Kaur & Shaari, 2006, p.16). Thus, Seitel (2017) advised PR practitioners not to try to buy a journalist (p. 216). This is because “bribery in journalism undermines journalists’ efforts to provide truthful and independent information” (Birhanu, 2010, p.494).

A significant lack of trust and suspicion between the two sides is also observed. The majority perceive each other as unreliable source of information. Both sides also view each other as dishonest partner. This is linked to unprofessional and unethical practices as well as state ownership of the two media. The suspicion adversely affects their relationships.

According to Coman (2004), such mistrust between the two has a serious consequence to both sides and also the public (p. 155). This is because the hostility between the two sides hurts the public by interfering with information flow (Sterne, 2008, p.7). Langett (2013, p.7) proposed openness, transparency and respect between PR and journalists to ensure trust. Trust and good relationships are key factors in establishing favorable attitudes (Callard, 2011, p. 185).

Furthermore, OGC PR as well as OBN & EBC journalists perceive their relationship as the mixture of both positive and negative aspect. This implies paradoxical relationship. This is because; on the one hand, it involves symbiotic relationship and on the other hand hostile relationships. Mixed relationship is common around the world. According to Charron (1994), the incentives to cooperate emerge from the interdependence of the two groups, while the dimension of conflict arises from the struggle to control the distribution of information (p. 52). The implementation of symmetrical communication is required to produces better long-term relationships with stakeholders in this regard (Grunig et al., 2002, p. 15).

Although their relationship is improving since the recent political reforms in the country, the relationship is not yet strategic and systematic. Their interactions are based on individual phone calls and the sending of invitation letters to each other during time of interest. But Larsson (2009), emphasized that effective media relations is not just about making contacts, but it is about maintaining relationships that requires constant effort (p. 138). There is no clear strategy designed to create better understanding and cooperation that ensure mutual benefit. Conflict resolution mechanisms are not put in place. Most of the time, they act independently of each other implying to some extent neutral relationships. According to Relationship Management Theory, delivering on promises, being honest and forthcoming, and working with the needs of journalists in mind help improve working relationships and can help to change the culture of antagonism once so prevalent in media relations (Ledingham & Bruning, as cited in McCollough, 2015, p.4, 5).

Research results from other studies indicate, “an organization’s interests are best served by establishing strong, positive, professional relationships with the media” (Tilley, 2005, p.757). Newsom et al. (as cited in Sriramesh & Vercic, 2009, p. 15, 68) also advised public relations practitioners to establish and maintain a positive relationship with the media and good working relationships with journalists for smooth functioning.

Good relationships can be initiated through possession of journalistic skill and the presentation of relevant story ideas rather than pre-packaged materials (Curtin, as cited in Langett, 2013, p. 8).

Collectively, both sides are found to be dissatisfied with the quantity and quality of each other's services and perceive their contributions negatively. OGC is not providing news releases to the media, which according to Tench & Yeomans (2014) enables the journalists save time and expense of investigative journalism (p. 244). Meeting the transactional needs of journalists may be a strong factor in improving the relationships between PRs and journalists (McCollough, 2015, p.5). Relationship Management Theory proposes that organization-public(stakeholders) relationships can succeed if they trust one another, agree on who has rightful power to influence, experience satisfaction with each other, and commit oneself to one another (Grunig and Huang; Broom et al. , as cited in Rhee, 2004, p. 42,43).

State control of OBN & EBC is found to negatively affect their relationships to some extent. Relating this to theory, Pang et al., (2014) stated, "state-press ideology affects the relationship between organizations and the media and influences the way news gets disseminated (p. 275). The overall state of perceptions between the two sides is summarized in table 15 below.

Table 15: Perceived Similarities and Differences between the two sides on Perceived Conditions

| | Perceived conditions | OBN/EBC Journalists | OGC PR Practitioners |
|----|---------------------------------|--|--|
| 1 | Status of PR | PR is a profession | PR is a profession |
| 2 | Importance of PR | PR is important for society | PR is important for society |
| 3 | Skills | PR practitioners lack journalistic skills | Journalists lack understanding of PR practices |
| 4 | Qualification | PR practitioners are not qualified professionals | Journalists are qualified professionals |
| 5 | Service | PR practitioners serve the interest of their organization | PR serve the interest of both Organization & their publics |
| 6 | Roles | PR practitioners tell positive side of their organization only | PR practitioners tell positive side of their organization only |
| | | PR practitioners control access to information | PR practitioners control access to information |
| 7 | Nature of their Roles | Complementary | Complementary |
| 8 | Trust | Journalists suspect information provided by OGC PR | OGC PR suspect how journalists treat PR information |
| 9 | State Ownership of Media | Negatively affects the relationship | Negatively affects the relationship |
| 10 | Satisfaction | Not satisfied with services of OGC practitioners | Not satisfied with services of OBN/EBC journalists |

Finally, the study has found additional practices that have been affecting the perceptions of the two sides. Journalists complained that OGC PRs do not release the details that journalists want. They also try to instruct or dictate the journalists to treat the story in the way they like. Moreover, government officials including OGC PRs sometimes intimidate and threaten journalists. For this reason, they are not allowed to report news that is against government interest. Such practices are unethical and illegal as well. This requires due consideration and solution to improve the situation. They have negative effect on PR-Journalist relationships. Whitaker et al. (2004) advised PR practitioners not to threaten journalists if something isn't printed or if you are unhappy with the way something is reported" (p.372). This is because journalists are neither for PR nor against PR, but neutral intermediaries standing between PR and the public (Tench & Yeomans, 2009, p.302).

In general, the overall results exhibited a mixture of both positive and negative perceptions. But negative perceptions dominated the relationships. Especially, journalists tend to be more negative towards OGC practitioners regarding professionalism, roles and ethical practices, while OGC practitioners hold relatively positive view towards them. This is consistent with the finding by Cornelissen (2013) that stated "communication practitioners hold less negative perceptions towards journalists and are often eager to work with them" (p. 210). Thus, Relationship Management Theory has identified elements such as control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment, exchange relationship and communal relationship to make up a positive relationship.

On the other hand, some positive aspects are observed in areas of the standard and status of PR, the importance of PR for society and complementarity of the roles of the two professions. These strengths can serve as a base to improve weaknesses observed in other areas and build more fruitful relationships. Based on Relationship Management Theory (Hung, as cited in Rhee, 2004, p. 44), in order to achieve symbiotic relationship, OGC should realize its interdependence with the two media and work together with the common interest of surviving in the environment).

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings the researcher provides the following suggestions with the hope of contributing to the healthy relationship between the two mutually interrelated professions.

- In the short-term, provide selected and practical training to:
 - OGC practitioners especially on news value, timeliness and news writing skills
 - Both sides on the roles and goals of PR and journalists as they lacked clear understanding in this regard. As the majority of OGC practitioners are from other social sciences, they lack understanding of the roles, professional standards and ethics. Similarly there is a considerable misunderstanding about the roles of PR among OBN & EBC journalists that need additional training. During the interview OGC higher official stressed that “intensive and output based training supplemented with practical and technical aspect can offer competence required for effective communication. Enhancing the practice of PR requires an overall reform regarding knowledge, skills and techniques”.
 - OBN & EBC should put in place a mechanism to check if their journalists are using the media to get cheap popularity as perceived by OGC practitioners.
- In the long-term, employ only qualified professionals in the field of either PR or journalism from now onwards. Side-by-side with trainings, OGC should introduce professional standards and make maximum effort to implement it in order to win the hearts and minds of journalists.
- Apply a two-way symmetrical model to ensure truthfulness, transparency and easy accessibility. The majority of negative perceptions towards OGC are associated with these qualities. Thus, the practitioners should use research and dialogue to bring about symbiotic changes in the ideas, attitudes, and behaviors of both the organization and its publics. Therefore, the bureau must decide to provide only truthful information prove that to journalists. Transparency and accessibility are also key factors. OGC PR should provide immediate and detailed information. Thus, OGC must ensure and clearly demonstrate that its information is truthful and reliable all the time to regain trust from journalists. It should abolish its bureaucratic procedures followed to control information and become transparency and accessible to media practitioners.

- Offering and receiving any kind of gift/money should be stopped. The two sides must reach consensus and cooperate with each other to stop the practice. Though not by OGC headquarters, PRs in branch offices and regional bureaus are blamed for offering payments. Bribes and other forms of offers favour the source at the cost of public's right to get genuine information. At the same time, OBN & EBC journalists should not seek any kind of payment. At the same time, the two institutions should put in place a mechanism to check if their journalists are using the media to get cheap popularity.
- The three institutions need to establish a regular joint forum where they can review their interactions in order to minimize suspicion and ensure trust with each other. A quarterly review meeting can create better understanding between them and minimize suspicion that can improve their relationships as well.
- OBN & EBC should be professionally liberalized. Even if they remain under State control, the editorial independence of the media should be respected. Journalists should have full authority and freedom to discharge their responsibilities.
- Moreover, OGC officials and PR practitioners must stop dictation and intimidation. Interfering in journalists work is both unethical and illegal. Cooperation is more useful than conflict to improve their mixed relationship and dissatisfaction between them.

Finally, I borrow the words of Pincus et al., to conclude this work. "PR practitioners who build good relationships with journalists are more likely to achieve better results for their clients or organization" (as cited in Callard, 2011, p. 23).

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Appendix 1

Questionnaires

1.1. Survey Questionnaire Developed for Media Practitioners

Addis Ababa University
School of Journalism & Communication

Dear Journalist,

I am conducting a survey for a study in titled “the Perceptions in PR-Journalist Relations for the case of Oromia Government Communication (OGC), OBN and EBC Afan Oromo” which is done in fulfillment of the requirements for Master of Arts Degree in Public Relations and Strategic Communication. The aim of this questionnaire is to obtain information needed for the study. And you are selected to fill this questionnaire to assist the study. Your accurate response is very important for the success of the study. Thus, you are kindly requested to provide your **honest** and **genuine** responses. I promise that your responses are kept confidential at all times and I assure you that the data obtained will not be used for any other purpose. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Abebe Gutema

Instruction 1:

The Questionnaire contains Six Issues presented in separate tables. Respond to all of them by putting a letter mark (X) in the space provided.

Note: OGC refers to Oromia Government Communication

A. PR-Journalist Understanding of the Field of PR

Instruction 2: choose one response from the given alternatives

| | Perception levels on understanding of PR | Yes | No | Do not know |
|---|--|------------|-----------|--------------------|
| 1 | Do you think the field of PR is a profession by itself? | | | |
| 2 | Do you feel that the status of PR field is less than the status of Journalism? | | | |
| 3 | Do you think PR is an important field for society? | | | |

B. PR-Journalist Professionalism Level

Instruction 3: indicate your level of agreement by choosing one scale

| | Perception Professionalism Level | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | OGC PR practitioners are qualified professionals in the field | | | | | |
| 2 | OBN/EBC Afan Oromo journalists are qualified professionals in the field | | | | | |
| 3 | OGC PR practitioners lack journalistic skills such as knowledge of news value, news writing skill & understanding deadlines | | | | | |
| 4 | OBN/EBC Afan Oromo journalists lack understanding about the practices of PR | | | | | |

C. PR-Journalist Role Clarity

Instruction 4A: indicate your level of agreement by choosing one scale

| | Perceived Levels on Roles, n=58 | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither/Nor | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|--|-----------------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | PR practitioners serve one side only (their organization) | | | | | |
| 2 | The role of journalists is to expose PR by revealing bad news | | | | | |
| 3 | The role of PR practitioners is telling the positive side of their organization | | | | | |
| 4 | Journalists do not understand the relationship building role of PRs between organization and publics | | | | | |
| 5 | PR practitioners control access to information to restrict journalists | | | | | |
| 6 | Journalists are superior in role and more important to society than PR practitioners | | | | | |
| 7 | OGC PR practitioners are available any time to respond journalists' questions | | | | | |

Instruction 4B: indicate your level of agreement by choosing one option

| 8 | The roles of Journalists and PR are | Complementary | Contradictory | Do not know |
|---|-------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| | | | | |

D. PR-Journalist Ethical Practices

Instruction 5: indicate your level of agreement by choosing one scale

| | Perception on Ethical Practices | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|----------------|-------|----------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| 1 | OBN/EBC Afan Oromo journalists give good coverage if they get gifts/payment | | | | | |
| 2 | OGC PR practitioners give gifts/payment to OBN/EBC Afan Oromo journalists to get good news coverage | | | | | |
| 3 | OGC PR practitioners do not tell the truth in case of politically sensitive issues | | | | | |
| 4 | OBN/EBC Afan Oromo journalists sensationalize stories from PR to attract viewers | | | | | |
| 5 | Journalists are ethically superior to PR practitioners | | | | | |

E. PR-Journalist Trust level

Instruction 6: choose one response from the given alternatives

| | Perception on trust level | Yes | No | Neither/nor |
|---|--|-----|----|-------------|
| 1 | Do you think OGC PR practitioners are trustworthy sources of information? | | | |
| 2 | Do you trust OGC PR practitioners in your relationships? Are they honest partners? | | | |

F. Relationship Indicators

Instruction 7A: choose one response from the given alternatives

| V | Perception Statements | Positive | Negative | Mixed |
|---|---|----------|----------|-------|
| 1 | How do you describe the relationship between OGC PR practitioners and OBN/EBC Afan Oromo journalists?? | | | |
| 2 | Does government ownership of OBN/EBC media affect the relationship between OGC PR practitioners and journalists of the two media? | | | |

Instruction 7B: choose one response from the given alternatives

| | | | | |
|---|--|-----|----|------------|
| 3 | Are you satisfied with the quality & quantity of the services you get from OBN & EBC Afan Oromo journalists? | Yes | No | Don't Know |
| | | | | |

Instruction II: Fill the following basic information to be used for demographic purpose

- i. Job Title _____
- ii. Gender: Male _____ Female _____
- iii. Age:
 - a. 20-25 _____
 - b. 26-35 _____
 - c. 36-45 _____
 - d. more than 45 _____
- iv. Years of experience as Journalist:
 - a. 1-5 years _____
 - b. 6-10 years _____
 - c. more than 10 years _____
- v. Field of study: tick on one of the given choices
 - a. Journalism & Communication _____
 - b. Public relations _____
 - c. Other social sciences _____
 - d. Natural sciences & technology _____
- vi. Did you take any course/standard training on PR field?
 - a. Yes _____
 - b. No _____

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

6.1. Survey Questionnaire Developed for Media PR Practitioners

Addis Ababa University
School of Journalism & Communication

Dear PR Practitioner/Communicator,

I am conducting a survey for a study entitled “Assessment of Perceptions Challenges in PR-Journalist Relations for the case of Oromia Government Communication (OGC), OBN and EBC Afan Oromo” which is done in fulfillment of the requirements for Master of Arts Degree in Public Relations and Strategic Communication. The aim of this questionnaire is to obtain information needed for the study. And you are selected to fill this questionnaire to assist the study. Your accurate response is very important for the success of the study. Thus, you are kindly requested to provide your **honest** and **genuine** responses. I promise that your responses are kept confidential at all times and I assure you that the data obtained will not be used for any other purpose. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Abebe Gutema

Instruction 1:

The Questionnaire contains Six Issues presented in separate tables. Respond to all of them by putting a letter mark (X) in the space provided.

Note: OGC refers to Oromia Government Communication

A. Understanding of the Field of PR

Instruction 2: choose one response from the given alternatives

| | Perceived levels on understanding of PR | Yes | No | Do not know |
|---|--|------------|-----------|--------------------|
| 1 | Do you think the field of PR is a profession by itself? | | | |
| 2 | Do you feel that the status of PR field is less than the status of Journalism? | | | |
| 3 | Do you think PR is an important field for society? | | | |

B. Professionalism Level

Instruction 3: indicate your level of agreement by choosing one scale

| | Perceived levels on professionalism | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | OGC PR practitioners are qualified professionals in the field | | | | | |
| 2 | OBN/EBC Afan Oromo journalists are qualified professionals in the field | | | | | |
| 3 | OGC PR practitioners lack journalistic skills such as knowledge of news value, news writing skill & understanding deadlines | | | | | |
| 4 | OBN/EBC Afan Oromo journalists lack understanding about the practices of PR | | | | | |

C. PR-Journalist Role Clarity

Instruction 4A: indicate your level of agreement by choosing one scale

| | Perceived Levels on Roles, n=26 | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither/Nor | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|--|-----------------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | PR practitioners serve one side only (their organization) | | | | | |
| 2 | The role of journalists is to expose PR by revealing bad news | | | | | |
| 3 | The role of PR practitioners is telling the positive side of their organization | | | | | |
| 4 | Journalists do not understand the relationship building role of PRs between organization and publics | | | | | |
| 5 | PR practitioners control access to information to restrict journalists | | | | | |
| 6 | Journalists are superior in role and more important to society than PR practitioners | | | | | |
| 7 | OGC PR practitioners are available any time to respond journalists' questions | | | | | |

Instruction 5B: indicate your level of agreement by choosing one option

| 8 | The roles of Journalists and PR are | Complementary | Contradictory | Do not know |
|---|-------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| | | | | |

D. PR-Journalist Ethical Practices

Instruction 5: indicate your level of agreement by choosing one scale

| | Perceived levels on Ethical Practices | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|----------------|-------|----------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| 1 | OBN/EBC Afan Oromo journalists give good coverage if they get gifts/payment | | | | | |
| 2 | OGC PR practitioners give gifts/payment to OBN/EBC Afan Oromo journalists to get good news coverage | | | | | |
| 3 | OGC PR practitioners do not tell the truth in case of politically sensitive issues | | | | | |
| 4 | OBN/EBC Afan Oromo journalists sensationalize stories from PR to attract viewers | | | | | |
| 5 | Journalists are ethically superior to PR practitioners | | | | | |

E. PR-Journalist Trust level

Instruction 6: choose one response from the given alternatives

| | Perception levels on Trust | Yes | No | Neither/nor |
|---|--|-----|----|-------------|
| 1 | Do you think OBN/EBC Afan Oromo journalists are credible sources of information? | | | |
| 2 | Do you trust OBN/EBC Afan Oromo journalists in your relationships? Are they honest partners? | | | |

F. PR-Journalist Relationship Indicators

Instruction 7A: choose one response from the given alternatives

| V | Perception levels on relationships | Positive | Negative | Mixed |
|---|---|----------|----------|-------|
| 1 | How do you describe the relationship between OGC PR practitioners and OBN/EBC Afan Oromo journalists? | | | |
| 2 | Does government ownership of OBN/EBC media affect the relationship between OGC PR practitioners and journalists of the two media? | | | |

Instruction 7B: choose one response from the given alternatives

| | | | | |
|---|--|-----|----|------------|
| 3 | Are you satisfied with the quality & quantity of the services you get from OBN & EBC Afan Oromo journalists? | Yes | No | Don't Know |
| | | | | |

Instruction II: Fill the following basic information to be used for demographic purpose

- i. Job Title _____
- ii. Gender: Male _____ Female _____
- iii. Age:
 - a. 20-25 _____
 - b. 26-35 _____
 - c. 36-45 _____
 - d. more than 45 _____
- iv. Years of experience as Journalist:
 - d. 1-5 years _____
 - e. 6-10 years _____
 - f. more than 10 years _____
- v. Field of study: tick on one of the given choices
 - a. Journalism & Communication _____
 - b. Public relations _____
 - c. Other social sciences _____
 - d. Natural sciences & technology _____
- vi. Did you take any course/standard training on PR field?
 - a. Yes _____
 - b. No _____

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Appendix II

Interview Questions

2.1. Interview Guide developed for OGC PR Practitioners

Addis Ababa University
School of Journalism & Communication

Dear PR Practitioner,

I am conducting an in-depth interview for a study entitled “the perceived challenges in PR-Journalist Relations for the case of Oromia Government Communication (OGC), OBN and EBC Afan Oromo” which is done in fulfillment of the requirements for Master of Arts Degree in Public Relations and Strategic Communication. The aim of this questionnaire is to obtain information needed for the study. And you are selected for an in-depth interview to assist the study. Your accurate response is very important for the success of the study. Thus, you are kindly requested to respond to the questions **honestly** and **genuinely**. I promise that your responses are kept confidential at all times and I assure you that the data obtained will not be used for any other purpose. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Instruction I: Respond to the following basic information to be used for demographic purpose

- i. Job Title _____
- ii. Gender: Male _____ Female _____
- iii. Age:
 - a. 20-25 _____
 - b. 26-35 _____
 - c. 36-45 _____
 - d. more than 45 _____
- iv. Years of experience as Journalist:
 - g. 1-5 years _____
 - h. 6-10 years _____
 - i. more than 10 years _____

- v. Field of study: tick on one of the given choices
 - a. Journalism & Communication _____
 - b. Public relations _____
 - c. Other social sciences _____
 - d. Natural sciences & technology _____
- vi. Did you take any course/standard training on Journalism field?
 - a. Yes _____ b. No _____

Instruction II: Questions prepared for conversation

1. What does PR mean to you shortly? What is your understanding of the field?
2. Is PR a profession by itself?
3. Do you think OGC PR practitioners are qualified Professionals?
4. Do you think OGC PR practitioners are working professionally? Why?
5. Do you think OBN/EBC Afan Oromo Journalists are working professionally? Why?
6. Are you satisfied with the services that you get from OBN/EBC Afan Oromo journalists? Why?
7. What are the challenges /factors affecting the relations between the two sides?
8. Does government ownership of the two media affect the relationship between the two?
9. Do OBN/EBC Afan Oromo journalists seek any gift/payment from OGC PR practitioners to give good coverage?
10. Do OGC PR practitioners give any gift/ payment to OBN/EBC Afan Oromo journalists to get good coverage?
11. Do OBN/EBC Afan Oromo journalists and OGC PR practitioners trust each other? Why?
12. Are the roles of the two fields complementary or contradictory? Why?

2.2. Interview Guide developed for Journalists

Addis Ababa University
School of Journalism & Communication

Dear Journalist,

I am conducting an in-depth interview for a study entitled “the perceived challenges in PR-Journalist Relations for the case of Oromia Government Communication (OGC), OBN and EBC Afan Oromo” which is done in fulfillment of the requirements for Master of Arts Degree in Public Relations and Strategic Communication. The aim of this questionnaire is to obtain information needed for the study. And you are selected for an in-depth interview to assist the study. Your accurate response is very important for the success of the study. Thus, you are kindly requested to respond to the questions **honestly** and **genuinely**. I promise that your responses are kept confidential at all times and I assure you that the data obtained will not be used for any other purpose. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

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- vi. Did you take any course/standard training on PR field?
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