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**ADDIS ABABA UNNIVERSITY**  
**School of Journalism and Communication**  
**Department of Public Relation and Strategic Communication**

**Exploring the Practice of Government Public Relations: The Case of  
FDRE Prime Minister's Office Press Secretariat**

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**June, 2019**  
**Addis Ababa**



**EXPLORING THE PRACTICE OF GOVERNMENT PUBLIC RELATIONS: THE CASE  
OF FDRE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE PRESS SECRETARIAT**

**By**

**Zewdu Alemnew**

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MASTER OF ARTS IN JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION**

**ADDIS ABABA  
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## **Declaration**

### **Addis Ababa University School of Graduate studies**

This is to certify that the thesis is prepared by Zewdu Alemnew entitled “Exploring the Practice of Government Public Relations: The Case of FDRE Prime Minister’s Office Press Secretariat” and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Public Relations and Strategic Communication. It complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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Chair of Department or Graduate Program Coordinator

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## **Dedication**

To my mom Belayenesh Shimelis who passed away without seeing the successful accomplishment of my career while she had always wished to be successful and never hesitated to offer her support immensely.

## **Acronyms**

**APRA:** - American Public Relations Association

**FDRE:** - Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

**FGD:** - Focus Group Discussion

**OPM:** - Office of Prime Minister

**PR:-** Public Relations

## Abstract

*PRs practice in Ethiopia in general government offices in particular is still in the infant stage. Unfortunately, all the regimes that assumed power during those times implemented public relations fully depriving its professional nature and undermining its roles. The current government system affirmed that government communication will not be a propaganda machine anymore. So as to show the commitment, the reformed government reorganized a new government communication by dissolving the former Government Communication Affairs Office. The main purpose of this study is to explore the practice of government PRs in the case of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia- Office of the Prime Minister. The research studied how the Prime Minister Office Press Secretariat practices PRs activities, what the major PRs tools are used by the Prime Minister Office Press Secretariat, how the internal staffs view the importance of PRs, and the challenges to implement the PRs practices. The research employed a qualitative research approach, wherein, in-depth interview, focus group discussions (FGDs), document analysis and observations were used as data gathering instruments. The study used qualitative case study research method. With regard to the sampling procedure, thirteen managers, senior experts and practitioners of the Press Secretariat were selected for interview using purposive sampling techniques. The researcher has also conducted one FGD with other staffs of the Secretariat with a total number of six participants. The FGDs have been made for the purpose of triangulation. The study showed the practice of PRs the newly formed PM office is on type of PRs model which is called Public Information Model of Grunig and Todd Hunts that is mainly focused on one way communication. Besides, the press secretariat uses different communication tools such as press release, press conference, media relation, photo exhibition, and others to reach the public but the press conference is seldom organized by the department. Moreover, the Press Secretariat has been challenged with the political appointment of managers and practitioners, negative image of the public towards government communication, limited communication and flow of information with regional states and other stakeholders, and lack of professionalism. The study recommended that the press secretariat to implement a two way symmetrical communication model, and organize the office with professionals, and develop a communication strategy.*

**Key words:** *Public Relations, Government Communication, Press Secretariat*

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Public Relations is said to have been associated with the creation of human beings. Seitel (2001) said that human occupation will take up more space to develop and improve human relationships. PRs scholars such as Seitel (2001), show that the modern public relations function has been well developed in the twentieth century. In the meantime, evidence indicates that PRs are used by leaders to influence and persuade people (Seitel, 2001).

Even though it is difficult to find out when and where the practice of modern public relation started in Ethiopia, researchers discovered that in the early years there are some evidences that shows political leaders such as emperors and kings made a public speech and conducted public forums (Ermias, 2009). This can be taken as an implication of the use of various Public Relations (PRs) techniques.

Solomon (2001), on the other hand, stated that the establishment of the ministry of Pen in 1940's paved the way for the introduction of public relations in government offices. He further stated that under the Ministry of Pen information and propaganda section was organized. Later on in 1950's the Ministry of Pen was replaced by Ministry of Information and Tourism.

1960s was another milestone for the modern PRs practice. It was the existence private public relations practice. Alem public relations consultancy firm which was established by Sibhat Gebreigziabher and Dereje Deressa can be an example. During the Derg regime, those prosperous private public relations firms were shut down.

After the down fall of the Dergue regime, the implementation of PRs activity in government offices comes to existence. It is in fact a recent phenomenon, not more than a decade. The governmental offices have been practicing a PRs activity relatively in an organized manner. In

principle, a communication department of government offices has been organized with a mission to facilitate contact between their organizations and their customers (Behailu, 2017).

In this research, efforts have made to explore the practice of the FDRE Prime Minister Office in the area of public relations (Press Secretariat). It enables the researcher to assess the Prime Minister's PR related activities since the Prime Minister has come to power including his inauguration of the public forums and meetings in the country and abroad. In general, this paper thoroughly investigates the whole activities of the office in relation to PRs. The motivation behind to conduct a research on this topic is the curiosity of the researcher to depict the need of dissolving the former Government Communication Affairs Office and to search the specialty of the newly formed Press Secretariat.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Providing the public with comprehensive and prompt information about matters pertaining to the work of individual ministries and/or government offices and the government as a whole is one of the core area to strengthen the relationship between the government and its public.

After the Ethiopian political reform which was made by the so called "Team Lemma", many government organizations such as Government Communication Affairs Office (GCAO) have been replaced. The office was organized to facilitate coordination between individual communication services on the government level, the communication services of individual ministries and government offices.

Following the replacement of GCAO by Press Secretariat, it is claimed that the information flow is getting weak which eventually results in shortage of adequate information exchange between the government and its public. The Press Secretariat Department of the Prime Minister Office is closely related with the country's external institutions like stakeholders such as Ministries, regional states, governmental organizations, NGOs, foreign affairs, agencies, commissions and others. Consequently, the Press Secretariat is expected to be a bridge between the government

and its public. Therefore this paper intends to assess the PRs practice of the newly organized department.

Furthermore, there is much we do not know in regard to government public relations in general and the press secretariat in particular. Besides, as far as the researcher has concerned, there has been no study and research done on the PRs practice of the Press Secretariat Department of the Prime Minister's Office. Therefore, research needs to be done to find out the practice of the press secretariat PRs activity and the researcher believes that this research can give an important insight about the office PRs activity.

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

#### **1.3.1. General Objective**

The main objective of this study has to explore the practice of PRs activity in the case of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia- office of the prime minister Press Secretariats.

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

The study has the following specific objectives

- To explore the PRs practice in the office of Prime Minister Press Secretariats.
- To assess the major PRs tools used in the office Press Secretariats
- To examine the view of internal staffs on the importance of PRs.
- To investigate the challenges in PRs activity of the office.

### **1.4. Research Questions**

1. How the Prime Minister Office Press Secretariat practices PRs activities?
2. What are the major PRs tools used by the Prime Minister Office Press Secretariats?
3. How the internal staffs view the importance of PRs?

4. What are the challenges to implement the PRs practices?

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

The research is expected to indicate the problems in the practice of public relations and the communication gaps between citizens and the government. Besides, it is also expected to indicate modern public relations models and practices. Moreover, the research is also significant to indicate the gaps between what has been done and that is left undone. Finally the research serves as an initial academic research in the area of government public relations.

### **1.6. Limitation of the Study**

Some office directors and practitioners were not interested to give information because they were afraid of the researcher that he might be from a government body who desired to blame them. This made the data collection difficult and tiresome. To the extent possible, the researcher tried to resolve the problem by persuading directors and staffs who are reluctant to give interview through a soft communication and proving himself that the researcher seeks the interview only for the research purpose. Lack of well-organized secondary data and related researches in the Press Secretariat was also a challenge and makes the research tougher.

### **1.7. Organization of the thesis**

This research paper consists of five chapters. The first chapter deals with introductory concepts. Such as, background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and limitation of the study. The related review literature has treated in the second chapter. The third chapter consists of research designs and methodology, population and sampling technique, types of data collected, methods of data collection, and data analysis. The fourth chapter deals with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data. The fifth chapter deals with conclusion and recommendation based on data collected and analyzed.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Under this chapter, literatures in relation to PRs practice, historical overview of PRs and PRs in the context of Ethiopia will be presented. This chapter will also present theories, the theoretical frame, and Strategic Communication Frame work of the study.

#### 2.1. Meaning And Definitions of Public Relation

Various scholars defined Public Relation in different ways. Public Relations as defined by Cutlip, Centre and Broom, (1994) is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the public's on whom its success or failure depends (Culip and Broom, 1994).

Newsome and Carrel, on the other hand, defined PR as the art and science of analyzing trends, predicting consequences of those trends, counseling organization leaders, and implementing planned programs of action which will serve both the organization's and public interest (Newsom and Carrel 2001).

The understanding of the above mentioned writers is that, PR is a two-way process between an institution and publics based on mutual understanding. Besides as Haywood (2002) stated making the PRs a two way activity, which listens the public thinking and project the organization's message, is mandatory (Haywood 2002).

PR can also be defined as a systematic promotion of mutual understanding between an organization and its public (Banik, 2004). Banik further said, PRs includes creating belongings' and wining employee's cooperation, building good will, furthering mutual interest and overcoming public misconceptions. The idea that is reflected in this definition is that public



relations have an important role in creating a team work, and a good reputation by using scientific methods and reducing the negative attitude of the public over the government.

Pride (2005) was also confirmed that PR is a broad set of communication efforts used to create and maintain favorable relationship between an organization and its stakeholders. He further said an organization communicates with various stakeholders, both internal and external (Pride, 2005).

Rex F. Harlow, often called the father of PR, emphasized that PRs skill plays an important role in management. It also helps managers and leaders to get knowledge and information on the current issues. Support and assistance will be provided based on research to help prevent disaster early. People and institutions also share common interests when working together (Tye, Larry 1998).

There are also literatures that give PR an unlimited power. For instance, News of New York, the industry Newsletter, defines public relations as the management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or an organization with the public interest, and plans and executes a programmed of action to earn public understanding and acceptance Alenka, Jelen (2013).

The above mentioned definitions of PR have a variety of aspects and roles. This shows that there are several studies in the field and efforts to define the profession. Thus, for the purpose of this study, the definition of the British Institute of Public Relations (BIPR) can be taken. According to BIPR PR is a deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its publics.

## **2.2. Objectives of Public Relation**

Public relation has its own objectives and goals to establish positive image of the company and among its publics. As Belch and Belch (2004) said PRs is targeted to create a conducive work environment for the company and its activities.

On the other hand public relation develops and implements program to meet organization objective by maintaining suitable image bridging, Customer loyalty and other relevant public including employees, suppliers, Stakeholders government labor groups citizen action groups and the general public (Belch and Belch, 2004).

## **2.3. Nature And Functions of Public Relation**

PRs researchers and professional associations such as the Public Relations of society of America (PRSA) adopted various functions of PRs. Among the functions creating mutual understanding among groups, serving different stakeholders based on their nature and achieving institutional goal can be mentioned (Ajala,1993).

Public Relation has a function of helping the complex, pluralistic society to reach decisions and function more effectively by contributing to mutual understanding among groups and institutions. It serves to bring private and public policies in to harmony (Daramola, 2003).

Public Relation has also a function of serving a wide variety of institutions in society such as businesses, trade unions, government agencies, voluntary associations, foundations, hospitals, schools, colleges and religious institutions. To achieve their goals, these institutions must develop effective relationships with many different audiences or publics such as employees, members, customers, local communities, shareholders and other institutions, and with society at large (Ajala,1993).

Understanding the attitudes and values of the public is another function of PR so that institutional goals can be achieved. The Public Relations practitioners act as a counselor to

management and as a mediator, helping to translate private aims into reasonable, publicly acceptable policy and action (Daramola, 2003).

According to Kotler (2006), public relation department may also perform a function of press relations, product publicity, public affairs, lobbying, investor relations and development. Press relations or press Agency refers to creating and placing news worthy information in the news media to attract attention to a person product, or service. Product publicity, on the other hand refers publicizing specific products. Public affair is building and maintaining national or local community relations. Lobbying refers building maintains relations with legislators and government officials to influence legislations and regulation. Investor relation means maintaining relationship with shareholders and other in the financial community. Development refers public relations with donors or members of not for profit organizations to gain financial or volunteer support.

#### **2.4. Evolution of Public Relation**

PRs is said to have been associated with the creation of human beings. The power of PRs was visible in ancient Rome. This can be deduced from the common phrase, *Vox Populi, Vox Dei* (the voice of the people is the voice of God). Julius Caesar, king of the Roman Emperor, was known for his extraordinary art of persuasion. Amongst the public relations tools used by the king to persuade the people so that they can engage in war were print materials and stage shows such as the drama (Cutlip and Scot, 1994).

In ancient Greece, there were also highly paid communicators. Best speakers were nominated and elected for the post of leadership. The politicians enlisted the aid of sophists (individuals with rhetorical power) to help fight verbal wars. This can be likened to the lobbyists of today who attempt to influence legislation through effective communication techniques (Ibid).

In the middle age, PR was used to expand Christianity. In Pop Gregory XV, The committee of cardinals knew as Congregation de Propaganda Fide (the congregation for the propagation of faith).The Catholic Church taught the Euphrates the school of believers to expand its mission. The Church was teaching the people about the value of Catholicism. It is believed that this is based on the concept of modern propaganda or PR (Ibid).

In the contemporary age, PR was the rise of modern PRs which embraces three major functions such as giving information, persuading people, and creating an effective community. Therefore, PRs is not just a propaganda it is rather a planned persuasion to reach a specific public for a particular purpose. In the meantime, evidence indicates that PRs is used by leaders to influence and persuade people (Seitel, 2001).

## **2.5. Public Relation in Ethiopia**

Most practitioners and researchers such as Biniyam (2006) and Zemedkun (2014) believe that there is no evidence of when and how the PRs began in Ethiopia. However, they confirmed that there were activities in the country that have similar content and form with PRs for many years.

Ermiyas (2009), as reported in his research, found that the Emperors who led the country in the early years used PR profession to persuade the people. The kings were to have used their speeches and to gather information from the people and then to answer publics questions. It has been particularly evident in the use of various PRs techniques to push for and convince their people in the war. This shows us that, the profession is known to us over a long time ago.

In the modern Ethiopian history, PR professionals have been employed in all public institutions and private companies. Although the public relations expanding and growing rapidly in many organizations in Ethiopia. Studies show that PR profession has been overcome for many years with its problems, but still there are many problems that are not solved (Geremew, 2017).

The researcher of this study has tried to assess the history of PR in Ethiopia from the authorized body which is Government Communication Affairs office. But he could not obtain more

information from the office. It is because of the office is out of service with the new government structure. However, data from various sources indicate that public relations profession have been established in our country long ago and have been used by the state for propaganda.

## **2.6. The Practice of Public Relation in organizations**

PR as a profession has different duties and responsibilities in different organizations. Practitioners also work to build the reputation of the institute and to fulfill its mission according to the organization's planning and management policy. In some institutions, PRs professionals are responsible for monitoring and responsible their external partners. In addition, they guide and coordinate for the internal affairs of the organization. The PR profession in government institutions is in different levels of performance and standards (Cutlip and Broom, 2006).

The overall goals for government public affairs, regardless of the level, and to some extent, type of government, have at least seven purposes in common. It includes informing constituents about the activities of the government agency, ensuring active cooperation in government programs, fostering citizen support for established policies and programs, serving as public's advocate to government administrators, managing information internally, facilitating media relations, and building community and nation (Ibid).

The main point behind informing constituents about the activities of the government agency is that the community has the right to know and updated information about services and activities in government agencies (Ibid).

Ensuring active cooperation in government programs implies that the government should demonstrate and collaborate on the day-to-day implementation of the government's development activities. Among the activities of the PR Department, it is important to work together with the community (Cutlip and Broom, 2006).

The focus of fostering citizen support for established policies and programs is to encourage and support the society during the time of formulating and enforcing policies and strategies. It is also believed that to aware and persuades the community is the job of the PRs professionals (Ibid).

The PRs profession is also responsible to serve the public in advocating to the government administrations. Prioritizing the interest of the public is in the heart of PRs profession.

Managing information internally is the other responsibility of PR professionals. The PR section of the Government Communication should organize and disseminate the information in a manner that is scientifically and in an accessible manner in order to organize specific data properly. Different sections are also required to help with the tasks that are based on information obtained (Ibid).

Among the major functions of the PR expert is the creation of a relation with various public and private media. It is appropriate to work with local and international media organizations working in the domestic and international markets (Ibid).

PR also plays a role in nation building. It is important to enable the community to engage in a series of activities so that the community can love and support the country (Ibid).

In some organizations, the public relations department is also known as the corporate communication department. Corporate communication offers a framework and vocabulary for the effective coordination of all means of communications with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining favorable reputations with stakeholder groups upon which the organization is dependent (Cornelissen, 2004).

## **2.7. Occupational areas of Public Relation Practitioners**

PRs professionals have various jobs in the organization. Daramola (2003) states list of tasks that needs to be acquainted as part of the day to day activity by the PRs practitioners. Some of the

tasks are writing, editing, organizing events, research and evaluation, Mass Media Production, corporate counseling, crisis communication, and public speaking.

A PR expert should know how to write a good article. It should know how to communicate with media and how to use them. It should know how to use PRs or communication tools in their own way. In addition, the PRs expert should be very active and ethical. It must be a good writer to prepare the public relations tools used to promote organization (Daramola, 2003).

Most of PR tools such as magazines, newspapers, brochures, and annual company reports are needed editing before deliver to the identified publics. These activities are performed by the practitioners in PRs. A public relations specialist must have knowledge about the general nature of human beings (Ibid).

The PR specialist consists of a number of different activities that will take place during the planning period. These include preparing a press release, organizing annual and monthly meetings, organizing trade shows, photo exhibitions, visits, Jubilee and other similar activities are prepared by public relations experts (Ibid).

PR department and practitioners should conduct a survey and research to assess the attitudes and perspectives of the public's in relation to their institution. They are required to submit recommendations to management team in order to improve their services based on the results. In addition, they should work to identify the positive and negative aspects of services provided by the Public Relations Section (Ibid).

Mass Media Production is one of the skills needed by PR professionals is special skills that are working with the majority of them. It's a must have ownership of the graphics and multimedia experience. Make photography to be used, make video recordings for the media, submit audio for radio programs, and perform other similar tasks (Ibid).

The PRs Division must be part of the management and should consult on any matter. Seek out the results that are based on research, as well as the management team, before attempting to prevent them (Ibid).

Crisis Communication is another occupational area of PR. A PR officer counsels the management about what to say and do in emergencies such as recalling unsafe products. As a public relations officer it is his or her duty to manage the flow of information between your organization and the public so as not aggravate the crisis. As part of preventive PR, it is necessary to plan to avoid crisis. However, since crisis can occur anytime, it is the duty to counsel management how to contain the pace of events and prevent them from getting out of hand (Ibid).

Preparing a Public speeches to the managers at various times and place is also PR professionals occupational areas. Informing the media is a function of the public relations expert (Ibid).

## **2.8. The Publics of PR**

The PR professionals are expected to work jointly with other interested publics and organizations that have similar interests. The purpose of working collaboratively is to identify and select institutions that can work together with the vision and mission of the institute. There is a need for a thorough research and investigate of other institutions' policies and strategies in order to work together and achieve their goals.

Grunig and Hunt (1984) have categorized PRs publics in to four. These are non publics, latent publics, aware publics, and active publics.

The character of non publics is that they don't have a tendency to cope or have not a good attitude either positive or negative issues. Their involvement in any activity at the institute is very low. For those people, the organization has a low level of recognition (Gruning and Hunt, 1984).

Latent Publics are publics who are not aware to communicate with who and what they do. The institute will involve these people in specific ideas and activities. The Public Relations department must work on preventing accidents by monitoring these types of people (Ibid).



People who are under the category of Aware Public are people at risk of some exposure to the affected with some who have experienced problems. But they are not to share the problem with others. If they are aware of the problem, they are ready to communicate the relevant body. The expected task from the PRs department will be to demonstrate and teach about the problems (Ibid).

Active Publics are people who are self-organizing, and they are trying to find solutions to the problem. They are aware of all the activities and that take place in the institute. As human rights activists, they may include this category.

### **2.8.1. Internal Publics of Public Relation**

PR department should work to maintain and building the internal relations of employees. If the employees do not communicate well in an institution, the goal of the organization may be lost. According to Lattimore (2007), there are key issues that affect the relationship between the organization and its employees. It includes inadequate communication, the extent of alignment with organizational values and culture, change to industrial relations legislation, unions, globalization, job cuts or structural changes, and perceived inequities of salary and retirement packages for organizational leaders compared to entry level workers.

### **2.8.2. External Public of Public Relation**

External publics are organizations that are affiliated with the company, and are part of efforts to support and assist to fulfill organizational policies and goals. External public of PR includes most government departments, immediate social groups, media, financial institutions, suppliers and distributors (Grunig J.E, 1992).

Community service is the relationship that we interact with, the benefit of the community, society members around the place where the company serve. The company must support this community in a variety of ways to address its social responsibilities. This creates consensus

among the company and the community. It also strengthens their relationship. The company can assist with education, water treatment, sewage and sanitation facilities and health services. This will also allow for the good will in the (Grunig J.E, 1992).

Relationship with Financial Institutions refers Communicating with financial institutions is one of the most important ways to make our plan change to a reality. Therefore, the PR Section should be able to find the institutions that can be financially empathetic and seek to establish a relationship. It may be possible to meet different financial institutions in a report, institution, or event (Cutlip and Broom, 1994).

Action Group is a small group of peoples that actively advocate for the welfare of the community, but they have the capacity and power to build a good reputation for the institution. They can also harm the company through interaction with the community. Therefore, PR department must maintain a good relationship with these individuals and maintain the good name of the institution (Cutlip and Broom, 1994).

General Public refers to the end user of the product or service. The PR department has to establish a close relationship with the general public's because they are the ultimate decision makers about the product or service of the company. The major types of communication to reach the general public are radio, television, exhibition, banners, brochures, boards, and leaflets (Grunig J.E, 1992).

## **2.9. Public Relation Tools**

A variety of tools can be employed to communicate the public. Ki and Hon (2006) stated that government PR communication is carried out in many forms, including press releases, media interviews, and speeches. The contributions via action also occur in many forms, such as counseling management to alter organizational policy, forming partnerships with interest groups, or holding special events. This is consistent with perspectives on PRs stressing its relationship management function (Ki and Hon 2006).

## **2.10. Factors Affecting the Effectiveness of Public Relation**

According to Smith (2003), the public relations practitioners are expected to identify issues that may affect the organization. Liu and Horsley (2007) identified eight attributes that affect the government public relations. These are politics, focus on serving the public, legal constraints, extreme media and public scrutiny, lack of managerial support for PR practitioners, poor public perception of government communication, lagging professional development and federalism (Liu and Horsley, 2007).

Most Country's political systems induced the PR of the country to be neglected for nation building. Governments in democratic system playing a positive role in the development of the profession, dictators such as Africa have used PRs profession as a propaganda tool (Ibid).

Focus on serving the public refers having a close relationship with the public. The PR profession is believed to have a close relationship with the people and the organization. However, in some places there is an imbalance of interest between the public and the organization. As a result, focusing on serving the public can only achieve the public interest rather than needs of the organizations (Ibid).

Legal constraints imply laws and regulations that hinder PR and communication activities. Some countries have laws that influence the media and information dissemination, which have a negative influence on the effectiveness of the PR profession. Federalism, on the other hand, is a factor that affects the PR profession. This is due to the existence of decentralized rules and regulations in which all spheres of PR work have had (Ibid).

Extreme media and public scrutiny means a high pressures and inspections that the media and the public face on PRs profession negatively influence its effectiveness. The general view of the community about the Government public relation knowledge and perception of the PR has also played its negative role in the development of PR profession (Ibid).

Institutional leaders and managers have little or no support for the professional ethos of the profession and the distorted views and expectations of the professionals. This has left an ineffective function in the organization (Ibid).

From the perspective of other professions, PRs profession has been negatively affected by the fact that public relations skills are not what they want (Ibid).

### **2.11. Misconception of Public Relation**

The thinking and views about the profession of PR of the general public has been subjected to wrong perception of what a PRs person actually does. This misconception is also seen in experts in PRs. This has also contributed to the non-renewal of the profession. As Newsom, Turk and Cruckeberg (2004) stated many people wrongly assume that PR are preoccupied with image-making in the sense of creating a false front or cover-up. Some of the misconceptions are courtesy, protocol, good will, well appearance, free gifts (Daramola, 2003).

Some people view PR profession as a discipline designed to honor other people. It is a good manner to consider the PRs practitioner with a good ethic, but it is wrong to respect of people, apart from other professions (Nwosu, 1997).

According to Daramola (2003), PRs professionals are connected to the protocol in the eyes of both the public and the organization management. Sometimes, there is only a need for the profession to organize and conducting certain ceremonies.

Daramola (2003) also stated that some people believe PR profession is the only way to create image building and promote the company's reputation. But PR profession is even more responsible and compulsory.

Many people and institutions require a PR expert to have complete fine appearance. They think that good attractive face is a must-have. As a result, some institutions set out different dress

codes and rules for PR specialists. However, it is unnecessary to evaluate a PR expert by their physical appearance (Nwosu, 1997).

Many company executives in Africa in particular and around the world in general, believe in projecting their organizations as charitable and benevolent through the giving of free annual gift. Effective PR does not begin and end with gifts (Daramola, 2003).

## **2.12. Theories, Models and Frame Works of Public Relation**

### **2.12.1. James Grunig and Todd Hunts Four Models of Public Relation**

James Grunig and Todd Hunt developed the Four Models of Public Relations. The Four Models of Public Relations are eminently known because they stepped the public relations profession up and up to now serve as baseline to sever public relations away from propaganda and persuasion.

According to Grunig and Hunt (1984) it is important to select one of the four models to utilize public relation skills properly. It is important to be selective when selecting the models to identify the strengths and weaknesses of organization.

The press agent/ publicity model came in to practice from 1850-1900. Following this, The public information model developed in 1900 and continuing as the major model of PR until 1920s. After this, the two way asymmetric model developed existed until the late 1950s. The two way symmetric model came after a long period of time, from 1960s up to 1970s. Though the Grunig and Hunt model was adopted long ago, it still remains as one of the most applicable model of PRs (Seitel, 2011).

Hence, Grunig and Hunt tried to convince the PRs professionals that institutions are able to carry out effective public relations if they choose to use one of their activities. The following table shows that similarity, and differences of the four models indicate that PR professionals should use the public relations and communication functions. Each model also has its own way of

persuading. Besides, the models will be used to interpret the Government PRs activities as being any one of the four.

**Table 2.1:- James Grunig and Todd Hunts Four Models of Public Relations (1984)**

No.	Models	Type of communication	Characteristics
1	Press agent or publicity model	One way communication	Uses persuasion and manipulation to audience influences to behave as the organization desires.
2	Public information model	One way communication	Uses press releases and other one way communication techniques to distribute organizational information. The public relations practitioners are often referred to as the in- house journalist.
3	Two way asymmetrical model	Two way communication (imbalanced)	Uses persuasion and manipulation to audience influences to behave as the organization desires. Does not use research to find out how stakeholders feel about the organization.
4	Two way symmetrical model	Two way communication	Use communication to negotiate to the public, resolve conflict and create mutual understanding and respect between the organization and its stakeholders.

As it is mentioned earlier, Grunig and Hunt categorized PR in four different models; press agent/publicity, public information, two way asymmetric and two way symmetric models. They said although PRs developed as a persuasive communication function, not all of these models use PRs for that purpose.

#### **2.12.1.1. The press agent /publicity model**

PRs serve as a propaganda function in this model. As to this model, practitioners advocate the interest of the organization involved, often through incomplete, distorted, or half true information. Grunig and Hunt (1984) argue that not all PR are persuasive.

#### **2.12.1.2. Public information model**

This model concerns the dissemination of information without the intention of persuasion. The PR person functions essentially as an in house journalist, whose job is to report objectively information about their organization to the public.

#### **2.12.1.3. Two Way Asymmetric Model**

Here PR practitioners have a function of the press agent/ publicist, they engaged in releasing information. The difference here is it uses a two way communication though it is imbalanced. Two ways asymmetry model does not use research as a result they have no idea what the stakeholders feeling towards the organization. The PR practitioners attempt to persuade and manipulate their audience so that they can behave as the organization desire.

#### **2.12.1.4. Two Way Symmetric Model**

In this model PR practitioners have a function of mediators; they serve the organization to create a mutual understanding with the public. Besides, the role of PR is not only delivering the

organizations messages but also they gather feedbacks and negotiate with the public on the issues at hand.

### **2.12.2. Strategic Communication Frame**

According to B. Van Ruler and Frank Körver (2004) The Strategic Communication Frame facilitates the communication professional to forcefully and efficiently make the right choices and it provides a clear picture of the communication strategy in one page. The Frame does not prescribe what one should do or which strategy is best. It just sets up and enables practitioners to select the best choices for the best strategy.

The Strategic Communication Frame is basically a balancing act of a realistic but limited set of questions and challenging answers that, when executed conscientiously, delivers a comprehensive but nevertheless crystal clear strategy at a glance (a one-pager). By putting superfluous details aside and concentrating on the essentials, the model has easily proven to be an instant eye-opener for clients and other stakeholders. (B. Van Ruler and F. Körver, 2004)

This frame was developed by B. Van Ruler in 2012. According to this frame work there are seven requirements for a good strategy development for PR and communication management. The requirements are clear vision on communications and its added value to the mission of the organization, focus on internal and external context as building blocks for constructing ambitions, no smart objectives but inspiring ambitions based on clear choices, explicit accountability that suits the ambition, Clear choices in every building block, as hypotheses for the future, Compact to fit on one page, and adjustable at any time to respond to situational dynamics (Ibid).

### **2.12.3. The Eight Building Blocks of B. Van Ruler**

B. Van Ruler has developed eight building blocks which demonstrate how to develop a communication strategy. According to B. Van Ruler (2014) the building blocks are interdependent. The building blocks are ambition, vision,



### **2.12.3.1. Ambition**

Ambition in this context refers to a strong desire to do or achieve something. Here two basic points need to be addressed. These are the basic communication values needed for the specific strategy and the communication objectives that the organization wants to achieve (B. Van Ruler, 2014).

The basic communication values need to be created in two levels: corporate management and corporate communications. Based on these created communication values the specific communication strategy will be developed (Ibid).

The communication objectives might be different from one organization to the other. The common communication objectives are either to inform the public or to persuade them. Communication objectives are important because they serve as a bench mark in planning and decision making and developing strategies (Ibid).

### **2.12.3.2. Vision**

According to G.Jhonson & K.Scholes (2004 ) vision refers to an aspiration description of what an organization would like to achieve or accomplish in the midterm or long term future. B. Van Ruler (2014) argues strategic planning is worthless unless there is first a strategic vision. Here two basic questions need to be answered: In what way can communication add value to organizational strategic choices? What is the role of the communication professional in this respect? And what signifies my profession and which trends in my profession are relevant to us? (Ibid).

### **2.12.3.3. Internal situation**

It is impossible to define and value the importance of phenomena in the outside world unless you know what is happening inside the organization. That is why it is important to consider: 1) What is going on in the organization, what are the strategic decisions in the board and in other management fields, and 2) What is the “style of the house”, how do staffs communicate with each other and how the organization encounter the outside world?(Ibid)

### **2.12.3.4. External situation**

It is typical for communication professionals to be aware of the external situation, of what is going on in the outside world and of public opinions, although we prefer to talk about social moods these days. Regarding this, B. Van Ruler (2014) suggests the following questions to be considered in analyzing the external situation: 1) what are relevant trends and developments in society? And 2) what are relevant issues and what is the social mood?

### **2.12.3.5. Accountability**

Accountability in this context refers to the obligation of an individual or organization to account for its activities. As good ambitions inspire and make clear what you want to achieve, accountability forces you to make clear what your exact responsibilities are regarding your ambitions and how you measure progress. Concerning accountability, the following basic questions should be answered: 1) what is your responsibility exactly and in what way? And 2) how do you show that you are on track?

### **2.12.3.6. Stakeholders**

According to Agle and Wood (1996) Stakeholders are those who have a stake in the organization and the organization’s target groups to reach with the organization’s communications .B. Van Ruler (2014) define stakeholders slightly different by: those groups or

persons who have a stake in the organization's ambition. B. Van Ruler (2014) further suggests two questions about stakeholder analysis: 1) Who are the organization's enablers, and 2) Who are the organization's partners?

### **2.12.3.7. Resources**

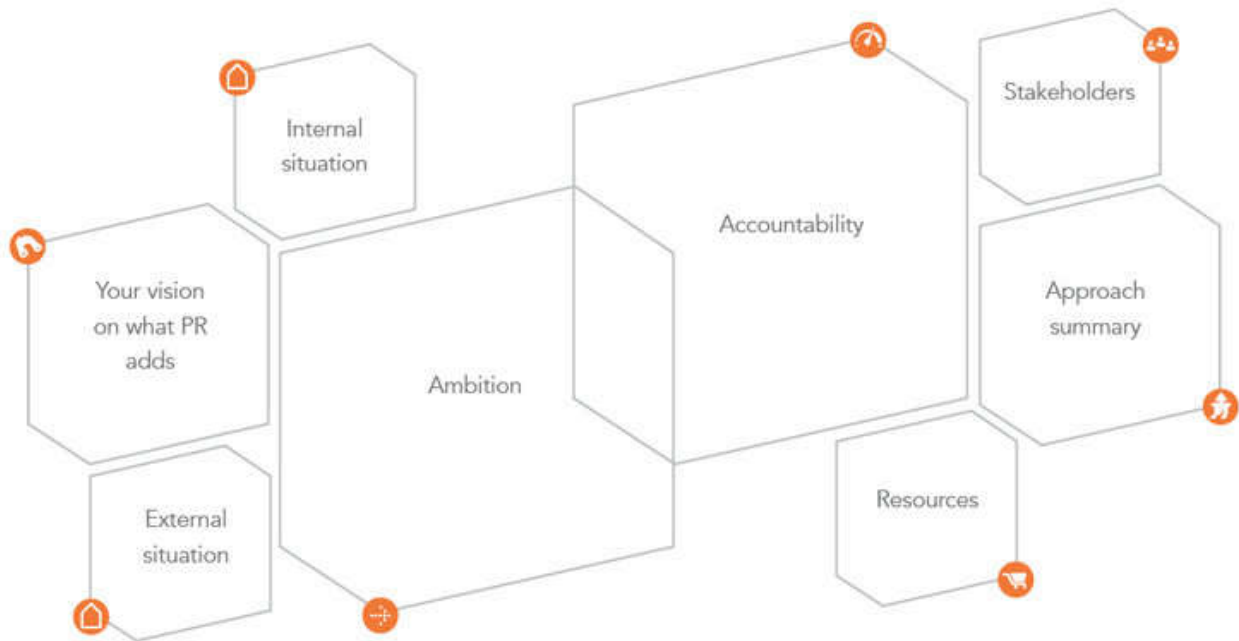
A very important part of the strategy concerns resources. Resource is about being equipped to do the job. It is about budget, budget allocation and about competences. With regard to resource analysis B. Van Ruler (2014) suggests two questions: 1) What competences do you need to realize your ambition, and 2) How much budget is required and how will this budget be allocated? As B. Van Ruler explained these questions are not only important to allocate resources (operational, managerial activities), but also to make wise decisions concerning talent development, cost cutting, etc. (strategic decisions).

### **2.12.3.8. Approach**

Approach is about translating all strategic decisions – done in the former building blocks – into operational activities. This is “the proof of the pudding”. All decisions in the former building blocks need to come together in the approach. Here two key questions are proposed by B. Van Ruler (2014): 1) What do you want to achieve with which key constituency and how, and 2) Which activities should have top priority and what does that mean for the communications calendar?

Hence, the Strategic Communication Frame facilitates the communication professional to forcefully and efficiently make the right choices and it provides a clear picture of the communication strategy in one page. The Frame does not prescribe what one should do or which strategy is best. It just sets up and enables practitioners to select the best choices for the best strategy. The following diagram illustrates the eight building blocks of Strategic Communication Frame (SCF):

Figure 2.1 the Strategic Communication Frame  
Source: B. Van Ruler (2014)



#### 2.12.4. Persuasion theory

Persuasion theory is communication theory that deals with messages aimed at subtly changing the attitudes of receivers. For PR writers, persuasion is a process of communications that intends to influence people using ethical means that enhance a democratic society (Smith 2003).

The focus of Persuasion theory is the psychological characteristics that a person's perception of and response to knowledge and skills, attitudes towards behavioral and social issues, predisposition or preferences, beliefs and concerns about the behavior and its consequences and attitudes towards the source of the message.

There are two important concepts or factors that need attention in Persuasion theory: influencing the audience –message factors and the source factors. Message factors are the characteristics of a message that make it appropriate and effective for a particular audience; how long or complex it should be, what language or vocabulary is best, in what order the messages should be presented, whether one side or both sides of an issue should be presented, how much repetition is needed to

get the messages across, and whether the message should use fear, humor, or logic to make its point (Fossard, 1996). The message factors also recall the differences of audience preferences for message style. This is to mean that there will not be a single choice for message style among the audience. Different audiences will have different preferences.

The other factor is the source factors which explain the type and characteristics of the source of messages. The characteristics of the message source can make messages interesting, relevant and persuasive for a particular audience. In drama, the character is the source who delivers the message. The most influential source factors are credibility (believability), attractiveness (appealing), similarity (commonalities of characters with the listeners), authority and authority and expertise (Smith 2003).

Thus, one of the basic roles of PR people is to help organizations exercise persuasion. But people who receive organizations messages have the freedom not to be persuaded. PR practitioners must uphold a person's right to ignore or reject the organization's messages (Smith 2003).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

The main purpose of this study is to analyze the practice of public relations in the Prime Minister Office. This chapter discusses the methodology employed to address the research questions and attain the objectives. The data types and data collection methods, the sampling procedures, method of data analysis employed are discussed as follows.

#### **3.2. Research Method and Design**

A research design is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted; it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data (Kothari, 2004).

Accordingly, this research uses qualitative case study research methods. The case study research method is used to explore the existing PR practice of PM office Press Secretariat. The Case study research method is selected for this research in a way to address an intensive study of a system with an aim to generalize across a larger set (Creswell, 2007; Gerring, 2004). By the same talk, Yin (2009) confirmed that case study research is most suitable where the research question is asking "how" and "why". In this research study context, the central research question is to assess "How PRs activity is implemented". In this regard, using a case study approach is appropriate in conducting the research. This study explores the existing PR practice of PM office Press Secretariat department. As a result, this research selects the PM office as a research case.

The Prime Minister office is the head of the Ethiopian government offices and the most powerful office in the country. The Constitution explicitly vests executive power in the Council of Ministers, and names the Prime Minister as chief executive (FDRE, Constitution (1995)).

### **3.3 Study Area**

This study has taken place in the PM office Press Secretariat. The PM office is the highest office in the country in which all economic, social, and political issues of the country analyzed and decided.

### **3.4. Target Population and Sampling Method**

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's Office of the Prime Minister is currently restructuring under the premiership of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. Under the new structure the Office comprises six departments. These include the: Prime Minister's Agenda Setting, Policy and Performance Management Units, Press Secretariat, National Security Department, Office of the First Lady and Republican Guard. ([https://www. FDRE Prime Minister Office.gov.et](https://www.FDREPrimeMinisterOffice.gov.et))

The Press secretariat department of Prime Minister Office was organized with the primary aim of assisting an organization to establish a good relationship both internally and externally to maintain a longtime reputation in the hearts of the public. In light of this, this research explores attention on its internal and external public relation.

Thus, the Press Secretariat department has taken as a target population for the research. Concerning the sampling method for interview and focus group discussion the study applied purposive sampling techniques. The rationale behind choosing purposive sampling technique for interview is that it permits the research to select a case based on features or processes that demonstrates issues of interest in the research and where those features are likely to be present (Silverman, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The table below presents participants in the interview session.

Table 3.1 Employees of PM office that participate in the interview

<b>Position of Interviewee</b>	<b>Qty.</b>
Managers	3
Senior Experts	2
Practitioners	8
Total	13

A focus group discussion with employees of the PM office who are working in other departments of the PM office was also formed for the purpose of this research. The group involved a total of 07 people.

### **3.5. Data Collection Methods**

As it is explained by Yin (2011), qualitative method allows for more flexibility in identifying factors and practical strategies than the formal, structured quantitative approach and it allows for theory development. Qualitative data collection methods include the use of in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions, document analysis, corporate literature, websites, articles, magazines and newspapers to provide a basis for extensive and thorough discussion of the research problem. Moreover, qualitative research approach is one of the main approaches of research methodology. It studies about experiences, behaviors and attitudes from the respondents. Therefore, due to the main research question that is related with “how” is addressed well with using qualitative methods. As compared to quantitative research approach, it does not use mathematical and statistical methods. However, qualitative research method uses logic to interpret gathered data.

In order to collect relevant and appropriate information to make the research complete both primary and secondary sources of data are used.

#### **3.5.1. In-Depth Interview**

In-depth interviews are used to get participants to provide an account of their experiences, of how they view their own world and the meanings they ascribe to it (Limb and Dwyer 2001).



The main objective of this study is to investigate the PRs practice of PM office Press Secretariat department.

As Baxter and Babble (2004) explained, the most common advantages of interview for communication research are to learn about phenomena that cannot be directly observed, to get a richly detailed manner what an interviewee thinks and feels about some phenomena, to study informants language use- their vocabularies and idioms, to assess the extent to which preliminary findings from one method will “ring true,” and to gain insight into the interviewee’s code of communication.

Interviews can be carried out through face-to-face, telephone, Skype or any other latest technology application. Face-to-face interviews were selected for this research. As Saunders et al (2003) noted, face-to-face interviews permit a sort of interaction between the interviewer and the interviewees.

### **3.5.2. Focus Group Discussion**

According to Lewis (2003) FGDs allow the researcher to conduct questions and answers on one or multiple research topics between the researcher and participant and within the participant aimed to discuss in depth rather than investigation.

Morgan (1998), on the other hand, defines FGDs as a group of people who have been purposefully assembled at a place to take part in a discussion on a topic of relevance. It is a method of collecting information by studying people’s collective views, opinions, experiences and reactions, and also to understand the meanings implied by them.

Accordingly, one focus group was formed for the purpose of this research. The group involved 7 people. The purpose of the FGDs is to triangulate discussant’s (internal staffs) point of view on the PRs practice of the Press Secretariat.

### **3.5.3. Observation**

Observation is one of the most important methods of data collection. It entails being present in a situation and making a record of one's impressions of what takes place. In the observation the primary research instrument is the self, consciously gathering sensory data through sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. (Somekh and Lewin , 2005).

The observation method is also used to collect information by way of researcher's own direct observation without asking from the respondent. If observation is done carefully and accurately, it helps to find information on what is currently happening without subjective bias. Unlike the interview or the questionnaire method, it is independent of respondents' willingness to respond. In the study the researcher observed how and when the Director and practitioners behave their office what they did and how to cover their task within the specific office hours.

### **3.5.4. Document Review**

There are many methods of data collection usually used in case research studies. Data from two or more sources will help to support the research answers. Therefore, this study also used document review to provide a basis for extensive and thorough discussion of the research problem. The document review includes newspapers, magazines, training manuals, videos, photos, proceeding, minutes, reports, organization policy, rule and regulations, press releases and websites.

### **3.6 Ethical Consideration**

In this research, a great care of ethical issues that is common in any scientific research undertakings were taken. During data collection, the researcher was taking care of the respondents' privacy and willingness. They were clearly informed about the purpose of the research and asked only if they are willing to provide the required data. They were assured that the information they provide confidential and only used for the research purpose.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter presents the data and analysis of the research findings. The socio-demographic profiles of respondents and the responses to the research questions will be presented in three themes. Data obtained from the managers, senior experts and practitioners towards the PRs practice of the Press Secretariat has also been analyzed. The finding of the FGDs which was conducted with other staffs which are outside the Press Secretariat department of PM office has been analyzed in a separate sub topic. So as to strengthen the findings the researcher's personal observation and secondary sources such as analyzed documents are integrated in the analysis.

In order to explore the practice of the Press Secretary in detail, the researcher has chosen James Grunig and Todd Hunts Four Models of PR. The rationality behind choosing this model is that it allows the researcher to assess the practice thoroughly. B.Van Ruler's Strategic Communication Frame (SCF) has also been chosen to make the analysis more detail.

#### **4.2. Public Relation Practice of Press Secretariat**

In this sub topic the researcher will try to assess the PR practice of the PM Office Press Secretariat based on the vision statement, way of communication with the public, professionalism, PRs policy and strategy, the implemented model, media relation policy, and image building activities.

##### **4.2.1. Mission, Vision and Values**

As it is stated in the background of the thesis the Prime Minister Office Press Secretariat was organized with the aim of assisting the office to establish a good relationship both internally and

externally to maintain a longtime reputation in the hearts of the public. Regarding this one of the managers (M1) said:

The mission of the office is to bring economic prosperity and democratic condition in the country. In doing so, the Press Secretariat department serves the PM office as a bridge of information between the government and its public. The office is serving not only the national public but also it serves the international public with providing accurate information about the country (M1).

One of the senior PR experts (E1) of the Press Secretariat department has also given a similar view. The expert said:

Unlike other offices the PM office directly reflects the image of the country to the national and international community. Following the current political change the PM office is restructured with six departments such as the PM agenda setting, Policy and Performance Management Unit, Press Secretariat, National Security Department, Office of the First Lady and Republican Guard. Among these six departments the Press Secretariat has a great role in providing appropriate information for both local and international publics. (E1)

One of the major tasks of the Press Secretariats is providing information to the public. This means the PR activities of the Office should advocate building a shared national and organizational visions and mission. In relation to this one of the practitioners (P1) said the following:

As it is known the vision of the Ethiopian government is to pull the country out of poverty and maintain democracy, good governance and peace. Accordingly our office is striving to advocate such vision to be shared by the public through different round table discussions, intellectual forums and political debates. For instance we have a media plat form called 'Addis Weg' in which panelists and

participants who have written, taught, researched and working on the issue raised, discussed and developed ideas as input for policy making.(P1)

In view of the values of the office, understanding the value of disseminating up-to date and accurate information, work to ensure rule of law, gender equality and equity, Serving people and government based on ethical principles, and producing public relation works economically and efficiently are among the values stated by the participants.

Even though the vision, mission and values of the office clearly identified, the role of PR in adding value and building a shared vision are not yet identified. It, therefore, contradicts with the idea of B.Van Ruler which says the role of PRs professionals in building shared vision need to be identified.

#### **4.2.2. How the Press Secretariat Communicate with the public?**

The Press Secretariat serves as a liaison between the media, the public, and the government, as the government is represented by the PM of Ethiopia, the press releases, panel discussions, meetings, and callings lead and produce by the PM delivered to the public via the press secretariat. In this regard one of the managers said:

We communicate with the public through media relation, press release, panel discussions with different parts of the society. We set guidelines for how to communicate with the media. Regarding the contents and forms of our news on social media, we collect and analyze feedbacks of the public from the page. They were monitored and evaluated. The monitoring and evaluation process is based on the standard that we have developed earlier. The national discussions forums and events that are hosted by the Press Secretariat will also be monitored and evaluated (M1).

The researcher has also observed press release is the major tool of communication which is used by the office. The Press Secretariat discharges various press releases regarding current issues, community based activities, development, agreements and others. There are also fliers, leaflets and magazines in the office with a limited quantity.

To reach the online audience, the Press Secretariat uses the digital forms of press releases and newsletters. One of the senior experts added that blogging allows the company to create and maintain a relationship with the public as well as establish a two-way communication. Social media networks, on the other hand, are also utilized by the press secretariat to establish a direct communication with the public.

According to one of the managers (M1), the Secretariat has several media partners, journalists working for media organizations which are registered at the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority with a permanent badges issued by the secretariat to attend media events and briefings at the Prime Minister's office. The researcher observed that the media partners of the Press Secretariat are from the print media, broadcast media, digital media and the international community. In relation to this one of the PR experts involved in the research said:

I feel we have a better relationship with local and international media. When the Prime Minister makes a statement, we call on media outlets at the press conference. They will bring their questions directly to the Prime Minister. And also we send press releases to the press. (E2)

Another practitioner also said:

Media relations are among the tasks that the secretariat has to work with. We give the mass media to access the news as quickly as possible. Some of the information that we provide might be delayed. This is because it takes us much time until we check the information from the source (P7).

Even though the respondents from the press secretariat said that they have a good relationship with the media, the researcher observed that the media relation has engaged in one way

communication, the press secretariat simply send news and press releases to the media without any feedback gathering and issue clarifying ways. More specifically, the press secretariat has seldom conducted a press conference, only twice since it was established.

Literatures of PR and strategic communication such as Wilcox (2005) have also confirmed that conducting very few (only two in this case) press conference within a year is not enough. The researcher also believes that there are several issues that need clarification from the highest authority of the country, the PM. Rather than setting up interviews with individual reporters, press conference allows an entity to interact with a roomful of journalists all at once and thus is an effective way to quickly disseminate PR messages. Countries with political crises such as ours need to give as many as press conferences so that they can reduce the information gap related problems.

Moreover, Citizens have the right to get clear information from the horse mouth. Press conference can have a room for dialogue in which issues can be explained until they get clear and ambiguity free. Press conference, as it is mentioned in the literature part of this study, also allows the audience to sense the emotional feelings of the respondent. Therefore, it is essential to conduct a schedule for press conference by the Press Secretariat.

From the above findings one can conclude that the press secretariat uses different communication tools to reach the public. However, the secretariat has a gap on conducting enough amount of press conference on different social, political, and economic issues of the country.

#### **4.2.3 Public Relation Professionalism in the Press Secretariat**

So as to assess the professionalism in the Press Secretariat, the researcher uses Saunders & Perrigo's five criteria that are necessary for public relations to gain professional status. These are specialized education involving a body of knowledge, skills and research; provision of a unique and specialized service that is recognized by the community; emphasis on public service and

social responsibility; autonomy and responsibility to make decisions; and enforcement of a code of ethics by a self-governing association of colleagues.

In view of specialized education of PRs in the Press Secretariat, almost all of the managers, senior experts and practitioners are educated in communication and related fields. Regarding this one of the managers said that:

Our department practitioners have the knowledge and ability to work. They know the principles and basic skills of public relations profession and they have to be implemented it. So, I believe that the PRs functions performed by the secretariat are in a professional way (M1).

On the other hand, one of the practitioners explained the similar idea as follows:

I know that the PRs activities should be done in a planned and well-organized manner. I believe that it is important to use different communication tools to build an organization image. Every task will be more productive if they are done by professionals. In the Press Secretariat, the leaders are well experienced some of them are educated abroad and worked in international organizations and it is an asset for practitioners to share experiences (P 7).

In view the skill and research, the Press Secretariat claims the services are taking place in a skilled manner. As one of the managers (M1) said the press releases are written in a clear and well edited language. The manager further said that the Press Secretariat has a well organized and skillful mass media production team. The other manager of the secretariat also said:

Public relations practice in this section is supported by a system of just like any other function. It has its own process of gathering, organizing, and analyzing information. We do our tasks according to the standard (M2).



Similarly, one of the PRs practitioners puts their perception as follows:

When we perform our duties, we have a system of procedures to guide. At all levels, supervisors will monitor the work properly. We have forums and dialogues that we can review our jobs. We will discuss our plan and implementation. We strive to fix our gap. And we'll scale out the work we've done (P5)

With regard to research, as one of the managers (M2) confirmed the press secretariat has never conducted a research and it has no separate team of research.

In relation to the provision of a unique and specialized service that is recognized by the community, the Press Secretariat organized moral building activities of the PM to the community such as students, donators, religious institutions and others. One of the practitioners said:

As opposed to the earlier trained of the PM office, the restructured PM office has highly engaged in unique and specialized services that are recognized by the community. For example the Press Secretariat organized the visit to the National Archives and Library of Ethiopia made by the PM where he talked to and provided morale support to students preparing for the upcoming national exams. In his remarks, he advised the students to undertake the examinations in a relaxed and focused manner and also reminded them that libraries are spaces that nurture minds and therefore should be frequented at other times too. This is the first time since His Imperial Majesty Haile Sellasie's visit that a leader has visited the library. (P1)

In view of emphasis on public service and social responsibility, as it is explained by the head of the Press Secretariat, the department together with the staffs of PM office has participated in different community services such as seeding plants, cleaning the city, and fund raising activities.

Regarding the autonomy and responsibility of the Press Secretariat to make decisions, one of the managers in the Press Secretariat said that the department is independent and has the autonomy to make decisions. However, the researcher has a doubt on the independence of the Press Secretariat. It is because the public relations task is practiced by politicians and politically assigned persons as it is confirmed by the managers themselves. This may lead to the misrepresentation of the professional activities by propaganda. Professionals who are trained and skilled in the field may be able to support the government. They can provide accurate information at the exact and at the appropriate time by doing their jobs. When it comes to decision making and autonomy, it is rare to be independent where they are assigned to do what they are told to do.

The above finding indicates that the staffs of the press secretariat more or less fulfill the criteria of Saunders & Perrigo's five criteria that are necessary for public relations to gain professional status. However research and development tasks are remaining ignored.

#### **4.2.4 The Public Relation policy and strategy in the Press Secretariat**

According to one of the managers (M2), the PM office Press Secretariat has several stakeholders such as ministers, regional states, international communities, print and electronic Medias and others. All the stakeholders need to be represented and get heard in matters that concern them. The Secretariat therefore has a massive responsibility of communicating the above mentioned and other stakeholders.

PR scholars such as B. Van Ruler agreed that Communication policy and strategy is prerequisite for effective communication. Effective communication methods always need to be founded on structured communications, including both formal and informal exchanges, to keep stakeholders informed. When looked at the Press Secretariat, the department has no communication strategy so far. Regarding this one of the managers said:

A team of PR professionals from the PM office and regional states lead by the manager of the Secretariat had been sent to the USA. The purpose of the visit was

to share experience from the American Press Secretariat. I believe the team has got tremendous experience and has reached in a consensus to develop a comprehensive communication policy and strategy document where principles, objectives, procedures, and directives were articulated for both internal and external communication. To do so, we need a professional support from higher institutions and other researchers of PRs and strategic communication (M1).

The researcher has also found that there has not been specific written guideline for each practice of public relations. As one of the managers (M1) confirmed the secretariat is in the process of developing the written guideline for PRs practices.

In connection with the novelty of the Press Secretariat, a communication plan was rarely prepared on weekly and individual basis as one of the practitioner (P8) admitted. The practitioner further said that the secretariat has a limitation to gather information from regional states and other stakeholders. One of the managers has also a similar view. The manager said:

We have very weak relations with both Addis Ababa and regional communication offices as the intention of the new arrangement of the press secretariat is to cover issues about the Office of the PM. But the regional communication offices are expected to run by themselves. but we share information (M2).

#### **4.2.5. The Model of Public Relation Implemented by the Press Secretariat**

As the researcher closely observed the public relations practice in the Press Secretariat, the main emphasis is on providing information as it is confirmed by both the head and the practitioners of the Press Secretariat. The researcher also proved that the PR model that the Secretariat characterized by Public Information model. The press release and conferences of the Secretariat are aimed at informing the public and creating awareness about the government decisions and stands. This kind of public relations resembles to public information model in which the big emphasis is on providing information rather than being open to accommodate the interest of the public. However as it is stated in the literature part of this research in the public information

model the key role of the information is not to persuade rather it simply delivers the information which eventually leads to lack of clarity. In this regard one of the PR practitioners in Press Secretariat said:

The primary responsibility of the Press Secretariat is to act as spokesperson for the PM of Ethiopia and the office. The Secretariat is responsible for communicating the PM's reactions to local and international events, as well as providing information about actions of the PM office. (P2)

From the above result one can depict that the Press Secretariat is doing a role of spokes person. Disseminating information was one of the major reasons the secretariat was established for. Giving clarity about the disseminated information through face to face discussion is hardly practiced in the secretariat. This practice contradicts with the PR principles in which persuasion is in the heart of PR profession which involves clarifying ambiguities and misunderstandings.

#### **4.2.6. Media Relation Policies and Practices of the Press Secretariat**

With respect to the local and international Medias, the Press Secretariat announced that journalists working for media organizations which are registered at the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority will have permanent badges issued by the secretariat to attend media events and briefings at the Prime Minister's office. In relation to this one of the managers said:

We have media partners from local and international media institutions. These are from TV, Radio, print and digital media. We often use TV and Radio in order to be more reachable. Besides, our digital Medias such as facebook, twitter, instagram pages provide timely information using both English and Amharic languages (M2).

One of the senior PR practitioners has also a similar view:

We use a variety of Medias to accomplish our work. We mainly use electronic media. Moreover Photograph exhibition is also our public relations tool. Social media, on the other hand, is our preference to deliver information faster (P3).

Another respondent from the secretariat (P2) also mentioned the proclamation that authorized the earlier government communication affairs office which is known as Proclamation 590/2008 is officially cancelled and replaced by the newly organized Press Secretariat under the proclamation 1097/2011.

From the above findings one can conclude that the Press Secretariat has a legal ground to perform such activities. In addition to this, the Press Secretariat has rules and regulations to manage media relations.

#### **4.2.7. Public Relation and Image Building**

Most PR Scholars agreed that PR has an important role in building institutional images. Thus, if given due attention to the profession, there is no doubt about speeding up the development of the organization. In this regard the Press Secretariat uses various ways to build a positive image of the PM office. These are community relations, corporate colors and designs, events, financial communications, lobbying, media relations, and news release.

In view of the community relations performed by the Press Secretary interacts with different groups of the community such as elders that need help, religious leaders, needy students and others. Regarding this one of the managers said:

Before the political change no one knows about the activities of the office. As the highest authorized office of the country, the PM office is trying to get closed with the society through visiting and discussing from the highest up to the lowest class

of the community, from political leaders up to religious leaders. Moreover, the office attempt to listen social and economic problems of the society (M1).

The PM office has also a newly formed official logo which shows the building of the national palace. The logo represents the bright future of the country. The office has also proposed a motto that says “Ethiopia the new horizon of hope”. In relation to this the head of the Press Secretariat said:

Logos and motto are important for the image of any organization. Seeing that, we have introduced a new logo, the sketch of the national palace with a blue color. As it is known blue is a sign of hope (M1).

The Press Secretariat has organized a number of events which promote synergy, development, national reconciliation, national consensus and others. In relation to this one of the managers said:

We aggressively organized and managed events mainly focused on building common understanding towards the problem and opportunity that the country faces. Local and international stakeholders together with scholars, activists, opinion leaders, community leaders were among the participants of the event (M2).

The PM office has a good financial communication with local and international developmental partners and donors. The reason is just to make the office plans changed to reality. In relation to this one of the managers said:

As we all know the country is extremely poor. Without the financial support of our partners we cannot achieve our projects and plans. For example the office had proposed a dinner with our local developmental partners such as banks, insurances, breweries, and other local investors (M3).

Lobbying is another way of image building activities. The Press Secretariat lobbied several stakeholders such as film actors, comedians, musicians, celebrities, religious leaders and others to contribute for the development and welfare of the country. In this regard one of the managers said:

Through lobbying celebrities, respected elders and religious leaders, the office tried to address the national economic, social and political goals to the public. The result is promissory. More or less, I believe the office has branded in a positive ways (M1).

The Press Secretariat also feeds news release on a daily basis. One of the practitioners confirmed that the secretariat has been delivering news via social Medias on social, political and economic affairs of the country.

Even though the PR practitioner said the secretariat feeds news on social, political, and economic affairs of the country, the researcher observed that all the news focused on only the positive side of the political, social and economic affairs of the country. The researcher find out that news story on displacement, unrest, and regional conflicts have reported after a long delay.

Hence, the practice of the Press Secretariat regarding image building is in line with the idea of PR scholars such as Cutlip, Center and Broom (2006). These scholars agreed that PR plays a great role in image building of the community and nation.

### **4.3. Document Analysis**

Under this sub title the researcher analyzes the documents related to the Press Secretariat such as proclamations, press and news releases of the secretariat, standards and procedures.

### **4.3.1. The proclamation**

The Press Secretariat has come into practice by the proclamation of the house of people representatives. The Press Secretariat has got its Power and duties by proclamation No. 1097/2018 which made the secretariat the replacement of the former Government Communications Affairs Office. The proclamation has made the Secretariat acting in ministerial level as a legal government institution to play a leading role in the government information and communication system in the country. The Press Secretariat has organized under the office of the PM.

### **4.3.2. Press and News Releases of the Press Secretariat**

The researcher selected a six months press and news releases of the Press Secretariat which were released through social Medias in general facebook in particular. The selected press and news releases are from November 2018 up to April 2019. The press and news releases were analyzed based on the Grunig and Todd Hunts Four Models of PRs.

As far as the researcher has concerned most of the news and press releases of the Secretariat do not have characteristics of Persuasion, they simply give information about the office activities. Therefore it can be concluded that the press secretary does not follow Press agent or publicity model of Gruning and Todd Hunts. Instead it follows the Public information model which promotes one way type of communication in which press and news releases to distribute the office information. The news and press releases were prepared by in-house journalists.

As the researcher closely observed the public relations practice of the Press Secretariat, the main emphasis is on information provision. Besides, most of the press statements of the Press Secretariat are aimed at defending the practice of the government even in a situation where a clear accountability is rested on the government. Moreover almost all the information those are disseminated by the Press Secretariat tries to tell the government side of the story. All information dissemination efforts are tailored to build the image of the PM office, ignoring fully or partially the interest of the public.



Therefore, the researcher concluded that the press releases of the secretariat resemble with propaganda. As Grunig and Hunt (1984) confirmed the Press Secretariat PR model is under the category of Public information model which advocates propaganda instead of persuasion. This, in fact, contradicts with Smith's theory of persuasion. As Smith (2003) clearly stated the most influential source factors of persuasion are credibility, attractiveness, similarity and authority.

#### **4.3.3. Working Guideline of the Press Secretariat**

The Press Secretariat's working guideline and the whole structure of the PM's Press Secretariat are yet under construction. At the time this research was conducted, the Press Secretariat was working using the working guideline and structure of the earlier Communication Affairs Office by making a slight modification on the structure and customizing the job description and directives of the earlier Communication Affairs Office. In other words the working procedure of the earlier Communication Affairs Office is still functional in the newly formed Press Secretariat.

The working procedure of the Press Secretariat was developed in 2014 by the then Communication Affairs Office. The working procedure has five major themes which are intended to be applied in all government offices including the PM office. These five themes are the need for disseminating government information, duties and responsibilities of the Press Secretariat, organization of PRs practitioners, ethics of the practitioners, institutionalizing the PRs activity.

The first theme of the working procedure explains that providing current, accurate and clear information to the public is in the heart of building good governance which is characterized by transparency, honesty and responsibility.

Duties and responsibilities of the PR practitioners is the second theme of the working guideline. The Press Secretariat was established to provide information to the public and facilitate flow of information between the Office of the Prime Minister and the general public by supplying

information about activities in all sectors. Moreover, the secretariat is also a bridge between the public and the government managing information flow from the public to the government and vice versa. It also works to ensure a better information flow and the public's access to information which is a right enshrined by the constitution as well as media information access rights. The secretariat is also responsible to create a framework for the public to reach a consensus on building peace, democracy and development and building the country's image in a preferred manner as well as cultivate unity, love and cooperation among Ethiopians resulting in a stronger nation.

Organization of PR practitioners is the third theme of the working guideline. According to the guideline, any public relations unit that is organized in federal government institutions including the PM office should have at least five practitioners together with the head of the public relations unit. Experts working on web page, social media, information desk, photo and video should also be included as additional vital personnel in the public relations units.

The fourth theme of the working guideline is ethics of the practitioners. The document recognizes that there is a strong relationship between public relations and ethics. It further explains the ethical standards that are expected from PR practitioner should be specified in a way that could be measured and evaluated. Honesty, independence, loyalty, fairness, advocacy and expertise are the major ethical behaviors that are mentioned in the guideline.

In view of institutionalizing the PR activity, the guideline had an aim of clearly specifying mission, role and importance of public relations in addition to the duties and responsibilities of department heads and experts. The document also stipulated that every federal government institution must organize a public relations body which would be accountable to the head of the organization and would have strong working relationship with the then government communication affairs office.

#### **4.4 Public Relation challenges in the Press Secretariat**

In relation of challenges that are faced by the Press Secretariat, the researcher found from the in-depth interview that political appointment of managers and practitioners, negative image of the public towards government communication, absence of communication strategy/ institutional frame work, limited communication and flow of information with regional states and other stakeholders, and lack of professionalism are the major challenges of the Press Secretariat.

##### **4.4.1. Political Appointment of Managers and Practitioners**

According to the response of one of the practitioners (P5), the political appointment of managers and practitioners is one of the challenges in the Press Secretariat. The interviewee confirmed that there is no formal recruitment and promotion process in the office in general and in the Secretariat in particular. The practitioners said:

In the present time, public relations task is practiced by politicians and politically assigned persons. This will only make one side of story. The professional activities misrepresented by propaganda. Most often the politics and the profession conflict each other. And it is difficult to reconcile the responsibility as a politician versus the responsibility as a professional (P5).

As opposed to the Practitioners view, one of the managers (M1) claimed even if the political stand is the pre requisite to be assigned in the department, being professional is also mandatory. Both the practitioners and the managers are expected not to reflect their political stand rather they are expected to implement the profession independently. The manager said:

If the practitioners and the managers failed to implement the profession, it is their own fault, no one else. They are assigned to make the Secretariat credible and acceptable by the public through delivering current, clear, accurate, and relevant information to the public. It is up to them to implement the profession exclusively and separate the politics and the profession (M1).

As to the researcher's view, it is difficult to implement the PR profession exclusively for someone who is assigned by their political loyalty and commitment. The assignment considers only the PR and communication related qualification; the performance of the assignee is completely neglected.

Hence, as to the above finding the correctness of political assignment of PR professionals is remained debatable.

#### **4.4.2. Negative Image of the Public towards Government Communication**

The public, as one of the practitioners explained (P8), always perceive the Press Secretariat as a government propaganda institution. He further said people mix up the Press Secretariat with the earlier Government Communication Affairs Office which was allegedly considered a government propaganda machine. The practitioner said:

Repairing people's perception towards government communication is a very big challenge. Even though we come up with a new motto and organizational appearance, the public's response is not yet promissory. As it is known rebranding is not a simple task (P8).

One of the managers has also a similar idea. The manager said:

The main purpose of dissolving the former GCAO is that to rebuild trust and transparency between the government and the public. The earlier GCAO was claimed to be distrust and ambiguous. As a successor of the earlier GCAO, the Press Secretariat is expected to the negative image of the perception of the public towards government communication (M2).

Hence, from the discussants view one can depict that the Secretariat is challenged to rebrand itself to the public in a positive way. Besides the Secretariat is striving to change the negative image of government's communication.

#### **4.4.3. Absence of Communication Strategy and Frame work**

The Press Secretariat, according to one of the managers, the whole structure of the PM's Press Secretariat is yet under construction and a full fledged restructuring is yet to be completed. The manager further said the delay of developing the Press Secretariat communication strategy made the Secretariat paralyzed. The manager said:

We believe that communication strategy and/or institutional frame work is very crucial for the Office. Activities need to be categorized based on urgencies and importance order. We believe the communication strategy and/or frame work addresses this issue. Therefore until we develop a communication strategy, the Press Secretariat remains less effective (M1).

One of the practitioners (P3) has also similar view. The practitioner said:

The Secretariat is working on a non-technical basis. How to implement the strategic themes are not clearly identified in written way. As we all know, unclear strategy leads to inefficiency (P3).

Therefore, from the interviewee result one can conclude that both the managers and practitioners are aware of the importance of communication strategy and framework. As a result the Secretariat is in the process of developing communication strategy and framework.

#### **4.4.4. Limited Communication with Regional States and Other Stakeholders**

The newly organized Press Secretariat has a limited communication and flow of information with regional states and other stakeholders, one of the practitioners admitted (P8). The practitioner further explained as compared to the earlier GCAO the newly formed Press Secretariat's communication with stakeholders is weak. The practitioner said:

The earlier governmental communication affairs office was organized in a way information is analyzed and released from the office (GCAO). Whereas, currently, the bridge that connect the regional states and the PM's office Press Secretariat has broken. As a result, there is no exchange of information from lower government offices such as regional states and city administration to the higher government office which is the Press Secretariat (P6).

From the above result it can be concluded as the Press Secretariat has a gap in information exchanges with stakeholders such as regional states, ministries and city administration.

#### **4.4.5. Lack of professionalism**

Throughout the research process the researcher has observed that lack of PR professionals is the major challenge of the country in general and the Press Secretariat in particular. In this regard the one of the managers expressed their feeling as follows:

PR as a profession is a recent phenomena in the country. If I am not mistaken Addis Ababa University is the only university which trains PRs practitioners. As a result lack of professionalism in the field PRs strategic communication is not only the problem of the Press Secretariat but also it is a problem in the entire government offices. In fact the main reason of dissolving the then GCAO is to develop the country's communication affairs in a professional way (M3).

One of the practitioners has also a similar view with the idea of the manager. The practitioner said:

We have lack of professionals especially in quantity. If you see the qualification of the managers and the practitioners their educational background and work experience are directly related with the PR. Since the PM's Press Secretariat is the engine of the country's information flow, it needs to be organized in a sufficient number of professionals and qualified individuals as well (P3).

The above result shows the Press Secretariat has highly challenged with the lack of professionals especially in the number of practitioners.

#### **4.5. Data Analysis and Development of Themes**

It is stated in the previous chapter of this research that FGDs is one of the major data gathering tools employed to achieve the objective of this study. The FGD is aimed at providing an insight from the office staffs point of view.

Demographically a total of six employees were involved in a group. The variables in the study are: age, education status, and marital status. The age range of the discussants was between 27 and 55.

The discussion is based on the five recurring thematic concepts identified from the group discussions. The thematic concepts are: whether the vision, mission and values are shared or not, how PR is understood by the employees of the office, independence of the Press Secretariat from the office management, the strength and weakness of the Press Secretariat, relevance of PRs for the internal staffs. The five thematic concepts are discussed one by one in the following manner.

#### **4.5.1. Are the vision, mission and values shared?**

In exploring whether the vision, mission, and values of the office are shared or not, the FGD with the employees revealed that the employees have awareness about the vision, mission, and values of the office. The employees who participated in the FGD stated that the vision of the office is to bring the nation among the middle incomes countries. They also stated that bringing economic prosperity and democratic condition in the country as the mission of the office. The values of the office which are stated by the discussants are understand the value of disseminating up-to date and accurate information, working to ensure rule of law, gender equality and equity, serving people and government based on ethical principles and producing public relation works economically and efficiently. Here are some of the excerpts:

D1 Basically all government offices have similar vision and mission; values are developed based on the situation of the organization. Bearing this in mind our offices vision is to bring the country in to middle income status. The missions of the office are to bring economic and democratic development in the country. The values of our office, which are slightly different from other offices, are disseminating up-to date and accurate information, working to ensure rule of law, and gender equality and equity.

D3 I would rather state what is left from others, which is related to the values of the office it is serving people and government based on ethical principles and producing public relation works economically and efficiently.

The finding of the group discussion is to some extent in line with the result of the document which states the vision, mission, and value of the office. But the participants failed to state some key words of the vision of the office such as popular participation, peoples consent, democracy and good governance, and social justice. When it comes to



the values of the office image building, team work, experience sharing, tackling rent seeking and developing the culture of role modeling were missed.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the vision, mission and values of the office are partially shared.

#### **4.5.2. How PR is understood by the employees of the office?**

When asked to reflect their understanding about PR, all of the respondents said that PR is just a bridge between the government and the public, a facilitator of information and information provider. The participants shared their opinion as follows:

D2 PR is the medium between the office and the public. So as to have good information flow PRs is important.

D3 PR is a field of job that facilitates events, organize venues, and support the management by providing information to the public.

D5 PR is a service which is delivered by professionals to control the overall information flow of a certain organization.

The above result indicates that the management and counseling functions of PR, crisis management function of PR, stakeholder management function of PR were neglected. As a result it can be concluded that the employees understanding towards PR is limited.

#### **4.5.3. Independence of the Press Secretariat from the influence of the office management**

The group discussion in relation to independence of the Press Secretariat from the influence of the office management, all the employees who are participated in the FGD explained that there is no interference of the office management at all. Some of their views are listed below:

D1 All the six departments including the Press Secretariat are free from the influence of the office management.

D2 the PM office is one of the few Offices in the country which are fully independent from the influence of the management.

Therefore, based on the discussants information it can be concluded that the PM office in general and the Press Secretariat department in particular are free from the influence of the management.

#### **4.5.4. The strength and weakness of the Press Secretariat**

The employees who participated in the FGD expressed some critical strength and weaknesses of the Press Secretariat. The strength regarding the activities of the Press Secretariat are mainly having a good relationship with each other and with stakeholders as well, giving quick information to the public using both Amharic and English languages. On the other hand, the weakness raised by the discussants is that the Press Secretariat is engaged on social media only. The following are the extracts of the respondent's views on this notion:

D1 Public relations practitioners are good at communicating with each other and giving quick information. The only weakness is that most of the time the news are available only in the social media. If they use other optional ways together with the social media, the news can be reach more than it reaches now.

D3 Frankly speaking, the Public Relations Section has done a lot of work in a short-term basis. It disseminates information to the public in an organized and fast manner. Any information is available on the Prime Minister's office web page and social media site.

Thus, the staffs of the PM office are positive towards the effort that the Secretariat is doing. In addition the Press Secretariat is successful to aware the internal office about its activity.

#### **4.5.5. Relevance of PR for the internal staffs**

To discover the respondents view concerning the relevance of PR for the internal staffs, the participants were asked to reflect on the issue at hand. Accordingly, the findings indicated that the majority of the respondents stated that PR is important for them because it serves as a bridge to communicate the staff with the management. Explaining the issue they said that:

D1 PR is important for us [internal staff] because it makes us more productive work forces. We always find the news from the office first- not from the media. Therefore, a sense of loyalty and unity has been built in the office, thanks to the Press Secretariat.

D5 Honestly speaking, I am attracted to join the department. The Press Secretariat keeps me to stay in the office. Simply the Press Secretariat is an ambassador of the office.

D6 There is a very clear communication among departments. The Press Secretariat announces the news to the focal persons of each department, and then the department focal persons release the news to the staffs.

The above finding indicates that the staffs of the office have positive image towards the PR profession. It also indicates that the Press Secretariat is effective in building internal communication.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### 5.1 Summary of Major Findings

This study aims to explore the existing practice of PR in PM Office Press Secretariat, examine the major PR tools used by the Prime Minister Office Press Secretariats, and assess the internal staffs view on the importance of PR and explore the challenges to implement the PR practices. The findings of the study are discussed as follows.

##### 5.1.1. The PR Practice in the Press Secretariat

The staffs of the press secretariat are well educated in the field of PR and other related fields. They also provide unique and specialized service which is recognized by both internal staffs and the community. Moreover, they are good at public services and social responsibility. They are also claimed that they are autonomous to make decisions. It is therefore in line with Saunders & Perrigo's five criteria that are necessary for public relations to gain professional status except for conducting scientific and problem solving research, which is neglected in the Press Secretariat.

Currently, the Press Secretariat has no written communication strategy; it is still using the former Government Communication Affairs Office working procedure.

The Press Secretariat is vigorously doing a role of spokes person. Disseminating information was one of the major reasons the secretariat was established for. However, giving clarity about the disseminated information through face to face discussion is hardly practiced in the secretariat. This practice contradicts with the PR principles of James Grunig and Todd Hunts in which persuasion is the heart of PR profession which involves clarifying ambiguities and misunderstandings.

All the news stories that are released by the secretariat were focused on only the positive side of the political, social and economic affairs of the country. News related displacement, unrest, and regional conflicts are rarely reported on time, they often released after they are reported on other private print and electronic media institutions. It, therefore, contradicts with the idea of Smith (2003) which advocates credibility as an important part of PRs activities.

The Press Secretariat has a gap in information exchanges with stakeholders such as regional states, ministries and city administration, sometimes the information released by the secretariat and by its stakeholders contradict each other. Hence, this is against the idea of B. Van Ruler (2014) which says stakeholders are among the eight building blocks that considered as enablers to succeed the communication objectives.

The employees understanding towards PR is limited, they consider the work of PR professionals is only a facilitator on events and a communication bridge, the management and counseling functions, crisis management function, and stakeholder management function of PRs have not been considered as the job of PR professionals. This finding is therefore in line with the concept of Daramola (2003) that states considering the PR profession as just an image builder and facilitator is misconceptions of Public Relations.

### **5.1.2. The Major PR Tools**

The press secretariat uses different communication tools such as press release, press conference, media relation, photo exhibition, and others to reach the public. However, it has a gap on conducting enough amount of press conference on different social, political, and economic issues of the country. This finding in lines with Ki and Hon (2006) ideas which says a variety of tools should be employed to communicate with the public effectively.

Press conference is seldom arranged by the Secretariat, they conducted only two press conferences since the Secretariat was established. It opposes with the thought of Wilcox (2005) which says press conferences need to be arranged as frequently as possible.

### **5.1.3. Internal Staffs View**

The staffs of the office have positive image towards the PR profession. It also indicates that the Press Secretariat is effective in building internal communication. This idea is in line with the idea of PRs scholars such as Lattimore (2007). According to Lattimore (2007), adequate communication with the staffs of the organization leads to successful internal relationship.

The staffs also understood the job of PR professionals as a facilitator and a bridge of communication between them and the management. Other jobs of PR professionals such as crisis management and advising and counseling the management were not mentioned by the staffs during the discussion on the FGDs.

### **5.1.4. Challenges to Implement the Practice**

The researcher found from the in-depth interview that the Press Secretariat has highly challenged with the political appointment of managers and practitioners, negative image of the public towards government communication, absence of communication strategy/ institutional framework, limited communication and flow of information with regional states and other stakeholders, and lack of professionalism are the major challenges of the Press Secretariat.

## **5.2. Conclusion**

This research paper has focused on the PR practice of PM office Press Secretariat and its PR implementation, the challenges in implementing PRs practice of the Secretariat. It explores the PR practices available in the Secretariat and how they are implemented. Furthermore, it assesses the view of the internal stakeholders towards the PR practice of the Press Secretariat.

This research used qualitative case study method. The case study research method is used to explore the existing PR practice in PM Office Press Secretariat. The research identified Grunig

and Todd Hunts PR model, as the main dimensions of PRs. B.Van Ruler' s strategic communication frame and Smith' s perception theory have also been identified for further analysis. The finding of this research indicates that the Press Secretariat is not fully engaged in most of PR activities like crisis management, conducting researches, and arranging press conferences on different national issues. On the other hand, the understanding of internal stakeholders towards PR practice of the office is considered as positively impactful.

Grunig and Hunt' s the Public Information dimensions of PR are implemented in the Press Secretariat exclusively. In view of the level of PM Office involvement in the Secretariat practice, the research result shows that the Press Secretariat is working independently.

The Secretariat PRs activity with regard to Press Conference is not satisfactory.

### **5.3. Recommendation**

So as to make the Press Secretariat's PR practice more professional, the Secretariat needs to develop communication strategic plan which embraces a clear vision and mission. For that to happen, the Secretariat needs to work aggressively in partnership with academic institutions. Besides, scholars must be motivated to produce research works and journal articles on public relations in the Ethiopian context. Issues that will contribute to the development of public relations should be identified and intellectual discourses be conducted on regular basis.

The Press Secretariat needs to have crisis management policy so that it solves national crises such as displacement, unrest and other chaos through providing adequate and up to date information to the public.

The Press Secretariat has to create a system that enables the department communicating with regional states and city administrations so that information flows appropriately.



The Press Secretariat needs to consider on adequate number of PR practitioners. Helping practitioners emphasizing professionalism of practitioners can be taken as good strategies for improving practitioner efficiency.

#### **5.4. Further Research**

The writer of this research work doesn't believe that this research can satisfy the demands on PR practices. Therefore, other similar research works will satisfy more question and demands on the study area. Thus, it is recommended that other studies on PR practices will definitely fill the gap. Moreover, the researcher would like to recommend the PM Office Press Secretariat should take a look at the findings and recommendations of this research paper so that it can fill the gap in PR related activities.

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**APPENDIX I**  
**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**  
**JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION FACULTY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC RELATION AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION**

**Interview questions for head of the Press Secretariat**

1. What is your position and responsibility in your organization?
2. What are the public relations roles of your department? Is Public relations department core process?
3. How many practitioners are there in your department? How PRs employees assigned?
4. How are public relations practitioners practicing in your office?
5. How do you explain the practitioner's awareness about the practice?
6. What are the public relations strategies employed by the office?
7. How is your relation with management, employees, stakeholders and the media?
8. How is public relations department involved in crisis situation in the office?
9. What kinds of public relations tools do you use in your department? Which tool is more reachable to your target audience?
10. What are the challenges facing in the office?
11. How are your relationships with internal and external audiences?
12. Do you have recommendations what you give me improve the public relations practice of the office?

**APPENDIX II**  
**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**  
**JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION FACULTY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC RELATION AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION**

**Interview questions for Public Relations practitioners of the Press Secretariat**

1. What is your position and current responsibility in your department?
2. How did you join to public relations profession? How long have you been working in the field of public relations?
3. What is your perception about the profession?
4. How do you describe the public relations department of your OPM? Do you have operational procedures, principles and guidelines?
5. How do you explain the perception that government high officials have towards public relations profession and practitioners in the office?
6. What is the most essential public relations practice of OPM?
7. What tools do you use to disseminate messages to your target audience? What is the key messages you used to promote your organization?
8. How do you get feedbacks from the audience on your performance?
9. What are the major challenges for public relations activities in your office?
10. What do you recommend to improve public relations practice of the OPM?

**APPENDIX III**  
**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**  
**JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION FACULTY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC RELATION AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION**

**FGDs Questions for office employees**

**ለቡድን ተወያዮች የቀረቡ መነሻ ጥያቄዎች**

1. የተቋሙ ራዕይ፣ ተልዕኮና እሴቶች ምንድን ናቸው? እነዚህንስ አጠቃላይ የተቋሙ ማህበረሰብ በተግባር እንዲመነገራቸውና ተቀራራቢና ተመሳሳይ አረዳድ እንዲኖር በህዝብ ግንኙነት ክፍሉ የሚከናወኑ ተግባራት ምን ምን ናቸው?
2. በተቋሙ ውስጥ ያለው አጠቃላይ የህዝብ ግንኙነት ስራ በምን አግባብ እየተከናወነ ነው? ባለሙያዎቹ የተቋሙን ማህበረሰብ በማቀራረብ ለተልዕኮው ዝግጁ እንዲሆን በምን መልኩ እያገዙት ነው?
3. የህዝብ ግንኙነት ሙያ የሚጠበቅበትን ተግባራትና ኃላፊነቶች ለመወጣት የአሰራር ማኑዋሎችና ስታንዳርድ ሊኖረው እንደሚገባ ይታመናል። ከዚህ አንጻር በተቋሙ ያለው የህዝብ ግንኙነት ተግባር በአሰራር ስርዓት ይታገዛል ወይ?
4. የህዝብ ግንኙነት ተግባርን በአግባቡ ተደራሽ ለማድረግ በርካታ የግንኙነት መሳሪያዎች ተግባር ላይ እንደሚውሉ ይታወቃል። ከዚህ ጋር በተያያዘ ፕሬስ ሴክሬታሪያቱ የሚጠቀማቸው የግንኙነት መሳሪያዎች የትኞቹ ናቸው? ከሁሉም የግንኙነት መሳሪያዎች በዋነኛነት የሚጠቀሙት በየትኛው ነው? በምንስ ምክንያት?
5. ተቋሙ በባለድረሻ አካላትነት ለይቶ የያዛቸው አጋሮች እነማን ናቸው? በየክልሉ ካሉ የመንግስት ኮሙዩኒኬሽን ጽ/ቤቶች ጋር ያለው የመረጃ ልውውጥ ተግባር እንዴት ይታያል? በጋራ ተጠቃሚነት መርህ መሰረት ከእነሱ ጋር የሚገናኝበት ስትራቴጂ አለ

ወይ? መረጃ ከመለዋወጥ ጋር በተገናኘም ግብረ መልስ የሚሰጥበትና የሚቀበልበት አሰራር አለ ወይ?

6. የህዝብ ግንኙነት ተግባርን በምናከናውንበት ወቅት ውጤታማ እንድትሆኑ የሚያግዟችሁ ጥንካሬዎቻችሁ የትኞቹ ናቸው? ድክመቶቻችሁስ? ጥንካሬያችሁን ለማጎልበትና ድክመቶቻችሁን ለመቅረፍስ ምን እየሰራችሁ ነው?

7. የተቋሙ ማኔጅመንት ለህዝብ ግንኙነት ክፍሉ ያለው ምልክታ ምን ይመስላል? ክፍሉንም ሆነ ባለሙያዎችን ከመደገፍ አንጻር ያለው ተነሳሽነት ምን ያህል ነው?

1. በአገር ውስጥና በውጭ አገር ከሚገኙ የህትመትና ኤሌክትሮኒክስ የሚዲያ ተቋማት ጋር ያላችሁ ግንኙነት ምን ይመስላል? ሚዲያን እንደ አጋርነት የምትለዩበት አሰራርስ አላችሁ ወይ?

2. ስለ ተቋሙ አጠቃላይ ተግባርም ሆነ ስለ ፕሬስ ሴክሬታሪያቱ ስራ ጥናት ይደረጋል ወይ?