ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

PUBLIC RELATION/PR/ PRACTICES IN ETHIOPIAN ELECTRIC POWER

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PUBLIC RELATION/PR/ PRACTICES IN ETHIOPIAN ELECTRIC POWER

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DECLARATION

I, Mulugeta Gutu Bekele, declare that this research paper entitled "Assessment of Public relation/PR/ practices in Ethiopian Electric Power" is my original work and has not been used by others for any other requirements in any other university and all sources of information in the study has been appropriately acknowledged.

Declared by:

Mulugeta Gutu

Sig:_____

LETTER OF CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that Mulugeta Gutu Bekele has carried out this project work on the topic **Assessment of Public Relation practice in Ethiopian Electric Power** under my supervision. This work is original and authorized for the submission in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the Masters of Marketing Management.

_____   _____

Hailemariam Kebede (Ph.D.)   Date

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Acronyms

EEP: Ethiopian Electric Power

PR: Public relation

SPSS: Statistical Package for the social Sciences

 IC: Internal Communication

EC: External Communication

PRP: Public Relation Practice

MoE: Margin of error

Abstract

Public Relations (PRs) plays very important role in government sectors in building common understanding with its public. The objective of the study was to assess and evaluate the practices of public relations in Ethiopian Electric Power organization. This descriptive research study involves EEP customers, employee, public relation managers and officers of the organization at the head office. Questionnaire, interview and document analysis was used to evaluate the overall practice of PR. Both descriptive and inferential analysis method was used to analyze the quantitative data whereas content analysis was used for qualitative data.

Regarding the practice of PR, majority of participants reported less quality and poor practice of PR. The findings also revealed that most respondents agree that PR office is not performing its main role. According to the result, the major public relation tools were broadcasting media, print media and social media. Various challenges were identified in the study that relate to equipment and resource; skilled human power; leadership; passive attitude towards the office; structure of the office; Passive attitude towards the office; Lack of coordination with other departments and lack of competitive. Generally, the practice of PR in EEP was ineffective and the department of PR was not performing its expected role since there various challenge in the organization that hinder to create mutual understanding with public.

***Key words:** PR Practice, Role and challenge*

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This section consists of background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, research objectives, significance of the study, scope of the study, limitation of the study, definition of terms and organizations of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

There is no single organization around the world that is not affected by rapid changes caused by global competition, customer's pressure and development of information technology, therefore, the magnitude of public relations may differ to size and nature, no matter what the philosophy, the strategy and method is alike but it has a power to influence the global understanding or to escalate relation with in the firm and its customer, agents, employers (Black, 2004).

Public Relations (PRs) is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and co-operation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools (Alison, 2001).

Most public relations departments are responsible for monitoring and responding to changes in the external environment, including issues, expectations, relationships, and reputation, and at the same time, also contribute to maintaining effective working environments within the organization through employee communication. Effective employee communication explains organizational priorities and shares organizational information about what is happening so that employees understand and accept the need for change and commit their efforts and ideas to helping the organization achieve its mission and goals (Mehta & Xavier, 2009).

The public relations department in any human organization handles various activities, which include: conflict resolution or crisis management, internal or employee relations, community

relations, promotions, media relations, environmental scanning and sponsorship programs. Furthermore, it establishes cordial and fruitful relationship between an organization and its publics; including directors, customers, suppliers, bankers, creditors, shareholders, community leaders, media, top management officials and agencies (Asemah, 2011).

The functions of public relations overlap with and are interrelated with that of other disciplines. It is often merged with marketing which functions separately and maintain separate sector in most organizations (Geremew, 2017). Public Relations and Marketing function together by building exchange relationships with consumers, customers, clients, distributors, and other marketing parties through areas such as sponsorships, corporate identity, image building and media relations (Kotler & Keller, 2009).From a marketing perspective, public relation is a part of marketing strategy and incorporates into the marketing communication mix. It is a set of information and strategies that promises a competitive advantage in marketing the scope of services (Aydln, 2016).

Public relations are a planned effort to influence opinion through good character and responsible performance based upon mutual satisfactory two-way communication.PR plays very important role in government sectors in building common understanding with its public at large and creates two way communications to maintain responsive relationship. This two way communication, building mutual understanding and responsive relationship is accomplished by proper planning of PR: ways of communications, what appropriate PR tools to be used, media relations and ethical considerations. Therefore, suitable use of PR for an organization is very important to deliver the information to the public to create awareness, capacity building, and promoting social issues, to create trustworthiness, build the image and status of the organization (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1994).

However, in spite of the huge impact of PR office for the organization and its customers in many ways, little is known about the prevailing practice of PR in government offices in Ethiopia. Therefore the aim of this study is to assess and evaluate the performance of public relations practices of EEP to extract challenges and prospects.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Companies which do use PRs in an organized and modern way can see the benefits in terms of increased awareness of themselves and their products or services, better staff morale, customer loyalty and shareholders satisfaction among other things (Kotler, 2002).The basic cause for company's poor image in the mind of its public is the gap that lies between its line of communication, understanding and cooperation as between the organization and the society at large (Scot, 2000). Since PR has such tremendous advantage for the organization, the prevailing practice and challenge of the PR office should be assessed to provide effective and timely solution. An effective PRs practice is very crucial for good organizational performance and achievements. PRs practice becomes successful when its organization achieves its goals, vision and mission.

PR in Ethiopia is less significant in the eyes of top level managements in an organization. As a result, the consistency of the PR practices may not be on the right track. In spite of significant changes in the focus and practice of public relations during the last decade in Ethiopia, the term is still misused and misunderstood in many organizations. It is often wrongly associated with propaganda, publicity, and manipulation. The issue of public relations practices in different countries including Ethiopia has been controversial within in the field of communication. The possible reason for this could be attributed to the lack of understanding of the role of public relations. At the same time, very few people know what public relation encompasses, what it aims to achieve and how it works. Some persons see public relations as propaganda, while some other persons understand public relations as a technique of embellishing ugly or even antisocial realities in some other part of the world (Geremew, 2017).

Rosenberg (2013) argued that many people wrongly assume that public relation is preoccupied with image-making in the sense of creating a false front or cover-up. Modern PR has evolved to embrace corporate sustainability; corporate sustainability is built around the organizational structure that embraces public relations theories and practices. Ecological, sociological, and corporate/business elements must be properly promoted internally/externally by utilizing public relations efforts in order to provide the most updated information to stakeholders/employees and the public (Penning, 2007).

PR recognizes a long term responsibility and seeks to persuade and to achieve mutual understanding by securing the willing acceptance of attitude and idea. Under modern condition no government, industry, company or organization of any kind can operate successfully without cooperation of its publics (Black, 2004). However, especially the government public relations face several challenges to function appropriately. There is always criticisms from public and media forwarded to the office due to the function of government PRs is highly attached with the concept of "propaganda" or/and 'spin doctor'. 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. Furthermore, there is much we do not know in regard to government public relations in general and the EEP in particular.

Public Relations also takes as a part of marketing management mix through promotion as a tool for establishing and maintaining both side relationships between the corporation and its public. Planned and frequent PRs activities can help in building favorable image in the minds of the public about the organization. From this perspective any organization especially those that are at a corporate level must have well organized and frequent PRs programs in order to create favorable image in the customers mind as well as the public at large. A major mass promotion instrument is represented by the activity of public relations – creating good relations with various existing categories of the public and judiciously managing or removing the negative effects of rumors, accounts or unfavorable events that are harmful to the firm (Olariu, 2017).

In line with the public relation principles and perspectives Ethiopian Electric Power has stated the following activities to be done by the public relation departments. These are to lead and coordinate the overall PR and communication activity, organizes and analyzes public opinions and submits the findings to the concerned bodies. Studies carry out public relation tasks with the view of improving public awareness and understanding of the organization. In addition, it plays a pivotal role in creating a favorable working environment for the employees through organizing different events. Besides, PR handles both internal and external relation of the organization. PR helps to maintain healthy relation with the other government organization, civil society, private sector and media and uploads information on the organization's website and updates them in regular basis. To create positive image of the organization public relation department is participate in social responsibility activities (sponsorship and community service).

Considering the above responsibilities and activities, the student researcher was interested to identify the relationship between stated roles and activities with the actual prevailing practice of PR office. Besides, as far as the researcher has concerned, there has been no study and research done on the PRs practice of the EEP. Therefore, research needs to be done to find out the PRs practice of the EEP and the researcher believes that this research can give an important insight about the office.

1.3 Research Questions

In sum, the following research questions were examined in study:

1. What is the prevailing public relation practice in EEP PR office assessed by internal and external customers?
2. What is the perception of customers towards PR officer undertaking their role?
3. What are mostly used public relation tools/channels in EEP the last six years?
4. What are the challenges that affect the EEP public relation practices?

1.4 Objective of the study

Based on the statement of the problem and the research questions, this study has the following general and specific objectives.

1.4.1 General objective

The general objective of the study is to assess and evaluate the practices of public relations in Ethiopian Electric Power organization.

1.4.2 Specific Objective

To realize the overall objective stated above, the specific objectives of the study were;

- To assess the prevailing public relations practice of EEP public relation office.
- To examine the perception of customers towards PR officer undertaking their role.
- To explore the major public relations tools implemented in EEP the last six years.
- To investigate the challenges in PRs practice of the office.

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 customers and the EEP office. Moreover, the research is also significant to indicate the gaps between what has been done and that is left undone. Since, the organization will have been benefited to identify problems and recommended solutions of the study and thereby the executive bodies, PR officers and others understand the limitations and work in order to fill the gaps by minimizing the challenges. It would also help EEP public relations office to take corrective action in the way and function of the organization. For other researchers, this paper will be an insight to conduct research regarding the issues stated here by filling some knowledge gaps and limitations that faces the researcher here.

1.6 Scope of the study

The study was delimited on assessing the practice of public relation and its challenges that hinder the effectiveness of the practice in Ethiopian Electric Power organization. This study was limited on the practice of public relation in EEP particularly on the head office near Mexico square, because the organization public relation department is only in the head office. It was also limited on the public relation practice of EEP which covers the year 2006 E.C up to 2011 E.C because the organization was restructured in new form in the year 2006 E.C. It was not possible to get information more than six years from the organization.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

Some office directors and officers were not interested to give information because they were afraid of the researcher 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 complete the questionnaires through a soft communication and proving them that the researcher seeks the questionnaires only for the research purpose. Lack of well-organized secondary data and related researches in the EEP public relation office and unavailability of some potential respondents especially the top management was also a challenge. However, the research was able to gather data from the document review and top managements by allocating more time and with help of others.

1.8 Definition of Terms

- **Public Relations:** is a systematic approach to create an understanding between the organization and the target audience, with the objective of building good image and good relationship.

- **Corporate Image:** is the mental picture of the company held by its audiences-what comes to mind when one sees or hears the corporate name or sees its logo.

- **Communication:** can be defined as the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another.

- **Department:** a division of a large organization in EEP.

1.9 Organization of the Study

The paper was organized into five chapters. The first chapter constitutes with introduction part of the study providing details related to the background of the study, statement of problem, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, limitation of the study, definitions of terms and organization of the study. Chapter two deals about review of related literatures with regard to the study's selected topics and the third chapter contain the methodology and description of the study area. Chapter four presents data analysis, findings and discussions of the data that were gathered. Chapter five deals with conclusions and recommendations part of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Theoretical Literature

2.1.1 The Excellence Theory

The excellence theory is the first general theory of public relations (Lindeborg, 1994). The theory specifies how PR makes organizations more effective, how it should be organized and managed in order to contribute for organizational effectiveness, and how to determine the monetary value of public relations (Grunig, 2002). Effective organizations are very strong in keeping their organizational reputation because of they are doing every activities carefully. Because of this they have positive relations and perceptions with their publics especially concerning their service and products. Then their services and products become accepted by many publics and they have good organizational image. This value is based on the quality of relationships an organization has with its stakeholder and publics. The theory asserts that in order for PR to make a contribution in an organization it must be part of strategic management. According to this theory, for an organization to be effective it must solve the problem and satisfy the goals of both the public's and stakeholders. Organizations must identify their various publics who are affected by the decisions taken by the organization or those who want the organization to solve a problem important to them.

2.1.2 Legitimacy Theory

For public relations practitioners to be effective in establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders, it is necessary to understand and negotiate many environmental influences on the organization that impact its survival. Institutional theory suggests that organizational survival depend not just on material resources and technical information, but also on the organization's perceived legitimacy. Organizational legitimacy is a summative reflection of the relationship between an organization and its environment. Legitimacy theory is defined and explained by many authors. Weber (1988) stressed the importance of legitimacy with his belief that legitimate order guided social action. Weber states

that legitimacy theory is important in organizations by legitimate order of social actions. Organizations are found in environment and established by social divisions. Therefore according to Weber (1998), legitimacy theory is used to order and guiding the actions of social in the organizations. Additionally Hoogiemstra (2000) looks at the image of a company through the legitimacy theory. According to this theory, the survival of a company is dependent on the extent to which the company operates within the bounds of the society. This means that companies that do not seem to affect their immediate publics in a positive manner may be set to leave the market sooner than later. Norms of society are gradually changing; companies need to depend on corporate reporting (communication of its activities) to prove that they are changing with the changing environment. Corporate reporting, in this case, will have to be geared towards self-laudatory, which will show the stakeholders what the firm is doing for the environment like reducing pollution, maintaining quality, sponsoring events close to the hearts of the people. In general the concept of legitimacy theory is important in analyzing the relationships between the organizations and their environment to build effective relationship in building organizational image.

2.1.3 Models of Public Relations

The most helpful for public relations' practitioners have to know the existing different models and its concepts for the practices of public relations. It is useful understanding how those theories and model are related to each other or differentiated from one another is important. Grunig and Hunt, (1984), identified four theories of public relations which are based on research. The four theories of public relations are press agentry/publicist, public information, two-way asymmetric and two-way symmetric communication.

2.1.3.1 Press Agentry/Publicity/

The first model, press agentry/ publicity, finds its roots in the work of press agents or publicists prior to the 1900`s. Press agentry (publicity) is theological in that it was "the necessary starting point" of the discipline and that it relied on fictitious or imaginary means in influencing behavior. It is essentially a one-way communication where messages will be sent from a source to a receiver. It is marked by manipulation, exaggeration and deception (one-sided argument) as

its purpose. Accuracy, ethics and truth are not seen as an essential factor in this model only shameful deception was related to the assertion public relation to achieve its goal.

2.1.3.2 Public information

Public information is related to press agentry in that one-way information dissemination is the purpose of the activity, but it is different from the press agentry in that truth is fundamental to its purpose. The information has to be accurate, true, and specific. The central purpose of this model is informative. Practitioners operating under this model do slight research about their audiences beyond testing the clarity of their message.

The press agentry/publicity and the public information models both stress information via outgoing information from the organization to the public and the relative absence of feedback. They are distinguished from one another primarily based on the former`s willingness to advocate a position at the expense of compute truth and objectivity. Some managers act as a one-way communications value, constantly transmitting but never receiving; they are all mouths and no ears.

2.1.3.3 Two-way asymmetric communication

Two-way asymmetric communication is mainly focused in persuasive communications to generate agreement between the organization and its publics by bringing them around to the organization's way of thinking. This model employs social science research method to increase the persuasiveness of their messages. Feedback from publics is used to adapt communications strategies to be more persuasive, not to alter the organization's position, or the organization is much more interested in having the publics' adjust to the organization's interest than the reverse. Through this model it is impossible to build good relationship for mutual benefit.

2.1.3.4 Two-way symmetric communication

Two-way symmetric communication: intended to generate mutual understanding. The two-way communications process should lead to changes in both the public's and the organization's position on an issue. Through this two-way model of communication the organization and their

publics adjust to each other to achieve mutual understanding and to sustain harmonious relationship.

Furthermore, the two-way symmetrical model of communication is a real as well as a normative model. It is a model that organizations can use but often do not use because an authoritarian dominant coalition sees the approach as a threat to its power. Two-way symmetrical public relations, however, epitomizes professional public relations and reflects the growing body of knowledge in the field. This ethical approach also contributes to organizational effectiveness more than other models of public relations. Practitioners of the two-way symmetrical model are not completely altruistic; they also want to defend the interests of their employers-they have mixed motives (Grunig, 1984).

2.1.4 Meaning and Definition of Public Relations

Broom (2009), defines Public Relations as the management process whose goal is to attain and maintain accord and positive behaviors among social groupings on which an organization depends to achieve its mission. Its fundamental responsibility is to build and maintain a hospitable environment for an organization. PR is the full flowering of the democratic principle, in which every member of society is valued for himself or herself, and has both a right and the duty to express an opinion on public issues, and in which policies are made on the basis of free exchange of those opinions that results in public consent (Allen, Patrick, Stacey, Frank, 2008).

Bahil (1994) added also, PRs is a systematic approach to solve problems. It is creating an understanding between the organization and the target audience, with the objective of building good will and good image. Since PRs is an investment towards good communications and good relationship. PRs is essentially an art of persuasion, and in order to influence people, it is obviously helpful to know as much as possible about the way in which people think and the manner in which they react to particular circumstances (Black, 1999).

An organization communicates with various stakeholders, both internal and external. PRs efforts can be directed toward any and all of these. Firm's stakeholders can include customers, suppliers, employees, stockholders, the media, educators, potential investors, government officials and society in general PR can be used to promote people, places ideas activities and

even countries it focuses on enhancing the image of the total organization (Pride, 2005).The practice of PRs has become more complicated because of two most important factors. Firstly, PR functions widely increasing in many organizations. Effectively, this elevation facilitated the practice of science only to art and science. Secondly, there is an increasingly sophisticated tool of PR for communication. The presence of both factors has resulted in a specialization of art and science within the practice of PR (Cutlip et al. 2000).

2.1.5 The Roles and Functions of Public Relations

Public relation can have a strong impact on public awareness at a much lower cost than advertising. The company does not pay for space or time in the media rather; it pays for staff to develop and circulate information and to manage events. If the company develops and interesting story, it would by picked up several different media, having the same effects as advertising that would have more credibility than advertising (Kotler, 2006).The role of public relations in strategic decision making is determined by proximity and access to management (Cutlip, Center & Broom 2006).

Public relations departments operate alongside others, including marketing, human resources, legal, research and development, and operations. These departments are coordinated by a managerial system that is referred to as the dominant coalition. The dominant coalition comprises a range of representatives from the organization and in some cases, the external environment, who have the power to determine the organization's mission and goals (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier 2002).

The role played by PR is not just to help the company sell its product or service but also to present the firms as a good corporate citizen concerned about the future of the country. Often, public relations are needed to deal with specific problems a company faces. It takes responsibility to maintain mutual beneficial relationships between the organization and its publics.

PR strives to influence how public interpret concerning the organization by creating an impression in the minds of the public by shaping negative attitude developed about the organization from the internal and external environment. In addition, creating two-way

communications between an organization and the public can be a good fertile ground to the mutually beneficial relationship. PR professionals should invest their time, money and another potential to connect their organization with the external world (Tench & YeoMans, 2006).

2.1.6 Public Relation Target Audiences

The targets of public relation efforts may vary with different objectives for each. Some may be directly involved in selling the product; others may affect the firm in a different way for instance they may be aimed at stockholders. According to Belch (2004), these audiences may be internal or external publics.

2.1.6.1 Internal Public Relation

The employees are the internal public of both public and private sector organizations. They are important because they participate in its operation, production and formulation of its idea. Effective communication between management and employees is of great importance. The objective of an internal PRs program should be the creation of an atmosphere of understanding and merited support of coordinated inter-change of high morale and high efficient (Belch, 2004).

An employee of the organization likes to know about the achievement, new developments, new facilitates and its advantages, new management initiatives and also about the opportunities for he/she for growth within the organization, internal communication can help information flow on such matters to happen systematically on a real time basis (Banki, 2004).

2.1.6.2 External Public Relation

As the name indicates, external PR is concerned with people outside the organization since necessary to communicate with deferent groups of people; the external target population has to be defined.

2.1.7 Major Public Relation Tools

According to Banik (2004), Public Relation tools used by the public relation department to communicate with the public's and target groups depending up on the nature of activity and different target groups, different tools can be used.

- **Publications:** may include interim report, annual report, and reports of firms meeting for the purpose of influencing the general background information to the reader about the overall condition of the organization. The written and printed communication produces higher level of comprehension to readers. It in corporate objective idea and goal by way of production of booklets, brochures, pamphlets.

- **Information center:** the information center are multi-purpose in nature and provide in several services to the organization as well as employees and also the members of the public outside, among different purpose of the information center. The following three are the most important.

- **Sponsorship:** sponsorship as a means of giving something to the community in which they operate and consider them as PR activities, like sponsorship to school and college in the project area, hospitals, and big events like national seminars or Exhibitions on telecommunication or various institutional of telecommunications.

- **Bulletins:** It is an official publication of an organization, highlighting its policies, programs and achievements; it serves as a vehicle of communication among the various members of the company. The bulletins is published at regular intervals, they includes weeklies, fortnightlies, monthlies, bimonthlies and quarterlies.

- **Company website:** Company website can be a good public relation vehicle. Consumers and member of other publics can visit the site for information and entertainment. Such site can be extremely population.

- **Advertising:** It is the dissemination of information concerning an idea, service or product for the action accomplishment of a definite purpose with the ultimate objective to create a favorable image of an organization. Uses of advertisement are to achieve wide coverage and to build the image of the company among its target group. Their objectives are varied from just an announcement, to imparting specific information to communicating the organization stand on an issue. The objective also includes launching a new service or project or plant installation confidence and building image of among its target groups.

- **Relation with press:** Despite the emergence of electronic media like radio and television, a relation with the print media is the oscillatory in PR. the press provides information and creates the climate and thereby influences attitudes. Normally there are four methods to conduct press relation which include press releases, press conferences,

facility visits and letters to the editors. Issuing new and initiating articles, and features and reports.

2.1.8 Public Relations in the marketing mix

Skinner, Mersham, and Von Essen, (2004) identify marketing and public relations as major external functions of a company. Both functions start their analysis and planning from the point of view of satisfying one or more of the public's that have already been identified. Skinner et al. claims that some organizations treat exchange relationships with customers as only one of many organizational relationships. On their organizational charts, marketing is part of the larger public relations function. Other organizations view marketing as the basic function paying attention only to those "non-customer relationships" seen as important to the marketing effort. Public relation is subordinate to marketing in these organizations. Other companies put "customer relations" under public relations making it responsible for non-marketing concerns of customers such as complaints, instructions for product use, safety information and repair services.

Koekemoer (2004) states that, in practice Marketing consists of coordinated program of research, product design, packaging, pricing, promotion and distribution. The goal is to attract and satisfy customers on a long-term basis. Its fundamental responsibility is to build and maintain a market for an organization's products and/or services. Product publicity is part of marketing communication. Since many think that publicity is synonymous with public relations, product publicity also contributes to the confusion between marketing and public relations. Public relations specialists do help in the marketing effort by writing product publicity stories and arranging media coverage of new products. However, Cutlip et al. (2000) argue that effective public relations contribute to the marketing effort by maintaining a hospitable, social and political environment. Similarly, successful marketing and satisfied customers make good relations with others easier to build and maintain for the public relations function.

Koekemoer (2004) concludes that public relations and marketing are two functions that are most often confused, with public relations typically being subsumed under the larger more powerful marketing function.
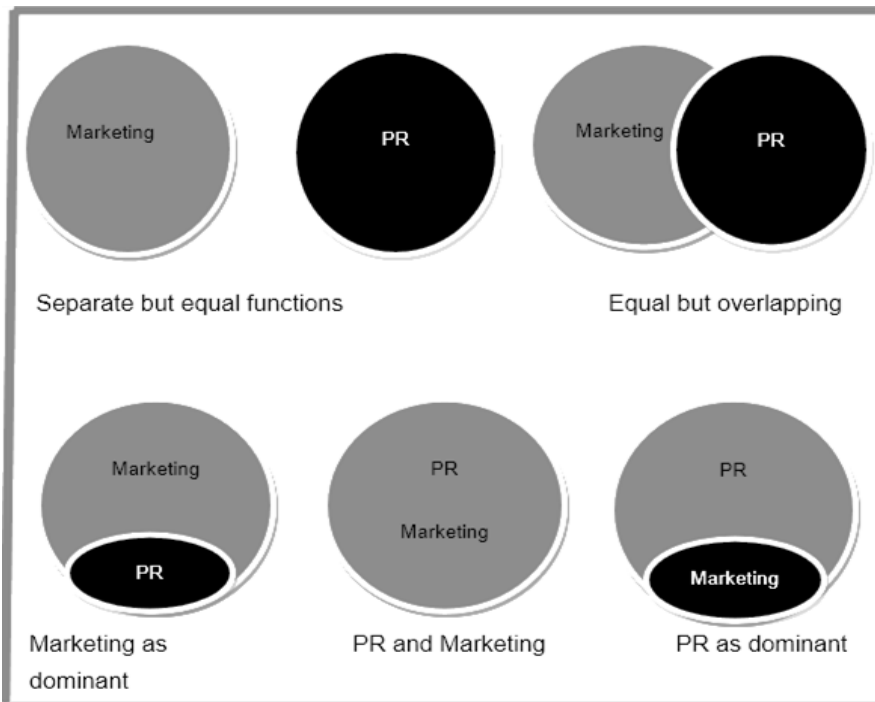
Source: Skinner et al. (2004)

Figure 1: Public Relations in the marketing mix

Public Relation is critical when marketing activities and sales are affected by public opinion or crisis events. In some cases, marketing activities can be the cause of such crisis events (Amisha & Xavier, 2009). Cornelissen (2004) mention that some organizations argue for the integration of the two disciplines, while others proclaim that these two organizational functions should remain independent. Based on this, it can be concluded that without a clear indication of the role and place of these two functions in the organization, their contribution to the overall functioning and performance of the organization will be greatly misunderstood and diffused.
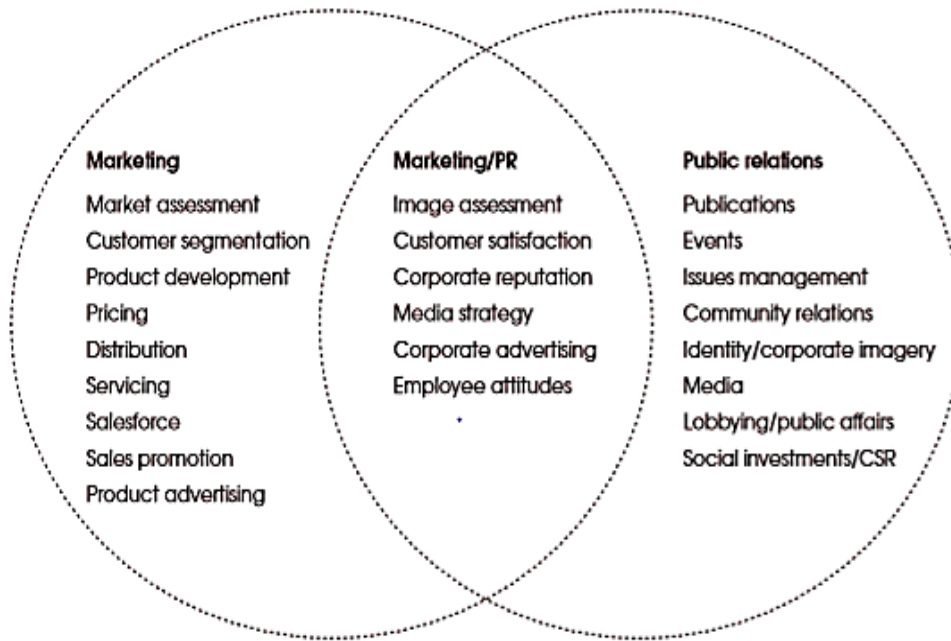
Figure 2: Public Relations in the marketing mix

In many other organizations, marketing and public relations are viewed as separate entities with different but complementary roles. It is therefore, evident that public relations' activities will differ from organization to organization and depending on the nature of the organization, public relations may serve as either a complement or a counterbalance to marketing activities. (Cornelissen,2004).

2.2 Empirical Literature

2.2.1 Practice of Public Relation

The study carried out in Harar and Dire Dawa, Ethiopia showed that the practice of public relations in the towns under study is very deprived and highly challenging for effective performance and implementation of public relations activities. The practices of public relations in the study area have been subjected to a wrong perception of what public relations person actually does. The paper verified that there is a very little understanding of the major functions

and roles of public relations in Harar and Dire Dawa towns including managers, journalist and practitioners because, public relations practitioners are rarely involved in strategic planning, in decision making and in following up the implementation of plans in their organizations (Geremew, 2017).

Bereket, (2015)was conducted to assess the practice of Public Relations in Eastern Zone of Tigray, and to do so, the researcher used mixed approach. A questionnaire was used to collect the both quantitative and qualitative data from Public Relation (PR) practitioners, employees, and external publics of the Weredas. The findings of the study depicted that professional Public Relations practice in the eastern zone of Tigray is at infant stage because the PR office is not professionally and structurally organized though its key role is well recognized. The PR practitioners have not well understood the concept of Public relations especially its management function to create mutual understanding with the public's rather they are considered to stage the debate other than mediates it. The PR office uses different tools which are not enough in number and frequency to reach the public on regular basis. Concerning the challenges, lack of skilled human power (professionals), passive attitude towards the office (belittling) especially from the top leaders, absence of adequate capacity building trainings, structure of the office (personnel), lack of logistics (electronic equipment's) and financial constraint, absence of professional leadership, lack of infrastructure (to reach village publics), reluctance of sector offices, and inadequate assistance from the region's communication bureau were highly challenging the practice Public Relations in the Weredas of Eastern Zone of Tigray. Based on this, the researcher calls up on the concerned body to organize the practice professionally and structurally, and if a suitable environment prevails and appropriate measures are taken, better prospects lie ahead for the practice of professional public relations.

Samson (2018) explores the practice of public relations management in maintaining relations with the public who interact with a corporate organization. To investigate the role of public relations in maintaining good reputation, a mixed method approach was employed taking Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate as a case study. Data were collected from different instruments such as questionnaire, document review and in-depth interview. The questionnaire was administered to 50 participants, while in-depth interview was done with the public relations department officers of EBC. The findings of this study indicated that the public relation

campaign of EBC is not research oriented and the outcome of the campaign is not measured. In addition, survey of the audiences' perception indicated that audiences have negative perceptions towards the organization. It is possible to extrapolate that the efforts made by the public relations department of EBC to manage organizational reputation is not successful. This could possibly be due to lack of research-oriented public relations campaign and lack of research on return on investment. The basic point to address here is that corporate reputation these days should not be neglected or underestimated rather it should be given high priority in company's overall strategy and in all operations, inside and outside the company.

Eyasu (2019) conducted a research on "Assessing the Practices of Public Relations: The Case of Seka District Communication Office at Jimma Zone, Ethiopia". The overall objective of the study was to assess the practices of PR in the communication office of Seka Chekorsa district at Jimma Zone. The research was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The data was collected from questionnaire, interview and document analysis. Questionnaire participants were the international and external publics of the Seka district communication office, and they were selected using convenience sampling. The two PR practionnaires were purposefully selected from the communication office of the district. With regard to data collected from questionnaire, it was tabulated and analyzed quantitatively using percentage in numbers. And the information that was gathered from interview and document analysis was analyzed qualitatively by using narration and description. Based on analyzed and interpreted data, the practices of PR in Seka Chekorsa are good especially in establishing and maintaining relationship, and in creating friendly atmosphere of communication between organization and publics (internal and external publics). However, it is not effective because of some problems like lack of professional man power, working material and enough budgets. Therefore, to overcome such problems and to make department functions more, the organization must give much attention to facilitate supportive mechanisms to the department. The researcher recommended that the concerned bodies should employ PR practitioners who are skilled in the field of language, journalism and communication, and the department has to have its own communication sector instead of working depending on other's media for the far betterment of the practice of PR in the office.

Reuben & Abubakar (2019), conducted a research on ''Public Relations Practices for Enhanced Services Delivery and Librarians' Image in School Libraries in Abia State, South East Nigeria''. This study investigated Public Relations Practices for enhanced Service Delivery and Librarians' image in School Libraries in Abia State, South East Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population was 135 teacher librarians in the selected secondary schools in the state. Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. Data generated was analyzed using descriptive statistics consisting of frequency tables and mean scores. The findings of the study show that the services offered to school library users are lending services to teachers and students, provision of seating and study facilities and user education. Also the dominant public relations practices in school libraries in the state include readers 'services, use of library's notice board, book talks, library displays and exhibitions. It was also revealed that the requisite competences of teacher librarians as public relations officers are good communication skills, professional experience, knowledge of ICT, and good marketing skills. The recommended strategies to enhance service delivery and librarians' image include reorientation of users and the society at large on the relevance of the library, provision of adequate infrastructure, provision of materials that are relevant to school library users, provision of user education and organization of library week to enlighten new or potential users and training and retraining of teacher librarians, among others.

Sriramesh, Krishnamurthy (1999) conducted a research on "The model of Public Relations in India". The purpose of this paper is to use Grunig's models of public relations to explore the nature of public relations in a sample of four types of organizations in India. The study began with the purpose of identifying the nature of public relations practice in India based on a theoretical framework. A sample of 18 organizations was studied for this analysis. This sample consisted of nine private corporations, seven public sector enterprises, a government agency and a non-profit organization. This study used a combination of survey research and ethnographic analysis, rarely used in public Relations research. The findings of this study, revealed important information on the nature of public relations in India and also indicated scope for further research. This study also indicates that, regardless of the size or type of ownership of the organization, most of the public relations professionals practiced, apart from Gruning's model, what can be called the personal influence model in representing the interests of their organizations.

2.2.2 Roles of Public Relation Department

A research finding of a study by Bereket (2015), PR office role were identified as passive in reaching its publics (internal and external) on regular basis. According the respondents of the study, the PR office was not structured and organized professionally which emanates from belittling its role especially from the top leaders. The finding was consistent with other study conducted in Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation public relations in corporate reputation management showed that the public relations department of EBC is not capable of changing negative attitude of people towards an agency to favorable or positive. The department is not anticipating what will exist near the future regarding the public opinion and looking for solution. The department does not also evaluate the outcome or the effectiveness of its campaigns (Samson, 2018).

Another research conducted by Tesfaye (2018) revealed that the main roles of the universities public relations offices are not well understood by the university community as well as the external publics. Meanwhile, the PR offices were not structured and organized professionally which emanates from belittling its role especially from the top leaders in study.

Tom Kelleher (2001) conducted a research on "Public relations role and media choice". In this study a survey was conducted to examine the relationship between public relations roles and media choice based on the integration of public relations theory and media richness theory. Respondents were identified as either public relations managers or technicians using confirmatory factor analysis, corroborating previous research.

For the survey a mail questionnaire was pretested with 47 respondents. The actual mailing included 793 questionnaires. The response rate was 34%.In this research the researcher formulated two basic hypotheses and the result was discussed within. The first hypothesis that "public relations managers will report spending more time communicating with oral communication channels than technicians" was supported. The mean percentage of time that managers estimated spending on face to face and telephone communication activities combined was 41.91. For technicians, the mean percentage was 34.07. Managers estimated a larger percentage of time for face to face communication specifically than technicians.

The second hypothesis, "public relations technicians will report spending more time communicating with traditional written channels (letters, memos, news releases) than managers" was also supported. The estimated percentage of time on normal, non-e-mail communication averaged 45.19 for technicians and 36.88 for managers. The final research question was "To whom do public relations people use e-mail to communicate with most often "74% ranked co-workers, 18% ranked clients and 4% media and the rest were miscellaneous. Results show that there are no significant differences in terms of spending more time communicating on the phone or via e-mail by managers and technicians.

Hogg, Gillian (1999) was conducted a study on "Practitioner Roles in Public Relations". This research paper considered the various roles that public relations practitioners play and the implications of those roles for the status of public relations within the organization. Within the context of local authorities in Scotland, considering the organizational constraints within which public relations practitioners operate and the extent to which the practitioner's role is affected by the expectations of those within the organization responsible for determining public relations policy.

In order to complete the research, a two stage methodology was adopted. In the first instance data were collected using in-depth interviews with focus groups, which was distributed to all local authorities in Scotland. In the second stage, a random questionnaire was sent to the person responsible for public relations. The results indicate that chief executives and politicians have very definite perceptions of public relations and expectations of practitioners and that even practitioners themselves have a limited view of the role that public relations can play in decision making within local authorities. This implies that they are not, nor likely to be, part of the dominant coalition, with consequent implications for the development of excellence in public relations. This study is the empirical manifestation of a new direction in public relations roles research, one which takes a wider look at the organizational and intrapersonal factors which directly influence day-to-day public relations practice. Exposing and exploring the complexity of role episodes, this type of research yields a grounded basis for achieving a positive change in the nature of organizational roles enacted by practitioners in the future.

Neha Singh and Dr. A. Ram Pandey (2017) was conducted a study on "Role of Public Relations in Image Management of an Organization". The paper seeks to establish the importance of maintaining good and meaningful relations with all the public's who interact with a corporate organization. It is the people who form an opinion over a period of time (about a firm) that gives the organization its reputation. So maintaining good relations with all the concerned publics is important for an organization. Public Relations, as the name suggests, is all about maintaining relations with the public. The corporate organizations feel the need to maintain, enhance and foster good relations with their prospective customers (public) in order to succeed. The Role of Public Relations in this aspect becomes very important.

2.2.3 Challenges of Public Relation

(Bereket, 2015; Tesfay, 2018; Mulualem, 2017;Geremew, 2017).As to them, the main challenges stated by the practitioners were lack of the people trust on the office; Lack of skilled human power (professionals); passive attitude towards the office (belittling) especially from the top leaders; absence of adequate capacity building trainings; lack of media acceptance; structure of the office (personnel); lack of logistics (electronic) and financial constraint; lack sufficient budget allocations; absence of professional leadership; infrastructure (to reach village publics) reluctance of sector offices; lack of understanding and misconceptions towards the roles and functions; and inadequate assistance from other concerned bodies .

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter begins with a discussion of the research design and the participants involved in this study, as well as the methods used to select participants. The procedures for data collection are then discussed, including a review of the measures used to collect data. Finally, the variables that are examined in this study, as well as an overview of analysis procedures used, are presented.

3.1 Research approach

The research was focused on the practice of public relation in EEP organization. Mixed research approach was used in order to arrive at reliable conclusions for the research questions. Mixed research approach enables researchers to seek a more panoramic view of the research landscape, viewing phenomena from different viewpoints and through diverse research lenses.

Kothari (2005) stated that qualitative approach of research is concerned with subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behavior. Quantitative research is the systematic and scientific investigation of quantitative properties and phenomena and their relationships. It involves studies that make use of statistical analyses, theories and hypotheses to obtain their endings (Kothari, 2005).

3.2 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive research design. Since the major purpose of the study is to investigate the practice of public relation in Ethiopian Electric Power organization the design was selected. So the researcher believes that descriptive research as the best design for describing specific behavior as it occurs in the environment, rather than simply explaining, the reason why descriptive research is gives a better understanding of a particular practice or a phenomenon, situation and subject.

3.3 Study Area

The one and only electric supplying organization in Ethiopia known as Shewa Electric Power in its former name was established in 1948 E.C. The new organization, although with its limited capacity, had a responsibility to manage the power supply not only in Shewa but also other administrative regions. In light of its function, its name was changed to "Ethiopian Electric Light and Power" in 1955 E.C. Soon after its establishment, the supervision and management of the organization were visited by the Board of Directors appointed by the government.

After eight months of its establishment, the Ethiopian Electric Light and Power was transformed to the "Ethiopian Electric Light and Power Authority". At that time, the capital of the authority was ten million Ethiopian Birr divided into one thousand shares of pre-value of ten thousand Ethiopian Birr each. It was also determined that the Board of Directors appointed by the government shall exercise all the powers of the Authority. In order to accommodate the new changes in the environment, the Ethiopian Electric Light and Power Authority was transferred to the Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation by reorganizing its functions on the basis of the principles of commercialization and decentralization.

In 2013, the Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation again reorganized into two separate entities, namely Ethiopian Electric Power and Ethiopian Electric Utility by the council of ministers with regulation Number Regulation No.302/2013.Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP) is a government-owned electricity power producer organization responsible for generation, transmission and whole sales service of electric energy throughout Ethiopia and neighboring countries (Sudan and Djibouti).

The Public Relation department goals and objective is to make Ethiopian Electric Power visible, accessible and acceptable by its customer's and stakeholders. The department uses different major PR tools to reach Ethiopian Electric Power for public, like press releases, press conference, website, Newsletter, internet, email correspondence sharing for communication with governmental, organization, stakeholders and contractors.

3.4 Target Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Technique

3.4.1 Target Population

The study was assessed at Ethiopian Electric Power organization head office. The total populations of study were compos of customers and employee of Ethiopian Electric Power, public relation managers and officers of the organization at the head office. Those who got services from the EEP in the head office, public relation managers and officers of the organization were target population.

3.4.2 Sampling Size

Regarding the customers, the average customer's flow of the EEP organization per month was approximately 330 according to the report of PR office of EEP. The general number employees of EEP organization head office were 3424. Accordingly, in this study to make the sample more representatives, the sample size for the customers and employee of the study was determined by using the Yamane formula (1967). Thus, the formula infers to use to calculate the sample size was used the following;

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

Where

n= corrected sample size, N = population size, and e = Margin of error (MoE), e = 0.05

Using this formula, the sample size for customers determined was a total of 180 respondents. The sample sizes for employees were also calculated using the formula was 358 respondents. All the PRs Manager and officers of the organization whom are 12 in number were included in the study since their number is manageable. The general sample size for the study was 550 respondents.

3.4.3 Sampling Technique

The researcher applied both probability and non-probability sampling technique to select the sample of the study. The sample EEP customers of the study were selected using convenience sampling technique. Convenience sampling technique is a specific type of non-probability sampling method that relies on data collection from population members who are conveniently available to participate in study. This sampling method involves getting participants wherever you can find them and typically wherever is convenient.

The sample EEP employees of the study were selected using simple random sampling techniques to give equal chance for all employees of the organization. There are eleven PR officers, two PR managers and one PR director. Accordingly, all of them were selected through comprehensive sampling to fill the questionnaire and for the interview because their numbers is manageable to collect data and they are expected to have better information and knowledge about the actual practice of public relation in their office.

3.5 Data Sources and Type

The researcher used both primary and secondary data sources of data collection to answer the research question. Primary source of data was collected through questionnaire and interview from EEP customers, employee, managers and officers. Secondary data from EEP files, pamphlets, office manuals, circulars and policy papers was used to provide additional information where appropriate. Besides, a variety of books, published and/or unpublished documents, websites, reports, and newsletters was reviewed to make the study fruitful.

3.6 Method of Data Collection

In order to obtain valid and reliable data for the study, the researcher was used both primary and secondary data. A different method of data collection was used in the research paper. As primary source structured questionnaire with 5 Point-Likert scale was prepare in English and translate in to Amharic and distributed to the selected customers and employee of Ethiopian Electric power and PR office staff. The pilot survey were undertake to check if the questionnaire is clear and easy to understand to ensure that the respondents can answer the questions with no difficulty.

Data from two or more sources were helpful 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. The document review was used to answer the major research question of the study by identifying the major public relation tools/channels are used in EEP.

Finally, interview was used to gather qualitative information about the challenges of PR practice in EEP from the public relation directorate. PR directors, managers and officers were included in the interview.

3.7 Reliability and Validity

Validity is the degree to which a test measures what it purports to measure (Creswell, 2009). The validity of the questionnaire data depends on a crucial way the ability and willingness of the respondents to provide the information requested. A pilot study was conducted to refine the methodology and test instrument such as a questionnaire before administering the final phase. Ten questionnaires were tested on potential respondents to make the data collecting instruments objective, relevant, suitable to the problem and reliable as recommended by (John Adams, 2007). Issues raise by respondents was corrected and questionnaires will refine. Besides, proper detection by an advisor is also taken to ensure the validity of the instruments.

Reliability is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trials. For this study, internal consistence reliability was determined by Cronbach's alpha. It is useful in assessing the consistency of the results across items within a test. It represents number between 0 and 1. According to Zikmundet (2010) scales with coefficient alpha between 0.6 to 0.7 indicate fair reliability and higher are considered adequate to determine reliability. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the pilot study instruments was 0.76 which was acceptable and reliable. Finally, the improved version of the questionnaires was printed, duplicated and dispatched.

3.8 Method of Data Analysis

The study was used both quantitative and qualitative types of data in order to arrive at reliable conclusions for the research questions. Concerning sources of data, both primary and secondary sources were used for generating valuable and relevant data. So the response of each customer from the questionnaires was organized and analyzed by using tables and percentage proportion quantitatively. The data was entered in MS excel-10 spread sheet, analyzed and interpreted using descriptive statistical measures like mean, standard deviation and percentages as appropriate. SPSS version 23 (SPSS Inc, Chicago, IL, USA) software program was used to analysis t-test.

Data entry was done by an experienced data clerk at the data collection site. The researcher was done the data cleaning, processing, preliminary analysis and final write-up of the study. Descriptive statistics such as means, range and mode for continuous and proportion for categorical variables was used for data summarization and description of the study population. Differences in proportions were compared for significance using one sample t-test. Content analysis method was used to analyze the qualitative type of data.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

In social science research, ethical considerations are critical when researching people or animals. In order to collect data successfully, the researcher had voluntary consent of the participants. In addition, showing respect for research participants and explaining the purpose of the study, the reason why they were selected, the amount of time that they are involved and their responsibilities. Furthermore, the student researcher will create a healthy rapport with respondents expressing that there are decisive for the successful accomplishment of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALISIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter deals with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data which gathered from the sample respondents namely customers, employees, public relation managers and officers of Ethiopian Electric Power.

This data were obtained through questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed to customers and employee of Ethiopian Electric Power and public relation manager and officer of Ethiopian Electric Power. The data obtained through preparing questionnaire contained with closed ended questions. Due to the excessive number of customers who are considered as a target population of the study, the student researcher was forced to use Yamane formula on sampling and selected 550 participants as a representative sample respondent from the total customers' population through applying probability. Though, questionnaires were distributed for 550 sample respondent but due to various reasons on the respondent acts of filling and returning the questionnaire paper as per the time limit and standard required, the student researcher has managed to collect only 486 (88.36%) questionnaires which are filled and returned appropriately and information also obtained from public relation manager and officers of Ethiopian Electric Power trough conducting interview with them.

Finally all the data gathered were summarized and analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics method in which the raw data were computed through applying depicted ontables and this is only for those data on the questionnaire and also the analyzed and summarized data on the questionnaire have been interpreted quantitatively. So, this chapter presents the major findings of the study in line with the stated purpose and discuss with the literature review.

4.1 Reliability Test

According to Nunnally (1978) Cronbach's alpha should be 0.700 or above. But, some of studies 0.600 also considered acceptable (Gerrard, et al., 2006). In this study, the value of Cronbach's alpha is greater than the standard value, 0.806. Thus it can be concluded that the measurements used in this study are valid and highly reliable. See Table 1 for the summary.

Table 1:Summary of Reliability Test Result of the Variables

No.	Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of items
1.	Public Relation Practice	0.82	15
2.	Role of Public Relation	0.79	6
3.	Challenges of Public Relation	0.81	6

Source: Survey result (2020)

4.2 General Characteristics of the Respondents

The depicted table below shows the personal backgrounds of respondent which includes their gender, age, educational background, nationality and their duration as a customer ofEthiopian Electric Power.

Table2: Frequency of Demographic Characteristics of respondents n=486

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	312	64.19
	Female	174	35.8
Age	Less than 30	121	24.9
	31 to 40	275	56.58
	Greater than 41	90	18.52
Educational Status	1-12 grade	34	6.99
	Certificate/Diploma	142	29.22
	1st Degree	266	54.73
	Master and above	44	9.05
Nationality	Ethiopian	431	88.68
	Non-Ethiopian	55	11.32
Duration	1-3 years	294	60.49
	4-6 years	192	39.5

Source: Survey result (2020)

As it is observed from the above table among the participant of the study majority of respondents 312 (64.19%) were male. Regarding the age group of the total number of respondents about 275 (56.58%) of customer respondents where in the age group between 31 to 40 years, 121 (24.9%) of them were below the age of 30 years, while 90 (18.52%) of them where the age group of greater than 41 years. With respect the status of educational qualification majority 266 (54.73%) of respondents were first degree holder. The rest were 142 (29.22%) of them are Diploma/ certificate holder, 44(9.05%) of them are masters and above holder and the remaining 34 (6.99%) of them are 1th-12thgrade complete. The total distribution of study subjects among different nationality, majority of the participants 431 (88.68%) were Ethiopians. When we look at the duration of respondents as customers, employee and PR staff, 294 (60.49%) have an experience between one to three years. The rest 192 (39.5%) were had an experience between four to six years. This shows that majority of the respondents were new for the organization.

4.3 The Practice and Role of Public Relation

The questionnaire has 3 parts, the first two parts from this scale represent the respondents reported their judgment of public relation practice in relation to major tasks of public relation office practices and the role of public relation department office. For a response format, the 5-point Likert scale was utilized, with anchors of frequency (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree). The items on the scales include descriptions of major public relation tasks and the role PR department should fulfill. The highest mean score is respondents tend to report a strong agreement with the high-quality practice of public relation in EEP organization.

4.3.1 Descriptive Analysis

Table 3: Participants response about PR practice and the PR office role n=486

Categories	Mean	SD
PR Practice	2.57	.634
PR Office Role	2.91	.725

Source: Survey result (2020

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The total scores represent participants overall judgment about the practices of public relation in EEP organization. The mean/item of the total scores was below the median score of 3 in the 5-point scale (Total; *m/item* = 2.57 SD±.634). This shows that most respondents had rated the organization PR practice as poor. As it is observed from the above table, the total scores of respondent represent the role of PR office in public relation activities of EEP. The mean of the total scores was below to the median score of 3 in the 5-point scale (Total; *m/item* = 2.91 SD±.725). This also shows that most respondents had rated the PR office had not fulfilling its role as expected.

4.3.2 Inferential Statistics

Table 4: One-Sample Test result n=486

	Test Value = 3					
	T	**Df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Mean Difference**	**95% Confidence Interval of the Difference**	
					Lower	**Upper**
Practice	-14.772	485	.000	-.42500	-.4815	-.3685
Role	-2.883	485	.004	-.09488	-.1595	-.0302

Source: Survey result (2020)

One-sample t-tests were run with the test value of 3 (*Ho*: $\mu_2-\mu_1$ = 3) to test the significance of the total score. The result showed that there is significant difference in the mean/item between the respondents total scores mean and the expected average of mean 3.0 (t = -14.772, p = 0.000). This shows that participants reported the less quality PR service of EEP organization. The lowest mean score of respondent showing sampled participants reported a strong agreement with the low quality practice of public relation in the organization.

One-sample t-tests were run with the test value of 3 (*Ho*: $\mu_2-\mu_1$ = 3). The result showed that there is statistically significant difference in the mean between the respondents total scores mean and the expected average of mean 3.0 (t = -2.883, p = 0.004). The lowest mean score of respondent showing respondents reported a strong agreement with the PR office of EEP is not performing its role as expected. This means most of the participants agree that PR office is not tackling its main role of the office.

The data gathered from the interview also supports the finding of poor PR practice in EEP. Most of the interviewees agreed that low quality and poor service of PR but most of them said that it's because of different challenges faced in the organization. The interviewees also mentioned that the same reason why the EEP PR office is not talking its main role on creating the mutual understanding between the organization and customer.

4.4 Major Public Relation Tools

This study document review to provide a basis for extensive and thorough discussion about the major public relation tools/channels are used in EEP. The document review includes newspapers, magazines, videos, photos, proceeding, minutes, reports, organization policy, rule and regulations, press releases and websites.

Table 5 shows the distribution of major public relation tools/channels are used in EEP in the last six years. The major public relation tools 287 (51.07%) were of broadcasting media. The rest PR tools were 98 (17.44%) print media, 94 (16.73%) social media and the remaining 64 (11.38%) and 19 (3.38%) were outdoor media and sponsorship respectively.

Regarding the broadcasting media about 151 (26.87%) were press release, 121 (21.53%) were TV/Radio electric power interruption announcement, while 11 (1.96%) were press conference. With respect to print media Banners 64 (11.39%) were mainly used and followed by newsletter 22 (3.91%) and the rest 5 (0.89%) and 7 (1.25%) were brochures and bulletin respectively. Social media was mainly used by the PR relation office of EEP in the last three year. Before that even though there was a plat form of social media it was practically used by the PR office.

Table 5: Result of document analysis

Variables	Categories	No	Percent
Print Media	Bulletin	5	0.89
	Newsletter	22	3.91
	Brochures	7	1.25
	Banners	64	11.39
Broadcasting Media	Documentary	4	0.71
	TV/Radio Interruption Announcement	121	21.53
	Press Conference	11	1.96
	Press Release	151	26.87
Outdoor Media	Exhibition	5	0.89
	Seminar	5	0.89
	Field Visit	54	9.61
Social Media	Website/Facebook/Telegram	94	16.73
Sponsorship	Sponsorship	19	3.38

Source: EEP PR Office Annual Reports (2018/19)

4.5 The Challenges of PR practice

Despite all these interventions and the efforts of the different stakeholders are taking, it is glaring that the implementation of PR practice is still affected by many challenges. These challenges, as identified in this paper, relate to resources and equipment, leadership and management, cooperation from different stake holders and skilled human power (professionals). Table 6 Represent the summery of respondents reply on the challenges faced in PR practice.

Table 6: Challenges of PR practice n=486

No.	Items	Agree		Disagree	
		No	%	No	%
	Public relation in the organization				
1.	…is well understood by the staff members	183	**37.65**	303	**62.35**
2.	…is clearly identifiable from other disciplines (such as marketing and communication).	192	**39.51**	294	**60.49**
3.	…is well equipped and resourceful	276	**56.79**	210	**43.21**
4.	… has skilled human power (professionals)	102	**20.99**	384	**79.01**
5.	… has professional leadership	108	**22.22**	378	**77.78**

Source: Survey result (2020)

In interpreting the table above which shows the challenges of PR practice in EEP. Out of the 486 participants, 303 (62.3%) were disagreed that the organization is well understood by the staff members. The majority of respondent 384 (79.01%) also disagreed the presence of skilled human power (professionals). When the participants were asked about challenges of leadership, 378 (77.7%) disagreed about the presence of professional leadership.276 (56.7%) respondents also agreed that the PR office is well equipped and resourceful. and difficulty to clearly identifiable PR from other disciplines 294 (60.4%) were the challenges they face in EEP organization.

4.5.1 Interview Analysis

Furthermore, data was also collected through interview were analyzed through content analysis. In addition, the manager said that PR office was not successful as expected. Some of the reasons were: lack of skilled human power (professionals); Passive attitude towards the office (belittling) especially from the top leaders; Absence of adequate equipment and resource and structure of the office. The EEP officer also said that there was lack of coordination the PR office with other departments in the organization like Marketing and IT departments. The reasons are lack of awareness and lack of coordination among other stakeholders. The other main challenge of the PR and the organization as whole is lack of competitive organization since EEP is the only organization that provides electric service in Ethiopia. Generally, PR practice in EEP were

challenged by equipment and resource, skilled human power, professional leadership, staff members understanding and difficulty to clearly identifiable PR from other disciplines.

4.6 Discussion

This study was conducted to assess and evaluate the practices of public relations in Ethiopian Electric Power organization. The finding of the study revealed that the majority of participants reported the less quality and poor practice of PR in EEP organization. The finding was supported with other study carried out in Harar and Dire Dawa, Ethiopia showed that the practice of public relations in the towns under study is very deprived and highly challenging for effective performance and implementation of public relations activities. The practices of public relations in the study area have been subjected to a wrong perception of what public relations person actually does. The paper verified that there is a very little understanding of the major functions and roles of public relations in Harar and Dire Dawa towns including managers, journalist and practitioners because, public relations practitioners are rarely involved in strategic planning, in decision making and in following up the implementation of plans in their organizations (Geremew, 2017).

Another research conducted by Tesfaye (2018) revealed that the main roles of the universities public relations offices are not well understood by the university community as well as the external publics. Meanwhile, the PR offices were not structured and organized professionally which emanates from belittling its role especially from the top leaders in study. Eyasu (2019) conducted a research on "Assessing the Practices of Public Relations: The Case of Seka District Communication Office at Jimma Zone, Ethiopia". It was found out the practices of PR in Seka Chekorsa are good especially in establishing and maintaining relationship, and in creating friendly atmosphere of communication between organization and publics (internal and external publics). However, it is not effective because of some problems like lack of professional man power, working material and enough budgets.

As guidelines for PR office, the EEP stated a lot of duties and responsibilities for the office to reach into the public and to create mutual understanding. However, the findings of the study again revealed that most respondents agree that PR office is not performing its main role of the office. This research observation is consistent with findings of a study by Bereket (2015), PR

office role were identified as passive in reaching its publics (internal and external) on regular basis. According the respondents of the study, the PR office was not structured and organized professionally which emanates from belittling its role especially from the top leaders. The finding was consistent with the research conducted in Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation public relations in corporate reputation management showed that the public relations department of EBC is not capable of changing negative attitude of people towards an agency to favorable or positive. The department is not anticipating what will exist near the future regarding the public opinion and looking for solution. The department does not also evaluate the outcome or the effectiveness of its campaigns (Samson, 2018).

According to the research result, various public relation tools/channels are used in EEP in the last six years. The major public relation tools were broadcasting media, print media and social media. This observation is consistent with findings of a study conducted by Fekadu (2011) on "The practices and challenges of public relations on marketing and promoting tourist destination sites in the case of ANRS Cultural and Tourism Bureau". The result of the study indicated that majority of the interviewees mentioned that there was some effort in marketing and promoting tourist destination sites through different communication tools such as TV program, radio, prints, You Tube and others though the effort that was made in Gondar city by far than Bahir Dar city because Gondar city's promote tourist destination sites through BBC and CNN.

The results regarding the challenges PR practice faced by the EEP, various challenges were identified that relate to equipment and resource; skilled human power; leadership; passive attitude towards the office and structure of the office. A number of studies in Ethiopia support the finding that PR practice faced various challenges to provide quality service for the public (Bereket, 2015; Tesfay, 2018; Mulualem, 2017; Geremew, 2017). As to them, the main challenges stated by the practitioners were lack of the people trust on the office; Lack of skilled human power (professionals);passive attitude towards the office (belittling) especially from the top leaders; absence of adequate capacity building trainings; lack of media acceptance; structure of the office (personnel);lack of logistics(electronic) and financial constraint; lack sufficient budget allocations; absence of professional leadership; infrastructure (to reach village publics) reluctance of sector offices; lack of understanding and misconceptions towards the roles and functions; and inadequate assistance from other concerned bodies .

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

Among the participant of the study, majority of respondents were male; at age group of between 31 to 40 years; first degree holder and have worked in between one to three years. The participants overall judgment about the practices of public relation in EEP organization was below the median score of 3 in the 5-point scale (Total; *m/item* = 2.57 SD±.634). The role of PR office in public relation activities of EEP was below to the median score of 3 in the 5-point scale (Total; *m/item* = 2.91 SD±.725).The result one-sample t-tests showed that there is significant difference in the mean/item between the respondents total scores mean and the expected average of mean 3.0 (t = -14.772, p = 0.000). This shows that participants reported the less quality PR service of EEP organization and most of the participants agree that PR office is not tackling its main role of the office. The data gathered from the interview also supports the finding of poor PR practice in EEP and not talking its main role on creating the mutual understanding between the organization and customer.

The finding also shows major public relation tools 287 (51.07%) were of broadcasting media. The rest PR tools were 98 (17.44%) print media, 94 (16.73%) social media and the remaining 64 (11.38%) and 19 (3.38%) were outdoor media and sponsorship respectively. Regarding the challenges of PR practice in EEP, 303 (62.3%) were disagreed that the organization is well understood by the staff members. The majority of respondent 384 (79.01%) also disagreed the presence of skilled human power (professionals). When the participants were asked about challenges of leadership, 378 (77.7%) disagreed about the presence of professional leadership. 276 (56.7%) respondents also agreed that the PR office is well equipped and resourceful. and difficulty to clearly identifiable PR from other disciplines 294 (60.4%) were the challenges they face in EEP organization.

5.2 Conclusions

This is a descriptive design with mixed research approach that assesses the practices of public relations in Ethiopian Electric Power organization. A total of 486 customers and employee of EEP, public relation managers and officers of the organization at the head office were participated in the study. Structured questionnaire and interview were prepared by the researchers using related literature and adopted instrument and document analysis as data collection instrument.

According to the research result, the total score was below the median score of 3 in the 5-point scale which was also had statistically significant difference in the mean between the respondents' total scores mean and the expected average of mean. This shows that the majority of participants reported the less quality and poor practice of PR in EEP organization. The findings of the study again revealed that most respondents agree that PR office is not performing its main role of the office to reach into the public and to create mutual understanding.

The study used document review to provide a basis for extensive and thorough discussion about the major public relation tools/channels that are used in EEP. The document review includes newspapers, magazines, videos, photos, proceeding, minutes, reports, organization policy, rule and regulations, press releases and websites. The finding of the study shows that various public relation tools/channels are used in EEP in the last six years according to the PR office annual report. The major public relation tools were broadcasting media, print media and social media.

The results regarding the challenges of PR practice faced by the EEP, various challenges were identified that relate to equipment and resource; skilled human power; leadership; passive attitude towards the office and structure of the office through questionnaire. Furthermore, data collected through interview reveal Passive attitude towards the office (belittling) especially from the top leaders; Lack of coordination with other departments and lack of competitive organization since EEP is the only organization that provides electric service in Ethiopia.

5.3 Recommendations

Since PR has a tremendous influence on for the organization, the prevailing practice and challenge of the PR office should be assessed to provide effective and timely solution. On the basis of the conclusion made above the researcher forwards the following suggestions:

➢ PRs practice is very crucial for good organizational performance and achievements. However, PR practice of EEP was poor and less quality. Therefore, EEP should provide great attention and increase effort to make a difference on the organization public relation office and activities by changing structure, leaders and sufficient budget.

➢ The organization should work to provide capacity building training and program for the present PR practitioners to strengthen professional practice of public relations since there is a gap in skilled and professional human power and PR office is not performing its main role.

➢ The public relation department must try to make an effort to create two-way communication and common understanding between the company and customers using up to date and various PR tools by increasing their frequency too. Since there was a limitation of using website and social media as tool and low frequency of PR tools in the department.

➢ The PR office should be structured and lead by PRs professionals to create trust between government and local community in order to engage the community in every government activities. Because there was a challenge on the structure of the PRs office and less co-operation with the management body. So, the organization should empower the leaders of PR office.

➢ In handling customers' complains and questions, the PRs office of EEP should focus on its information centers and personnel working in those centers. By implementing latest information technologies and by updating the personnel with those technologies the problem of the organization can be minimized.

> The organization PRs department should focus on facilitating meetings with the public. The PRs department should focus on the development of the information centers in number as well as quality and capacity of the centers in making information easily accessible.

5.4 Direction of Further Research

This study attempts to explore the impact of public relations practices at the organization headquarters. As a result, in this study it has been attempted to assess main practice, role and challenges of public relations. However, as the complexity of the company, the researcher believes that similar studies should be conducted by other researchers to get more indicators and finding on the public relation.

If further studies could be taken particularly rely on the practice of PRs on customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and customer reputation using other research methodologies, it will give an opportunity to alleviate practical problem facing in the field. Researchers should done further investigation and repeat the study with an into consideration variables that did not consider in this research and other data gathering instruments to fill the gaps of the study and come up a comprehensive finding.

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Appendix

St. Mary University

Faculty of Business

Department of Marketing management

Questioners to be fill by Customer

This questionnaire is prepared by a prospect graduate student of St. Mary University in the field of marketing management for the partial fulfillment of a thesis in order to assess the public relation practice of Ethiopian Electric Power. Your genuine answer will have much use for the research paper. Fill all answer dedicatedly and honestly just by taking a few minutes out of your precious time. All information you provide to this study will be kept strictly confidential. Thank you in advance for filling this questionnaire.

General Direction

- ❖ No need to write your name
- ❖ Please put a tick (√) mark corresponding to your response
- ❖ Please write short and precise answer

Part I. Personal Information

1. Gender: Male ☐   Female ☐

2. Age: Less than 30 ☐   31 to 40 ☐   Greater than 41 ☐

3. Educational Background

   1-12 grade ☐   Certificate/Diploma ☐   1st Degree ☐

   Master and above ☐

4. Nationality: Ethiopian ☐   Non-Ethiopian ☐

5. For how long has been customer/employee/PR officer/ PR manager of the Ethiopian Electric Power:

   1-3 years ☐   4-6years ☐

Part II. Public Relations in Practices

The statements below refer to the activities currently performed by the public relations department or division in EEP. Use the following scale to indicate the extent of your disagreement or agreement with the statements:

1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Works towards creating common understanding with its publics					
2.	Works hard in creating positive image in the minds of the external publics					
3.	Organizes special events (e.g. exhibitions, workshop, seminar).					
4.	Participates actively in sponsoring social support activities					
5.	Participates in a community services in order to create a better relationship					
6.	Provides adequate communication through radio, to avail information and establish ongoing communication with its customer					
7.	Provides adequate communication through TV, to avail information and establish ongoing communication with its customer					
8.	Provides adequate communication using online media, to avail information and establish ongoing communication with its customer					
9.	Provides adequate communication using print media, to avail information and establish ongoing communication with its customer					
10.	Provides timely information to the external public					
11.	Takes information from its customers as an input to make corrective action					
12.	The organization PR activities are compatibility with the public interest					
13.	EEP public relation office help the organization retain its customer					
14.	Develop public relations strategy that supports corporate strategy.					
15.	Edit public relations materials (e.g. speeches/ annual report).					

Part III. The role Public Relation office

The statements below refer to the major role of the public relations department or division in EEP. Use the following scale to indicate the extent of your disagreement or agreement with the statements:

1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

No.	Statement - PR office works on	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Building good image of the organization in its customer					
2.	Maintaining relationship between the internal or external and the organization					
3.	Making advantages of both organization and its publics					
4.	Identifying public problems and finding solutions					
5.	To be well recognized and influential					
6.	Every activity it is concerned independently					

Part IV. The Possible Challenges of Public Relations

The statements below refer to the possible challenges of the public relations department or division in EEP. Indicate whether you agree or disagree with the statements:

No.	Statement - Public relation in the organization	Agree	Disagree
1.	…is well understood by both the top managers and staff members		
2.	…is clearly identifiable from other disciplines (such as marketing and communication).		
3.	…is well equipped and resourceful		
4.	…is to handle public complaints (if any) properly		
5.	… has skilled human power (professionals)		
6.	… has professional leadership		

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

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St. Mary University

Faculty of Business

Department of Marketing management

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Dear Public Relation department managers and officers

These interview questions are prepared basically to solicit information from the public relation manager and officers in order to identify problem areas on the public relation practice of Ethiopian Electric Power and give possible recommendations after assign the public relation activities and practices.

I. Personal biography

A. How long have you been working in the EEP?

B. How long have you been working in your current position?

C. Have you ever assumed any other position in the department other than your current position?

II. Interview questions

1. What do you think about EEP effort and your department contribution on creating common understanding with the customers and the external public?

2. What are the mechanisms that your department is using on making relationship with the public and stakeholders?

3. What do you think about your current public relation activities on being effective enough to maintain good relationship with your customers and retain them as a result?

4. How do you see the compatibility of your department's activities with the interest of your customers and the external public?

5. How does the overall public relation practice of the organization looks like in your own opinion?

6. What do you think are the major challenges of public relation in the organization?

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