



Exploring the effectiveness of public relations practices in the public sector: A Namibian case study

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ABSTRACT

Public relations remains a profession that is admired in most Sub-African countries including Namibia. According to Grunig (2008, p. 4), public relations and communication management denote a process of planning, executing and evaluating the organisation's communication with both internal (employees, directors, and board members) and external (media, teachers, customers, unionists, and community members) publics. This study covered the effectiveness of public relations practices in the Namibian government ministries which include communication practices and management. The theoretical framework of this study is based on PR activities, tools and parameters of the Excellence Theory that depict the value of PR in the public sector. The study targeted over 40 public relations officers in 24 government ministries in Namibia. Questionnaires were distributed to public relations officers and media officers in the ministries.

The random sampling method was used to select the participants in this study. The researcher aimed for rich data, therefore, official documents such as annual reports on the activities of PROs in the government, ministerial communication strategy, Government Communication plan, Social Media Policy and other relevant documents were used. The qualitative method remained a predominately research method of this study. Based on the selected qualitative research method, data were interpreted and analysed considering the objective of the research. The chosen data analysis for this study was descriptive analysis.

Keywords: Public Relations Practice, Strategic Management, Excellence Theory, Models of Public Relations, Knowledge Potential, Communication Strategy

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DECLARATION

I, **Maria Etuna Shikalepo (Aindongo)** confirm that:

- ✓ This Research Report contains my own, original ideas and work
- ✓ The ideas and works that are not my own have been cited through the prescribed referencing system (APA)
- ✓ I have not submitted the ideas or work contained in this Research Report for any other tertiary education credit
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the study and the purpose of carrying out this research. The study is based on the Public Relations practice in the Namibian government ministries. The Public Relations practice pertaining to government activities, actions and programmes has been a concern in Namibia. Thus, this research paper explored those concerns so as to measure the effectiveness of public relations' activities in the public sector through a descriptive study. According to Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2012, p.10), excellent studies aim to give a clear picture of how the public relations profession should be practised in order to enhance relationships.

Du Plessis (2000, p.16) describes Public Relations as a “distinctive management function which helps, establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organisation and its publics”. According to Lee, Neeley and Stewart (2012, p. 207), Public Relations Practitioners in the government setup play a significant role in improving organisational reputation through public awareness, education and informative ways. Namibia has 24 government ministries with public relations divisions that are responsible for communicating, educating and informing the public about government policies and activities. Every ministry has two or three public relations practitioners that are responsible for portraying the image of the ministry and coordinating the ministry's activities with the internal as well as the external publics.

Therefore, the study focused on all 24 ministries with the target population of about 40 public relations practitioners and 20 random selected samples formed part of this study. The subsections covered in this study are the following: contextualisation of the study that gives the overview of the public relations industry in Namibia; problem statement; research objectives; research questions; literature review; theoretical framework; research methodology; data collection instruments; data analysis methods; sampling;

research population; and ethical considerations. The next section provides a contextualisation of the study.

1.2 Contextualisation of the study

Public relations (PR) is primarily about the creation of reputation for the organisation and its mandate. The functions of public relations are very diverse and interchangeable. Reddi (2009, p. 163) explains public relations as a way of promoting the corporate reputation by taking the correct and well informed message to the intended publics about the service and products of the entity. According to Mogel (2008, p. 9), the functions of a Public Relations practitioner include coordinating media relations for the organisation and its divisions; planning and implementing the organisation's PR activities, public services and public interest programmes; writing speeches for executives; writing press releases; arranging speakers, organising meetings and events; writing and editing house publications, newsletters and employee communications; acting as spokesperson for the organisation in the event of an accident or disaster; and arranging press/media conferences.

Public Relations practitioners in government offices are expected to facilitate and advocate for government activities with the general public. According to Gregory (2004, p. 2), public relations is responsible for bringing up subjects of national concern including government policies, global trade, and social justice, and it remains a mouth-piece of the voiceless in the society. Thus, effectiveness in public relations practices within the government sector is highly essential. Effective public relations practices continue to be an essential requirement in government institutions as to assist the organisation in promoting and disseminating information on policies and programmes (Reddi, 2009, p. 36). According to the Communication Plan 2016/17-2019/20 by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT) in Namibia, "public relations remain a function in the public service that affords the incumbent public relations practitioner the opportunity to manage and disseminate information to both internal and external publics". Van Ruler and Vercic (2004, p. 449) report that there is

lack of understanding about the principles of Public Relations in most public institutions which may cause insufficient and ineffective PR activities. Also, it may create wrong perceptions about the nature of PR in public institutions. Van Ruler and Vercic (2004, p. 449) further argue that PR in the private sector has over-shadowed PR in the public sector due to a lack of PR understanding by the internal publics in public sector organisations.

Being part of the external publics and understanding the necessity of the public relations division in any organisation, journalists take up the public relations job in the public sector. Mutumbo (2014) points out that former journalists mostly take up public relations vacancies in the public institutions because they are expressive about the communication industry. In Nigeria, Oyedokun (2012) found out that many of the publicity officers recruited in the country were former journalists and these were used to disseminate government information. Furthermore, Mutumbo observed that PR practitioners in government institutions are mostly confined to media releases, speech writing, photography, reports and trade fairs as they practice the one-way symmetrical than two-way asymmetrical communication style. Dwyer (2013, p. 285) explains that the practice of two-way asymmetrical communication allows the public to understand organisational ways of thinking rather than creating a mutual relationship and changing policies in response to feedback from the publics.

As per the Communication Plan 2016/17-2019/20 by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT), the Cabinet Decision 4th/15.02.200/006, states that “in order to become involved in strategic planning, all Offices/Ministries/Agencies (O/M/As) should ensure that Public Relations Officers have immediate and full access to political office bearers and senior managers to obtain comments or factual information to enable them to react to media reports with the assistance of the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT)”. The Communication Plan 2016/17-2019/20 was set up by the MICT as a guideline for all government Public Relations Practitioners on how to provide access to public information. The Plan further notes that Government

Public Relations Officers should also be given an opportunity to attend management meetings, to allow them to have first-hand information on developments in the institutions they are serving. Although quite progressive, these initiatives still depict a technical role where PR practitioners are expected to attend to the media queries than to seat and actually contribute to the decision making process.

Therefore, there is a need to understand how public relation professionals in the public sector can be good mediators between the society (public) and government in the delivery of government policies and programmes. This is made possible by the investigation of the effectiveness of PR in the public sector. The next subsection provides an overview of the Public Relations industry in Namibia.

1.3 PR industry in Namibia

The Public Relations industry in Namibia was introduced to the public sector since the country's independence in 1990. Public and private institutions found it necessary to have a mouthpiece responsible for communicating institutional information to all external and internal publics, hence the introduction of public relations practitioners. Some of the principles of the public relations field are to have good writing skills, critical thinking, reading skills, editing and excellent presentation skills. Thus, Theaker and Yaxley (2013, p.17) propose that PR practitioners require good writing and editing skills in order to communicate information clearly and concisely with different publics of the organisation using different channels of communication. However, Ikosa (2014) found that public relations in Namibia have been encountering different challenges such as absence of critical thinking, poor writing and editing skills. Wise (2005) observes that writing skill remains one of the foundations of a successful public relations practitioner and the ability to communicate messages clearly and concisely to the publics.

For excellence in public relations practise, public relations practitioners are advised to join organisations or associations that enrich their skills and knowledge and learn from others. The Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA) is one of the

organisations that recognises and motivates professionals in PR and communication management throughout the Southern African Region including Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and South Africa. A research by Mutumbo (2014) found out that there are only five Accredited Public Relations Practitioners in Namibia and Namibia has recently set up a national PR body (PRISA Namibia). Ikosa (2014) found that while local PR practitioners have good strength in media relations and good public speaking expertise, there is a need to train them on how to plant intelligence into top managements on strategic stakeholder issues. The latter can create a good working relationship between PR practitioners and top management teams in institutions.

The study focused on exploring the extent to which excellent public relations is practiced, as well as how it is organised and maintained in the Namibian public sector. The study attempted to explore the extent to which PR practitioners are well informed, trained and knowledgeable about their roles towards the strategic development of the ministries. Edwards (2015, p. 27) made a similar inference that PR practitioners in government institutions have been recruited from the media industry and learnt PR activities on the job. This implies that few PR practitioners are dominantly trained in the press agency and public information roles than any strategic role. In short, the practice of public relations in government offices in Namibia has been regarded as ineffective based on the slow dissemination of information, programmes and policies. The other drawback relates to the slow process and little responses to media enquiries. According to a research done by David (2018), managers in the public sector have recently noted the importance of public relations and thus emphasised the creation of good relationships between managers and Public Relations practitioners in order to timely disseminate relevant information to the public. David also found out that public relations requires support from all stakeholders to enable them to execute their duties. The next section provides a problem statement that guided this study.

1.4 Problem statement

The role of Public Relations in government ministries is crucial as it impacts upon the lives of many in the society. One of the important organs in any organisation is the public relations division as mandated to execute the organisation's strategic plans (Lee 2008, p. 8). Therefore, there is a need to practice public relations effectively in order to meet the need of the society. The latter can be achieved through the appreciation and support of the public relations departments or subsections in the government ministries. The visibility of public relations through proactive participation and discussion in different forums in assisting management in government cannot be overstated. They must be able to demonstrate their value to the organisation in order to justify their existence.

The objective of the study is to investigate the effectiveness of the PR practice in selected Namibian government offices using the excellence study as a foundation or benchmark to gauge effectiveness. According to Toth (2007, p. 104), excellence studies are essential for government ministries. This basically enhances communication between ministries and their internal and external publics. Public relations excellence assists to explain how the relationships between ministries and their publics can be managed (Heath 2001, pp.111-112). The next section provides the research objectives of the study.

1.5 Research objectives

The primary objective of this study is to explore the effectiveness of the public relations practice in the Namibian government ministries. The study was measured using the excellence theory in evaluating how public relations is organised, practiced and managed in order to enhance relationships with citizens. The significant objectives include:

- To explore the roles and functions of PR in the Namibian government ministries;
- To explore the extent to which the standards of communication excellence are upheld by selected government public relations departments in Namibia; and
- To explore how public relations in government ministries should be organised, practiced and managed in order to enhance relationships with citizens.

The study involved descriptive and graphic information to illustrate the findings of the research. Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006, p. 44) explain that a descriptive study intends to define aspects accurately by narrating, classifying and measuring the relationships. This was done by analysing the opinions of PR practitioners as the identified target population. The next section provides the research questions of the study.

1.6 Research questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the following issues in government ministries in Namibia. The main question remained: *How effective is the public relations practice in the government ministries?*

- *What are the roles and functions of PR in the Namibian government ministries?*
- *To what extent are the standards of communication excellence upheld by selected government public relations departments in Namibia?*
- *How should public relations in government ministries be organised, practiced and managed in order to enhance relationships with citizens?*

1.7 Methodology summary

Interpretative research focuses on understanding the human experience about the working environment (Wagner et al., 2012, p. 56). This study uses the interpretivist paradigm that aims at understanding Public Relations Practitioners' experiences with regards to how and why they execute their duty in such a manner. This study was conducted using the qualitative method. The data was collected through questionnaires which were distributed to PR practitioners in all government ministries in the country. A total of 20 participants was selected through random sampling as final respondents for this study.

1.8 Limitations of the study

The researcher found it difficult to collect questionnaires back from some respondents due to the declaration of the state of emergency on Corona Virus (COVID 19) in the

country. The country was under lockdown during the period of collecting the data. It was difficult for the researcher to balance work and study during the critical period of COVID 19. As all respondents were government employees, some of them took time to respond due to their hectic schedules and country lock down period.

1.9 Outline of the study

The study comprises of five (5) Chapters. **Chapter one** outlines the overview introduction by underlining the contextualisation of the study, the public relations industry in Namibia, problem statement, research objectives, study questions and study limitations. **Chapter two** presents the literature review and theoretical framework by looking at the studies done as relevant to this research topic. **Chapter three** focuses on the research methodology provided to collect and analyse data including the research design, research paradigm, data collection instruments, data analysis, sampling, research population, reliability and validity, and ethical considerations. **Chapter four** depicts the findings, data analysis and presentation of data collected through questionnaires. **Chapter five** presents the study conclusion and recommendations and includes possible future research areas.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of the work regarding the chosen research topic of exploring the effectiveness of the public relations practice in the Namibian government ministries. Thus, the literature review covers public relations in general, public relations in government ministries and theoretical framework for the Excellence Theory. The Public Relations profession remains an essential part of the workforce that contributes significantly to the development and achievement of the institution of which government ministries are of no exception. The main purpose of excellent public relations practices in government ministries is mainly to create a good relationship between the ministry and its internal and external publics and for the organisation to achieve its goals and objectives. Thus, excellent public relations practitioners are expected to be loyal to both the organisation and the internal and external publics of the ministry. The literature review in this paper surrounds the work of public relations practitioners, information management and dissemination in the government, the kind of public relations tools used and how effective is their work towards the functionality of government ministries in Namibia and their engagement with the publics.

2.2 Defining public relations

Public relations is a self-defined term that refers to the relationship that exists between the government or private sector with the internal and external publics. Through excellent communication, public relations activities and programmes are expected to be provided to publics timely. Smith (2013, p.3) defines strategic communication as a process in building mutually beneficial relationships between organisations and their publics. Mogel (2008, p. 41) explains public relations as an involvement of several activities which include the provision of the information to the public, persuading the public to change their attitudes and actions, and the integration of the ministry's attitude and action to that of the publics. Baines, Egan and Jefkins (2004, p. 84) further highlight that excellent public relations practices requires excellent communication between an organisation and its

publics in achieving the common objectives. Baines et al. (2004, p. 7) define the public relations practice as the art and social science that is designed to analyse trends and implement the planned action programmes in an organisation. Considering the definitions and examples provided above, excellent public relations practices in any organisation is fundamental and needs to be supported at all times. The success of the public relations practice has been measured by Lee (2008, p. 01) based on its ability to serve the both internal and external publics' interest.

2.3 Government public relations

Government public relations focusses mainly on the dissemination of information that is factual and clear to all internal and external publics. Lee (2008, p. 1) explains that government public relations assists the government to accomplish its goals and objectives by disseminating programmes and activities based on two-way symmetrical communications. Government communications mostly refers to the way of directing information to the large public through public meetings, PR campaigns, press releases and press conferences. Lee, Neeley and Stewart (2012, p. 01) explain that public relations in the government has been regarded as the most important tool in advancing the operations of public services to influence public behaviours. Lee (2008, p. 7) outlines some of the public relations' functions in the government which include the excellent responsiveness to the public queries, building excellent media relations, practicing excellent public reporting and increasing the utilisation of public information campaigns, seeking voluntary public compliance with laws and regulations and increasing public support.

The government's openness and accountability depends on the decentralisation of government communication activities and its willingness to assist the nation (Butterick 2011, p. 181). This means that the public relations divisions are authorised to lobby for support from both parties (government and citizens). Internal publics include employees, directors, and board members of the organisation while the external publics include the media, teachers, customers and community members (Seitel, 2014, p.12). Therefore,

internal communications in government ministries mostly benefits staff members and stakeholders of the ministry, while external communications cater for external audiences.

Public relations in the government is more concerned about how government offices should represent people at the grassroots level. To create a good relationship with people at the grassroots level, the public relations' boundary-spanning role acts as liaison between the government and the publics. Grunig (2008, p. 70) acknowledges that public relations practitioners are therefore optimally positioned to play a boundary-spanning role between the organisation and its publics by keeping the institution informed of what is externally and internally happening which may affect the performance of the organisation. Thus, Reddi (2009, p. 93) acknowledges that the public relations practice in its boundary spanning role helps in keeping the organisation aware, so as to accept and adapt to changes accordingly. Ikosa (2014) posits that there is a need for Namibian public relations practitioners to assess the communication imbalances and identify issues affecting the performance of the organisations by conducting environmental scanning. Environmental scanning remains a mechanism by which the organisation should use through research to gather and analyse data (Kitchen, 1997, p.60). Thus, Ledingham (2003) notes the need for public relations practitioners to carry out an organisational-public relations assessment to align the organisation's interests to those of its publics. Thus, Kitchen (1997, p. 60) further observes that the contribution to the strategic decision-making process can be realised through boundary spanning which could also assist organisations in managing changes.

Meanwhile, Lee et al. (2012, p.145) illustrate that one of the standards of excellent communication is to ensure that lawmakers are responsive to the public's demands in such a way that communities are able to hold the ministries accountable on the implementation of programmes and plan of actions that advance their living conditions. Thus, Lee et al. (2012, p.160) acknowledge that the importance of government public relations is to assist in facilitating communications with constituencies and government publics. Hence, public relations practitioners in government offices are tasked with

providing information on policies, plans and achievements, and informing and educating the public on regulations and legislations concerning the society (Toth, 2007, p.102). The next section discusses the functions of public relations in the public sector.

2.3.1 Nature of PR in Namibian government sector

In other African countries, the public relations industry has grown tremendously compared to Namibia where it started after the country's independence in 1990. Even though little has been documented regarding the public relations practice in Africa, Oyedokun (2012) however, highlights that public relations in Nigeria started with the establishment of the newspaper called 'Iwe Irohid' that provided information concerning missionary activities as well as political activities in the country. In Namibia, Manetti (2018) notes that the Public Relations industry in Namibia has shown some prospects of growth and transformation over the past years, adding that the advancement from traditional media to online outlets is classical evidence. The traditional media such as radio and newspapers have been the main tools of public relations practitioners that have been used to communicate information to the intended group.

The Namibian government has developed a Plan of Action document, called the Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPP) with the aim to increase development in various defined economic areas. One of the pillars of the HPP is 'Effective governance and service delivery'. Thus the government through the MICT has developed a social media use policy and implementation plan in July 2016 as the guidelines for all Offices/Ministries/Agencies (O/M/As) to establish the social media platforms to connect with their publics. It is a government directive that all government institutions should incorporate social media platforms in their communication plan and utilise them wisely and effectively as channels of communication. Social media platforms include Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, LinkedIn and Facebook.

Eyrich, Padman and Sweetser (2008) note that social media has moved from traditional media to strategic tools where most public relations practitioners are developing

knowledge and skills on the use of online communication technology. However, the research done by Macnamara and Zerfass (2012) reveals that a few public relations officers have some understanding and knowledge of using and maintaining the social media platforms. The present researcher has observed that a few Namibian government ministries are currently adhering to the government directive of using the social media platforms. Thus, the question remains as to why some public relations practitioners do not make use of social media to disseminate information.

In addition, the government through the MICT has developed a communication strategy; “Providing Access to Public Information: Communication Plan 2016/17-2019/20”, as a guideline with substantive implementation plans for all government offices, ministries agencies, regional councils and local authorities in the country. The research by Kashuupulwa (2018) suggests that public relations duties should be clearly outlined so that they can become the only source of information in the ministry but not the Executive Director or Directors in the directorates. The plan highlights all the duties of the Public Relations practitioners that aim to improve accountability and transparency in the government offices. Thus, it is important for public relations practitioners to be well informed about the development in their ministries and their responsibilities therein.

David (2018) and Mutambo (2014) note that some public relations practitioners in the OMAs are in managerial position and some attend management meetings in order to have first-hand information for them to be able to answer to the media inquiries and public issues. Bowen (2010, p. 77) reasons that public relations uses communication through the media to persuade the internal and external publics. However, Kashuupulwa (2018) observes that public relations practitioners in the ministries always push journalists to senior management or Executive Directors to get answers to their inquiries. The research by David (2018) reveals that limited government information, activities and programmes are communicated to the public through only local newspapers and television. Thus, Kashuupulwa recommends for public relations practitioners to be proactive and make use

of both channels of communication to educate and inform the nation on the government activities.

As per the government's communication plan, public relations officers in Namibia are also required to disseminate information to the internal public by conducting meetings, develop and maintain the intranet, publishing the internal newsletter, and maintain and update the notice board. According to Haikera (2005), some public relations practitioners have failed to disseminate information to the employees which demonstrates a lack of employee relations as part of the public relations function in the organisation. Haikera further notes that some employees receive information through their managers and supervisors, whereas some organisations receive information through the ministry newsletters, annual reports, notice boards and directorate meetings. In this context, external communication involves the announcement of government activities and programmes to the external stakeholders with the purpose of shaping the environment and creating strong relationships.

2.3.2 Challenges of PR in the government sector

According to studies by local researchers, public relations departments in the Namibian government sector have been facing challenges due to the misunderstandings and misconceptions among government employees, top management and politicians about the importance of the public relations division in the ministries. It may accelerate the underperformance of some government public relations practitioners to provide quality and well-informed information about the Ministry to the intended group or publics. Some of the challenges noted by Ikosa (2014) include lack of transparency, political interference, and bureaucracy strangleholds among others. Kirat (2005) notes some of the challenges affecting the public sector as including the misunderstanding of the profession from top management; lack of budget allocations to the PR department; lack of personnel at the PR; small size of the PR department; unqualified and inexperienced

PR practitioners; mix-up of tasks and entitlements; lack of formal research; and absence of the PR department in the decision making process in the organisation.

David (2018) explains that there should not be interference in the work of the public relations practitioners as public relations practitioners have the final message as to what is happening in the ministry. Thus, Kirat (2005) suggests that for a better use and practice of public relations, top management, officials, politicians and practitioners should understand clearly the necessity and functions of public relations in order to correct the misconceptions and misunderstandings. Most of the government ministries have set up the institutions' core values that include transparency and accountability. The government of Namibia has also set up the core principles of the public service charter that stands as the commandments of all public servants.

Toth (2007, p. 145) maintains that transparency can create trust, dialogue, and collaboration with the public and enhance accountability in the organisation. Thus, PR practitioners are authorised to give a helping hand to the government's management and politicians who are the first main source of information to be disseminated to the publics. David (2018) recommends that public relations practitioners in government should be proactive and good innovators to approach the management team when they are unhappy about a certain aspect. Kirat (2005) notes that effective and excellent public relations practices should be maintained in researching and crafting a strategic plan which aims to create an excellent corporate image of the institution.

Some Namibian institutions have been encountering problems with people who apply for public relations positions because of lack of critical thinking, poor grammar and editing skills, and lack of ability to learn things that are not within the area of their field of specialisation (Ikosa 2014). Kim and Reber (2009) observe that some public relations officers lack critical thinking skills, editing skills and an understanding on how the business should operate and they are unable them to execute their duties.

Public relations is a broad field that requires a comprehensive understanding about social, economic and organisational issues. Since Namibia's independence in 1990 and the growth of the industry, the field of public relations has been introduced in the country's institutions of higher learning. The University of Namibia (UNAM) introduced a diploma in public relations in 2015 and the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) issues a course in communication to train inspiring Public Relations officers in the country. However, these two universities have been offering training in the field of journalism or media studies which cover modules that include public relations, corporate communication, marketing communication, crisis communication and branding. Thus, most of the public relations officers in the government sector have emerged from journalism based on their qualifications in media studies or journalism and little training in public relations and corporate communication. Ledingham (2003) notes that the management function of public relations requires practitioners to be trained in management process to enable them to apply these skills to public relations problems and opportunities. Kirat (2005) suggests that public relations practitioners must be well trained in writing, communication as well as having good skills of research, opinion polls, ethics and leadership. Such managerial skills are essential for strategic and effective public relations practices in the public sector.

In addition to the challenges of public relations, Macnamara and Zerfass (2012) explain that the issue of lack of knowledge and understanding on how to maintain the social media platform need to be addressed for public relations officers for them to be educated or trained on how to use the platforms to achieve the balance in organisational social media engagement. Ikosa (2014) notes that there is a need for public relations practitioners to under-go training on how to implement social media tools as well as the emerging technological communication tools such as Twitter, Facebook, and Flickr. Kirat (2005) notes that PR requires qualified practitioners' ethics, leadership and patience as PR becomes a developed profession and a job that grows exponentially.

Ikosa (2014) has observed that there are some PR issues that need to be addressed through the PRISA Namibia as an organisation such as the introduction of the PR Code of Ethics booklet that applies to the Namibian context. According to Kirat (2005), public organisations need effective two-way communication for them to interact with their publics through research, strategic planning and management in order to serve them efficiently and professionally. The PR Code of Ethics is a starting point towards achieving this goal. The effective public relations practice in the government should be regarded as an important engine for advancing the operation of public services in Namibia. We focus next on the functions and roles of public relations.

2.4 Public relations functions and roles

Public relations has a significant role in promoting the organisation's objectivities. Heath and Coombs (2006, p. 08) point out those public relations functions that are strategic actions that a public relations practitioner or a public relations unit performs in its day-to-day operations as well as in long-term planning. The position of the public relations function within the organisation has more influence on the execution of the organisation's objectives. Thus, Angelopulo and Barker (2013, p. 235) state that the main aim of public relations is to create good relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders through the interpretation function, communication function and management process.

2.4.1 PR as interpretation

Public relations' interpretation function involves the responsibility of understanding and meeting the need of the organisation, stakeholders and society in general (Angelopulo & Barker, 2013). This means that public relations practitioners should be in a position to always clearly translate the ministry's policies, actions, programmes and plans to its publics. In addition, Bowen (2010, p. 11) found out that the public relations practitioner should act like a counsellor to the top management on the attitudes of the public and translate private aims into reasonable action. The communication function of public relations mainly focusses on the dissemination of relevant information to the targeted publics. Narula (2006, p. 242) combined the functions of public relations into four main

functions such as building images, projecting images and sustaining those images. Narual further elucidated that the common function of government public relations is to inform, educate and motivate the public and business community about the programmes and adhere to the rules and regulations.

Bowen (2010, p. 21) found out that media relations is one of the public relations roles when organisations are dealing with the external communication. The main reason is to connect the public to the ministry through different tools of public relations. These tools as mentioned by Bowen (2010, p. 22) include the production of the public relations materials such as news releases, brochures, video news, website update, press kits and social media interaction. Ledingham (2003) acknowledges that public relations functions such as special events, public affairs, development, and press relations are not part of communication but practice areas that are distinct from communication production such as the preparation of news releases, speeches, and annual reports. Narula (2006, p. 243) notes that these public relations activities can be channelled to the media through the space bought (advertorial) or courtesy of media channels. This involves the public relations strategies that are used to build public opinion, create visibility for the programmes, create credibility for the government and do active publicity (Narula 2006, p. 242).

2.4.2 PR as communication

Another public relations function is the communication function that involves the sender, message, receiver and feedback (Bowen, 2010, p. 10). The most important aspect of communication is to understand the message of others through listening and dialogue, from which feedback can be provided. In this undertaking, communication management involves the monitoring of media coverage, monitoring of social media and internal environment. Heath and Coombs (2006, p. 8) observe that some of the public relations functions that are supporting communication in the organisation include strategic

planning, research, publicity, promotion, monitoring, crisis management and collaborative decision-making.

Angelopulo and Barker (2013, p. 32) note that strategic planning involves decisions on the implementation of strategy by various functions or departments in the organisation. In terms of the strategic planning function, the implementation thereof in government can place the ministry in the position to respond to the needs and opinions of others (Heath & Coombs, 2006, p. 08). It also involves the counselling of management's efforts to align their interests with those of their publics. According to Narula (2006, p. 245), the public relations research function is a necessary component that provides feedback on public relations activities focusing on credibility, acceptability and effectiveness of the message that is sent to the publics. Research can be used to obtain data that can be used to refine planning decisions regarding which publicity actions and promotional campaigns can get the ministry's message to the public (Heath & Coombs, 2006, p. 9). Research further helps to identify threats and opportunities in the ministry and this supports an understanding of the contexts that involve employees, media and members of the public.

The publicity function has a major contribution in the society such as attracting individual attention about the specific actions of the ministry. This function involves mainly the media coverage in informing the public about certain services or products. According to Seitel (2014, p. 13), publicity is defined as the public relations function through public relations campaigns that aim to generate positive publicity for the organisation.

In terms of the promotional function, Heath and Coombs (2006, p. 09) note promotion as an involvement of several activities or actions that transpire for some times so as to attract customers' attentions. In the government system, public relations practitioners have the responsibility to promote their ministry's products and services through exhibition and trade fairs. According to Mersham (2004, p. 244), the main idea behind

exhibition and trade fairs is to promote the organisation's products and services; generate press coverage and enhance the ministry's image.

The collaborative decision-making explained by Heath and Coombs (2006, p.10) is that public relations is involved in the counselling of the management team so as to foster a decision-making style that respects the concerns of the public that is affected by the decision. Thus, there is a need to have a close relationship between the public relations practitioners and the management team in the organisation. Muleya (2003) acknowledges that public relations practitioners should be able to advise and counsel the top management on decision-making, what is good for the organisation and employees in order to keep trust and earn some respect among other organisations. Mogel (2008, p. 43) notes that public relations practitioners provide knowledge and the techniques relating to public relations duties and functions to enable the management team to be more effective which will lead to the effectiveness of the organisation.

In addition to the above functions, Seitel (2014, p.13) highlights some of the common functions of public relations as involve writing, media relations, planning, counselling, researching, publicity, marketing communication, community relations, consumer relations, employee relations, government affairs, investor relations, public affairs, advertising, event management and crisis management.

2. 5. Public relations and organisational effectiveness

Organisational effectiveness is a complex topic with different definitions as provided by some researchers. Botan and Hazleton (2009, p. 32) explain that organisational effectiveness involves competing values, strategic publics and goal attainment. The goal attainment means the organisations are effective when they meet the set goals. According to Seitel (2014, p. 95), an organisation's goals must define what its public relations goals should be and those goals should be able to be measured. Based on the Excellence Theory (Grunig, 2002), the organisation should be effective when solving the problems and satisfying the goals of the publics as well as of management. According to

Seitel (2014, p. 91), public relations practitioners should not forget their responsibility to enhance the organisation's credibility by ensuring that corporate actions are in the interest of the publics. The public relations practitioners have been valued as contributing factors to the effectiveness of any organisation, private or public sector. Kitchen (1997, p. 61) argues that the public relations function has some contributing factors to the organisation's effectiveness by using communication programmes to build relationships with the publics of the organisation. The efficiency and effectiveness of public relations in the public sector have been measured based on the quality of the institution (Heath & Coombs, 2006, p. 202).

2. 6. Effectiveness of the public relations practice

The effectiveness of the public relations practice is basically determined by different factors such as the skills, attitude, trust, knowledge and ability to effectively communicate the organisational activities and programmes. Faten and Muhammad (2018) argue that skills and attitudes are the most significant factors contributing to effectiveness in the public relations practice in any organisation. This is supported by Ikosa (2014), who argues that public relations practitioners require skills in many aspects such as writing, presentation, editing and communication for them to be able to execute their duties. Zerfass et al. (2008, p. 328) define excellence in the public relations practice as a set of attitudes and practices that contribute to the effectiveness of the organisation. Ikosa (2014) further reasons that it is difficult to prove the effectiveness of the public relations practice as many public relations practitioners in the public sector are predominately responsible for producing clipping files of news stories appearing in the local newspapers. However, Lee et al. (2012, p. 214) suggest the need for the use of monitoring and evaluation in order to refine and prove public communication effectiveness.

Johnston and Sheehan (2014, p. 07) argue that the type of public relations practiced mostly depends on an organisation's nature and the position and attitudes of the public relations practitioner. Dwyer (2013, p. 288) notes that one of the public relations objectives is to gain the public's acceptance of the organisation through the provisions of clear public relations plans by focusing on promoting the organisation's presence, image,

products and services. There is thus a need for organisations to develop and adapt to environmental changes in order to enhance the performance of the public relations objectives and plans. Dwyer (2013, p. 287) further notes that it is imperative for the organisation to manage public relations in order to do more than manage their reputation perceptions, images, brands and projects by impacting knowledge and skills in public relations practitioners or public relations departments. According to Reddi (2009, p. 142), the success of public relations depends mostly on public relations practitioners' skills and attitudes to craft and implement the public relations plans, structures and policies set up in the organisation. Grunig (2008, p. 86) attests that excellent public relations contribute to the effectiveness of the organisation when a senior public relations practitioner is a member of the dominant coalition to be able to shape the organisation's goals and help to determine which externals are more strategic. The effectiveness of the public relations practice is usually measured by the achievement of organisational objectives that lead to excellent organisations. Thus, Grunig and Dozier (2002, p. 20) note that an effective public relations practice contributes significantly to the organisation's effectiveness by reconciling the organisation's goals and objectives with the expectation of its strategic plans. The effectiveness of the public relations practice in government offices contributes to the effective relationship between the organisation and its publics. It further enhances the effective delivery of government programmes and action and improves the implementation of public policies. Beard (2001, p. 04) found out that the use of planned public relations in the public sector is a relatively recent phenomenon and there may be more barriers for the public relations practitioners to breakdown the issue of effectiveness than in the private sector. The effectiveness of the public relations practice in the government can be measured using different theories such as the Excellence Theory and also the Systems Theory, though the latter is beyond the scope of this study. We thus focus next on the excellence theory.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Excellence Theory

The Excellence Theory is a dominant theory that is used to research the excellence of the public relations practice and the effectiveness of the organisation. Butterick (2011, p. 31) defines Excellence Theory as “focused on organisational relations and the attainment of managerial power and influence for the PR role”. This implies that the public relations practice needs to enhance excellent organisational delivery and the achievement of its goals and objectives. Based on the research done by Grunig (2013), excellence theory refers to the value of public relations towards the organisation and its internal and external publics.

According to Toth (2007, p. 175), the Excellent Theory came a long way through trying to answer the question; “How, why and to what extent communication affects the achievement of organisational objective”. Thus, public relations through research processes would be able to answer the questions that assist the organisation to have stability between itself and its environment (internal and external publics). Heath (2010, p. 36) acknowledges that excellence researches began in 1985, with the purpose of answering the two specific questions regarding effectiveness and excellence: “How do public relations functions make organisations more effective? How should public relations functions be organised to help achieve such effectiveness?”

Botan and Hazleton (2009, p. 22) declare that the main goal of Excellence Theory was not to impose a single theory on public relations but to bring both complementary and competing theories together in a way that would answer questions and solve problems of concern to public relations practitioners. The Excellence Theory was adopted globally by most public relations practitioners. Botan and Hazleton (2009, p. 56) observe that the study started in English-speaking countries and became applicable to public relations practitioners in other countries such as the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. The research by Grunig (2008) has shown that the same four models of public relations have been used to describe the United States practice (press agency, public

information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical) as designated in other countries worldwide (Botan & Hazleton, 2009, pp. 56-57). According to Swann (2014, p.228) for the past 10 years, the Excellence Theory of public relations has been considered as the dominant public relations theory that infers the symmetrical two-way communication between the organisation and public in the form of dialogue. As part of the Excellent Theory, Kriyantono (2019) supports the sharing of opinions among the employees that can be help the management team in the decision making process. This means that symmetrical internal communication is essential in the organisation. Heath and Coombs (2006, p. 201) explain that Excellence Theory can be used to set up procedures in the organisation to have an effective public relations practice. This is supported by Davis (2007, p. 85) who argues that Excellence Theory has recently become acceptable and used as a benchmark in most organisations to measure the effectiveness of the organisation. Thus, Butterick (2011, p. 32) found out that most organisations that make use of this theory in public relations have found it as effective in terms of external and internal communication through systematic communication in which two-way of communication must take place between two parties in the form of dialogue.

Based on the Excellent Theory, Kriyantono (2019) argues that excellent public relations practices require involvement in the decision making process, access to information and ability to inform and educate the publics. Considering the above analysis, the present study uses the Excellence Theory in exploring the effectiveness of the public relations practice in the Namibian government ministries. Gruing (2008) reports that the Excellence Theory depicts the value of public relations to government ministry based on the social responsibility of managerial decisions and the quality of the relationship with the publics. This determines if the characteristics of excellence in public relations is reflective in the PR practitioners who have work experience in government ministries. Kriyantono (2019) notes that public relations practitioners are expected to apply the principles of excellent Theory at all times. Although there are about fourteen characteristics of Excellence communication management, the present study only focuses on the following six parameters of the Excellence Theory as acknowledged by Toth (2007, p.187). They are

as follows: (1) public relations in strategic management; (2) empowerment of the public relations function; (3) integrated public relations function; (4) the role of the public relations practitioner; (5) and models of public relations as discussed below, and (6) knowledge potential for managerial role.

3.1.1 Public relations in strategic management

The involvement of public relations in strategic management is one of the parameters of the Excellence Theory. As one of the functions of public relations, strategic management requires involvement of both public relations and the top management in any organisation. Angelopulo and Barker (2013, p. 30) define strategic management as a way of “coordinating and monitoring the organisation’s strategy development and implementation process”. Moreover, Heath (2010, p. 40) suggests that public relations practitioners should participate in the organisational strategic management for bringing excellence to public relations and effective organisation. Thus, Toth (2007, p. 139) observes that public relations may assist the organisation to adapt to its stakeholders’ environment by understanding the stakeholders’ concerns and expectations. Public relations also influences the organisation’s management to address issues identified in the process of aligning organisational goals and objective. This involves the models for strategic management such as stakeholders, the publics and issues (Heath, 2010, p. 40). The stakeholders point involves the establishment of cross relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders in realising the organisational mission. Heath (2010, p. 40) notes that public relations practitioners are required to identify stakeholders that are influenced by the organisational behaviours. In case of the public stage, public relations practitioners are required to identify the public section to interconnect the communication goals with them as well as involving the public in the decision making process. Heath (2020, p. 40) notes that the issue of stage involves the public relations practitioner to look at the best way to communicate with the public in addressing the issue at hand before it become a crisis.

In addition, researchers found out that strategic communication is one of the crucial aspects for the implementation of strategic management in an organisation. Strategic communication refers to the need of the organisation's management to communicate the organisation's strategic direction to internal and external stakeholders (Toth, 2007, p. 142). In this connection, public relations practitioners have the responsibility to interact with various stakeholders in order for an organisation to achieve its mission and objectives. Grunig (2011) observes that the contribution of public relations to strategic management may influence the organisation's effectiveness. Public relations practitioners are involved in strategic management by implementing the planning principles, research methods, communication theories, and effective communication presentation skills (Austin & Pinkleton, 2015, p. 9). This shows that public relations practitioners can be measured based on the ability to execute the above abilities in any organisation. Toth (2007, p.162) notes that the development of a PR strategy in any organisation makes the PR function relevant to those of the strategic management process by providing the link between the communication plan/activities and achievement of the organisation's mission and top-level strategies.

The research done by Valentini (2013) shows that most of the public relations officers do not contribute to the strategic planning but contribute to operational activities of the organisation. In the Namibian perspective, Kashuupulwa (2018) notes that public relations officers contribute to operational activities through media relations programmes such as media releases, press conferences and news clipping. Grunig (2011) notes that the tools for strategic management of public relations include environmental scanning, identifying stakeholders, segmenting publics, issues management and crisis communication, scenario building and evaluating public relations programmes.

The next session discusses the empowerment of the public relations functions.

3.1.2 Empowerment of the public relations

The empowerment of the public relations function or direct reporting in relation to senior managers is another parameter of Excellence Theory. This means that public relations practitioners should coordinate with the senior managers in the organisation in ensuring the dissemination of relevant information to all stakeholders concerned. It also implies that public relations officers should have a direct reporting channel of the communication activities with senior management. In the Namibian perspective, as per the Public Relations' Communication Plan, public relations officers are certified to have direct reporting with the Executive Director formally known as the Permanent Secretary (Accounting Officer) of the Ministry.

Heath (2010, p. 37) outlines some of the principles that enjoin the empowerment of public relations as distinctive and strategic managerial functions in making the organisation effective. These principles include the involvement of public relations practitioners in the strategic management process, a good working relationship between the management team and public relations practitioners, and the diversification of PR roles.

Botan and Hazleton (2009, p. 33) echo the same sentiment that the public relations function must be empowered as a distinctive and strategic managerial function. In addition, senior public relations practitioners should be members of the dominant coalition and have access to the management team of the organisation. The relationship between PR and top management is a prerequisite to achieve excellence in government public relations. McKee and Lamb (2009, p. 2) explain that to ensure openness, the PR practitioner requires the support and involvement of management whom are responsible to coordinate the responsibilities or activities assigned to PR practitioners.

According to the research by Muleya (2003), some public relations practitioners are placed in middle management level which is not good enough to involve them in the implementation of the ministry's strategic plans and they may have little influence over the decision-making process. Thus, there is need to have a close working relationship

between the directors or top management and public relations practitioners in ministries to ease the flow of information. However, Lee et al. (2012, p. 05) observe that government public relations has a high potential to be misused, abused and misunderstood by lawmakers in the ministries. Thus, the public relations practitioner in the government ministry has the responsibility to educate the lawmakers and other officials on the importance of the public relations division towards employee and the external public that includes the media. According to Hendrix, Heyes and Kumar (2012, p.198), public relations practitioners have the duty to provide the lawmakers or officials with data about the client's field of interest and the effects the proposed legislation or regulations would have on this field.

Botan and Hazleton (2009, p. 38) observe that the growth in the female practitioners should be valued for the diversity it brings to the industry but not hinder the empowerment of public relations functions in general. The research done by Grunig (2008) shows that the women are valued like men in the organisation with Excellence in Public Relations. They are valued for the strategic role and developed programmes to empower them throughout the organisation. Public relations departments are also valued when they bring gender and socio-ethnic diversity into play.

Zerfass, Ruler and Sriramesh (2008, p. 334) argue that a good relationship between the top management and public relations practitioners has a strong monetary and developmental impact in any organisation. Some of the impacts highlighted include a reduction of risk in making decisions that affect different stakeholders, reducing negative publicity and creating good relationships with stakeholders. However, Muleya (2003) notes that public relations practitioners in middle management always censor the information delivered to employees in favour of top management while public relations practitioners operating at ordinary staff member level have less censorship in favour of management. Botan and Hazleton (2009, p. 41) found out that public relations is an interesting and challenging position for capable and knowledgeable professionals to work

in. Thus, they suggest for public relations practitioners to be empowered as they play an active strategic role and they bring their expertise in communications into the function.

3.1.3 Integrated public relations function

Public relations practitioners are expected to carry out the different functions and roles to enable the organisation to be visible in the society. These functions are research and data collection, media relations, employee relations, government relations, lobbying, corporate image advertising and corporate social responsibility (Nweke, 2001). Public relations practitioners have a significant role to play in order to build the reputation of the organisation based on its mission, vision and mandate. These roles involve advisory and counselling, planning and execution of the PR campaigns and programmes; crisis management, event management, and internal communication (Nweke, 2001).

The public relations function needs to be integrated into other organisational functions to enhance the performance of an organisation and increase productivity. Botan and Hazleton (2009, p. 38) observe that the public relations functions integrated in an excellent organisation should not be integrated into another department responsible for management function rather than communication function. Thus, Muleya (2003) states that public relations practitioners should make employees understand that they are not there to serve management agenda but that their professional sphere involves everyone who is directly or indirectly affected by it internal or external publics.

Zerfass et al. (2008, p. 337) found out that most organisations splinter the PR function by making communication a supporting tool for other departments as a marketing or human resource. Botan and Hazleton (2009) explain that Excellent Theory states that public relations should be a management function that is separate from other functions, while making communication a supporting tool for other departments. Muleya (2003) states that most employees in the organisation do not know the role of public relations in the organisation as the public relations practitioner is seldom in contact with the employees.

Zerfass et al. (2008, p. 337) learnt that an excellent public relations function integrates all PR programmes into a single component and provides mechanisms for coordinating programmes managed by different departments. Grunig and Grunig (2008) acknowledge that programmes from different stakeholders should be integrated from a single department to the public relations divisions and enhance the relationship with relevant stakeholders.

3.1.4 The role of the public relations practitioner

Public relations practitioners have a role to play in shaping the work environment and creating a good image of a government ministry. Namibian public relations practitioners in the public sector have a big role to inform the publics about the activities, policies and programmes of the government. Kashuupulwa (2018) states that some of the public relations's mandate is to feed intelligence to top management on strategic stakeholders' issues, concerns and expectations to analyse trends and predict their consequences.

Heath (2010, p. 37) outlines four major roles of public relations in an organisation as the manager, communication liaison, and technician and media relations. The manager and technician roles are the most common of the four roles (Botan & Hazleton, 2009, p. 36). If the senior public relations practitioner is not a manager, it would be impossible for one to be empowered to management function because there are no managers in the department. Botan and Hazleton (2009) found out that the distinction between the manager and technician role for the senior communicator in a public relations division that could differentiate the excellent from the less excellent division. A research done by Heath (2010, p. 253) found out that more women took up the technical role and that would be difficult for them to move up to the management role. The technical role involves the writing of press releases, organising press conferences, and updating websites and social media platforms. Du Plessis (2000, p. 45) discovered that the effectiveness of public relations practitioners depends on their ability to deliver in terms of writing, speaking, listening and counselling. With the presence of the senior communicator in a public

relations division, and government Offices/Ministries/Agencies (OMAs), he/she would be able to freely communicate their activities through media channels.

Angelopulo and Barker (2013, p. 238) acknowledge that public relations practitioners in the public sector play an important role in communicating and informing the public of the government policies and activities, and seeking public interest and support of the government programmes. The research done by David (2018) depicts that some public relations practitioners in the government setup act as secretaries instead of being spokespersons of their ministries. David further notes that public relations practitioners should also be given training to acquire confidence and knowledge to represent their ministries in providing information to the media either through the radio or television.

Botan and Hazleton (2009, p.36) state that an excellent public relations division should be headed by one senior communications manager who is responsible to direct public relations programmes and supplied to the top management of the organisation. In other instances, public relations practitioners require PR and professional knowledge and skills in executing the management and communication functions. The media relations role is also crucial for public relations practitioners to maintain media contacts, place news releases, and organising press conferences as ways of sharing information about the organisation. “The better public relations become, the less public relations practitioners will need the media” (Grunig, 2008).

3.1.5 Models of public relations

The models of public relations form part of the parameter of Excellence Theory that include the press agency/publicity, the two-way symmetrical, public information and two-way asymmetrical as introduced by Grunig et al. (2012, p. 12). Grunig (2008) introduced the idea of PR models as a means of understanding, analysing and explaining the performance of public relations practitioners in the organisation. Grunig et al. (2008) further clarify that these models are used to analyse excellent public relations practices in numerous settings and for explaining why public relations is practiced in these different

ways. The models of PR will be able to describe the public relations practice in the organisation depending on its structure.

a) Two-way symmetrical approach

Du Plessis (2000, p. 25) notes that public relations practitioners are encouraged to follow the two-way symmetrical approach where neither the public nor the government is favoured in communication. A research done by Kashuupulwa (2018) states that those public relations practitioners in the public sector need to adopt and make use of the two-way symmetrical model of public relations that uses two-way communication to negotiate with the public, solve problems and promote respect and mutual understanding.

Botan and Hazleton (2009, p. 40) found out that excellent divisions could design their communication programmes on the two-way symmetrical model rather than the other models, as the two-way symmetrical public relations aims to balance the interest of both the organisation and its publics. Two-way symmetrical communication can also build a good and long-term relationship with the publics than other models.

According to Heath (2010, p. 19), with the implementation of this model, the organisation can be able to develop a dialogue with its publics which involves the communication flow from the organisation to the publics and the other way with the aim of resolving the crisis in a professional and effective manner. Dozier et al. (2010, p. 21) emphasised that a two-way symmetrical communication remains a key quality of excellence in public relations practice as it requires public relations to gather information about the public for management decision making.

Butterick (2011, p. 27) acknowledges that ministries engage in a dialogue with stakeholders to persuade, listen, learn and adapt organisational behaviour following the communication process. In this case, symmetrical communication managers use information to negotiate and compromise, as well as build long term relationships with the public while creating a win-win situation to any matter arising. Davis (2007, pp. 83-84)

explains that this approach supports mutual understanding and respect from both parties. Symmetrical communication involves a dialogue that influences each other and thereafter effecting change and mutual understanding. Thus, Butterick (2011, p. 27) acknowledges that the two-way symmetric public relations should be supported to rely on honest two-way communication with give and take rather than one-way persuasion, focusing on mutual respect and efforts to achieve a mutual understanding.

However, Grunig (2008, p.19) believes that excellent public relations practice mostly exercises a mixture of two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical, although their practice is more symmetrical than asymmetrical. According to Davis (2007, p. 84), effective public relations practice occurs through the two-way symmetrical model. This goes with the word from Toth (2007, pp. 188-189) that organisations with excellent public relations disclose relevant information to the publics and listen to the publics through research. They also maintain the balance between their organisations' interests with those of publics through symmetrical communication. This is the best way to develop and maintain a close and healthy relationship with the publics through dialogue.

b) Two-way asymmetrical approach

According to Heath (2010, p. 19), this model relates to the way in which the organisation uses the questionnaire pools to gain insights that are needed to persuade the publics to accept its point of view. In case of asymmetrical communication, managers use information to manipulate or persuade the publics to do what the organisation wants them to do. This model uses the one-way communication approach from the organisation to the target audience with the attempt to persuade the publics to act or support the charity organisation (Butterick, 2011, p. 27). However, Davis (2007, p. 83) depicts this model as involving messages going in both directions but there is an imbalance in favour of the sender. Kitchen (1997, p. 09) argues that asymmetrical communications are imbalanced, and as such this leaves the organisation unchanged and attempting rather to change the publics.

c) Public information

The public information model is also based on a one-way process of communication with the sole purpose to persuade, based on an honest approach (Butterick, 2011, p. 25). “Predominately characterised by one-way transfer of information from the organisation to the publics, the aim is to provide information in a journalistic form” (Heath, 2010, p. 19). Some organisations or ministries are using this approach to address their resolutions while ignoring the concerns of the publics. Davis (2007, p. 83) notes that the purpose of this public relations practice is to disseminate truthful facts, figures and advice on behalf of the government in all sectors of the economy.

d) Press Agency/publicity

In the case of the Press Agency model, Heath (2010, p. 19) notes that the organisation is only interested in making its philosophy and products known, even at the expense of half-truths. This means that the organisation is more concerned with the ethos than they need to plant into the mind of the publics. Thus, Butterick (2011, p. 25) observes that the purpose of this model is to persuade people to pursue specific action on the organisation’s favour.

Davis (2007, p. 82) explains Press Agency as one of the distinct types of public relations practice where feedback may be the ‘bums on seats for entertainment or sales of prompted products’. Dozier et al. (2010:13) explain that Press Agency and public information models of communication public relations practices are one-way models which involve the flow of information outwards from the organisation’s senior managers to various publics. It was noted that the public relations practice was like propaganda because the information disseminated by the practitioner was incomplete, distorted, selective and partially true (Butterick, 2010, p. 25), and that the flow of information was one-way traffic from the organisation to the intended people but with no feedback. This means that the communicator using this approach does not serve as a channel of information from the publics back into management decision making.

3.1.6 Knowledge potential for the managerial role

The knowledge potential for the managerial role and symmetrical public relations has been considered as another element of the Excellence Theory that aims for the effective public relations practice. Botan and Hazleton (2009, p. 37) note that public relations managers are most effective when they also possess technical expertise or have it available to them especially technical knowledge in media relations.

However, Kashuupulwa (2018) found out that the attitudes of some public relations practitioners in the Namibian ministry towards journalists is very bad because some public relations practitioners have a tendency of treating journalists like they are all not media practitioners. In the Namibian ministry, some public relations divisions are managed by media officers or information officers or public relations officers with the same job descriptions of the communication person or spokesperson of the ministry. According to Grunig et al. (2002), the knowledge to practice the managerial role and the two-way role models are two characteristics that are included in the broad category of the potential of the PR division. Valentini (2013) observes that public relations officers require knowledge while working in the field but not through education or the academic process. The potential of the PR division involves professionalism of the PR practitioners towards the organisation and its publics.

The potential of the managerial role also involves the educational background of the public relations officers and how they are trained to execute their duties. Mutambo (2014) observes that the duties of public relations officers include demonstrating professionalism and being knowledgeable in the field of communication and contributing to the strategic management of the organisation.

4. Conclusion

Based on the literature, effective public relations practice remains a cornerstone of development and effective organisation. This is guaranteed by the parameters of Excellence Theory as used in this present research. The selected parameters have

been considered as relevant to the research questions identified based on the topic and its objective. These parameters could narrow the research to provide reliable and valid findings from the respondents. These were measured based on the inputs, process activities and outputs against the goals, mission and objectives of the government ministries.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

According to Mishra and Alok (2011, p.1) research methodology is a process in which all research techniques used are addressed thoroughly. The present chapter outlines the research techniques used to collect and analyse data for this study. These include the research design, research paradigm, data collection method, data analysis method, sampling, research population, reliability and validity of the study, and ethical considerations. The study sought to provide a clear understanding of the effectiveness of the public relations practice in government ministries. This study was conducted using the qualitative method. The data was collected through questionnaires which were distributed to public relations practitioners in all government ministries in Namibia. In case of the qualitative dimension, part of the questionnaire contained open spaces for the respondents to express themselves. The questionnaires containing closed and open ended questions were distributed to public relations divisions in 24 ministries.

3.2 Research design

In simple terms, the research design is more like a strategic plan. Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012, p. 21) explain the research design as a plan or plan to be followed when building up a research study, and explaining how the research should be conducted. There are different research designs that can be used as guidelines towards the development of the research project. This study gathered data based on the completed questionnaires from the group of Public Relations Practitioners in different government ministries. Therefore, in this study, the targeted population of Public Relations Practitioners responded to questionnaires that were distributed to them through email and hand-delivery and these were emailed back, handwritten or typed. The next section provides the type of research paradigm used in this study.

3.3 Research paradigm

In general, research paradigm refers to the set of concepts used as a guideline through the research process. According to Wagner et al. (2012, p. 52), the paradigm in research study, guides the methodology on how the research proceeds. This can be in the form of positivism, constructivism/ interpretivism and transformative/emancipatory research. According to Belk (2006, pp. 157-158), the interpretivist paradigm deals with the understanding of a condition from participants' perspective, that can help to craft the meaning through which the participants constructed their realities that could be correct or incorrect. This study involved the social reality of the public relations practice, which is described by Daymon and Holloway (2011, p. 100) as ontology. 'The ontology influences the epistemology and methodology of a research study' (Daymon & Holloway, 2011, p. 100). This study used the interpretivist paradigm that shows multiple realities and social factors that exist due to public relations' experiences, interpretations and skills. Belk (2006, p. 158) explain that the interpretivist paradigm is commonly associated with the qualitative research method. This study is not purely qualitative. It contained a questionnaire that included semi-structured questions for elaboration (. The next section provides the data collection instruments used in this study.

3.4 Data collection instruments

The data was collected through the completion of questionnaires by public relations practitioners in the public sector. Questionnaires are described by Wagner et al. (2012, p.100) as one of the types of questionnaire research that can be completed through internet or handwritten and gathers information in the most cost-effective way. The researcher distributed questionnaires to all Public Relations Practitioners in the government ministries. Questionnaires containing closed and open ended questions were circulated to PR departments for descriptive analysis purposes. The next section provides data analysis methods of the study.

3.5 Data analysis

Public Relations practice involves many activities that are relevant to the effective delivery of service to the intended receivers. Therefore, data were coded to facilitate interpretation to make relevant meaning. The researcher used the Moonstats software package for coding, entering and cleaning of data. Based on the selected research methods, data was interpreted through coding and analysed considering the objectives of the research.

The chosen data analysis for this study was that of descriptive analysis. The descriptive analysis is concerned with the descriptive and summary of information in the form of graphics and numeric data (Wagner et al. 2012, p. 177). Different types of graphs and diagrams were presented and a short summary was presented to give clear interpretation of the findings. According to Blance, Durrheim and Painter (2006, p. 189), coding involves the transformation of information provided in the questionnaire into a meaningful format using Moonstat software. The information was coded based on the questions; however, the demographic part was coded separately to determine the gender of the participants. The entering of data stage is described by Blance, Durrheim and Painter (2006, p. 190) as a process of entering the numeric codes as recorded in the questionnaire into a computer system by using the statistical computer package. In this case, the research used the Moonstat software package. The researcher identified the patterns, themes and similarities in the findings as provided in the form of graphs. The cleaning stage involved the analysis of data sets for errors and rectifying all errors that could have occurred (Blance, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p. 192). The next section provides a brief summary of the sampling technique and size of the study.

3.6 Sampling

According to Wagner et al. (2012, p. 274), sampling refers to the selection of a section for participating in the research. The list of the available population of public relations practitioners in the government ministries was determined so as to come up with the sample size and technique to be used. Therefore, random sampling method that was

done using the Moonstat software was implemented to get participants for the study. All the collected questionnaires were numbered and the software was used to generate the sample randomly.

3.6.1 Sampling technique

The study used the random sampling techniques. According to Blance, Durrheim and Painter (2006, p.134), random sampling implies that each element in the sampling frame stands an equal opportunity of being selected for the sample. Bertram and Christiansen (2015, p. 60) proffer that random sampling implies that all participants in the study have an equal chance of being part of the response rate.

3.6.2 Sampling size

The sampling size for this study consists of 20 participants from the 24 government ministries. Some government ministries have more than one public relations officer.

3.7 Research population

The Namibian government has 24 ministries that have Public Relations divisions. Each ministry has Public Relations Practitioners who are responsible for the internal and external communication of government policies, plans and programmes.

3.7.1 Target population

The targeted population was over 40 Public Relations Practitioners in the government ministries which represents 100% and this is where questionnaires were distributed with the understanding that not all offices would respond to these questionnaires. This was not a census. Only half of the population was targeted to respond to the questionnaire. Which means the sampling size consists of 20 participants out of an estimated population of 40 practitioners. Of the 24 ministries, only 1 PR practitioner was asked to complete the questionnaire.

3.7.2 Accessible population

The study was done among the accessible population of public relations practitioners in the government ministries. Before handing over the questionnaires, the targeted population was informed by email or formal letter or telephonically to explain the whole process and the importance of this research. The questionnaires were hand-delivered or emailed to all public relations departments in the government ministries.

3.8 Reliability and validity

The reliability and validity of data was measured based on the research objectives. According to Daymon and Holloway (2011, pp. 78-79), the reliability aspect is considered due to the subjective nature of the qualitative research while the validity feature is more based on the importance of the qualitative research through looking at internal or external validity.

3.8.1 Reliability

Data were collected from different ministries within the division of public relations and communication services. Each respondent was presented with questionnaires to complete.

3.8.2 Validity

The data were validated based on the internal and content validity of the questionnaires and representative samples of the research that the researcher intends to measure.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The aspect of confidentiality and informed consent was highly considered whilst working with government officials in order to protect their rights and that of their ministries. Thus, information drawn from this study will not reveal neither the specific ministry nor the names of the respondents.

i. Confidentiality

This means that the participants were not allowed to mention their names as well as the ministry they are working for. Thus, the data was analysed and interpreted in general based on their responses, the similarities and different experiences of the Public Relations Officers.

ii. Informed consent

This was followed to inform the participants about the research, what it would involve, how is it would be used, why it is relevant and how it would be conducted. This was done by writing a formal letter to the ministry before the process started.

3.10 DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

- Government Public Relations Officers workshop report, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT), 2-6 September 2019
- Providing Access to Public Information: Communication Plan 106/17-2019/20 - MICT
- Social Media: Use Policy and Implementation Plan 2016/17-2019/20, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT)

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter described the methodology used to collect and analyse data into meaningful concepts. The mixed method research was used while the Moonstats software was used for coding and entering data. The targeted population were the public relations officers in all government ministries in Namibia.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter shows the results and data findings from questionnaires and supportive documents that were used in this study. The research covered the perceptions regarding public relations activities, roles and functions in government ministries. It further touches on the implementation of standards of communication excellence in the public sector. The research also aimed to discover how public relations in the government ministers should be organised, managed and practiced to enhance relationships with citizens.

Data collection methods comprised of mainly questionnaires. Out of the 40 participants that took part in the study, only a total of 20 participants were selected through random sampling as final respondents for this study. The questionnaire targeted mostly public relations officers of which most ministries have more than one communication officer.

In this chapter (Chapter 4), the researcher made the decision not to temper with the results but to draw the results and findings from the questionnaires and available documents. The demographic information was analysed and that led to the public relations practice concept being interpreted.

4.2 Demographics

A total of 12 females, representing 60% and 8 males representing (40%) public relations officers from different government ministries took part in this study. Figure 1 demonstrates that the majority of female respondents are employed in public relations in the Namibian government as compared to their male counterparts.

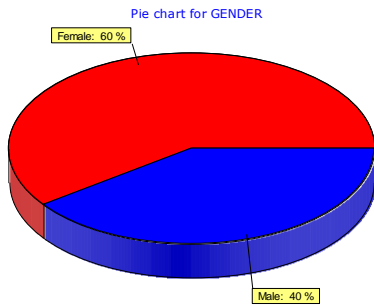


Figure 1 Gender

Table 1: Gender

Frequency table for GENDER

Value	N	%	Cum. %
Female	12	60.00	60.00
Male	8	40.00	100.00
TOTAL	20	100.00	

Three age groups participated in this study, those that were 20-35 years old consisting of 40 respondents (40%), 36-45 years old consisting of 8 respondents (40%), and while 46-55 years old consisting of four respondents represents 20%. This implies that most people join the public sector at a young age and then retire in private sector. One of the respondents explained that it is best to work for the public sector and gain the experience and skills to be employed in the private sector.

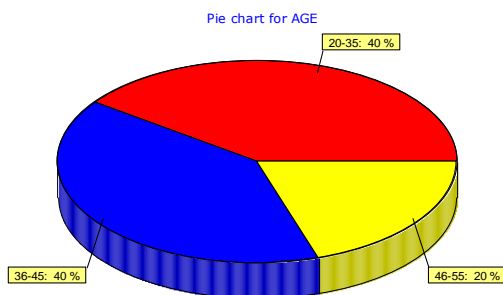


Figure 2 Age Group

Table 2: Age Group

Frequency table for AGE

Value	N	%	Cum. %
20-35	8	40.00	40.00
36-45	8	40.00	80.00
46-55	4	20.00	100.00
TOTAL	20	100.00	

In terms of educational qualifications, most respondents had BA Honours, as represented by 12 of the respondents (60%), four respondents had Master’s Degrees (20%, three with Bachelor of Art Degree (15%) and one with a diploma which represents (5%). This implies that most of the respondents are qualified public relations practitioners with different levels of qualifications as indicated below.

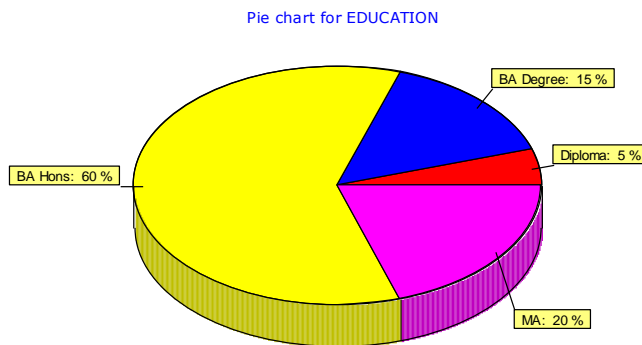


Figure 3 Educational qualification

Table 3: Educational Qualification

Frequency table for EDUCATION

Value	N	%	Cum. %
Diploma	1	5.00	5.00
BA Degree	3	15.00	20.00
BA Hons	12	60.00	80.00
MA	4	20.00	100.00
TOTAL	20	100.00	

The respondents consisted of four groups based on their training. Most of the respondents were trained in the area of Communications, which consists of six respondents (30%), whereas equally six respondents (30%) were trained in the Public Relations field, followed by five respondents (25%) who were trained in Media Studies,

while three respondents (15%) were trained in Journalism. Based on the participants' educational backgrounds, this representation shows an understanding of the field and requiring them to perform management roles so as to enhance communication in the organisation.

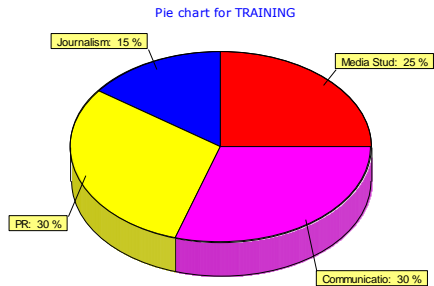


Figure 4 Area of Training

Table 4: Area of Training

Frequency table for TRAINING

Value	N	%	Cum. %
Media Stud	5	25.00	25.00
Journalism	3	15.00	40.00
PR	6	30.00	70.00
Communication	6	30.00	100.00
TOTAL	20	100.00	

Regarding the years of experience in the government communication area, the study found out that most respondents had seven to nine years of experience as represented by six respondents (30%), followed by one to three and four to six years of experience with 25%, two respondents have less than a year's experience (10%), and two respondents with 10 to 12 years of experience (10%).

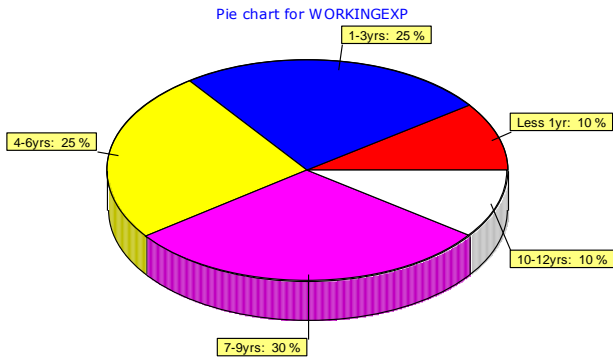


Figure 5 Working Experience

Table 5: Working Experience

Frequency table for WORKINGEXP

Value	N	%	Cum. %
Less 1yr	2	10.00	10.00
1-3yrs	5	25.00	35.00
4-6yrs	5	25.00	60.00
7-9yrs	6	30.00	90.00
10-12yrs	2	10.00	100.00
TOTAL	20	100.00	

In terms of job position, a total of 7 respondents were employed as Senior Media officers/PRO (35%), and the other seven were working as Public Relations Officers (35%) and the remaining six respondents were employed as Chief Public Relations Officers which represents 30%.

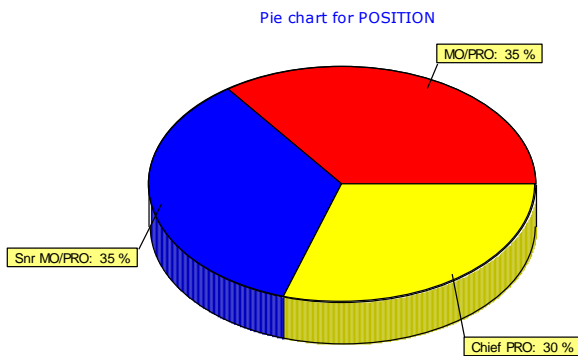


Figure 6 Job Position

Table 6: Job Position

Frequency table for POSITION

Value	N	%	Cum. %
MO/PRO	7	35.00	35.00
Snr MO/PRO	7	35.00	70.00
Chief PRO	6	30.00	100.00
TOTAL	20	100.00	

4.3. Effective PR practice

4.3.1 The usefulness of the Government Communication Plan

The participants were asked to answer the question relating to the usefulness of the Government Communication Plan 2016/217-2019/20 towards their communication strategies. This is a guideline for all public relations officers in the Offices/Ministries/Agencies (O/M/As) on how to ensure that all government policies and activities are disseminated to all the intended publics. Its mission is to render an effective information service to the Namibian society. The participants were asked the question based on the government's directive to all government institutions to adhere to that communication plan. The respondents' answers were based on the scale of 1(not useful) to 5 (very useful) by ticking the appropriate box.

A total of 11 respondents indicated that the communication plan is not useful which represents 55%, while four respondents remained neutral (20%, three respondents found out that the communication plan was useful (15%), and two respondents believed that the plan is somewhat useful towards their communication strategy.

Those who indicated that the document is not useful explained that they have opted to consider their ministerial communication strategy over the Government Communication plan because it addresses the same elements. The respondents indicated that their communication strategies are more designed specifically for their ministries based on their programmes and areas of interest as compared to the Government Communication

Plan which is more general. The researcher was able to obtain six communication strategies from various ministries in Namibia. As part of the recommendations taken from the Government's Public Relations Officers' workshop report by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT), all ministries should develop a communication strategy for them to be able to effectively execute their duties.

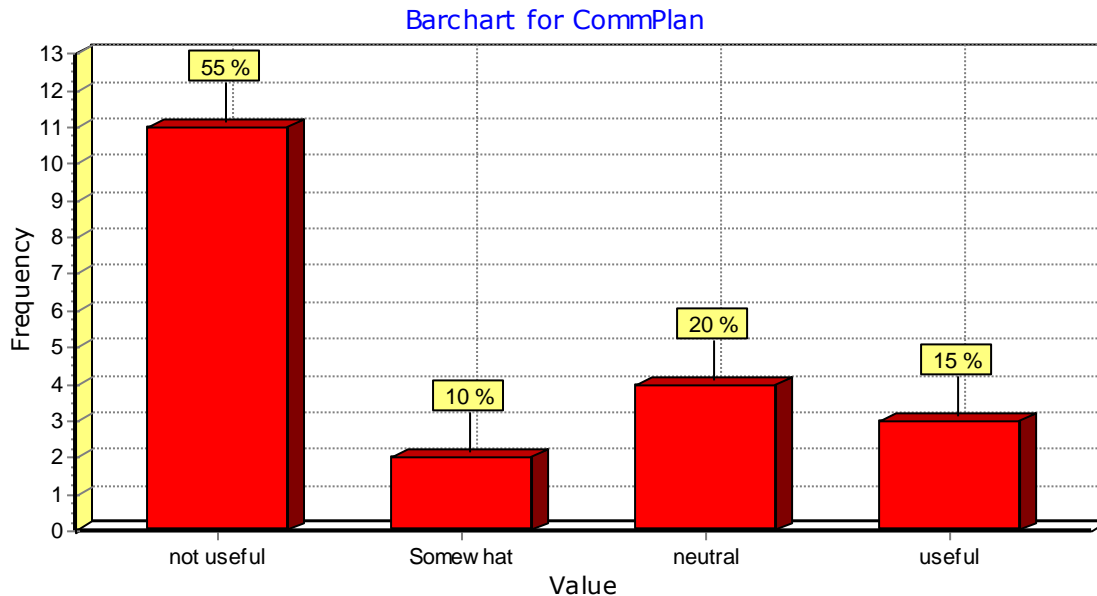


Figure 7 Communication Plan

4.3.2. Performance of PR activities

The data reveals that some Government Ministries have considered some public relations activities as more important than other activities as listed in the Table 7 below. The data shows that 50% of the participants update their ministerial website on a specific frequency basis; 20% sometimes and 30% always update websites. It shows that website update is the most practiced public relations activities in most ministries (M: 4.10; SD: 0.91). Some respondents argued that their website content is of poor quality and no evaluation is involved due to lack of well-trained officers. Some respondents indicated that their websites are being updated by computer technicians or programmers. A study done by Karkin and Janssen (2014) also found out that there should be website evaluation to assess the content, quality, usability, transparency, responsiveness and balancing of interests.

This study shows that some respondents do frequently organise press conferences or briefing which represents 45%, while some indicated they sometimes (25%), hardly (25%) and always (5%) call for press conference when needs rise. This shows the M: 3.30 and SD: 0.92.

In relation to the use of social media, participants showed the necessity of using the social media (M: 4.45; SD: 0.69) as compared to engagement of print media for information dissemination (M: 3.85; SD: 0.75). According to Mergel (2013, p. 330), public relations uses social media to increase transparency, participation and collaboration among both internal and external publics. Karkin and Janssen (2014) found out that it is essential to evaluate the use of social media in the society against the objective of the organisation to make use of the social media platforms.

Respondents in this research believed that monitoring the media regularly is the best way to check the publication of articles relating to their ministries and their stakeholders (M: 4.25; SD: 0.91) and at the same time making use of media clippings to keep record of the publications (M: 3.85; SD: 0.88). Lower scores are notable in the participants' ideas regarding the provision of feedback on short-messages services (SMSs) queries published in the local newspapers (M: 3.65; SD: 0.93); publication of ministerial newsletters (M: 3.20; SD: 0.83); publication of annual reports (M:3.30; SD: 1.13); issuing of press releases (M: 3.50; SD: 1.00) and internal communication (M: 3.30; SD: 1.13).

Some of the respondents indicated that they hardly publish their ministerial newsletters and annual reports due to lack of trust from the top management and lack of provision of information from directorates. The research done by David (2018) found out that political implication is the cause of the denial of sharing information with the public relations officers for them to compile these publications. Therefore red tape and bureaucracy is to be blamed.

Regarding the media queries, the study depicts that some respondents provide responses to media questions as part of their duties (M: 4.00; SD: 0.86). The overall findings show that most participants are mostly involved in the use of social media (M=4.45; SD=0.69) and monitoring of the media regularly (M=4.25; SD=0.91). The least activities are speech writing (M=2.10; SD=1.17); organising employee information sharing meeting (M=2.75; SD=1.07) and publishing ministerial pamphlets (M=2.95; SD=0.94).

Table 7: PR activities

Variables	Mean	StdDev
Update of website	4.10	0.72
Conduct press conference/briefing	3.30	0.92
Use social media	4.45	0.69
Engage print media for information dissemination	3.85	0.75
Monitor the media regularly	4.25	0.91
Media clipping	3.85	0.88
Providing feedback on SMS queries	3.65	0.93
publish Ministerial newsletters	3.20	0.83
Provide response to media queries	4.00	0.86
Publish annual reports	3.30	1.13
Issue press releases	3.50	1.00
Internal communication	3.30	1.13
Speech writing	2.10	1.17
Publish ministerial pamphlets	2.95	0.94
Organise employee information sharing meeting	2.75	1.07

NB: The number of cases for each variable stands at 20. All variables are measured on the scale ranging from 1 to 5: (1=never; 2=hardly; 3=sometimes; 4=frequently; and 5=always).

In relation to the media clipping, one of the respondents pointed out that “we are never provided with access to newspapers in order to analyse the news”; and “newspapers are only made available for top executives and some senior managers in the ministry”. However, based on the Namibian Government Communication Plan 201/17-2019/20, all public relations officers should have access to newspapers and ‘full access to political office bearers and senior managers to obtain comments or factual information to enable them to react to media reports’. A limited access to media content reduces the ability of PR practitioners to scan the environment and thus be proactive in responding to current and emerging issues.

4.3.3 Media relations

Regarding media relations, respondents were asked to indicate the level of their relationship with media organisations and the level of media coverage of their ministries’ activities. The study shows that the respondents had different opinions as 55% indicated a good relationship, while 40% showed that the relationship is “Ok” and the remaining 10% had a poor relationship.

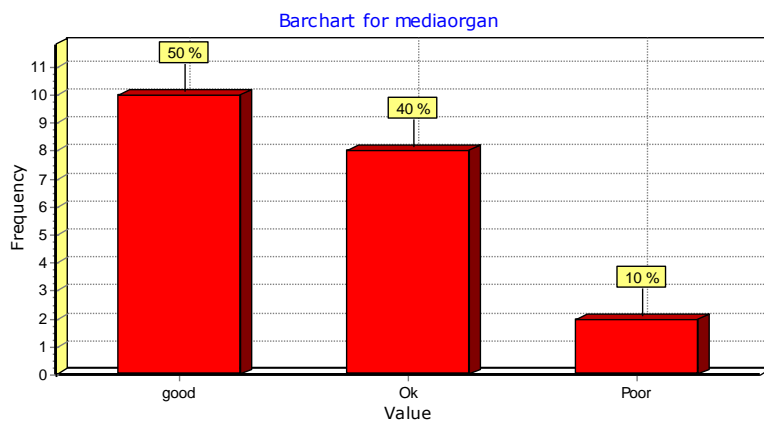


Figure 8: Media relations

Like the view of Waters, Tindall and Morton (2010, p. 256), public relations practitioners consider the benefits of media relations as an effort to increase awareness and decrease advertising expenditures.

In case of media coverage, the finding shows that the majority of the respondents indicated the level of media coverage about their ministries has been neutral with 55%, followed by 20% fair, 15 % positive coverage and 10% with negative coverage. One of the respondents indicated that the purpose of monitoring the media coverage is to look at the fairness of the story and facts surrounding it.

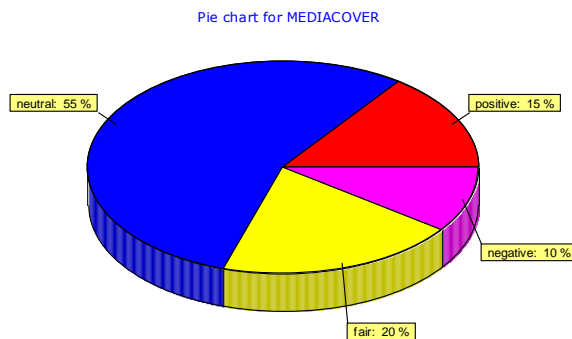


Figure 9 Media Coverage

Mutumba (2014) found out that government public relations officers have an obligation to assist media organisations or journalists to cover government activities and mobilize public support and enhance awareness. In the view of Supa (2014, p. 9), “the goal of media relations is not only to obtain media coverage but to develop relationships with those people who are able to best communicate with audiences across the spectrum”, and media relations for an organisation should not assume that media coverage equates to success. This implies that by obtaining media coverage this does not guarantee the excellence public relations practice in the ministry but there is a need to create a conducive environment for journalists and other stakeholders.

4.3.4 Internal communication

In regard to internal communication processes, the respondents were asked to indicate the person/body responsible to communicate internal information and how often information is circulated to all employees and its stakeholders. The respondents indicated that public relations officers are the persons authorised to share internal information (55%), followed by Information Technology experts (IT system) with 20%, others (human resources and sometimes responsible department or directorate) which was represented by 15%; and computer technician and Administrative officers as represented 5% each.

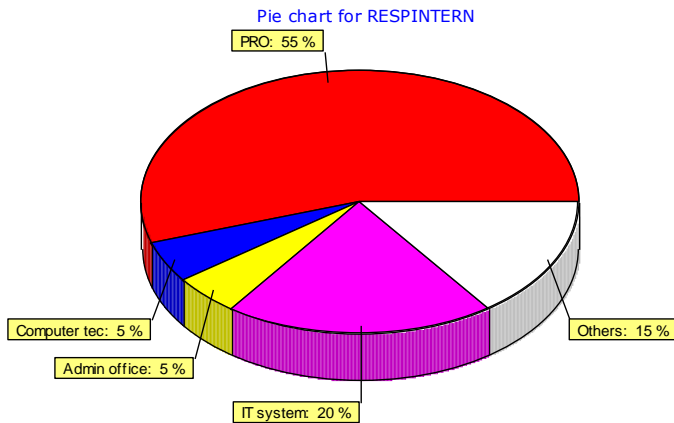


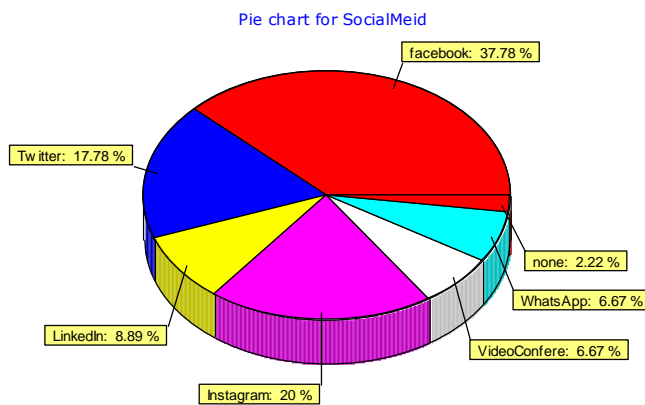
Figure 10: Internal communication process

4.3.5 Social media Tools

Regarding the question on the type of social media tools used by different ministries, participants opted for different platforms. The data shows that

37.78% of the participants make use of Facebook, followed by 17.78% using Twitter, 8.89% use LinkedIn, while 6.67% of the respondents prefer to use WhatsApp because it is fast and effective in communicating to the media either for disseminating press releases or sending invitations, and 6.67% Videoconferencing.

The remaining 2.22% of the participants do not use social media in their ministries as per the directive given by the management team in fear of criticism by members of the public. However, some of the participants noted that there is need to employ an online communications officer or public relations officer who is an expert in navigating the social



media platforms.

Figure 11: Type of Social Media

Respondents indicated that the use of social media is more effective as members of the public find it easy to directly express their dissatisfaction or satisfaction with the ministry's services. While some explained that social media tools are more effective in disseminating ministerial speeches and awareness of what transpires in the ministry, some ministries opted to make use of one social media tool because of lack of regular monitoring and evaluation due to lack of little knowledge of the use of social media.

As per the Government's Social Media use policy and implementation Plan of 2016/17-2019/20, it is recommended for all government institutions to embrace the use of social media in order to engage with internal and external stakeholders and audiences. Like Mergel's (2013, p. 332) findings, social media directors indicated that the government makes use of social media channels to provide information over/than manual channels such as publications. The study further depicts that a few ministries have been using more than one social media tools based on their clients and stakeholders likeable and accessible social media tools. I therefore support Waters et al. (2010, p. 259) in the conclusion that public relations should openly embrace social media platforms because it enables real conversations.

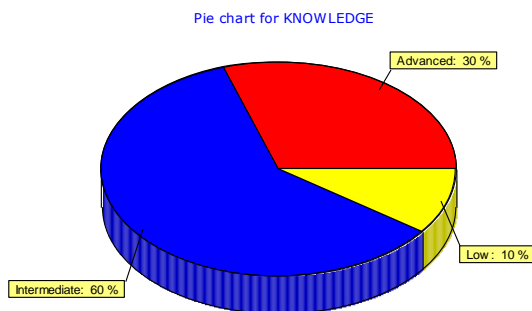


Figure 12: SM knowledge

In comparison with the participants' knowledge towards the usage of social media, the data shows that 60% of the participants are at the intermediate level of understanding, 30% at the advanced stage, and 10% at the low stage. This could be that 40% of the

participants consisted of the young group between 20-35 years of age and 40% between 36-45 years.

4.3.6 Strategic management of public administration

The data revealed that most of the public relations officers in the government sector contribute to the strategic management of public administration in their ministries (see Table 8). Most of the participants agreed to attending the management meetings to enable them to have first-hand information on development in their ministries (M: 4.25; SD: 0.91) while contributing to the strategic plan of their ministries (M:4.15; SD: 0.81). Other responses were as follows: *“Attending management meetings allows us to get information needed to execute our duties”*. *“Attending management meeting is not part of my job description but falls as other assigned duty”*.

In comparison, Grunig and Grunig (2000, p. 315) found that most of the public relations departments less often conduct research to gather information for the strategic planning of their organisations as an indication that public relations units are not qualified to contribute to strategic planning. This study further depicts that respondents assist the management team in developing goals and objectives in their Ministries (M: 3.90; SD: 0.79) and they also contribute to strategic management by building relationship with internal and external publics (M: 3.85; SD: 01.27) and contribute to operational activities such as media and employee relations (M: 3.85; SD: 0.88).

The experienced researchers in excellent public relations units through research can enhance environmental scanning of issues in management, provide counsel in crisis management, and evaluate communication programmes to formally communicate with members of strategic publics.

However, in this study, respondents showed less contribution in conducting formal research for use in decision making processes (M: 3.70; SD: 0.86), slow support from senior management towards the public relations communication activities or plans (M:

3.65; SD: 1.04) and a few senior managers value their contribution towards the development of the ministry (M: 3.60; SD: 0.99). One respondent said, “No formal research conducted but will do it in future”.

The two graphs below depict the most agreed and least agreed to respectively in strategic management aspects of the government communication departments. Graph 13 shows that 50% of the participants have strongly agreed to the importance of attending management meetings while 5% participants could not agree. Graph 14 illustrates that 45% of the participants are not sure, while 10% disagree with the statement that the senior management team values the public relations officers’ contributions to the development of their ministries. In relation to excellence, this shows that most of the public relations officers in government offices have first-hand information by attending the management meetings and being able to attend to the public’s queries.

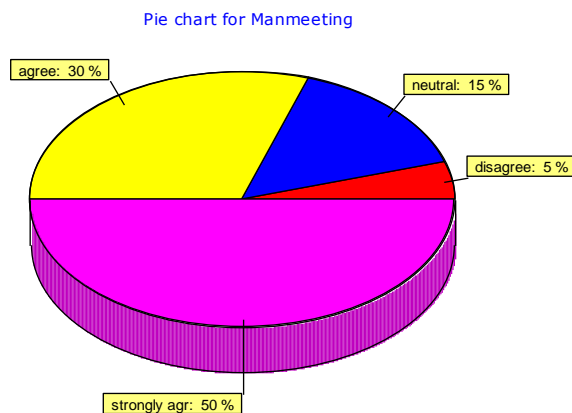


Figure 13 Attend management meeting

Pie chart for MANVALUE

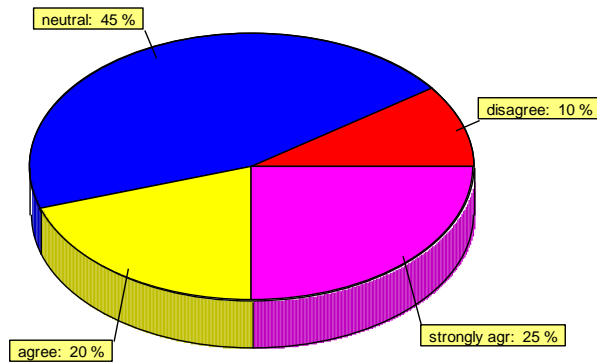


Figure 14 Senior Management value

Table 8: Strategic management

Variables	Mean	StdDev
Attend management meetings	4.25	0.91
Contribute to strategic management	3.85	1.27
Contribute to operational activities	3.85	0.88
Contribute to strategic plan	4.15	0.81
Develop goals and objectives	3.90	0.79
Conduct formal research	3.70	0.86
Senior management supports	3.65	1.04
Senior management value	3.60	0.99

NB: The number of cases for each variable stands at 20. All variables are measured on the scale ranging from 1 to 5: (1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neutral; 4=agree; and 5=strongly agree).

According to Supa (2014, p. 8), the duty of public relations is mainly to communicate with internal and external publics to bring their voices into strategic management. The literature on strategic management indicate (Mutumba 2014) that the 'strategic management function revolves around deliberated communication strategies to help the organisation achieve favourable goals'.

4.3.7 Empowerment of public relations

Regarding the empowerment of public relations in their ministries, Public Relations Officers agreed with some indicators as stipulated in Table 9 below. The table shows that the highest number (M: 4.00; SD: 0.95) of women was empowered as Public Relations Officers while the lowest (M: 1.90; SD: 1.12) represents the public relations officials that have little access to the management team.

Some of the respondents noted: *“We have little access to the management team to tap more information”*. *“Not all managers are always willing to share information for media responses”*. *“Not all managers are cooperative when it comes to information sharing”*.

In brief, half of the participants agreed (50%) that they are considered as members of the senior management team; 30% of the respondents agreed that it is easy to request and get information from directorates, while 35% confirmed that they report directly to the Executive Directors of their ministries.

Some respondents pointed the following: *“We report directly to the Director for Auxiliary Services, HR and Administration”*. *“I report to Director for IT and Administration”*.

This translates to the fact that there is a lack of conformity in the government sector regarding the reporting channels that could cause some misunderstandings or lack of understanding on the functions and activities of the Public Relations officers.

Almost 65% of the participants were neutral with regards to being considered as boundary spinners by collecting and bringing information from the outside to the management for decision making processes. On the other hand, 55% strongly disagreed that none of the public relations officials has access to management members who make decisions in the organisation. This implies that some public relations officers do not have access to information that is supposed to be made available to them by the management cadres.

Thus, communication officers would not be able to respond to the media and stakeholders' enquiries.

Table 9: Empowerment of public relations

Indicators	Means	StdDev
Members of senior management	3.40	1.27
Get information from Directorates	3.40	1.05
Report directly to Executive Director	3.10	1.55
Empowered as a woman	4.00	0.95
A boundary spinner	3.25	0.97
Have access to management	1.90	1.12

NB: The number of cases for each variable stands at 20. All variables/indicators are measured on the scale ranging from 1 to 5: (1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neutral; 4=agree; and 5=strongly agree).

4.3.8 Integrated public relations function

The study looked at the extent at which Public Relations Officers agree with the integrated public relations function in their ministries. It looked at two indicators, first being whether the public relations function makes communication a supporting tool for other departments, and secondly if public relations coordinate programmes are managed by different departments.

For the first indicator, the data shows that 50% agreed that their functions remain to make communication a supporting tool for other departments; 25% strongly agreed, 20% were neutral and 5% disagreed with the statement.

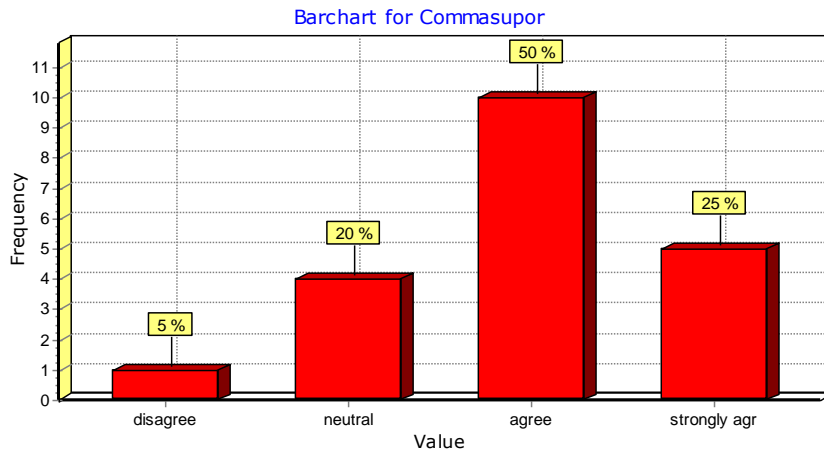


Figure 15 Communication as a supporting tool

The literature on integrating communication indicates that an integrated public relations function requires both technical support but not only management support. Public relations officers are in the best position to manage integrated communications processes as they are involved in the evaluation of every facet of the organisation.

“We are responsible for internal and external communication, placing notices, organising interviews for both electronic and print media that easy communication”.

Regarding the second indicator, the data depicts that 40% of the participants agree while 5% strongly disagree that public relations coordinates programmes are managed by different departments in their organisations.

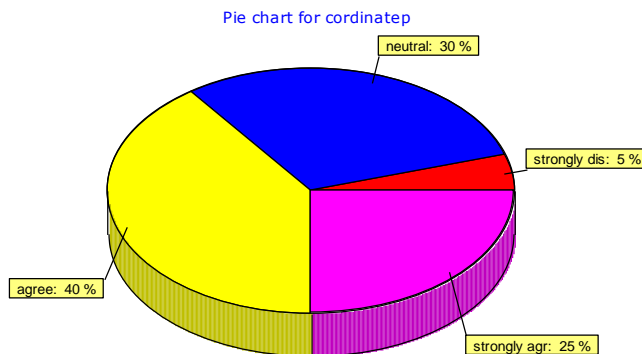


Figure 16 PR coordination

The participants further indicated that public relations practitioners have been hardly involved and consulted regarding the ministries activities; whistle some feel that most PR programmes are managed and coordinated from the PR office; some observed that some public relations programmes are coordinated from the wellness section or procurement section. This is thus contrary to Grunig and Grunig's (1998) recommendation that the good characteristics of excellent public relations involve the full coordination of all programmes and activities happening in the organisation.

The respondents of this study further explained that:

“Team work is needed for efficient integrated PR and also team building for people to efficiently work together and cater for the public”.

Some respondents noted that not all departments understand public relations' importance hence perhaps there is a need to educate the management teams on the functions of the public relations officers.

“We act as a bridge between departments, between employees and management; and a bridge between the organisation and its internal and external publics”.

4.3.9 Role of public relations practitioners

When asked to indicate the level of agreement to the statements about the public relations roles in their ministries, respondents had diverse opinions on what they are doing on a daily basis. Looking at the mean and standard deviation, results show that the majority of the respondents agree (M: 4.55; SD: 0.60) that the role of the public relations practitioners is to shape the work environment and create a good image of the ministry.

A few of the respondents agree (M: 3.65; SD: 1.09) that they play a managerial role of researching, planning, organising and evaluating the work in their ministries. This statement is supported by the fact that 30% of the participants hold the position of Chief Public Relations Officer while 35% of the participants are senior public relations officers who have power or are responsible for the managerial role in their PR divisions.

Regarding the technical role, the level of agreement shows that some of the respondents are involved in technical activities as indicated by the writing of press releases, production of pamphlets and production of annual reports.

Table10: Role of PR

Variables	Mean	StdDev
PR shapes the work environment	4.55	0.60
Communicate government policies	4.30	0.57
Seek public interest on government programmes	4.10	0.85
PR role based on the Ministry's expectations	3.80	1.01
PR plays technical role	3.80	1.06
PR plays managerial role	3.65	1.09

NB: The number of cases for each variable stands at 20. All variables/indicators are measured on the scale ranging from 1 to 5: (1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neutral; 4=agree; and 5=strongly agree).

4.3.10 Knowledge potential for managerial role

Regarding the knowledge and experience of work among the communication officers, most of the respondents strongly agreed that they have adequate knowledge and experience in media relations and public relations. It shows that 45% strongly agree and agree as compared to the 5% that strongly disagree.

Pie chart for Experience

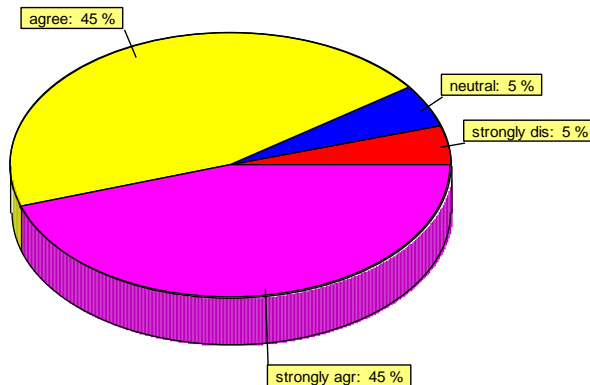


Figure 17: Experience in Media and PR

In the chart below, the data shows that most of the participants strongly agree (30%) that they were journalists before taking up positions of public relations in government ministries. This result shows a cross relationship with the media industry and knowledge of their operations. However, 5% of the participants were neutral because either they were journalists for less than two years because they feel that the experience gained in journalism has no significant impact in their current job activities (M: 3.00; SD: 1.75). This is in comparison with the respondents' educational qualifications, and as such the study reveals that 60% of the respondents were trained in public relations and communication while 25% were trained in media studies and the remaining 15% were trained in journalism. This shows the level of knowledge and experiences in media and public relations of the Namibian government's communication officers.

Pie chart for journalist

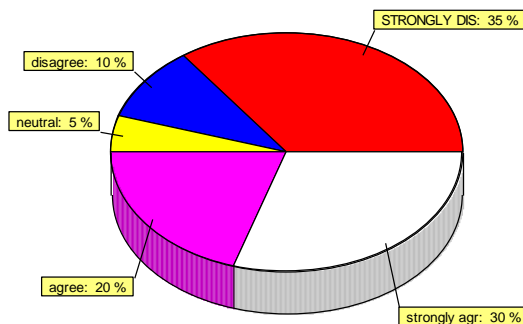


Figure 18: Experience in Journalism

In comparison with the respondents' work experiences in the government communication sector, the study reveals that 30% of them have 7-9 years of experience and 25% have 4-6 years of experience, which qualified them to have good media relations and public relations experiences.

4.3.11 Models of public relations

The four public relations models were used to test the effectiveness of public relations practices in the Namibian government institutions. The study revealed that the level of agreement towards the Press Agency of the priority of communication strategy to maximise publicity stands at M: 4.15, SD: 0.75 while M: 3.60, SD: 0.94 in determining the success of the event based on the number of people or number of media houses attended. Respondents towards this model showed that they used to seek media attention in any form possible in their organisations. In total, the model shows an increase (M: 3.93; SD: 0.82) in comparison with the respondents' years of working experiences in the communication industry.

Regarding the public information model, respondents indicated that they value communication as the best way of dissemination of information than advocating for the ministry (M:3.40; SD:0.94). The overall impression of the respondents stands at M:3.13; SD: 1.07, which was described by Grunig and Grunig (1998) as practiced by "journalists-in-residence" who disseminate positive and factual information but no negative information about their ministries.

The literature shows that both the press agency and public information models are ways of communication that practitioners never consider for public ideas as any formal research conducted among the publics. This research shows that technical practitioners have no time for formal research (M:2.80; SD 1.15) as compared to the job positions (Chief PRO 3%, Senior PRO 35% and PRO with 35%) that require them to conduct researches for planning purposes.

Table 12: Models of PR

Variables	Mean	StdDev
Press Agency	3.93	0.82
Communication strategy is to maximize publicity	4.15	0.75
Attempt to get favourable in the media	4.05	0.76
Determination of the event's success	3.60	0.94
Public Information	3.13	1.07
Have no time to do research	2.80	1.15
News clipping is the best way of communication	3.20	1.11
Communication is about dissemination of information	3.40	0.94
Two-way symmetrical	3.88	0.83
Balance interest of both ministry and its publics	4.30	0.60
Gather information about the publics	3.75	0.85
Create win-win situation	3.60	1.05
Two-way Asymmetrical	3.70	0.96
Use questionnaire to gain insights	3.50	1.00
Use information to encourage publics	3.65	0.88
The goal is to attract people	3.95	1.00

NB: The number of cases for each variable stands at 20. All variables/indicators are measured on the scale ranging from 1 to 5: (1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neutral; 4=agree; and 5=strongly agree).

With regards to the two-way symmetrical model, the study shows that the level of agreement is very high with a big difference in mean (M: 3.88; SD: 0.83). Respondents showed agreement in balancing the interests of both the ministry and its publics (M: 4.30; SD: 0.60); gather information about the publics (M: 3.75; SD: 0.85) and create a win-win situation (M: 3.60; SD: 1.05). Grunig and Grunig (1998) posit that the organisation practicing the two-way symmetrical model plays a big role in negotiating and bringing changes in the ideas and behaviours of both the organisation and its publics.

The level of agreement towards the two-way asymmetrical model shows the 'sophisticated public relations practice' as described by Grunig and Grunig (1998). The study illustrates that the model has a mean of M: 3.70 and a standard deviation of SD: 0.96 as compared to the years of working experiences of public relations in the government ministries. The respondents have agreed more with the statement that their goal is to attract people to have favourable attitudes towards their ministries (M: 3.95; SD: 1.00) as compared to the use of information to encourage publics to do what the ministry wants them to do (M: 3.65; SD: 0.88) and the use of questionnaire to gain insights to persuade the public to accept their point of views (M: 3.50; SD: 1.00).

This implies that excellent communication has been practiced in the Namibian Public sector with the aim to create good working relations with the publics; however, a few respondents believe in conducting research on how to influence the public. This also shows little practice of a two-way of communication in the public sector that is aimed to create a win-win situation.

The graphs below illustrate the agreement index of the four models as practised in the public relations departments in Namibia. The researcher found out that with regards to the Press Agency model, about 50% of the participants do not agree with it and only 15% agree with the indications under this model, while 35% are neutral. A research done by Sriramesh (2000) shows that those public relations departments use the Press Agency model relies mostly on the use of one way communication to persuade and sell the interests of the organisation to the publics.

Pie chart for PRESSAGENT

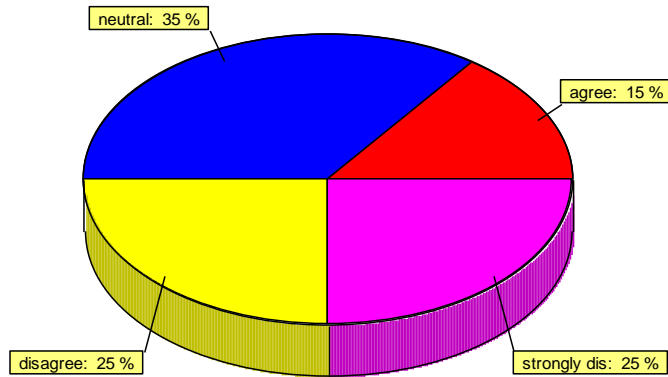


Figure 19 Press Agency Model

Regarding the public information model, participants indicated that 15% agree, 10% strongly agree, 40% are neutral, 20% disagree and 15% strongly disagree. This is an indication that most of public relations practitioners make use of the public information model in the public sector in Namibia. According to Sriramesh (2000), the public information model involves a one-way communication with factual information that is aimed to change the behaviour of the publics towards the organisation. The implication with regards to using the public information model is that more public information campaigns are conducted to educate the public on various aspects of the organisation.

Pie chart for PUBLICINFO

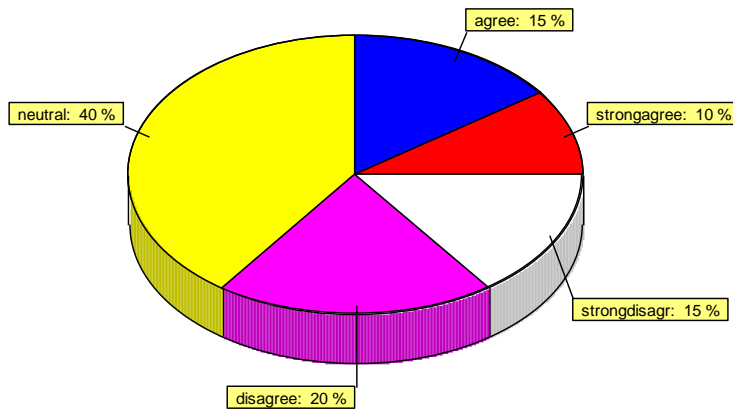


Figure 20 Public Information Model

The study shows that only 10% of the participants agree with the two-way symmetrical model, 40% disagree, 30% strongly disagree and 20% are neutral. This implies that only 10% of the participants agree with an indicator that there should be balance of interest between the ministry and its publics; they gather information about the publics' interest for management decision making; and public relations practitioners create a win-win situation to any arising matter. This shows the practice of the two-way symmetrical model that relates to the use of research and dialogue in managing conflict and enhancing good working relationship.

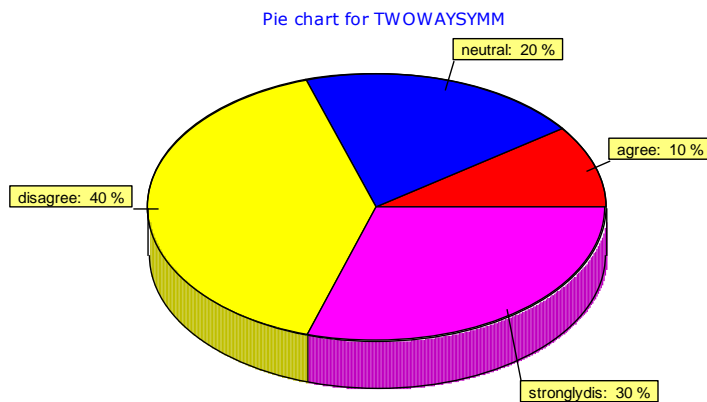


Figure 21 Two Way symmetrical model

The findings show that only 15% of the participants agree and 5% strongly agree with the two-way asymmetrical model while 30% disagree and 15 strongly disagree, and 35% are neutral with the model as per the indicators given.

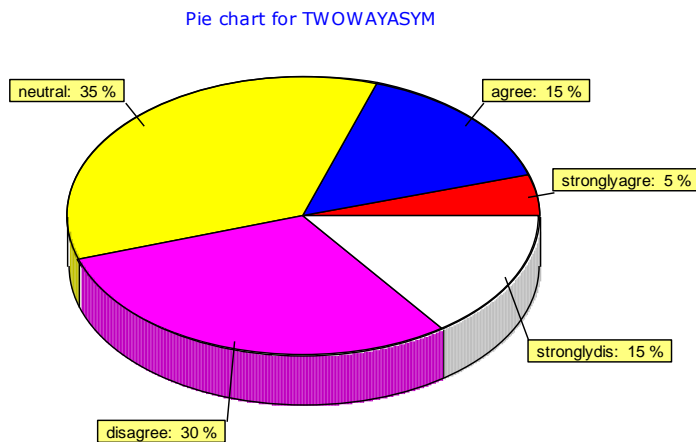


Figure 22 Two- Way Asymmetrical Model

The findings show that only 15% of the participants agree and 5% strongly agree with the two-way asymmetrical model while 30% disagree and 15 strongly disagree, and 35% are neutral with regards to the model as per the indicators given. This is an indication that a few respondents are practicing the two-way communication in the public sector. The advantage of promoting two-way communication in any organisation is that it can create an opportunity to learn from each other (public and organisation) and enable them to reach their objectives.

The researcher found out that public information is more popular than other models with a total of 25% of the participants agreeing with the model where no research has been conducted and accurate information is being channelled to the targeted audience without feedback thereof. This could have implications in the excellence public relations practice in government offices by delaying development in their ministries and minimising relationships with their customers or stakeholders or the public at large and therefore not contributing to organisational effectiveness.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the findings gathered and analysed through the use of questionnaires and documents. The presentation of the findings was done through the qualitative method. The findings show that the respondents have been encountering

common challenges such as lack of full support from the management and lack of further training. It also concludes that most of the respondents are using public information models in their ministries.

CHAPTER FIVE

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents more information on the findings, and provides recommendations and conclusions drawn from the findings thereof. Based on the aim of this study with the purpose to investigate the effectiveness of the public relations practice in the government ministries in Namibia, the key findings are presented based on the research questions. The study was basically focussed on the following three questions and the findings show different forms of knowledge, experiences and skills of different public communication personnel in the government ministries. The implications of findings are presented based on the excellence and effectiveness of public relations practice in the Namibian public sector. The recommendations and conclusions presented centre on the key findings on the benefits of adhering to the excellent standards of communication.

5.1 Key findings

Based on the findings in Chapter 4, the researcher has underlined the key findings as per the research questions.

(a) ***What are the roles and functions of PR in the Namibian government ministries?***

The findings show that most of the respondents know their roles and function of the public relations departments as the enhancement and development of the organisation. Again, they believed that it is imperative to maintain a good relationship between the organisation and its publics. According to the data provided by the respondents regarding the role and functions of the public relations practitioners, the majority of the respondents showed that they have an important role to shape the organisation and create a good image about their ministries. Furthermore, a number of them indicated that they have been playing a technical role which involves the production of the ministerial websites, writing press releases, writing media invitation and organising media events.

The respondents also noted the importance of using the social media platforms to reach large audiences when communicating the ministerial information or communicating to the media organisations. However, the findings disclosed that most of the public relations officers require training in the use of social media platforms.

(b) *To what extent are the standards of communication excellence upheld by selected government public relations departments in Namibia?*

The findings on excellence communication among the participants in this study show that effectiveness, coordination and training are the most required so as to enhance the standard of communication in the Namibian government institutions.

In terms of strategic management for public administration, the excellence theory shows that most public relations practitioners contribute to strategic management by attending management meetings even though some of the respondents indicated that they attend meetings as minute takers. The involvement of public relations practitioners in the management meetings also assists in the gathering of information for the purpose of responding to media queries. However, in some instances, the public relations practitioners fail to effectively compile accurate and adequate information due to low knowledge and willingness by some to conduct formal research and communication evaluations that can assist in the strategic planning for the organisation.

In terms of empowerment of public relations, the excellence study shows that most women as respondents are empowered in their organisations, despite them having limited access to top management. This shows that there is a lack of proper coordination between the public relations departments and the top managements in terms of providing information to the publics. This may cause lack of visibility and transparency in the provision of services to the publics. In terms of the integrated public relations function, respondents showed that a few departments are willing to divulge information to public relations practitioners which enhances the organisation's effectiveness. The provision of

information to the public relations department can enable the office to have open and free communication with media and thereby enhance effective public relations practice in the ministries. Regarding the role of public relations, the indicators show that a few respondents play a managerial role in terms of researching, planning, and evaluating the ministries' activities. This implies that research, planning and evaluation could enable the public relations officers to identify threats and opportunities in the ministry and they may be able to understand the contexts that involve stakeholders, employees, media and members of the public. In terms of knowledge potential for the managerial role, respondents showed that communication excellence is upheld based on their knowledge and skills in the field and how to deal with media. Effective public relations practice is being maintained by creating good media relations and employees' relations in order to persuade the stakeholders about the organisation's activities and plans. Concerning the models of public relations, the findings show that the respondents practice the public information model than other models such as press agency, two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical models. The respondents reacted a bit negatively by stating that *'they have no time to do research'*.

According to them, news clipping is the best way to determine the success of the communication. Furthermore, they stated that communication is about disseminating information than advocating for the ministry. This implies that by practicing this model in Namibia, there is lack of response to the public queries as they are practicing one-way communication. The implication thereof is that the organisation will not be able to promptly address the problems of the public because there is no two-way communication. This may enable the two parties to understand and learn from each other for the development of the organisation.

(c) *How should public relations in government ministries be organised, practiced and managed in order to enhance relationships with citizens?*

The findings revealed that public relations officers in the public sector require support from politicians and the top management team to enhance the organisation and

management of public relations functions in their ministries. An effective public relations practice creates good relations between the organisation and its publics. The research found out that the close relationship between public relations practitioners and media organisations is essential and increases publicity about the organisation. The findings further found out that most of the respondents are making use of different means of communication to effectively practice public relations in their ministries such as social media, print media and electronic media despite the little knowledge on how to navigate the social media platforms.

The researcher found out that most ministries have more than one public relations practitioner in the department which makes it easy for them to organise, practice and manage communication effectively and efficiently. A few of the respondents showed their little involvement in the decision making process or the development of ministerial plans and activities. This has negative implications to the growth of the organisation as public relations officers have little understanding about the organisational activities and also lack information to share through the different ministerial platforms.

However, there is a will among public relations officers to strive to take their work seriously, thus most public relations officers are always proactive and innovative in carrying out their duties despite the lack of encouragement and support from the senior management especially the Executive Directors in the Ministries. The researcher concluded that a few public relations officers have knowledge in high level training in environmental scanning, conducting research and planning. This could be utilised with the support of the management team.

5.2 Recommendations

This section outlines some of the recommendations to the government and public relations practitioners, and recommendations for further research. The researcher found out that for the government's public relations divisions to prosper, the challenges affecting the sector need to be minimised.

5.2.1 Proposed recommendations

- The researcher is recommending that the Government Public Relations Officers have to be encouraged, supported financially and provided with information at all times for them to know what is happening in their organisations.
- All Public Relations Officers should be allowed to attend all meetings in the organisation for them to have first-hand information and thus enable them to respond to the media and public queries at all times.
- They must also attend those meetings to give valuable input that can lead to organisational effectiveness.
- Public relations officers should be given training on how to use social media, how to be social media friendly and thereby enable them to respond to public queries and comments promptly on social media platforms.
- After giving training to public relations personnel, the government will be able to enforce the use of social media platforms in all institutions. Moreover, there should be conformity within the Offices, Ministries/ Agencies (O/M/A/s) on the type of social media platforms to be used and a budget should be provided given to boost the social media platforms.
- Furthermore, there is a need for public relations courses in the local tertiary institutions to train the aspiring PR practitioners in the country in addition to a Diploma in Public Relations that was recently introduced at the University of Namibia (UNAM). The intersection of public relations training to management would also assist PR practitioners in performing a strategic function in the Namibian public sector that would lead to the innovation of the government (and thus organisational effectiveness).
- It is also recommended for the public relations practitioners to be proactive and innovative for them to be able to execute their duties diligently. They should not wait to be provided with information without looking for such information from the right person.

5.2.2 Future research areas

For further research, the researcher recommends the following possible areas:

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1. The researcher recommends further research in investigating the budget allocation towards the public relations section or departments in the public sector to be able to procure relevant marketing and branding materials in their ministries. This process will enhance the relationship between the organisation and its public and it can also provide an opportunity to educate and inform the public on the ministry's products, services, activities and plans.
 2. Another possible research area is the issue of gender representation in the public relations industry in Namibia and the implications thereof.
 3. The researcher also suggests for research on the effects of the bureaucratic role in implementing public relations activities in the Namibian government institutions.
 4. Also a study is recommended on excellent public relations practices in serving the interests of the media.
 5. Another possible research is about the importance and maintenance of social media platforms in the public sector as compare to private sector.
 6. Another possible area for research is the investigation of internal publics' understanding of the role and function of the public relations in an organisation.
 7. It is also recommended to conduct research to explore the monitoring and evaluating process on the effectiveness of the government's social media platforms.

5.3 Conclusion

Based on the research findings, the researcher has concluded that there is a need for a paradigm shift in the Namibian public sector so as to improve the organisation, practice and management of improved public relations functions. The current coaching of PR lacks the specialisation on the dynamics of the public sector. In addition, communication remains painstakingly uncoordinated and fragmented across government institutions as no public information hubs exist. This has implications in the execution of excellence public relations practices in the O/M/As and creates a bad impression on public relations departments. The researcher found out that the theory of excellence in public relations requires efforts from the top management, political leaders, the media and other stakeholders.

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7. Appendices

A. Questionnaire

My name is Etuna M. Shikalepo and I am conducting a study titled ***“Exploring the effectiveness of public relations’ practice in the public sector: A Namibian case study’*** in partially fulfilment of the requirements of the Master’s Degree in Communication at the University of South Africa. Kindly indicate by ticking (√) the appropriate options to your view. Your response will be treated with confidentiality, thus there is no need for you to provide your name or number or name of ministry working for.

SECTION A: Demographic Information

Please complete the following details by ticking (√) in the appropriate box.

1. Please indicate your gender.

Female		Male	
--------	--	------	--

2. Please indicate your age group

20-35		36-45		46-55		Above 56	
-------	--	-------	--	-------	--	----------	--

3. Educational qualification

Certificate		Diploma		BA Degree	
BA Hons		MA		PhD	

4. Area of Training

Media Studies		Journalism		Public relations	
Corporate Communication		Information Studies		Others (specify)	

5. How many years of working in government communication?

Less than a year		1-3 years		4-6 years		7-9 years	
10-12 years		13-15		16-18		Over 19 years	

6. Your job title (position)

Media officer/PRO	Senior Media Officer/ Senior PRO	Chief Public Relations Officer	Others (specify)	
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SECTION B: Effective PR practice

7. How useful is the Government Communication Plan 2016/17-2019/20 to your Ministry's communication strategy?

On the scale of 1 to 5 please tick (√): 1 = Not useful to 5 = very useful

5	4	3	2	1	
---	---	---	---	---	--

8. How often do you perform the following PR activities?

On the scale of 1 to 5: 1 = never, 2 = hardly, 3 = sometimes, 4 = frequently and 5 = Always (tick (√))

Tick (√) the appropriate box	5	4	3	2	1
Update the ministry website					
Conduct press conferences/briefing					
Use social media					
Engage print media for information dissemination					
Monitor the media regularly					
Media clipping					
Providing feedback on SMSs queries					
Publish ministerial newsletter					
Provide response to media queries					
Publish annual reports					
Issue press releases					
Internal communications					

Speech writing					
Publish ministerial pamphlets					
Organise employee information sharing meeting					
Others (specify)					

9. How is your relationship with media organisations (journalists)?

Good		Ok		Poor	
------	--	----	--	------	--

10. How do you rate the level of media coverage about your Ministry?

Positive		Neutral		Fair		Negative	
----------	--	---------	--	------	--	----------	--

11. How do you rate the success of communication strategy in your Ministry?

Not satisfied		Slightly satisfied		Neutral		Very satisfied		Extremely satisfied	
---------------	--	--------------------	--	---------	--	----------------	--	---------------------	--

12. Which social media tools do your ministry uses?

Please tick (√)

Facebook	
Twitter	
YouTube	
LinkedIn	
Instagram	
Blogs (weblogs)	
Videoconferencing	
Others (specify)	

Please

Elaborate

.....

.....

.....

13. To what extent do you have knowledge of using social media?

Advanced		intermediate		Low	
----------	--	--------------	--	-----	--

14. Who is responsible to communicates information to the internal publics (employee)?

Public relations officer	
Computer technician	
Administrative officer	
IT system Administrator	
Others (specify)	

Please Elaborate

.....

15. How often do you send internal communication?

Never		Very often		Frequently		Most times	
-------	--	------------	--	------------	--	------------	--

15. Who prepare answers/response to the media queries or questions?

Executive Director	
Directors	
Public relations officer	
Any staff member	
Others (specify)	

16. To what extent do you involve in the **strategic management of public administration** in your Ministry? **On the scale of 1 to 5: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree**

Indicators	5	4	3	2	1
I attend the management meeting to allow me to have first-hand information on development in the institution.					
I contribute to strategic management by building relationship with the publics (internal and external).					
I contribute to operational activities such as media relations and employee relations.					

I contribute to the strategic planning of my Ministry.					
I help management to develop goal and objectives in the Ministry.					
I conduct formal research (news clippings, internal) for use in decision making.					
Senior management supports my communication activities/plans					
Senior management value my contribution on to the development of the Ministry.					

Please elaborate

.....

17. To what extent do you agree with this **Empowerment of Public Relations** in your ministry? **On the scale of 1 to 5: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree**

Indicators	5	4	3	2	1
I consider myself a member of the senior management.					
It is easy to request and get information from directorates (working relationship).					
I report my activities directly to Executive Director?					
I feel empowered as a woman to work as public relations officer.					
I am considered as a boundary spinner (collecting and bringing information from the outside to the management for decision-making process.					
None of the public relations official has access to management who make decision in the organisation.					

Please Elaborate

.....

18. To what extent do you agree with the **integrated public relations function** in your Ministry? **On the scale of 1 to 5: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree**

Indicators	5	4	3	2	1
Public relations function makes communication a supporting tool for other departments					
Public relations coordinate programs managed by different department.					

Please Elaborate

.....

19. To what extent do you agree with the **role of public relation practitioners** in your Ministry? **On the scale of 1 to 5: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree**

Indicators	5	4	3	2	1
Public relations shape the work environment and creates good image of the Ministry.					
As a PRO, I do play management role in the department					
We communicate and inform the public of the government policies and activities.					
We seek public interest and support on government programmes.					
My role as PRO is based on the expectation of the Ministry.					
I play a technical role (write press releases, articles, speeches, producing materials such as newsletters)					
I play a managerial role (research, planning, organising and evaluating)					

Please Elaborate

.....

20. To what extent do you agree with the **knowledge potential for managerial role** in your Ministry? **On the scale of 1 to 5: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree**

Indicators	5	4	3	2	1
I have knowledge and experience in media relations and public relations					
I have worked as a journalist before became a public relations officer/ media officer of the Ministry.					

Please Elaborate

.....

21. To what extent do you agree with these indicators?

On the scale of 1 to 5: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree

Press Agency	5	4	3	2	1
The Ministry's communication strategy is to maximise publicity					
We attempt to get favourable publicity in the media					
We determine the success of the event based on number of people or number of media houses attended.					
Public information	5	4	3	2	1
We have no time to do research					
News clipping is the best way to determine the success of the communication.					
Communication is about dissemination of information than advocating for the Ministry.					
Two-way symmetrical	5	4	3	2	1
We aim to balance the interest of both Ministry and its public					
We gather information about the publics for the management decision making					
We create win-win situation to any matter arise.					

Two-way asymmetrical	5	4	3	2	1
We use questionnaires to gain insights to persuade the public to accept our point of view					
We use information to encourage publics to do what the ministry wants them to do					
Our goal is to attract people to have favourable attitudes towards our Ministry.					

Please Elaborate

.....

.....

(Thank for your participation in this study)

B. Consent Form



C. Permission Letter



D. Ethical Clearance Certificate



E. Turnitin Report

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the study and the purpose of carrying out this research. The study is based on the Public Relations practice in the Namibian government ministries. The Public Relations practice pertaining to government activities, actions and programmes has been a concern in Namibia. Thus, this research paper explored those concerns so as to measure the effectiveness of public relations' activities in the public sector through a descriptive study. According to Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2012, p.10), excellent studies aim to give a clear picture of how the public relations profession should be practised in order to enhance relationships.

Du Plessis (2000, p.16) describes Public Relations as a "distinctive management

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F. Editor's Report

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To whom it may concern

LANGUAGE EDITING – MRS M.E. SHIKALEPO (AINDONGO)

This letter serves to confirm that a **Masters in Communication: DFCOM95** thesis entitled *Exploring the effectiveness of public relations practices in the public sector: A Namibian case study* by Mrs M.E. Shikalepo (Aindongo) was submitted to me for language editing.

The thesis was professionally edited and track changes and suggestions were made in the document. The research content or the author's intentions were not altered during the editing process and the author has the authority to accept or reject my suggestions.

Yours faithfully


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